



Tales of the unexpected: why archival research remains important today

Tuesday 9 October, 5.30–7pm

Speaker

Simon Ville

Senior Professor
Economic and Business History
University of Wollongong

Location

McDonald Room

R.G. Menzies Library
2 McDonald Place
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Registration required

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This lecture is free and open to the public
The lecture is followed by light refreshments

Presented by

ANU Archives and the
Friends of the Noel Butlin
Archives Centre



For the contemporary researcher, archival research is often considered antiquarian and too labour intensive to meet the publication demands of the modern corporate university. For the economic historian there is often a choice between long hours spent in the archives and subsequent analysis of scanned documents or obtaining datasets from which to test hypotheses. The tensions between historical and economic methods, both legitimate, run deep in the discipline. Using examples

from his own research, Simon Ville will show that working on historical archives is enjoyable, though labour intensive, providing many original and unexpected outcomes. Things aren't always what they appear to be...

Simon Ville is Senior Professor of Economic and Business History at the University of Wollongong, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and a recent member of the College of Experts at the Australian Research Council (2013–17). He holds a PhD from University College London, has previously worked at ANU, University of Auckland and University of Manchester, and has held a visiting fellowship at Harvard Business School. He has written widely on big business, industry associations, social capital, transport history, the Vietnam War, and the rural and resource industries.

He and Glenn Withers edited *The Cambridge Economic History of Australia*, published in 2015. Among his other major works are: *The Big End of Town: Big Business and Corporate Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, with Grant Fleming and David Merrett (CUP 2004); *The Rural Entrepreneurs: A History of the Stock and Station Agent Industry in Australia and New Zealand* (CUP 2000). The Archives of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre were used extensively for the latter work. His first archival research, for his PhD, looked at the papers of Michael Henley and Son, London shipowners, located at the National Maritime Museum. This was published as *English Shipowning during the Industrial Revolution, 1770–1830* (Manchester UP 1987).