

Editors' page

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In this issue we have a historical article, biographical memoirs of four deceased fellows of the Australian Academy of Science, a selection of book reviews commissioned and edited for us by Martin Bush, and the annual bibliography of history of Australian science compiled by Helen Cohn.

The astonishing biodiversity of Australia's fauna and flora, especially in the insect kingdom, is much remarked on today, but the article on Oswald Lower—a bio-geographer, a lepidopterist and historian from Broken Hill, where he did much of his collecting—remind us of the contributions made, over one hundred years ago, to this field. By vocation a pharmacist, and by avocation a lepidopterist, Lower, named almost 1000 valid new species, and his collection of 40 000 specimens forms the nucleus of the outstanding Lepidoptera collection at the South Australian Museum.

The scientists memorialised in this issue include a glaciologist, a geologist, an inorganic chemist and a metallurgist, the latter two having served as vice-chancellors of their respective Australian universities. Bill Budd was a founding figure in Australian glaciology, studying a range of glaciological and meteorological topics that included ice-core paleoclimatic studies and relationships between sea ice and climate that are of great relevance 50 years after he began to address them.

Ian McDougall was known internationally as an Earth scientist, but spent most of his career at the Australian National University. He undertook pioneering research on young volcanoes, supported the emerging theory of plate tectonics, and established a comprehensive geochronological framework for hominin evolution in eastern Africa.

Ray Martin, son of professor of physics and leader of nuclear research in Australia, Sir Leslie Martin, pursued a successful career as a professor of chemistry at the University of Melbourne and at the Australian National University before he served as vice-chancellor at Monash University and later head of the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC). Martin's field of research was one of the great strengths of Australian chemistry, in which there were many notable practitioners. Ray's memoir was prepared by his daughter, Dr Lisandra Martin, also a chemist.

In 1948, Rupert Myers' studies of the metallurgy of strategically important metals tantalum and titanium earned him the first Australian PhD to be awarded for a scientific thesis. After contributing to similar studies at Harwell, UK, Myers became foundation professor of metallurgy at the new University of New South Wales, where he later succeeded Sir Philip Baxter as vice-chancellor. With a combination of astute judgment and good humour, he led the university through a difficult period of student and societal unrest.

The book reviews include, in an interesting juxtaposition with the historical article described above, the biography of a museum specialist, Allan McCulloch, who added about 1200 fish specimens to the collection at the Australian Museum. The importance of museums also resonates with Tom Darragh, from the Melbourne Museum, who brought together art and technology in his book about engravers and lithographers. Finally, an account of exhibitions and the rise of public science in Australia, written by an author residing in Hawaii, also emphasises the importance of institutions in the history of Australian science.

The bibliography of the history of science for 2022 is also included in this issue.

We alert readers to a special issue of the journal planned for July 2024 that will contain articles about the history of Australasian plant pathology, a scientific discipline that has been of vital importance in combatting disease in Australian and New Zealand agriculture, and the pastoral industry, and has informed quarantine practices. The issue will be sponsored by the Australasian Plant Pathology Society (APPS) with specialist historical contributions by members.

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