

Editors' page

Despite the restrictions on professional and personal life caused by responses to the Covid 19 pandemic, authors have been busy and we are pleased to publish their latest work in this issue. It consists of two historical articles, a historical document and expert commentary on it, the annual bibliography of the history of Australian science, a collection of book reviews compiled by our new book review editor, Dr Martin Bush, and four biographical memoirs of fellows of the Australian Academy of Science.

Turning first to the memoirs, we note that two of them have also been published by the Royal Society of London. These scientists, both Australian born, made their careers in the United Kingdom and were fellows of the Royal Society. Lord Robert May began his career as a theoretical physicist but made major contributions to mathematical analysis of ecological systems, with applications as diverse as the study of infectious diseases. He was president of the Royal Society in 2000–2005, chief scientific adviser to the UK government between 1995 and 2000, and as a member of the House of Lords he played an important role in the making science policy in Britain. David Buckingham played first-class cricket at Oxford and Cambridge, but stuck to his original field of chemistry and brought new life to the exploration of the physical properties of molecules.

Mervyn Paterson designed and built equipment to study the behaviour of rocks under conditions of high pressure and temperature, and his work had practical applications in the field of geodynamics. Scott Sloan, engineer, fisherman and blues guitarist is remembered for computational models he developed for

prediction of the movement of soil and rock masses. His models were important in the design of safer civil infrastructure.

The breadth of coverage of HRAS is exemplified not only in the biographical memoirs. The contributed articles deal with pharmacology, astronomy and botany, respectively. In each case the story includes more than just the science. Ian Rae's article about drug research describes collaboration between university chemists, physiologists and pharmacologists and their links with the pharmaceutical industry. Martin Bush's account of Mary Proctor's efforts to have a solar observatory established reveals much about bureaucratic competition in two Australian colonies and New Zealand and depicts her as an important figure in science communication in the early twentieth century.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Georg Rumphius described a tree growing in islands to the north of Australia, decades before it was described here and now known as *Eucalyptus deglupta*. Rod Fensham has provided a translation of Rumphius' 1743 article and a discussion of the rich history surrounding the identification and naming of *Eucalyptus*.

The breadth that we referred to above is also evident in the book reviews published in this issue, and to a striking degree in the bibliography of history of Australian science compiled by Helen Cohn.

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