

JRF Report

Dr Meg Foster

Mary Bateson Research Fellow

A Criminal Inheritance?

British Highway Robbery and the origins of Australian Bushranging.

October 2020-April 2022

Research Milestones

Completed a preliminary survey of the literature in this area, and delved into primary source material on early Australian bushranging.

Created a database to record the life course histories of British convicts who were sent to Australia after being convicted of highway robbery.

Created a database to record all cases of highway robbery before the New South Wales Supreme Court between 1824 and 1835 (the peak years of Australian bushranging).

Commenced research into the legal definition of Australian bushranging, which resulted in the article 'Freedom Bound: vagrancy, bushranging and the contours of colonial liberty', *Law and History Review* (under review). For more details see 'Research Outputs' below.

Uncovered connections between early Australian bushranging and piracy, maritime culture, Aboriginal resistance strategies and settler colonisation. These connections indicate the adaptive nature of bushranging (contrary to pre-existing scholarship, it is already clear that bushranging was not simply British highway robbery transplanted to colonial soil).

Special Distinctions

Appointed a Visiting Fellow at the School of Humanities and Languages, University of New South Wales.

This post was granted in recognition of my intellectual achievements, and is intended to provide resources and networks to further my Newnham fellowship project.

Research Outputs

Boundary Crossers: hidden history of Australia's other bushrangers (Sydney: New South, 2022 forthcoming).

I have submitted my manuscript to NewSouth (an Australian academic publisher) for the publication of my first book, *Boundary Crossers: hidden history of Australia's other bushrangers*. The book is due to be published in Australia in November 2022, and will also be published in the UK at a later date.

'The Other Bushrangers', in Nancy Cushing (ed.), *A History of Crime in Australia: Australian Underworlds* (London: Routledge, 2022 forthcoming).

'Freedom Bound: vagrancy, bushranging and the contours of colonial liberty', *Law and History Review* (accepted pending revisions).

'Unprecedented Times?: COVID-19 and the lessons of history', in Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton (eds.), *Writing With History: making something with the past* (Sydney: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2022 forthcoming).

with Toni Burton, Mark Finnane, Carolyn Fraser, Peter Hobbins and Hollie Pich, 'A History of Now: historical responses to COVID-19', *Public History Review* vol. 27 (2020), pp. 86-115.

'Texture, Light and Sound: a sensory history of early Sydney', *Australian Historical Studies* vol. 51, no. 3 (2020), pp. 344-347.

'Pathfinders: a history of Aboriginal trackers in New South Wales by Michael Bennett', *Aboriginal History* vol. 43 (2020).

Academic Community Engagement

Imperial Genealogies of Crime Conference and Workshop Series (online, forthcoming, May 2022).

This four day international conference and workshop series will run in May 2022. The aim of the interdisciplinary series is to explore global histories of crime and imperial history through the lens of genealogy (exploring such themes as legacy, inheritance, connection and rupture). The series is a joint venture between Newnham College and the International Criminology Research Unit at the University of Liverpool. It is convened by myself and co-convened by Dr Katy Roscoe from Liverpool. The series has already garnered a great deal of interest, with the *Imperial Genealogies of Crime* website receiving over 2.6 thousand views since it was launched in 2021. It is also proving to be truly international, with speakers and attendees participating from the UK, Europe, America, Canada, Australia and India, to name just a few.

Postgraduate Mentor, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 2021-2023.

Supervisor, *Paper 21: Empires and World History from the Fifteenth Century to the First World War*, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, October 2021-May 2022.

'The Legend of the Diggings: Black Douglas, bushranging and disorder in 1850s Victoria', Monash University Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Symposium. Online (3 December 2021).

'Old Legends, New Names? writing subaltern bushrangers into national histories', Australian Historical Association Conference. Online (30 November 2021).

Seminar Convenor, 'Histories of Empire' for *Historical Argument and Practice*, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 9 November 2021.

Seminar Convenor, 'Histories of Race' for *Historical Argument and Practice*, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 26 October 2021.

'Wom*en in the Arts: Career Panel', University of Sydney Arts Society. University of Sydney, Online (15 September 2021).

'Law, Emotion and the Tyranny of Difference: the case of Aboriginal Australian Outlaw Jimmy Governor', Social History Society Conference. Online (29 June 2021).

'Indigeneity in Fact and Legend: colonial mythmaking and the case of Mary Ann Bugg', as part of the

'Confronting Empire: Indigenous Biographies and the Global' panel convened by Dr Stephanie Mawson, European Network in Universal and Global History Conference. Turku, Finland and Online (15 June 2021).

Elected member of the Newnham College Valuable Possessions Committee, 2021-2023.

Member of the Newnham College 150th Anniversary Committee, 2021.

Supervisor, *Paper 30: Islands and Beaches: the Pacific and Indian Oceans in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, October 2020-May 2021.

'A Worldly Bandit? The transnational life of a black bushranger, 1817-1892', *Cambridge World History Seminar*. University of Cambridge, Cambridge (6 May 2021).

'The End of History? History in post pandemic Australia', "This Changes Everything": Australia and the post pandemic world virtual symposium, Australian Studies Institute. Australian National University, Canberra (24 October 2020).

Public Engagement

Historical Collaborator with artist Jamie Preisz on the piece: *The Bushranger of Bunnings part 2*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 130 x 100cm.

'The Bushrangers We Forgot', *History: The Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, no. 151 (March 2022), pp. 6-8.

'On Time: reflections on temporality and COVID-19', *Overland Literary Journal* (9 November 2021), available at: <https://overland.org.au/2021/11/on-time-reflections-on-temporality-and-covid-19/>

Speaker for 'Careers in History', *History Council of New South Wales* (online, 26 July 2021).

Podcast for *BBC History Extra*, 26 July 2021. 'Australian Bushrangers: folk heroes or common criminals?', available via: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/australian-bushrangers-folk-heroes-common-criminals-podcast-meg-foster/>

On screen historian for the TV series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Series 12, Episode 2, 2021.

On screen historian and consultant for the TV documentary series *Our African Roots*, 2021.