

Visit to the STATE LIBRARY of NSW

It was agreed that this visit was one of our best so far. It was such a great day it has taken three members to describe this outing !!



On 16th November, 2009 our Chapter visited the State Library of NSW in Macquarie St. Sydney.

The Mitchell Library is a reference Library (not a lending Library) operated by the State Government and contains over 5 million items. The Library aims to collect, preserve & make accessible the documentary heritage of NSW.

These items include books, manuscripts, newspapers copied onto microfiche, CDs etc.

It is a requirement that all handbags & apparel are to be left in lockers provided before our tour began. We were greeted by Lyn our guide on the Ground Floor at 11.00am. Lyn is a volunteer, one of many attached to the ML. Actually there are 360 employees in the Library Building. Arrangements were made to meet David, an employee, back at the ground floor at 12 noon.

From the ground floor we went down to the Reading & Reference Room on the LG floor. Students can access books, microfilms, Newspapers, computer research, etc. Should any item not be available it can be sourced from the Stack rooms below. You order the item by form and within 20mins the request will arrive.

Every book published that has over ten pages must have one copy sent to the Library, which is one way of completing the collections. The Stack rooms are below ground (there are at least 5 stories of the library below ground level) where older copies are stored at a constant 20°C & 50% humidity. Some books have been found in book shops like A&R and Dymocks. Some have been donated by relatives of deceased estates.

Our tour finished several floors up with Louise Annematt giving us an extensive talk on our origins and explaining about the FF journals they have in the library. I guess the most wonderful part was when she passed the journals around after explaining about each one and us holding them in our hands and examining their different neat hand writing. On one of the journals it showed hand stitching where inserts had been added and stitched them in to hold them there permanently.

To actually hold one of the original detailed maps of Sydney Cove showing where the ships were anchored and where everyone was housed in Australia's earliest days was wonderful. She made people like Joseph Banks, Cook, Phillip and Clark just to name a few come alive and take on personalities. Each one of us came away feeling elated. This trip made being a FF really something special.

In the Entrance to the Macquarie wing of the Library hangs an eye-catching Tapestry.



The tapestry is the work of Martin Sharp and based on the sonnet 'Australia', by poet Bernard O'Dowd. The poem is also quoted in the Bicentennial Rotunda at Centennial Park and was the winning entry in a competition run by the Bulletin magazine in 1900.

The Mitchell wing of the Library was closed for renovation and will re-open in February in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Library. However we were able to access the Mitchell wing foyer from inside to view the marble Abel Tasman map featured there.



The marble mosaic is constructed from Wombeyan russet marble. The slabs of marble are 20mm thick and joined only where lines occurred on the map itself.

The original map is held in the Library and is drawn and decorated on Japanese paper. The map bears the Arms of the City of Amsterdam, with the date of 1644.

Following are two photos outside the Mitchell Wing – one of Matthew Flinders and the other of ‘Trim’ his cat.



The statue of TRIM was once positioned at the base of Matthew’s statue but for safety reasons has been repositioned on a ledge at the base of the window behind.