

Milari garden eel pond with Customer Service Officer  
Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum





6,570

handfulls of  
fresh eel feed

Research and Collections

## Research

The chestnut racehorse is one of Australia's most popular sporting champions and the subject of legend, having won 37 of his 51 races between 1928 and 1932, before an untimely death during an ill-fated venture to the United States. Today, Phar Lap stands proudly in the Australia Gallery. The surrounding walls are cloaked in his carmine, black and white racing colours. It is a remarkable experience to visit Phar Lap and watch the different generations walk slowly around him, look up and speak in whispers, as if paying homage in a sacred space. The people have made sure Phar Lap's spirit endures. The people have made Phar Lap a treasure.



Phar Lap portrait  
*Treasures of the Museum*

Museum Victoria is responsible for maintaining a collection in excess of 16 million items. The collection is developed through research and acquisition, and accessed by scholars and communities. Information on Museum Victoria's collection and research focus, including details of current research programs and projects, is available on Museum Victoria's website.

During the year, Museum Victoria focused on the implementation of key aspects of the Research Strategy, which was approved by the Museums Board in September 2001. Museum Victoria constantly aims to expand its research capacity by building on existing research partnerships with key universities and research institutions. Additionally, Museum Victoria aims to secure further research grants and increase involvement in graduate student education.

### Research Highlights

- In 2003/04, Museum Victoria researchers received funding support from a variety of sources including: the Australian Research Council; Australian Biological Resources Study; National Oceans Office; Department of the Environment and Heritage; Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Department of Infrastructure; Australian Academy of Sciences; Smart Water Fund; The Ian Potter Foundation; The Hermon Slade Foundation; and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility.
- Museum Victoria received funding for a further three years from the Smart Water Fund for ongoing support of the Water Smart House

interactive display, which will be launched in September 2004. The additional funding is for public events, website maintenance and annual updating of the interactive, which highlights effective water-saving approaches by Melbourne residents.

- Museum scientists ran a 'DNA Laboratory' in the Science and Life Gallery at Melbourne Museum during the Summer Holiday Program in January 2004, providing visitors with an opportunity to learn about 'back-of-house' research activity. Generous support for the DNA Laboratory came from the Ian Potter Foundation, Amersham Biosciences, Australian Geographic Society, Corbett Research and Deakin University. The initiative received a 2004 Museums Industry Recognition Award for Best Project.
- The 2004 Thomas Ramsay Science and Humanities Fellowship was awarded to Mr John Kean, whose project 'Victorian natural history illustration at the Museum', includes a study of an important collection of illustrations of biological specimens commissioned by the Museum's first Director, Professor Frederick McCoy.

### Graduate and Postgraduate Student Supervision Highlights

- Four honours and 30 postgraduate students were supervised by Museum Victoria staff.
- Museum Victoria has awarded three 1854 Student Scholarships, to encourage the involvement of graduate and postgraduate students in research on the Museum's

collections. The scholarship scheme was established as part of Museum Victoria's 150th Anniversary program.

### Publications Highlights

- Museum Victoria finalised a Publications Strategy in March 2004. This strategy includes a program for publishing monographs and collections of articles on areas of research, particularly those outlined in the Museum Victoria Research Strategy, along with non-specialist publications. The first title in the new publication program is the *The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne: A Guide*.
- The Museum published a commemorative book entitled *Treasures of the Museum* to mark the 150th Anniversary and promote the institution's extensive and diverse collection. The book was written, designed, illustrated and produced in-house.
- The *Memoirs of Museum Victoria* Volume 60(2) was produced, featuring a series of scientific papers on marine and terrestrial invertebrates.
- 104 papers, reports, books and theses were produced, and 171 lectures and talks were presented.

Visitors looking at display of Indigenous baskets  
Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum



## Australian Society and Technology

Greek shadow puppetry evolved from the Turkish model, which dates back to at least the 16th century. Dimitris Katsoulis, a master of the genre, migrated to Melbourne in 1974, hoping to foster the tradition in Australia. The central figure is the roguish Karaghiozis (main image), and he and a variety of characters are involved in humorous moral tales that make satirical observations about social and political life.



Puppet representing Karaghiozis from the traditional Greek shadow puppet theatre. Donated to the Museum by Dimitri Katsoulis  
*Treasures of the Museum*

Through the Australian Society and Technology Department, Museum Victoria conducts research and develops collections that document Victoria's history in a national and international context, to facilitate the community's understanding of the past and engagement with issues affecting our future.

### Highlights

- Museum Victoria is developing a web project to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Victorian Railways. The *Tracks through Time* website will draw on the Museum's rich image collections, as well as images held by the Public Record Office, and provide a valuable public and educational resource on the impact of the railways on Victoria's history and communities. The project, scheduled for completion in September 2004, has been supported by the Department of Infrastructure.
- Curatorial staff provided content and direction for development of the Melbourne Museum exhibitions, *Etched on Bark, 1854: Kulin barks from Northern Victoria* and *CSIRAC: presenting the world's only surviving intact first generation computer*. Additionally, two new migration stories featured at the Immigration Museum as well as a *Treasures* display at each Museum campus.
- A Curator of Design was appointed as part of the Museum's *designed to inspire* program, with funding from the Victorian Government's *State of Design* initiative. An extensive program of design forums, events and family activities was developed. This brought together design educators, professional designers, students and manufacturers, as well as participants from Italy, England and Sweden.
- Two websites were completed. The new Phar Lap website features historical pages, collections and multimedia, and has won a multimedia design award from Museums Australia. The Customs House website is a new feature of the Immigration Museum website, outlining the history of the building and some of the extraordinary stories associated with customs and migration history.
- The Museum participated in the 15th Women on Farms Gathering held at Horsham in March 2004, which was attended by over 250 women from across Victoria. In partnership with the Gathering, the Museum developed two portable display units that present artefacts, images and oral histories of past gatherings, and can be transported to future gatherings.

- A project to improve the documentation of the Museum's major collection of Australian Medals was undertaken, drawing on the expertise of a numismatics specialist and a social historian. Over 2,200 medals were photographed and given detailed numismatic and historical descriptions on the new EMu collection database.
- A review of the *Printing Machinery and Type Collection* was undertaken with advice from printing industry specialists. The report will enable detailed registration of significant items, and the de-accession of duplicate and less significant material.
- Curators undertook a wide range of research projects, many of which will lead to publication and exhibition. They include: *Women in agriculture; Sustainable water practices; Photography in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; the Royal Exhibition Building; Development of television in Australia; War and public memory; Glory boxes of immigrant women; History of telegraphy; Immigrant ships; History of computing in Victoria; Lives of women in Melbourne's "Little Lon"; and the Melbourne Observatory.*
- Significant acquisitions included Phar Lap's racing saddle, used by jockey Billy Elliott, including at his final win in the Agua Caliente Handicap, Mexico in 1933. Held under a joint arrangement between Museum Victoria and

the Australian Racing Museum, the saddle was acquired with support from the National Cultural Heritage Account. A major acquisition of documentary and photographic material relating to agricultural equipment manufacturer H.V. McKay was obtained from AGCO Australia - the McKay collection now spans from 1884 to the end of the 20th century. A cast-iron steam cylinder and steam chest from a stationary steam engine made by Langlands Bros & Co's Port Phillip Foundry, circa 1863, and used on Woods Point goldfields, was acquired with the assistance of Heritage Victoria. As a result of the Victorian Government's handgun buyback scheme, 45 firearms were added to the collection; primarily 19th century pistols, many with high levels of workmanship and decoration.

#### Advisory Committee

- Professor Kate Darian-Smith, Director, The Australian Centre, University of Melbourne.
- Professor Graeme Davison, School of Historical Studies, Monash University.
- Professor Peter Thorne, Computer Science & Software Engineering, University of Melbourne.
- Dr David Turnbull, School of Humanities, Deakin University.

Studying the weather of Antarctica has been an important scientific goal since the earliest days of exploration, and one that could help ensure an expedition's survival. This barometer was used by Andrew Keith Jack on the western party of Shackleton's 1914–17 Transcontinental Expedition. Disaster struck this party when its ship was driven from shore before adequate supplies could be landed. The expeditioners spent two winters on minimal supplies before being rescued.



Barometer used for the Australian Antarctic Expedition (c 1910)  
*Treasures of the Museum*

## Indigenous Cultures

The Aboriginal people of Central Australia produced a variety of body ornaments for both ceremonial and decorative purposes. Headbands, armbands, aprons, pubic tassels, pendants, neckbands and other ornaments were made from materials such as human-hair string, feathers, animal bones and spinifex resin. In some cases, these ornaments were 'sung' to give them certain magical powers and were traded between neighbouring groups.



Headband (1902) made from Kangaroo teeth embedded in a resin pendant with hair-string  
*Treasures of the Museum*

Museum Victoria works with Indigenous peoples in Australia and the South Pacific to improve our understanding of Indigenous people and their cultures.

### Highlights

- The Museum Victoria touring exhibition *Thookay Ngaweeyan*, which features Aboriginal children's art, ended its regional tour at Melbourne Museum.
- Development of the exhibition *Our Place: Indigenous Australia Now*, in conjunction with the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Indigenous Cultures staff also contributed to the exhibitions *Etched on Bark, 1854* at Melbourne Museum, and *Boorong Night Sky* for the Planetarium (scheduled to open in November 2004). Other exhibitions in development include *Twined Together*, an exhibition promoting contemporary fibrecraft from northern Australia, and *Colliding Worlds: Episodes of first contact between the Pintupi and Europeans: 1956–1984*.
- Fieldwork was undertaken on the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project *Anthropological and Aboriginal perspectives on the Donald Thomson Collection: material culture, collecting and identity*, and supported by significant input from the collection management team. Research was also carried out on the Officer collection (Solomon Islands) and the history of Melbourne Aboriginal community organisations.
- During 2003/04, the Roving Curator program developed and managed the *Twined Together Weaving Workshop*; developed and ran an Aboriginal Jewellery Workshop; undertook discussions with the Koori Records Taskforce, Public Records Office and Australian Archivist Society regarding an Aboriginal community archive project; developed a portable display for south-western Victorian communities; and barcoded Museum Victoria assets in use at regional Aboriginal organisations.
- *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land* was published and launched in early 2004. A draft reprint of *The Aboriginal Photographs of Baldwin Spencer* is currently being revised for publication in 2005. Preparations for the web publication of the *Fiji Online* project were finalised, and the site will be launched in the upcoming year.
- Major acquisitions during the year included David Morrisey's Lake Tyers collection of photographs and children's works. The department also finalised the acquisition of the Gantner-Myer collection.
- There continues to be a very high demand for external access to the collections and for copies of photographs. Scanning and registration of 3,500 images in the Donald Thomson Pintupi Collection was completed. Further work was also completed on Thomson's map collection, and significant progress towards a full data enhancement of the manuscript collection was achieved.
- Loans from the Indigenous Cultures collection were processed at the request of the National Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

## Repatriation

With funding assistance from the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DoCITA), Museum Victoria repatriated Aboriginal ancestral remains and associated grave goods from the State Collection to representatives of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Framlingham, Gunditjmarra, Kirrae Wurrung (all Victoria) and Barkindji (NSW) Aboriginal communities. Approval was also obtained to repatriate ancestral remains to the Ngarrindjeri community (SA) and to communities in the Pilbara and the Kimberly regions (WA), via the Western Australian Museum. Further archival research of the State's ancestral remains collection was conducted in support of the repatriation effort.

Supported by new agreements recently negotiated with the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs, Museum Victoria has finalised arrangements for the repatriation of 105 secret-sacred objects to a number of Central Australian Aboriginal communities. Eighty-five restricted objects have also been forwarded on loan to the Western Australian Museum for future repatriation (nine of which have since been repatriated).

Research into the provenance of remains included in the Berry Collection was pursued by Museum Victoria staff in conjunction with representatives from the University of Melbourne, under a funding arrangement with the University. Data recorded on some of the currently unprovenanced remains should enable the estimation of their provenance to at least a regional level, thereby assisting in their appropriate repatriation to the Aboriginal community.

A collection of Aboriginal ancestral remains has also been received from Freemasons Victoria, and negotiations are in progress to obtain financial support for their management and eventual repatriation.

## Advisory Committee

Museum Victoria continued to receive advice through the following committees:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ACHAC).
- Pacific Islands Advisory Group.
- Donald Thomson Collection Administration Committee (in association with the University of Melbourne).

Bicornial baskets, made of split lawyer vine, come from the rainforest and adjacent coastal areas of north-eastern Queensland around Cairns. Both men and women made these baskets, and carried food and personal belongings in them. The two-cornered base made the basket ideal to use as a trap and sieve when secured in a stream. They were traded from Cardwell north to Port Douglas and exchanged for bark blankets with people from the Tully River area. Anthropologist Ursula McConnell recorded an important story place at Mission Bay that includes a representation of a 'lawyer cane dilly bag'.



Painted Bi-cornial basket made from split lawyer vine, 1980s (Wragge Collection). From coastal regions of north-eastern Queensland  
*Treasures of the Museum*

## Sciences

The Pig-footed Bandicoot was collected from north-western Victoria and first described in 1836 by Sir Thomas Mitchell. The Blandowski Expedition collected a specimen in 1857, across the Murray River, in New South Wales. The bandicoot was noted by one member of the expedition, Gerard Krefft, as becoming scarce in areas where it grazed. It became extinct in this area in the 1860s but lasted until 1907 in Central Australia. It is believed that competition for grazing by introduced stock hastened its extinction. Very little of the biology of this species was ever recorded.



Pig-footed Bandicoot (*Cheatopus ecaudatus*)  
collected by William Blandowski (c. 1857)  
*Treasures of the Museum*

Museum Victoria aims to promote an understanding of the natural sciences, the human mind and body, and science communication.

### Highlights

- Sciences staff provided content and played leading roles in the successful development at Melbourne Museum of *Bugs Alive!*. Staff also contributed to the display of *Treasures* at Melbourne Museum, in particular with a range of type specimens named after Museum staff; *Toys: Science at Play*, and the *Big Bang* show at the Planetarium.
- Staff were involved with two major publications. In *Geology of Victoria*, Museum staff edited and contributed a number of chapters. This publication is now the primary reference source for Victorian geology. An interactive guide to the identification of polychaete marine worms was also produced on CD-ROM.
- Upgrading of the X-ray Diffraction Laboratory in Geosciences took place in December 2003, with the purchase of a new diffractometer system equipped with state-of-the-art, computer-based analysis and identification software. This equipment underpins research programs based on the mineralogical collections.
- Staff continued to develop and improve the OZCAM (Online Zoological Collections in Australian Museums) project with the addition of public access to this distributed database platform. The establishment of the OZCAM website led to the successful application for funding for the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) to image capture the primary types of Australian Vertebrate and Mollusca species. These images and their associated data are freely available through the OZCAM website.
- Significant funding was received from the Department of Environment and Heritage to data capture sections of the entomology collection. This data will be used to assess major conservation issues confronting Australia.
- The successful ongoing monthly seminar series, the Melbourne Systematics Forum, continued with participants from Museum Victoria, several Melbourne universities, Royal Botanic Gardens and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.
- High international interest continued in southern marine wildlife and the specific research activities of Museum Victoria research staff and students. A number of film production networks visited Melbourne and/or attended field research trips organised by marine staff, including: National Geographic Film and TV, Channel 5 ITV (UK), PBS (USA), Japan Underwater Films/NHK, and TBS Japan. Research staff also provided scientific advice for BBC productions.

- National television networks also demonstrated their interest in the marine research group, with segments and specials on ABC TV (*From the Heart*, series special on the south coast and *George Negus Tonight*, program segment on deep-sea life), Channel 7 (*Coxy's Big Break*, a marine parks special) and Channel 10 (*Totally Wild*, a children's program).
- Staff undertook fieldwork at locations in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, as well as deep-sea sampling off western Tasmania. Overseas fieldwork was undertaken on Chatham Island, New Zealand, and in Alaska, USA.
- Science collections accessioned more than 39,408 lots. Highlights of these include: over 1,200 lots of deepwater specimens from the NORFANZ cruise to the eastern Tasman Sea; a 2.5 m great white shark from eastern Bass Strait; a 522 carat faceted citrine (yellow quartz) from Beechworth; a tooth of a multi-tuberculate mammal from the Cretaceous of South Gippsland (this was the first record of multi-tuberculates from the southern hemisphere); and an excellent selection of objects from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL).

### Advisory Committee

- Associate Professor Janet McCalman, Department of History & Philosophy of Science, and, Centre for the Study of Health & Society, University of Melbourne.
- Professor John McKenzie, Faculty of Sciences, University of Melbourne.
- Professor Fred Mendelsohn, Howard Florey Institute, University of Melbourne.
- Dr Gareth Nelson, School of Botany, University of Melbourne.

The Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) was founded in 1916 to provide life-saving products to a country isolated by war. The organisation is renowned for its work in the areas of penicillin, antivenoms, hormones, vaccines and blood products. In 1994, CSL Ltd was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and has achieved considerable success in the international market for bioproducts. The museum's CSL collection covers the period from 1916 to 1984. The objects were originally collected by CSL staff and volunteers for the CSL Museum, which was once located at the CSL site at Parkville.



CSL collection, Tiger snake anti-venom, 1956  
*Treasures of the Museum*

## Collection Management

The Bornemissza Collection in Bugs Alive!



The Museums Board of Victoria endorsed a Collections Strategy and Action Plan. Some of the major projects to emerge from the Strategy, such as the Collection Inventory System, the EMu database transfer program, and web collection projects continue to be implemented according to plan. Museum Victoria is currently planning to implement Collection Registration as a major project from July 2004 through to 2014.

The *Treasure House* concept is being developed as a major strategy to open the collections to the public and to address long-term collection storage needs. Various measures were implemented in a concerted effort to increase security for the collections.

Museum Victoria loaned sets of the 2001 Federation Handbells to over 80 organisations and individuals.

### Collection Information Systems

The EMu project continued to be implemented according to plan, with 12 collection databases, including the Technology, Herpetology, Marine, and associated loan databases transferred from old electronic systems into EMu. Seventy-five percent of the Museum's disciplines now have their main collection databases on EMu. The Entomology, Image, Sound and Document collections, as well as the exhibition collection, conservation and location databases, are due to be transferred into EMu in the forthcoming year.

The Collection Inventory System (CIS) was implemented according to plan. The Australian Society and Technology collection at Moreland was completed, along with part of the same collection at Scienceworks, creating 10,900 new inventory records. As well as providing accurate location data in real-time, the implementation of CIS also provides accurate figures for unregistered and unidentified collection items.

### Conservation

Museum Victoria conserved the Victorian Railways Union Eight Hour Day banner as a major project, with funding from the Department of Infrastructure and the Bus, Rail and Tram Union, Victorian Branch. The banner was stabilised and consolidated for display purposes.

Artworks from the *Spirit Country* collection were prepared for travel and exhibition in Matsumoyama, Tokyo, and Kushiro, Japan. The exhibition *Our Place: Indigenous Australia Now*, was prepared for display in Athens. Conservation staff travelled to Japan and Greece to install and demount the works.

Major treatments and preparations were undertaken for objects featuring in the *Treasures* exhibition. These included the Melbourne stained glass window and CSIRAC for display at Melbourne Museum, and the Symphonion, currently displayed at Scienceworks.

The entire collection of natural science specimens located at the Moreland store was treated by freezing as part of an integrated pest management program.

### Production

- Design and production of the exhibitions *Bugs Alive!* at Melbourne Museum; the *Muck Bunker Stormwater Experience* at Scienceworks; and *Treasures: Museum Victoria Celebrates 150 years* at all three museums.
- Design and production commenced on the *Station Pier* exhibition at the Immigration Museum.
- Photography, design and publication of a commemorative book entitled *Treasures of the Museum* to mark the 150th Anniversary and promote the institution's extensive and diverse collection.
- Design and photography for the special 150th Anniversary issue of the Museum Magazine.
- Image capture of the Museum Victoria's major collection of Australian medals, involving over 4,000 images.
- Preparators travelled to Nagle College, Bairnsdale to mould and cast Aboriginal Grinding Grooves for the Gippsland/East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.
- A new centralised design unit was created in our production studio and a Design Manager recruited. Exhibition Fabrication was also established in the department.

The Murray Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) was drawn by Ludwig Becker and labelled *Astacopsis serratus*. The specimen drawn for the Prodrromus is the largest known at 32 centimetres long. Although the species can still be found in the Murray River and its tributaries, it is no longer 'very common' as McCoy reported, and fishing has ensured that none this big remains today. McCoy's interest in the crayfish was perhaps stimulated by the 'considerable quantity' sent to the Melbourne market.



McCoy's specimen, Murray Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) *Treasures of the Museum*