

FOREWORD

The current issue of *Explorations* is still more than six months behind schedule, but the editorial team hopes to accelerate the pace of publication in the near future so that by the end of 2004 we will have returned to a more regular timetable.

In this issue, apart from book reviews by Ed Duyker covering important work on the period of exploration, we are offering our readers two main papers, one focusing on an aspect of cultural history associated with a famous former Sydney landmark, and the other on a topic of contemporary history.

John and Marie Ramsland, both of the University of Newcastle, have explored the French associations of the now-defunct Hotel Australia in Castlereagh Street, focusing on its foundation late in the nineteenth century and its status as the pre-eminent destination for sophisticated European travellers into the early decades of the twentieth.

The second paper gives an account of the fluctuations of French–Australian relations in our region during Bill Hayden’s term as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although the objectives of ISFAR, the publisher of *Explorations*, include the study of French–Australian relations “historical as well as present”, our magazine rarely covers contemporary topics. The 1980s were a period of ostensible conflict between France and Australia, the result of disagreements on nuclear policy in the Pacific and decolonization in New Caledonia—although things are never quite as simple as they seem. This paper draws on recent personal recollections and retrospective assessments by Bill Hayden and unpublished material specially released by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of my investigation. Both sources, especially the interview with the former Minister, reveal some unexpected aspects of the dynamics of French–Australian relations during this period, challenging certain *idées reçues*.

The invitation in n° 33 to readers of *Explorations* to submit research papers for publication in forthcoming issues is renewed here with vigour.

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