

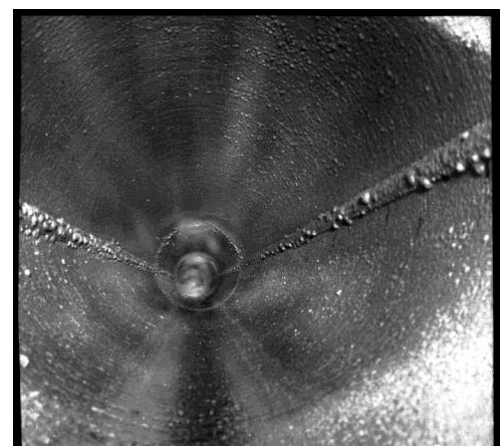
# Engineering feats and Aboriginal Advocacy in the State Library of Western Australia

It was a pleasure for CIs Jane Lydon and Martyn Jolly to visit conservator Bindy Wilson at the State Library of Western Australia. Together the three of us looked closely at two significant collections of lantern slides from the fourteen collections the Library holds, most of which are available for viewing online.



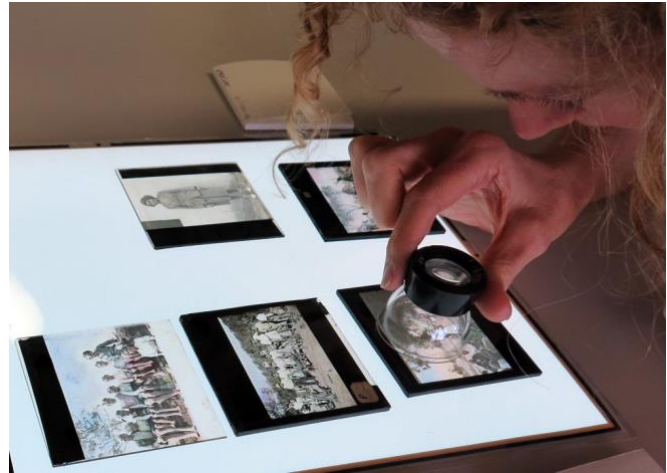
Conservator, Bindy Wilson with Project CI Jane Lydon at the State Library of Western Australia. Photo credit: Martyn Jolly.

Australia's Engineering Heritage is documented in a group of slides which, at first glance, look like images of distant galaxies or abstract paintings, but are in fact the interiors of steel water pipes from Western Australia's famous Goldfields Water Supply Scheme. These slides complement another significant set in the [Kerry Stokes Collection, featured in a previous 'Archive in the Spotlight'](#), of slides used by the Chief Engineer, Charles Yelverton O'Connor, to promote the ambitious project. As every patriotic West Australian knows, O'Connor committed suicide as a result of false accusations of corruption a few months before the project was successfully completed in 1902. His pipeline is still the longest steel pipeline in the world, and still supplies water to over 100,000 people. The



John Parr, 'Pipeline interior, Goldfields Water Supply, between 1903 and 1914', lantern slide, State Library of Western Australia Collection.

SLWA slides weren't made by O'Connor, but by John Parr, the District Engineer at Northam. O'Connor's pipeline was beset by corrosion and leakage, perhaps the slides were made by Parr for a lecture he and a colleague gave in 1917 to the Institution of Civil Engineers in London. Their engineering innovations exercised much excitement amongst engineers, and garnered the pair two engineering prizes, a rare honour never previously bestowed on Australian residents. These entirely instrumental images, presumably made by inserting a camera deep into a pipe, are not only strangely beautiful in their visual abstraction, but are also an important part of the heritage of Australia engineering.



L-R: 'Tea Break on the Warburton Track' with label, lantern slide, State Library of Western Australia Collection; CI Jane Lydon examines slides from the Doreen Trainor Collection at the State Library of Western Australia, photo credit: Martyn Jolly.

The second collection the three of us saw had been assembled by Doreen Trainor who was an active campaigner for Aboriginal welfare in the 1950s and 60s. She was a vociferous letter writer, visited Aboriginal inmates in Fremantle Prison for the Aborigines Advancement League, and was active within Original Australians Progress Association and the Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Her collection of slides cover life at the Mount Margaret Mission, Warburton Range Mission and Brookton Mission Church. The images offer an extraordinarily rich view of the Noongar experience of mission life — getting married at a church, hunting for wild pigs, dressing as Santa at Christmas, erecting mission buildings and repairing bicycles. They have been hand coloured, sometimes crudely but at other times quite delicately, which add to their intimate charm. They were presumably made to promote the work of the missions. The SLWA only show their digital records of the slides online as images, not objects, so the valuable inscriptions on the slide edge are sometimes lost. For instance the online image of one slide of a tea break on the Warburton track doesn't reproduce the helpful advice to the presumably amateur lanternist, unused to putting an a lantern show, a label suggests some commentary: 'The billy boils and they snatch a snack on the Warburton track', along with an addition instruction - 'HOLD THUMB HERE' — to ensure that the beginner lanternist doesn't put the slide in upside down.