

The Forbes Society is pleased to announce a number of new events including the 2024 Plunkett Lecture and 2024 joint presentation with the Ngara Yura Committee

Legal history tutorial by Dr Henry Kha – Thursday 5 September 2024, in Court 13A Law Courts Building starting at 5:15pm “Wife Sales and Legal Responses in Colonial Australia”

Abstract: Wife sales was an informal method of divorce that emerged in 18th century England. The practice involved a husband parading his wife in public and then auctioning the wife to the highest bidder or the husband selling the wife to another man in a deed of conveyance. The practice of wife sales was brought to colonial Australia and it was practiced in the 19th century. Wife sales were never legally valid as contracts. Although wife sales did not legally dissolve marriages, the practice emerged in response to the desire of the husband or the collusion of the married couple to separate and informally divorce, because divorce was practically impossible for many ordinary people to access. The presentation will explore the topic of wife sales from the perspective of legal history by considering the cases where parties were prosecuted for making a wife sale, the law of marriage and divorce in colonial Australia, and relevant external sources, such as newspapers and commentaries about the practice of wife sales in colonial Australia.

Dr Henry Kha is Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of New South Wales. He is the Treasurer of the Australian and New Zealand Law and History Society. His main research interest is in all aspects of family law from both a legal historical and contemporary perspective.

No registration is necessary for **in person attendance** – if you are unable to attend in person, to receive details for online viewing please follow this link to “register now” [Dr Henry Kha - legal history tutorial 5 Sept 2024](#). The emailed confirmation will contain the viewing link.

Plunkett Lecture by Dr Jeff Kildea, chaired by the Attorney General, the Hon Michael Daley, MP – Tuesday 10 September 2024, in Banco Court, 5:15 for 5:30 pm “Liberty not Licence: The law’s response to the challenges of ethno-religious sectarianism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia”

Abstract: In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia sectarianism between Catholics, mostly of Irish descent, and Protestants, mostly of British descent, threatened to destroy the vision of a society in the new world based on religious tolerance and social harmony freed from the conflicts of the old. In this lecture Dr Jeff Kildea will describe the challenges sectarianism posed for Australia’s emerging democracy and examine how those responsible for making and administering the law responded to those challenges. Our forebears’ attempts to balance freedom of thought, belief, and expression with the maintenance of peace, social harmony, and order provide lessons for us today as we face the challenges of our own new world of ‘culture wars’, ‘identity politics’, ‘hate speech’ and ‘cancel culture’.

Dr Jeff Kildea is an honorary professor in Irish Studies at the University of New South Wales. He practised as a solicitor from 1974 to 1979 and as a barrister from 1979 to 2013 as a member of 5th Floor Wentworth Chambers. His areas of practice were Equity, Land and Environment, and Native Title. In 2014 he held the Keith Cameron Chair of Australian History at University College Dublin. He has written extensively on the history of the Irish in Australia. His books include *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1910-1925* (2002), *Anzacs and Ireland* (2007), *Wartime Australians: Billy Hughes* (2008), *Hugh Mahon: Patriot, Pressman, Politician* Volume 1 (2017) and Volume 2 (2020), *Leaving Home: Stories of my Emigrant Ancestors* (2021), *Sister Liguori: The Nun who Divided a Nation* (2024). He is a co-author of *To Foster an Irish Spirit: The Irish National Association of Australasia* (2020).

No registration is necessary for **in person attendance** – if you are unable to attend in person, to receive details for online viewing please follow this link to “register now” [Plunkett Lecture 2024 - Dr Jeff Kildea](#). The emailed confirmation will contain the viewing link.

If you have any queries, please email secretariat@forbessociety.org.au.

The Society is very grateful to the Chief Justice of NSW, the Hon. Andrew Bell, for his permission to use Supreme Court facilities.

Upcoming dates

15 October Sheriff of NSW, Tracey Hall PSM on the 200th anniversary of the Sheriff’s Office

5 November Forbes Society & Ngara Yura Committee 2024 joint presentation – a panel discussion exploring the history and personalities of the District Court’s Walama List

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: A reminder that membership of the Francis Forbes Society for the 2024/2025 financial year is now due. Membership will run to 30 June 2025: please see [Forbes Society Membership](#). One of the Society’s objects is to encourage and promote research into Australian legal history, and it maintains the **Francis Forbes Fund** for that purpose, to which donations may be made. The membership form makes provision for donating to the Fund.

Forbes Fund grants: Grants were made from the Fund for **2024** to support the following projects:

- Inma Conde (PhD candidate, University of Sydney Law School): A historical interpretation of Article 7(1) of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods
- Dr Jeffrey Gordon (Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney Law School): Free speech moments in Australian legal history
- Dr Henry Kha (Senior Lecturer School of Private and Commercial Law, UNSW Law & Justice): Ne Temere and the Marriage Law of New South Wales: Religious Sectarianism in the 1920s

In addition, the Society supports an annual **Essay prize** for the best paper presented at the ANZLHS Conference, judged by a panel appointed by the Editor of law & history.