

Renée Fauvette Erdos (1911-1997): Educator & Founder of the History Teachers' Association of NSW

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Renée Erdos began teaching in NSW secondary schools during the Depression of the 1930s. At the end of World War II she became involved in the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for ex-service personnel and transferred to Sydney Technical College. There followed two decades as a teacher and administrator of correspondence education, a field in which Renée became an international leader. In the middle of that busy period she was the driving force behind the establishment of the History Teachers' Association of NSW. This article presents an overview of the professional life of this significant Australian educator.

New Women, Bohemians & Larrikins

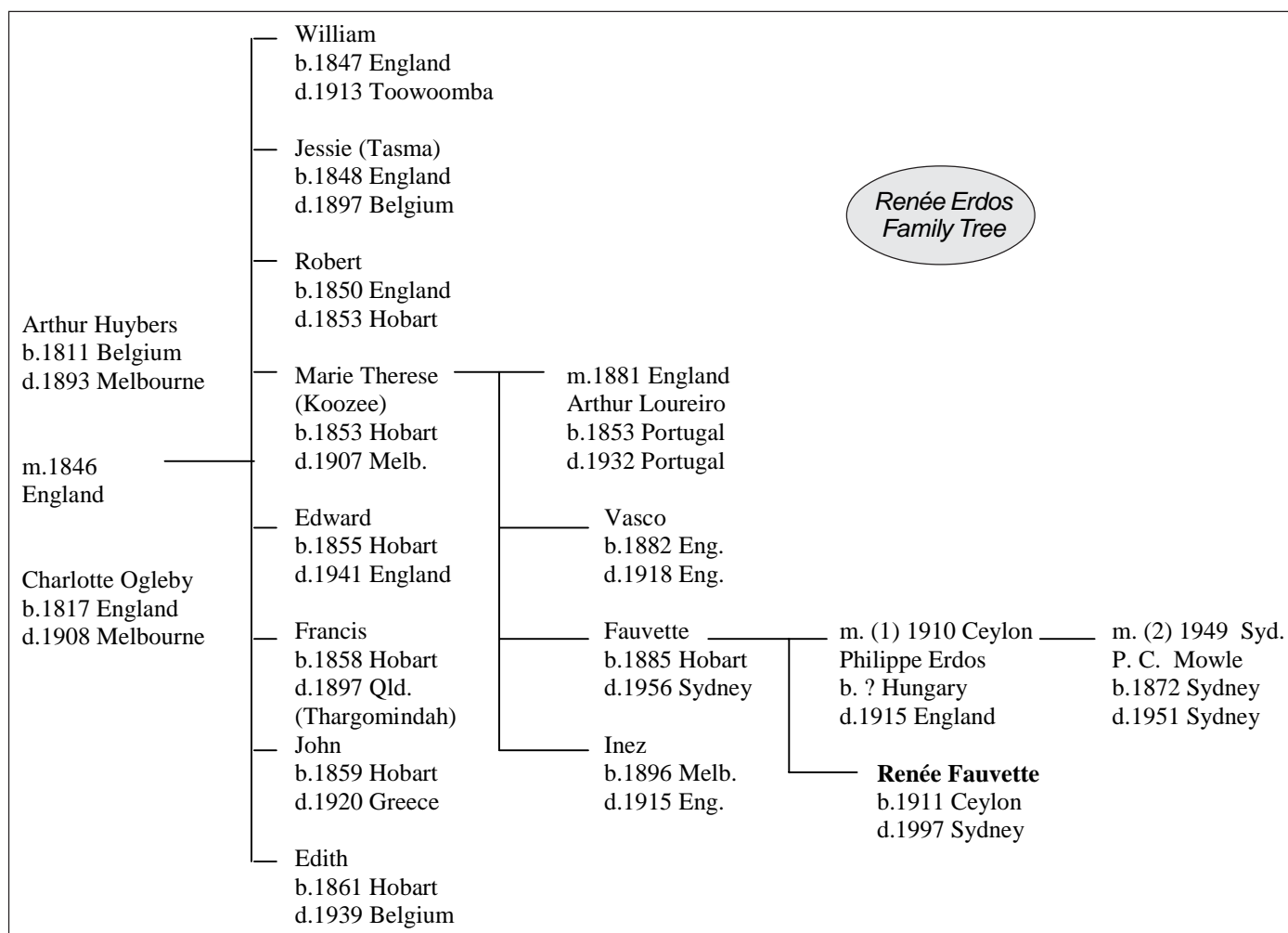
Renée Fauvette Erdos had an unusual family background for an Australian born in the early twentieth century. Her maternal great-grandparents were Charlotte and Alfred Huybers. Charlotte was of Anglo-French descent and Alfred was Belgian. In 1852 the couple migrated from England to Tasmania, where he became a successful merchant. They had eight children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. With life in Hobart something of a cultural exile for Charlotte, in 1873 she decided to take five of her children to Europe in order to complete their education with the sort of experiences that were not available in colonial Tasmania. In Europe Charlotte and her children spent time in Paris, London and Brussels before returning to Australia at the end of 1875. After little more than two years, however, Charlotte returned to Europe with four of her children and was joined a year later in Paris by her eldest daughter Jessie. According to Jessie's biographer, Patricia Clarke, 'the Huybers became part of the colourful bohemian world of Parisian art students...' ¹ Described by Clarke as a remarkable example of the New Woman then beginning to emerge, Jessie established a 'gender-defying' career as a public lecturer and foreign correspondent. She returned to Australia once more to divorce her first husband, almost unprecedented for a woman in the nineteenth century, before settling in Europe and marrying the Belgian statesman Auguste Couvreur in 1885. Writing under the pseudonym 'Tasma', Jessie Couvreur also published a number of novels set in colonial Australia and she is now remembered as one of Australia's important early novelists. ²

Jessie's sister, Marie Therese Huybers, met the Portuguese artist Arthur Loureiro while living in Paris. They married in London in 1881 and their first child, Vasco, was born there in the following year. The Loureiros divided their time between England and France, where Arthur spent some time at Fontainebleau, south of Paris, experimenting with the new style of *plein air* painting. Arthur also became friends

with the young Australian artist Tom Roberts when he was visiting Europe. ³

Suffering from ill-health, Arthur was advised to seek a warmer climate and he and Marie Therese decided to come to Australia. They arrived in Hobart in 1884 and their second child, Fauvette, was born there in 1885. However, the family soon moved to 'marvellous Melbourne', drawn to the scene of what has been described as 'the most celebrated period in the history of Australian art'. ⁴ While this 'golden age' in Australian art, from the mid-1880s until the turn of the century, was dominated by figures such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder and Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Loureiro was a significant influence in the emergence of the *plein air* Heidelberg School and enjoyed considerable popularity as an artist, designer and teacher. In 1886 he was a founding member of the Australian Artists' Association and was elected to its first council along with Roberts, McCubbin and Julian Ashton. ⁵

The Loureiro's third child, Inez, was born in 1896. By this time Marie Therese had taken over from her sister Edith as art critic for Melbourne's *Age* newspaper. This put her in a position to offer the first appraisals of what have become some of Australia's most well-known paintings. In April 1904, for example, she greeted a McCubbin exhibition as 'one of the most notable of the "one man shows" that have been held in Melbourne'. One of the paintings in this exhibition was the now famous triptych *The Pioneer*. Marie Therese made a prescient assessment: 'The Pioneer marks the passage in Mr McCubbin's career from incidental art ... to monumental art.' Also in this review is this comment: 'The work is one that worthily marks an onward step in art in spite of conditions so adverse that many of the leading painters in Melbourne have found themselves obliged to take their talent elsewhere.' ⁶ At face value, this may be an accurate observation on the closing years of Melbourne's 'golden age', the end hastened by the economic depression



of the 1890s. But for Marie Therese there was also a personal context – by this time Arthur had abandoned his family and returned to Europe. The reasons for this are unclear. While he was said to be experiencing ill-health again, it may have been more significant that Melbourne’s art patrons dried up during the 1890s and Arthur was increasingly forced to rely on teaching to earn a living. At the same time, it hardly seems likely that such a drastic split would have occurred had the relationship between Arthur and Marie Therese been untroubled.⁷

Arthur’s departure left Marie Therese in a desperate financial situation. Even though she wrote a column under the pseudonym ‘Marmite’ for the *Age*’s new women’s page along with her art criticism, this work was paid by the line and she struggled to earn an adequate income. She was finally forced to work as a governess for wealthy families. Marie Therese found this work humiliating and her resentment was expressed in letters she wrote to her daughter Fauvette in a mix of French and English.⁸

After Marie Therese’s death in 1907 Fauvette, aged 22, was left to look after 11 year-old Inez. The pair decided to visit

their father in Portugal. On the way to Europe their ship stopped for two days at Colombo in what was then the British colony of Ceylon. During the two days Fauvette met a Hungarian photographer named Philippe Erdos who proposed marriage. Fauvette refused him and the two sisters sailed on to meet up with their father in Portugal. However, the family reunion was short-lived and Fauvette and Inez returned to Melbourne within a year. Arthur Loureiro was to remain in Portugal, where he remarried, had another family and enjoyed renewed success as an artist. His reputation for ill-health notwithstanding, he lived until the age of 79.⁹

Back in Melbourne Fauvette was the only family member on hand to make arrangements for her grandmother’s funeral when Charlotte Huybers died in 1908. In the meantime, Fauvette had maintained a correspondence with Philippe Erdos and the two eventually ‘became engaged by letter’. When Fauvette returned to Ceylon in February 1910 they were married on the day her ship berthed. Renée Fauvette Erdos, the couple’s only child, was born in 1911. The family, which always seems to have included Inez, remained in Ceylon for some time after Renée’s birth and then lived successively in Budapest, Rome and London. It

was while they were living in London during World War I that Philippe and Inez died of illness within a few months of each other in 1915. There is no record of how Fauvette coped with such a devastating tragedy or of how she and her daughter lived in wartime Britain but, according to Renée's subsequent recollections, her mother decided to return to Australia in 1917. Again, there is no record of what must have been an interesting wartime journey, but sometime during 1917 Renée Erdos arrived in Australia for the first time at the age of six.¹⁰

Coincidentally, in January 1917 Fauvette's elder brother Vasco arrived in England with the 11th Field Company of Australian Engineers on the troopship *Suevic*. He was on his way to the Western Front. Vasco had enlisted in the AIF in Brisbane in 1916 using the name Louis Vasco and all his service records are found under this name. It is not clear why this name change occurred but it was possibly an 'Australianisation' of 'Vasco Loureiro'. There is some evidence that 'Vasco' was used as an all-purpose first name/surname. In any case, Vasco was an artist who had inherited some of the family talents but his work as an illustrator of comic postcards was not highly regarded. His forte was as a caricaturist with a facility to capture likenesses 'with a few crayon strokes'.¹¹ He also found a way to ply his trade that suited his itinerant lifestyle and intermittent work ethic – he sold caricatures to boat passengers, firstly on Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay steamers, then on Sydney Harbour ferries and, eventually, on Atlantic Ocean passenger liners.

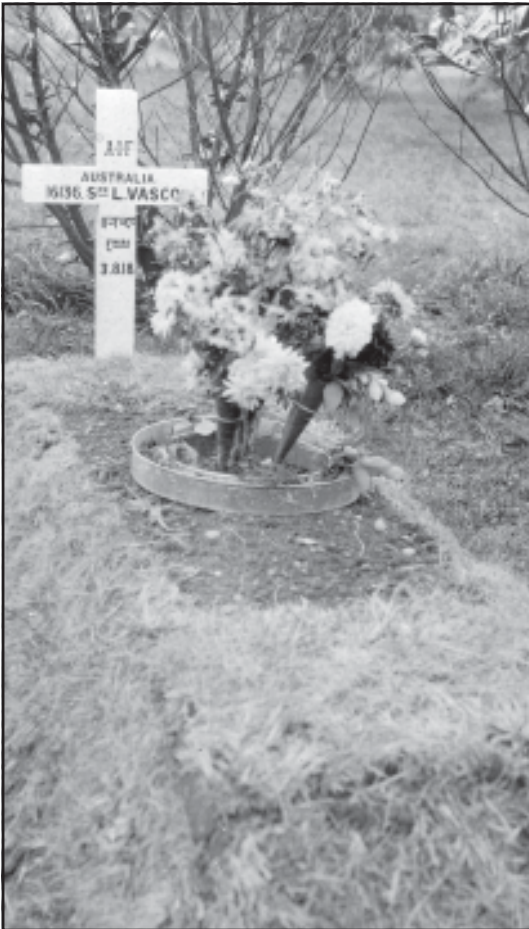
Following his enlistment Sapper Vasco seems to have quickly become the 11th Field Company's unofficial but popular war artist. As well as caricaturing many of the men in the company, he produced numerous sketches of life aboard the *Suevic*, painted watercolours of Freetown Harbour in Sierra Leone, where convoys gathered before the final dangerous passage to England, made studies of French peasant life and many aspects of leave activities and provided drawings of Western Front features for the company's war diary. Much of this material reflects a view of the war seen through the eyes of a larrikin with a persistently upbeat outlook. This only adds to the poignancy of Vasco's death in the final months of the war – injured while serving on the Somme and evacuated to England after contracting a form of meningitis, he died in hospital in August 1918 and is buried at St Albans, just north of London. As the *Melbourne Herald's* obituary writer noted a month later, many of Vasco's caricatures became treasured mementos when they found their way back to soldiers' families. It is possible that some of these drawings, most with a distinctive 'VASCO' in the bottom right corner, are still in the possession of descendants of 11th Field Company veterans.¹²

In an interview conducted in 1976 Renée Erdos recalled that her mother moved to Sydney soon after their return to Australia because of the severity of Melbourne's climate. However, it is also clear that Fauvette had experienced a period of sustained personal tragedy and there may have been a desire to make a new start away from Melbourne, where there was no longer any family. She was now confronted with the need to earn a living even though she was equipped with no occupational skills or experience. According to Renée, her mother came from 'a generation where it was not the fashion for girls to be trained'. Indeed, in keeping with the values of his time, her father had refused to allow her 'to have any training' because 'her place was in the home'. Faced now with the impossibility of staying in the home, it was fortunate that while Fauvette had no 'training' for a career, she did have a good 'education'. Multi-lingual and steeped in the European culture that was valued by Australia's middle class, she was able to earn a living by offering French conversation lessons to schools and private pupils. Not surprisingly, this experience contributed to Fauvette's determination to ensure that Renée would be 'trained with a qualification' that would allow her to earn a living.¹³ It was a goal that Renée would embrace with enthusiasm.

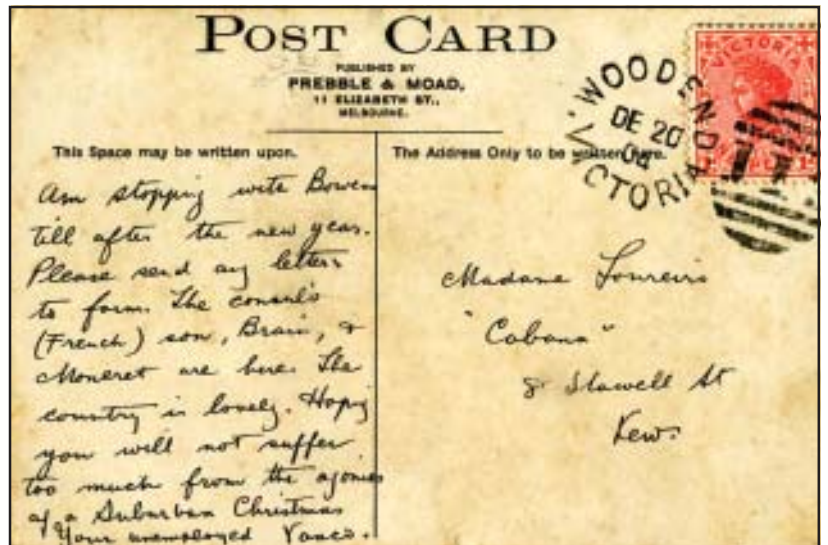
Renée's background and early years suggest a positively bohemian influence that offers an interesting contrast to the stability and commitment that were to characterise the remainder of her life, much of it lived in apparent harmony with the routines of notoriously rigid bureaucracies. Nevertheless, Renée was very conscious of her family's cultural heritage, maintained a broad interest in the arts and was later to duplicate in her home a version of the European *salon* experience to which her forbears had been exposed. It was a source of pride that Arthur Loureiro's paintings hung in the National Gallery of Victoria and her home was filled with paintings by her grandfather and a number of his contemporaries. Renée also collected the books of her great-aunt and was able to provide considerable assistance to Patricia Clarke when she was researching Jessie Couvreur's life. In 1995 Renée wrote an introduction to Patricia Clarke's *Tasma's Dairies*.¹⁴ She also appears in the list of acknowledgements in *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond*, the wonderful publication that accompanied the *Golden Summers* exhibition in the mid-1980s.¹⁵ Finally, in the 1960s and 1970s the itinerancy that had been a feature of Renée's infancy re-emerged, this time with even more exotic destinations.

A University Woman

Even though Fauvette and her daughter were reduced to genteel poverty, the pair eventually settled in comfortable Neutral Bay and Renée attended Loreto Kirribilli, where she completed her secondary education in 1928. An able



Vasco Loureiro (aka Louis Vasco) was buried at St Albans, England. This photo is one that the army sent to family members in a small folder with details about the burial. (Mrs K. Huybers)



Vasco Loureiro sent this postcard to his mother, Marie Therese, before Christmas 1904. On the front, shown on the back cover of this issue, was one of his own cartoons. He was writing from Woodend, one of the rural retreats for Melbourne artists. 'Cabana' was the house and studio Marie Therese and Arthur Loureiro built at Kew. (Mrs K. Huybers)

The Erdos family group at Ceylon in 1911: Fauvette, Inez Loureiro, Philippe and Renée. (Mrs K. Huybers)



Renée Erdos' final high school report card. While it seems to indicate an aptitude for history, Renée did not study any history subject as an undergraduate. (Mrs K. Huybers)

RESULT OF EXAMINATIONS		SCHOOL		
Western Number of Marks— Chinese Book for and Church History — 80 Pass — 52 Other Subjects — Honor — 75 Pass — 58		History — — Youth — — Drawing — — Penning — — Division — — Physical Culture — 75 Mathematics — 80 Health — — Latin Reading — —	Marks Obtained Chinese — 80 Church History — 95 Mathematics — — English — 75 History — 95 Chinese — 80 Science — 85 Mathematics I — 77 Mathematics II — 87 Latin — 75 French — 84 German — — Theory of Music — 548	Marks Obtained Mathematics — 84 Chinese — 80 Second in Class

and very keen student, she won a Teachers' Scholarship, allowing her to enrol in an Arts degree at Sydney University in 1929. At a time when women formed a distinct minority amongst the fortunate few who made it to NSW's only university, Renée retained a clear impression of the address given by the Dean of Women on the first day:

The bit I remember best was: 'You must never wear red dresses, patent leather shoes, V-necked blouses or belts, as these things provoke the baser instincts of the opposite sex.' We nearly swooned away.¹⁶

Renée completed her Arts degree, with Honours in English, in 1932. She had also studied Latin, geography, psychology and philosophy.¹⁷ Two years of philosophy brought her within the orbit of one of Sydney University's legends, Professor John Anderson. While it is difficult to detect his influence on Renée's somewhat conservative outlook in later life, some students and colleagues have seen Anderson's inspiration in a 'Socratic' teaching method that embraced open enquiry and critical analysis.¹⁸ Even though this immediately brings to mind modern approaches to teaching history, Renée did not study history for her Arts degree. It was only after teaching for a number of years, and at times when work locations allowed for it, that she completed three years of history as an evening student.¹⁹

With secondary school teaching one of the few major avenues of employment for women with degrees, Renée completed a Diploma of Education at Sydney Teachers' College in 1932. Someone who 'loved studying', Renée described her experience of university and teachers' college as 'a tremendous privilege and joy'.²⁰ Later a member of the Association of Women Graduates of NSW, she displayed an attitude that has been described as typical of women graduates of the early 1930s – 'Their sense of self was built around pride in scholarship, mastery of a discipline and consciousness of their status as "university women" who had proved themselves the intellectual equal of men.'²¹ As we will see, this did not guarantee equality in the work place.

School Teaching & 'Single Blessedness'

In the early 1930s, with the NSW government struggling to find ways of cutting costs in the face of the Great Depression, graduates of Sydney Teachers' College were told that appointments to Department of Education schools would be deferred. This applied even to scholarship holders like Renée, who were bonded to work in Department schools for five years. Fortunately for Renée, she was able to find employment for a year at Wenona, a private school near her Neutral Bay home. When she did receive her first appointment to a Department school at the start of 1934 it was also close to home – Neutral Bay Girls' Intermediate High School (which Renée has referred to as Cremorne Girls' High School). This was the start of a twelve year

career spent in NSW state secondary schools: Neutral Bay (1934-1936), Wollongong High School (1937-1940), North Newtown Boys' Intermediate High School (1941-1942), Armidale High School (1943-1944) and Gosford High School (1945).²²

We have only snippets of information on this period from Renée's own recollections. There is the impression of enormous enthusiasm: 'I was fortunate because, as it turned out, when I began to teach I found that I really loved teaching...' At Wollongong High School, we learn, Renée collected 'long compositions' every week from Charmian Clift, who would go on to a brilliant literary career. The move to a boys' school at Newtown, Renée suggests, was necessitated by the need to replace male teachers who were joining the armed services. The two years at Newtown gave her the opportunity to return to nearby Sydney University to take History I and II as an evening student. Both Newtown and Armidale were demonstration schools where student teachers came to see model lessons. At Armidale Renée gave demonstration lessons in history method to students from the new University of New England College.²³

In Wollongong High School's files we catch a brief glimpse of Renée's life at this time. In 1938 she needed to apply for a day's leave to look after her mother when she was ill. In endorsing the application her Principal explained that she regularly travelled down to Wollongong on Monday morning in a car with other teachers after spending the week-end with her mother in Sydney. On this particular Monday, he noted, she had stayed to look after her mother but had sent back all her marked papers with the other teachers.²⁴

What is fascinating is that in the same year's file there is correspondence discussing the need to terminate the employment of one of Renée's female colleagues because she was about to get married. The outcome was that the woman was required to cease employment on the day of her marriage. This is a stark reminder that the period of Renée's employment with the Department of Education coincided with the years during which the Married Women (Teachers and Lecturers) Act was in force. This Act, which prohibited the employment of married women as permanent teachers, had been passed by the NSW Parliament in 1932 as a response to the Depression. In part, it was related to the measure referred to earlier which had seen the appointment of Teachers' College graduates deferred. Particularly as the Depression forced more men into a teaching career, there was a view that married women were denying new graduates employment while they themselves were supposedly being supported by a male breadwinner. The law was passed despite opposition led by Jessie Street and a number of women within the NSW Teachers' Federation. They maintained a campaign that contributed to its repeal in 1947.²⁵

While the Married Women (Teachers and Lecturers) Act was a clumsy attempt to address the economic difficulties of the Depression, it was also a major step backwards in the progress towards genuine equality for women. Further, it took no account of the contribution of individual married women who had dedicated themselves to a teaching career. The fact that the law could have been passed in the first place is indicative of the conservative views of the wider community and of the persistence of a mindset that saw spinsterhood as the natural state for female teachers. This is certainly what comes across, however delightfully expressed, in an article from a 1930s *Australian Women's Weekly*:

Although teachers' hours are shorter than those of a business girl, her work calls for the expenditure of much more vital energy. A good teacher is rather like a good actress who by sheer force of personality 'puts across' an unpopular play. At the end of the day the teacher is drained of vitality, and even if her spare time need not be spent in correction or preparation she is commonly unfit for the give-and-take of general society. School teachers are not born old maids but have single blessedness thrust upon them.²⁶

Renée Erdos never married. This was despite clear evidence that she seems to have been able to survive the classroom experience with considerable vitality and thrived on the give-and-take of general society. From an early 21st century perspective, of course, it is a non-issue. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that had Renée contemplated marriage at any time between 1932 and 1947, she would have had to confront the choice between marriage and her career. Had she chosen marriage, this story would have been quite different.

Sydney Technical College and the CRTS

In 1944, while teaching at Armidale High School, Renée responded to a notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* seeking people to teach military personnel by correspondence. She imagined that this would involve tutoring some students. A few months later she was surprised to receive a letter telling her that she had been appointed to actually write the correspondence course for students studying Leaving Certificate Modern History in Sydney Technical College's Department of Preparatory Studies. Despite the fact that she 'had not even heard of such a thing as a correspondence course, let alone seen one', she set about the task by trying to imagine herself in the situation of a student studying by correspondence. For example, she saw the fact that such students 'could not be motivated by group discussion' as a significant issue.²⁷ This was at a time when history was typically taught through rote learning from a single text!

Renée Erdos Chronology

- 1911 Born in Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on 3 January.
- 1921-1928 Attended Loreto Kirribili.
- 1929-1932 Studied at Sydney University and Sydney Teachers' College, graduating with a BA and Dip Ed
- 1933 Taught at Wenona, North Sydney.
- 1934-1945 Taught in NSW Department of Education secondary schools: Neutral Bay Girls' Intermediate High School (1934-1936); Wollongong High School (1937-1940); North Newtown Boys' Intermediate High School (1941); Armidale High School (1942-1944); Gosford High School (1945).
- 1944 Wrote a correspondence course in history for Sydney Technical College.
- 1946 Seconded to Sydney Technical College.
- 1948-1959 Head Teacher of history in the Department of Preparatory Studies (School of General Studies from 1954) at Sydney Technical College.
- 1954 Founded the NSW History Teachers' Association and was Secretary on the four member Executive from 1954-1955.
- 1959-1969 Supervisor of Correspondence Courses & Officer in Charge of the Technical College Correspondence Teaching Division (School of External Studies from 1964).
- 1961 Awarded a Smith-Mundt Fulbright Scholarship for the study of correspondence teaching in the US.
- 1965 Elected to a four year term as President of the International Council on Correspondence Education, ICCE. (This organisation is now known as the International Council on Open and Distance Education, ICDE.)
- 1967 Made a Fellow of Australian College of Education.
- 1969-1979 Spent the 1970s working on correspondence education development projects in Africa: Botswana (1970-1972); Tanzania (1972-1975); Swaziland (1976-1979).
- 1980 Returned to Australia.
- 1989 Awarded honorary Doctor of Letters from Deakin University.
- 1997 Died at her home in Neutral Bay on 10 March.

When Renée submitted her first units the Lecturer-in-Charge of the Department of Preparatory Studies, W.R. Crisp, was full of praise:

I find it difficult indeed to express my appreciation of the planning and effort that you have given to the correspondence course in history. What you have sent to me is proof of your love of the subject, of your thorough understanding of it, and of your appreciation of the students' problems and difficulties.

The sincerity of this assessment may be judged by the fact that, after the submission of a few more units, Crisp organised the doubling of the fee paid for each unit – from £2 to £4. While this was not unwelcome, Renée recalled

that it 'had never occurred to me to relate the amount of effort to the size of the fee'.²⁸ It is a revealing comment from someone who would never lose the vocational outlook of a classroom teacher.

While Renée was submitting her correspondence units, Sydney Technical College was struggling to prepare for an influx of ex-service personnel who were expected to take advantage of the Commonwealth Reconstruction and Training Scheme (CRTS). Operating from 1945 to 1950, this scheme provided free training and a small allowance to those returning to civilian life at the end of World War II. While the vast majority of the 200,000 who were assisted by the scheme across Australia were involved in trades or vocational training, thousands also seized the opportunity to complete their secondary education and gain matriculation to university courses. Between 1945 and 1948 Sydney Technical College's School of Preparatory Studies catered for 2000 of these students in its War Service Matriculation Course. What was unexpected was the number of women who turned up for the first classes. This prompted W.R. Crisp to seek the appointment of a female teacher to the all-male teaching staff. He approached Renée, who readily agreed to accept a secondment from secondary schools to teach English and history to the War Service Matriculation classes for 1946 and 1947.²⁹

The War Service Matriculation classes were very different from the secondary school classes that Renée had been accustomed to. The ex-service personnel were drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and age groups. All had served in Australia's armed forces and many had considerable life experience from the hard years before the war. Some had made their own history in places like Tobruk, El Alamein and New Guinea. A few had been radicalised by the Depression or war. To varying degrees, all were struggling to cope with the transition to civilian life, dealing with families or relationships and needing to supplement their small allowance. What united them was a desire to make up for lost educational opportunities – despite ongoing economic austerity, they shared a post-war optimism and a faith in the ability of education to help them relaunch their lives. When first confronted with this heady mix, Renée later confessed, she had been 'petrified'.³⁰

Fortunately, we have the recollections of two members of her 1946 classes to assess the effectiveness with which Renée dealt with the challenge. One of these former students is Elizabeth Gray, who was nineteen years old when she was discharged from the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in 1946. Her mother had just died, her father had disappeared and she was left with the responsibility of caring for six siblings, ranging in age from 2 to 17. Nevertheless, describing herself as 'bright but

impoverished', she was determined to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the CRTS, even if it meant juggling a number of part time jobs and her family responsibilities around the classes. It was a commitment that Elizabeth sustained through to the second year of university, when exhaustion and marriage forced her withdrawal. With this failure to complete a degree disrupting rather than ending Elizabeth's pursuit of education, the fact that the opportunities opened up by the CRTS were cherished is evident in her marvellous vignette of Sydney University life in the late 1940s:

The maturity of the CRTS students led to the years at Sydney University being classed 'the golden years'. They were years of involvement in student societies and interest in areas of study other than our own. I remember standing on a motor cycle outside Professor John Anderson's philosophy classes and listening to his lectures with my stomach stretched across the window ledge of his classroom. We benefited from a great liberal education.³¹

Elizabeth Gray remembers Renée Erdos as a wonderful teacher with an incisive intelligence, a firm grasp of her subject matter and an inspirational manner. She describes 'Miss Erdos' as a 'conservative lady' but 'unconstrained by conventions' and without 'cant or humbug'. It was a blend that won Renée instant credibility with the worldly veterans. Moreover, her encouragement of participation and sophisticated debate was the ideal approach with opinionated adults. Today Elizabeth Gray can look back on a busy and varied life that has included thirty years spent as firstly a Community Educator with the NSW Mental Health Association and then as a Parent Counsellor with the Autistic Children's Association. She has also published poetry, co-authored the Australian edition of the *The Prejudice Book* and tutors in prose and poetry for the University of the Third Age. She credits Renée with having been the original mentor who 'lit the light' for her own literary career and still sees Renée as the role model for her tutoring. In the 1980s the two met again as members of the NSW Society of Women Writers.³²

Another member of Renée's 1946 classes was Bob Walshe. He had left school at the age of fourteen in the late 1930s and found work in a butter factory, a paper factory and a number of offices. He enlisted in the Australian Army in 1942 at the age of eighteen and saw service in Darwin. On completing his matriculation in 1946 he went to Sydney University, where he majored in history and graduated with Honours in 1950. After gaining his Diploma of Education from Sydney Teachers' College in 1951, Bob was appointed to Sutherland High School as an English and history teacher. His teaching career would be combined with an extraordinary range of involvement in educational,

environmental and community activities, recognised in 1998 with the award of an Order of Australia Medal. Bob has been a prolific writer and many NSW history teachers of the average age and above will be familiar with his *Student's Guide to World History 1789-1965*.

Bob Walshe remembers 1946 as a wonderful year, when a group of highly motivated people came together to satisfy their thirst for learning and Renée Erdos proved to be perfectly matched to the situation. Even with a group of adults, she was something of a 'mother figure' in the way she combined concern and encouragement with devotion to the task of herding them through the requirements of the course. In particular, it was Bob Walshe who discerned Renée's employment of a 'Socratic' approach to discussion – what this amounted to was that 'knowledge was brought out rather than shoved in'. Bob would later play a significant role in the History Teachers' Association that Renée was soon to establish.³³

With the CRTS due to wind down, Renée was destined to return to secondary school teaching in 1948. Two developments intervened. Firstly, it had become apparent that there was a demand from the wider community for matriculation classes, whether in the form of evening classes, day classes or correspondence courses. Secondly, the requirements of the Diploma Entrance Examination that was available to non-veterans were broadened to include a subject from the humanities. The subject chosen was Modern History. This led to the creation of the position of Head Teacher of History within the Department of Preparatory Studies, which Renée applied for. Conscious that she was contemplating a significant career change, she was drawn to the diversity she had encountered in technical education as compared to secondary schools, where 'we were all moulded by much the same background – Sydney University followed by training at Sydney Teachers' College'. The application was successful and in 1948 Renée Erdos became Sydney Technical College's first Head Teacher of History. Her break with secondary schools was made permanent a year later when the Department of Technical Education was separated from the Department of Education. (This 1949 restructuring also resulted in the establishment of the University of Technology, the future University of New South Wales.)³⁴

While her appointment as Head Teacher of History gave Renée faster promotion than she might have expected in secondary schools, it was still a decade before equal pay for female teachers and she was earning less than the younger male colleagues she was now supervising. One of these men was Noel Bede Nairn. A Depression-era early school leaver who had worked at the Technical College as a clerk while completing evening study, Nairn taught history

briefly in the Department of Preparatory Studies before going off to the new University of Technology and a brilliant career as a labour historian. In 1966 Nairn began a long association with the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, becoming its joint general editor in 1974. Interestingly, the *ADB's* entry for the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt was contributed by Renée Erdos in 1967.³⁵

Foundation of NSW HTA

In 1951 Renée, who was living in a flat in Kurraba Road Neutral Bay with her mother, acquired new neighbours. As recalled by Mary Vernon:

We met her in 1951 when we moved into the flat across the hall from Renée and her mother ... I was only two and, I think, the catalyst for a lifelong friendship between Renée and my mother, Judy Kennedy. I treated their flat as simply an extension of ours and Renée became part of the family. Mrs Mowle [Fauvette] died when I was about seven ... We had already moved, but Renée remained a fixture in our lives ...³⁶

Renée became a godmother to Mary's sister and an 'honorary aunt until the day she died'. Mary Vernon has memories of Renée hosting 'discussion evenings' in the late 1950s that attracted 'fairly high powered people'. Participants included Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Patrick White. Of Patrick White, Australia's only Nobel Laureate for Literature, Renée remarked: 'his writing could never be enough to excuse his rudeness'.³⁷

In the meantime, Renée was becoming immersed in history. In 1948 she gained a Distinction in History III as an evening student at Sydney University and subsequently spent many years researching for an MA degree in history that was never completed. As Head Teacher of History at Sydney Technical College, Renée supervised the teaching of all history courses, both face-to-face and correspondence. She taught in both areas. During the 1950s Renée twice revised the Modern History course to address syllabus changes and successfully introduced Ancient History. She also represented the Department of Technical Education on both the Ancient and Modern History syllabus committees and attended Department of Education meetings of English and history teachers, where she found that the focus on English left little time for the consideration of history. It was this experience that convinced Renée of the need to establish an association of history teachers: 'I became convinced that the teaching of history needed the forum of an organisation solely concerned with history teaching at all levels and in all types of institutions.'³⁸

Having once conceived the idea of forming an association of history teachers, Renée focused an enormous amount of energy on the project. She spent 'about a year going and

seeing people' and writing letters to anyone who might be interested. The goal was to gain support that 'crossed both the vertical and horizontal frontiers of the various bodies teaching history'. Thus, Renée ensured that she contacted teachers and principals from state, independent and Catholic sectors. She also enlisted the backing of key figures such as Dr C. H. Currey of Sydney Teachers' College and Sydney University's Professor of History, John Ward. Finally, confident that she had 'unanimous and enthusiastic support for my suggestion', Renée sent out invitations to a meeting to be held at Sydney Technical College on 30 July 1954.³⁹

The attendance register for this meeting is clear evidence that Renée had done her work effectively. While Director General of Education Dr Harry Wyndham had sent an apology, there was a very healthy gathering of teachers from all the school sectors and Sydney University was represented by Professor John Ward and a number of lecturers, including A.G.L. Shaw.⁴⁰ One of those present was Russell Robertson, who taught history with Renée at Sydney Technical College. He recalls Renée opening the meeting, outlining its purpose and then handing over to Dr Currey who, as had been pre-arranged by Renée, accepted an invitation to chair the discussion. It was soon apparent that Renée had very strong backing for her proposal and, when it was put to the vote, there was unanimous support for a resolution to 'inaugurate a History Teachers' Association'. At this point Dr Currey asked for nominations for a Chairman, A.G.L. Shaw's name was put forward, he accepted the nomination and, being unopposed, was declared NSW HTA's inaugural Chairman (President). A Provisional Committee of six was then selected and given the task of drafting a statement of aims and rules. Renée Erdos filled the position of Convener/Secretary.⁴¹

The involvement of Dr Currey and A.G.L. Shaw sheds light on the way in which Renée operated. While she wanted HTA to provide an informal forum for ordinary teachers, 'she deliberately targetted the people who had influence and reputation that would make the new association interesting and attractive'.⁴² Her first target had been Dr Currey, familiar to most history teachers due to his long association with Sydney Teachers' College, influence over teaching methods and authorship of school texts. While he agreed to lend his stature to the inaugural meeting, he declined any further involvement. Fortunately, the Sydney University lecturer A.G.L. Shaw then made himself available for the important role of inaugural Chairman. Around the same time, Shaw became Chief Examiner of Modern History and in 1959 would publish *Modern World History*, for a time the only text catering for the new Modern History syllabus. Thus, Shaw brought together his own academic reputation, the then all-important *imprimatur* of Sydney University and a very significant involvement with and influence over school

history.⁴³ As HTA's inaugural Deputy Chairman Harry Nicolson recalls, Shaw 'gave us the prestige and the urbanity'. Alan Barcan, a member from Newcastle, has similar recollections, suggesting that one of the benefits of the early HTA was that it provided the opportunity to meet academics of the calibre of Shaw and Professor Ward.⁴⁴

Not only did he bring status to the new organisation, A.G.L. Shaw was an effective Chairman who presided over the successful establishment of HTA. By the time he left the role in 1957, the association was in a very healthy state and busy on a number of fronts. Shaw went on to a distinguished academic career and became foundation Professor of History at Monash University. Interestingly, while there is no doubting the soundness of Renée's strategy for a high profile inaugural Chairman, HTA continued to prosper despite the fact that Shaw's immediate successors were humble teachers, admittedly from prestigious old schools.

The first official meeting of HTA was held on 24 September 1954. It quickly endorsed the statement of aims and rules presented by the Provisional Committee. This single page document only listed one general aim: 'As teachers of History we want to meet and discuss the teaching of History and issues connected with our teaching of History'. Seemingly in justification of its conciseness, or perhaps displaying real insight into HTA's potential, the statement suggested that 'no document can anticipate all the developments that our association should make'. The thirty members present at this meeting then agreed that the Provisional Committee should stay in place until the following year, when there would be an Annual General Meeting held as part of a first HTA Conference. It was also decided that HTA should seek involvement in the syllabus revision process that was taking place and prepare a submission for the Wyndham Committee Inquiry into secondary education (see below). Finally, it was agreed that the annual membership subscription would be 10 shillings.⁴⁵

HTA's first conference was held at Sydney University's St Andrew's College in March 1955. Of the 41 who attended, 9 were from universities or colleges, 12 from independent schools, 15 from state schools, 4 from technical colleges and 1 from the Department of Education. The wide representation that Renée Erdos had aimed for was clearly achieved. (By comparison, a HTA conference today typically attracts up to 200 each day but the tertiary and technical sectors are not as well represented.) One of the conference sessions explored the question 'What are we trying to do in teaching history in our schools?' Contributions to the discussion included:

- The teaching of history equips the child to stand up against the blasts of propaganda that assail him from all sides.

- History [is] a new subject not yet worked out in its fullest implications. [Its] always a new subject as each generation has its own values.
- [History] begins to fill the vacuum left by [the] decline of the classics.
- Every effort should be made to make children interested in history & every effort [made] to awaken their historical imagination in the adventure of man.
- [A] framework of historical landmarks must be learned [just] as children learn multiplication tables.⁴⁶

Following a successful first conference, the range of activities HTA was involved in continued to expand. During 1955, in a significant development for syllabus development at this time, HTA was invited to send two representatives to assist in drafting the new Modern History syllabus. The annual conference became a fixture and began to incorporate a conference dinner. Additional lectures, from distinguished scholars such as Professor Gordon Childe, were arranged. Members were surveyed in order to obtain information to present to the Wyndham Inquiry. By 1958 there was discussion about the need to visit country centres and of the possibility of HTA producing its own publications.⁴⁷

All of this activity began to put a strain on the small volunteer executive and its meagre resources. Along with discussion about the need to increase the size of the executive, there was concern about the cost of printing and postage – the 1958 Secretary’s Report produced an observation on what one suspects is the timeless vicious circle that confronts a successful voluntary association: ‘The volume of correspondence and administrative business has increased a great deal, and is likely to continue to increase’. Indeed, the discussion about raising the membership subscription that this report prompted would sound very familiar to current HTA executive members. To a warning about the dangers of ‘continually raising fees’, Renée Erdos responded by urging support for a rise in order to continue to cover the growth in activities. She went on to argue that ‘even at the increased subscription rates our fees are still low compared to an equivalent organisation’. The outcome was that the annual subscription was increased to £1/10-. This was 30 shillings or three times the figure it had been four years earlier. Fortunately for current members, this rate of increase has not continued. But, Renée’s observation about comparable organisations remains valid!⁴⁸

A debt of £30 in 1958 not only forced a rise in subscriptions but obviously affected preparations for the annual conference, with a February executive meeting noting the need to obtain ‘4 bottles of reasonable sherry, at 4/- each if possible, or, at most at 5/6 each’ (4/- = 40¢, 5/6 = 55¢). Nevertheless, the conference still ran at a loss, partly it

NSW HTA Executive 1954-1958

1954 (Provisional Committee)

Miss Renée Erdos Convener/Secretary
 Mr A.G.L. Shaw Sydney University
 Mr J. Hagan Sydney Teachers’ College
 Mr H. Nicolson Cranbrook
 Miss M. Pickard Sydney Girls’ HS
 Mr E. Woolmington Shore School

1955

Chairman Mr A.G.L. Shaw, Sydney University
 Deputy Chair Mr H. Nicolson, Sydney Technical College*
 Secretary Miss R. Erdos, Sydney Technical College
 Treasurer Mr J. Hagan, Sydney Teachers’ College

1956

Chairman Mr A.G.L. Shaw, Sydney University
 Deputy Chair Mr J. Hagan, Sydney Teachers’ College
 Secretary Mr N. Gash, North Sydney Technical HS
 Treasurer Mr R. Knock, Sydney Grammar

1957

Chairman Mr A.R. Barnes, Sydney Boys’ HS
 Deputy Chair Mrs J. Gillies, Sydney Girls’ HS
 Secretary Mr J. Angel, St Ignatius’ College
 Treasurer Mr R. Knock, Sydney Grammar

1958

Chairman Mrs J. Gillies, Sydney Girls’ HS
 Deputy Chair Miss D. J. Hughesdon, Abbotsleigh
 Secretary Mr J. Angel, St Ignatius’ College
 Treasurer Mr R. Knock, Sydney Grammar

* Harry Nicolson moved to Sydney Technical College in 1955 but later returned to Cranbrook.

was later realised, because of the number of attendees who partook of lunches and afternoon teas but neglected to pay for them. It was decided that, in the future, meals would be paid for in advance and afternoon teas would be supervised by two executive members – ‘one will do the pouring and the other collect the money’.⁴⁹

HTA, the Wyndham Inquiry & History

The perennial issues of reasonable wine and catering arrangements notwithstanding, the Wyndham Committee Inquiry presented the early HTA with an opportunity to participate in a survey that would result in some of the most far-reaching developments in Australian education. The Wyndham Committee was established under Director General of Education Dr Harold Wyndham in 1953 to investigate secondary education in NSW. After a period of extensive survey and consultation, the committee published its report in October 1957 and this eventually led to the introduction of the Wyndham Scheme into NSW’s secondary schools in 1962.⁵⁰



At a meeting of those interested in the teaching of History held in the Staff Common Room at the Sydney Technical College on 30th July, 1954 it was resolved to inaugurate a History Teachers' Association.

A provisional committee was nominated by the meeting to draft a tentative statement of aims and rules to be submitted for the consideration of a subsequent meeting.

The provisional committee consisted of:

3 teachers - Miss M. Pickard of Sydney Girls' High
 Mr H. Nicolson of Cranbrook
 Mr Woolmington of Shore

1 representative of Universities - Mr AGL Shaw
 1 representative of Teachers' Colleges - Mr J. Hagen

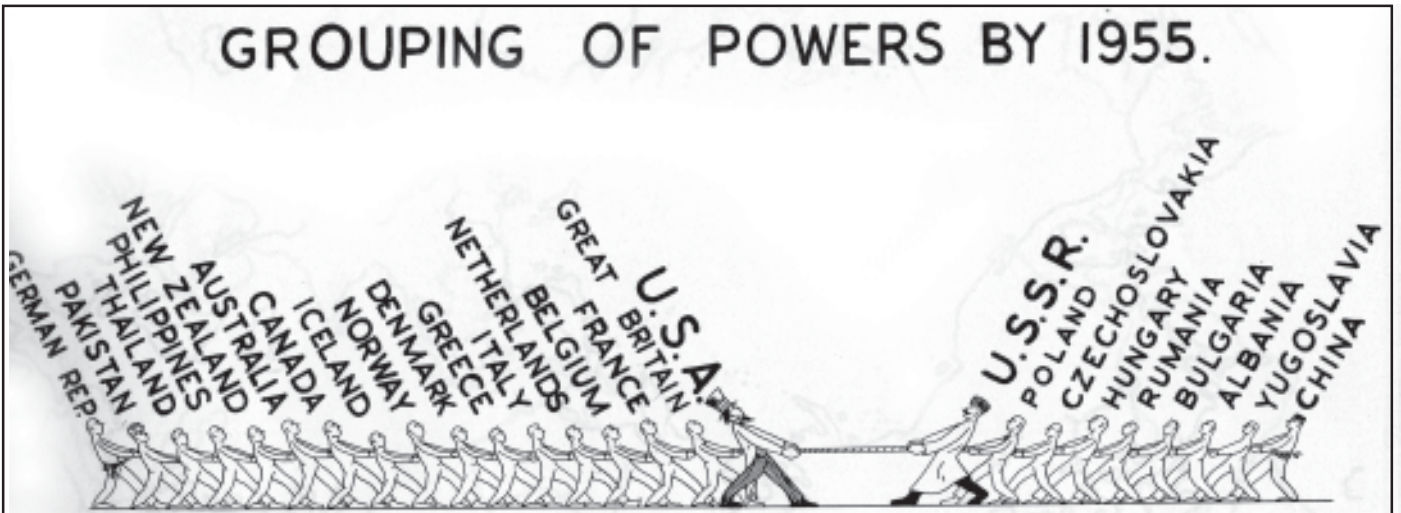
Convener - Secretary - R. Erdos

Following a resolution moved by the Chairman Dr C H Currey that 2/- should be regarded as an "initial subscription" the sum of £3-8-0 was collected.



HISTORY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.
 A HISTORY Teachers' Association has recently been established. Membership is open to all teachers of History. Further information can be obtained from the Acting Secretary, R. Erdos, School of General Studies, Department of Technical Education, Broadway. Telephone M0422 extension 275.

- Clockwise from the top right:
1. An unusual tribute to HTA's inaugural Chairman (President), Professor AGL Shaw. Peter Corlett sculpted this bronze gargoyle to mark Professor Shaw's 84th birthday in 2000. It is one of six on the outside of Trinity College's Leeper Library in the Evan Burge building, overlooking Melbourne University. The gargoyles celebrate outstanding figures in the history of Trinity College and Melbourne University. (Courtesy of the Trinity College Art Collection, The University of Melbourne.)
 2. A notice from *The Education Gazette*, 1 December 1954.
 3. An illustration from a Modern History handbook produced by Renée Erdos for Technical College students in the mid-1950s. (Mr R. Knock)
 4. HTA's founding document, in Renée's handwriting.
 5. A social gathering of students and friends from Renée's 1946 CRTS classes. Renée is third from the right at the back, Elizabeth (Betty) Gray is seated on the right of the middle. (Elizabeth Gray)



The Wyndham Committee's Report clearly identified what had been the overriding concern:

The cultivation of talent was perhaps the outstanding feature of older concepts of secondary education. Today's problem is that of meeting the needs of all adolescents without impairment to the potentialities of any.⁵¹

This was a response to the increasing number of students staying at school, itself the result of a combination of factors, including the raising of the school leaving age in the 1940s and the emergence of a more affluent post-war society that would place rapidly increasing demands on the education system. The challenge for educational planners was that not only would there be larger numbers staying at school for longer but that there would be a greater proportion of less academically able students.

The Wyndham Scheme's response was to extend the period of secondary schooling from 5 to 6 years, introduce a common core of subjects for the first year and allow for electives and different levels in the following years, and establish the structure and terminology of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate credentials. While some elements were short-lived, such as the Advanced, Credit and Ordinary levels of study, much of the Wyndham Scheme structure is still apparent, including its most important legacy, the large, comprehensive high schools that blossomed in the 1960s and beyond. As to the challenge of actually 'meeting the needs of all adolescents', half a century later it is clear that we are still grappling with the consequences of more and more children staying longer at school.

Even though it was only established while the Wyndham Committee Survey was in progress, the new HTA was quick to respond to an invitation to present a submission on behalf of history teachers. As early as 29 November 1954, just four months after the foundation meeting, Renée Erdos was able to circulate a draft submission that had been prepared by the Provisional Committee on the basis of replies to a questionnaire distributed to members in the previous month.⁵² An amended document was then submitted to the Wyndham Inquiry and on 20 May 1955 a HTA delegation led by Harry Nicolson appeared before the Wyndham Committee in a public hearing.

HTA's carefully prepared submission and the lengthy record of the public hearing make for some fascinating reading. In his introductory remarks at the hearing Harry Nicolson underlined HTA's view that history was a 'major subject' that should be studied by all 'fully educated people'. However, he also suggested that it had been 'taught badly' and would need to be 'a very much more vital subject, to appeal to the great mass of students'. Some idea of how badly it might have been taught is given in the submission's

reference to teachers taking up to 30 periods a week (presumably of 35 minutes duration) with classes of over 45 students – 'conditions ... so gross that the teacher is confined to rote methods'. In order to improve the teaching of history, HTA's submission highlighted the need for separate history departments ('[history] should stand on its own feet and should be run by one master'), a better provision of resources and teacher training that was more subject specific. Harry Nicolson's concession that the submission was 'very idealistic' may have had in mind the suggestion that history teachers be subsidised for 'travel and refreshment' so that they could gain experience abroad and interstate. More than forty years before Premier Bob Carr's introduction of NSW's unique Premier's Scholarships to support teacher travel and research, this may have seemed ridiculously visionary to the committee.⁵³

Two points may have particular relevance to the current discussion about national curriculum. Firstly, in response to a committee member's question regarding the possibility of increasing the focus on Australian history, Harry Nicolson raised the issue of repetition – he had done 'the same explorers three times in the course of coming through at the secondary level, following on my primary years' and suggested that such 'boring repetitions' were a result of it being 'no one's business to look after history'. Worryingly, this might suggest, observations about the negative impact of repetition in Australian history have been repeated for at least fifty years. Secondly, in closing the hearing Dr Wyndham made his own significant observation: 'I think it might be a nice piece of inquiry, not to say research, to discover who it was who left the unwanted cat called Social Studies on the schools' doorstep'.⁵⁴

Dr Wyndham's apparently unprovoked comment about social studies is intriguing. While it sounds heartfelt, it also may have had the dual purpose of ending the hearing on a jolly note and reassuring the history teachers about the status of their subject. For it is clear from HTA deliberations that the perceived encroachment of social studies had created considerable anxiety. In 1952 social studies had replaced history and geography in primary schools.⁵⁵ And even after Dr Wyndham's somewhat cryptic reassurance there were fears that social studies might be 'taking its place in the new order' and that history appeared to 'have been given an inferior position'.⁵⁶ What was at stake, in Harry Nicolson's words, was:

... that History can do all that social studies can do but can do a better job. Social studies is descriptive. History is descriptive as well as critical.⁵⁷

In the event, the Wyndham Scheme introduced social studies as a subject in 1st Form (Year 7) but retained history as a distinct discipline in all other years of secondary school.

This gave rise to a good deal of concern and prompted this response from Sydney University's Professor Ward in one of the first issues of *Teaching History*:

The History Teachers' Association has already expressed its fear that History may disappear as an independent discipline from the whole of the first four years of the secondary schools. History has already gone from the first form, surviving only as one element in that strange, discredited compound called Social Studies.⁵⁸

While it is very easy to sympathise with the anxieties of early HTA members at a time of curriculum uncertainty, it is not clear that the 1st Form social studies course was ever meant to be the thin edge of the social science wedge. The fact is that the integrity of history as a distinct discipline was preserved in both junior and senior secondary years in NSW's schools. The degree of influence HTA's arguments had on this outcome is impossible to gauge. What is clear is that HTA put a very strong case for history and that the effort required to do this helped to galvanise the early leadership, clarify aims and give significant impetus to an association that was less than a year old when it was so ably represented before the Wyndham Committee.

While the coincidence of the Wyndham Committee Inquiry with HTA's foundation was clearly important, two other factors may help to explain the sense of purpose and momentum that so quickly developed within the new association. Firstly, the 1950s was the beginning of a long period of rapid expansion in Australian education. It could be argued that NSW's Wyndham Scheme was both a symptom *of* and a catalyst *for* this expansion. An obvious measure of the phenomenon was a proliferation in the number of universities and teachers' colleges – by the early 1960s secondary teachers were no longer all being moulded by Sydney University and Sydney Teachers' College, as Renée Erdos had observed in the 1940s. Thus, with education in general on the crest of a wave, 1954 was an ideal time for the founding of a professional association. (Incidentally, the expansion of the tertiary sector would provide opportunities for a number of early HTA members who went on to prominent academic careers – A.G.L. Shaw became foundation Professor of History at Monash University, Jim Hagan became Professor of History at the University of Wollongong, Jim Angel became a Senior Lecturer in History at Sydney University and Alan Barcan became Associate Professor of Education at Newcastle University.)

Secondly, the 1950s was something of a watershed in the development of approaches to the teaching of history in NSW. The long reign of Sydney University's Professor Stephen Roberts had only recently come to an end. Roberts had been

Professor of History from 1929 until his appointment as Vice Chancellor in 1947. As such, he had dominated secondary history syllabuses. Not only did he set and supervise the marking of public exams but he was the author of the only major texts in use.⁵⁹ Under these circumstances, concern developed that what was being encouraged was rote learning from a single text in preparation for a public exam. This situation did not change immediately under Robert's successor, Professor John Ward. However, both Ward and A.G.L. Shaw, HTA's inaugural Chairman, were supporters of secondary teachers becoming more involved in areas that had been the exclusive domain of Sydney University. HTA's formation, therefore, was timely in that it created a mechanism through which concerned history teachers could advocate for long overdue reform of teaching practices. This was encapsulated in HTA's submission to the Wyndham Committee:

This [current] state of affairs calls for a new outlook. We formed our association to stimulate this new outlook and to encourage each other by discussion. The suggestions we would like to present to you are based on a review of past methods and future requirements made by active teachers.⁶⁰

Renée Erdos – 'Our Stalin'

As the preceding discussion suggests, the 1950s was an opportune time to establish NSW HTA. It has also been pointed out by Professor Jim Hagan, HTA's first Treasurer, that Renée Erdos was assisted by a number of situational factors. A product of an independent school who had spent more than a decade teaching in state schools and was now working at Sydney Technical College, she had an ideal background for the task of building bridges between teachers from the various sectors. Renée's position at the college and her long period of postgraduate study at Sydney University also meant that she had good contacts with academics and Department of Education officials. Finally, Sydney Technical College offered meeting venues at Ultimo, which was near both the university and Central Station.⁶¹

However, while it is important to consider all aspects of the historical context, it is very clear that the critical factors in the foundation of NSW HTA were the role played by Renée Erdos and the remarkable set of personal qualities that she brought to the task. This does not discount the contribution of A.G.L. Shaw, Harry Nicolson, Jim Hagan and others who were active in HTA's first years. Harry Nicolson, in particular, played a prominent role representing HTA before the Wyndham Committee and in syllabus development. Nevertheless, while Harry has been described as a 'tornado of energy' by Bob Walshe, Harry's own recollection is that he was more of an 'eager beaver' working for the 'founding mother'.⁶²

Renée Erdos did take advantage of her position and numerous contacts. She was a highly effective networker long before the term came in to use and when the networking was heavily reliant upon prodigious letter-writing. Above all, however, Renée brought together a combination of vision, energy, passion for history, administrative ability and practical classroom instinct. This produced the inspiration for HTA and guaranteed its successful foundation.

Harry Nicolson remembers Renée being given the affectionate title 'our Stalin' during the time she was Secretary of HTA.⁶³ It was an allusion to the Soviet leader's behind-the-scenes effectiveness when he was General Secretary of the Communist Party. Unlike Stalin, though, Renée's motives were neither sinister nor self-serving. While 'absorbed with the early work of the association'⁶⁴, she was content to remain behind the scenes and only held an official position until early 1956. Interestingly, in some of Renée's personal papers there is a suggestion that she held the position of Chairman in 1957-1958.⁶⁵ This is not supported by HTA documents. The minutes of the 1956 AGM show a vote of thanks was 'carried with acclamation' when Renée stood down as Secretary and she clearly held no offices in 1957 or 1958, after which there are some gaps in HTA's records until 1961.⁶⁶ Why does there appear to be confusion over what offices Renée held? It is possible that Renée served as Chairman at some time between 1958 and 1961 and did not retain an accurate memory of the years. There was certainly an instance of such inaccuracy in her 1992 book *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, where she gave HTA's foundation year as 1956 rather than 1954.⁶⁷ An alternative explanation is that, at a time when she was increasingly busy across a range of history related areas, Renée may have been carrying out many of the duties of Chairman, whether or not she held the position officially, and this later gave rise to confused memory. Such impaired recall was not confined to Renée – Jim Hagan expressed surprise at the suggestion that Renée was never the Chairman. His recollection is that she was 'always out the front, always in charge ... in a good sense'.⁶⁸

As with a number of her early HTA colleagues, the 1960s provided Renée with career opportunities that would eventually draw her into a much larger arena. Nevertheless, for much of this decade she remained actively involved with HTA. Bob Walshe, Renée's former CRTS student and Chairman of HTA in 1962, offers an interesting anecdote from this period. In 1959 he had been elected Convener of HTA's Teaching Method Committee, a position he held until 1971. This created the circumstances for a confrontation with Renée when she discovered Bob's introduction of the spelling Convener. At Renée's insistence, he was obliged to revert to Convener. For Bob, at the time it was a lesson in how much weight Renée's views carried.⁶⁹ For us, the incident may add some texture to our understanding of the personality

of this almost universally admired woman. Indeed, it is tempting to speculate if there was more to the episode than a disagreement over a minor issue of English usage. Was it a case of the conservative Renée bridling at the upstart ways of a former pupil with a reputation for radical views?

Correspondence Education: From Ultimo to Swaziland

At the start of 1959 the Supervisor of Sydney Technical College's Correspondence Teaching Division retired and, overcoming an initial reluctance to 'give up the teaching of History as my main activity', Renée successfully applied for this senior administrative position.⁷⁰ From this point on her prodigious energies would be increasingly focused on correspondence education. The demands on her time meant that she was forced to withdraw from an MA degree in history at Sydney University in 1968.⁷¹ Even so, along with her involvement with HTA, Renée managed to publish two monographs, was a member of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Advisory Committee on school broadcasts and, in 1960, presented an innovative television program called *Doorway to Knowledge*.⁷² It is possible that the monographs, *The Sydney Gazette 1803-1842* (1961) and *Ludwig Leichhardt* (1963), were a product of the MA research. As indicated earlier, Renée later wrote the *Australian Dictionary of Biography's* entry on Leichhardt.⁷³

Renée Erdos was both the first woman and the first teacher to be appointed as Supervisor of the Correspondence Division.⁷⁴ Not only had all her predecessors come from administrative backgrounds but there was a feeling that correspondence teaching in general was a backwater for failed classroom practitioners. It was a view summed up in the reaction of one of Renée's colleagues: 'How could you a successful teacher in the classroom retreat behind a desk!' For Renée, this reflected an attitude that saw correspondence education as a refuge for 'crooks, cranks and cowards'. It was something she set out to challenge. As a teacher, she was determined that the Correspondence Division would be seen as an educational service rather than a mailing service presided over by a clerical officer.⁷⁵

According to Russell Robertson, who took over from Renée as Head Teacher of History, she set out to make correspondence education relevant and efficient:

Her first move was to examine the entire administrative structure, then to introduce a number of important practical changes. She then turned her attention and energy to improving the educational side. Many courses were revised, new ones developed and the overall quality greatly improved.⁷⁶

Indicative of the imagination she brought to the task, within a year of taking over the Correspondence Division Renée persuaded the Director of Technical Education to mark the



In 1967 Renée Erdos was invited to co-direct a Dag Hammarskjöld Seminar on correspondence education for African educators held at Uppsala, Sweden. In this photo Renée is standing at the rear centre of the gathered delegates. (Mrs K. Huybers)

In fact, the night mail-train journeys of the early 1960s were only the beginning of what would be two decades of increasingly exotic travel for Renée as she became more and more active beyond Sydney Technical College's Ultimo campus. By the end of the 1960s Renée Erdos would be recognised as an international leader in the

golden jubilee of correspondence education in 1960 with the publication of a booklet. It was seen by her as an opportunity to celebrate the work of correspondence education in a way that might help to break down the isolation of students by demonstrating that 'they belonged to a student body some thousands strong'.⁷⁷ The result, *Golden Jubilee: Correspondence Teaching Division*, was an attractive publication that showcased the variety of courses available and highlighted the achievements of successful students. It also documented the size of the operation that Renée directed in 1960:

11	full-time teachers
207	part-time teachers
38	clerical staff
300	subjects offered
11 000+	students enrolled ⁷⁸

Breaking down the isolation of correspondence students was one of Renée's priorities. She was also determined to learn about their problems first-hand. This led to the introduction of a program of regular country visits involving train travel throughout NSW. For Renée, these trips were the most important factor in being able to 'give satisfactory service' from her office in Ultimo.⁷⁹ For Mary Vernon, they created childhood memories of the Kennedy family taking Renée to Central Station: '... we would always see her off on the night train which seemed very exotic to me at the time'.⁸⁰

field of correspondence education. A catalyst for this transformation was Renée's success in winning a Smith-Mundt/Fulbright Scholarship in 1961. It allowed her to spend six months studying correspondence teaching in American schools and universities. This was followed by a further six months in Canada, Europe and the USSR and, at the request of the Australian government, visits to India and Malaysia to discuss a Colombo Plan scholarship scheme.⁸¹

While in the United States Renée attended the Sixth Conference of the International Council of Correspondence Education (ICCE) at Gearhardt, Oregon. At the end of the conference she discovered that she had been elected the ICCE's Vice-President for the next four years. At the next conference, held in Sweden in 1965, Renée was elected President of the ICCE. One of the achievements of her four year Presidency was her successful negotiation of the ICCE's affiliation as a non-government organisation of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).⁸²

Renée Erdos' growing stature within the international correspondence education community brought with it numerous requests for her to produce publications, lead seminars and undertake consultancy work. The quality of her output only increased the demand for more. There was a particular interest in Renée's expertise from Scandinavian and UN groups who were attempting to develop correspondence education models for developing countries. The culmination came in 1969 when Renée resigned from

Sydney Technical College to accept a one year contract from UNESCO to develop correspondence teacher training programs in Botswana.

Understandably, giving up her secure position for a one year UN contract and the uncertainties of challenging work in what was then a remote third-world nation was something that Renée agonised over.⁸³ In the event, her decision to 'throw it into the lap of the gods' opened up a new career that spanned the next decade and allowed Renée to make a significant contribution to the development of education in a number of developing nations. Incidentally, it also gave Renée the opportunity to experience adventure and travel at a level that was most uncommon at the time but somewhat reminiscent of her own earliest years.

The 1970s is the one decade of Renée Erdos' life that has already been relatively well-documented. It is dealt with in some detail in her own book, *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, and in a number of interviews she gave. Additionally, most of the papers Renée lodged with the Australian National Library relate to her 'international period'. In summary, the initial one year UN contract in Botswana was extended. It was followed by four years in Tanzania working for the Swedish International Development Agency and two and a half years in Swaziland with the Danish International Development Assistance Organisation.

One of the first things Renée Erdos had done when she took on the position of Supervisor of Correspondence Teaching in 1959 was to ask Sydney Technical College's Library Research Department to do a literature search on 'correspondence teaching'. The result was a list of two books. While the limited capacities of the library's researchers in 1959 may have been a factor, there is clearly validity in Renée's assessment that this was a reflection of a lack of interest in correspondence education.⁸⁴ By the time of her retirement Renée had made a major contribution to redressing the problem at an international level. Two of her books, *Teaching By Correspondence* and *Establishing an Institution Teaching By Correspondence*, were translated into French and Spanish. In a 1982 review of her work for the journal *Distance Education*, Kevin Livingston suggests that Renée played an instrumental role in the 'take-off years' for distance education:

She belongs to this group of educators whose early books represent a major leap forward in what we now know as 'distance education'. She also belongs to those writers whose work with correspondence educators in developing countries is strongly reflected in their writings.

Livingston detects in Renée's writings the qualities of a consummate administrator/practitioner that so distinguished all aspects of her life as an educator:

She exhibits a very practical approach, writing clearly and succinctly about the basic skills required by the course writer, the tutor, the counsellor and the administrator in a well-organized system. The range of areas covered is, indeed, comprehensive.⁸⁵

Interestingly, at a time when we are hearing a great deal about 'curriculum for the 21st century', Livingston also highlights the visionary qualities that co-existed within such a task-oriented pragmatist as Renée. Addressing the 1975 ICCE Conference as keynote speaker, for example, she obviously drew on both her own recent experience and reading in quoting from *Future Shock*, written by the then popular futurist Alvin Toffler, to suggest that developed countries must prepare for a 'break up of the rigid scheduling and grouping in the education system'.⁸⁶ It is a suggestion that still sounds wildly futuristic!

Renée returned to Australia in 1980 to begin a very active retirement at the age of 69. She attended ICCE/ICDE conferences around the world into the 1990s and continued to write and do some consulting. At the same time, her Neutral Bay home once again became a venue for lively gatherings of interesting people. Jean Nysen, one of those who attended these gatherings, recalls an apartment full of artworks, wonderful food cooked by Renée and stimulating discussion. The two had met through the Warringah Book Lovers Club after Renée had been invited along as a guest speaker and stayed on to become a member. Jean describes Renée as an inspiring person whose talks brought to life everything from her own experiences in Africa to the trials of Ludwig Leichhardt in outback Australia. Gaynor Mitchell, who interviewed her for Loreto Kirribili's archives, was another person who knew Renée in her later years. She describes her as a warm, vital and fascinating person.⁸⁷

One of the projects that Renée took on when well into her seventies was the writing of *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, her reflections on the development of distance education and her involvement with it. In order to do this she purchased a computer and taught herself word-processing.⁸⁸ At the time *Teaching Beyond the Campus* was published Renée was corresponding with the distinguished American-based Australian academic Jill Ker Conway. In a letter to Renée, Professor Conway commented on the 'creative, far-ranging, and pathbreaking career' described in the book but then complained that it 'revealed too little of you as a person'.⁸⁹ Both are perceptive observations, each having resonance with this writer at the end of an extensive research effort.

Renée Erdos passed away at her Neutral Bay home on 10 March 1997 at the age of 86. Her funeral took place at St Augustine's Anglican Church Neutral Bay on 10 March 1997 and she was cremated at Sydney's Northern Suburbs

Crematorium where, according to her wishes, her ashes were scattered.⁹⁰

A Pioneer for Women

Mary Vernon’s father, the veteran journalist Buzz Kennedy, wrote the *Sydney Morning Herald’s* obituary for his former neighbour and close family friend. He ended with a flourish:

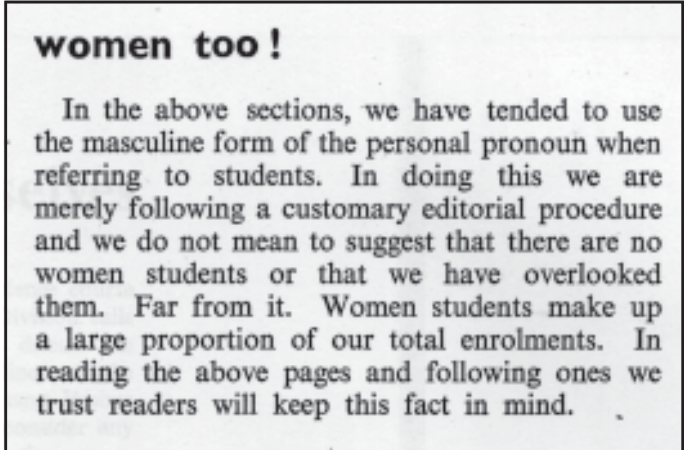
[Renée Erdos] was proud of her achievements as a woman and was a true pioneer of the women’s movement, although she would not have claimed to be.

She was a woman of a different generation and maintained her conservatism throughout what she called the excessive stridency that has come from many sides since the 1960s. For her time, Renée Erdos went to places that no other women had ever gone before.⁹¹

It is a bold assertion that invites examination.

Firstly, it is a matter of record that Renée Erdos established a career in circumstances where women did not have equality and where they faced varying degrees of discrimination in the workplace. The Married Women (Teachers and Lecturers) Act (1932-1947) and the fact that Renée was paid less than male colleagues until the end of the 1950s have already been discussed. Secondly, it is also clear that at Sydney Technical College there were numerous incidental aspects of a male-dominated workplace to be negotiated. In what may have been one of the *rites of passage* for pathbreaking women, for example, Renée had to appeal to the Director of Technical Education, E. A. Dickson, for adequate female toilet facilities.⁹² Another revealing episode occurred following the publication of the *Golden Jubilee* booklet in 1960. It featured a brief message from Renée and was accompanied by a photo of her. This prompted a spate of letters from correspondence students apologising for having addressed her as ‘Dear Sir’. Amused but also conscious of what it said about assumptions at the time, Renée summarised the typical apology as: ‘it never occurred to me that the Supervisor could be a *woman*’.⁹³ (Incidentally, *Golden Jubilee*, with its special section on Women’s Courses and quaint explanation for the use of what we might call non-inclusive language, is itself an interesting artefact of the times.)

Thirdly, it may be argued that Sydney Technical College in the forties, fifties and sixties was a particularly difficult environment for a woman to operate in – pathbreaking involved much more than simply challenging the symbolic or superficial. Jim Hagan has referred to the ‘crusty old engineers who ran the place’ and their varying degrees of hostility towards women, the humanities and correspondence education. According to Harry Nicolson, this meant that



Women too!, an extract from *Golden Jubilee* (1960)

Renée often had to ‘struggle against men’ in order to implement change.⁹⁴ Russell Robertson has added significant detail and insight to this perception. His views are particularly interesting because he not only worked closely with Renée but went on to a very successful career in technical education – after taking over from Renée as Head Teacher of History, he became Principal of Orange Technical College in 1970 and returned to Sydney Technical College as Vice Principal in 1973. According to Russell:

Renée Erdos had been very successful in her position [as Head Teacher of History], but her situation in technical education was seen by some as ‘awkward’. It was a male-based and male-dominated system. There were women teachers in typing and office practice, and in dress making and clothing manufacture, but they were ... self contained ...

Renée’s situation was different. She was in a mainstream area that was growing quickly ... she had a good record and had accumulated significant seniority. A woman who could soon move into higher positions was seen as inappropriate or out of place. But she was there and not going away. A solution was found. The Head of the Division of Correspondence Teaching was due to retire. If she moved there she was sidelined. And out of the mainstream.⁹⁵

In the event, of course, Renée refused to be sidelined. Having accepted the challenge of taking on the run-down correspondence division, she applied her considerable energies and vision to the task of overhauling and re-organising it. Russell Robertson suggests that ‘higher authority’ then found itself caught up in the momentum and obliged to support many of Renée’s initiatives.

While Renée did work for twenty years in a 'male-based and male-dominated system', a focus on the challenges inherent in this situation needs to be balanced against the fact that she also enjoyed the respect of many individual men. Those who worked closely with her, such as Russell Robertson and Harry Nicolson, seem to have had little difficulty in accepting her as a colleague on an equal basis. More importantly, as Renée readily acknowledged in her writing and interviews, there were a number of instances in her career when the support of men in 'higher authority' proved to be critical. W.R. Crisp, Lecturer in Charge of Sydney Technical College's Department of Preparatory Studies in the late 1940s, was quick to recognise Renée's potential when she first submitted her correspondence units and his early sponsorship was influential. During the 1950s E.A. Dickson was supportive of Renée's activities with HTA, allowing her to use Sydney Technical College's secretarial facilities and mailing system. (As anyone involved with voluntary professional associations will understand, these were no small matters, especially in the pre-digital age.) In 1959 it was Randal Dunbar, Deputy Director of the Department of Technical Education, who persuaded Renée to apply for the position of Supervisor of Correspondence Teaching. His argument, in hindsight understated, was designed to appeal to Renée: 'I do not think you realise the educational possibilities of the position'. While not dismissing the view that there were those who may have been happy to see Renée sidelined in this position, it is difficult to ascribe such motivations to Dunbar when it was he who subsequently drew her attention to the Smith-Mundt/Fulbright Scholarship and encouraged her to apply for it. There was also a good deal of flexibility in allowing Renée leave to pursue international commitments during the 1960s.⁹⁶

Renée Erdos was very conscious of her pioneering role within the broader context of women's struggle for greater opportunity and equality in the workplace. She saw the 1950s as the decade that 'saw the beginning of the demand by many women for further education which circumstances in the past had denied them'. As one of the fortunate few to have gained a university education, her appointment as Head Teacher of History had been the first full-time appointment of a woman in Sydney Technical College's School of General Studies and she remained the only full-time woman on its staff for a decade. She saw her appointment as Supervisor of Correspondence Education as 'revolutionary' at a time when it was 'unusual for a woman to be considered for a supervisory position in a field that was not mainly concerned with women students'. When this appointment was made in 1959 'the idea of a woman as a Principal of a technical college was unthinkable' and when Renée left Sydney Technical College a decade later she still felt that 'the time had not yet come for the idea of a woman as the principal of a technical college to be

acceptable'. Her hope was that her appointment to the position of Supervisor of Correspondence Education would be 'a modest step along the road towards the appointment of women to positions in the administration of Technical Education'. With all of this, Buzz Kennedy was probably quite accurate in his depiction of Renée as a woman 'of a different generation [who] ... maintained her conservatism throughout what she called the excessive stridency that has come from many sides since the 1960s'.⁹⁷ Indeed, sometimes a little strident in her own opposition to 'militant feminism', Renée accepted the challenge that the onus was on women to win respect in the workplace:

Never a militant feminist none the less I have always believed that the way for women to gain recognition for competence is to undertake responsible positions when opportunity arises, and by quiet efficiency demonstrate their capability.⁹⁸

Not all women of Renée's generation endorsed such an approach. Nevertheless, while the alternatives were limited and often very limiting, Renée's view that 'quiet efficiency' would be recognised was constantly reinforced in her own experience. Her exceptional competence was obviously a factor in this. So too, it might be suggested, was the self-belief that that came together in an individual who was very conscious and proud of both her New Woman forbears and her own University Woman status. In this sense, the fact that women no longer expect to have to earn respect in the workplace through humble service is the outcome of a long and complex development in which women like Renée Erdos played a critical pioneering role.

Significance & Legacy

A number of those interviewed during the course of the research for this article welcomed the prospect of Renée gaining some recognition for her achievements. There was a view that her significance, particularly in the field of correspondence education, had been overlooked. Once again, this prompts discussion in a number of areas.

It could be argued, for instance, that Renée Erdos *did* gain considerable recognition *during her lifetime*. In addition to the Smith/Mundt Fulbright Scholarship awarded in 1961 she received a British Council Visitor's Award in 1962. Her international colleagues elected her Vice President and then President of the ICCE in 1961 and 1965 respectively. In 1967 she was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education, one of her nominators being David Verco, who would succeed Dr Harold Wyndham as NSW Director General of Education in 1969. Finally, in 1989 Deakin University awarded Renée an honorary Doctor of Letters, 'saluting an outstanding, pioneering figure in the the fields [of] ... distance, adult and open education'.⁹⁹



Top: Erdos Street in the Canberra suburb of Bruce. (P. Kiem)
Left: Dr Renée Erdos in 1989 following the award of an honorary Doctor of Letters from Deakin University. (Loreto Kirribili)

Moreover, Renée was very conscious of her family heritage and this may have extended to a healthy sense of her own significance. Amongst a number of donations to museums and galleries, for example, she left her personal papers to the National Library of Australia. She also made substantial bequests to support three scholarships, two at Sydney University and one at Deakin University. With no immediate family, the scholarships were no doubt seen by Renée as a worthwhile way in which to disburse the considerable wealth she had accumulated during her forty year career. And, in the various scholarship conditions it is easy to see the range of Renée's ideals and interests reflected – the very generous scholarship given to Sydney University's College of the Arts is designed to support a program of travel for a young artist, the Sydney University History Prize is for 'the best 4th year thesis provided the student has not won other prizes' and the Deakin University award is for a student 'more than half of whose honours program has been undertaken in the off-campus mode'. Whatever the motivations and procedures at work, however, the three scholarships do have a commemorative intention – they were called the Fauvette Loureiro Memorial Artists Travel Scholarship, the Philippe Erdos Prize in History and the Renée Erdos Memorial Prize.¹⁰⁰

Renée also has a street named after her in the nation's capital, something that probably came about quite

fortuitously. The Australian Capital Territory has a street-naming scheme that groups names around themes that celebrate 'all aspects of Australian history and endeavour'. Thus, Erdos Street is in a 'tertiary educationalists' themed division of the suburb of Bruce. Why was Renée chosen? Almost certainly because her obituary was picked up from either the *The Age* or *The Sydney Morning Herald*. And such a tribute is unlikely to have been published in both Australia's major newspapers if Renée had not, by chance, been a neighbour of the journalist Buzz Kennedy.¹⁰¹

Regardless of the circumstances of the street naming, as an Australian educator of international standing, Renée is an ideal candidate for such an honour. A concern for this writer, though, is that when local school children are asked to research the historical significance of Bruce's street names, they will find no reference to Renée's role in founding NSW HTA in the information provided about Bruce's Public Place Names on the ACT government's website.¹⁰² Of course, HTA was also overlooked in Buzz Kennedy's obituary. This raises a more awkward point – Renée's death went unnoticed by HTA. Her role in its foundation, along with much of the early history, had been allowed to slip into obscurity well before 1997.

While there is obvious irony in HTA not having a good sense of its own history, it is also entirely understandable for a voluntary professional association to focus on the present and the future. With generational change in the Executive, a frequently frenetic program of activity and the need for a dynamic response to a constantly evolving educational environment, the capacity for dealing with internal heritage is limited. There is another aspect to this. In a major interview given in 1976 and in *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, Renée devoted very little attention to her role in

founding HTA. While she felt that ‘looking back on my teaching, that this was one thing that was achieved’ and expressed delight that HTA was ‘flourishing’ in 1976, it seems likely that she regarded the foundation of HTA as a relatively minor achievement in a career that came to be dominated by her work with correspondence education.¹⁰³

What is suggested here is that the foundation of NSW HTA may end up being Renée’s most significant legacy. In 2008 it is still flourishing. As we approach a period of national curriculum upheaval that will almost certainly introduce changes on a scale similar to those brought about by the Wyndham Inquiry of the 1950s, HTA is ideally positioned to provide classroom teachers with a forum for discussion, representation and support through the process of change. Moreover, HTA has managed to carry into the 21st century the strong collegial identity Renée and her colleagues gave it. This remnant of 1950s idealism stands out in an educational environment where market forces have an ever-increasing influence. It ensures that HTA continues to operate in the interests of the discipline of history, its teachers and their students. Thus, HTA’s 1200 members, their students and the very many others who benefit from its activities, may be the longest term beneficiaries of Renée’s vision and energy.

It will be very satisfying if this article rescues from obscurity Renée Erdos’ role in founding NSW HTA and makes some contribution towards the recognition she deserves as an outstanding Australian educator.

Endnotes

1. Patricia Clarke *Tasma: The Life of Jessie Couvreur*, p 70.
2. *Tasma: The Life of Jessie Couvreur*, esp. pp. xii-xiii; Patricia Clarke (ed.) *Tasma’s Diaries: The Diaries of Jessie Couvreur with another by her younger sister Edith Huybers*, pp. iii-iv.
3. Jane Clark & Bridget *Golden Summers*, pp. 20-21; Billee Huybers *The Huybers Story*, p 29-33.
4. Patrick McCaughey in *Golden Summers*, p. 8.
5. *Golden Summers*, pp. 20-21, 55, 58, 86, 184.
6. *Age*, 22 April 1904, p. 8. (In 2008, when this article was being written, McCubbin’s ‘The Pioneer’ dominated one of the galleries at the National Gallery of Victoria’s Ian Potter Centre in Melbourne’s Federation Square. Also on display were five of Arthur Loureiro’s paintings.)
7. *The Huybers Story*, p. 32; *Tasma*, p. 128.
8. Renée Erdos’ collection of her grandmother’s articles and letters; *Tasma*, p. 157.
9. Undated letter (c. 1987) from Renée Erdos to Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum explaining the background to her mother’s wedding dress, which she was donating to the museum; ‘Portugal looks again at its wandering native son’, *Financial Review*, 30 September, 1994.
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 12. *Melbourne Herald*, 7 September 1918; David Cook *Picture Postcards in Australia 1898-1920* Pioneer Design Studio, Lillydale, 1985, p. 117; VASCO Louis, Service Record, Series Accession Number B2455/1 (Australian Archives); VASCO Louis – Service Number 16136, AWM 145 Roll of Honour Cards (Australian War Memorial); LOUREIRO Vasco, Wartime artwork PXE 700 V.1-5 (State Library of NSW).
 13. 1976 Interview, p. 12,720.
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 15. *Golden Summers*, p. 5.
 16. As quoted in Buzz Kennedy’s obituary ‘Renée Erdos 1911-1997’ in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1997, p. 35.
 17. University of Sydney Student Cards, Renée Erdos, G3/210.
 18. Correspondence & phone interviews with R.D. (Bob) Walshe, 22 Feb. 2006, 30 Dec. 2007.
 19. University of Sydney Student Cards, Renée Erdos.
 20. Sydney Teachers’ College, Register of Admissions and Examinations 1929, No 23; 1976 Interview, p. 12,720.
 21. Theobald, Marjorie & Dwyer, Donna L. ‘An episode in feminist politics: the married women (lecturers and teachers) Act, 1932’ in *Labour History*, no.76, May 1999, p. 60.
 22. 1976 Interview, p. 12,721; NSW Department of Education Teacher Career Cards, Renée Erdos, SRNSW: NRS 15320 Container 17.
 23. 1976 Interview, p. 12,720-12,721; Renée Erdos *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 2.
 24. Department of Education School Files, Wollongong High School, SRNSW: 1932-39 Bundle B 5/18167.1.
 25. Theobald & Dwyer ‘An episode in feminist politics: the married women (lecturers and teachers) Act, 1932’ in *Labour History*, no.76, May 1999, pp. 59-77.
 26. *Australian Women’s Weekly* 24 June 1933, p.3, as quoted in Kay Whitehead ‘The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1870s to the 1960s’ in *History of Education Review* Vol 36, No 1, 2007, pp. 11-12.
 27. 1976 Interview, pp. 12,721-12,722; *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 1-2. The Leaving Certificate was the equivalent of today’s Higher School Certificate but was awarded at the end of 5 years secondary schooling rather than 6.
 28. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 3&5. (£1 = \$2).
 29. Joan Cobb *Sweet Road to Progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949*, pp. 341-2; *Spanners, Easels & Microchips: a history of technical and further education in New South Wales 1883-1983*, NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, 1983, pp. 89-90; *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 6.
 30. Phone interview, Elizabeth (Gray) Hirschl, 30 Dec. 2007.
 31. Email, Elizabeth (Gray) Hirschl, 2 Jan. 2008.
 32. Phone interview, Elizabeth (Gray) Hirschl, 30 Dec. 2007 & email, 31 Dec. 2007. (Elizabeth has written under the names Gray & Hirschl. The University of the Third Age, U3A, provides lifelong learning opportunities for the retired. Incidentally, at the age of 92 Professor AGL Shaw, HTA’s inaugural Chairman, continues to lecture at U3A.)
 33. Letter from Bob Walsh, 22 Feb. 2006; phone interview with Bob Walshe, 30 Dec. 2007; R. D. Walshe *Student’s Guide to World History 1789-1965*, Martindale Press, West Como, 1966.
 34. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 8.

35. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 8; NSW Public Service List, 1950, NSW State Records Office, Reel 3619; Gerald Walsh 'Noel Bede Nairn, AO, Scholar, Author and Historian 6 August 1917 – 21 April 2006' on Australian National University's website <http://rssl.anu.edu.au/documents/bede.html> [31/12/2007]; Renée Erdos 'Leichhardt, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1813 - 1848)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online Edition* www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020090b.htm [31/12/2007].
36. Mary Vernon, email correspondence, 12 Oct. 2007 (Renée's mother, Fauvette, had married Percival Mowle in 1949. He died in 1951 and Fauvette died in 1956.)
37. Mary Vernon, email correspondence, 24 Aug. 2007.
38. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 9 & 13.
39. HTA Archives: Minutes, Formation Meetings & Conferences, 1954-1958 (HTA Minutes 54-58); 1976 Interview, p. 12,726; *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 13-14.
40. Letter from H. Wyndham to Renée Erdos, 13 July 1954 (Correspondence, 1954-1956); HTA Minutes 54-58 (The list of schools represented at the first meeting might appear to be drawn from a narrow range. Within two years of its establishment, however, HTA's membership would include many teachers from outer suburban and country high schools.)
41. Letter from Russell Robertson, 3 Aug. 2007; HTA Minutes 54-58.
42. Letter from Russell Robertson, 3 August 2007.
43. Interview with Jim Hagan, 2 Jan. 2008; A.G.L. Shaw *Modern World History* (Book 1) F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne 1959. (In the preface to *Modern World History* Shaw acknowledges help received from Renée Erdos and Harry Nicolson.)
44. Phone interview with Harry Nicolson, November 2007; letter from Alan Barcan, 21 February 2006.
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46. HTA Minutes 54-58, 19 March 1955 AGM & Conference.
47. HTA Minutes 54-58, 8/7/55; Minutes of Executive Meetings 24/2/58, 28/7/58.
48. HTA Minutes 54-58, March 1958.
49. Minutes of Executive Meetings, 24/2/58, 1/5/58.
50. Alan Barcan *A History of Australian Education*, p. 301.
51. Report of the Committee Appointed to Survey Secondary Education in NSW (1957), p. 9, quoted in Barcan, p. 301.
52. Renée Erdos, letter of 29 Nov. 1954, Correspondence 1954-56.
53. 'Survey of Secondary Education Committee' Forty-first day, Friday 20 May 1955, pp. 1174, 1175, 1177, 1179, 1180-1182, HTA Correspondence 1954-56. (The HTA delegation consisted of Mr H. Nicolson, Mr. J. Hagan & Miss D. Wayne.)
54. *ibid.*, pp. 1185, 1192.
55. Alan Barcan 'A History of History Teaching' in Little & Mackinolty, p. 43.
56. Minutes of Executive Meetings 1957-58, 28/7/58 & 28/8/58.
57. *ibid.*, 28/8/58.
58. J.M. Ward 'History in the New Secondary Schools Curriculum' in *Teaching History*, July 1962, p. 3.
59. Alan Barcan 'A History of History Teaching' in Little & Mackinolty, p. 42; phone interview with Jim Hagan, 2 Jan. 2008.
60. 'Survey of Secondary Education Committee' Forty-first day, Friday 20 May 1955, pp. 1178, HTA Correspondence 1954-56.
61. Phone interview with Jim Hagan, 2 Jan. 2008.
62. Letters from Bob Walshe (7 Feb. 2006) & Harry Nicolson (12 July 2006); phone interview with Harry Nicolson November 2007.
63. Phone interview with Harry Nicolson, 11 July 2007.
64. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 14.
65. Curriculum Vitae attached to Ann Michelle Lewis' essay.
66. HTA Minutes 1954-1958: 24/3/56, 4/5/57.
67. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 14.
68. Phone interview with Jim Hagan, 2 Jan. 2008.
69. Phone interview with Bob Walshe, 30 Dec. 2007.
70. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 13-14.
71. University of Sydney Student Cards, Renée Erdos.
72. Nomination for Australian College of Education Fellowship, (ACE Nomination) 1 Feb. 1966.
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75. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, pp. 22-23; Lewis essay, p. 6.
76. Russell Robertson, letter 3 August 2007.
77. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 24.
78. *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 3, 26-28.
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80. Mary Vernon, email, 12 Oct. 2007.
81. 1976 Interview, pp. 12,730-12,731; ACE Nomination.
82. 1976 Interview, pp. 12,730-12,734, 12,736; Lewis essay, pp. 7, 11; ACE Nomination.
83. 1976 Interview, pp. 12,737-12,738; Lewis essay, p. 15.
84. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 15.
85. Kevin T. Livingston 'The Work of Renée Erdos' in *Distance Education*, Vol 7, No 2, 1986, pp. 301-302, 303.
86. *ibid.* pp. 304-305.
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88. Lewis essay, pp. 23-24; Buzz Kennedy, 'Renée Erdos 1911-1997' in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1997, p. 35.
89. Letter from Jill Ker Conway to Renée Erdos, 3 April 1995.
90. Buzz Kennedy, 'Renée Erdos 1911-1997'; St Augustines Neutral Bay Burial Register [email, 12 Jan. 2008]; information supplied by Renée's solicitors.
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92. Harry Nicolson, phone interview, 11 July 2007.
93. *Teaching Beyond the Campus*, p. 26.
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