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'A "bushie" and a godless creature': a case study of the rejection of English identity and values in western Queensland, 1879-1919

Wednesday 19 September 2012 4:15-5:30pm

School of History Seminar Series

Barbara Dawson, School of History, ANU

McDonald Room Menzies Library, ANU



This paper examines concepts of identity in the writing of Rose Scott Cowen – an Australian woman with aristocratic connections – whose life straddled nineteenth-century colonialism and 71 years of post-colonialism in the twentieth century. The first part of the paper probes the difficulties in defining 'Englishness', both in the British Isles and the Australian colonies, with reference to the complex application of the terms 'English' and 'British'. Having reached some resolution to this problem, I proceed to explore Cowen's *Crossing Dry Creeks 1879-1919*, published in 1961.

The paper's main focus is an exploration of the influences that formed Rose Cowen's opinions and character during her life in western Queensland, where she lived amongst the sometimes hardened men and women of the outback and, in the Channel country, worked alongside Indigenous people.



Dr Barbara Dawson is a visitor with the School of History, ANU. In December 2011 she retired from the Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, where she had worked since 1999. She completed a PhD in RSSS in 2007, and is now working on the publication of her thesis, and converting the fruits of her PhD research into journal articles. Her most recent publication is 'Four Intrepid Scotswomen: Travellers to the Australian Colonies and their Representations of Aborigines', in *History Scotland Journal*, July/August 2009.

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