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## **“My box of memories”: An Australian Country Girl Goes to London**

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**Abstract:** In 1954 a young country woman from New South Wales, Shirley Dunk, exercised her agency and travelled to London. This was a journey to the home of her forefathers and copied the activities of other country women who made similar journeys. Some of the earliest of these journeys were undertaken by the wives and daughters of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century rural gentry. This research project will use a qualitative approach in an examination of Shirley’s journey archive complemented with supplementary interviews and stories of other travellers. Shirley nostalgically recalled the sense of adventure that she experienced as she left Sydney for London by ship and travelled through the United Kingdom and Europe. The article will address questions posed by the journey for Shirley and her travelling companion, Beth, and how they dealt with these forces as tourists and travellers. Shirley’s letters home were reported in the country press and reminiscent of soldier’s wartime letters home that described their tales as tourists in foreign lands. The narrative will show that Shirley, as an Australian country girl, was exposed to the cosmopolitan nature of the metropole, as were other women. The paper will explore how Shirley was subject to the forces of modernity and consumerism at a time when rural women were often limited to domesticity.

**Keywords:** women’s travel writing, letters, diaries, agency, traveller, tourist

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### **1. Introduction**

It is not unusual or extraordinary for young Australian women to exercise their agency and travel overseas today; however, it was not always so. This story is about the travel experience of Shirley Dunk, a young woman from the country town of Camden. She gave me access to her papers, “my box of memories” as she called them, from her trip to England in 1954 with her best friend, Beth Jackman. Her journey archive included letters, diaries and photographs. And as historian

Tom Griffith writes in *The Art of Time Travel* the archive is “one of the primary launch pads for the historian’s time travel” (11). Shirley’s journey archive was the launching pad for my time travel into a new world.

Shirley’s experience as a traveller and tourist going to London was far from unique, and much to my surprise, this project has tapped into a rich vein of untold stories of women with similar travel experiences. As I have discovered, many women from ordinary backgrounds undertook this adventure. “Mum always talked about her trip” was a common refrain (O’Brien et al. 2019). This work is a qualitative study that explores an untold story of women’s history – tales from the shadows if you like – a form of radical history that details “the struggles of disempowered people” (Irving and Cahill 1). The work illustrates that contemporary travellers and tourists have much in common with those from the past.

Shirley’s travel archive fits into a rich history of women travel writers, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it became easier “for women of all classes to travel” (Fish 672). Cheryl Fish argues that 20<sup>th</sup> century women’s travel writing linked to motion, gender, technology and progress and that women’s travel journeys were the “twentieth-century version of the ‘quest’” (672). Leyla Giray Alyanak maintains that women’s travel writing “is more than about places – it’s about how women cope with being women in a foreign land” (n.p.). Alyanak identifies its origins to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Frenchwoman Marie Catherine le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d’Aulnoy, who travelled extensively in Spain and England. (n.p.). The genre of women’s travel writing gradually expanded as women progressively learnt to write and travel for leisure with the introduction of the railway. Women recording the intimate details of their journeys became a popular pastime. Collections of women’s travel writing, including diaries, are held in libraries (National Library of Australia 2020; State Library of NSW 2020) and other archives. Some women have had their writing published (for example, Tasma and Clarke, 1995) or have self-published (for example, Colman 1996) and women’s travels have drawn the attention of scholars (Pesman 1996; Woollacott 2001; Bridge et al. 2009).

## 2. The Extraordinary Journey of Going to London

Across Australia, thousands of young single women exercised their agency and travelled to London and beyond from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In the immediate post-war years, the majority of the 30,000 Australian-born who lived in the United Kingdom were women in their 20s (Bridge, et al. 01.2). Angela Woollacott in *To Try Her Fortune in London* calls these journeys a pilgrimage and describes how they were a life-changing experience for many women (19). Historian Ros Pesman argues that these journeys were a metaphor for a passage that was also a rite-of-passage (184). An extraordinary travel journey that was not at all ordinary (11).

Woollacott has argued that Australian women in London were perceived as modern because they had the vote, were “more athletic and physically fit than English women” and were “travellers and tourists” embodying new technology of travel. Steamships represented the modernity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the travel experience was for relaxation and enjoyment and showed the sophistication of the traveller (20–21). The sea-passage reflected and captured some of the style and comfort of the grand North Atlantic Ocean liners. Shirley Dunk travelled on the RMS *Orcades*, which was built for the Orient Line in 1947 and was the most modern, and fastest ship on the Australian trade. The ship had “a sense of style and the feeling of old-world luxury” offering a “new standard in accommodation [with] multiple saloons, shops, a hair salon, hospital, swimming pool and a range of cabin choices.” The ship carried just over 1500 passengers on a passage of 31 days (McFadzean and Churchward n.p.). The passage was an epic journey for any young traveller and visited exotic port locations at Colombo, Port Suez, Naples, Marseilles, and Gibraltar.

For young Australian travellers, the journey was extraordinary if only examined from the cost of the fares. Shirley paid A£95 for her one-way sea-passage from Sydney to London, which was 63 times her weekly wage of 30/- per week as a clerical and sales assistant at Clintons Electrical in Camden. The alternative air-flight on the “Kangaroo Route” was much more expensive at £525. The air route had seven stop-overs, a flight time of over 70 hours using the propeller-driven airliner Lockheed Constellation and carried 29 passengers (Qantas 2019, n.p.). The introduction of jet aircraft in 1959 ended any notion of a romantic journey by creating a quick and efficient link to Europe (Qantas 2018, n.p.).

Pesman, who travelled to Europe in 1961, argues that there was a commonality of experience amongst these female travellers (2). Initially, there were the months of pre-departure preparation and community farewells, followed by the journey made up of the sea-passage, sight-seeing of new places and sometimes working overseas. At the same time, women produced an extensive written record, which was stored away once they returned home (11–12). Pesman argues that young women travelled overseas for a host of reasons including holidays, recreation, self-improvement, recognition, professional experience, adventure, romance, escape and fulfilment of aspirations, and modernity was part of this mix (9). The imperial metropole of London offered new modern experiences in the arts and urbanity that were not available in Australia (Woollcott 4).

### 3. The Modern Country Girl

Camden’s Shirley Dunk has identified herself as a modern country girl and modernity has been part in her life in the form of fashion, the movies and other types of consumerism. She presented herself as a representation of the “Modern Girl” that “emerged around the world in the first half of the twentieth century.” Alys Eve Weinbaum

and the Modern Girl Around World Research Group argue that “the ‘modern girl’ denoted young women with the wherewithal and desire to define themselves in excess of conventional female roles and as transgressive of national, imperial and racial boundaries.” Shirley, and other young country women, were influenced by visual representations of the “Modern Girl” in posters, magazines, journals, and films. The consumption of beauty products and associated fashions “enabled” country women to exercise their agency as “social actors” and “craft themselves as modern” influenced by advertising and movie stars (Weinbaum 1, 9, 12–13, 18, 20).

In 1953 Shirley presented herself in a photoshoot as an up-to-date stylish young woman in a Dior-inspired home-made dress well-aware of the latest fashions (Aulsebrook 2019). Modernity was on display weekly at the Paramount Movie Theatre in Camden and Shirley was a big movie fan. Sociologist Catherine Driscoll in her book *The Australian Country Girl* argues that the country town movie theatre was a significant cultural experience of “modernity,” and played a “crucial role in the visibility of ‘modern girls’” (24). Film historian Jessica Freame maintains that movies were an important site for representations of the “ideal” woman in the 1950s. She argues that this imagery re-enforced an “idealised version of femininity, marriage and family” that was associated the “safety and security” of the past during the anxiety of the Cold War period. (n.p.). Shirley and her work colleague, Beth, were not to be confined by representations of “ideal womanhood” and associated links to domesticity, social restrictions or gender expectations. They exercised their agency, and sought adventure and new horizons outside their lives in the country town of Camden (Rorke 2019). Shirley says that her travel aspirations were assisted by the increased affluence of the post-war years and a new sense of entitlement that came with it (Rorke 2020).

The sense of escape that Shirley and Beth sought was a common theme of travel stories by other women. Camden’s June Clinton, a contemporary of Shirley, was encouraged by her mother to travel, see the world and have an “exciting life,” not an ordinary one like her own that had been confined by marriage and domesticity. June travelled to London in 1953, and her daughter Melissa says that she found the journey a life-changing experience. June considered herself a modern young Camden woman and smoked cigarettes in a holder, cut her hair short and wore smart, fashionable clothes that were the trend in London (Baker 2019).

Another Camden escapee was 25-year-old traveller Annette. She left Sydney on a cargo ship in 1958, escaping a marriage proposal and seeking to further her career as an artist and writer. She spent six weeks at sea and landed in Norway. Annette had departed with the expectation of work in London that failed to eventuate. She found a job and stayed eight years, living in France and England (Annette 2019). Escaping loss caused by the Second World War was top of the list of reasons for going to England for 24-year-old Camden school teacher Patricia Fraser. In 1947 Fraser left Camden because of feeling hollow and lonely after the death of her husband. Fraser had married a Camden airman in 1944 who was killed in action shortly after their

marriage (Colman 32–37). The aftermath of the loss and chaos of the Second World War sometimes created opportunities that women eagerly took up.

Bexley-raised 25-year-old Enid Wilmot refused to be confined by gender expectations and domesticity when she left Australia in 1948. Enid had served in the WAAAF in the Second World War and her daughter Jo, a Camden resident, says that her mother was escaping the expectation that she would return to traditional life and “the confines of home, people’s expectations or censure, and disappointment in love.” Jo feels that Enid was “looking for adventure, new experiences, variety and wanting to discover more about the world” (O’Brien 2019, 340). Enid left Australia for Fiji, then journeyed to New Zealand, stayed four years and eventually arrived in London in 1954, lasted for ten months, then travelled to Canada and eventually returned to Sydney in 1956. Enid was a city girl who loved parties, music and theatre and was worldly-wise by the time she left Australia. City girls, unlike their country counterparts, had access to educational, entertainment and employment opportunities that were often denied rural women who lived in small, closed, and sometimes, isolated communities. Modernity shaped Enid’s life in Sydney well before she travelled overseas and made her “cosmopolitan and independent.” Jo says, “Her journey was not the trip of a life-time – just another interesting place to go” (O’Brien 2019). Often these desires were inter-generational. Historian Jan Twomey argues that escaping a conservative society was part a mix of reasons that motivated military nurses going off to the First World War (2019), including ten from Camden (Hokin 2017). The Camden contingent was a small part of over 2000 nurses who served overseas. Many wanted to extend and enhance their professional experience, while others were looking for adventure, demonstrating a sense of patriotic duty and a desire to care (Twomey 2019).

Shirley was far from the first Camden woman to feel the attraction of metropolitan London. Husband-hunting was high on the agenda of colonial women from wealthy families who travelled to England. One of the earliest was Elizabeth Macarthur, a member of the Camden female elite. She did the Grand Tour of Europe in 1860 with her parents, James and Emily Macarthur of Camden Park, where she met her future husband. After marrying British naval officer Captain Arthur Onslow at age 26 years in 1867, she travelled to England between 1887 and 1891 with her children. She attended her son James graduation from Cambridge BA LLD in 1890. She returned to England between 1892 and 1894 when she purchased a house in London; in 1902 she attended the coronation of Edward VII, and in 1911 she died in England. Elizabeth’s daughter Sibella accompanied her mother on these trips and, after her mother’s death, travelled to London in 1920, 1927, 1932 and 1937. The Macarthur Onslow women were financially well off and enjoyed the privilege of travelling to Europe regularly. They developed social, cultural and economic links to ‘home’ in England that functioned across three levels – local, provincial, metropolitan – Camden, Sydney, and London, which consolidated their status in New South Wales (Willis 2014, Chapter One).



#### 4. Travellers and Tourists

The departure of Shirley and Beth for England was a notable social event in their home town of Camden and was marked by community farewells reported in the local press – Pesman has called them pre-departure rituals (151). Over 80 friends from Sydney and Camden attended “an enjoyable function” held at the Craigend tea rooms in Camden, where there were skits and other entertainment. At the end of the night, Shirley and Beth received some gifts, and everyone enjoyed the “portmanteau” cake (*Camden News*, 17 December 1953). The previous year June Clinton and Enid Clifton were similarly farewelled before they went to England. The Camden CWA Younger Set gave Enid and June going away gifts, and there was a farewell at the home of Mr and Mrs Arthy of Rose Bay (*Camden News*, 18 December 1952). On their departure from Sydney, June and Enid were sent off by a “crowd of friends” at the Sydney wharves on the ship the SS Maloa (*Camden News*, 24 December 1952). Similarly, Camden teacher Patricia Fraser had farewell parties when she left the local area in 1947 (Colman 45). Pre-departure parties were a public affirmation by the Camden community of the desire by these young women to see the world and escape the community’s social restrictions. It created an apparent paradox where a rural community allowed its brightest and best young women to leave and freely roam the world with no restrictions.

Historian Richard White argues that the sea-passage was a vital part of the trip and prepared these travellers for their arrival, heightened their anticipation, increased their knowledge giving an air of modernity and establishing useful contacts among fellow passengers (11.6). The sea-passage was a relaxed entry into Shirley and Beth’s travel adventure and allowed them to develop useful contacts. Shirley recalls flirting and making good friends with one of the ship’s stewards, George, who made a helpful contact once both women disembarked in England (Rorke 2020). For others, the sea passage was a life-changing experience, like, 24-year-old Brisbane-raised Narelle Beck who travelled to London in 1961. Her daughter Mandy says that Narelle met her future husband, Milton, on the ship and they married the following year at Holburn in London (Perrin 2019).

#### 5. Arrival and Settling-In

Shirley and Beth were confronted with a range of challenges on their arrival in metropolitan London and became pre-occupied with establishing the foundation of their working holiday. The women were unfazed by the difficulties of establishing a daily routine in a large city. Experiencing everyday life in London was an education for both women with many firsts in their lives: organising ration cards; banking arrangements; mail collection; somewhere to live and to write home; coping with homesickness and just being away from their familiarities of home (Dunk 1954a,

n.p.). Shirley and Beth took on the world with a fresh-faced innocence and demonstrated their adaptability and resilience.

Setting up a house was an early challenge. Initially, Shirley and Beth stayed at the YWCA, then a bed-sit in Earls Court for a month before renting a room at George's house at Fulham. George came and went depending on his rostered voyages. Both Shirley and Beth found work in mid-February at the offices of the Shell Co. in Bishopsgate for seven months and "loved being there." After a short break in October, they found more work in November until they left for Sydney in early December. Shirley worked at an up-market shoe shop, and Beth did office-work (1954a, n.p.). The weather was a recurrent theme of Shirley's trip-book and pre-occupied many of her thoughts. In their first week, the Camden women experienced the cold of a London winter, and Shirley noted the temperature at 27°F (-3°C) on the 2nd February, their second day in London. The following day they visited Trafalgar Square and the fountains were frozen over. The water sprays "were like great Stalagmites hanging over the pond part of the fountain." The women were feeling the cold "around the neck, ears and feet" so they went shopping and bought "a cashmere scarf, fur-lined gloves and boots." The weather was always on their mind and was variously described in Shirley's letters as "lousy," "freezing" or just plain "awful" (1954a, n.p.).

Shirley and Beth's journey was a working holiday on a budget, and they were always conscious of their tenuous financial position, and spending was restricted to essentials. Shirley and Beth cut their lunches when they went to work (1954d), used public transport and walked everywhere. In April Shirley's finances were running low (1954h) and her mother sent her money mid-year (1954k). Shirley again wrote to her mother about money in August, saying that it was "impossible to save over here" (1954n) and asked her mother for a loan. The following week her father sent her £60. Shirley wrote that she felt Beth was in a worse financial position than herself (1954n). Both women kept to cheap entertainment which included going to the "pictures" (1954g) and lots of sight-seeing.

## 6. Writing Home

From the start of the trip, Shirley established a letter-writing routine. It became the emotional centre of her life away from home. Christopher Hager calls letter writing a "dialogue with home" (14), and Shirley's letters illustrated how her life was intertwined and shaped by others around her. Shirley's letters are an unfiltered view of the world as she experienced it and a travelogue of her journey. A regular ritual for Shirley and Beth was picking up letters on a Saturday morning from the London branch of the Commonwealth Bank, after which they went sight-seeing. There were "long faces" when there was no mail. Letters took 12 days to arrive from home (1954g) and Shirley wrote, "you do not know what a letter from home

does” (1954i), and they were always appealing to their family for more letters from Australia (1954j).

Letter writing inspired Narelle Beck to travel to London in 1961 when she visited her English penfriend, Patricia Page. As a young girl, Narelle regularly wrote to Patricia for over ten years and on her arrival in London moved in with the Page family. Narelle’s daughter, Mandy, says her mother was excited to head off on the adventure of a working holiday and viewed the journey as an opportunity to see the world. Narelle and Patricia spent the next 50 years writing to each other, and Mandy says they “shared their experiences and feelings in their letters.” Narelle’s letter-writing was a crucial emotional centre in her life (Perrin 2020). Camden teacher Patricia Fraser was a prodigious letter writer and recalled that during her time in Great Britain she wrote 256 letters to Australia (Colman 54).

Shirley and Beth were always eager for news from home (1954k). Shirley’s mother sent copies of the *Camden News* every two weeks (1954e) maintaining an emotional connection with family. Similarly, during the First and Second World Wars, Camden women included the local newspaper in comfort parcels sent to Camden soldiers, and their thank-you letters appeared in the *Camden News*. Historian Christopher Hager found that American families regularly sent local newspapers to their men in the army during the American Civil War. They wanted to hear news from home (73). Local newspapers were a rich source of local news and gossip and a direct emotional link to family and friends at home. The newspapers re-enforced a traveller’s sense of belonging and community identity and an extension of the community’s social and familial networks (Willis 2018).

## 7. Sight-seeing

Richard White has described travel as “adventure, exploration and discovery” (11.3) and Shirley and Beth’s sight-seeing activities fitted that description. Both women were naturally curious and inquisitive and sought out new experiences throughout their journey. They were both determined to see the world and did what ever it took within their limited budget to see the sights of London and beyond, and documented their adventure. Sight-seeing for Shirley and Beth fell into several categories beginning with the exotic ports of call on their sea voyage. In Colombo Shirley thought that the shopping was good and noted that “the shops sell everything,” and she sought out “bargains” in the “native sector” (1954a, n.p.). Shirley was excited about how differently the locals dressed and wrote that the women and children were “beautifully dressed. I haven’t seen such gorgeous colours in all my life, and the material is magnificent. It is mostly Lavon [style] and Chiffon” (1954a, n.p.).

Week-day and weekend sight-seeing was squeezed in and around work commitments, and after their Saturday morning routine of picking up their mail. Even

a lunch-time visit to the London Stock Exchange fitted their schedule. London sight-seeing included London Bridge, Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey, Hyde Park, Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament and lots of other historic locations. At weekends they visited Brighton, Windsor, and Dover in March (1954a, n.p.). Limited finances constrained Shirley’s sight-seeing, and at Easter, when they went to Dover and Canterbury, they travelled by bus because “it was cheaper than the train” (1954h). In May they stood outside “all day” to see the Queen drive past Big Ben and Shirley wrote that the views were “marvellous” after they ate their cut lunch (1954k; 1954a, n.p.).

Weekly church attendance was part of the routine, and while sight-seeing Shirley and Beth attended church services at Westminster Abbey in February, and Canterbury Cathedral at Easter in April. They met the choirmaster who had visited Camden’s St Johns Church at home and thought the service at Canterbury Cathedral “was a wonderful experience to see and hear the Archbishop preach. We stayed for two services.” Shirley felt that “this is one Easter we shall never forget” (1954a, n.p.). Their Canterbury visit was reported in the Camden press and stated that the women were “most impressed with the beautiful Cathedral, the choir, the procession and exquisite robes and the experience was one never to forget” (*Camden News*, 13 May 1954).

Weekend outings included several sites linked to the scouting movement that occupied Shirley and Beth’s time in Australia – they were cub leaders in the Camden scout troop. The women’s athleticism fitted the imagery of “the Australian girl” from novels of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historian Sharon Crozier-De Rosa argues the Australian girl was imagined as a “beauty,” “healthy,” “robust,” “tom-boyish,” and a “real pal” (250). Woollacott contends that Australian women were recognised in the United Kingdom for their athletic bodies (182). Shirley and Beth fitted these stereotypes, and both regularly played tennis while in London (1954g). They confirmed these representations of Australian womanhood when they spent a weekend with the Hertfordshire Scout troop at their camp in March (1954a, n.p.). Shirley recorded that both of them played games with the scouts “in the woods.” She wrote that “I never did so much running in all my life” (1954f). In August the women visited the Gilwell Park scout camp (1954n), the home of leadership training for the global scouting movement, while earlier in the year they had seen the Imperial Scout headquarters in London and the Baden Powell museum (1954b).

## 8. Extended Sight-seeing and Visiting Relatives

A European summer holiday in June was the first of Shirley and Beth’s extended sight-seeing journeys. They went to Belgium and Holland for ten days with two friends (1954l) and visited Ostende, La Panne, Dunkirk and Brugge. In the late summer, they teamed with another couple, hired a station wagon and went on a

three-week road trip around England, Wales and Scotland (20 August –12 September). The *Camden News* reported their adventure at home in September and “described” it in “glowing words” as “3 wonderful weeks” (*Camden News*, 16 September 1954). Shirley meticulously recorded the detail of the trip: they covered “2500 miles in a 1948 Austin station wagon; averaged 37.5 miles per gallon; with hire charges of £9 per week; plus insurance of £4/-/9; used 68 gallons of fuel; and travelled on average 121 miles per day” (1954a, n.p.). Travellers Narelle Beck and husband Milton also undertook a road trip after they were married and set off in an old standard Vanguard around Europe, taking in many of the sights (Perrin 2019).

Shirley was an astute observer of her surroundings and provided a social and economic picture of country life in England, Wales and Scotland on her trip. She described a rayon factory at Greensfield in Wales, sheep farming methods in Scotland and the workings of a cider brewery at Little Copse in Devon. She noted that the brewery could “make ½ million gallons and 18 gallons [was] made from 1 ton of apples.” Shirley asked permission to inspect a coal mine at Plean in Scotland and compared it with the Clinton mine in Burrageorag Valley near Camden. She observed that the Scottish countryside “was like you see on calendars where sheep are roaming in the hills. Was awfully pretty and enjoyed it very much” (1954a, n.p.).

The dark shadow of the Second World War was part of Shirley and Beth’s sight-seeing experience. Shirley wrote that there was still evidence of the war with fortifications and destruction at Naples, Marseilles and Dunkirk. She noted that while at Antwerp in June, “one could see the damage made in wartime” (1954a, n.p.). In 1947 Camden teacher Patricia Fraser found London to be “sad and weary, the stress and strain still evident in the devastation and the worn looking faces” (Colman 55).

Part of the travel experience for many Australian women who visited the United Kingdom was visiting family relatives. Shirley and Beth left this activity until the end of their holiday, and travelling by bus visited family relatives at Manchester, Durham and Buckingham. They were shown the local sights and caught up on family news and gossip, and then expected to tell all their stories to those at home in Australia. Exchanging gifts was part of the visiting ritual as was the obligation of sending gifts to family and friends at home in Australia. To fulfil these commitments, Shirley got busy shopping early in the trip. She packed her first gift parcel for Australia two weeks after her arrival in England in February (1954c) and continued the practice throughout her trip. Historian Emma Gleadhill argues that gift-giving was a cultural practice of women and showed affection between giver and receiver. Gift-giving was part of a souvenir culture that supported female sensibilities and emotions (Gleadhill 2019). Shirley’s gift-giving was a tangible expression of her affection and love for those at home. Shirley was sending home part of the ‘old country,’ a little sample of their cultural heritage.

## 9. Conclusion

Camden’s Shirley Dunk and Beth Jackman set out on their transnational adventure negotiating the world as both travellers and tourists. Modernity was the essence of their experiences, yet they retained their identity as country girls and viewed the sights and their travel experience through that lens. The cosmopolitan nature of metropolitan London shaped their daily lives and how they navigated London’s urban life and their travel experiences across the United Kingdom and beyond. Shirley and Beth had several sites of consumption throughout their journey that included: their daily existence in London; sight-seeing in and around London; their road trips; their purchase of souvenirs for family and friends; the cost of their transport; and a host of other sites. For Shirley, the journey was a pilgrimage, a life-changing experience, and a once in a life-time adventure and rite-of-passage. When interviewed, Shirley talked nostalgically about her trip sixty years ago as a part tourist and part traveller. Her journey was one of the most significant events in her life.

There were commonalities of experience amongst these women travellers. For example, traveller Patricia Fraser said that she participated in Camden farewell parties, and travelled throughout the United Kingdom and Europe on a “very meagre budget.” She created a 700-page travel diary, worked as a relief school teacher in Scotland and after her return to Australia in 1949 re-married (Colman 91). Narelle Beck wrote a memoir for her family on her return called “Our Fortunate Life” (Perrin 2019), while Fraser published her story as a memoir called *Just a Simple Soul* (Colman). Travellers recalled the nostalgic memories of their journey, and for their families, this “was something that Mum always talked about.”

Escape was a common theme amongst these travellers while others sought career advancement, adventure and freedom. Flight from social expectations, the confines of family life and the gender expectations of domesticity informed Shirley and Beth’s decision to travel. Influenced by modernity and consumerism, they sought adventure and new horizons. For Shirley this meant not returning to her old job and as early as June 1954 got her father to ask around Camden businesses for another job (1954m). On her return to Australia, she moved out of home, lived at Bondi, worked in Sydney city, and delayed getting married until she was 28 years old. Maturing during her year away from Australia Shirley developed a more comprehensive view of the world and the opportunities it could present to her as a “Modern Girl.”

This article only hints at the individual travel stories that are part of a larger narrative of young Australia women acting as travellers and tourists and going to Europe. These stories are part of women’s history that is still hidden in the shadows of the past and remains mostly untold. The lives of some of these women have been the subject of study by family historians. I have benefited from their assistance in the compilation of this paper. This area of research is a rich area for furthering inter-disciplinary studies, especially those interested in genealogy, biography, gender and tourism studies.

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