

# out of THE STORES the riches of Mitchell



Commemorative coronation mug, 1937.

Cecil Ballard Collection

Approximately 95 per cent of the National Historical Collection is stored in the Museum's repository buildings in the northern Canberra suburb of Mitchell. In our first article in this series, we have searched the Mitchell stores for objects that tell something of the story of the Queen Mother and her place in Australian history. We hope that in the issues of *Friends* to come, you will enjoy learning more about our fascinating collections held at Mitchell.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, born on 4 August 1900, was the mother of Queen Elizabeth II and the widow of the late King George VI. The Queen Mother's remarkable life spanned over a century — a period of immense change. Having married Prince Albert, Duke of York, in 1923, she found herself Queen Consort on the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936. As Queen, she played a significant role in Britain, supporting the King and helping to uphold national morale during the difficult years of the Second World War and its aftermath.

Widowed at the age of 51, she continued to undertake royal duties for the next 50 years in support of her daughter, the Queen, and continued to make public appearances right up to the end of her life. The Queen Mother died peacefully in her sleep on Saturday 30 March 2002 at Royal Lodge, Windsor.

The royal family has always held an important place in Australian history and in the lives of many Australians. The National Museum's association with the Queen Mother began when she and her husband (then the Duke and Duchess of York) opened the provisional Parliament House in Canberra in 1927. The Museum has an excellent collection of material commemorating this visit, including the 1926 Crossley Landaulette (the 'Canberra') used in the 1927 royal tour, and an invitation to 'view the ceremonies connected with the Establishment of the Seat of Government in Canberra 9 May 1927', which is currently on display in the Nation gallery.

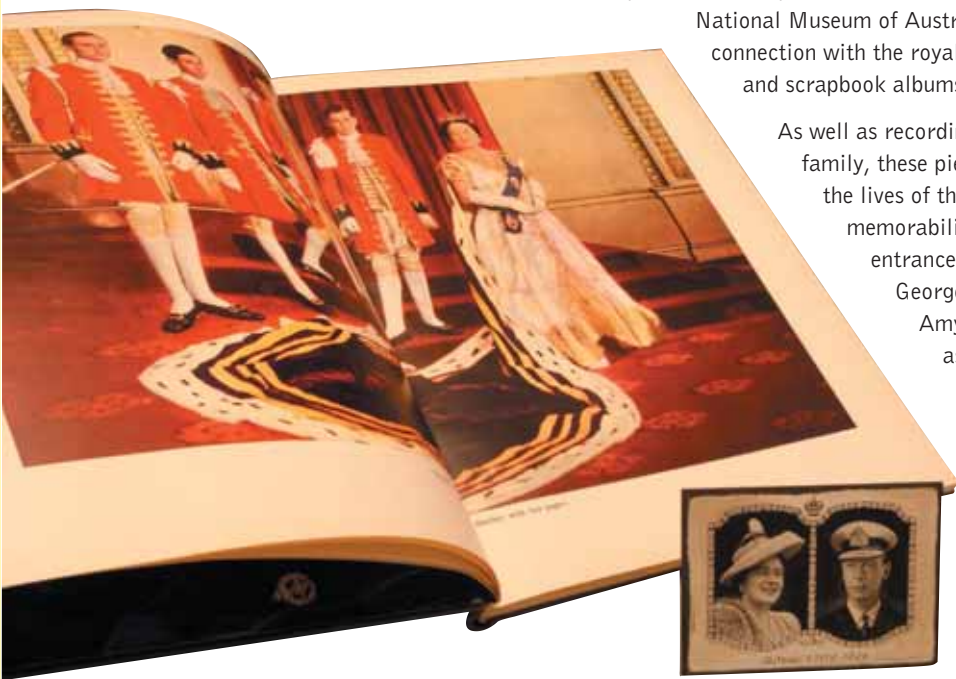
On subsequent visits to Australia by the Queen Mother in 1958 and 1966, numerous commemorative books, china and decorative items were produced for a public eager to obtain a memento of the royal visit. The

National Museum of Australia houses a diverse collection reflecting the connection with the royal family, from commemorative cups, plates and scrapbook albums to objects documenting the republic debate.

As well as recording Australia's fascination with the royal family, these pieces also represent important moments in the lives of their donors. The Amy Hudson collection of memorabilia relating to women's cricket also contains an entrance ticket to the Coronation of King

George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 12 May 1937.

Amy was in England at the time of the coronation as part of the 1937 Australian Women's Cricket Tour. This flimsy entrance ticket was carefully preserved by Amy and donated to the Museum along with other memorabilia from the tour.



The Queen Mother and her pages from *The Queen Elizabeth Coronation Souvenir*, 1937.

Koomari Collection



Miniature of the Queen Mother as a young woman.

Cecil Ballard Collection

# memories of the QUEEN MUM

1900–2002

One of the larger objects held in store associated with the Queen Mother is the Crossley, one of a fleet of 12 cars brought out from England for the 1927 royal tour. Of these cars, only two were of the luxury Landaulette style, named the 'Canberra' in recognition of the new models used by the royal family while in Australia. The Crossley Canberras went into limited production after the royal tour and were purchased for other royal fleets and government dignitaries. The original Crossley Canberras were returned to the Crossley dealer after the royal tour and sold into private hands.



The Crossley.  
photographer unknown

The Museum's Crossley is a rare example of this prestige English make. Only five examples of the Canberra limousine are known to exist worldwide. Of the cars used in the 1927 royal tour, the Museum's is the only one known to still have matching engine and chassis numbers from the inventory of vehicles brought out for the tour. The car is fitted with a six-cylinder OHV engine of 3.2-litre capacity. It has a four-speed gearbox and a maximum speed of approximately 140 kilometres per hour. The car was purchased by the Commonwealth as an object of national significance through the personal intervention of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in December 1976.

Over the last 40 years, the car has undergone three restoration programs: one by the owner who sold it to the Commonwealth in 1976, one by the Commonwealth soon after its purchase, and one contracted by the Museum in preparation for the 1988 bicentennial rally.



Museum conservator, David Thorrowgood, and automotive supervisor, Col Ogilvie, working on the Crossley, April 2002.

photo: Dean Golga

During a recent collection survey by the Museum's conservation section, the Crossley was identified as needing immediate attention to prevent deterioration so that it can continue as a functional vehicle. The survey of the vehicle revealed that it had led a very hard life during its early working period, with many parts of the car worn and unsafe for operation. Close examination also revealed that the restoration work on the car was far from satisfactory, and in many instances repairs were short term, merely to keep the car on the road. It was also evident that the upholstery and paint were not original, as was the modern chrome plate on the exterior of the vehicle where nickel and silver plate were originally used. A decision was taken to begin the first stage of the vehicle's conservation by addressing the mechanical faults. A second stage of the Crossley project will address the non-original fittings and finishes.

Scientific research carried out by the conservation section suggests that early vehicles such as the Crossley should have a safe museum working life with negligible wear of at least 250 years. This is only possible with appropriate maintenance, lubrication and use schedules. The Crossley conservation project aims to ensure the car's long-term preservation through a structured maintenance scheme.

The Crossley — a significant item in the Museum's collection relating to the Queen Mother and her place in Australian history — should once again be available for public display later this year.

David Thorrowgood, Maria Ramsden and Melinda Smith  
Collections Management



Souvenir poster of the 1927 royal visit to Australia by the Duke and Duchess of York, 1927.

People's Paraphernalia Collection #12