

Press release
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**‘Australasia through a lens’:
The National Archives puts historic photographic collection online**

Thousands of early photographs of Australia have been released [online](#) by The National Archives (UK) in London ahead of this year’s Australia Day (26/01/2013) celebrations.

The collection contains almost 2,000 images of Australian towns, buildings, landmarks and people dating back to the middle of the 19th century and includes rarely-seen panoramas of Sydney harbour as it looked in 1870.

By uploading the pictures to the photo-sharing website [Flickr](#), The National Archives is hoping that visitors will tag and contribute comments and suggestions to help improve the descriptions.

Steven Cable, photographic records specialist at The National Archives, said:
“The confidence and civic pride of the Victorian era shine through in the municipal views, architectural studies and exhibitions captured by the many photographic studios operating in Australia at the end of the 19th century. Though the environs may have changed, many buildings remain instantly recognisable today, a testimony to the spirit of the age”.

The images have been digitised as part of The National Archives’ ‘World through a lens’ project which has seen thousands of photographs from the British Colonial Office collection released online since 2011.

‘[Australasia through a lens](#)’ also includes more than a thousand photographs and drawings of [New Zealand](#), [Papua New Guinea](#), [Fiji](#), [Tonga](#), [Vanuatu](#) and other Pacific islands.

Highlights from the collection include:

- Stunning panorama of [Sydney harbour](#) taken in 1870
- The [Garden Palace](#), Sydney, photographed in 1880, before its destruction by fire
- Views of [Melbourne Cricket Club](#) (M.C.C) and [St Paul’s Cathedral](#) in 1912
- [Prime Minister’s Lodge](#), Canberra in 1927
- Street scenes of [Adelaide](#), [Brisbane](#) and [Perth](#) at the turn of the century
- Photographic views of [Tasmania](#) in 1870
- Album depicting the arrival of the first [Governor General](#) in Australia
- Coloured paintings of [New Zealand](#) by naturalist George French Angas
- Early 20th century photographs of [Wellington](#), [Auckland](#) and [Dunedin](#)
- Five volumes of photographs of [Papua New Guinea](#) from 1885

To access the collection visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/australasia from Friday 25 January, 2013

For more information, pictures and interview requests please contact The National Archives press office on 02083925277 or e-mail press@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Notes to editors

The Colonial Office Library's photographic collection, catalogue reference CO 1069, was transferred to The National Archives in Kew, west London, in 2005 following the closure of the Colonial Office Library and was made accessible to the public following conservation work in 2008. It is made up of more than 35,000 photographs, sketches and drawings from across the British Empire and offers a unique insight into life in the colonies from the second half of the 19th century through to the 20th century.

The pictures were taken, painted and drawn in response to instructions from the 2nd Earl Granville, who as Secretary of State for the Colonies in the 1860s requested that governors arrange for the taking of photographs of "noteworthy buildings and scenery...together with individuals peculiar to the colony". His instructions coincided with technological developments in the new art of photography. Over the years, changes in overseas departments saw photographic items from the Foreign Office, Dominions Office and Commonwealth Relations Office find their way into the collection. The majority of photographs relating to India are held at the British Library alongside the East India Company and India Office records. Last year, images of Hong Kong and China in the Asia through a lens collection attracted hundreds of thousands of online visitors. In 2011, The National Archives' Africa through a lens project resulted in more than a thousand user-generated descriptions which can be used to inform future generations about the records and what they depict.

About The National Archives

For the record, for good...The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, we look after and make available to the public a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files. Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.