

# Introduction

Su Baker

Cultural treasures can wend their way into museums, libraries and archives in strange and unexpected ways. Many of the paintings, artefacts, specimens, books and other precious items that today make up the cultural collections of the University of Melbourne arrived at their permanent home after surprising journeys and meanderings. The proud marble bust of Sir Samuel Wilson, one of the university's most generous benefactors, caused consternation among Melbourne academics when in 1886 it arrived unannounced in a packing crate from England. In this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections*, Dr James Waghorne recounts this curious anecdote, and we can only be thankful that the sculpture survived another perilous incident—the disastrous Wilson Hall fire of 1952.

A group of marine life specimens that are now part of the Tiegs Zoology Museum was gathered from the sea by an expedition of University of Melbourne scientists exploring Australia's coastal environments in the 1930s. The McCoy Society, named in honour of one of our four founding professors, camped for weeks in the summer of 1936 on the inhospitable Lady Julia Percy Island near Warrnambool, making efforts to understand the ecology, plants and

animals of that part of Victoria. Rohan Long recounts the story for us here.

Dr Caitlin Stone tells us about a collection that reflects the journeys of people, not of artefacts: that of International House Melbourne. This hall of residence was established in the 1950s in response to a severe shortage of student housing, particularly for overseas students. But it went on to serve an even greater purpose: to promote international cooperation and goodwill between Australia, our Asian neighbours, and countries further away.

A very large collection that arrived in Melbourne from England relatively recently is the Germaine Greer Archive. Some 82 linear metres of papers and other records are the tangible result of more than half a century of academic teaching and research, political activism and writing by one of Melbourne's most famous alumnae. Archivists Dr Rachel Buchanan and Dr Sebastian Gurciullo tell us about one small aspect of Professor Greer's wide-ranging personal and professional life: her involvement with Italy, where she had a house for some years, and met such significant figures as writer Primo Levi, filmmaker Federico Fellini

and singer Luciano Pavarotti. And as Greer's remarkable career continues, the archive continues to grow.

I trust that all readers will find much of interest among these and the other contributions to the December 2017 issue of *University of Melbourne Collections*.



**Professor Su Baker** is pro-vice-chancellor engagement at the University of Melbourne, and chairs the university's Cultural Collections Committee. Previously she was head of the School of Art and then director of the Victorian College of the Arts, and has had senior roles at the Sydney College of the Arts and the University of Sydney. As a visual artist she has regularly exhibited in public and commercial galleries across Australia.