

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 60

JOHN ROWLAND SKEMP COLLECTION

Naturalists, Northern Tasmania

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INTRODUCTION

John Rowland Skemp was born on 2 July 1900, son of Rowland and Florence (nee Kearney) Skemp of Myrtle Bank, in north-eastern Tasmania. John's father migrated from England to Tasmania in 1883 to join his brother, Samuel, who had arrived the previous year and had purchased 20 acres at Myrtle Bank in 1883. Florence Kearney was head teacher at the nearby Patersonia School from 1886 until she resigned in 1893, prior to her marriage to Rowland Skemp on 28 February 1894.

J R Skemp was educated at the Myrtle Bank School, where his mother was head teacher, and at Launceston High School. He won a scholarship to the University of Tasmania, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in 1924. During this time he joined the Education Department, spending two years as a teacher at schools in various parts of Tasmania. After visiting England in 1924, he returned to Tasmania and worked on the family farm at Myrtle Bank until he was appointed by the Education Department as museum education assistant at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, commencing on 1 July 1939. Apart from a year's leave of absence due to his father's poor health, he continued in this role until 1946.

Mr Skemp was author of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* articles on William Kearney and Esh Lovell and, with T E Burns, on R C Gunn. A prolific writer on natural history and Tasmanian history, he also gave numerous broadcasts for the ABC on these subjects. He published *Poems of a pioneer: selected poems by Rowland Skemp; with a foreword by his son John Rowland Skemp* c.1954.

In 1959 Mr Skemp, a foundation member, was made a life member of the Launceston Field Naturalists' Club in recognition of his contribution to Tasmanian natural history. He was appointed Honorary Research Associate in Botanical History by the University of Tasmania in 1960. The following year he was appointed a justice of the peace.

J R Skemp died on 12 May 1966, aged 65, at Launceston. He bequeathed approximately 50 hectares at Myrtle Bank to the Launceston Field Naturalists' Club. Called the John Skemp Field Study Centre, it is owned and operated by the Launceston Field Naturalists' Club, which also holds an annual John Skemp Memorial Lecture.

The collection was previously stored in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Botany Department. Additional material was donated in September and October 2002.

Major publications by J R Skemp:

Memories of Myrtle Bank: the bush farming experiences of Rowland and Samuel Skemp in north eastern Tasmania 1883-1948, Melbourne, 1952

Letters to Anne, Melbourne, 1956

Tasmania yesterday and today, Melbourne, 1958, second edition, 1959

Van Diemen's Land correspondents, with TE Burns, Launceston, 1961

A history of the North-West Coast, printed in *Tasmanian Education* 1962-1965

A history of Deloraine from the earliest settlement to the present day, Deloraine, 1964

My birds, Launceston, 1971

1.J R Skemp Correspondence

1/1	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1921-1938,
1/2	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1947-1956
1/3	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1957-1958
1/4	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1959
1/5	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1960-1961
1/6	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1962-1963
1/7	Correspondence to J R Skemp	1964-1966
1/8	31 letters sent to J R Skemp, March-May 1966, during his last illness	1966
1/9	Undated correspondence to J R Skemp	nd
1/10	Correspondence from J R Skemp	1954-1964
1/11	Seven postcards, various places and dates, to J R Skemp; five Paris postcards and one English with J R Skemp's ? handwriting on reverse	

2.J R Skemp Manuscripts

2/1	Handwritten poems by J R Skemp (in an exercise book, some illustrated with sketches)	nd, 1919, 1924
2/2	'Then and now: life on a Tasmanian farm fifty years ago and today', typescript play, with handwritten introduction, by J R Skemp; 'The miners: a scene on the goldfields', typescript play	nd
2/3	'Observations on colour changes in the male blue wren', (typescript and manuscript)	1960
2/4	'The Tasmanian West Coast monster' (typescript and manuscript, information letter from Tasmanian Museum, 1962, <i>Bulletin</i> 17/3/1962 cartoon, 2 photographs of <i>Advocate</i> expedition to the 'Monster'; manuscript letter to editor of <i>Wide World Magazine</i>)	1963
2/5	'Ronald Gunn and the Franklin Gardens'	nd
2/6	'Addendum to Birds' (one page)	nd
2/7	Source material for foreword to reprint of <i>Bush life in Tasmania</i> , (typed by T E Burns)	nd
2/8	'Mrs Fenton's diary' (typescript)	nd

- 2/9 'Tasmania today' (manuscript, typescript, illustrations for *Tasmania, yesterday and today*) nd
- 2/10 Notes, typescripts etc concerning Ronald Campbell Gunn (includes T E Burns correspondence, 1959-61)
- 2/11.1 Pages [1]-296 of typed manuscript, possibly 'The Tasmanian naturalist'
- 2/11.2 Pages [1]-296 of typed manuscript, possibly 'The Tasmanian naturalist'

3.J R Skemp Radio Broadcast Scripts

- 3/1 Radio broadcast scripts (some manuscript, some typescript) by J R Skemp: Billop owls; Bird friends; Bird watching, 1,2,3; Birds and ants; Birds of the beaches; Birds of the Bight; Blackberries; Bones-ancient and modern; Bunyips; Cape Barren geese; Flounder; Guardians of the paddocks; Ghost towns of NE coast, West Coast, South; Gorge Bridge; Gunns Plains; Hibernation; Hobler of Hobler's Bridge; Koala in Tasmania; Launceston's water supply; Lavender harvest; Legless lizards; Lewin rail; Long distance migrants; Migrants return; Modern whaling; Mollyhawks and Pacific gulls; Penguins; Moonlight concert in the Gorge ; Moorleah meteorite; Mt Barrow; Native cherry; Night calls of the bush; Old link with New Zealand; Other leguminous plants; Other myrtaceous plants; Our strange animals; Parrots and black jays; Petrified wood; Railway riots; Reaping match at Cressy; Ronald Campbell Gunn (1964); Sensible sea urchin; Smells and noses; Springtime fashions; Springtime skirmishes; Tasmanian devils; Tiger cat; Tigers; Trees in tree ferns; Useful weevil; Vegetables of the forest; When the wind is southerly (1950) nd
- 3/2 'The Dusky-Tasmania's peculiar robin' (typescript and manuscript by J R Skemp, photographs by H J King, but no photographs included) 1949
- 3/3 'Bird watching in autumn', (typescript of ABC broadcast, Correspondence School series, by J R Skemp, 1/3/1957) 1957
- 3/4 'Bird day programme' (typescript of ABC broadcast, Correspondence School Speaks series, by J R Skemp, 16/10/1959) 1959
- 3/5 'Tasmanian birds' nests' (typescript of ABC broadcast, Correspondence School Speaks series, by John Skemp, 14/10/1960) 1960

3/6 'Tasmanian writers and their work' by Robert Morrison. No.1. nd
John Rowland Skemp, Catherine Shepherd, ABC script

4.J R Skemp Miscellaneous Records

4/1 J R Skemp's birth certificate (born 2 July 1900) 1915

4/2 J R Skemp's leaving certificate 1918

4/3 Certificate showing subjects passed by J R Skemp to complete BSc degree 1924

4/4 Passengers' Contract Ticket, third class, for *Jervis Bay*, from London to Melbourne, issued to J R Skemp 1924

4/5 Identity card for John R Skemp, Myrtle Bank 1942

4/6 'Bird notes 1941- 42', notebook kept by J R Skemp, with geology notes at end of book 1941, 1942

4/8 Form re Myrtle Park Consolidated State School classification test, J R Skemp to assist in supervision of test 1953

4/10 J R Skemp's passport, issued Hobart, 1953 1953

4/12 Launceston Field Naturalists' Club, certificate of life membership to John Rowland Skemp; notice of annual meeting, 1961 1959, 1961

4/13 New Zealand itinerary for J R Skemp 1960

4/17 Historical Records Society of Tasmania, draft constitution, with list of founding members (includes J Skemp) nd

4/18 J R Skemp's Justice of the Peace certificate 1961

4/20 J R Skemp's will, 10 February 1966 (typed copy) 1966

4/21 Special visitors pass, LGH, for Miss Ainsworth to see Mr Skemp 1966

4/22 Agreement by J R Skemp to assign all his land at Myrtle Bank to Mrs R E Darnton, 9 May 1966 (typed copy) 1966

4/23 Poem carried by J R Skemp in his wallet (with copy typed by T E Burns) nd

4/24 'The Tasmanian jackass', 'As sing the birds', 'Envoy', 'In a fern gully', 'Life', 'London skies', poems by J R Skemp (typed by T E Burns) nd

4/25 *Examiner*? obituary for J R Skemp c 12 May 1966 1966

- 4/26 Original letters and other items used by J R Skemp in writing
Letters to Anne
- 4/27 Folder of pencil sketches by J R Skemp (folder includes drawings
by young children; 2 watercolours and 2 pages of pencil drawings
by Samuel Skemp)
- 4/28 'View from East. "Reediford Holm", Myrtle Bank', pencil sketch
by J R Skemp (in 210 x 260 mm frame)
- 4/29 'Mt Barrow from Reediford Holm, Myrtle Bank', watercolour by
J R Skemp (pencil drawing of girl on reverse)

5. J R Skemp's Estate

- 5/1 Correspondence concerning Launceston Field Naturalists' Club, 1966-1974; List of household furniture, 1966, Notebook concerning the estate, compiled by N L Campbell, a trustee, 1966-1971; Correspondence, 1966-1973 1966-1974

6. T E Burns Correspondence concerning J R Skemp and J R Skemp's Estate

- 6/1 General correspondence 1954-1974

7. Florence Skemp Records

- 7/1 Correspondence to Miss Kearney (later Mrs Skemp): 5/1/1892 from Rowland Skemp, Myrtle Bank; 15/1/1893 from Rowland Skemp, Myrtle Bank 1892-1893
- 7/2 Correspondence to Mrs Skemp: 29/5/1894 from AMP, enclosing marriage certificate for Florence Susanna Kearney and Benjamin Rowland Skemp, married 28/2/1894 at Richmond 1894
- 7/3 Correspondence to Mrs Skemp: 15/5/1901 from R Marriott, Scottsdale; 17/5/1905 from [Rowland] Myrtle Bank, with notes from Jack and Les (letter is incomplete); 11/7/1911 from niece, Cheltenham (letter is incomplete); 2/8/1911 from Ida; 1917 Christmas card from J C Eastman, 12th Battalion, France; 28/1/1920 from Lottie?, Colwyn Bay; 5/3/1920 from Les, Flinders Island; 14/8/1920 from Blakeston & Brown, East Yorkshire; 7/1/1923 from Rowland, Myrtle Bank; 9/4/1924 from R Ernest Smith, Rosevears; 21/9/1926 from Gladys, Bridport; 27/11/1927 from Polly, England?; 30/9/1928 from Polly; 8/7/1930 from Tinning, Propsting & Masters, Hobart; nd from Polly; Les, Waitara; nd to Grandma from Rowland, Waitara; birthday postcard from Vera 1901-1930
- 7/4 Isle of Man postcards (17) to Mrs Skemp from Pattie? (2 from Pattie? and Polly) c1908
- 7/5 Correspondence from Florence Skemp: 29/1/1894 to Sam 1894,

	(brother-in-law); 15/6/1921 to Jack (son); 9/10/1921 to Jack; 30/10/1921 to Jack; 12/8/1924 to Jack	1921,1924
7/6	Poems by Florence Skemp: 'Lines', 27/12/1892; 'To Roland', 22/2/1893; 'To Rowland', 4/3/1893; 'A dream', 5/3/1893; 'A dream of perfect love, 5/3/1893; 21/4/1893; 17/5/1893; 'To Roland', 24/8/1893; 'To our Mother', 7/8/1898	1892-1898
7/7	Mrs Skemp's diary, 19 January-21 December 1925 (mainly weather, natural history records concerning items brought by pupils?; records of teaching materials used listed at back of book	1925
7/8	1901 calendar inscribed 'To Flo from Tom, Xmas 1900'	1900
7/11	Agreement concerning loan by Mrs Skemp to trustees of Myrtle Park recreation ground	1929
7/12	Newspaper cutting from <i>North Eastern Advertiser</i> re function at Myrtle Bank Hall to mark Mrs Skemp's resignation from the Education Department	c1930
7/13	Florence Skemp's will, 25 October 1934 (typed copy)	1934
7/14	A series of United Kingdom postcards to Mrs Skemp from Pattie/Patty, 1908-1921; A series of English postcards to Mrs Skemp from various correspondents, 1903-1924; A series of Australian and New Zealand postcards (9) to Mrs Skemp from various correspondents, 1909-1922	1903-1924

8.Rowland Skemp Records

8/1	'Subscription on behalf of Rowland Skemp...who is obliged to leave his country on account of bad health'	nd
8/2	Correspondence to Rowland Skemp	1885-1925
8/3	Plan of land, Dorset, Patersonia, owned by Rowland Skemp	1890
8/4	Receipt for W A Carins and R Skemp for five pounds for Patersonia? chapel organ fund; R Skemp's receipt re loan to Patersonia Methodist Church	1902, 1915
8/6	Mr Skemp's account from William Seddon, Launceston, for boot repair; receipt from J Dunn, Launceston, for cement	1919, 1921
8/7	Correspondence to Rowland Skemp from Law, Weston & Archer, Launceston, concerning Annie Boden's estate, includes probate for Randolph Boden, 1919	1932
8/8	Rowland Skemp's will (typed copy)	1934

8/9 Three English postcards to Rowland Skemp from Pattie 1908-09

9. Skemp Family Miscellaneous Items

9/1 Remembrance card for Thomas Skemp, died 1874;
remembrance card for Mary Skemp, died 1878 1874, 1878

9/2 Birthday card inscribed 'May 4, Mr Skemp Snr' 1881

9/3 'A short trip to the Isle of Man, July 1881' by Samuel Skemp
(typed and with notation by T E Burns, 1980) 1881

9/4 'Running a secretarial agency', article re Norma Skemp and
Skemp House, London, in *The Lady*, February 1968 1968

9/5 7 postcards, various places and dates, to Les Skemp

10. Ada Emily Kearney Records

10/1 Correspondence to Ada Kearney: 8/1/1908 from Arthur Kearney,
York?Hotel; 4/5/1916 from Mick Burke?, On Active Service,
Egypt, with group photograph; 21/5/1934 from Flo (sister);
12/10/1934 from Law & Weston & Archer, Launceston;
14/11/1934 from Amy (cousin) Grafton, New Zealand; nd from
Pauline (niece) Campania 1908,
1916, 1934

10/2 St Patrick's River Produce Show, first prize for dressed fowls
awarded to Miss Kearney, 17 March 1934 (blue card) 1934

10/3 Estate of Ada Emily Kearney, accounts from Archer, Hall &
Campbell 1943, 1945

11. Lovell/Kearney Records

11/1 Lovell family tree (rough manuscript); family notes

11/2 Remembrance card for H Hopkins, died 1870, sent to John Kearney,
Laburnum Park sabbeth school 1870

11/3 William Kearney's purchase records (4) for land at Enfield, 1883;
remembrance card for William Kearney, died 1914 1883, 1914

11/4 Letter to David Pitt, Richmond, from Tinning & Propsting, re
Mrs Kearney's land at Campania 1897

11/5 Remembrance card for Violet Mildred Kearney, died 25 November
1903 1903

12. Photographs

12/1	Anne Lovell (later Mrs Thomas Kearney)	nd
12/2	Ada and Florence Kearney	c1875
12/3	Rowland Skemp	c1882
12/4	Leslie Skemp with unidentified child (2 small photographs on a card)	nd
12/5	Myrtle Bank School, group includes Mrs Skemp and Mrs Imlach	c1906
12/7	Vernon Alexander, Myrtle Bank, Tasmania (Vandyck Studios, Launceston)	nd
12/8	Sid Bowden (in soldier's uniform) (Spurling Studio, Launceston)	nd
12/9	Elliot Woolley (Crawford's Studio, Hobart)	nd
12/10	Photograph of "Sandringham House" inscribed 'Yours sincerely Les, Jan 25 1916'. 'On active service no.4881', with message on reverse	1916
12/11	Aunt Ada, Les, Mum	c1917
12/12	Les (Skemp) and his pet cow	nd
12/13	Unidentified family group, parents and 4 children. 'To dear Aunty Flo. This is how we looked when 'snapped' by an amateur in our garden in June 1924'	1924
12/14	'To Aunt Flo & Aunt Ada with love from Pauline & Mildred'	nd
12/15	Sefton & Frances; Mum & Frances, Napier, Xmas 1929	1929
12/16	Orchard, garden, paddock at "Reediford Holm", 3 b&w photographs by T E Burns	1942
12/17	Rowley Skemp	1956
12/18	Mark Jonathon Skemp	1961
12/19	"Glen Carron", South Gippsland, lady in foreground, inscribed '...from Nan, Bill & family'	1966
12/20	B&w photograph of grave inscribed 'Robert Lovell Kearney, Peak Hill, WA Died 2 nd July 1918	

12/21	Member of Skemp family (tintype)	
12/23	Myrtle Bank School, group includes Mrs Skemp and J R Skemp	c1902
12/24	Roland Dawson-Bowling	1952
12/25	Baptist Chapel, Peel St., Eccles	nd
12/26	Miscellaneous photographs	nd

13. Miscellaneous Items

13/1	'Visit to Windermere' (England), manuscript, 4 pages	1879
13/2	Remembrance card, Constance Chrystobel Grining, died 21 June 1904, Kalgoorlie	1904
13/3	New Year's wishes from Jennie, Sheffield	1910
13/4	With compliments wedding? card from Mr & Mrs Geo. Carins (nee Miss B G Brown)	1915
13/5	Thanks for sympathy note from George Brown and daughter	1923
13/6	Minutes of meeting held at Patersonia Hall to discuss proposal to approach Premier to have Patersonia Road made State Highway (in notebook)	nd
13/7	Plan of graveyard, Patersonia (photocopy)	nd
13/8	Commonwealth War Damage Commission, demand for contribution in respect of fixed property for Upper Myrtle Bank Hall	1942
13/9	Myrtle Park Consolidated School Parents' & Friends Committee: Minutes of meeting (Mr Skemp present at meeting) (nd); Constitution, 1958; Annual meeting (Mr Skemp was acting chairman), 1965	1958-1965
13/12	Myrtle Park Cricket Club, account from Fotheringhams; account from Athol Martin, nd	1965
13/13	'2 new Skemp awards', <i>Examiner</i> 16 December 1969 (re memorial prizes presented at Myrtle Park prize day)	1969

OTHER SOURCES

QVMAG, Community History, 1998.MS.0042

QVMAG, Community History, QVM 1, correspondence files 1939-1946

Launceston Reference Library, manuscript, Skemp Family Papers (these papers complement CHS 60)

The Launceston Field Naturalist, vol. 1, no. 7, May 1968, vol. 2, no. 1, October 1968