

Ken Orchard



Ken Orchard was born in Keith, S.A. in 1959, and has worked as a Registration Officer at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide since 2007. Initially training as a visual artist in Adelaide and Sydney, he has exhibited widely in Australia and internationally since the 1980s. Over the past three decades he has also sustained a deep interest in the history of Australian colonial photography, publishing extensively on the work of German-born Australian photographer, J. W. Lindt.

Ken's association with Mildura commenced in 1994, when he gave a presentation for the Mildura & District Historical Society on a series of 1862 stereographic photographs taken by Murray River-borne travelling photographers George Burnell and E. W. Cole.

In 1995 his Sunraysia research was instrumental in identifying the location of Wilhelm Blandowski's Victorian Government supported Natural History Survey (1857) camp site at Chaffey Landing, Merbein, a discovery which has subsequently led to the recovery and reappraisal of an important chapter in the Aboriginal history of the region, and of Australian science more broadly.

In 1997 Ken was associated with the unveiling of the Memorial Cairn at the site of the Yelta Mission Station near Lock 10, and contributed to the Mildura 150th Celebrations in the same year, authoring a number of articles for the special issue of the Sunraysia Daily newspaper.

More recently Ken undertook an Assessment Report for the Mildura Arts Centre on J. W. Lindt's lantern slide collection and, at the invitation of the Rural City of Mildura, gave the 2019 Mildura Sister City 50th Anniversary Lecture at the Old Mildura Station Woolshed on these slides and other photographs from the series that Lindt produced under commission to the Chaffey Brothers in 1889.

In late 2023 Ken was invited to give a public presentation for the exhibition J. W. Lindt in Sunraysia curated by the Mildura Arts Centre, and collaborated with film-maker Ian McWilliams on a documentary showcasing the exhibition, produced for the Frames of History series currently under production.



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The Chaffey Brothers were renowned for their deployment of state of the art engineering technology in their quest to inaugurate and develop ambitious irrigation settlements in both the United States and Australia in the 1880s. The scope of these technologies, in the Australian context, is evidenced in their use of sophisticated imported engineering equipment and pumping works, which enabled rapid horticultural settlement to take place in Mildura following its establishment in 1887.

One of the technologies used to further the Chaffey's aspirations to ensure the success of their ambitious irrigation scheme – and not sufficiently well recognised - was their co-opting of the medium of photography, which, during the 1880s underwent its own technological advancements following the development and introduction of the dry-plate photographic process. This development, coupled with the broad-scale manufacture and distribution of photographic lantern slides, transformed the way in which photographic images could be made in the field and subsequently showcased to increasingly mobile and dispersed audiences both in Australia and overseas.

This address will explore some of the ways in which photography was harnessed by the Chaffey Brothers, by referencing three significant photographic collections surviving in the Sunraysia district. It will also bring into sharper focus the valuable pictorial record of progress made in the Mildura irrigation colony in those early years, by highlighting the pictorial inventiveness of the photographers, Baker and Farquahar (Melbourne), J. W. Lindt (Melbourne), and E. E. Oswald (Mildura), whose work, taken together, has left subsequent generations a unique visual legacy.

**Tickets to see
Ken Orchard**

