

Obituaries: Tributes to three of our finest

- From: [The Advertiser](#)
- August 27, 2011 12:00AM



Colin Freeman, Peter Schodde and Audrey McMurtrie.

THIS week we pay tribute to an adventurer, a McLaren Vale identity and a science educator.

COLIN FREEMAN

Sportsman, teacher, adventurer

Born: August 28, 1937; Harrogate, England

Died: May 28, 2011; Canberra

THE man who became a sportsman, scientist, librarian, explorer, naturalist, information technologist, author, teacher and diplomat spent his early years as a child of the Blitz wandering the streets and parks of London and Sunderland.

For a child of an inquiring mind, this freedom to explore unshackled was pure bliss. The world became Colin's school room - PNG, the Canadian Arctic, US, Nepal, Tajikstan. He could read by age four and devoured books, especially those of adventure which stirred his fertile mind.

Colin was elder son of Gordon (a painter and decorator) and Ruby Freeman (nee Naden). The Freemans arrived in Adelaide from the UK in 1951.

From Finsbury Migrant Hostel, the family moved to Laura where Gordon restored the Lutheran church for elder Johann Heinrich Klemm - and Colin met a great-granddaughter, Marion Klemm, who would become his wife.

The Freemans then settled in Adelaide where Colin attended Woodville High School. He began work as a claims clerk with South Australian Railways and moved to Dunlop Rubber before doing national service in the Engineering Corps. Colin married Marion in November, 1959.

In 1960, he enrolled in a science degree at the University of Adelaide, majoring in zoology and ecology. While at university, he worked in the Public Library of SA, gaining a Library Association Preliminary Certificate.

In 1963, after a period at the SA Engineering and Water Supply departmental library, Colin was appointed librarian to the Adelaide Botanic Garden.

In 1967, he accepted a post as librarian for the New Guinea Collection at the new University of Papua New Guinea and collated 200 years of writing. He lived in Port Moresby with his family until 1972.

In 1972, he was appointed as principal librarian at the National Library of Australia in Canberra and six years later turned diplomat, becoming liaison librarian for North America and first assistant secretary at the Australian embassy in Washington, DC. Colin became increasingly involved in the growing field of information technology and obtained a Master of Science in Information Studies at the University of Sheffield.

Always thirsting for knowledge and mastering new techniques, he returned to Canberra in the 1980s as an information systems analyst, working on Medline and tax evasion tracking. From 1989 to 2006, he was a senior lecturer at the University of New South Wales, the Australian Defence Academy and then Australian National University.

Colin was a prolific writer and traveller. He walked the Kokoda Track twice and from Wau to Bulldog. Always multi-tasking, he was biologist, aqualung diver and overall co-ordinator for the Columbia University Expedition to the Louisiade Archipelago in the Coral Sea. Colin completed four books: two co-authored on the arts and crafts of the country and his Wau to Bulldog: Across the Roof of Papua New Guinea plus his autobiography Voyage to the Antipodes and What Happened Thereafter.

Colin was also a noted sportsman, captaining the University of Adelaide rugby union side and gaining a blue. In 1963 he played for SA.

He later served as captain-coach of the University of Papua New Guinea side, coaching the national touring side in 1968.

A qualified open-water scuba diver, he dived with giant manta rays off Heron Island, became president of the SA Museum of Underwater Research and helped establish marine coastal reserves. He dived in many countries, including an Arctic dive in Canada at the age of 60.

In later years, he undertook UN and Asian Development Bank consultancies in Nepal, Thailand, central Asia and Vietnam.

Colin Freeman is survived by his wife, Marion (nee Klemm), daughters Melissa and Cassandra and three grandchildren.

Anthony Radford with Melissa Freeman
