

In 1834 William Charles Rigby was born in London. During his youth he worked in a London booksellers shop, and by a curious coincidence alongside him were two youths who were to become the heads of the largest bookselling and publishing concerns in Australasia.¹ In 1853 he purchased a 48 ton lugger "The Gem" and sailed to Australia with his family and a crew of seven men.²

He came to Adelaide in 1859 and opened a bookshop at 53 Hindley Street, Adelaide with five cases of stock valued at £229.16.7d. The city and colony were only twenty three years old and the settlers avidly sought out books to read, and W. C. Rigby slowly began to establish a reputation as a supplier of fine books, with the result that his bookshop thrived.³

By 1875 with the business growing he bought larger premises at number 64' (later 74) and commenced trading from there in 1876. Within a few years he became one of Adelaide's leading booksellers and kept this position in the trade until he retired on his 75th birthday in 1909. He died in 1913.⁴

John Morley Bath took over the running of the business, which marked time through World War I. In the early 1920's it expanded into King William Street and included an up-to-date library, chemist and soda fountain; in fact Rigbys became quite famous for their milk shakes. In the mid 20's Rigbys retail outlet was sold and it was not restored until they bought the Coles Book Arcade in the early 30's. By 1939 the company was thriving, having been through a period of pitiful sales, but that prosperity was interrupted by World War II.⁵

In 1945 J. Morley Bath died. He had been a fine man, respected by his staff and business associates, and had fought particularly hard to stop the government from putting sales tax on books. V. M. Branson took over as managing director, and was to continue to head Rigbys until 1973.

Rigbys expanded into educational publishing in 1947 and then moved into general publishing, with books by and for Australians. The 1950's saw branches opened in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney and by 1956 all of Rigbys Adelaide operations were consolidated under the one roof at premises in James Place, which was the most up-to-date school bookshop and wholesale warehouse in Australia.⁶ Rigbys celebrated their centenary in 1959 with an outstanding year, with full page coverage in the papers. Their list of publications, especially text books increased rapidly during this time. A Perth Branch opened in 1962.

In 1973 when the ownership of the company changed hands V.M. Branson left the company and staff numbers had expanded from 44 people in 1947 to over 200 in 1973. Rigbys had become the largest Australian owned book publisher by 1977, commanding some 6.5% of the retail market and representing 35% of the sales of Australian owned publishing. It had branches in all mainland capital cities and was to publish over 300 books in the following year. Staff numbers totalled over 250 people, half of whom were based in Adelaide and the other half in the four mainland cities.⁷

Octopus Books, who had commenced a franchise with Rigbys in 1973 and the MacMillan Company, chaired by Mr. Paul Hamlyn were both interested in taking over Rigbys in 1977, but these offers did not eventuate. On the 30th June 1978 the Octopus franchise was terminated. By 1979 Rigbys was Australia's largest publisher and was producing up to 400 new titles each year. It was in 1979 that Reed Consolidated Industries Limited (a Sydney company) took over Rigbys on the 29th May, with Mr. Kevin Weldon and Mr. Keith Hand joining the board and then being appointed directors of the company.^{8,9} Rigbys Limited then became part of the Rigbys Group of Companies, which included Lansdowne Press, Hanna-Barbera and Summit Records. It never again held such prominence in South Australian Publishing.¹⁰

References:

1. Mr. George Robertson (founder of the firm known as Angus and Robertson Ltd.) and Mr. Samuel Mullens (originator of the company of Robertson and Mullens Ltd.)
2. "It's worth Repeating", copied from the 'Rigby Review', issue October 1953, and published again in February 1970, issue No. 199.
3. 'Rigby Review', January 1979.
4. "A Short History of Rigby Limited", written by V. M. Branson, former managing director, after his retirement in 1973.
5. Ibid.
6. "120 Years of Progress", Page 1, 'Rigby Review', January 1979, R.J. Blackburn.
7. Chairman's address (W. H. Hayes) on 15th November 1977,
8. Letter of 29th May, 1979 from Rigbys to Corporate Affairs advising of the successful takeover of the company.
9. Letter of 5th April, 1979 from Rigbys to the Stock Exchange.
10. "Ripple Magazine" staff journal of the Rigby Group, February, 1980.
11. 'Advertiser' Saturday 13 June 1959, pp 11-14. (Centenary feature).

C. dB.
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Authors' manuscripts, typescripts, printers' and publishers typescripts, galley proofs, page proofs, together with other production material and other papers - relating to books published by Rigby Ltd. A card index to this series, arranged alphabetically by authors, will be found at the beginning of the series. BRG 12/1/203 – printing plates – removed 22/8/02	<u>1</u>
Correspondence concerning Rigby 's Centenary Literary Competition. 1960. 0.03m. Includes entry forms, notes by authors and appraisals of manuscripts entered.	<u>2</u>
Minutes of the meetings of Directors Rigby Ltd. 1909-1976. 50 cm (10 volumes) Includes minutes of ordinary and extra-ordinary meetings of shareholders. Principal record of the business activities of Rigby Ltd.	<u>3</u>
Private ledgerbooks. 1923-1959. 50 cm (7 volumes)	<u>4</u>

Secretary's ledgerbook. 1933-1940. 4 cm (1 volume)	<u>5</u>
General ledgerbooks. 1914-1953. 10 cm (3 volumes)	<u>6</u>
Share transfer journals 1908-1976. 13 cm (4 volumes) Register of share transfers arranged by transfer number. Detail includes date of transfer, name of transferor and transferee, number of shares transferred and certificate number. Most comprehensive for the period 1948 to 1976. Relates to ser. 8 and ser. 9.	<u>7</u>
Share registers. 1948-1967. 12 cm (2 volumes) Register arranged by folio numbers of shares issued, or by application number. Includes name of applicant, occupation, share entitlement and amount paid.	<u>8</u>
Index to ordinary shareholders. 1951-1969. 30 cm (6 volumes) Alphabetical index to shareholders. Detail includes name, address and occupation of shareholders; units acquired or disposed of; transfer journal reference and number of certificate. Controls series 7.	<u>9</u>
Index to dividend Payments. 1948-1978. 28 cm. Series consists of a card index to dividends paid. Arranged alphabetically by shareholder's name. Cards are extent for shareholders with surnames L - Z only. Relates to series 7 and series 9.	<u>10</u>
Share certificate book. n. d. 2 cm (1 volume) Series consists of unused share certificates numbers 351 - 500. Sample only.	<u>11</u>
Dividend. journal. 1948-1958. 2 cm (1 volume) Series consists of an annual cumulative record of dividends paid to share holders. Includes shareholder's name and amount paid. Relates to series 10.	<u>12</u>
Miscellaneous financial papers and correspondence. 1921-1979. 50 cm Includes correspondence with shareholders and financiers, indentures, accounts, annual balance sheets, auditor's reports and related correspondence.	<u>13</u>

Journals.	<u>14</u>
1926-1947. 10 cm (4 volumes)	
Monthly statements of accounts.	
Wages records.	<u>15</u>
1924-1979. 50 cm (22 volumes)	
Consists largely of records entitled 'Annual summary of wages and tax deductions'. Arrangement is chronological and also be employee name. Includes details of occupation and period of employment.	
Sales book.	<u>16</u>
1948-93. 1 vol. 0.03m.	
Monthly statement of cash sales.	
Staff terminations.	<u>17</u>
1975-1976. 10 cm (2 items)	
Consists of applications for employment annotated with termination dates.	
Minutes of Staff Executive meetings	<u>18</u>
1946-1954. 40 cm (1 volume)	
Minutes of meetings of the Rigby Ltd. Employees pensions and Benefit Fund.	<u>19</u>
1948-1979. 20 cm (1 volume)	
Record of decisions made and financial transactions concerning a superannuation scheme for Rigby's employees.	
Newspaper cuttings books.	<u>20</u>
1957-1971. 5 cm (2 volumes)	
Consists of cuttings from South Australian and national periodicals concerning the business activities of Rigby Ltd.	
Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Booksellers' Association.	<u>21</u>
1899. 1 cm (1 volume)	
Record of the proceedings of the first meeting of the Booksellers' Association. The Association was formed to promote the common interests of companies in the book trade.	
Miscellaneous plans and view of warehouses and other buildings.	<u>22</u>
1964-1969. 50 cm.	
Correspondence and papers relating to E.J. Ross.	<u>23</u>
1940-1944. 1 cm.	
Consists of correspondence and papers relating to Mr. E.J. Ross D.F.M., an employee of Rigby's between 1935 and 1940. Ross, who enlisted in 1940, was killed in action on January 2 1944.	

Printed matter. 1950-1982. 25 cm. Includes annual reports, articles of association and staff newsletters.	<u>24</u>
Historical notes. 1973. 1 cm. Consists of a short history by V.M. Branson on the history of Rigby Ltd.	<u>25</u>
Artifacts. 1956-1976. 2 items. Consists of two commemorative shields concerning interdepartmental sporting events.	<u>26</u>
Order book. 1950-1974. 1 volume	<u>27</u>
Photographs from a book on Rigbys, together with 3 examples of promotional material. n.d. 1 cm	<u>28</u>
Record of service of employees ca 1976.	<u>29</u>
Unsorted papers relating to publications n.d. 2.88 m	<u>30</u>
Unsorted miscellaneous material n.d. 54 cm	<u>31</u>
Assorted maps and illustrations 60 cm	<u>32</u>
Newspaper clippings 36 cm. Volumes in 3 boxes.	<u>33</u>
Assorted image layouts relating to books 60 cm. 2 parcels.	<u>34</u>
Burmeister embosser 35 x 24 x 11 cm. 1 object.	<u>35</u>