

MEDIA RELEASE



HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST

COLLISION

NEW EXHIBITION AT THE JUSTICE & POLICE MUSEUM



Some of Sydney's first car crashes and traffic accidents are revealed in photographs now on display at the Justice and Police Museum.

The images date from 1920 to 1964 and reveal how NSW police used photography to investigate smashed vehicles and traffic accidents.

Curator Holly Schulte has been researching the museum's vast forensic photography archive, selecting 45 unseen images for the exhibition titled *Collision: Misadventure by Motor Car*.

"Cars became really visible on Sydney streets from the 1920s and police were increasingly being called to investigate traffic related accidents.

"You can see how over time cars changed Sydney's streetscapes as road markings, traffic lights and signage were introduced.

"I came across images of the first speed cameras launched in New South Wales in 1954 which I've included in the show. Two officers were required to operate the 'radar sets' that were positioned in a police car boot parked right by the side of the road. Quite different to the sophisticated and easier to conceal technology used today.

"Speeding drivers were called 'scorchers' by the police and it wasn't until these cameras were introduced that they could measure exactly how fast people were going."

The photographs featured in *Collison* are part of a larger police archive of more than 130,000 glass plate negatives held at the Justice & Police Museum and include a fascinating array of mug shots and crime scenes taken by police photographers over 50 years.

"We don't always know the full details of the accidents so we often do a bit of our own detective work, checking the police notes on the negative which can lead us to related newspaper articles or police records to find out more," Ms Schulte said.

Timeline Snapshot:

- 1923** motorists in city outnumber those using horse and cart
- 1924** motorists required to use hand signals when stopping or turning
- 1934** electronic windscreen-wipers become compulsory
- 1937** first lines painted in centre of roads
- 1958** first driver-training courses, held at Sydney Technical College
- 1964** computer-regulated traffic lights introduced in Sydney

Holly Schulte is the Assistant Curator of Photography at the Justice & Police Museum. Since joining the museum in 2006 she has played a central role in sifting through the hundreds of thousands of images in the vast forensic photography archive held by the museum, and uncovering the stories, which lie behind them. The archive consists of 130,000 uncatalogued glass plate negatives, rescued from a flooded warehouse in Lidcombe in the 1980s and relocated to Sydney's Justice & Police Museum. Holly will spend May/June exploring photography collections in the US, UK and Europe, having been awarded the Phillip Kent Travel Scholarship by the Historic Houses Trust.



EXHIBITION ON NOW
UNTIL 31 December 2011
Justice & Police Museum,
Cnr Phillip & Albert Sts, Sydney
Open daily 10am – 5pm
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