The celebrated Tichborne legal affair (1867-1874) centered on a butcher from Wagga who claimed to be the long-lost baronet, heir to an English estate. His trial in London to claim his inheritance became the longest legal proceeding in Britain during the nineteenth century, with his supporters spearheading the largest national mass democratic movement of its time.

This talk reveals a little-known aspect of the Tichborne affair: its significance as a landmark in the emergence of nineteenth-century visual culture and modern evidence law. The illustrated presentation will present images selected from a global archive of photographs, engravings, and other visual materials (many from national and local Australian archives), that circulated internationally during the high-profile trial. It explores for the first time both the impact of new nineteenth-century visual media upon the conduct of legal proceedings, and some of the factors that led to the trial’s emergence as a dominant subject of Victorian visual culture.

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