

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

FOUNDED 1974

P.O. Box 203, North Adelaide, S.A. 5006

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NEWSLETTER No. 13

MARCH, 1977

NEXT MEETINGS

MARCH

Field Trip: Historic Adelaide Mansions

Date: Saturday, 26th March, 1977.

See details below.

APRIL

Date: Friday, 1st April, 1977.

Place: State Library Lecture Theatre, Institute Building,
North Terrace, Adelaide.

Time: 8 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Derek Whitelock.

Subject: Adelaide's History : A Sense of Difference.

Dr. Whitelock is a lecturer in the Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide. He has recently completed a book on Adelaide's history. His talk promises to be an excellent introduction to the subject.

MAY

Date: Friday, 6th May, 1977.

Place: State Library Lecture Theatre.

Time: 8 p.m.

Subject: "A Cornish Evening".

The meeting will have as its subject South Australia's settlers from Cornwall and their peculiar contribution to the character and history of this state. The evening will be more informal than most; it is hoped to have a plentiful supply of Cornish pastry on hand for supper.

Itinerary

- 2.00 p.m. Meet at Loreto Convent, Marryatville, gateway on Portrush Road, just south of the intersection of Kensington and Portrush Roads. Please park outside the grounds.
- 3.30 p.m. Depart Loreto.
- 3.45 p.m. Arrive Rostrevor College, Glen Stuart Road, Woodforde. Go along St. Bernard's Road and turn east (to the hills) up Moules Road to its eastern extremity. Please park outside the grounds.
- 5.30 p.m. Conclusion of tour.

Members without transport who would like to attend - please notify the Secretary, Box 203, P.O., North Adelaide, S.A. 5006.

Because this field trip is relying on the generosity of Rostrevor College and Loreto Convent, it is essential for members who intend going on this trip to book with the Secretary beforehand. The numbers have to be restricted to 25, so please book as soon as possible.

The Secretary's address is P.O. Box 203, North Adelaide, S.A. 5006 - or telephone no. 269 1951 (a.h.).

Peter Moore's book (\$8.75), signed by him, may be purchased by members on the afternoon of the field trip.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY RADIO BROADCASTS 5UV

Beginning on March 30th, Radio 5UV will broadcast a series of weekly programmes on South Australian history. The programme is as follows:

Wednesday, March 30th, 8 p.m.

Dr. Whitelock talking to Ron Gibbs, Brian Samuels and John Tregenza about the Society. Helen Jones on women's sweated labour.

Wednesday, April 6th, 8 p.m.

John Love from the Archives on the role of "preservation" in history. Readings from Archives material.

Wednesday, April 13th, 8 p.m.

Arnold Hunt interviews Jim Everett, Dr. Lohe and Phil Coward in the "religious" programme.

Wednesday, April 20th, 8 p.m.

Ian Harmstorf, Nancy Robinson, Margaret Barbalet and Sue Marsden talk about their local histories.

Wednesday, April 27th, 8 p.m.

A "pre-history" programme. Bob Ellis talks with Carol Hauston, Lee Sackett, Max Hart and Natasha McNamara about aborigines.

Wednesday, May 4th, 8 p.m.

John Playford, Graham Laughlin and Craig Campbell look at the politics of the 1890s in Adelaide.

The Society would like to record its sincere thanks to Miss Eleanor Harry who co-ordinated, introduced and negotiated the whole series: even to the extent of arranging some financial backing. She and Graeme Dimmitt of the Adelaide C.A.E. (who was the "technical operator" for the series) performed a magnificent job for us, as I am sure members will agree when they hear the series.

BLINMAN, S.A. (by Mrs. S.E. Pritchard)

When, in September 1976, my husband and I said that we were going to spend a week's holiday at Blinman in the Flinders Ranges, and that we would be travelling there and back by bus and so would not have our car to transport us around the countryside, many people wondered what on earth we would do to fill in our time, and whatever was there to see.

It turned out to be a very enjoyable week of discoveries, a holiday which finished before we had seen and taken photos of all we wanted to.

We met friendly people who could tell us the parts of the history of the area in which they or their families were involved, but who were anxious to know more specific details about such things as the working depths of the Blinman Mine, its output of copper and so on. Hans Mincham, in his book on the Flinders Ranges, gives quite a general history of mining in the north of South Australia, but not any detailed information which the local people themselves would like to know, and which they would gladly pass on to the numerous bus loads of school children - both primary and secondary - who arrive daily from all over the State and from interstate, and who ask these questions as part of their "travelling project". Through information from the Department of Mines, Adelaide, I hope to soon forward some Blinman and mine "history" to the local people.

I mentioned seeing buses of school children but there were also many senior citizens tours who visited the town (the passengers staying overnight in the shearing quarters of some nearby stations, mainly at Gum Creek) and the Far North tourist buses call in at Blinman en route. It is unusual to find the main street empty during the day, especially as the North Blinman Hotel caters for morning teas and lunches for the bus passengers.

The Hotel is also an overnight stop for holiday makers going to, or coming from, further north in the Flinders Ranges; and it sets the feeling of being in the period in which it was built by its stone-flagged floors, its open log-burning fireplaces, its flight of steps from the living level to the sleeping level, and the hanging lanterns, to name a few of the features. As most of the overnight guests come from interstate and wish to see as much as they can, there are usually some very lively "travel" discussions between them and the local people.

The Blinman Mine, about a mile to the north east of the town, stands at the top of a hill. There is still much of interest to see in that area, and the big deep shafts have been wire fenced so that accidents will not happen to over-enthusiastic viewers. Photos of the mine, taken in 1907 by Mr. P.A. Corry who was Headmaster of the Blinman school for 10 years, and which are kept in an album at the hotel, show how much activity took place there only 70 years ago and how the main means of carrying timber, ore, supplies, etc. was by bullock waggon or donkey waggon.

A story told to us was that Mr. Dick Richards had a team of 26 donkeys pulling his waggon and he used to tell people, "I make the 27th donkey". He carted much material in this way from the Port Augusta railway, and when the Angorichina Hostel was being built in the 1920s, he took many a load of pine logs to it. He was known, it seems, as "Donkey Dick".

Pine logs were used extensively in building the early houses and a few that show this are still standing. One such is the house used by whoever was the Mine Captain, and it has been restored by its present owners to look as much as possible like it did when it was built. Walks (of which we did a lot) through the scrub beyond the township uncover great areas where these pine trees have been felled and not grown again.

Like all the Far North towns, Blinman relies on the Flying Doctor service for medical care and advice, and contact is made between the town and the Base by a transceiver operated from one of the homesteads. The airstrip is kept in good condition and is about 3 miles out of town off the Wirrealpa Road, and near the race course. Races are held only once a year, with a special gymkhana and gala atmosphere, but not in bad drought times because of the fire risk.

We were taken to the airstrip and race course by car, and then walked back towards Blinman, first along the airstrip, then over the fields, up hills (from the top of which we had a beautiful view to the south), past a little slate quarry from which some cemetery headstones would have come, near a stumpy tailed lizard who kindly opened his mouth just as we took a photo, up to and across quite a pretty creek with a huge red gum growing in it, and back to the Wirrealpa Road. From there we visited a large windmill but found it was disconnected from its pump which is now driven by a motor; then on to examine the ruins of an old cottage, tramped over hill and dale, almost lost our way back by nearly finishing up at the unofficial rubbish dump, and finally found the golf course which is quite near the township.

Towards the end of our walk we did have one thing to guide us, and that was the monument to Blinman soldiers of the 1914-1918 World War. This is a tall, fairly narrow, stone cairn erected at the top of the highest hill near Blinman and is a really good landmark. It is made of large stones laid horizontally on each other with no mortar or anything like that in between, and I marvelled that it was so solid, especially in the gale winds that blew there at the top of the hill.

We caught a glimpse of two beautiful red kangaroos, but they saw us first and bounded away almost before we could raise the camera. We were more fortunate with two grey ones who seemed rooted to the spot just to see intruders, but they also took off and our second photo just shows streaks. We disturbed many grey 'roos and some rabbits (really, not many of these) who bounded off speedily.

The mailman (who lives in the house once occupied by the Magistrate appointed to look after the district when the township of South Blinman was in existence) does a trip three mornings a week from Blinman to Parachilna, taking the mail there and collecting whatever has come up from Adelaide by train. We went with him one morning, and on the way there, after passing Angorichina which is now a tourist resort, we crossed a number of waterways (some quite treacherous, he told us, even for his four wheel drive vehicle) and he pointed out trees growing in the creek that were showing the scars from the last flood a year or so ago. These gougings were over 20 ft. above the creek base and were made by uprooted trees (some of which were lying near) bumping and hitting as they were being swirled along in the flood waters. On the return journey he left us - quite early in the day - at Horns Camp ruin and we managed to take all day to wander along dry creek beds, up hills, along ridges, look into unused bird's nests, discover unusual trees and many kinds of wildflowers and arrive back at Blinman in the very late afternoon.

Our walk to the north took us some distance along the Glass Gorge Road and then off to the left to finally arrive at the Doctor Mine which is actually made up of about ten or more shafts. These did not prove very interesting but the walk to it and the quondong trees around it made the trip worthwhile. Again we went back across country, up hills and down valleys, and that was when we surprised the red kangaroos. Some of the almost bare, dry ground in that area was once known as "Kelly's wheat fields" because of the good crops that were grown, so we were told later; it is hard to imagine that anything, other than onion weed, ever grew there.

Just inside the cemetery gates is a marble monument erected by the S.A. Branch of the Royal Geographical Society to Willfiam Darton Kekwick, 1822-1872. He was second in command to John McDouall Stuart from 1859 to 1863 "when the British Flag was placed in the Centre of Australia, the 22nd April 1860, and on the shores of the Indian Ocean, 25th July 1862". The Blinman Area School was the proud possessor of an indian ink drawing by Mr. Kekwick, and the Headmaster very kindly lent it to us to photograph, as we had taken photos of the monument to give to him.

Another resident of Blinman had a water colour of South Blinman, painted by an unknown artist in the early years of this century. This we were also lent to photograph. Only two of the buildings shown in it are still in existence.

And, to finish, I must tell you of the beautiful "velvetty" darkness of the night when the sky looks alive with stars which one never sees in town, and the Milky Way shows up as a broad band across the sky from one side to the other, and the Southern Cross sparkles.

NEWSLETTER BUSINESS

A reminder that a "Letters to the Editor" section is now open in the newsletter. All members are invited to express their thoughts on any aspect of the Society or on any involvement they may have with the State's (or Colony's) past).

Also, we are still looking for medium sized articles for newsletter publication.

Please contact the Editor, c/- 15a Gray Street, Norwood, S.A. 5067; or phone 42 5870.