

# HSSA

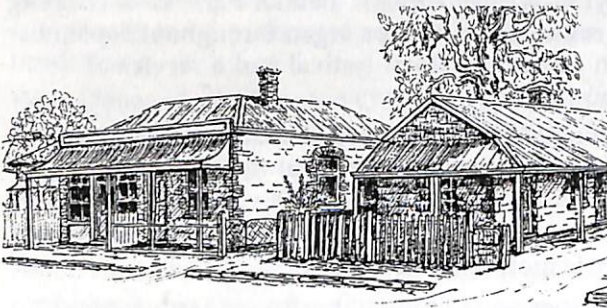
*History*

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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September 1997

## HSSA to host an exploration of historic Mitcham



The Society has arranged a visit to the historic environs of Mitcham village for Sunday 12 October, followed by a walk in the Watiparinga Reserve.

The tour starts at Allison's Apothecary, 21 Albert St, Mitcham, at 1 pm. The apothecary is a pharmaceutical museum in a cottage dating from 1876. Although the cottage has been extensively restored, great care was taken to ensure that its authenticity and charm were retained.

After a stroll around the historic area of Mitcham there will be a walk of about 1.5 hours' duration in the Watiparinga Reserve,

Before being declared a reserve in 1953, Watiparinga was mainly used for sheep grazing, with crops and almond trees along some of the creek flats.

Members should wear sensible shoes and the paths are unsuitable for people with walking sticks. However, people of average fitness will have no trouble with the walk and its easy pace.

Depending on which paths are chosen, members may see an early limestone quarry, the remnants of settlers' houses, an early almond nursery, and the site where, it is said, an illegal still once operated.

Bookings are essential and should be made with Avis Huckel, 8277 2953. The cost will be \$10 per person.

## Secretaryless no longer

Our plea was answered!

Following the front page article in the July issue of *History SA*, expressing the Society's desperate need for a secretary, Meredith Whitford of Somerton Park responded to the call.

Meredith attended her first meeting in August and biographical notes about her and other recent newcomers to Council – Dr Simon Cameron, Colin Deed, and Christine Garnaut will appear in future issues.

## Bower Cottages 100 years on

Bower Cottages in Semaphore celebrated their centenary in June with a street parade, bazaar, a special church service in the garden, and the launching of a history of the cottages.

The heavens opened for about 15 minutes to drench the parade but the men on the penny farthings and the women in their long dresses and petticoats squelched through the mud regardless.

The cottages were open to visitors for the week of celebration with guided tours being taken by volunteers in period costume. There were static and active displays including memorabilia and furniture from past days.

Visiting schoolchildren were given lessons on slate boards. One teacher asked the children how they thought irons were heated 100 years ago. and one bright boy replied, 'That's easy. They put it in the microwave.'

Eleven descendants of David Bower attended the celebrations, which ended with a high tea for past and present volunteers.

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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

Institute Building, 122 Kintore Avenue, Adelaide  
5000 (mailing address only)  
Founded 1974

### OBJECTS

- To promote the collection, preservation and classification of source material of all kinds relating to South Australian and Australian history.
- To publish historical records and articles.
- To promote the interchange of information among members of the Society by lectures, readings, discussions, field trips and exhibitions.
- To arouse interest in and promote the study and discussion of history, especially that of South Australia and Australia.
- To cooperate with similar societies throughout Australia.
- To do such things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of any of the above objects.

### COUNCIL

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History SA editor: Mr J. Loudon, phone / fax 8340 3467

Auditor: Mr K. Banfield

### Advertising

*History SA* accepts advertising for goods and services appropriate to its readership. The rates are \$100 for a full page, \$65 for a half page and \$35 for a quarter page.

Copy or finished artwork, together with a cheque for the appropriate amount (made payable to the Historical Society of SA, Inc.), should be sent to the Editor, Jim Loudon, 1 Ashley Place, Ridleyton, 5008. Phone / fax 8340 3467.

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The six cottages were very isolated when they were built as a home for seamen in 1897. They were not far from the abandoned Port Misery and sat on the edge of what was then an uninhabited mangrove swamp, now known as the vastly different West Lakes.

The cottages continued to accommodate seamen until 1975, when the Housing Trust purchased the property and converted it into a community centre. The former Hindmarsh and Woodville Council took control of the cottages in the 1980s and the City of Charles Sturt is continuing to develop them as an outstanding community centre.

## Flower festival, concerts for Clayton-Wesley Church pipe organ centenary

Clayton-Wesley Church, Beulah Park, is celebrating the centenary of its pipe organ throughout September with concerts, a floral festival and a service of thanksgiving.

Built by J.E. Dodd, the organ's mechanical action still works most efficiently but the original hand bellows were replaced in 1905 by bellows operated by water pressure and these were replaced in turn by an electric motor in 1923.

The pipes were thoroughly cleaned last year and, apart from a few minor alterations, the instrument is virtually as it was when first heard 100 years ago.

The first of the three commemorative concerts will have been held by the time this issue of *History SA* is printed but there will be two more, on 14 and 21 September. The first of these will comprise organ solos by previous organists of the church, including Ray Booth (St David's, Burnside), Peter Kelsall (Pilgrim Church, Adelaide), Tom Way (Christ Church, Wayville) and Winton Barry (St George's, Magill). There will also be vocal items by tenor David Clarke, of Victor Harbour.

The concert on 21 September will include items by the Way Consort with Shirley Gale, from St Peter's Cathedral, at the organ. Both concerts will begin at 2 pm.

At 10 am on 21 September, the Rev. Alan Shephard will preach at a thanksgiving service featuring an augmented choir and David Annear at the organ.

David Annear will also play at 11 am and 12 noon at the Floral Festival on Saturday 20 September.

Winton Barry will play at 2 pm and 3 pm.

October talk

## Sacred Heart still going strong

Sacred Heart College, Somerton Park, celebrates its centenary this year, an event which will be marked by the talk Peter Donovan and Bernard O'Neil will give to the Society's October meeting.

Sacred Heart was the first Marist Brothers' school in South Australia, beginning humbly as a boys-only school at Port Adelaide in 1897.

It relocated to Semaphore in 1902 and moved to Largs Bay in 1905, before finally settling in stately Paringa Hall, Somerton Park, in 1914.

Despite innovations and changes over the years, the College has maintained traditions of high academic standards, a significant role for sport, an important old scholars' network, and a strong boarding component, to say nothing of a continuing need for fundraising.

Peter Donovan and Bernard O'Neil – not old boys of the school – have written *In the Marist Tradition: Sacred Heart College, Adelaide, 1897-1997*, to mark the anniversary.

Peter is the managing partner of Donovan and Associates, history and historic preservation consultants. He studied architectural conservation at the International Centre for Conservation in Rome and taught history at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and Flinders University before establishing his consultancy. He has written many research reports and heritage surveys as well as 25 books, ranging from urban and regional histories to histories of corporations and organisations.

Bernard O'Neil is widely experienced as a researcher, consultant, historian and editor. He has also been involved in many publications and research projects. He is currently a Visiting Research Fellow in History at the University of Adelaide.

Members and friends can hear the talk, 'Chalk and Cheese: Sacred Heart College 1897-1997', by Peter Donovan and Bernard O'Neil at 8 pm on Friday 10 October in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town.

### History SA deadline

The deadline for all material to be submitted for the November issue of *History SA* is Friday 14 October.

November talk

## 'She keeps the silver in excellent order'

Margrette Kleinig, a postgraduate student in history at Flinders University, will draw on her research into the government-assisted emigration of single women to South Australia from 1873 to 1939 for her talk in November.

Margaret told *History SA*, 'In the first week of spring 1924, a woman disembarked at Port Adelaide from an emigrant ship. As part of her application for a government-assisted passage to Australia, the woman submitted an employer's reference to immigration officials in London. It read, in part, "She is a good plain cook and laundress and is careful of all in her charge. She keeps the silver in excellent order".'

'In the 19th and early 20th centuries, in periods of economic buoyancy, South Australia, like all Australasian states, recruited single women from the United Kingdom as part of its assisted immigration program. Domestic service predominated as the occupation for which single women were recruited. They were part of an international labour force with skills transferable from the old world to the new.'



*Domestic workers outside a large house in Norwood in the 1890s. (State History Centre, Adelaide)*

'While considerable attention has focused on the colony's early immigrants, much less is known about the adventurous, resourceful and skilled single women who arrived in Adelaide in the 20th century.'

Before steeping herself in the lives of these women, Margaret spent some time living and working in Melanesia, first in Papua New Guinea and later, with her husband, in the Solomon Islands as an Australian Volunteer Abroad for two years.

Margrette Kleinig will give her talk in the Prince Philip Lecture Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, at 8 pm on Friday 7 November.

## Who can tell the inside story of the Catholic female refuge?

Unley Museum is preparing a display on the history of the former Catholic female refuge in Wattle St, Fullarton,

The refuge was established by the Josephite Order in 1901 in a building which had originally been a jam factory. It was intended as a shelter for prostitutes but was soon accommodating unmarried mothers. It continued to serve that purpose until it closed in the 1960s.

The seven-acre property comprised a large stone building with galvanised iron outbuildings and a large cottage which served as the lying-in hospital. In its early days the refuge housed up to 80 adults and 40 children. The women paid for their keep by doing laundry and needlework as outwork. There are people still living in Unley who had babies there or were themselves in the refuge.

It is likely that objects associated with the refuge will be acquired or borrowed in order to strengthen the Unley Museum's collection.

The museum will also enhance its image as a valuable community resource as a result of this project. For example, the Catholic Communications Centre has notified all parishes about the project, and future collaboration is foreseen with institutions such as the Catholic Archives and State Records.

Museum volunteers will interview women and former children who lived in the refuge and will seek objects related to life there. They are looking for everything from baby clothes, nuns' habits, prayer books, hymnals, diaries, letters and needlework samples to washing machines and mangles.

The museum's curator, Marie Boland, says the key to success in a project of this kind is to have someone who can work up the concepts, plan it and do the necessary research and coordination.

Marie has already made some contacts but is still looking for that someone who spent some time in the refuge and can pass on information about it and about others who lived there. She is calling on family historians, among others, to help find this person.

Once the research is finished and all the objects, photographs and archival material assembled, the display will be prepared in time to open in February 1998.

The female refuge project has been assisted by a \$3,200 grant from the Museums Accreditation and Grants Program.

(Adapted from an article by Geoff Speirs in *Community History* Vol. 7, No. 1)

## Miracle of penicillin comes to schools on CD-ROM

The State History Centre has produced an interactive CD ROM on Howard Florey, the SA scientist who brought penicillin to the world. Teachers would find the resource particularly valuable in teaching science and history to students in Years 3-12.

The CD ROM features unique archival film and photographs, and is supported by a pack prepared by a team of practising teachers to support use of the CD ROM in schools. The pack contains sets of study questions and valuable background information.

Teachers whose schools purchase the *Florey and the Miracle Mould* CD ROM can print out and copy the resource material for use in their classes.

The CD ROM is available for \$45 from the SA Science Teachers Association at Plympton High School, tel. 8293 3833.

An antibiotic kit is also available at \$7.50 to demonstrate the action of penicillin on bacteria in the laboratory or the classroom. Prepared by the Mycology Unit of the Women's and Children's Hospital, the kit contains cultures of *Penicillium notatum*, Florey's miracle mould, and a harmless bacterium.

## Bid to save WWI names from air pollution

The future of the Lych Gate at St Margaret's Anglican Church, Woodville, is reportedly in the balance.

The August issue of the newsletter of Woodville Historical Society reports church councillor Beryl Howe as saying that air pollution had almost obliterated the names of 132 World War I soldiers which are engraved on brass plates inside the gate.

To replace the brass plates with bronze would cost up to \$12,000 and even the \$2,500 for new plates in stainless steel, which the church council favours, is beyond the council's means.

The church has received a \$1,000 grant towards the work from the Department of Veteran Affairs and the balance is a matter of negotiation by the St Margaret's council, the City of Charles Sturt, and the RSL.

Some years ago the then Woodville Council advised that the church would have to move the gate to allow for the widening of Woodville Road. At that time the gate faced Woodville Road, opposite the side entrance of the church. The church could not

afford to move the gate and decided to demolish it instead.

A parishioner wrote to the *Advertiser* claiming the gate was 'an architectural gem' and a priceless memorial to the World War I soldiers of the district. The State RSL joined the fray and urged Woodville Council's support in saving the gate. Council shifted the gate to the corner of the church property and it was rededicated by the Governor at a special church service.

## Enfield Cemetery history 'a story of reformist ideals'



Dr Robert Nicol, State Historian and President of the Historical Society, sees the history of Enfield Cemetery as 'the story of a set of reformist ideals, their proponents and how successfully they were implemented'.

Dr Nicol details the 50-year history of Australia's first lawn cemetery in *Fairway to Heaven*, which was launched by the Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide, the Most Rev. Ian George, last month.

In a note on his latest book, Dr Nicol said anyone expecting lists of trustees and staff or a chronicle of every event associated with the cemetery would be disappointed.

'I am grateful to the trustees and managers for accepting that a broader perspective and a different approach was possible,' he said.

'This history tells how community response to the need to provide for the disposal of human remains has changed over time and how governments have sought to accommodate that change.

'At a time when we are confronted almost daily with the negative consequences of the disastrous economic and business excesses of the 1980s, it is a valuable reminder of South Australia's ability to be a genuine leader.'

*Fairway to Heaven* is available at \$25 a copy plus \$5 postage from the Enfield Cemetery Trust, PO Box Blair Athol, 5084. Tel. 8262 1321, fax 8349 4941. It is also available from the book table at HSSA meetings.

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## The ideal companion for Barossa journeys



Cultural historian and writer Dr Noris Ioannou has drawn together the many threads of his knowledge of the Barossa to publish *Barossa Journeys: Into a Landscape of Tradition*, covering the wine, viticulture, cuisine, food, customs, history, art, architecture, folklore and landscape of the region.

Dr Ioannou says, 'My new book is not only about the physical action of journeying into a place, but also about a travelling into the past, and into the landscape of the imagination.

'Most travellers to the Barossa simply skim the surface, with only a few venturing further to discover its cultural bounty.

'I wrote *Barossa Journeys* to make accessible the cultural qualities sought by the intelligent tourist.'

Through seven chapters and 80 illustrations, *Barossa Journeys* creates a sensorial experience where, according to prepublicity, 'the flavours of wine and food intermingle with the community's festivals and music. Favourite places and enchanting, out-of-the-way sites are revealed'.

Dr Ioannou frequently lectures on Barossa heritage and the Australian decorative arts and will be remembered by HSSA members for the talk he gave in 1995 on 'The Barossa Folk: Germanic furniture and craft traditions in Australia'. He is also craft critic and a heritage writer with the *Advertiser*.

*Barossa Journeys* will be launched on at the Tasting Australia Festival in Adelaide next month.

The softcover book is available to HSSA members at a prepublication price of \$20 plus \$2 postage from Paringa Press, tel. 8362 6730 or fax 8362 6888. The recommended retail price will be \$24.95.

*Barossa Journeys* will also be available at the Society's meeting on 10 October.

*Pictured (above) is an early Barossa family, dressed in its Sunday best.*

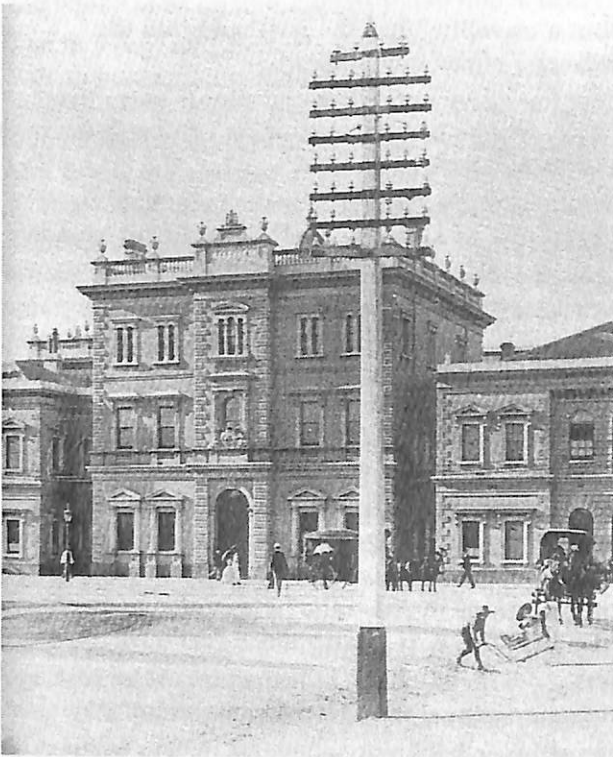
# Adelaide's 125 years of visual blight

by Robert Nicol

The visual blight of an Optus or Telstra cable pales by comparison with what was once inflicted on Adelaide in the name of progress in communication. Yet it all began with a few simple lines.

The first ones were for the telegraph. When the Overland Telegraph Line was completed in 1872, in one of the great engineering feats of the 19th century, communications with London and the rest of the world were revolutionised. But there was a price. After the first connection, vast collections of wire were strung across the city streets and to all the outposts of the colony.

Next came the telephone, first introduced to Adelaide in 1883. The exchange was housed in the GPO and the commercial hub of South Australia was



*Promoted as a view of the Government offices in Flinders Street, Adelaide, in the 1890s, this picture serves equally well to remind us of the giant poles, with their many cross bars, that carried early telegraph wires around the city. (State Library of South Australia)*

blanketed with yet more cables. In 1901 that newfangled power source, electricity, came to the city when the first power station opened in Grenfell Street, in a building which is now part of Tandanya. There was a further roll-out after 1909 for what was to become an extensive electric tram system.

But the problems of congestion and visual blight were already being solved by the time the electricity network was developed. With little space left by the telegraph wires, nearly all the city electricity supply had to be put underground. Even semi-suburban North Adelaide was blessed with a supply from underground cables laid along Frome Road and O'Connell Street in 1902.

Adelaide's underground system was gradually extended as more and more of the cables disappeared from overhead. There was even a pneumatic tube system underneath the footpaths in the central business district. Brass pipes connected the GPO with the Advertiser Building, the Stock Exchange and the Adelaide railway station, allowing documents to be whizzed directly between these key points.

Beyond the city, however, it was a different story. A change from the two-wire DC electrical system to the four-wire AC system compounded the problem. Huge poles with up to a dozen cross bars marred major junctions and carried the latest technology on hundreds of wires to suburbs and regional centres alike.

And of course there was the Stobie pole, first used in 1924 and worthy of a story in its own right. (From *Community History*, Vol. 7, No. 1)

## Eighty at Annual Dinner

Some 80 members and friends met at the Adelaide Tattersalls Club on 16 August for the Society's Annual Dinner, with guest speaker Warren Bonython.

With its ceiling fans, potted palms and leather chesterfields, the club proved to be a welcoming and comfortable venue, appropriately reminiscent of times past.

Mr Bonython illustrated his talk on his exploration of the Gammon Ranges and Lake Eyre with his own colour slides, taken very soon after colour transparency film became available in Australia in the late 1940s.

## Coming events

If you have a meeting, a dinner, an outing or any other historically oriented event you would like to bring to the attention of readers, please submit the details to *History SA* for publication.

**13 September:** History of Science, Ideas and Technology Group AGM, guest speaker Dr Roger Clay, Department of Physics, University of Adelaide, 'Cosmic Ray Studies at Mount Stromlo Observatory: unplanned, underfunded and doomed to fail'. Royal Society rooms, Plane Tree Court, off Kintore Avenue (behind State Library), 2.30 pm.

**14 September:** Concert to celebrate the centenary of the pipe organ in Clayton-Wesley Church, cnr The Parade and Portrush Rd, Beulah Park. Featuring previous organists of the church, 2 pm.

**15 September:** Burnside Historical Society meeting. Dr Geoffrey Bishop, 'An ill-shaped leg: the settlement and development of Yorke Peninsula'. Burnside Community Centre, 8 pm.

**20-21 September:** *Pieces of the South-Eastern Puzzle*, South-East History Conference and dinner, Struan. Enquiries to Judy Murdoch, 08 8764 2091 (fax 08 8764 2099) or Pam O'Connor, 8739 9243.

**20 September:** Floral Festival with organ interludes to mark the centenary of the pipe organ in Clayton-Wesley Church, Beulah Park, 10 am - 4 pm.

**21 September:** Thanksgiving service to mark the centenary of the pipe organ in Clayton-Wesley Church, Beulah Park, 10 am.

**21 September:** Concert to celebrate the centenary of the pipe organ in Clayton-Wesley Church, Beulah Park. Shirley Gale (organist, St Peter's Cathedral) and the Way Consort, 2 pm.

**21 September:** Salisbury and District Historical Society springtime garden tour. Full day beginning 9 am, tel. 8250 3258 for enquiries and bookings.

**24 September:** Combined meeting of Mount Lofty Districts Historical Society and Mount Lofty branch of National Trust of SA, 'Bring and Tell' - bring along a book, family heirloom or any item of history and heritage. Stangate House, Aldgate, 8 pm.

**10 October:** HSSA lecture, Peter Donovan and Bernie O'Neil, public historians, 'Chalk and Cheese - Sacred Heart College 1897-1997'. Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, 8 pm.

**12 October:** HSSA visit to Mitcham and Watiparinga Creek. Meet at Allison's Apothecary, 21 Albert St, Mitcham, 1 pm. Bookings essential, call Avis Huckel, 8277 2953.

**18-19 October:** Burnside Historical Society weekend tour to Yorke Peninsula. Enquiries to Richard House, 8379 9015.

**20 October:** Burnside Historical Society meeting. Susan Magarey, 'Catherine Helen Spence'. Burnside Community Centre, 8 pm.

**20 October:** Woodville Historical Society AGM. Murree Smith Memorial Hall, Woodville Town Hall, 7.45 pm.

**25 October:** Eastern Region Biennial Seminar. 'History among the red and blue gums', Norwood Town Hall. Keynote speaker Dr Robert Nicol. Hosted by Kensington and Norwood Historical Society. Enquiries to Jean Wright, 8332 5780 by 12 September.

**25 October:** Introductory Oral History Workshop, Boardroom, State Library, North Terrace. Enquiries to Beth Robertson, 83207 7349.

**1-2 November:** Old Government House garden, Belair, open to the public under the Australian Open Garden Scheme. Tours of the buildings also available. 10.30 am - 4 pm both days.

**7 November:** HSSA lecture, Margaret Kleinig, postgraduate student. Flinders University, 'She keeps the silver in excellent order'. Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, 8 pm.

**15 November:** Meeting of History of Science, Ideas and Technology Group. Professor Gus Fraenkel, Faculty of Medicine, Flinders University, 'Penicillin and SA Rhodes Scholars'. Royal Society rooms, Plane Tree Court, off Kintore Avenue (behind State Library), 2.30 pm.

**17 November:** Burnside Historical Society meeting. John Moore, 'Pulteney Grammar School'. Burnside Community Centre, 8 pm.

### Exhibitions

*The Wandering Jew: Myth and Metaphor*, from the Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne. Works by 24 Jewish and non-Jewish contemporary artists. Migration Museum. Kintore Avenue, Mon-Fri 10 am - 5 pm, weekends 1 pm - 5 pm, to 1 October.

*Selling a Dream: promoting Australia to postwar migrants*, Migration Museum, Kintore Ave, Mon - Fri 10 am - 5 pm, weekends 1 - 5 pm, 17 October - 31 January.

## Government Gardens, Belair (2)

# Woods and Forests Nursery and the Curator's Garden

*The first article in Pam Tamlyn's three-part series on the Old Government House Gardens at Belair appeared in History SA, July 1997. The series will end in the November issue.*

The acclimatisation movement was revitalised in the late 1870s, when some funding towards the establishment of an Acclimatisation Society was forthcoming from the Government (1). As the movement gained impetus from about 1880, the Government Farm at Belair (now the Belair National Park) was again seen as a possible venue for acclimatising exotic species of trees appropriate for local industries. A memorial to the Commissioner of Crown Lands in January 1882 suggested that the farm could be used as 'an experimental farm, a forest reserve and an acclimatisation station'. Hence moves were made in 1885 to make use of the remains of the Government Gardens, next to the former summer residence of the Governors, as an experimental orchard for the cultivation of suitable species, and as a small nine-acre nursery for the recently formed Woods and Forest Department (2). An annual budget of £150 (later increased to £200) was voted to set up and run the Belair Nursery. Its Curator was to be housed in the adjacent former vice-regal cottage, now no longer required by the Governor.

### Eucalypt seedlings

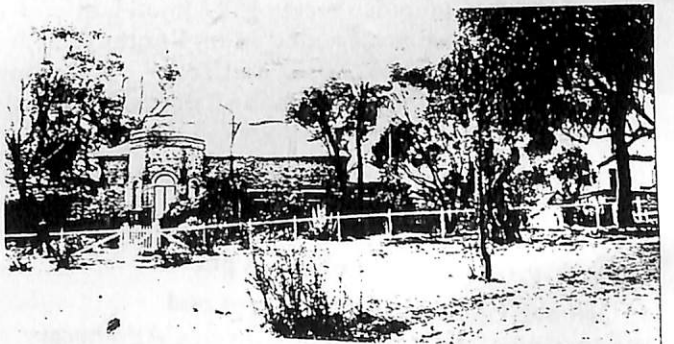
In 1886, the first nursery curator, Albert Niemann, reclaimed an area by the creek running through the neglected Government Garden, to raise eucalypt seedlings, mainly red and blue gums, for the Forest Reserves of the southern parts of the colony (3). Seedling sugar gums were also raised, a stand of which was also planted nearby at the same time. This stand is still in existence on the edge of the Government Farm Oval in Belair National Park, and a companion, but better known, stand of 500 sugar gums was planted next to Belair railway station on 35 acres of the Belair Forest Reserve, excised from the western side of the Government Farm in July 1886. Over 400 of these trees still remain, as do the sugar gums lining the adjacent Sir Edwin's Avenue. Several varieties of pine were grown in the nursery, including bunya, Aleppo, hoop, insignis and radiata. Most of these pine seedlings were planted within the next few years around the Government Farm. Cedars and cypresses were also raised. Sixty thousand vine

cuttings were grown in 1886-1887 for the Emu Flat scheme in the South-East (4), and by 1880 a huge number of mulberry seedlings and Terminalia palms were being raised at Belair; the mulberries to encourage the local production of silkworms and thereby a colonial silk industry, and the Terminalia palms, native to India and producing ink, dyes and polish, to form another local industry (5).

The mulberries and palms trialed at Belair, even with the higher Hills rainfall, did not grow at the rapid rate desired, so neither proved viable for large scale cultivation in South Australia, although vine cuttings for landowners throughout the colony continued to be raised by the thousands (6). More successful trials were done with olives, date palms, basket willows and a variety of pines, the most successful eventually being the radiata pine (7). On other Forest Reserves, investigation was being made into raising *acacia pycnantha*, the Golden Wattle, the bark of which was best for tannin and in great demand in the late 1880s and early 1890s. However, as this species was very common at Belair, the wattles of the Government Farm were stripped to provide valuable income for the Woods and Forests Department, without the necessity, as elsewhere, to grow them in the nursery from seed.

### Water supply

Water from the creek and the springs had always been used for the trees and plants in the garden beds along the creek banks, and water from a well nearby (located in front of the present Belair State Flora Nursery sheds) was also used to water the thousands of seedlings in pots and bamboo tubes. By now renamed 'The Rest', the curator's cottage, situated alongside the nursery, depended on rainwater from tanks against the building. Little was available for the garden surrounding its terrace, so here the eucalypts remained, interspersed with hardy aloes and agaves, with occasional enduring briar rose and arum lily (8).



*Old Government House c. 1885. There are eucalypts and succulents around the house and tanks on its right hand side. The bush in the foreground is a briar rose.*

The Government Farm was set aside as the National Park in 1891 but the little oasis of the nursery and its residence continued in the heart of the park. In the 1890s and early 1900s casual employees assisted the nursery curators at peak periods. Most of them came in from the gardens and orchards on the National Park's perimeter and forestry cadets also passed through Belair (9).

By 1900 the old Government Garden was a thriving concern. Bill Canny, the third curator, was an experienced nurseryman and was responsible for raising thousands of vine cuttings and native and exotic trees for distribution to landowners around the State. The large exotic trees still on the site were planted by him at the turn of the century, including bunya, radiata and Aleppo pines right in the present Old Government House garden and a couple of metres away, separated when the southern nursery fence was erected early this century. Himalayan cedars and cypresses were also planted.



Jack Canny (pictured left c. 1957), took his father's place as curator in 1914. He was a skilled and dedicated nurseryman and remained at Belair until he retired in 1958. His single mindedness kept the nursery viable in the 1930s and 40s, when other forestry activities were hit first by the great depression and then by the second world war.

A temporary crisis arose when the long-running free tree scheme was abandoned in 1925, but Jack kept the nursery going by producing a variety of seedlings of both natives and exotics for planting around Belair National Park, and street trees, including white cedar, ash and plane, for several of Adelaide's metropolitan councils up to the 1950s. Many of the thousands of street trees in the Mitcham Council area date from this period and all but a few were seedlings raised by Jack Canny (10).

He would deliver carloads of seedlings to Belair railway station, whence they were transported free of cost to many SA destinations.

A small nursery outside the kitchen of 'The Rest' was used to raise seeds and develop cuttings for the garden around the residence. Jack could entice lush growth from apparently lifeless twigs which he had surreptitiously gathered on visits to some of Adelaide's better known public gardens, so camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas, bulbs and other

flowers and shrubs flourished there, while his vegetable garden over in a corner of the nursery produced magnificent beans and tomatoes (11). In 1958, after Jack Canny's retirement, the Woods and Forests Department, while retaining the nursery, transferred the residence and its grounds to the Commissioners of the National Park (12).

#### Old links broken

For the first time ever, the direct links between the gardens in the nursery and the garden around Old Government House were broken. The Woods and Forests Department still maintained the land in the nursery and to this day has continued to cultivate and supply mainly native trees and plants for the public (13). The curator's residence and the grounds around it were returned to the National Park to be restored as a heritage site but gradually, during the 1960s, Jack Canny's garden, which had once been so beautiful, became a bit of a wilderness. Grassy areas surrounded the ivy-covered terrace and ivy and creepers clambered over several old tree butts in the garden. An old lilac bush grew rampantly behind the house and spring bulbs grew in profusion. In the mid 1960s some could see the garden's potential as a tourist attraction but over a few years many of the interesting old plants disappeared from neglect or removal from the site and the garden deteriorated further. By the 1970s it was due for a complete upgrade.

#### Footnotes

1. B. Best, *George William Francis, First Director of Adelaide Botanic Gardens*, Adelaide 1986.
2. The 1873 Act to Encourage the Planting of Forest Trees, agitated for by Surveyor-General George Goyder and brought before Parliament by Frederick Krichauff, introduced the far-sighted idea of a free tree scheme to help counteract the ravages of deforestation that were occurring in the settled areas and to provide trees suitable for primary industries.
3. *Parliamentary Paper No. 63, 1886* – Woods and Forest Annual Progress Report.
4. A scheme, set up by the Government on a forfeited sheep run near Keith, which employed men to clear the mallee scrub for trees, vines and other crops, and to encourage the natural growth of *acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) for its bark.
5. *Register*, 21 September 1889.
6. Although the Emu Flat Reserve scheme had a degree of success in 1886–1887, the land was sold on a 21-year lease in 1888, as only a small portion of it was suitable for intensive cropping – *Parliamentary Paper No. 18, 1888*. Vine cuttings then went from Belair to other localities.
7. J.E. Brown in *Tree Culture in South Australia*, pp. 93-94, refers to the radiata and its close relative, the *pinus insignis*, the remarkable pine, as being suitable for cultivation in SA. The popularity and reliability of the radiata over the insignis led to the former's massive contribution to South Australia's timber industry in the 20th century.
8. Many Adelaide gardens of this period featured aloes. Kate Langloh Parker, writing in the 1860s, described them as  
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'drought defying'. There are still remnants of aloes and other succulents and old briars on the drier slopes near Old Government House, and an infestation of arum lilies further down the creek.

9. Correspondence from descendants of nursery staff – V. Faithfull (1979), M. Johnson (1988), J. Hames (interview 1997).

10. Mitcham City Council Archives, general correspondence 1921-1953, Vol. 82.

11. Correspondence from relatives and friends of the Canny family – M. Carhart (1992), N. and B. Brooks (1996), E. Davey (interviews 1993-1995).

12. Woods and Forests Archives, Mt Gambier – Memorandum D.L. 4188/57; Lands Titles Office Diagram Book – Adelaide, No. 3 55/101/p. 61C.

## Participating in Open Garden Scheme

Readers who have been fascinated by Pam Tamlyn's articles on the history of the Old Government House garden will be interested to know that it will be open to the public under the Australian Open Garden Scheme on the weekend of 1 - 2 November from 10 am to 4 pm.

The gardens are planted in mid-Victorian style and feature a comprehensive collection of heritage roses. There will be light entertainment during the day and refreshments will be available. Entrance to the garden on this occasion will be \$3.50 per person. Tours of the buildings will be offered for a small additional charge.



Old Government House, Belair

## Barmaids redeemed, and a day in the life of a dog catcher

By Geoffrey Manning

*The second in a series drawn from Mr Manning's researches into life in the Adelaide suburbs of 90 years ago and more.*

### The barmaid

The barmaid is often a much misunderstood and misrepresented woman and the constant butt of many grandmotherly reformers as well as many thoroughly sincere folk. The question has been asked, 'Does she encourage drinking?' The hotel bar has been described as 'the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the scholar's kindness and the citizen's courtesy'. If that is accepted, then the influence of the drinking saloons is not the hand that serves the liquor.

It is wonderful what a barmaid will do for one pound a day; she will work from early morning till midnight and later, with just a few hours in the open air occasionally to keep the complexion going. The calling demands special qualifications for the successful barmaid must be of an excessively amiable temperament, with a smile and a pleasant word for everybody. A certain amount of 'stage presence' is useful, although not indispensable, and there is ample scope for conversational talents. Above all, the absence of tact will cause friction more than anything else.

How to tell a liquor-stupefied man to harness his thirst is a delicate task which frequently brings into play the diplomatic resources of the bartender, and she can scarcely be blamed for sometimes breaking the law about serving intoxicated persons. She will have numerous clientele who will treat her with the respect due to her sex. You will rarely see her drink with anybody for, in her heart of hearts, the average barmaid is the keenest advocate of temperance inside or outside the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Her convictions, however, are not allowed to come to the surface, for if they did her one pound a week and three meals a day and complexion walks would be gone. No, the poor barmaid is not a special contributing force to the drink traffic. Her abolition would probably not bung up one hogshead of beer. As for the surroundings of a drinking saloon not being

healthy for young women, there is little doubt that a bar is largely what the lady in attendance makes it. A man can tell at a glance what measure of respect he is going to mete out to the barmaids and they all have their own ways of commanding that respect when they wish.

#### The dog catcher

From the time the first house was built and occupied in the suburbs, 'man's best friend', the dog, became a prerequisite in sharing the home and hearth of many families. But there were others in the community who failed to appreciate their presence and in 1848 a resident issued a note of warning to those who frequented the River Torrens:

All dogs and other animals of the canine species are hereby warned that any further molestation by them of the putrid carcasses in the great hole near the lower watering-place will be attended with the risk of having their living carcasses mingled with the unburied dead. (1)

Local shopkeepers were also listed among the 'dog-hating' fraternity:

I was surrounded by dogs by day and night – dogs digging into my house, jumping through my shop windows, running away with meat and loaves of bread, and endangering the life of every horseman who passes by ... A heavy tax (should) be enforced on all the canine tribe. (2)

Another disgruntled citizen suggested an all-out campaign to purge the district by a concerted community effort:

We would at once propose a crusade against the suburban swarm of dogs whilst the population is still strong enough for the task of extermination. (3)

In the course of time the dog became, in number, of plague proportions, despite the levying of licence fees: by 1907 most suburbs had their local dog catcher, who roamed the streets snaring neglected and disowned dogs. A reporter has left us a first-hand account of a day in the life of the catcher:

I had pictured them tempting (the dogs) with a piece of beefsteak in one hand and lassoing them with a rope in the other. He does it without bait or lasso. As he cycles along the streets or walks leisurely over the park lands nobody would guess his mission – much less would the dog suspect his machinations. To all appearances he is intent on pursuing the even tenor of his way, when with a dart, he pounces upon an unwary little mongrel and secures it with a rope. He catches sight of another – this time a fox terrier, but the latter

spies him and keeps out of reach. He tries to coax it but scenting trouble, it refuses to be wheedled into capture. The next victim is a bigger dog and more game. It faces him defiantly and as he makes a feint to grasp it by the back of the neck, it ducks aside and shows its teeth, growling ominously.

He resorts to strategy. Shaking his fist in its face, he goads it on until a fitting opportunity enables him to thrust the closed hand in its mouth. Few would care to emulate the example, but he doesn't mind. He always gets his quarry and withdraws his hand uninjured. Sometimes he carries a baton but the bike pump often serves as a 'quietener'. A fair day's haul is about seven dogs, and in the four months he was engaged last year he caught 173, of which 142 were destroyed, 30 were released and one escaped.

It was almost pitiable to see the 'prisoners' at the council's depot. They were chained in a shed waiting to be claimed. If their owners did not appear in a reasonable time, their fate was sealed. They were mostly yellow mongrels but the exceptions included a smart-looking greyhound, a sharp little terrier and a water spaniel. One could not help feeling sorry for the last-named. Whenever it was approached, it sat up on its hind legs mutely imploring to be released and allowed to go home. It was evidently someone's pet, well trained and well looked after.

1. *Register*, 25 March 1848, p. 4a.

2. *Register*, 3 June 1857, p. 3f.

3. *Observer*, 1 October 1859, p. 6e

#### The rent collector

'Mother ain't 'ome and sez will you call to-morrer.' That, the collector said, was a common answer to the knock at a door. His life is like the policeman's in *The Pirates of Penzance* – not a happy one. It is said that a fool and his money are soon parted, but most tenants are not in that category; it is a hard job to part money from some of them, and when they do, they think they are conferring a favour.

The rent collector gets into his office at about 8 am and goes through his books. He steps out into the street at about nine o'clock and keeps going until about 6 pm. The worst times are the weeks following race days. At house after house it is – 'We backed the wrong horse, but we will pay next week.'

From one firm a collector may get a fixed salary or a small salary and commission. But the man who collects for a number of firms on commission only has the worst time, as he will get only doubtful ones that

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ensure a lot of trouble with small results.

A collector has to find horse and trap or bicycle, and that all reduces his money. The time payment men have about the best of it as the goods are sold on the hire system, so that the payments must be kept up or they will lose them and the collector has the chance of picking up commission on fresh sales when the old ones expire. He says his occupation is healthy, in spite of the fact that on some days he was wet through to the skin and on others nearly roasted.

'I think we are a necessary evil,' he said. 'Some people would never pay if we didn't call on them. One large firm decided to ease their collectors by attaching to the account a slip notifying that for the future the collector would not call and requesting customers to forward cheques. The customers were delighted and the firm found that the new rule did not pay.'

#### The dustman

Old boots, broken crockery, kitchen refuse, rags and fish tins. What more profitable occupation can be named than that of collecting them? Yet banish the dustman and what a nuisance would result. As purifiers of backyards, they do work that must be done by someone, and fortunate it is for householders that such men can be found to do it – well, too, generally. Of course, the scavenger cannot wear kid gloves, high collar, patent leather boots and a nose-gay, but what matter. His stock-in-trade are an old tub and a roomy tipdray with a horse to match.

Tramping by the side of his steed, or in the wake of his rumbling dray, the dustman plods along the lanes and byways – usually a bit of a philosopher after his own fashion. Rarely does he see the householder because the household rubbish is not kept too close to the house. Generally, the only welcome he gets is from dogs – occasionally cross dogs.

#### The 'Boss' scavenger talks:

Our chaps are as happy as Larry. The work is healthy and they never have an ache or pain. It makes 'em as hard as barbed wire and there's no strain in the mind. Talk about smells giving people fever! Why, there can't be anything in it. I'm not fond of dirt but I've noticed that the nervous folk are the first to go under when they get scared with these germ notions – it wouldn't do for our chaps to worry their heads about them.

It's pretty hard graft. They can get eight bob (shillings) a day anywhere at other work but seem to be content to carry those old tubs around for seven. You see it's constant and that's why they stick to it. We get our really busy times. It's

when the cauliflowers are in. You'd be surprised at the difference they make to us. Think of all the stalks and leaves the people throw away compared with what they eat.

We get on well with people taking 'em all though. It's only now and then we have a bit of a 'scrummage'.

Last week a fellow objected to our chap opening his white gate with dirty hands. But, then, the poor cove was only newly married, so you mustn't be too hard on him. Dare say he will get the conceit taken out of him before too long.

We are not bound to cart away anything and everything. One lady was wild when we had to tell her that brickbats, garden cuttings and yard sweepings were not in our line. The circulars headed 'Duties of the Scavenger', which we carry round, save no end of arguments. People think at first it's a bit of lawyer's work of your own, but you can see for yourself that they're issued by the Local Board of Health.

No home dog likes to see strangers taking stuff away – specially bones; and that's why they want to go for our chaps. But we can refuse to go into any yard where a savage dog is off the chain. One got at me the other day. When my hands touched the tins he started to bark like mad and brought the missus out. 'That's only his play,' she said. But when the cur nipped me and hung on until I lifted him away with the point of my boot, I thought it was no play for me. The lady said she was sorry, but Towser must have been in a bad temper that morning. I guess he was sorry, too, when he felt my boot.

We have some funny experiences. The other day a lady offered one of our chaps half a crown if he could find her false teeth among the rubbish. How she lost them I don't know, but she said she had hunted all over the place except the dustbin. Another one had lost her wedding ring while sweeping the floor. She was a sweet young thing and was in a terrible fluster about telling her husband. Any of our chaps would have eaten his hat if only he could have handed her that little bit of jewellery.

I am often asked whether we pick up anything valuable. My reply is that if we were to wait till we made a fortune out of what's left in local dustheaps, we'd be as old as two blooming Methuselahs and a Wandering Jew and a half, and then die poor as Lazarus's dog.