

# HSA *History*

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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## Travel with Sturt during dinner

The Society has been greatly honoured by Mr Bob Lewis who has accepted our invitation to be guest speaker at the annual dinner of the Society to be held at the former Tattersalls Club, 14 Grenfell Street, Adelaide on Saturday, August 15, 1998 at 7 pm for 7.30 pm.

Mr Bob Lewis is a great-grandson of James Lewis, who was in the party which accompanied Captain Charles Sturt's mid-1840s expedition to find the Inland Sea. Mr. B. Lewis' grandfather was the Hon. John Lewis, an explorer, bushman, drover, roughrider, pastoralist, businessman, legislator, historian, breeder of thoroughbred horses, floriculturist, art and nature lover, patriot, and he would have prided himself most of all, as a hard worker. He was President of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, S.A. Branch, for seven years. With the assistance of Thomas Gill he published a series of exceptional Presidential Addresses on Australian explorers. His memoirs *Fought and Won* are a fascinating record of his life.

Our guest speaker has no problems in discussing these two ancestors in a most honest and forthright manner. One might perhaps even wonder, what would the Hon. John think!

The food and beverages at this venue are excellent, but even if they were not, a most enjoyable night would be had.

Bob Lewis is the son of Essington Lewis, well known as the Managing Director of B.H.P. and probably the most important industrialist in Australia's history, particularly for his outstanding efforts during World War 2. Bob is himself a distinguished person in his own right. He was head prefect at Geelong Grammar School, a member of Trinity College Club Committee and won a rowing and boxing blue at Melbourne University, where he gained his B.Sc. in metallurgy. His wife, Betty, a daughter of Sir Archibald Grenfell Price, was awarded a gold medal in training as a nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.



*John Lewis, explorer.*

*Photo: Royal Geographical Society of SA*

Bob Lewis became Vice-Master of St. Mark's College and in 1967 became Master. He added a B.A. degree with First Class Honours from Adelaide University. Following his period as Master of St. Mark's College he left in 1968 to take charge of Menzies College at the newly established La Trobe University in Melbourne. He has been an active member of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, S.A. Branch, having served on its Council and various committees, as well as many other activities.

Members and friends are urged to book early for the dinner by ringing Mrs Avis Huckel on 8277 2953. The cost is \$28 for members and \$30 for non-members.

## 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.

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## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Historical Society of South Australia welcomes seven new members: Mrs. R. Bickford, Mr. J. Clark, Mr. J. Healey, Mr. and Mrs D. Lampshire and Mr. A. Mortimer, Mr. J. Everett.

## Coming events

**4 September:** Historical Society of South Australia's scheduled talk has been cancelled and replaced by Pat Sumerling's popular talk *An Armchair Pub Crawl - History of pubs in SA*. 8pm. Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town. All welcome.

**15 July:** Coromandel Valley and Districts branch of National Trust walk around Willunga. Lunch at Old Bush Inn. Enquiries: Jeanette McHenry 8278 7549.

**16 July:** Visit to Old Treasury Building Museum, including original Cabinet Room. Engineering Heritage Branch, Institution of Engineers (SA) 8267 1783.

**17 July:** *A Taste of Life in the 1870s* activity for children 7-15 years at Ayers House. National Trust of SA. \$10. 8223 1655.

**18 & 19 July:** Thirtieth anniversary celebrations of Australia's first high-performance coupe, HK-series Holden Monaro at Drage Airworld Museum in Wangaratta, Victoria. Monaro hotline (03) 9530 4545

**22 July:** History of Ayers family and house and some history of Adelaide's early plumbing by Ms Aileen Kearns at SA Genealogy & Heraldry Society's library, 201 Unley Road, Unley. 7.45 p.m. 8272 4222.

**23 July:** View the SA Museum's State Anthropology Collection of Aboriginal artefacts led by curator Franchesca Cubillo-Alberts, 6.30 pm. Friends of SA Museum. 8278 6007 after 7 pm.

**26 July:** *Changing fashions in society* by Marjorie Hann. Burnside Historical Society, 2.30 pm. 8333 2748.

**31 July:** 125th birthday of the declaration of the government township of St. Kilda.

**5 August:** Illustrated talk: *Is the book dead?* by University Librarian Ray Choate at University of Adelaide Alumni Association. 7.30 pm. 8303 4275.

**5 August:** *Facets of my life in Norwood with Medicine & Music* by Dr. Arthur Giannopolous. Kensington and Norwood Historical Society at Don Pyatt Community Hall, Norwood Town Hall, off George Street. 8 pm.

**9 August:** Pilgrimage in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop and the pioneer Josephites from Adelaide through the Copper Triangle. \$35 each. Bookings essential 8364 5311.

**9 August:** Metropolitan Male Choir at Beaumont House, 631 Glynburn Road for National Trust of SA. 2 pm. Tickets: \$15, \$12.50 members & concession. 8223 1655.



*Alf Traeger*

*Photo: A Pictorial History of the RFDS - M. Page*

## AERIAL MANTLE OF SAFETY

*The mantle of safety: a celebration of 70 years of the Royal Flying Doctor Service* will be the laudatory topic for the Historical Society of South Australia's meeting next month on Friday, August 7.

Many wonderful things have been originated by South Australians.

Although Alfred Traeger was born in Victoria, he lived most of his life in South Australia, and was a significant member of the team which set up the famous Flying Doctor Service.

John Flynn felt the need for a mantle of safety when he started work at Beltana in 1911, but it took another 17 years before his dreams came true. A dynamic man, Flynn was adept at harnessing the energies and abilities of other men in realising his dream. One of these men was Alfred Traeger, a quiet, shy man who achieved great things. He did what he felt had to be done to meet what he saw as human needs. The lecture in August, while looking at the general early history of the R.F.D.S., will have an emphasis on Mr. Traeger.

The speaker will be Mr Ron White, a member of the Historical Society of SA. Born in 1937, Ron started school during the war, and later went to Adelaide Teacher's College, from 1955-'56.

After teaching at the Karkoo and Beaufort one-teacher schools from 1957-'61, Ron was the third teacher to be appointed at the ort Augusta School of the Air, and it was during that time that he built up his appreciation and enormous admiration for the R.F.D.S.

Ron continued his teaching up to 1992, when he retired from a career lasting over 35 years.

Ron has interests in music, having conducted and been a member of various choirs; is currently President of the Australian Electric Traction Association, S.A. Division; is an active member of the St Kilda Tramway Museum, a tour guide for Cummins historic house, and member and voluntary worker with the Theatre Organ Society.

Ron has involvement in tramway museums in New Zealand and is a keen traveller within and outside Australia.

All are welcome to attend the talk in the Prince Philip Theatre at Prince Alfred College, Kent Town at 8 p.m.

## COLIN THIELE: Our home-grown greenie!

by Stephany Steggall

In an article written for *History SA* number 129, March 1997 about *The Cedars*, frequent reference was made to the book, *Heysen of Hahndorf* by Colin Thiele, which inspired the article in the first place.

As a sequel, it is an opportune time to write about Colin Thiele. His contribution, to Australian literature in general and South Australian tradition and heritage in particular, is measured in about 100 books for children and adults, published overall in 13 languages.

This year Colin Thiele has added the accolade of the Dromkeen Medal to his list of credits. It is presented annually by the Governors of the Courtney Oldmeadow Children's Literature Foundation in Victoria.

Dromkeen is a nineteenth century homestead which houses a world-renowned collection of children's literature. The historic home is featured on the medal and it is appropriate for Colin Thiele to be a recipient, for his writing is always in the context of the home and its inhabitants, endorsing old-fashioned values of family life and simple traditions.

Of interest to the South Australian historian is that which Max Fatchen, Thiele's lifelong friend, refers to as the writer's "strong sense of where he belongs".

"Colin Thiele," says Max Fatchen, "is a great interpreter of the South Australian countryside which he knew and loved so well."

Children's books aside - many of them appreciated by adults too - Colin Thiele has given South Australia a legacy of fine historical writing. Reference will be made here to three books: *Barossa Valley Sketchbook* (Rigby, 1968), *Coorong* (Rigby, 1972) and *Heysen of Hahndorf* (Rigby, 1968). He numbers the last two as "rather special" amongst his personal favourites.

*Barossa Valley Sketchbook* had its origins in Colin Thiele's family background. His story began at Mutter Knabe's Nursing Home in Eudunda on November 16, 1920. A farm in the Hundred of Julia Creek, about 12 kilometres from Eudunda, was home to Colin Thiele for the first 16 years of his life.

His recollections of that time are captured memorably in yet another highly readable book - an autobiography, *With Dew on My Boots: A Childhood Revisited* (Walter McVitty Books, 1997) - the text of which is complimented by numerous authentic original period advertisements, news clippings, trademarks and photographs from the 1920s and '30s.

He was the one writer qualified to "convey the true feelings of life in Barossa Valley", according to the introduction of *Barossa Valley Sketchbook*. In a section on "Heritage", Thiele defines the Barossa as "not just a place. For over a hundred years it has been much more than that - a way of life, perhaps, an attitude of mind, a quality of spirit."

This sums up the essential Thiele quality - he recognises the importance of people in their chosen place and captures it in language which is "at once simple, yet enriched with the freshness and clarity of a poet's imagination and a respect for and delight in words. His writing reflects benign interest in, and love of, ordinary people depicted faithfully in their everyday environment, in particular places and periods of special significance to him ..." [these words are from the citation read at the announcement of the Dromkeen Medal winner.]

His sketching of the history and development of the Barossa Valley identifies its particular pattern of daily life and ongoing traditions, the dominance of the vineyard and the rewards of family enterprise; as well as the existence of celebrated historic homes and landmarks.

Thiele sums up "his" ageless Barossa in words that ring true today, 30 years after the publication of the book: "And so today, though change and convulsion wrack the world, the Barossa miraculously retains something of its old spirit. The scene remains rural. Man is at one with the earth, and the earth is good ... The cycle of the seasons ... the march of the vineyards and the march of the generations ... It is all part of the Barossa even now."

Similarly in *Coorong* there is a prophetic thread in a book dedicated to extolling the region's isolation and uniqueness: warning that its untouched beauty, "a rare and precious place in the world", could be destroyed.

Colin Thiele has, in the quarter of a century that has elapsed since the writing of *Coorong*, gained a reputation as an environmentalist; evidenced recently by his winning The Wilderness Society Environment 1997 Award for *High Valley*. South Australia has good reason to acknowledge the extra dimension, the hidden agenda of their homegrown "greenie", for his is a voice attended by the younger generations that will assume responsibility for environmental issues.

While *Coorong* is just one expression of an environmental theme first put in place by the fictional *Storm Boy* (1963), the book bearing the name of the area is also well-researched documentation of little-known aspects of South Australian history.

For example *Coorong* considers the existence of the Djip Djip Rocks and Pool, once part of the lore of the region and ceremonially important to the Aborigines; the mystery of three Chinaman's Wells; the sensitive response to the spirit of the Coorong by George French Angas in his 1844 journey.

Thiele also delves into the macabre early history of the area: the massacre of the survivors of the *Maria* (wrecked on the Coorong coast in 1840) - the worst such atrocity in the history of South Australia - and the disappearance of Collet Barker in 1831 when exploring the Encounter Bay region. *Coorong* is solidly based in its history and geography, while also developing the wilderness theme,

By contrast, *Heysen of Hahndorf* is an intensely human account of a South Australian's life and times. Colin Thiele spent 12 months in research, including long sessions with Sir Hans Heysen who applauded the finished product.

Thiele's success in writing a remarkable biography is evidenced by current interest in producing a new edition of the book. A characteristically Australian painter who has given artistic expression to South Australia - the Adelaide hills, the River Murray, the South Coast and Flinders Ranges - and whose home and studio have become famous, is a worthy subject for a canvas in print.

Once again, memories of an elder statesman's life are meticulously recorded for present and future generations to appreciate in an historical and aesthetic context : the Thiele touch.

It is 40 years since Colin Thiele wrote his first book for children, *Sun on the Stubble*, on the liner "Himalaya" bound for the USA.

A life size sculpture of Thiele now stands in Eudunda's town gardens, overlooking the hills that provided the background for *Sun on the Stubble*, which has never been out of print. There are also, in Eudunda, moves afoot to restore the Thiele farmhouse and open it to the public.

Appreciation of a South Australian writer who has contributed much to national and international understanding of his home state's history, through its people and places, is certainly in order.

Note: Most of the details for this article came from the books mentioned and from personal conversation with Colin Thiele, who now lives in Dayboro, south-east Queensland. I am also indebted to Frannie Kelly, literary agent, whose complete set of Thiele books and thorough biographical research of the author were made available to me.

- *Stephany Steggall*

## Enjoyable events

**12 August:** Tour of Royal Geographical Society at State Library of SA, hosted by Young Trust of National Trust of SA. 6 pm. \$6. Bookings 8223 1655.

**14 August:** Inaugural anniversary dinner of Burnside Historical Society at Waterfall Gully Restaurant. Bookings: Alan Cross 8333 2748

**15 August:** HSSA annual dinner and guest speaker, Mr Bob Lewis, at Tattersalls Club, city. Mr Lewis will talk about his great-grandfather James Lewis, who was in Captain Charles Sturt's mid-1840s expedition to find the inland sea; and his grandfather Hon John Lewis, explorer, businessman, legislator, floriculturist. \$28 members, \$30 non-members. Bookings 8277 2953.

**17 August:** *Familiarity breeds contempt: understanding history through built heritage* by Brian Samuels at Burnside Historical Society. 8 pm at Burnside Community Centre.

**18 August:** *Engineering a City* by Deane Kemp at Engineering Heritage Branch. 8267 1783.

**19 August:** Dr Ralph Foster, botanist, will talk about Belair National Park at Coromandel Valley & Districts Branch, National Trust of SA in St. John's Church Hall, Main Road, Coromandel Valley. 8 pm. 8278 1034.

**19 August:** History and role of Blood Bank by Rosalie Evans at Port Adelaide Historical Society. 8 pm in upstairs foyer of Semaphore Library.

**26 August:** Dr Michael Symons' talk on history and theory of kitchens. Young Trust of National Trust of SA. 7.30 pm at 452 Pulteney Street, Adelaide. Andrew 8362 8906.

**27 August:** Grand Bradman Dinner to celebrate Sir Donald Bradman's 90th birthday. \$125 per head. State Library of SA Foundation 8207 7626.

**12 September:** Guided wildflower walk in Engelbrook Reserve, Bridgewater. 1.30 pm from southern end of Wattle Street.

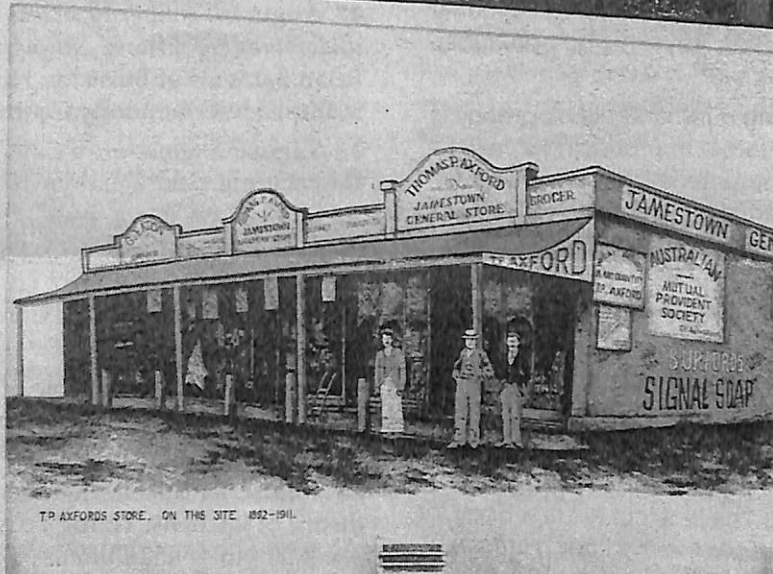
**12 September - 2 October:** RAA Adelaide International Motoring Festival.

## Reunions

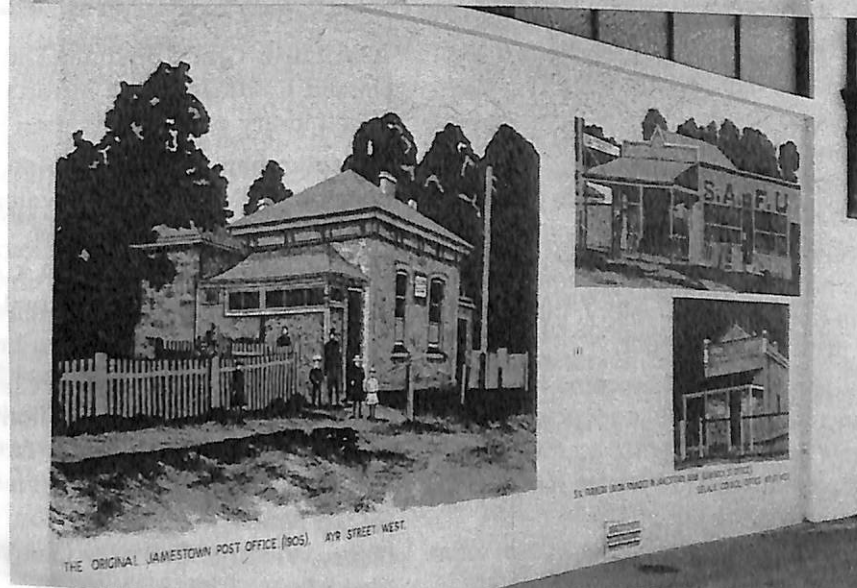
Roach and Ninnes reunion at Clare, SA on November 14 & 15. For descendants of Thomas and Mary Roach who arrived at Port Adelaide from Cornwall on November 10, 1848 and descendants of Thomas and Joseph Ninnes who arrived Nov. 8, 1848 at Port Henry, Victoria. Contacts: Glenys Savage 8262 7570, Lloyd Roach 8269 4645, Helen Dyer 8276 4184, Bert Ninnes 8522 2252.



Sir Hubert Wilkins was born 1888 at Mt. Bryan. The first of four murals on supermarket at Jamestown.



Second mural of the original group of shops built on the site early 1870s.



Fourth mural: S.A.F.U. started in Jamestown. Also depicted are the original Post Office and Belalie Council building, Ayr Street, Jamestown.

# Jamestown's walls of fame

by Julie Humphris,  
Secretary of Jamestown Branch,  
National Trust of SA.

In 1993, the former Jamestown District Council, received funding from Kickstart and the Northern Cultural Trust, and commissioned artist John Whitney to paint murals depicting local history. John, a former art teacher, had been involved with similar projects in the Adelaide metropolitan area. He worked in Jamestown with the assistance of students from Jamestown and surrounding high schools.

The large mural at the western end of Ayr Street, illustrates the flow of South Australia's history, from its Aboriginal inhabitants, through the pastoral era, to the farming settlement of the Belalie area and town of Jamestown. The Ngadjuri aboriginal tribe inhabited the area and Belalie is believed to be an Anglicised version of two words from their language meaning two eagles and these can be seen on the left; Belalie Creek flows through Jamestown, in the Hundred of Belalie.

Matthew Flinders, H.M.S. Buffalo, Governor Hindmarsh and the Old Gum Tree represent the beginning of European settlement in South Australia. Seeking more grazing land, the early pastoralists followed the explorers, and their portraits - J.B. Hughes and J. Maslin of "Bundaleer", Dr. J.H. Browne of "Canowie", G. Marchant of "Mannanarie" and D.H. Cudmore of "Yongala" can be seen with a map of the former Jamestown District Council.

With the influx of farmers in the 1870s, a town was surveyed, and the scattered buildings of early Jamestown can be seen along with portraits of Sir James Fergusson, after whom it was named, G.W. Goyder, whose "rainfall line" influenced the area and Dr. J.A., Cockburn, the first mayor.

On the south side of Ayr Street, at the side of the Memorial Hall, Sir James Fergusson, K.C.M.G., Governor of S.A. from 1869 to 1873, sits in his comfortable chair, he watches the town he named, but never visited.

A series of four murals are on the side of the supermarket. The first honours Sir George Hubert Wilkins, born in 1888 at Mt. Bryan, east of Jamestown. After a country childhood and education at the School of Mines, Adelaide, his life of adventure and exploring began.



*Mural: Town named after Sir James Fergusson, Governor of South Australia 1869-1873.*

He stowed away on ship, arrived in England where he obtained a job as a news photographer in the Balkan War, and later became interested in the pioneering efforts of aerial photography. He spent 1913-'17 in the Arctic as an expedition photographer, led a British natural history expedition to Australia in 1923-'25 collecting specimens, then returned to the Arctic on flying expeditions with Ben Eilson. After their pioneering flight across the Arctic from Alaska to Spitsbergen in 1929, G.H. Wilkins was knighted for 15 years work in science and exploration. He also married in the same year. As Sir Hubert Wilkins, he joined a dirigible flight around the world, followed by further flying expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic and in 1931 he attempted to take a submarine under the ice to the North Pole. Wilkins had left Australia aged 20, and from then lived permanently overseas. He returned occasionally to visit his family and retained his Australian citizenship. The Sir Hubert Wilkins Building at the Jamestown airstrip, named in his honour, was opened on October 23, 1994 by Mr Dick Smith.



On the side of an office building, two early industries: the flour mill and produce factory are featured together. In 1873 Mr. Albert Trilling built the Jamestown flour mill. Four years later, at the age of 45, he was killed in an accident, when his coattails caught in the mill machinery. His sister, Miss Ida Trilling, with the help of managers continued to conduct the business for a further 19 years, when it was sold to the Adelaide Milling Co.

Edmund Humphris, who claimed to have been the third person to arrive and settle in Jamestown, was the first butcher and the foundation town councillor. In 1880 he purchased an established aerated waters factory, which for a short time made Emu beer. After Edmund's sudden death in 1882, his widow Frederina, with 10 children from 17 years to a baby born a month after his father died, took over the Emu factory. She introduced the production of tomato sauce, as well as chutney, pickles, preserves, jam, butter, et cetera. For many years the factory was the largest employer of labour in the town. As Frederina's four sons left school, they joined their mother in the business. A branch opened in Adelaide and produce was sent interstate and overseas. In 1933 the family business was sold to R.J. Finlayson Ltd., with Mr. Ralph Humphris remaining as manager. The factory closed in 1965. Many other murals are copies of photos from the collection in the Jamestown National Trust Museum.

*Top photo: two industries, flour mill and Emu factory of F. Humphris & Sons. Other photo: mural at western end of Ayr St. on shop of M.S. McLeod, which began in Jamestown.*

They feature the original Belalie District Council Office, former Post Office, the business of M.S. McLeod Ltd. and S.A.F.U., both of which commenced in Jamestown.

The Bundaleer Forest, eight kilometres south of the town, was established in 1876. It was the first government-planted forest in Australia. It was here that Mr. W.J. Curnow, forest overseer from 1876 to 1885 introduced the idea of growing seedling trees in short pieces of bamboo. The practice continues today with plastic replacing bamboo.

Jamestown may add more murals, to present its past, to visitors and local residents.

Information from:

The former Jamestown District Council;

Mrs B.I. Parri's local history collection;

*Change on Change* by Nancy Robinson, published 1971;

*Jamestown - A Photographic Study* by Leigh Cooper, published 1978;

*Undiscovered Australia* by Capt. Sir G.H. Wilkins, published 1929;

*Sir Hubert Wilkins - Enigma of Exploration* by John Grierson, published 1960;

*Sir Hubert Wilkins - His World of Adventure* by Lowell Thomas, published 1961

## EARLY TRANSPORT OF KENSINGTON & NORWOOD

*continued from previous issue;*

Apparently there was no suggestion emanating from the corporation that Mr Wigg was faced with a conflict of interest when pursuing the coachmen, but the residents of Kent Town, Norwood and Kensington, concerned that the new site was in the centre of a very wide street and as such was a great risk to patrons while crossing over to the stand, memorialised the corporation for an immediate restoration of the original site. The editor of *The Irish Harp* concluded that it was intolerable "that a single shopkeeper should thus have the power of overriding the interests of a whole community." In their wisdom the city fathers decided to relocate the cab stand at the corner of Grenfell and King William Streets. (4)

By 1875, with the imminent introduction of horse trams the demise of the coaches had started and the Editor of the *Express & Telegraph* expressed the opinion that:

"In the hot weather it is not pleasant travelling inside these coaches and in the cold weather the passengers are exposed to all sorts of disagreeable draughts. There is, therefore, abundant room for an improved mode of travelling ... and there can be little doubt that a tramway properly managed would be well patronised and adequately supported." (5)

In 1900 there were 377 licensed Cabmen and by July 1, 1925 only 39 remained. But the cab still retained a certain aura of romance for it was an ideal match-maker and many an eligible young bachelor regretted the day when he could no longer lounge beside a fair lady on padded seats.

By 1920 trains, trams and motor cars had made intrusions into the cabman's income but it was the motor buses that hammered the last nail in the industry's coffin; funerals were its only steady source of financial reward together with conveying "drunks" to the watchhouse and payrolls to and from banks.

"The manner in which the Norwood trams is conducted is a crying disgrace ... remonstrances with the boys only bring forth a volley of abuse and appeals to drivers are met with something very like silent contempt. The tram cars are crowded to an extent which renders their resemblance to full boxes of oleaginous sardines more forcible than pleasant. Dresses are spoiled, corns are trodden to cursing pitch, children are squashed out of all likeness to their former selves ... The horses are overworked, the men are overworked, the cars are overworked and the public are over-worked. Who's to blame?" (6)

By the 1870s it had become apparent to the authorities that rail communication was an efficient way of conveyance and by 1877 horse trams had arrived on the local scene and services plied to and from nearby suburbs. In 1877 the Adelaide and Suburban Tramway Company was formed and the first rail was laid in front of the Norwood Town Hall by the Governor, Sir William F.D. Jervis, on October 29, 1877; the first car ran to Norwood and Kensington along the four and a half mile track in June 1878.

Stone tram sheds and stables of galvanised iron with a capacity to provide shelter for 120 horses were on a triangular block of land at the north-west corner of Shipster Road and Regent Street. The route from the sheds was southwards along Shipster Road, down Kensington Road into High Street to The Parade, northwards into Sydenham Road, then down Beulah Road and Rundle Street into Kent Town to Pulteney Street, then to Hindmarsh Square, Grenfell Street, King William Street and back to Rundle Street.

However, all was not smooth running for the patrons because many complaints were forthcoming about the uncomfortable trips, the dilatory manner of drivers and the cheekiness of tramboys:

"Every variety of jolt and violent swaying, both sidelong and upwards, has to be endured - not necessarily for the whole journey, because it is open to passengers, who cannot bear the infliction, to get out and walk before reaching their destination.

The trams rarely run up to the time that is published ... the boys are decidedly cheeky (their being dirty is ... excusable) and some of the drivers seem asleep during the journey ... The already fatigued bony horses ... should have been turned out four years ago ..." (7)

Under the laws which regulated horse trams there was no effectual check on the number of passengers which could be carried for a conductor could overload his tram to any extent and be safe from prosecution because the private Act of Parliament controlling the company was superior to any corporation by-laws - so the tramcars were overloaded with impunity and the passengers who complained had no redress.

It was not uncommon to find that a car, supposed to be licensed to carry sixteen passengers inside and nineteen outside, would have as many as 25 within and more than 30 without. To remonstrate with the driver during this overloading process was to no avail for he would disregard all remonstrances and take on passengers as long as he could pack them in.

The laws governing tram cars were eventually amended to give local authorities control over some aspects of the company's operations and the first prosecution was launched in 1906 when Arthur Hutchinson of West Hindmarsh, a driver for the Adelaide, Hindmarsh and Henley Beach Tramway Company, was charged with permitting "a larger number of passengers than was specified in the licence, viz., five in excess."

Counsel for the defence suggested that the alleged overcrowding was "due to the greed of the company and its desire to draw in the filthy lucre." After heated exchanges between counsel for both sides the unfortunate defendant was allowed to leave without a blot on his escutcheon for the learned magistrate ruled that portion of the council by-laws was repugnant at law. (8)

Another inconvenience was the presence of dogs which were permitted in tram cars "to the great annoyance of persons inside" while the ever-present drunkard was "far more objectionable than a dog in a crowded vehicle"

Roomy carriages became close and stuffy and the loading at the top and on the steps was a check on ventilation. There were notices in the trams that any complaint or incivility or otherside should be made to the secretary of the company in writing but they probably found "themselves in a correspondence which [ended] in nothing."

It was suggested that an appeal to the driver would be useful, but his hands were full minding his horses and attending to the call bell and the state of the traffic in the streets, and had no time in transit for altercations and no power to do anything except complain upon return to the depot - the long hours they had to keep were against any special zeal in this direction.

Each tramcar had a driver and a conductor, the latter usually a boy. The smaller cars had fare-boxes into which all the fares in tickets or money was put. At the end of each journey the driver and conductor delivered a weighbill showing the number of persons carried, and this of course had to agree with the tickets and money in the box, of which the company manager kept the key.

In the large cars the stationary boxes were closed and the tram conductor went around with a box which would have served very well for church collection purposes. Its secular character was, however, manifest from its being so constructed that money or tickets could not be taken from it except by use of a key.

In the smaller cars a strap attached to a bell in front and behind ran along the whole length of the vehicle above the gangway, and by pulling it a passenger

could secure the immediate attention from the driver. In the larger, the alarm bells were rung by touching a cord, which ran along either side above the windows, that on the driver's side being intended for him and the other for the conductor.

The men who drove the cars were most "respectable and steady; their daily task [was] severe and protracted." They worked from twelve to fourteen hours a day and had no special times for meals - they took them when they could. If they were off duty from sickness or any other cause, they had to "place a shilling for every trip made in their absence." They received a holiday every other Sunday and one week every year, the latter being a concession only introduced in 1881.

Many youths from working class families were employed as conductors on the horse trams and one of them has left us with a poignant account of his life, both at home and in the work place:

"Father was very poor - sometimes in work, sometimes out of it - sometimes drunk and sometimes sober - there were seven of us to keep and very little to do it with. There were times when the baker wouldn't trust us for bread, and the butcher gave us up more than once.

"Father tried to dodge the schoolmaster and kept me away from school so that I might earn a little to help the family, but the School Visitor was one too many and father was fined five shillings, for the magistrate said the boy must be taught whatever happened; and father asked "What even if the kids have to starve?" The magistrate answered quite angry like, "Don't you go and question the action of a wise and liberal government, my man, or I'll make it ten shillings.

"After this I went to school again, and often got more driven into my head than put in my stomach; but I persevered and thought of the future before me, for mother had often said that if I got along with my books she would get my uncle who drove one of the tramcars, to use his influence with the Company and get me a billet as a tramboy.

"When I came home one night with the red band around my cap and my number printed on it, my little brothers were as proud as though I had been made a policeman, and they all, even down to the baby (for there is always a baby in our house) had a try on, and made up their minds to become tramboys themselves when they grew old enough, the cheeky little beggars.

"Brush your clothes and polish your boots, and keep your face and hands clean, and be civil and honest", says Mr. Jones, the manager, "and mind you ring the bell whenever you take a fare, and the Company will

stand by you and God will bless you ..." (9)

A newspaper editor had some remarks on the young boys employed as conductors:

"... Some special provision is necessary. A sort of an attempt was made some time ago ... to put badges with numbers on their hats. However this regulation, if it be one, is observed only to a limited extent; many of the lads have no badges at all, and it is within our knowledge that the boys change badges and hats too at times - so that travelling on one car at different times of the day may ring the changes and baffle if not quite prevent positive identification."

In 1903 a tramboy, aged sixteen years, was accused of stealing a tin worth threepence (two cents) and five shillings (fifty cents) in money from the company and upon being found guilty was ordered a whipping of ten strokes. (10)

In 1908 electric trams superseded the horse trams and they served the community for nearly 50 years when, in 1954, following a decision which is still the subject of concern today, they were replaced by buses, the proponents of which contended that they were mobile and that routes could be changed or extended at less cost; matters such as air pollution did not enter into the debate!

Gangs of men commenced removing the tramlines in 1954 and with the one exception of the Glenelg line, the complete suburban network had been dismantled by the close of 1958.

A typical tramway company had a stable made of corrugated iron on a framework of timber to accommodate ninety horses. Stalls were constructed in two tiers, each having two rows of stands, the horses in the two rows standing with their heads inward; each row of stalls accommodated twenty-two. The stands were separated in three of the rows by poles from the manger suspended by chains, but in the case of the fourth the divisions were fixtures, as it was found that some of the horses, from being vicious or fidgety, required to be kept more to themselves than the rest.

At the southern end was the feed-room and from this two small tramways ran down between the mangers of each tier. A truck carrying the feed ran along from end to end at feeding-time, the contrivance saving a great deal of labour, as each box was easily supplied by the men with its measures of feed as the truck passed along. There were eight stablemen kept busy grooming and effecting changes of teams which were effected 70 times each day. Two trips a day were done by each horse. (11)

With the introduction of electric trams the horses could well have expected being "put out to grass" but their

owners had different ideas as the following report indicates:

The old and the new clashed almost pathetically at North Adelaide on Wednesday afternoon. There was a sale of tram horses at the local sheds, and while the veteran four-legged servants of the travelling public were severing ties, electric cars whizzed by with a note of superiority. The closing scene - was it comedy or tragedy? - was witnessed by over a thousand people - the days when tired animals pulled abominably crowded vehicles (antiquities of a forgotten civilisation) around corkscrew hills and up long slopes to the tune of a vigorous whipping, and the sarcastic indignation of those on board.

The regime of exhausted horses and exasperated passengers, seems never to have existed, so familiar have become the glories of the new system. The people have won the splendid reward of waiting; what of the horses? "I reckon those poor beggars deserve to be in clover all the rest of their lives," remarked a sympathetic onlooker. But there is no sentiment in commerce. Today horses mean money. Farmers especially want them. The area of cultivation is rapidly increasing; new agricultural districts are opening, and the exports of draughts to Western Australia and other countries has not improved matters. A good horse is a valuable asset.

The auction was conducted by Messrs Coles and Thomas and "cockies" came from everywhere and were in the majority and "the tramway authorities showed appreciable enterprise by charging (one shilling) for admission to the auction."

After the horses had been disposed of, wagon-loads of harness, obviously as old as some of the animals, "and older than many of the jokes said about them" were brought under the hammer; this sale accounted for £150 in an overall total of £2,032. (12).

4. *The Irish Harp*, July 18, 1873, page 5c;
5. *Express & Telegraph*, April 9, 1875, p.2b;
6. *Lantern*, May 7, 1881;
7. R.M. Gibbs, *Old Kensington, A Local History Guide*, MLSA ref. 994.212-G443; *Register*, 24.10.1894, p.4h & 20.7.1901, p.8h;
8. *Register*, 28.11.1906, p.11a;
9. *Register*, 28.4.1884;
10. *Register*, 18.9.1878, p.6d; *Advertiser*, 19.4.1881, p.4c & 27.10.1903, p.8b;
11. *Register*, September 18, 1878, p.6d;
12. *Register*, April 15, 1909, p.7f.

- by G.H. Manning.

## Golden 'ears for *GM Hour* at State Library

Almost 50 years ago the first car designed and built for Australian conditions rolled off the production line. It was the start of a major industry. More than that, the Holden became part of our way of life.

From humble beginnings as a saddlery business established in Gawler Place in 1856 to a coach making and car assembling business using imported chassis and locally made bodies, JA Holden & Co. became the company that was to give the first Australian car its name.

Badly hit by the 1929 depression, the Holden company and name were saved in 1931 in a merger with General Motors, to form General Motors-Holden's Ltd.

World War 2 interrupted plans to produce an all-Australian car, but the war also helped create the infrastructure necessary to produce the Holden. Since 1948, there has been a steady run of company achievements, culminating in the latest factory expansion at Elizabeth.

South Australia has played a continuous role in the development of the Holden, and for its golden anniversary, the State Library is staging a special exhibition drawing on the Holden Collection held in the Mortlock Library.

Fascinating archival material documenting this remarkable corporate story features in the exhibition. Linked by a time-line highlighting company milestones, there are sections dealing with the original Holden Company's early history, the war effort and the popular 1950s-'60s radio program, the *General Motors Hour*.

The role of Holden in the racing scene and the role the Holden has played in our developing national psyche is also explored.

Visitors to the exhibition will be able to tune in to a rousing *General Motors Hour* play each lunchtime from 12.30-1.30 pm; view fascinating historical film footage from the Mortlock collection; browse the VT Holden web site; and pursue treasured original documents and artefacts.

*The Holden Story - Celebrating 50 years of the first Australian car* is an exhibition for everybody, and will be open during normal library hours: weekdays (except Thursday) 9.30 am - 8 pm; Thursdays 9.30 am - 5 p.m.; weekends 12 noon - 5 pm in the State Library Exhibition Space, North Terrace, Adelaide from Saturday, August 1 to October 25, 1998.



*Humble beginnings -  
the Gawler Place saddlery - come - car assembly  
business .*

Photo courtesy of Mortlock Library of South  
Australiana Picture Collection

- article courtesy of *EXTRA extra*, July to September  
1998 issue, the free quarterly newsletter of the  
State Library of SA.

### Exhibitions

*'The Wreck of the Sydney Cove, 1797: Cargo for the  
Colony'* at SA Maritime Museum, 126 Lipson Street,  
Port Adelaide until July 31.

*The Painted Coast: Fleurieu Peninsula* painted by  
William Light from the 1830s, G.F. Angas from  
1840s, H.P. Gill from turn of century, Horace Trenerry  
in 1930s, '40s and modernists. Art Gallery of SA until  
August 16.

*A Twist of Fate: An exhibition and interactive  
experience about refugees.* Migration Museum,  
Kintore Avenue, Adelaide. Mon-Fri 10 am - 5 pm,  
weekends 1-5 pm. Until November 22.