

HSA

History

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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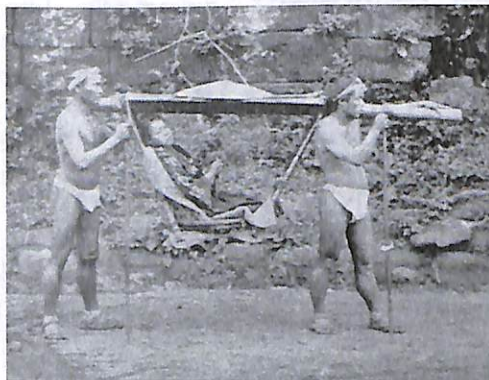
No. 141, March 1999

A leap of faith . . . or two . . . or three

The life-long search of one man for a faith and an occupation to satisfy him is the subject of our April lecture, "That Old Heathen: the Extraordinary Life and Travels of Wilton Hack", to be given by Dr. Robert Nicol at the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, April 9th. The evening will commence at 7.45 p.m. to allow time for the Annual General Meeting to be held before the talk begins at 8 o'clock.


Born in South Australia in 1843, Wilton Hack was brought up as a Quaker, studied for the Anglican priesthood, but soon after was re-baptised by the Rev. George Stonehouse into the Baptist faith. He married Anna, one of Stonehouse's daughters, in 1870 and two years later was appointed pastor of the newly-founded Hilton Baptist Church (now Theatre '62).

In 1873 he decided to become a missionary and sailed for Japan with his pregnant wife and two children. Thus began a life of exotic travel and adventure as he leapt from one belief or enterprise to another. He was the first missionary in Japan to print and circulate Christian tracts, though the mission eventually failed from lack of resources and the hostility of the authorities. On his return he hatched a scheme to promote Japanese settlement in the Northern Territory, spent time in the Kalgoorlie gold-fields, set up the socialist-based Mt. Remarkable Village Settlement for the Unemployed and then travelled to Ceylon to establish a school. In the meantime he had become a Theosophist and was writing and publishing works on spiritualism.



*Japanese litter-bearers,
photographed by Wilton Hack, c. 1874*

The later years of his life were spent in Western Australia where he owned and managed a gold-mine, dying in 1923 and being cremated, in accordance with his own instructions, on a funeral pyre in a nearby paddock.


Dr. Nicol made contact with the family in Western Australia and had access to a number of documents including a scrapbook of Hack's containing the many photographs he took on his Eastern travels. A selection of these will be shown during the lecture. 

Evening visit to Darroch House

If the idea of wandering through a stately, two-storey Victorian home on a pleasant autumn evening appeals to you, then the pleasure of your company is requested at Darroch House, 6 Briar Road, Felixstow, on Friday, April 16th at 7.00 p.m.

The house was built by Scottish-born James Marshall who came out to South Australia in 1867 and soon established a successful drapery business. When his premises in Rundle Street were destroyed by fire in 1881 he built a splendid, new establishment that later became the Myer store.

Darroch House was built as his residence in 1885 and originally stood on 13 acres that stretched from Payneham Road to the river. Its features include an unusual brass-panelled fireplace, a beautiful stained-glass window set over a magnificent central staircase, a wood-panelled smoking room and wide balconies overlooking the gardens.

The present owners, Des and Barbara Bowen, will show us over the house and have kindly offered to provide us with supper. 

The Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

Founded 1974

P.O. Box 519, Kent Town, S.A. 5071

Meetings are held on the first Friday of each month at 8 p.m. in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town. All welcome.

THE OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY ARE:

- 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 of history, especially that of South Australia and Australia.
- To co-operate 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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History SA Editor: Mr. J. Healey, 27 Germein St, Semaphore, 5019. Ph. 8449 2268.

Borneo burlesque

In July, 1942, a group of 150 Australian army officers were sent to a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp at Sandakan in Borneo. Here, and later at another camp at Kuching, they were to suffer illness, cruelty and the most severe deprivations until the end of the war. Their determination to survive and the activities they devised to sustain their morale are the themes of our May lecture, "My Dad in a Borneo Prisoner-of-War Camp", to be given by Dr. Michelle Cunningham, part-time tutor in History at the University of Adelaide.

Surrounded by jungle and living on meagre rice rations, they were prey to malaria, beri-beri, tropical ulcers and malnutrition. In the face of this they decided to keep themselves mentally active by putting on musicals, burlesque revues and dramas, and by organizing a wide variety of lectures on educational topics.

An amazing amount of talent was unearthed, most of the theatrical productions being written and composed by the men themselves. These included shows with titles such as *Campus Capers*, *The Jury Retires*, *Sinbad the Sailor* and *Love on the*

Double Cross. Other theatrical evenings featured scenes from *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*, recreated as accurately as possible from memory.

Costumes were made from blankets, towels and scraps of rag, props were scrounged from the men's personal belongings or fabricated from wood, and paper was salvaged from tobacco wrappings and the envelopes of prisoners' letters. Posters and programmes were produced for each event, illustrated with lively designs and pencil drawings. Fortunately these were saved and a selection of them will be shown during the talk.

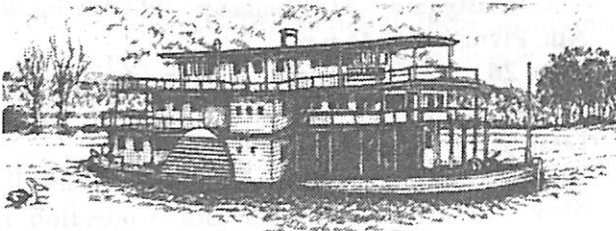
Many officers suffered from scabies and, being prohibited from fraternising with the other men, decided to put on a "strictly diseased only" show called *Fundosi Follies* – a reference to the loincloths or 'fundoses' they were required to wear during their treatment. The poster for this revue, which was co-produced by Adelaide jazz musician Johnny Poole, is shown at left.

The talk will be given on Friday, May 7th, at 8.00 p.m. in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town.



Cruising the river of history

The paddle steamer *Marion* will feature prominently at the 1999 State History Conference to be held at the riverport of Mannum, S.A., from Friday, May 28th to Sunday, May 30th. Delegates to the conference, hosted by the Mannum Dock Museum Board, will be able to spend time aboard the *Marion* (pictured below) and will be introduced to the history, environment and characters associated with the River Murray and the Mannum area. Although the title of the conference, *Turning the Wheels: Keeping History Afloat*, is expressed in aquatic terms, the theme is universal and the programme will be of interest to all historians.



The activities will begin with a 'steam-out' on Friday night where the carping will be of a culinary nature, enhanced by some vintage specialities, songs and a yarn or two. On Saturday morning, long-time River Murray historian and writer, Bill Reschke, will argue the importance of regional history for those developing interpretative and protective strategies. This will be followed by a choice of sessions on housing history (run by heritage architect Andrew Klenke), relations between image and text (Peter Templeton), collating and sharing information through computerisation (with representatives from AMOL) and developing objectives in line with accreditation possibilities (run by cultural tourism consultant Lyn Leader Elliot).

After lunch the issue will be 'Funding Historical Activity', with Julie Ann Ellis and Richard Reid focussing on government funding, self-generation of funds and sponsorship possibilities. There will then be a mid-afternoon excursion to the Ngaut Ngaut Aboriginal Conservation Park at Nildottie, an important site for the early keepers of the river. Delegates will return in the evening for dinner.

On Sunday morning a panel will discuss ways to maintain enthusiasm and expand our numbers of voluntary historians. Following this there will be alternating sessions, involving a walk and a steam-out, both dealing with strategies to maximise opportunities for enlivening people to our historical environment. After lunch, teacher and river pilot, Frank Tucker, will consider the education market for history, Jan Spriggett will offer insights for

pursuing the tourist market, and the State Library's Valmai Hankel will discuss the readers market.

A variety of accommodation is available for the weekend, including the *P.S. Marion* itself, which will provide approximately 30 berths on a twin-share basis. Bookings may be made by phoning Veronica Ingram Jones on 8569 2733. Accommodation is also available at a number of bed-and-breakfast establishments, motels, caravan parks and houseboats.

The registration fee for the conference is \$35 (Seniors/Students \$30). For further information and registration forms write to the Mannum Dock Museum, P.O. Box 68, Mannum, SA 5238, or phone Veronica on the above number.



Uraidla Heritage Walk

The East Torrens Historical Society has issued a handy guide to the heritage buildings of Uraidla, the earliest of which dates from 1859. Uraidla was not a surveyed township but developed from a cluster of houses and other buildings on land owned by the Cutting, Willcox and Dyer families. Twenty of these historic sites now form the basis of a two-kilometre walking trail through the town.

The leaflet, entitled "Uraidla Heritage Walk", contains a map and historical notes on each building, and is available from shops in the town or by sending an SSAE to the East Torrens Historical Society, c/o Post Office, Norton Summit, SA 5136.



1999 subscriptions due


Members are reminded that unpaid subscriptions for 1999 are now due. The fees are: ordinary members \$30, family \$35, students & pensioners \$22, country members (more than 50 km from the GPO) \$25, associated societies \$32, institutions \$35, term members (for ten years to Dec. 2008) \$250, life members \$600.

Please use the subscription renewal notice which accompanied the January newsletter. If you do not have one, the form is available from the HSSA, P.O. Box 519, Kent Town, S.A. 5071, or by phoning the Treasurer on 8277 2953. Cheques or money orders should be made payable to the Historical Society of S.A. Inc. Payment may also be made by Visa, Bankcard or Mastercard.

The Society would like to thank those members who included a donation with their subscription. Their generosity is much appreciated.



History SA deadline

The deadline for all material for the May 1999 issue is Friday, April 16th. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, SA 5019. Enquiries: 8449 2268. 

History SA interviews Don Both, co-developer of the Adelaide Iron Lung

The Brothers of Invention

Introduction

In 1937 there was a severe outbreak of polio in Adelaide and the S.A. Health Department asked two Caltowie-born brothers, Ted and Don Both, to develop an iron lung. (This was a cabinet in which patients whose chest muscles were paralysed with the disease were enclosed. The rising and falling pressure within forced their lungs to breathe.) The brothers had established their firm, Both Laboratories, in Adelaide a few years earlier and were already well-known as inventors and manufacturers of medical equipment.

There had been an earlier American iron lung but it was very cumbersome and expensive. Ted Both designed a much simpler and cheaper version and soon the "Both Cabinet Respirator" was in production. In that summer of 1937-38, the demand for iron lungs was such that within an hour of each one being completed it was being used by a patient.

The following year London also suffered a polio epidemic and Ted Both moved there to work on new patterns for the respirator. The industrialist, Viscount Nuffield, learning of this, announced that he would subsidise, to the extent of £500,000, the supply of Both iron lungs to all parts of England and the British Empire, and his Morris works were soon producing them by the thousand, at one-thirtieth the cost of the previous American design.

One of the Nuffield iron lungs is on display at the Jamestown Museum and another is held at the S.A. Museum's store at Netley. They are constructed of plywood and aluminium and rest on wheeled frames. Badges attached to the cabinets read: "Both Cabinet Respirator, Presented by the Viscount Nuffield" and "Made in U.K. by Nuffield Organization to a South Australian design. (E.T. and D.J.R. Both)".

The brothers went on to produce a vast array of scientific and medical equipment, in many cases inventing and designing it themselves. The list includes X-ray machines, electro-encephalographs, blood transfusion equipment, foetal heart recorders, gun barrel testers, geiger counters, pen recorders, nail detectors, raisin sorters, electric scoreboards

and the temperature sign that used to be mounted on the Advertiser building.

All the apparatus was manufactured in the Adelaide workshops of Both Equipment Limited which, after beginning in modest quarters at the University of Adelaide, re-located to Tavistock Street (now Frome Street) and later to King William Street, Kent Town.

Ted Both, who was awarded an OBE for his work on the iron lung, died in 1987. Don, who turned 85 in January, still lives in Adelaide with his wife Yvonne, and continues to supply the tennis tournaments at Memorial Drive with the electric scoreboards that he and his brother originally developed for the 1952 Davis Cup and the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

The editor of *History SA* recently interviewed him and discovered a few more stories from a fascinating and extraordinarily productive life.

The interview

JH: Don, how did it all begin? What led to the setting up of the Both Laboratories?

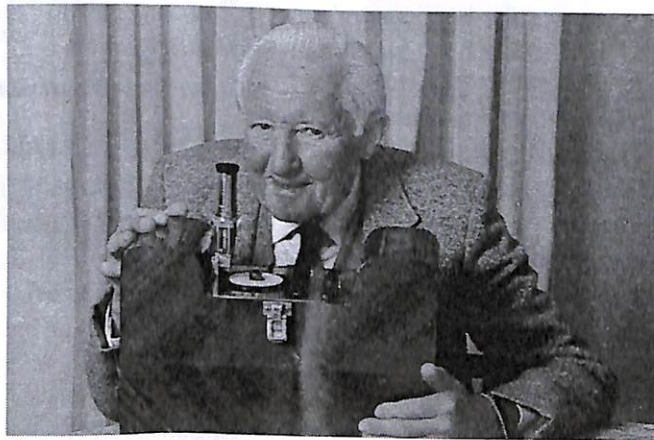
DB: Well, Ted was already in Adelaide in 1932,

employed as a workshop assistant in the Physics Department at the University. He'd read an article in a medical journal about a Professor in Holland – Einthoven, I think his name was – who had discovered that the heart produces electric currents. The electrocardiographs that were around at that time were huge things, and very costly. There was one at the Royal

Adelaide Hospital in the 1920's that was 18 feet long and stood on a massive slate bench.

Anyway, Ted put his mind to it and produced a portable version about 2 feet long and battery-powered. It had a diamond stylus that recorded the heart-trace on a carbon-coated glass disc, which the doctor could view through an eye-piece. You see, the aim was to have an instant diagnosis at the bedside. Previously a recording had to be made and then taken to a darkroom for developing. You were lucky if you got it back the next day.

Well, Professor Kerr Grant – in the Physics Department – saw Ted's ECG and straightaway offered to set him up in a workshop at the University, and to finance the production of them. So Ted called me – I was still in Jamestown – I went down to Adelaide, and we set the lab up in the



Mr. Don Both, with an early model of the portable electrocardiograph, the first of many Both achievements.

ground floor of the old Armoury building behind the Museum – where the Children’s Library was later on.

JH: And you went on to produce several hundred electrocardiographs?

DB: Oh yes, there was model after model. They were transistorised later so they were lighter and more compact. And they were relatively cheap, so private doctors could own their own portable unit, not just the hospitals.

JH: Did you have much to do with the patients?

DB: I worked at the Royal Adelaide for two years taking heart-traces. I’d do something like thirty patients in a morning, take the discs back to the lab to print the records out onto paper, and deliver them to the hospital the same day.

I’ll tell you about one ‘patient’ I had. I was in the workshop one day – this was in 1938 – and Kerr Grant came over with another chap. He said to me, “Can you take this gentleman’s trace?” So I linked him up, and I was thinking that he looked familiar. And then Kerr Grant said, “I want to know why he’s such a good cricketer.” Of course, it was Don Bradman. So I took his trace – very strong and even it was too. I’ve still got the original here.

JH: What was Kerr Grant like?

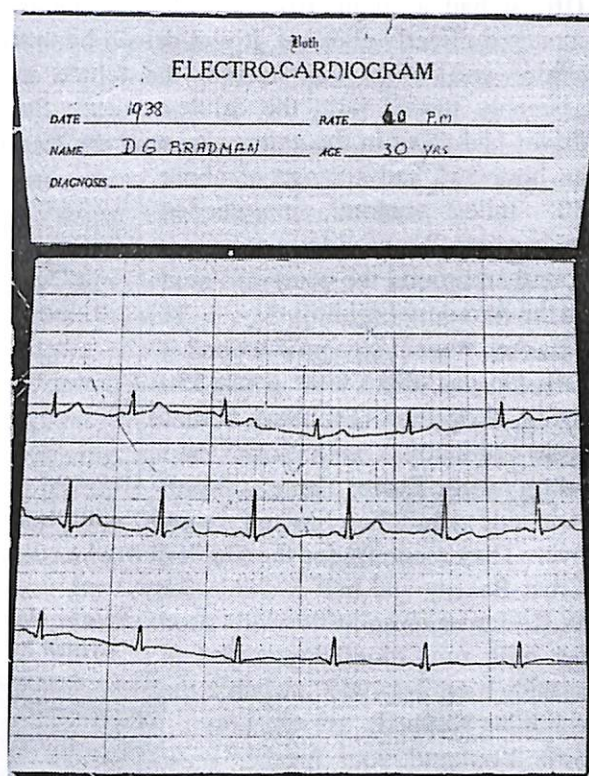
DB: He was a real character. He was over at our workshop all the time. He was very quick-witted. I remember a story about a lecture of his. He had some demonstration equipment there that he couldn’t get to work and one smart-alec student tossed a penny down onto the desk – you know, as if that was all he needed to start it. Well, Kerr Grant didn’t bat an eyelid, but at the end of the lecture he gave another demonstration. He put his felt hat down over a sheet of paper on the desk, rapped the top of it and then lifted it up. The paper came with it. “Why?” he asked. Someone gave the answer: “Because there’s a vacuum under the hat.” In a flash, Kerr Grant skimmed his hat over to the smart-alec who, as he’d expected, promptly put it on. “Well,” said the Professor, “now there’s another vacuum under it!”

JH: You worked with Kerr Grant during the war?

DB: Yes, he was the Adelaide Controller of the Army Inventions Directorate. Ted and I were on the team that examined all the proposals and patents that were submitted. There were some bizarre suggestions as to how to win the war. I remember one old gentleman from Grange who wrote in with a plan to use the beams of searchlights to pick out enemy planes. “And then,” he said, “you run an electric current up the beam of light and destroy the plane!”

JH: And it was at this time that you developed the world’s first fax machine?

DB: Visitel. That was a brilliant idea. Ted thought that up in 1941. It could transmit handwriting, or a drawing, over any distance, as it was being written.



*Don Bradman's electrocardiogram,
taken by Don Both in 1938.*

There was a small writing table with a pen mounted over it attached to levers which registered the pen's movements on the X and Y axes. These movements were then transformed into a modulated signal which could be sent, either by radio or telephone cable, to a receiver. At the other end the procedure was reversed, which moved another pen and recreated the original message.

I wrote one of the first test messages when we were showing it to some of the University men. But then the Army declared it top secret and it all became very hush-hush. They issued a prohibition notice and we weren't allowed to talk about it to anyone. It was so secret that it was never used, at least not in the war zones. GMH used it though --- to send designs of military equipment between their Adelaide and Melbourne plants.

After the war it was used by Automatic Totalisators at Randwick racecourse (where Ted was working) to send the judges' results, which had to be personally signed, to the totes and to transmit the dividends instantly to the payout windows. Every second counted because so much money depended on the timing.

JH: You were also producing the electric bread van during the war. How did that come about?

DB: That was another of Ted's patents. We developed that in 1940 because of the petrol rationing. The van ran on sixteen 6-volt batteries and you could recharge it overnight.

JH: It was a three-wheeler, I understand. How was it driven? ⇨

DB: It had a single front wheel with the motor mounted directly above it. It was driven by vertical chains and when you steered, the whole motor assembly turned with the driving wheel. So the driver had to sit in the centre. It could do 25 miles an hour and had a range of about 50 miles before it needed recharging. We used to test drive it round and round the courtyard next to the Armoury building.

JH: And it went into production?

DB: Oh yes, there were about 150 made altogether. The first bodies were built by Oke's - at their factory in Tynte Street, North Adelaide -- and then Lawton's took over. They made 20 for the Golden Crust Bakery and half a dozen for W.R. James. The vans were used for milk runs too. They stayed in service until 1949 when the rationing stopped.

JH: You and your brother must have worked well together.

DB: Most of the things we did as a team. Ted could turn his mind to just about anything. He could always find a solution to the problem. And I was good on design and production methods. We had three things that kept the money coming in - the ECG's, the iron lung and the humid crib. We'd spend any profits on research and developing new ideas.

JH: The humid crib was one of your personal achievements. You designed that in 1953?

DB: Yes, Dr. Southwood, in the Hospitals Department, asked me to do it. There were American ones apparently, but I never saw one. It had to have a constant temperature, plenty of ventilation and very precise control of the humidity. We did that with trays of water that slid in and out as needed.

JH: And you were awarded the contract to supply humid cribs to S.A. hospitals.

DB: Yes, we went on making them for over twenty years. With a number of modifications, of course. We were always changing things.

JH: You also modified the iron lung later on, I believe.

DB: With the early ones they had to unfasten everything and pull the patient out in order to do anything. It took too long. So I introduced a hinged lid and a counterweight that made it easy to raise it

quickly. We altered the bellows too. For the first ones we'd used rubber but it deteriorated too quickly. Eventually we discovered that the best material to use was kangaroo hide.

JH: The firm seems to have produced an enormous range of equipment over the years. Did you concentrate on any particular field?

DB: Pen recorders were quite a specialty of ours. We started using them first in the portable ECG's. Instead of writing on a glass disc they were modified to take a roll of paper and the pen was a thin tube fed from a reservoir of ink. The height of the reservoir controlled the darkness of the line being drawn. Then later we switched over to a heated stylus that wrote on sensitised paper.

JH: What else were pen recorders used in?

DB: All sorts of medical and scientific equipment - anything that needed a permanent record made. We used them in electro-encephalographs, blood pressure kits, rainfall gauges, wave meters. We'd design any sort of pen recorder to suit the client's requirements. We made them for the Woomera Rocket Range to measure the drift and the acceleration of their rockets. And for the scientists in the Antarctic - for temperature recordings.

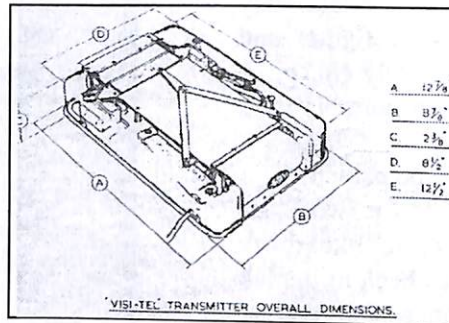
JH: I gather that you're quite a tennis fan.

DB: Since I was little. My uncle, Ron Thomas was the first South Australian to win a Wimbledon title - that was in 1919. I still do the scoreboards at the Drive - take all the electrical gear and the light globes in for the tournaments. I've done that for 46 years now.

JH: Don, what was the most exciting thing you ever produced?

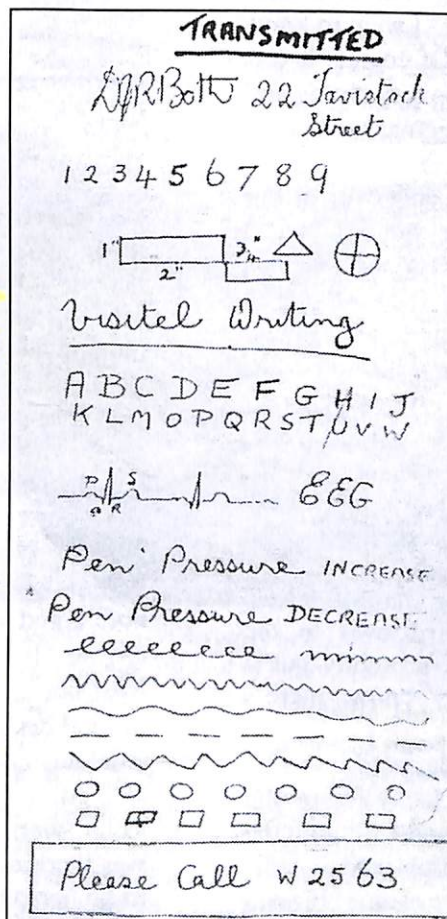
DB: Oh, the electro-encephalograph. We made those in the fifties -- for recording the electric currents in the brain.

We'd link up one of our men in the workshop and you'd see the normal wave patterns of his brain appear on the trace. And then we'd ask him a question. And suddenly all the waves would change and leap about as he thought of the answer. It was just marvellous to be able to watch a person thinking!



Above: Original drawing of the Visitel transmitter, designed by Ted Both in 1941.

Below: One of the first test messages written by Don Both and successfully transmitted by Visitel in 1941.



“Gentleman seeks new position”

by John Healey

In August 1996 the St. Peter's College Archives acquired a wooden trunk, marked "Secretary's Box", which contained the records of George Wright Hawkes who was Secretary to the school's Council of Governors from its foundation in 1847 until 1875.

Among the papers were several letters written to the school in 1850 by newly-arrived immigrants in search of teaching positions. Three are of particular interest. One is from George Francis, who later became the first Director of the Botanic Gardens, another is from the artist and naturalist, George French Angas, and the third, from Thomas Gibson, details a young man's reasons for emigrating, his troubles with a clergyman's daughter and his struggle to find work.

The school archivist, Mr. Robert Fisher, has made the letters available to *History SA*, and the texts are reproduced by kind permission of St. Peter's College.

George Francis arrived in Port Adelaide on the *Louisa Baillie* on 2nd September, 1849, with his second wife and six children. He was an accomplished botanist with numerous publications to his credit and before long had proposed the establishment of a Botanic Garden to the Governor, Sir Henry Fox Young and the Colonial Secretary, Capt. Charles Sturt. The Governor did not approve of a garden being set up at public expense and on 22nd February, 1850, the Legislative Council, on his advice, rejected the proposal. This set-back may have prompted Francis to apply for the advertised position of Third Master at St. Peter's. His letter, written from Walkerville on 30th March, 1850, is addressed to Bishop Short, the Chairman of the Council of Governors.

My Lord Bishop and Gentlemen,

I venture to offer myself a candidate for the Third Mastership of your Collegiate School & to forward testimonials.

I kept a school in London for many years & afterwards in France, but the last revolution drove me thence with much loss of property. England was depressed & for the sake of a rising family I



*George William Francis,
from a painting done in London
before he emigrated.*

resolved to come to Australia. I chose this colony by the advice of Mrs Chisholm, who authenticated my testimonials to My Lord The Bishop, coming with the intention of opening what I was given to understand was much wanted, a finishing school, but found your college established.

You will see that my testimonials are strong, but they would have been stronger and more numerous had not Mrs Chisholm by error sent a packet of them to Sidney [sic] as I believe she informed His Lordship, and I have never been able to recover them. I speak and write French, Teach Drawing, am the Author of no less than 18 books of a scientific character, and belong to the Linnaean and other learned Societies of London.

*I have the honor to remain,
My Lord and Gentlemen,
Your Obedient Humble Servant,*

George Francis

P.S. I have always been a surveyor and during the interval between 1840 & 1845 pursued that occupation only. It is necessary to state this because I applied for the situation of Surveyor to the Burra Burra Company and the two specimens sent appear to have reference to that pursuit rather than scholastic affairs.

Caroline Chisholm, on whose advice, evidently, Francis came to South Australia, had formed her Family Colonization Loan Society in 1849, having actively promoted the emigration of the respectable poor (especially families) since her return to England six years before.

George Francis, failing to obtain the post at the college, persevered for the next five years to have the Botanic Gardens established, finally succeeding in 1855 when he was appointed Superintendent, later to become the first Director. The Gardens still retain most of the features of his comprehensive plan of 1864 (including the gnarled old peppercorn tree to the left of the main gates which was planted by Francis the year before that).

The letter from George French Angas was an unsolicited appeal for employment written shortly after his second arrival in South Australia. He had originally come out in 1844, spending some months here before going back to England. On his return to Adelaide in 1850 he was 28, married and was offering drawing classes at his studio in King William Street. His letter, written from there on 20th September, 1850, reads as follows: ⇨

Sir,

Will you oblige me by mentioning to the Committee of the Governors of the Collegiate School at the next meeting that I am anxious to obtain the appointment of Drawing Master at the College, to teach the art on my system of learning to draw by means of models of solid forms. The terms per pupil 2 guineas a Quarter. The hours of attendance I could make at any time to suit the convenience of the Masters' engagements.

I am,

Sir,

Yours obliged,

George French Angas

It is this letter whose outcome is recounted in Dr. John Tregenza's book on Angas. The College Council approved the offer but on condition that the fee should not exceed one guinea per quarter. The artist was highly affronted at this and an article in the *Mercury and Sporting Chronicle*, presumably based on an interview with him, described the rate as a "beggarly stipend" and "an insult to his professional standing". Five weeks later the College was informed that "Mr. Angas declined to avail himself of the appointment" and had decided to emigrate to New South Wales.

Thomas Gibson, aged 24, arrived in Port Adelaide on 26th December, 1849, on the *Harry Lorrequer*. He was alone in the colony, found himself accused of abduction, and was having difficulty finding work. On February 9th, 1850, he wrote to Bishop Short at St. Peter's College.

My Lord,

I called upon you some time back to assert my innocence of the charge brought against me of having run off with one of the Emigrants of the Ship "Harry Lorrequer" where I officiated as Religious Instructor, but unfortunately for me Your Lordship was from home. Some days after that I requested the Father of this Emigrant to send his daughter to you herself to say that it was entirely her own doing and that instead of my having induced her (as was reported) to run away from the Ship, I did everything I could to put her in the way of returning with several of the female Emigrants I saw waiting at the Labour Office, but you were again from home.

Since then I have let the matter drop having a clear conscience myself and having received every apology from Mr Rands (the name of the girl's Father) accompanied with the warmest thanks for the service I rendered him in seeing his other daughter home with all their luggage to Angaston.

On my return from this place I called upon Mr Giles and, instead of receiving me with the great kindness he evinced on my former visit to him, he was so cold in manner that I left his room with a full determination to work by the sweat of my brow

for a living sooner than throw myself where I might perhaps meet with similar treatment.

I have no one here I can call even an acquaintance. My Father is a Clergyman of the Church of England. He was Minister of the Lock Chapel, Hospital & Asylum, for about twenty years until the late Marquis of Westminster pulled it down. A Church was then built for him in Chester Square, when he was attacked with a dangerous illness which compelled him to leave London altogether and retire to his living "Worlington", Mildenhall, Suffolk. He has a large family and the living produces only £170 per annum.

I held a Government appointment in the "Ordnance" but at the time of the great reduction of Government Offices I, being the latest Clerk appointed, was discharged with very many above me and consequently, sooner than live dependant upon my Father, who felt at the time his altered position, I determined to come out here which I could not have done had he not procured me a free passage.

Since I have been here no one could have been quicker or more anxious for employment than I have and, not having been able to meet with any Clerkship or Tutorship, I purchased a Horse and Cart with the little money I brought with me and Mr Smith the Town Surveyor has indeed been kind to me in promising me constant employment, but the work is too much for me. I am very willing to do any kind of work, but never having been used to it I find the heat with the exertion too excessive.

I have therefore taken the liberty of addressing Your Lordship. I am at work from 8 o'clock a.m. till ½ past 5 p.m. after which time I should have called on Your Lordship, but I have not been well enough but I will do so on Monday evening.

I offer the extreme loneliness of my position as an apology for my boldness in writing this and have the honor to remain

Your Lordship's
most obedient servant,
Thomas Gibson

The emigrant girl was the daughter of Thomas Rands, who later became the sexton at Angaston. Mr. Giles, whose manner so changed towards Gibson, was undoubtedly William Giles, the manager of the South Australian Company whose fortunes were then booming under his leadership. And Mr. Smith was William Smith, Town Surveyor in the Department of Public Works.

Before long, however, Thomas Gibson's fortunes also improved. In 1853 he married Elizabeth Bennett at Penwortham and the following year he bought land at Mintaro where he took on the duties of schoolmaster. He had a private school with an enrolment of about forty pupils and continued as its sole teacher until resigning in 1860

when a public dinner was given for him at the Mintaro Hotel. He then became the town butcher for several years and after that the mail contractor. This was a period of reasonable prosperity for Mintaro, first as a staging point for the bullock teams transporting copper from Burra to Port Wakefield and later with the development of the slate quarry.

Thomas Gibson died in 1871, leaving his wife and seven children. He is buried in West Terrace Cemetery, though the family headstone does not record his name.

Note: For the benefit of family historians the names of the other applicants who wrote to St. Peter's College in 1850 are: D. F. Adey, Richard Bayly, J. Berjew, N.



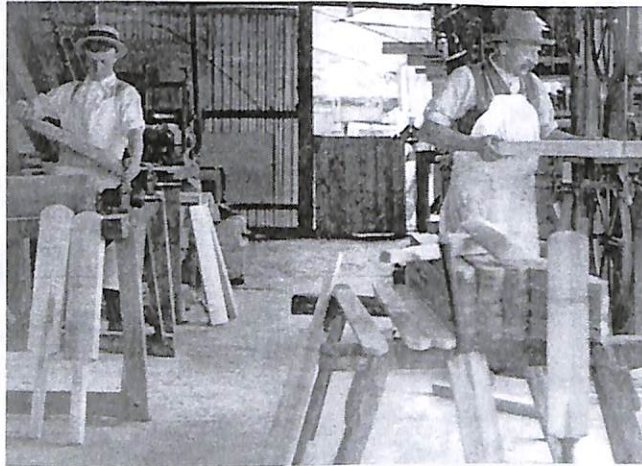
100 not out

One day in 1894 a carpenter named Ewald Kumnick was walking through the old showground in his home town of Lobethal when he came across a seasoned log of willow lying on the ground. Having repaired several cricket bats for the local club, he decided to try his hand at making one. The result was such a success that the following year he set up a cricket bat factory in the disused Lutheran church building on his father's land in the Main Street of Lobethal. And so began a story which has continued for over a hundred years and is told in Robert Fielke's *Cricket Bat Making in South Australia* (Gawler, 1998).

Kumnick's business went from strength to strength. He used locally-grown "basket willow" (of which there was a plentiful supply because in the early days of settlement the South Australian Company had encouraged the planting of it along rivers and creeks to give the countryside a softer, more English appearance

as well as to prevent erosion). By the mid-1930's the factory was producing 15,000 bats per year and was exporting them interstate and overseas. Ewald died in 1948 and his son, Jack, continued the business until the factory closed ten years later.

The next batsman at the crease, so to speak, was Laurie Fielke, another woodworker of Lobethal, who, having also repaired cricket bats, decided in 1965 to make them and set out to learn all he could of the craft personally from Jack Kumnick. Thus sixty years of experience was



Caporelli, Mr. Carew, L. Egan, John Forsyth, William Holdsworth, James Houghton, Ernest James Ley, R. G. McTaggart, Charles H. J. Parrott, John Phillips, John Victor, Rev. Thomas Waite, J. R. Williams and James E. Woodforde. Enquiries regarding their letters may be made in writing to Mr. Robert Fisher, Archivist, St. Peter's College, St. Peters, SA 5069.

References:

Barbara J. Best: *George William Francis: First Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden* (Adelaide, 1986)

Robert Miller: *Mintaro from the 1850's: Millers and their Contemporaries* (Port Elliot, 1994)

John Tregenza: *George French Angas: Artist, Traveller and Naturalist 1822-1886* (Adelaide, 1980)

John Tregenza: *The Collegiate School of St. Peter: The Founding Years 1847-1878* (Adelaide, 1996)


handed down to another family, descended, as were the Kumnick's, from Prussian forebears who had emigrated here in the 1840's and 1850's. The Fielke family has carried on the tradition of fine quality, hand-finished cricket bats for over thirty years, the business now being run by Robert Fielke from his workshop in Gawler.

His book presents a history of the two families, their successes and setbacks, detailed accounts of the fashioning of cricket bats and entertaining pieces of local and cricketing lore.

There are forty-seven processes involved in the making of a bat apparently, and we are treated to a clear, carpenter's account of the main steps.

There are some interesting observations on the impact of the two world wars on the Kumnick business. During W.W.I, with no public demand for cricket bats, Ewald diversified into wooden packing cases for the war effort and in W.W. II he supplied 300 bats a year for the Fighting Forces Comforts Fund. In the 1920's he suffered a setback when his stocks of seasoned willow were commandeered by the Government for the manufacture of artificial limbs for ex-servicemen.

The 112-page book features numerous wood-working illustrations, reproductions of early brochures and many old photographs, such as the one reproduced above showing Ewald Kumnick (on the right) in his factory in 1908.

The book is available from Robert Fielke, 6 Crown St., Gawler, SA 5118, for \$25, plus \$5 postage. 

A glimpse of Light

The publication in London last year of *Billabongs and Ballrooms: The Letters of Avril Fuller* has sparked the interest of South Australian historians who know Miss Fuller as one of the original settlers who arrived here on the *Buffalo* in December, 1836. She was twenty-two at the time and spent seven years in the colony before marrying and returning to England. She seems to have been a charming and well-respected young lady, who was on friendly terms with many of the senior figures in the new province.

The following extract from a letter, written on the 10th January, 1837, to her friend Henrietta Lansdowne in New South Wales, describes her meeting with Colonel Light only days after arriving.

But I must tell you that I have recently made the acquaintance of one of the Most Distinguished Personages of our young colony. He is Colonel William Light, a fine military gentleman who has been entrusted with the cardinal task of surveying and laying out our future home.

We met upon the occasion of my first venture away from the shore where we landed. My friend Lucy Royston and I had made the arduous journey to the inland settlement --- a rude congregation of huts on the banks of a somewhat unprepossessing stream (which does not stream at all but rather lies about in a series of idle ponds).

We were ferried across this "river" and escorted to a military tent on the northern slopes where we were presented (with great courtesy and not a little flourish) to the Colonel and his entourage. He was most attentive and immediately offered to accompany us to a well-known vantage point from which we could view the prospect of the town-to-be. We made our way to a grassy knoll jutting out from the hillside, and it was as we approached the brow of this pleasant eminence that a most singular and distressing occurrence took place.

Our gallant Colonel Light had the misfortune to trip, rather spectacularly, as he attempted to leap over a short stretch of wire fence (of the sort used, I gather, in your eastern colony to enclose sheep). Misjudging its height and discovering very quickly its elasticity, he performed a complete somersault in the air and finished up sprawled on his chest in the dry grass, gazing out over the plain below.


I rushed to his side immediately and asked if he were hurt, but he appeared not to

hear me. In fact, he made neither movement nor reply, but continued to stare out across the river towards the proposed town-site. I could not tell what ailed him. His eyes seemed glazed and unfocussed.

"My dear Colonel Light," I said, "is it your vision?"

Again he made no answer. I then ventured to place my head level with his so that I might discern what, if anything, had so engaged his rapt attention. But I could see nothing --- nothing but the brown earth and the grey-green trees, and of course the vexatious piece of sheep-fence which imposed its criss-cross network of wires over the vista in front of us. In fact, our whole view of the town-site was framed by this horrid rectangular grid.

I could perceive nothing remarkable in it at all. I am concerned for Colonel Light however for, upon our return to the encampment, he sequestered himself in his tent, after calling for "pen, paper and a Stout Ruler". He has not been seen for three days.

The Friends of Avril Fuller will hold their customary Champagne Supper in her honour on Montefiore Hill at one minute past midnight on the night of March 31st. 



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The owner, Helen Dickeson, is Curator of the Clare Regional History Collection.