

HSA

History

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

Print Post approved 535806/0005

No. 146, January 2000

A distinguished start to our year

The Historical Society's first function for 2000, our lecture night on Friday, February 4th, will be a particularly noteworthy occasion. His Excellency the Governor of South Australia, Sir Eric Neal, and Lady Neal have accepted our invitation to attend and the evening will begin at 8.00 p.m. with the presentation of the prizes for the history essay competition for school students, inaugurated this year by the HSSA.

The Governor will present the medal for First Prize as well as the prizes of \$500 and \$200 for Second and Third, and certificates of commendation for the other five students who were short-listed. The winning student will also receive a prize of \$1,000 which has been donated by Bank SA. Consequently the award will this year be known as the Bank SA History Prize and a representative of the bank will be presenting the cheque to the winner.

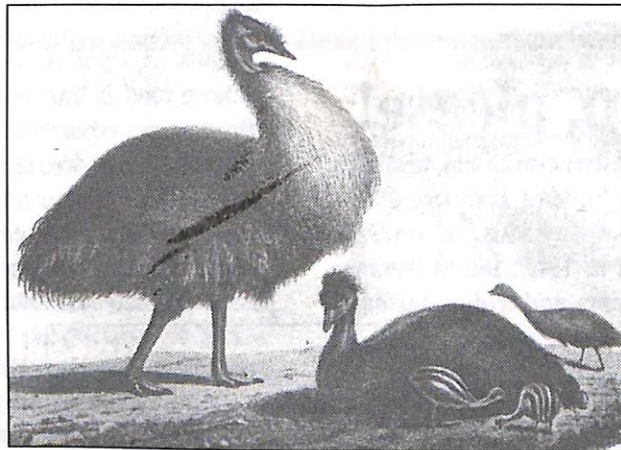
A total of thirty-four essays were received and the judging panel (from the History Teachers Association and the HSSA) has been most impressed with the quality of the entries.

The meeting, to be held in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, is expected to be very well attended and members are asked to arrive a little earlier than usual --- prior to the entrance of the Vice-Regal party. Gentlemen are not obliged to wear frock coats, nor are hats and gloves mandatory for the ladies.

Following the presentations, Anthony Brown will deliver his illustrated lecture on "Flinders and Baudin: the Unknown Coast".

Terra Australis or Terre Napoléon?

Early in 1802 two sea-captains, from countries engaged in a bitter and protracted war in Europe, arrived at opposite ends of the coastline of what is now South Australia. In the months that followed, Matthew Flinders and Nicolas Baudin carried out their separate explorations of the previously uncharted seaboard from the Head of the Bight to Cape Banks. In our February lecture Anthony Brown will look at



The Kangaroo Island Dwarf Emu, seen by both Flinders and Baudin in 1802 but now extinct. The drawing is by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, one of Baudin's artists.

the forces behind the voyages, the differing qualities of the two captains and the many significant discoveries they made along our coast.

The purpose of both the expeditions was scientific as well as cartographic and detailed observations were made of the landscape, its flora and fauna.

Baudin was the first man to circumnavigate Kangaroo Island and there are still almost fifty French place-names in use there and in the south-east. His map of the South

Australian gulfs is reproduced on page 12, though most of the names shown on it were attached by his subordinates after his death on the way home in 1803.

The material of the lecture derives mainly from contemporary sources --- the journals, reports, letters and books of the two captains, their officers and scientists.

Anthony Brown, now retired, is a former chief librarian of the S.A. Institute of Technology and director of learning resources in the Department of T.A.F.E. He is currently a member of the S.A. Encounter 2002 Steering Committee and his book *Ill-Starred Captains*, which details the complete voyages of Flinders and Baudin between 1801 and 1803, will be published later this year.

The Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

Founded 1974

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

E-mail: hssa25@hotmail.com Web-site: www.history.sa.gov.au/hssa.

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 arouse interest in and promote the study and discussion of history, especially South Australian and Australian history.
- 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 co-operate with similar societies throughout Australia.
- To do all such things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of any of the above objects.

PATRON: Sir Walter Crocker, K.B.E.

COUNCIL:

President: Dr. R.P.J. Nicol, 8297 9844.

Vice-President: Mr. M. Keain

Secretary: Mrs. G. Brown

Treasurer: Mrs. A. Huckel, 8277 2953.

Members: Dr. G. Bishop, Dr. S. Cameron, Mr. S. Dawes, Mr. C. Deed, Mr. J. Healey, Mr. J. Loudon, Ms. J. Palmer, Dr. P. Payne, Ms. P. Sumerling.

Journal Editor: Dr. J.T. Stock, fax 8303 3446.

History SA Editor: Mr. J. Healey, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, S.A. 5019. Ph. 8449 2268.

APPOINTED OFFICERS:

Consultant: Mr. R. M. Gibbs, A.M.

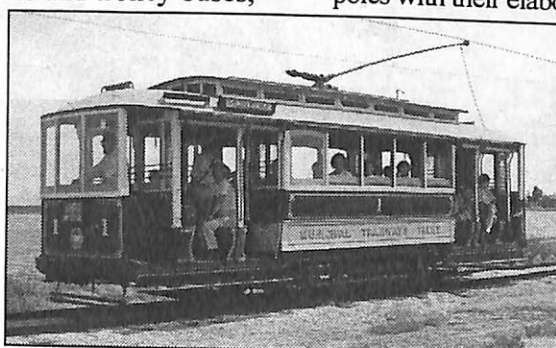
Publicity Officer: Ms. M. Dunshore

Records Officer: Mrs. E. Ulbrich

Mind the step, please!

Members are invited to an afternoon of fun, history and the reliving of memories on Sunday, February 27th, when the Society visits the Tramway Museum on St. Kilda Road, St. Kilda. Opened in 1967, the Museum now boasts over twenty tram-cars and trolley-buses, which have been immaculately restored by a dedicated team of volunteers. We will be able to climb aboard several of these on the day and inspect the polished woodwork, gleaming brass fittings, leather seats and etched glass windows, not to mention some quaint signs such as "Ladies are requested not to occupy seats in Smoking Compartments before 9 a.m."

Neville and Bev Smith, who have, between them, thirty-five years of experience at the Museum, will escort us on a tour of the premises and provide a commentary on the history of Adelaide's electric tramway system from its beginnings in 1909. After wandering through the display gallery of photographs, maps and historical information, we will be shown the hulk shed which contains trams in the dilapidated condition in which they arrive, the restoration workshop where we can see one in the middle of its rejuvenation process, the service area where mechanical and electrical




maintenance is carried out and the trolley-bus shed with its array of destination signs and equipment with intriguing names like dogspikes, jiggers and track tongs. The site also features a beautifully restored 1912 signal box from Pulteney Street and a 1930s inspector's cabin from Victoria Square, as well as the long line of power poles with their elaborate finials, collars and scrollwork.

Several important acquisitions have been made recently, so even if you have been before, do come and enjoy a delightful day out.

Free rides along the 2 km. track to the beach and back will be provided on both Combination Car No. 1 (*shown left*) which was used to open the system seventy years ago and is the only original

No. 1 tram running regularly in the world today, and the open 'Toastrack' Car No. 42 with its crossbench seats capable of taking fifty passengers. Afternoon tea will be available in the Museum's tea-room.

The cost of the outing is \$5.00 and members are asked to be at the Museum by 2.00 p.m. It is a 15 minute drive from Gepps Cross up the Port Wakefield Road. There is a "Tramway Museum" sign at the St. Kilda turn-off (12 km.) where you turn left and go another 3 km. to the Museum. Anyone who does not have transport may request a lift by phoning the Treasurer, Mrs. Avis Huckel, on 8277 2953. 

Images of war

In 1917, as a result of the efforts of C.E.W. Bean, the official historian of the Australian Imperial Forces in World War I, the War Records Section was established to document the activities and heroism of the Australian troops. Although it was initially set up to collect written material and war memorabilia, Bean had a larger aim in mind --- the creation of a war museum which would incorporate artistic

memorials honouring the exploits of the fighting personnel. In 1918 he seconded the Victorian sculptor Wallace Anderson, who had served in France, to head the Modelling Unit, and another Melbourne artist, Charles Web Gilbert, as the chief sculptor. They were to create "picture-models" --- factual and highly realistic representations of famous battlefields



featuring three-dimensional scale models of soldiers, weapons and buildings before a painted background. These were intended to capture the immediacy of the fighting, the characteristic heroism of the troops and, in particular, the battles which earned them their war-honours.


A number of other sculptors contributed, not only to the picture-models in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra but also to the production of many impressive statues throughout the country. They were responsible for at least thirty major pieces in South Australia and the eastern states. In fact, eighty per cent of all Australian W. W. I sculpture came from the artists of the War Records Section.

An account of their achievements, accompanied by slides, will be presented by Dr. Simon Cameron in his lecture, "Bronze Warriors: the Sculpture of the Great War", to be given in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, March 3rd, at 8.00 p.m.


The sculptors visited many sites in Belgium, France and Palestine in the year after the war, studying the scarred landscapes, talking to the men of the occupation forces, collecting samples of weapons, uniforms and equipment, and examining photographs. The distinct styles of the artists reflected their individual responses to what they saw and heard. C. Web Gilbert produced heroic, classical images of war. His massive monument erected on the summit of Mont St. Quentin depicts an Australian soldier

vigorously bayoneting to death a German eagle under his feet. Gilbert's evocative statue "The Helping Hand" was used for the Burnside War Memorial (pictured left) which stands in Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park.

Wallace Anderson, on the other hand, concentrated on the pathos of war, portraying introspective, haunted figures --- stretcher-bearers, prisoners and water-carriers. George Lambert produced very grandiose work while Rayner Hoff was known for his crumpled, downcast figures exhibiting a definite anti-war sentiment. Between them, the sculptors of the War Records Section made a unique contribution to the documentation of the Great War.

Simon Cameron has a degree in Medicine from Flinders University and a Masters in Public Health from Adelaide University and now works as a G.P. in Port Adelaide. When studying he chose history as his electives and became fascinated by the enigmatic appeal of statues and the tales they tell about the people and the society building them. In 1997 he published *Silent Witnesses: Adelaide's Statues and Monuments* and now spends all of his spare time presenting history to anyone who will listen, leading walking tours and giving lectures. 

History SA deadline

The deadline for all material for the March 2000 issue of the Newsletter is Friday, February 11th. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, S.A. 5019. 

benchmark

Project Managers
Publishing Consultants
Book Production Services
Packagers of Children's
Books

Benchmark Publications
Management Pty. Ltd.
P.O. Box 193, Olinda 3788,
Victoria, Australia
Tel: + 61 (03) 9755 3293
Fax: + 61 (03) 9755 3295
E-mail: benchm@smart.net.au

benchmark – point of reference from which
quality of excellence is measured

On your Council

Gaye Brown

Members who attend the Society's lecture nights will be familiar with our Secretary, Gaye Brown, who gives out the name tags at the door. But there is a lot more to her involvement with the HSSA than this. She has been a member since 1983 and, after joining



the Council in mid-1998, has proved to be one of its hardest-working office-bearers. As well as keeping all our documents and correspondence in order, she has recently worked with Dr. Robert Nicol to obtain the \$3,000 grant from the Federal Department of the Environment and Heritage (see following article).

Gaye was born in Adelaide and as a child lived in the house behind her grandfather Alfred James' funeral parlour on Unley Road. She was educated at the Methodist Ladies College and then Wattle Park Teachers College where she studied Settlement Geography under Jim Faull, who first stimulated her interest in local history. She later graduated from the University of S.A. with a Bachelor of Education, majoring in Geography and School Librarianship. After teaching at Elizabeth Downs and Mitchell Park Primary Schools, she married Adrian Brown in 1967 and shortly after they moved to Hawker where she taught at the Area School for two years. This was her first stint in the country and she thoroughly enjoyed it, no less because of its proximity to the wonders of the Flinders Ranges.


She and Adrian then spent five years in Maryland, U.S.A., during which time their two children were born. On their return home, Gaye resumed her studies and by 1980 was back teaching, this time at McLaren Vale Primary School, where she taught for twelve years. "When I first went there," she says, "it was still very much a little country school, with fewer than 200 students --- many of them from third or fourth generation McLaren Vale families."

In 1986 Gaye helped to organize the local Jubilee 150 celebrations. Her pupils learnt a lot about the district's history and she was in part responsible for the placing of commemorative plaques at the sites of previous schools. Members will be able to inspect these and other places of interest when Gaye leads our all-day field trip to McLaren Vale in April.

She then taught for seven years at O'Sullivan Beach before retiring at the end of 1998.


One of the most interesting projects that Gaye has worked on was the book *Sturt Street School: A Centenary History* which she helped research for the editor Jim Faull. "I love reading school journals," she says. "You come across some amazing headlines --- like 'A Wanton Assault on Miss Gordham by Dulcie

Newchurch!' (1929), 'Two Escapees from the Industrial School Found Asleep in the Teachers' Room' (1921) and 'William Coulter, Grade Two, Was Run Over by a Richmond Bus, Number 29475' (1924)."

On her enthusiasm for South Australian history, Gaye says, "You should know about your own patch. It's an identity thing really --- knowing about where you came from and where you live. I did Modern European History at school but I didn't enjoy it much because there was no link with my situation. I like local history because I can see it with my own eyes." 

\$3,000 grant to HSSA

The Society recently received notification that Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, has approved a grant of \$3,000 to the HSSA under the 1999-2000 Programme of Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organizations. In announcing grants awarded to a total of 106 community-based groups around Australia, Senator Hill said that the programme recognised the important role that voluntary organizations play in protecting our natural and cultural heritage.

"Organizations are assessed on their record and their potential to contribute," he said. "This is the first year that cultural heritage groups have been included in the programme. The diversity and quality of the applications submitted by these groups has been outstanding." 

BEULAH PARK BOOKS

Secondhand &
Antiquarian
Booksellers



325 The Parade, Beulah Park

NEW SOUTH AUSTRALIANA
CATALOGUE OF OVER 1000
ITEMS NOW AVAILABLE

Also a wide range of quality books
in most subjects.

Specialities: History, Literature,
Exploration, the Outback, Aborigines,
Antarctica and Natural History.

Open Tuesday to Friday 10-5,
Saturday 11-5, Sunday 1-5
Phone: (08) 8331 0005

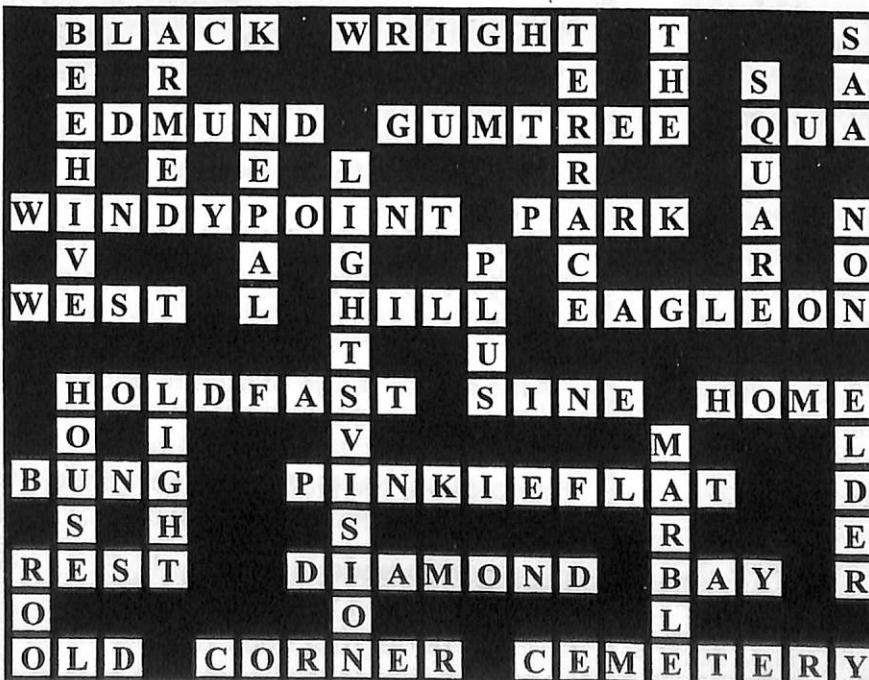
Supper is now up to you!

At the Society's lecture night in November our "Honorary Caterers", Ila Hollands and Enid Ulbrich, were each presented with a handsome carriage clock as tokens of our gratitude for the scrumptious suppers they have provided for the last seventeen years --- a task they now have to relinquish. Members were obviously aware that this was the last time they would enjoy such a feast. Enid was overheard to say, "I've never seen the food disappear so quickly!"

Unfortunately no-one has offered to take full responsibility for future suppers, so it is now up to members themselves. We are asking everyone who comes to the meetings to bring a plate of food, please, beginning in February. Our attendances are apparently the envy of interstate societies and while this is largely due to the quality of the lectures and the ongoing commitment of members, the suppers are clearly an important part of the evenings, encouraging people to stay and socialize, exchange information and make useful contacts. All Council members have promised to bring a plate to the meetings and we would ask everybody to make an effort to contribute. 📖

Thanks to Marcia & Peter

The HSSA Council would like to thank Marcia Dunshore, our Publicity Officer, and Peter Rice for their major contribution to the Society in managing the address labels for our mail-outs over a period of several years. Keeping track of 400 members is no easy task and the Society is indebted to them for their generous efforts. Due to changes in our administrative set-up and the fact that the HSSA computer is not Y2K compliant, the Secretary will now manage the membership records and the printing of the labels.



CHAFF MILL VILLAGE

Luxury apartments in the heart of Clare

310 Main North Road,
Clare, S.A. 5453

Phone:
(08) 8842 1111

Website:
<http://www.capri.net.au/~chaffmil>

E-mail:
chaffmil@capri.net.au

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

New members

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Mrs. Joan Carney, Mrs. Jenny Prider, Mr. Russell and Mrs. Pam Smith, Mrs. Gwen Wilkinson, Mr. Lyndon Zimmerman and the Gumeracha and District History Centre.

**Solution to
History SA
Crypto-historical Crossword
(November 1999 issue)**

The winner is
Dr. Jane Southcott
of Preston, Victoria.

She will receive her choice
of books to the value of \$20
from the range at our bookstall.

The Editor would like to thank
all those who sent in entries.

The Bohemian Tea Rooms, Gawler Chambers

by Patricia Sumerling

Gawler Chambers, on the corner of North Terrace and Gawler Place, was originally designed as the premises of the once-renowned South Australian Company. The directors of the company were persuaded by medicos in 1911 to build new offices which would also include fashionable suites that could be rented out to them. In this period professional suites in multi-storey office blocks along North Terrace were highly favoured by the medical profession.

Gawler Chambers was built in two stages with the eastern wing being completed in November 1913 and the western wing in March 1914. While the building is fondly remembered by many South Australians for their visits to the dentists and doctors located there, it is also remembered, with much more affection, for its upmarket tea rooms located in the basement. Perhaps some of you remember these?

Known as the Bohemian Tea Rooms, they were established by Mrs. Katherine E. Cowan soon after the building was completed in 1914. They operated under this name until 1963, after which the building was refurbished by the Adelaide Development Company. At this point one of Adelaide's more salubrious and genteel old haunts sadly closed its doors after almost fifty years of catering for at least two generations. By today's terms this is an extraordinary record for an upmarket café.

The tea rooms catered mainly for "society ladies" or young ladies from the independent schools who would meet with their friends for afternoon tea parties. It was considered to be in the medium price range and not a place where "working girls" would necessarily choose to go. Although you could drop in for tea without prior notice, it was advisable to book to be sure of securing a table. Never crowded, it was described as "comfortably full". Its location in the basement before the advent of fluorescent lighting, gave it an intimate atmosphere. Advertisements in *South Australian Homes and Gardens* in 1945-46 described it as "Adelaide's exclusive rendezvous" which catered for weddings, birthdays, receptions, morning teas, luncheons and afternoon teas. By the early 1950s it was also advertising a "private room available for sherry and late afternoon parties".

The tea rooms with their waitress service, had tables for both two and four, which were covered in

white damask cloths. The waitresses were dressed in the traditional black, with white aprons and frilly caps. Mrs. B---- said she particularly remembers visiting the tea rooms in the 1930s and '40s for lunch or afternoon tea with her girlfriends because, apart from it being a family tradition (her mother also went there), it was so convenient for shopping and for the cultural activities that took place on North Terrace. She said it would also have attracted those who had appointments with medical specialists in the building.

Mrs. B---- said she always wore hat and gloves because there was "a definite standard". She remembers the cakes as creamy cones and cream puffs with chocolate sauce and she reminisced that one always saw people one knew at the other tables. Luncheons that she remembers included whiting and fricassee of chicken. To broaden her spectrum Mrs. B---- also visited the "Covent Garden" in King William Street for its open sandwiches and the "Ritz" (next to Haigh's) for chocolate sundaes. Another tea-room close to the Bohemian was the "Piccadilly" in the Liberal Club Building basement.

Ninety-four-year-old Lyndal Bonnear, a well-known former antique dealer, also remembers the food, such as omelettes, scrambled eggs benedict and cinnamon toast, the likes of which she has never tasted anywhere else. "You never capture that first fine careless rapture," Miss Bonnear was quick to add. She remembers the mahogany panelling and the room-sized Wilton pile carpet of pseudo-oriental design in colours of blue and beige. The chairs were of imitation embossed leather, each one reminding her of "a heavily-laced lady with corsets". Stacked on shelves around the tea rooms was a huge collection of early twentieth-century Dresden figurines that the proprietress Mrs. Baxter had amassed.

When asked why she visited these tea rooms in preference to others, Lyndal said it was because her ageing mother insisted on being taken there after 1936 when they returned to Adelaide to live. Until then Lyndal had spent many years running an antique shop in Brighton, Melbourne, since she was about 20 years old. The Bohemian Tea Rooms were apparently like the Wattle Tea Rooms in Collins Street. Mrs. Baxter, according to Lyndal, was tall and elegant in a genteel way and was described as a hostess who made all her guests feel important when they arrived.

By the late 1950s when coffee bars and self-service cafés appeared in large numbers, the Bohemian Tea Rooms were considered old-fashioned. Though now long gone, the Bohemian had the distinction of being one of Adelaide's longest-running tea rooms.

Reference: Swanbury Penglase: *Gawler Chambers Conservation Study* for the Adelaide Development Co., 1995. (Historical research by P. Sumerling.)

Hare we go, Hare we go, Hare we go!

by Russell Smith

In July 1860 Charles Simeon Hare was appointed Manager of the South Australian Railways. It was a fateful appointment for five years later Mr. Hare, in his capacity as Railways Manager, came close to killing or maiming, in one swoop, the Governor of South Australia, Sir Dominick Daly (*pictured below*), his two daughters, his son Dominick Gore Daly (who was his private secretary), his nephew Dominick Daniel Daly (his aide-de-camp), the Lord Bishop of Adelaide, the Chief Secretary, the President of the Legislative Council, the Treasurer, the Colonial Surgeon and the Commissioner of Public Works, plus several other dignitaries and their wives and children. A slice of luck saved Hare from being much better known in South Australian history and all that he ended up with was a sacking and public humiliation.

C. S. Hare was an American. He was one of South Australia's original settlers, arriving with his wife Anna Maria at Kangaroo Island on the *Emma* on October 5th, 1836. He was then 28 years old and secretary to Sir John Morphett, a post he did not hold for long, for shortly after arrival he gained employment with the South Australian Company. A few months after that his services were dispensed with and he began carrying on business as a contractor at the newly settled Port Adelaide.

The young American became labelled as an eccentric and a local character. He practised medicine unofficially, often being referred to as Dr. Hare. The secretary, clerk, contractor, medico also became a farmer and began involving himself in all political questions of the day. In doing so, Hare seems to have made more enemies than friends. He regularly addressed public meetings on controversial topics and in July 1851 was elected to the Legislative Council as the member for West Torrens. He resigned that seat in June 1854 and six months later became a Commissioner for the formation of the Adelaide and Gawler Town Railway. Then followed a term as Superintendent of the Yatala Stockade and finally, in 1860, came the position of Manager of Railways. By then Charles Simeon Hare had accumulated immense experience in overall colonial matters but was universally disliked by his peers.

At the time he was appointed Railways Manager the Adelaide-Port Adelaide line was only four years old, the City-to-Gawler connection had already been made and the opening of the extension to Kapunda was only a month away. It was an exciting time. The



new mode of transport was still causing wonderment, and everyday living for all South Australians was being improved dramatically.

There were, however, many safety concerns. Never before had public transport raced across the countryside at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour. Some passengers were totally oblivious to the potential dangers and warnings were regularly given, such as: "It is an excellent general maxim in railway travelling to remain in your place without going out at all until you arrive at your destination. When this cannot be done, go out as seldom as possible. Beware of yielding to the sudden impulse to spring from the carriage to recover your hat which has blown off".

On that eventful day, April 13th, 1865, when Mr. Hare greatly upset the Governor and several members of the Ministry, many hats were being held onto tightly. The very important group were passengers on the train from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, en route to inspect H.M.'s sloop *Falcon* which had berthed at the Port.

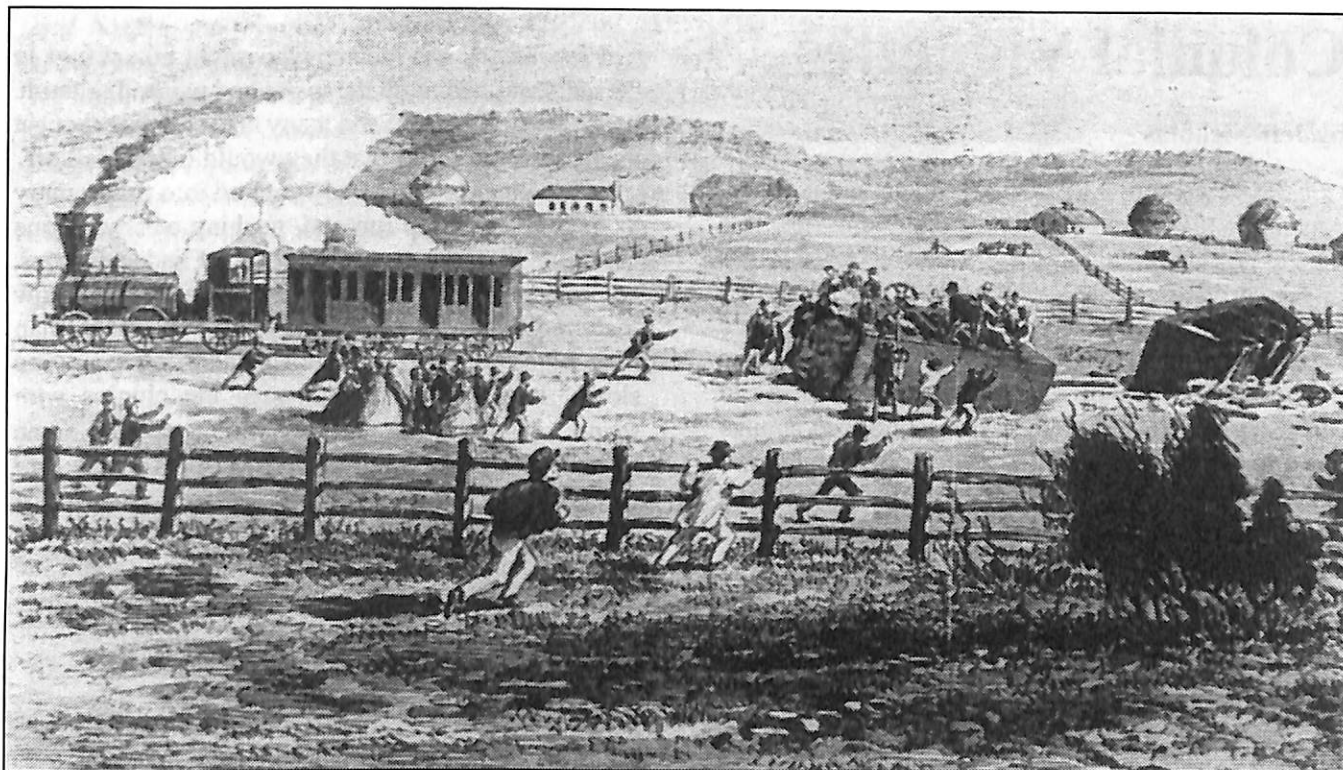
The party was spread over two of the three carriages. There was nothing else to the train, no brake-van, no engine tender. Brave Railway Manager Hare boasted that his very special iron horse could complete the journey in the unbelievable time of nine minutes and promptly instructed his luckless driver to aim for the maximum speed as quickly as possible once past the Morphett Street crossing.

It was not long before the little train was travelling at a tremendous pace.

The dignitaries on board very quickly became alarmed for never had they experienced such speed. Their alarm gradually turned to panic for, as the train sped past the Bowden Railway Station, the three carriages began to oscillate. This to-and-fro movement gained momentum, and added to it came a jerking, pitching motion. The terrific pace continued and the heaving and pitching increased. As Charles Simeon Hare urged his driver on he failed to take notice of the objections being raised by his passengers, many of whom were by now quite terrified, convinced a crash was inevitable.

About one mile short of Woodville it happened. Hare's exciting dream ended and his nightmare began. The passengers in the first carriage were deafened by a violent crashing sound and then the air around them filled with dust. Simultaneously the wild ride ceased as the little engine and their own swaying carriage slowed down. It immediately became apparent that they were alone. Metallic squeals were replaced by human squeals when it was realized that the other two carriages had become separated, had overturned and were lying on their sides across the track.

Among the fortunates in the standing carriage were the Governor and his family, Commissioner of Public Works Francis Stacker Dutton, Chief Secretary



Drawing of the train derailment by Dominick Daniel Daly, the Governor's nephew and aide-de-camp, who was on board at the time. (He later became a surveyor and was a member of George Goyder's Northern Territory Survey Expedition of 1869.) From the *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 18/5/1865.



Henry Ayers and the Lord Bishop of Adelaide, Augustus Short, and his daughters. Among the unfortunates in the second carriage were various members of Parliament and staff of the Governor while the third carriage had only one occupant, the guard.


The two overturned carriages had been dragged for some distance on their sides before the couplings fortuitously broke. Had that not happened there certainly would have been a disintegration of the carriages and probable loss of life. As it was, the passengers were simply thrown together and ended up lying across each other above the windows and doors. No-one was seriously hurt.

It did not take long for the rescue operation to begin. The upper doors and windows were forced open and the dazed dignitaries lifted out. It was particularly noted that the ladies involved behaved heroically and did not outwardly lose their self-possession. The carriages, however, were in a bad way. The wheels were torn off, the axles bent and the floor of the third carriage had completely broken away. The guard received nothing more than a sprained wrist despite the fact that he had been thrown around much more than the others.

What an embarrassing débâcle for all concerned!

The state of the rails was blamed by many while others blamed the unnecessarily excessive speed. Some witnesses claimed that because the train sped past them at such a rate they were convinced it was out of control. The track on the other hand had only the night before been hastily and incompletely repaired at the very place of the accident. Clearly it was a combination of both and either way the blame rested on the shoulders of the Railways Manager, the suddenly even more unpopular Charles Simeon Hare.

Ensuing investigations found Hare guilty of negligence and the following official statement was published: "The continuation of the services of the present Manager of Railways is inconsistent with the interests of the public and Mr. Hare's services will be forthwith dispensed with." The accident could easily have been much more serious, with far greater repercussions for South Australia, so Hare was very lucky indeed that all he suffered was a sacking.

And, for the record, the shaken-up but composed Vice-Regal party were crammed into the first carriage and taken quickly on their way, the tinier but slower train arriving at Port Adelaide for the inspection of the *Falcon* less than one hour late. 

Russell Smith is the author of *1850, A Very Good Year in the Colony of South Australia* (Shakespeare Head Press, 1973), *The Battle of Vinegar Hill* (which won the playwriting competition held for South Australia's sesquicentenary and was subsequently produced at the Arts Theatre), numerous historical articles in a variety of magazines and newspapers, as well as the fast-selling books *Curiosities of South Australia*, Volumes 1 and 2, which feature fascinating and unusual tales from our state's history. His wife Pam assists in the research and preparation of the stories.

Curiosities 1 and *2* are available from the bookstall at the HSSA monthly meetings at the members' price of \$9.00 each.

Colonial Vignettes

by Jeff Nicholas

As we venture into the new millennium and with Australian history now spanning four centuries, it is time to go rummaging in our ageing shipboard trunks in search of those gems which should be taken out, dusted down and spirited up to consciousness. From behind the hushed portals of political correctness, from underneath the gun-carriages of imperial armies and somewhere in the back of the old shearing shed familiar to so many of us, there lies a plethora of tales and stories — some true, some tall and some just waiting to be polished up with the family silver. The following historical vignettes are all South Australian and they all tell us something of who we are.

The first comes from the voyage out with Colonel Light on the *Rapid* in 1836. Lieutenant (later Vice-Admiral) William Pullen kept a diary and as the brig slid toward the equator he turned his mind to things fanciful. To “cross the line” without some hanky-panky and a modicum of deference to King Neptune was simply not on, and so Pullen, when reminiscing about the trip, offers us the following story:

... of our crew, as fine set of fellows as anywhere to be met with. As fond of their pranks as we were abaft, one instance I will give. A little before crossing the line, being rather warm, I proposed shaving my head if any would keep me company. [Lieutenant] Field was the only one who agreed to the proposition which was soon put in execution. Happening to go on deck soon after, some of the men saw me and, they not wishing to be behind in the ridiculous, in the short space of one hour had metamorphosed themselves into as mad and strange a set of beings I ever saw.

The starboard watch had shaved their right whiskers off with a strip of hair about an inch in width from the back of the neck over the crown to the forehead. The larboard watch, their left whiskers, with this strip across from ear to ear and one fellow, not having whiskers, made up for it by shaving the head both ways. Any strangers who had seen us at the time would certainly have taken us for madmen.

The second vignette is from the *Reminiscences* of J. F. Hayward, one of the first and most intrepid squatters in the province, who took up land at both Pekina and Aroona in the late 1840s. Given the population densities we now have on earth it is hard to imagine that many early Australian pioneers suffered badly from the isolation and loneliness of the “big distance”. Of course we all cling determinedly to the seaboard now and our “dead heart” is only propped up by the brave, the stupid, the laconic and the adventurous. But in the 1850s to be north of Spencer’s Gulf was to be in a dust bowl where animal life was confined

to a few lizards and rodents who might take refuge in the red sand underneath the sparse and parched saltbush. It was “flat earth” stuff and many new colonists thought they had come so far that they would indeed fall off.

Squatter Hayward had ventured into this country to stake out a sheep run and, pushing westward one day down from the escarpment of the Flinders Ranges, he came upon a bewitching scene. There in the low scattered saltbush, where no plant was more than knee high, he espied an Aboriginal woman moving slowly and purposefully through the clumps with several canes lashed together which reached some twenty-five feet into the air. On the tip she had fashioned some birds’ feathers in such a way that the whole charade resembled a hovering eagle or kite. Finding themselves under apparent threat and startled into precipitous action, the small scrub game were prompted into the open. Alas! In one decisive blow the unseen husband had lunged with his “waddy” and supper was all but on the table. Now that really is the art of survival! Anyone for a tasty morsel after a few minutes in the coals of the open fire?

Vignette three comes from back in the Adelaide hills. Many families who had forsaken England for a chance to practise their beliefs unencumbered by Church, State or neighbourly expectation set about re-inventing the niceties of English domestic life. One such family were the May’s who arrived in 1839 and took up land at Mount Barker. They had eleven children, they were hardworking, they were studious, they were disciplined and they were Quakers. Every so often a ship would come bearing mail for them and a titter of excitement would ripple through the small community of “Friends”. Captain Field, a neighbour, would usually bring the letters and papers up the Great Eastern Road in his dray, stopping only to pay the 4/- toll at Glen Osmond and to carefully cross the Onkaparinga River. Imagine the scene in the May household in the evening hours that followed.

I wish our friends could take a peep at us when an English budget is being read; they would see dear Mother sitting at the top of the table with spectacles on and a candle close in front and the letter in her hand; then dear Father sitting at her left hand, with spectacled nose, and looking as demure as a judge; a row of smiling brothers sit at the table back to the windows, and look full of anxious expectation; opposite a string of damsels, broken only by Edward, are busy with their needles, and looking off ever and anon, to return the smiles of their opposite neighbours.

Then they would hear such exclamations, as first one and then another well-remembered person, place, or thing is brought before our notice, and if Mother pauses for an instant, there is such a gabble, that it is often a minute or two before she can go on. The moment we have our tongues at liberty, we begin to guess, calculate and fix, as the Americans would say,

and having our confabs all our own way, we do settle knotty and undecided points in first rate style. We make things turn out just as we wish, and one fancies one thing, and one another, until our airy castles are magnificent, and we get so happy and merry that we are almost sorry when it is bedtime. These are delightful evenings, and what we hear furnishes topics for conversation for some time. I do not know what we should do without so many kind correspondents.

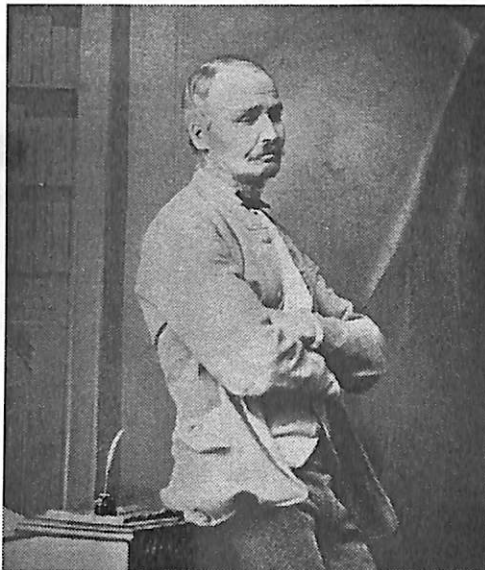
The last vignette is from the pen of Eustace Reveley Mitford (pictured below). A gentleman farmer from the early moments of the colony, he was, by the 1860s, writing and publishing a weekly paper called the *Pastoral, Mineral, and Agricultural Advocate*. Writing under the pseudonym of "Pasquin" he is, by contemporary standards, the equivalent of the best that we read today in the *Adelaide Review*. Here are his comments on the Turkish Baths which were built on King William Road in 1867. Can you imagine how on earth we managed to have such a thing in Adelaide then? Why, if you went bathing in public at Glenelg beach you were fined a shilling in that era. Nevertheless the Baths were built and this is his response --- and his tongue was placed firmly in cheek.

So much has been said about this refuge for the uncleanly, that it may be well to correct a few errors which naturally attend any discussion upon a novel subject in which colonial editors gratuitously seek to lead the public mind astray. The "Satirist" tells us that one Dr. Baxter first introduced the Turkish bath into the United Kingdom for the purpose of relieving the "Blarney Stone" in the County of Cork. Hibernian history is generally of the poetical cast --- extremely amusing and imaginative, without any narrow prejudices in favour of facts or dates --- which, after all, are not of much value when detailing past occurrences.

The credible version of the story, however, goes to show that this method of lavation was first brought to England in 1790, and established at Covent Garden, where the Old Hummums now stands, so called from "el hamaum", the Turkish for bath. At this time the Irish people never allowed anything stronger than whisky to approach the person; and a Scotchman who was known to wash himself was expelled from his Synagogue, as one tempting Providence by a suicidal performance. However, there is no instance on record of a Scotchman or Irishman of that period endangering his life by the unwholesome application of water upon his outer covering of protective accumulations. The Turkish Bath is an invaluable institution for those who decline the daily use of plenty of soap and water upon the outside of their carcasses; but for clean,

wholesome Englishmen it is an effeminate, enervating, unnecessary luxury. For all foreigners it is perfectly essential, and in warm weather a consolation to their friends --- beyond expression.

In fact, the whole of continental Europe, parts of Asia, and the United States of America, might with great advantage to the olfactory perceptions be put under the pump, dragged through a horse-pond, or boiled in the Turkish bath several times a day. Dr. Millengen, writing from Constantinople, says that it is a fine thing for editors and delirium tremens. Very well --- put Grenfell Street¹ into the coppers forthwith, and stew that locality for a week carefully, after which abstinence from beer and legislative debauchery may relieve the present alarming symptoms. . . .



Under these circumstances the Turkish baths may be of very important service to the colony. If we get our editors, Ministers, and members nicely scrubbed and cleaned up before the Prince comes [Prince Alfred, our first Royal visitor to South Australia in 1867], and stuck in a row by the triumphal arches, under the surveillance of the Inspector of Nuisances, with orders to let them sing that beautiful burlesque on the Royal Anthem which appeared in the "Register" a week or so since, H.R.H. will think the favorite legend of the old cow said to

have perished of extravagant harmony, has been realized by the shampooed Christian minstrels of South Australia.


¹ Eustace Mitford did not like humbug, particularly from the mainstream papers, the politicians and the monied classes of the Exchange and the Church, most of whom were well represented in Grenfell Street in 1867.

References:

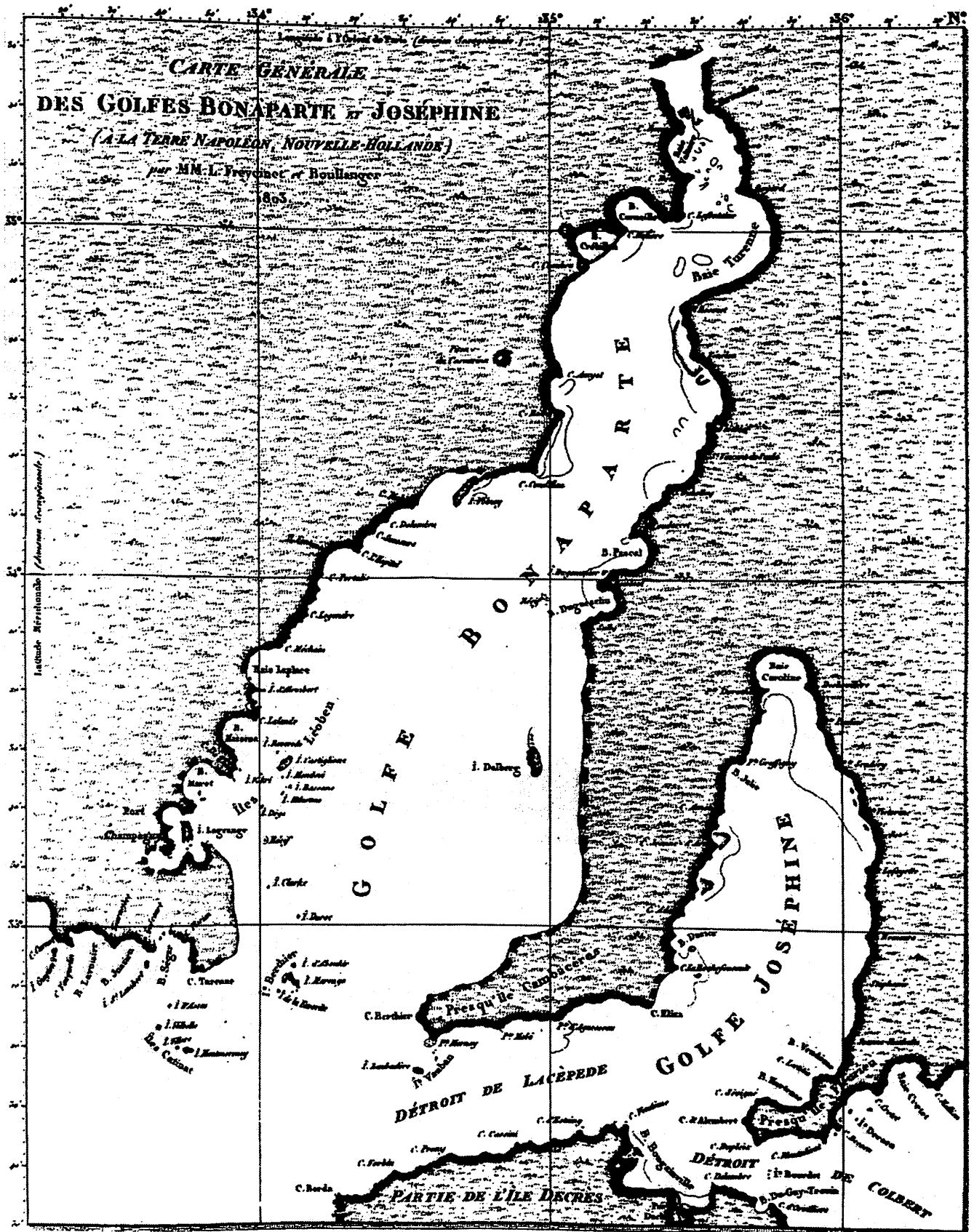
Story 1: Vice-Admiral Pullen's Journal, Mortlock Library, PRG 303.

Story 2: Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch), Vol. 29, Session 1927-28, pp. 165-166.

Story 3: Margaret May's Letters [Typescript] Mortlock Library, PRG 131/2, pp. 108-109.

Story 4: *Pasquin: Pastoral, Mineral, and Agricultural Advocate*, 26 October 1867. 

Dr. Jeff Nicholas lectured in Health and Physical Education for over twenty years at Salisbury Teachers College, Sturt CAE and Flinders University. He is a member of the HSSA and President of the Pioneers Association of South Australia, and is currently preparing a biography of William George Field, R.N., Colonel Light's First Mate on the *Rapid*.



The French map of the South Australian gulfs, prepared by Baudin's cartographers and included in the official account of his expedition, *Voyage de Découvertes Aux Terres Australes*, written by Francois Péron and Lieutenant Louis Freycinet. The map was issued in 1814, shortly before Matthew Flinders published his work, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, in which he commented: "Mons. Péron, naturalist in the French expedition, has laid a claim for his nation to the discovery of all the parts between Western Port in Bass' Strait, and Nuyts' Archipelago; and this part of New South Wales is called Terre Napoléon. My Kangaroo Island, a name which they openly adopted in the expedition, has been converted at Paris into L'Isle Decrès; Spencer's Gulph is named Golfe Bonaparte; the Gulph of St. Vincent, Golfe Joséphine; and so on, along the whole coast to Cape Nuyts, not even the smallest island being left without some similar stamp of French discovery."