

HSA

History

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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No. 150, September 2000

Policing Sth. Australia

When the South Australian Police Force was set up in 1838 under Governor Gawler, it was the first force in the British Empire, outside the United Kingdom, that was organized as a preventative police force covering the whole colony and not just the capital city. Gawler had served in the British Army with Charles Rowan, one of the early Commissioners of the London Metropolitan Police, and the S.A. Police Force was modelled along the lines of that body. Another significant influence was that of Sir John Moore, the famous British general who commanded a Light Infantry Brigade in the early 1800s.

When Raymond Leane took over as the S.A. Police Commissioner in 1920 his philosophy of training and man-management was very similar to that of Rowan and Moore and his appointment marked the beginning of professionalism in the S.A. Police and the application of science and technology to policing methods.

In the HSSA lecture, "The Development of the S.A. Police between the Wars", to be given on Friday, October 6th, in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, at 8.00 p.m., Tony Kaukas will discuss the connections between these figures and their approaches to organizing a disciplined force of men. The philosophy of policing that developed in South Australia in the 1920s has prevailed until the present day and is quite distinct from those of the other states.

Tony Kaukas was a National Serviceman in the British Army before migrating to South Australia where he became an officer in the Army Reserve and worked as a civilian public servant in the Department of Defence for over twenty years. He has an Honours Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Applied Historical Studies from the University of Adelaide and is currently doing a post-graduate course researching the subject of his October lecture. 


The centre that isn't the centre

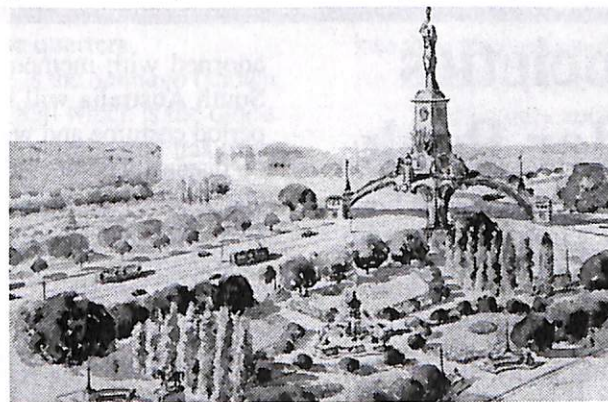
When the town acres of Adelaide were initially selected, the first ones chosen were around Victoria Square and right from the beginning the square was regarded as a public space of some significance. But in its 160-year history it has never been any one thing for very long and so, although it is in the exact centre of Adelaide, it has never been the centre of the city's life. Andrew Klenke will explore some of the many changes the square has seen in his illustrated lecture,

"For Show or Comfort ? A History of Victoria Square", to be given at the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, Nov. 3rd, at 8.00 p.m. In researching the square's many manifestations, he has consulted a host of newspaper cuttings (useful as a record of public reactions) as well as City Council files and Parliamentary Papers. He

will discuss what the square has meant to people over the years, how it has been used by those living nearby, the buildings that have risen around it, and the numerous remodellings and their attendant controversies.

There was fierce debate in the 1850s over the location of the Cathedral and in the 1880s about the proposal to run King William Street through the middle of the square. The turn of the century saw lush plantings and palm trees but in the 1920s people were calling for the space to be "modernized". One of the more fanciful proposals for the square (*shown above*) was submitted in 1946 by the S.A. School of Art.

Andrew Klenke, after gaining his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of South Australia in 1990, worked with Donald Langmead on the conservation plan for 'Collingrove' at Angaston, spent several years with the National Trust of South Australia and now works for a small, innovative design practice in the city. 



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.

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History SA Editor: Mr. J. Healey, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, S.A. 5019. Ph. (08) 8449 2268.

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Historical Societies Picnic at Elder Park

The Historical Societies Picnic, to be held at Elder Park on Sunday, November 19th, from 11.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., looks like being a grand day out for both history buffs and the general public.

Displays will be mounted by at least twenty-five different organizations, including many of the local historical societies and branches of the National Trust as well as the the Royal Geographical Society, the Oral History Association, State Records (S.A.), the Friends of the S.A. Maritime Museum, the Military Historical Society of Australia, the Adelaide Gaol Preservation Society, the Glenside Hospital Historical Society and the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum. There will be a wide range of material on view, including books, newsletters, journals, programmes, photographs, drawings, memorabilia, historical documents and artefacts, and heaps of other interesting paraphernalia.

The Adelaide City Council has very kindly made Elder Park available to us and stalls will occupy the area between the Rotunda and the Festival Theatre. The South Australian Police Historical Society will set up their Black Maria Mobile Museum and their Chrysler Royal near the centre of the lawns, alongside the HSSA display. In addition, the Hindmarsh Historical Society will be bringing their 1927 fire engine,

adorned with mementos. The Victoriana Society of South Australia will be taking part with members in period costume and with various items of memorabilia on display. The Society for Creative Anachronism will also be providing costumed characters and will stage an exciting bout of mediaeval fighting (at approximately 12.30 p.m.) as well as displays of weaving and chain-mail making.

Two brass bands will be playing in the Rotunda: the TransAdelaide Band (which began life 115 years ago as the Locomotive Band) playing at approximately 11 a.m. and the Campbelltown City Band at 2.00 p.m. We are very grateful to both these bands for providing us with concerts free of charge.

It is suggested that people bring picnic lunches and enjoy an old-fashioned day by the river, with the chance to familiarize themselves with the activities, resources and publications of all the different groups. The Festival Centre kiosk (on the edge of the lawns) will be stocking extra supplies of food, sweets and drinks for the occasion and arrangements have been made with the Festival Centre Trust that, if it is a rainy day, we will be able to move all the displays under cover on the outdoor forecourt of the Theatre.

Members are encouraged to publicize the event among friends, colleagues and community groups. The picnic will be an excellent opportunity not only to eat sticky buns and jam sandwiches but also to see just how much is happening on the historical scene. ☺

Boatloads of history

Members will be offered a double helping of history on Sunday, October 22nd, when we take a cruise on the Port River to the Ships' Graveyard and a walk around the historic precinct of Port Adelaide.


Between 1910 and 1945 over twenty ships were abandoned on the southern shores of Garden Island. Many of them had spent their last years in the Port River as storage hulks but during the Depression there was a major clean-out of the river and the North Arm was a convenient place both to break them up and to leave the remaining hulls. They include iron steamers, wooden schooners, barques, barges and dredges and they have lain there undisturbed for over fifty years.

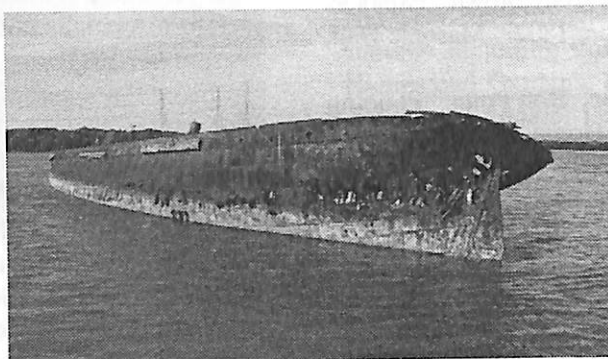
We will leave from No. 1 Wharf, Port Adelaide, in the comfort of the ex-police launch *Archie Badenoch*, which has indoor seating surrounded by windows as well as an open area at the stern for taking photographs. As we go, Rob Morcom, Education Officer at the S.A. Maritime Museum, will entertain us with stories from the Port River's past and provide a commentary on the history of the Graveyard and the various vessels that we will be viewing at close quarters.

One of the most impressive is the *Santiago* (shown above), an iron barque built in 1856 which is the oldest intact iron sailing ship hull in Australia and has been declared an historic shipwreck.

We will run two cruises, leaving at 12.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m., with a maximum of 24 passengers on each. While one group glides gently down the stream to the Ships' Graveyard, the other will accompany Brian Samuels, Principal Heritage Officer with the Department for Environment and Heritage, on a walk around the diverse collection of colonial buildings in the centre of Port Adelaide. Brian's commentary will cover both the buildings and the development of the harbour which provided the economic basis for the town. The cruise and the walk will each take 1½ hours and we will meet back at the Lighthouse at 2.00 p.m. to change over.

The cost of the tour will be \$10 (children \$5), payable in advance. Numbers are strictly limited so please phone the Treasurer, Avis Huckel, on 8277 2953 to make your booking (and have it confirmed) and then forward a cheque or money order for the appropriate amount to her at 9 Sierra Nevada Blvd., Pasadena 5042, by Friday, October 13th.

Please meet at the Lighthouse, No. 1 Wharf, at the end of Commercial Road, Port Adelaide, promptly at 12.15 p.m. It is suggested that you bring with you any lunch or snacks that you might want. 



Federation grant for HSSA book


In 1986 the Jubilee 150 Board decided to commemorate those figures in our State's history who have made outstanding contributions to our lifestyle. One hundred and sixty-nine people were selected, representing a wide range of occupations, pursuits and achievements --- pastoralists, explorers, politicians, industrialists, educationists, social workers, scientists, artists, sporting figures and government officials --- many of whom gained national or international recognition for their work. Bronze plaques, featuring the names, dates and occupations of these men and women, are

set in the footpath of North Terrace and attract a good deal of attention. However, there has been no single publication summarizing the lives of these eminent South Australians.


In November 2001 the Historical Society of South Australia will publish *S.A.'s Greats*, a book of concise biographies of all the 169 people,

each piece containing a summary of the person's life, career and major achievements, together with insights into their character and their legacies to South Australia. An illustration will accompany each one-page biography.

The Society recently received notification from the State Government that it has been awarded a Centenary of Federation grant of \$25,000 to assist with the costs of the project.

Almost a hundred writers and historians, including many members of the HSSA, are contributing entries to the book, which will be edited by John Healey and distributed state-wide through societies, schools, libraries, bookshops and newsagents. 

New members

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Mr. E.G. Crisp, Mrs. Nichole Gough, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Harrington, Mrs. Joyce Hutchens, Mrs. Glynis Nicholson, Mrs. Lizzie Russell and Ms. Margaret Stableford. 

LECTURES ON TAPE

Cassette audio-tapes of HSSA lectures, from February 1998 onward, may be purchased from the Society at a cost of \$5.00 each.

Send your order, specifying the title and date of the lecture you require, with a cheque or money order, to the Treasurer,

9 Sierra Nevada Blvd., Pasadena 5042.

Further orders, if the tape is returned, are \$3.00 each.

On your Council

Christine Garnaut


Christine Garnaut was an HSSA Council member in 1998 and was co-opted onto the Council again in May of this year.

Born in Adelaide, she has lived all her life in South Australia. She graduated in 1975 with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English, History and Fine Arts from Flinders University where an interest in architecture was sparked by the lectures of Donald Johnson. After teaching at Whyalla and Christies Beach High Schools and taking some time off to raise four children, she trained as a swimming instructor and taught part-time for five years with the Education Department.



She moved to Colonel Light Gardens in 1980 and was immediately struck by how intact the suburb was. "It was like stepping back in time," she says. "The houses hadn't been altered and the oval was like that of a country town." Between 1983 and 1990 she worked as assistant to Donald Johnson in the establishment of the Australian Architecture Archive, now lodged at the University of South Australia. In 1992 she returned to study in the Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design at the University, completing a Ph.D. in 1997 with her thesis "Model and Maker: Colonel Light Gardens and Charles Reade".

Christine is now a Research Associate at the University of South Australia with a grant from the Royal Geographical Society to work on Reade's minor works in South Australia. She is also writing (with co-author Donald Langmead) an encyclopaedia of architectural feats from ancient times to the present day, to be published next year by ABC-CLIO. Other current projects include work on the Woomera town plan, a Database of Australasian Architects and Associated Professionals and research into the South Australian Home Builders' Club, a 400-strong group of people who co-operated to build homes for one another in Adelaide after World War II. (See article this page.)


In 1999 Christine's book *Colonel Light Gardens: Model Garden Suburb*, based on her Ph.D. thesis, was published by Crossing Press and this year she contributed a chapter on early twentieth-century town planning and the garden city concept to *The Australian Metropolis: A Planning History* (Allen & Unwin). She has also written a number of articles on town planning for various journals and in April 2000 organized the 5th Australian Urban History/Planning History Conference in Adelaide. 

The S.A. Home Builders' Club

The South Australian Home Builders' Club functioned in metropolitan Adelaide between 1945 and 1960. As its motto *Non Nobis Solum* (Not for Ourselves Alone) suggests, the Club was a co-operative venture in which people came together to assist other members in the construction of a home. In the post-war years, with building restrictions and a shortage of labour, materials and funds, the Home Builders' Club was an appealing option for those prepared to share and acquire building skills. In its hey-day there were approximately 400 members, resulting in the Club's division into a northern and a southern branch. Club members built houses in suburbs including Enfield, Modbury, Manningham, Hampstead Gardens, Prospect, Kilburn, Broadview, Taperoo, Erindale, Urrbrae, Panorama, St. Mary's, Clarence Gardens and Brighton. Some began with a temporary home that later became a garage, others with a "backender" onto which they added rooms as funds and materials became available.

The Club was meticulously organized. It had a constitution and a modest membership fee. Hours worked were recorded and at the regular meetings each member was assigned his next task. Members provided their own tools but the Club owned and hired out scaffolding and a brick-making machine. Home builders usually designed their own homes, generally with a conventional hipped-roof but sometimes with a flat-roof and open-plan living area.

Professor Donald Langmead and Dr. Christine Garnaut of the Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia, together with colleagues from other disciplines, are devising a research project to investigate the phenomenon of the South Australian Home Builders' Club. They began their enquiries after an approach from former Club members who outlined the purpose and methods of the organization and showed them Club and personal records in their possession. Prof. Langmead and Dr. Garnaut are now keen to locate other members of the Club and/or their relatives and to identify the addresses of houses that they built. They are also eager to sight any records, including photographs, related to the building of the houses. It is hoped that as part of the project a series of interviews can be undertaken with former Club members and that an inventory of records can be compiled and used to write a history of this significant organization.

If you were a South Australian Home Builders' Club member or know of someone who was, please contact Prof. Langmead (8302 0654) or Dr. Garnaut (8302 0204) in the School of Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia. Any assistance will be greatly appreciated, and acknowledged. 

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I write in response to your article on the front page of your July Newsletter concerning the future of the Mortlock Library of South Australiana in the Jervois Wing of the State Library. You have expressed concern in this article that access to the Jervois Wing will be reduced and that it may even be relegated "to the status of a little-frequented storage area".

Be assured this is not the intention of the State Library. We are very proud of the Jervois Wing and consider it the jewel in our crown. It is our intention in the redevelopment to make it into a high-use public area for all ages, young and old, enabling even more people to see it, to walk through it and to use the balconies and nooks and crannies that form part of it but are currently closed to the public.

You may be aware that the plans which were placed on display in the State Library, and which you commented upon, were the concept plans. These plans serve to show that all elements of the Library can be fitted within the dimensions of the new building and do not necessarily show the final location of individual services. It can be expected that there will be changes to the concept plans.

You may also be aware that the building no longer meets the current Building Code and that it is not suitable as a preservation or storage area for library materials. Advice from Artlab is that the building is not suitable for storing unique preservation materials because it is not fire-proof, secure or environmentally (light and heating) adequate. We want to better protect our heritage South Australiana Collection which, of course, is unique and must be preserved so that it continues to be available to historians and social scientists of the future.

We are very keen that the Jervois Wing be accessible to a greater number of the public, both at ground and balcony levels. To this end we are currently discussing with the architects options such as:

1. Making the Jervois Wing the main entrance to the Library so that people enter the library and are greeted in the beautiful chamber.
2. Environmentally controlled displays of our South Australian Memory collection in this area. This might include elements from the Children's Literature Research Collection, our Rare Book Collection, material from the Bradman Collection, and other specialist collections.
3. Lounge and public reading areas in the Jervois Wing, including welcoming and meeting areas.

However, it is important to remember that none of this is yet set in stone and that we will be guided very much by our architects, who are experienced in advising on the use of heritage buildings and who also have extensive experience in the development of public buildings. The architects are a joint collaboration between Hassell Pty. Ltd. and Mitchell Guirgola and Thorp. Both

are leading national, award-winning companies. The latter has been responsible for the new Parliament House and involved with the National War Memorial building in Canberra. We are very confident that, with their help, we will be able to identify a suitable use for our beautiful building.

We will also give equal attention to restoring and making available other historic highlights of the State Library. These include the Institute Building and the Sir Josiah Symon Library, both of which are currently closed to the public. As you know, the Jervois Wing will be closing soon for a six-month project to strengthen it against the possibility of a major earthquake. This is part of a state-wide project for heritage buildings. You might recall that the Museum has recently been strengthened against this possibility.

The staff and I at the State Library are very excited about the opportunity to enable more people to see our heritage. However, you need not be concerned that the Jervois Wing will become a mausoleum. On the contrary, it is our intention to make it a highly visible public space that is an interesting, enduring and educational part of the State Library experience.

Yours sincerely,

Bronwyn Halliday

Director, State Library of S.A.

Editor's Reply:

Ms. Halliday does not address the main point of the article, namely, that the Jervois Wing should continue to be an active, working area where people can use and enjoy the Mortlock Library of South Australiana --- a heritage library in a heritage building. This is a far more appropriate and imaginative use of its splendid features than the suggested lounges, "welcoming areas" and books behind glass.

There is no need for the Director to seek the help of architects "to identify a suitable use for our beautiful building". It already has one. To turn it into merely "a highly visible public space" would be to trivialize it as a library. Special tours to see the nooks and crannies are a fine idea but they are no substitute for constant daily use (nor are they incompatible with it).

I am surprised to hear that "the building is not suitable as a preservation or storage area for library materials". If this is true, how can Ms. Halliday consider housing elements of the Rare Book Collection there? And if it no longer meets the Building Code, then public tours must be out of the question.

Such inconsistencies aside, it is surely within the abilities of a modern library administration, with the help of its award-winning architects, to make the Jervois Wing both safe and environmentally adequate. It has been done with countless other heritage buildings around Australia, such as the Mitchell Library in Sydney, so why not here?

It seems, in fact, that the decision has already been taken not to bring the Jervois Wing up to modern

standards. It is considered to be the Library's "jewel in the crown" but clearly they do not intend to spend money on it. This is nothing short of a disgrace. If work needs to be done upgrading the Wing, then it should be given the highest priority in the \$40 million budget.

It is perhaps understandable that Ms. Halliday has overlooked the needs and preferences of the Library's core users, given that she is a business consultant and, by her own admission, knows little of libraries. But this lack of experience should not deter her. If she can rise to the challenge, the Jervois Building could be an outstanding blend of heritage architecture, sophisticated standards and a real, living library.

--- John Healey

Dear Sir,

You have reported (*History SA*, July 2000) on plans for the Mortlock Library to leave the Jervois Wing permanently. While I support the remarks made, I would add that we also need to see the proposed changes to the North Terrace cultural complex as a whole.

The one which concerns me most at the moment is the future of some of the Museum's collections, particularly birds and fishes. The Museum's Director, Dr. Flannery, is anxious to maintain the current status of all collections and to extend the staffing of under-supported sections. However, the current funds seem to be inadequate. If adequate funds are not forthcoming, the only alternative is the mothballing of the collections. Since they are biological parallels of the Mortlock collection, this is equivalent to closing public access to the Mortlock Library.

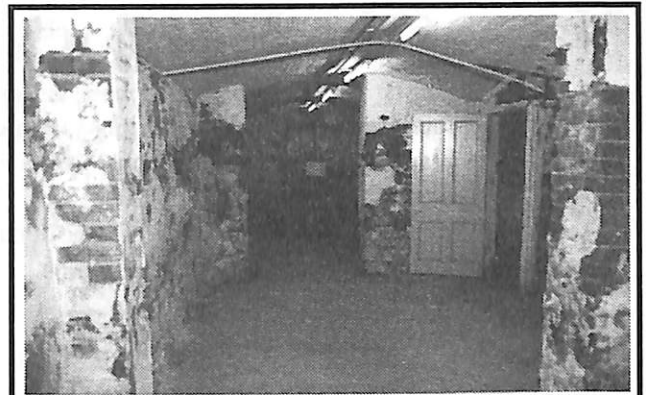
No-one wants this situation but it costs money, and money is only obtained from governments by substantial political pressure. At the moment it seems that the government's decision is driven by a report on the Museum, the Cogger Report, which has never been made public but, on what I have been told about it, seems to be based on some questionable assumptions. Decisions based on secret reports are not the way I want this country to be governed, and I am sure I am not alone.

Many decisions nowadays seem to be based purely on managerial (i.e., financial) criteria without showing awareness of the vision of what the North Terrace cultural complex is now and what it might become. As a strong Society, we need to make it clear to the Government that we consider it essential that this complex is strongly supported as a centre of academic learning, both professional and amateur. This includes ensuring that the complex retains the pleasant ambience which it now has and also that its invaluable collections are not only maintained but visibly strengthened.

Would the HSSA consider convening a meeting of all of Adelaide's learned societies to meet with the Minister and other parties involved to put such a case?

Yours sincerely,

John Truran
Goodwood



Part of the warren of chambers and passages in the basement of the Old Treasury Building, Victoria Square. Eighty people attended the HSSA tour of the building in June, escorted by the curator Michael Taliangis. Photograph by Max Millowick.

Book Review

John G. Wilson: *The Forgotten Naturalist: In search of Alfred Russel Wallace* (Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 2000)

This is the story of a remarkable naturalist who has been forgotten in time. Alfred Russel Wallace was the co-discoverer of the theory of evolution, the credit for which popularly rests with Charles Darwin.

This book by Adelaide medico Dr. John G. Wilson, tells of Wallace's epic trips to South America, the Malay Peninsula and the Spice Islands, and records his perceptive observation of both the natural history and peoples of these regions. Wallace made a great contribution to natural history, not the least of which was the theory of natural selection which he outlined in a letter that he wrote to Charles Darwin in 1858.

Considerable controversy surrounds the question of what Darwin did with the contents of that letter which must have arrived like a bolt out of the blue. John Wilson ably evaluates how Wallace's and Darwin's theories were presented to a meeting of the Linnaean Society on 30th June, 1858. Ironically, the Society's president, Thomas Bell, summed up that year as one in which nothing of lasting importance had been presented to its meetings!

The story of Alfred Russel Wallace has a nice link with Adelaide. Wallace was a distant relative of the Wilson family and for many years Dr. Wilson had in his bookcase a series of green leather-bound books by A.R. Wallace. They were given to him by a great-uncle, Dr. C.E.C. Wilson, who greatly treasured them. The books remained unopened until Dr. Wilson became aware of the "Wallace Line", an arbitrary line which passes through Indonesia, dividing Asian and Australian flora and fauna. This inspired him to read Wallace's books and to travel to the places that Wallace visited.

Dr. Wilson tells a fascinating story and he brings Wallace vividly to life. *The Forgotten Naturalist* retails at \$34.95 and is available from major bookshops.

--- Geoffrey Bishop

New at the Mortlock

Compiled by Brian Samuels from recent issues of *Mortlock Miscellany*, the monthly listing of Mortlock Library accessions, which is available on the State Library's web-site <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au>.


Roger André is presently on leave. His column "Mortlock Archives" will resume in the next issue.

MONOGRAPHS

- 1900-2000: A Century of Agriculture** (Stock Journal Publishers, Unley, 1999)
 Adelaide Gate & Fence Company: **Manufacturers of Metal Gates & Fences** (A. G. F. C., Adelaide, 1923?)
 K. Altmann *et al*: **Ponds, Ponds & Pop-Eye: Notes for an Afternoon Afloat on Adelaide's River Torrens, 21 November 1999** (Institution of Engineers Australia, S.A. Division, North Adelaide, 1999)
 K. Bailey: **Kadina: A Second Look** (H.K. Bailey, Kadina, c. 1999)
 Paquita Boston: **Home and Away with Douglas Mawson** (P. Boston, Carnarvon, 1998)
 Central War Loan Committee of South Australia: **To Every Mother . . .** (Hussey & Gillingham Ltd., Adelaide, 191-?)
 E.W. Chambers: **Woomera: Its Human Face** (Seaview Press, Henley Beach, 2000)
 D. Chessell: **The Italian Influence on The Parade** (City of Norwood, Payneham & St. Peters in association with Wakefield Press, Norwood, 1999)
 P. Christopher: **Paddlesteamers and Riverboats of the River Murray** (Axiom, 2000)
 S. Cockburn *et al*: **Highway through the Hills: The Story of Mount Barker Road** (Wakefield Press in association with Transport SA, Kent Town, 2000)
Creed and Architecture (S.A.I.T. School of Architecture and Building, Adelaide, 1970)
 M. Cudmore: **Benevolent Still After 150 Years** (Adelaide Benevolent & Strangers' Friend Society, Adelaide, 1999)
 B. Dickey & E. Martin: **Building Community: A History of the Port Adelaide Central Mission** (Port Adelaide Wesley Centre, Adelaide, 1999)
 D.J. Gordon: **Charles Sturt, Explorer** (*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 1930)
 T. Gum: **Protection and Freetrade: Lecture** (*The Herald*, Adelaide, 1901)
 J.L. Hoad: **Hotels and Publicans in South Australia 1836 - March 1993** 2nd ed. (Hoad, McLaren Vale, 1999)
 W.M. Hughes: **For Australia: Speech delivered by the Prime Minister at Burra, South Australia, on 29th March, 1922** (1922)
 P. Humby: **Middleton, South Australia: History at a Glance, 1849-1999** (P. Humby, Middleton, 1999)
 T.H. James: **Six Months in South Australia: with some account of Port Phillip and Portland Bay, in Australia Felix** Introduction by Valmai Hankel [Australiana Facsimile Editions, No. 219] (Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 1999)

- John McKinlay's Northern Territory Explorations, 1866: South Australian Parliamentary Papers 1865-66** Introduction by Valmai Hankel [Australian Parliamentary Editions, No. 1] (Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 1999)
 A. Langsford & M. Pharoah: **In the Footsteps of Sir Douglas Mawson** (South Australian Museum and the University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2000)
 M. Lucieer: **SS Pareora 1896-1919** (Lighthouse Press, Bridgewater, 1998)
 M. Lucieer: **Sturt Light to Cape Willoughby: South Australia's First Lighthouse** (Lighthouse Press, Bridgewater, 2000)
Marrabel & District Revisited Compiled by S. Rowett (Marrabel Rodeo Committee, Marrabel, 1999)
 E. Martin: **Changing Relationships: Marriage Guidance Council to Relationships Australia - A South Australian History** (Relationships Australia (SA), Adelaide, 1998)
 M. McColl: **Quorn: The Continuing History, 1978-1998** (Quorn Local History Group, Quorn, c. 1998)
Murray Valley Standard, 1900-2000: The People, The Events: 100 Years in the Life of the Murraylands (Murray Valley Standard, Murray Bridge, 2000?)
 D. & P. Parker: **The Cemeteries of Terowie & Whyte Yarcowie, S.A.** (D. & P. Parker, Peterborough, 2000)
 R. Parsons: **Early Steam Ships in Australia: An Investigation of the Arrival and Development of Steam Ships in Australian Waters from 1830 till 1850s** (R. Parsons, Lobethal, 2000)
 B. Rogers: **Reedbeds Rifle Club No. 36 Inc: A History** (G.T. & M.J. Morony, Magill, 2000)
 K. Round: **As Many Lives as a Cat?: The University of Adelaide Theatre Guild, 1938-1998** (University of Adelaide Theatre Guild, Adelaide, 1999)
 N. Smith: **The Northern Lines: North Adelaide, Prospect, Enfield, Walkerville** (Australian Electric Transport Museum, Adelaide, 1999)
South Australia: A Land of Promise and Prosperity (The Intelligence and Tourist Bureau, Adelaide, 1927)
 H.G. Tolley: **The Development of the Murray River Basin** (R.M. Osborne Ltd., Adelaide, 1930)
 J. Vickery: **A Proposal for Creation and Establishment of a Multi-Disciplinary Outback Land Management Division as a Successor to the South Australian Pastoral Board** (Standing Committee on Land Resource Management, Arid Zone Management Investigation Group, Adelaide, 1979?)
 A. Zielinski: **South Australia's Movie Map: Film and Television Locations in South Australia, Celebrating the First Centenary of Cinema, 1896-1996** (South Australian Film Corporation, Adelaide, 1996) 

History SA deadline

The deadline for all material for the November 2000 issue of the Newsletter is Friday, October 13th. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, S.A. 5019. 

Memoirs of the pedal wireless man

Part II

Introduced by John Healey

These further extracts from the reminiscences of Alfred Traeger (written in the third person) and the accompanying photographs are reproduced by kind permission of his widow, Joyce Traeger Blaess.

In November 1926, having successfully installed radio transceivers at the Hermannsburg Mission and the Arltunga Police Station, linking them to the A.I.M. Nursing Home in Alice Springs, Alf Traeger was tempted to play a practical joke on the padre, John Flynn.

Several days after returning from Hermannsburg Alfred was involved in a little episode and he was not exactly proud of the part he played in it. Now children, and some adults too, at certain times just seem to want to annoy someone because they feel frustrated and out of sorts. . . . Well, one day Alfred felt like annoying someone, which is not so bad, but to deliberately do it by an adult of thirty years of age or so is not very good. The opportunity came when Alfred was talking with Flynn about future plans. The subject of quartz crystals for use in the outpost sets was very much in the foreground. Now Alfred had several faulty crystals in a matchbox and some good crystals packed away in a safe place. The matchbox fell out of Alfred's pocket, he stepped backwards to see what had dropped and there was a crunch, a dreadfully ominous sound. He had stepped on the box of crystals.

Now Alfred knew that Flynn didn't know that the good crystals were safe, and he knew how important Flynn considered these crystals, so he said, "There go our crystals. Oh well, accidents will happen, it will do us good to have some reverses." The effect was not in what he actually said, but the way he said it. Flynn said nothing but just looked at Alfred and looked right through him. The look took perhaps only ten seconds but to Alfred it seemed like half an hour. Then he spoke and up to that time Alfred did not know that there were so many different words in the English language which describe a mean, despicable character and Alfred began to feel smaller and smaller and he began to wish for a hole to open in the ground into which he could fall and then a lid for the hole. Alfred knew that every word Flynn said was true which made things so much worse. Eventually Alfred meekly

told Flynn that things were not so bad as far as the experiments were concerned because he had some more crystals tucked away in his luggage. Alfred has annoyed many people since but never deliberately.

The following year, 1927, Flynn and Traeger were on the road again in the Dodge Buckboard, preparing to further expand the radio network. They happened to be in Cloncurry on Melbourne Cup Day and one of the starters in the race was the Cloncurry horse, Trivalve, ridden by Bobby Lewis.

Flynn quietly spread the word around that Alfred would attempt to pick up the broadcast of the running of the Melbourne Cup with his short wave receiver on the loudspeaker. It could have been the first time the Melbourne Cup had been broadcast from the new short wave station VLR in Victoria. The place was a vacant block close to the Post Office. Long before

the race was to start a huge crowd gathered around the Dodge and reception was good and clear. The description of the race was exceptionally clear and the excitement was intense as the horses neared the winning post when, horror of horrors, a dog fight developed and the earth wire was broken, completely detuning the set. Alfred called to Flynn, "The earth wire, the earth wire!" Flynn realized immediately what was wrong and grabbed the wire and connected it just in time to enable the placings to come through loud and clear. [Trivalve won.] In about one minute the space around the Dodge was clear, but the street was packed with people crossing to the hotel, some to celebrate and others to drown their sorrow. Soon the post office boys came out to announce the placings

to the crowd as on previous occasions, but there was no crowd --- they already knew. The post office boys were a little bit annoyed.

In 1928 Alf was travelling by train from Townsville to Brisbane and there was a slight hiccup in the sleeping arrangements.

The train from Townsville to Brisbane had those narrow gauge carriages divided into compartments with the seats along the sides. At night the seat was made into a bed and the top bunk came out from above the window somehow. The beds were already made up when the train was due to leave and when Alfred eventually found his bed there was a woman in it. Alfred said, "Madam I think you have made a mistake and you are sleeping in my bed. This is a 'gentlemen only' compartment anyway." "No, indeed, it is not your bed," she said and seemed very annoyed. ⇨



Repairs on the track: Alf Traeger "somewhere out bush" c. 1930.

Then she sat up and she was big, fat and ugly. She produced her ticket and compared it with Alfred's and sure enough it was the same bed. So Alfred went in search of the attendant and explained the situation to him. "Oh," he said, "this could be a special privilege which the Queensland Railways are providing for you." Alfred replied that he was not very happy about the special privilege which the Queensland Railways was providing and the attendant said he would come immediately to see what he could do. He had quite a job to get the woman to move but she eventually gave in and the attendant found some other bed for her to sleep in. Later on he came to Alfred and said that he was satisfied that it was a genuine mistake --- after seeing the woman he was sure that the Queensland Railways would not consciously do this to Alfred.

When he arrived back in Adelaide Alf gave up his work at Hannan Bros. and concentrated on building radio equipment for the A.I.M. He was determined to improve the power supply for the homestead sets, knowing that it would be awkward for a bush operator to tap out Morse code messages

and at the same time work a hand-driven generator. By November 1928 he had built the first pedal wireless and the following year he set out, with his assistant Harry Kinzbrunner and Padre George Scott, to change the face of outback communication. The first transmission was made on June 18th, 1929.

When all was completed Harry took charge of the base station at Cloncurry. Scott and Alfred went to instal the first pedal set at Augustus Downs about one hundred and fifty miles north of Cloncurry. When the set had been installed and communication established with Cloncurry and Mrs. Rothery had had preliminary instruction on how to operate the transceiver, the time arrived for her first session with Cloncurry. At the scheduled time the signals from Cloncurry came in loud and clear: "This is V.J.I., the aerial medical service station calling . . . Augustus Downs. Go ahead Augustus Downs." Then Mrs. Rothery replied in the correct way: ". . . replying to V.J.I. Receiving you O.K. Over." This was sent in good morse, almost perfect. Then from Cloncurry: "V.J.I. to . . . Your signals are strong and clear. Go ahead with your message." Then from Augustus Downs: ". . . to V.J.I. Received you O.K." "Now," said Alfred to Mrs. Rothery, "send

him a message, say anything you like." Mrs. Rothery said, "Oh dear! What shall I say? I can't think of anything to say." Alfred said, "Say 'Hello, Mr. Kinzbrunner.'" "Oh! That's too long a name to spell out in morse," said Mrs. Rothery. "Well, say 'Hello, Harry.' That's his christian name."

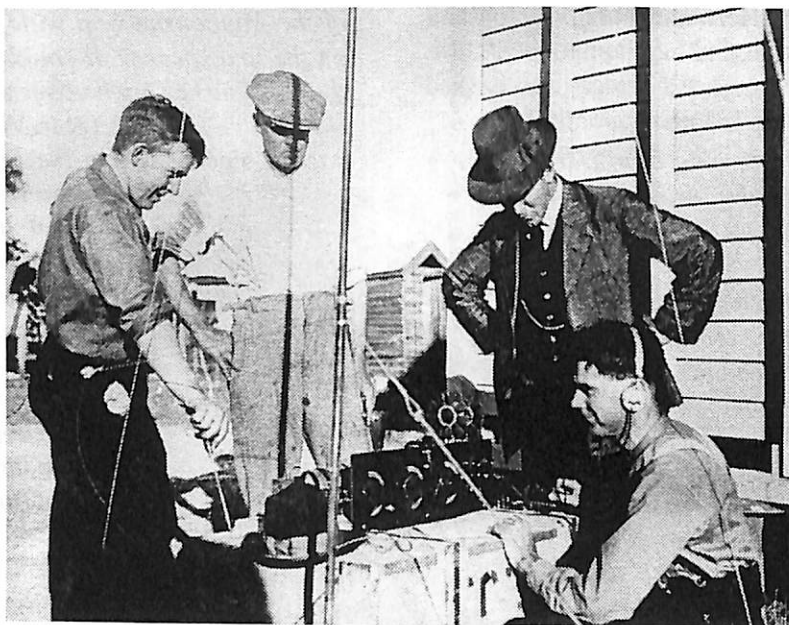
By this time Mrs. Rothery was all confused and upset. The 'Hell' was just a jumble of dots and dashes and no one would be able to make head or tail out of it, but the 'o' was good and clear --- three dashes. "That's no good," said Alfred, "he would not be able to read that, try again." So she tried again and it was much better. But the 'o' was spaced too far from the

'Hell'. Alfred said, "You must keep the 'o' closer to the 'Hell' otherwise Harry will think that they are two words." So she tried again but there was no improvement so Alfred gave up and told her to send 'Harry' which she managed quite well. In his reply Harry seemed a little hesitant and said, "I think I received the message O.K." Later Alfred found that Harry did not make anything of the first jumble of dots and dashes, but the rest of the message was clear and could not

be mistaken. It was 'O hell, O hell, O Harry!'

Alf Traeger's quirky sense of humour no doubt sustained him as he continued his work during 1930, supplying pedal radios to outback stations. On one occasion he was on a train from Katherine to Darwin when it stopped for refreshments.

The refreshment booth was a long trestle table in a large tent. Alfred was sent out with a large teapot with tea leaves in it and he was instructed to have it filled with boiling water . . . but did not have the faintest idea where he was going to get [it]. Suddenly there was a terrific roar, with clouds of steam coming from the locomotive engine. Each time that fresh water is put into the boiler all sorts of wogs, creeping and crawling things and muck finds its way into the boiler. This doesn't evaporate and sinks to the bottom into a well provided for it. Remembering that the temperature of the water in a locomotive boiler reaches to about twice that of normal boiling water, Alfred knew that any bacteria would be totally destroyed. At certain intervals this muck has to be got rid of by opening a tap and blowing it out accompanied with water and clouds of steam with a terrific roar. This gave Alfred an idea, so he walked up to the engine and asked the



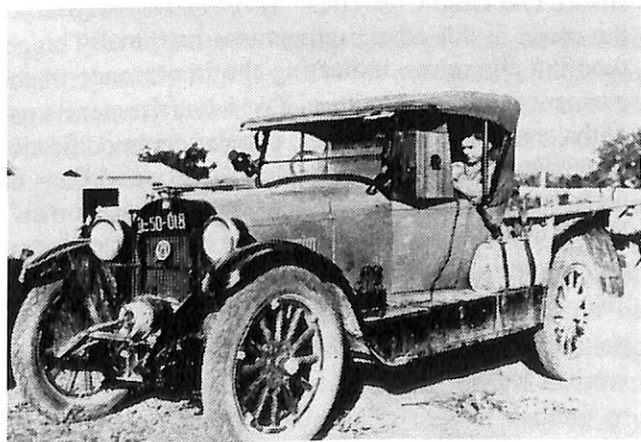
Alf Traeger (seated) with experimental radio equipment in the back yard of the Presbyterian Church at Cloncurry, May 1928.

driver for some of the hot water that he was blowing out of the boiler. The driver was delighted to oblige, and turned the tap nearly off so that Alfred could get near enough to the outlet with the teapot. In a very short time his teapot was full of really boiling water.

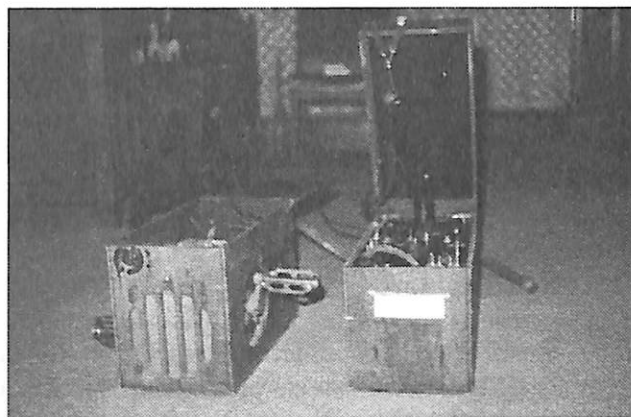
Alfred returned to the party quite happy but with some apprehension. When he handed the teapot to Mrs. Scott, she opened the lid immediately to see if any leaves were floating on top of the water. When the time came to drink the tea, Alfred received a pleasant surprise when everyone remarked what wonderful tea it was, particularly Mrs. Scott, who said it had such a fantastic flavour. Alfred took her word for it and said he did not just feel like a cup of tea at that time. When asked where he got the water from, he just said that the engine driver was having his meal and drinking some tea so I asked if he would let me have some boiling water, which he was delighted to give me. This was not really a lie but just a very brief summary of the incident.

At this time also there were the "Reso" parties --- groups of business men and other important people from Victoria, who grouped together and travelled to get to know Australia better. When Alfred was at Hermannsburg installing the transceiver, one particular group was camped there and would go and explore Palm Valley and other places around Hermannsburg. During this trip a member of the party and a very influential citizen of Victoria died suddenly of heart failure. The leader of the party came to Pastor Albrecht at Hermannsburg very concerned about how to get in touch with the man's relatives, and he expected to have to drive the eighty miles to Alice Springs several times to send telegrams to Melbourne. He was agreeably surprised when Pastor Albrecht told him that he could send telegrams to Melbourne from Hermannsburg.

The result was that the body was to be taken to Melbourne for burial. Apparently a very special coffin had to be made to send a dead body to Melbourne by train and this could only be made in Melbourne. Measurements of the dead body were requested by the coffin makers and these measurements had to be sent as an urgent telegram that evening. Normally the



Traeger with transmitter --- before he thought of pedals.
Note the generator on the front of the car.



One of the first models of the pedal wireless built by Alf Traeger in 1929.


Cloncurry Station was not permitted to operate at night because it would interfere with folk trying to receive the broadcasting stations. Conditions were not good and a lot of repetition took place. Morrie took the phone off the hook so that he would not be interfered with by the sweet comments from the irate listeners, whose programmes were being interrupted by a loud voice giving the length of the body, the width across the shoulders of the body, the thickness of the body and lots more about the body. Poor Morrie got it good and strong the next day when he met the people down the street.

And finally, a story from one of the many visits that Alf made to the nursing home at Innamincka.

Two new sisters had just arrived from the city and they made the visitors very welcome. They had just baked their first batch of bread and were very proud of the result. The visitors of course praised it but as far as Alfred was concerned it was just eatable when fresh. The next day it was hopeless and Alfred noticed that the others were not particularly anxious to eat it either. Mrs. Scott of course insisted that she must go and see the Burke and Wills tree with the word "DIG" carved on it. This was several miles from Innamincka and was by now accessible by motor car.

Before leaving for Broken Hill the sisters insisted on giving the party a loaf of bread to sustain them on their way. During the morning one tyre developed a puncture and Mr. Scott needed a stone or rock to act as a foundation for the jack because the ground was soft, and stones and rocks were as scarce as hens' teeth at this particular spot. Someone suggested the loaf of bread. It was not actually used for this purpose but it was used as a chock behind the wheel to prevent the car from moving during the changing of the tyre. No-one bothered to pick it up and as far as Alfred knows it is still there.

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- Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 12, pp. 251-2 (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1990)
- Fred McKay: *Traeger, the Pedal Radio Man* (Boolarong Press, Moorooka, 1995)
- Personal communication from Joyce Traeger Blaess 

Sacred and Profane: when God and Art met Corsetry

by Leigh Summers

For the feminist or pro-feminist scholar, nineteenth-century corset advertisements can be read as a critical moment in advertising sexism. For the scholar less interested in women's history these same advertisements potentially provide a rich optic into the psyche and culture of middle-class Victorian life. Either way a contemporary analysis of Victorian corset advertisements dismantles prevailing perceptions of these curious images as quaint, semi-erotic ephemera and recasts them as documents that reveal much about the sexual politics of the Victorians, and the skill of Victorian advertisers to appropriate "high" culture for popular appeal.

After 1880 few publications were without corset advertisements of some kind. By the 1890s corset advertising almost saturated public reading space. Corsetry advertisements appeared in women's magazines as

well as in newspapers and journals designed for general consumption. They also appeared in theatre programmes, dance programmes and trade union journals. More surprising still is their appearance in religious publications. The *Church of England Messenger*, whose readers would no doubt have decried representations of scantily clad women in pornographic magazines, frequently published advertisements featuring images of semi-naked corseted women.

Nineteenth-century corset advertisements were, like contemporary advertisements which feature women in states of undress, consciously contrived and positioned with editorial care. Many advertisements were frankly sexual and, like advertisements of the twentieth century, were largely informed by male rather than female expectations and understandings (or misunderstandings) of the female body. Corset advertisements were, too, like current representations of naked or semi-naked women, very public property. A surviving pamphlet produced by George Roberts' Stay Warehouse in London in 1851 is a particularly good example of male control

over female representation in the nineteenth century and the tendencies of advertisers to make the semi-naked female form visually accessible to men as much as to women. Roberts' catalogue included a large illustration of his "stay warehouse" in which the massive plate glass windows on the ground floor were filled from ceiling to floor with corsets.¹ These were pinned to the far wall of the display in rows and on body forms placed on shelves attached to the front of the wall, while still more corsets were laid flat on the shelves below. The effect was dazzling, even by today's advertising standards. Every inch of the display was crowded with this, ostensibly, most intimate garment of female attire, displayed at intriguing angles to attract maximum attention from male as well as female passers-by.

Newspaper advertisements for corsetry were at times even more blatantly positioned to catch the male eye.



Fig. 1: Old Gold Cigarettes advertisement
from the *Illustrated London News*, 27 May, 1899, p. 741.

Advertisements featuring illustrations of curvaceous corseted women produced by the Y & N corset company were regularly published between advertisements for tobacco, shirt studs, cigars and other "masculine" commodities.² Advertisers may have thought men might persuade wives and lovers to purchase Y & N corsets because of this. For whatever reason, the placement of corset ads in between other advertisements directed at men allowed,

even invited, male readers to examine corseted models with ease and without detection.

On occasion the corset itself was used to sell other goods manufactured for male usage. Old Gold Cigarettes used an image of the corset rather than the words "course it" in its slogan "Of [corset] is a treat to smoke Old Gold Cigarettes." (Fig. 1) The diagram of the corset in this advertisement was marginally bigger than the cigarettes, indicating the importance of the garment in popular culture. The advertisement's use of the corset also indicates the popular commodification of women's bodies in Victorian society and flags an underlying if unacknowledged attitude that women's bodies were considered as accessible and as interchangeable as other purchased pleasures, such as cigarettes. The question which demands to be asked at this point is how, at a time when depictions of near-naked women were considered scandalous, was it possible to publish images of corseted women so publicly? The answer is, in part, that the flood of corset imagery, though potentially provocative to the Victorian middle-

class moral sensibility, found acceptability because it was part of a larger artistic tradition of representing women. Little academic analysis exists which looks at the depiction of women in nineteenth-century advertising but art historians have carefully examined the depiction of women in Victorian art. They reveal that women's bodies were routinely objectified for the pleasure of the male spectator as a "consumable object of desire".³

Despite the "lowbrow" status of corset advertisements in comparison with high art depictions of the unclad female form, it is clear that both types of representation were informed and infused by identical values and referents. Indeed, because of their fundamental shared similarities, corset advertisements can be viewed as an element of the canon that encompassed the female nude in art, sculpture and architecture. By the nineteenth century the female nude had become a genre within high art and her depiction was commonly used to represent ideals of art, beauty and justice. The nude's popularity and public acceptability, whether she appeared in high art or advertising, derived much of their legitimacy from the craze for Greek statuary which swept Britain and the United States in the early part of the century. The importation of the Elgin marbles to England in 1807 by Thomas Bruce (the seventh Earl of Elgin) created enormous interest in Greek culture. The wide interest in antiquity was increased and further expanded by the discovery of the Venus de Milo, which was universally regarded as a masterpiece.

The consequent acceptance of Graeco-Roman statuary made it impossible for concerted campaigns against nudity (whether in art or advertising) to succeed. Artists and advertisers alike quickly understood that the nude or semi-nude female body was invested with "integrity" when it was presented in either a religious, classical or mythological setting.⁴ Conventions that dictated appropriate representation of the nude female body in high art (no matter how spurious the connections) were just as quickly co-opted in advertising to legitimise depictions of the semi-naked corseted female body. Sewell's Rival Corset Company clearly capitalised on the craze for Graeco-Roman antiquities to sell its garments. Sewell's advertisements published

in the 1870s featured a stony, corseted Venus de Milo, whose shapely hips were thinly veiled by classical drapery. (Fig. 2)

The plundering of classical icons, myths and legends in corset advertisements also succeeded because Graeco-Roman myths and legends were understood, admired and widely circulated in the popular culture of middle-class Victorians. The inclusion of Greek and Latin studies in public and private schools after 1800 made for a familiarity with the pantheon of gods and goddesses which proliferated in Victorian art and advertising.⁵ The Corset Sylphide,⁶ along with Sharp and Perrin's best-selling corset the I.C. Persephone⁷ (a pun to be read as "I see Persephone") were both named after goddesses. Their naming was no doubt

intended to evoke the glamour that a classical forebear might bring.

In some cases the corseted women of these illustrations were actually depicted as mythological creatures. Y & N's diagonal seam corset advertisements featured a corseted siren whose curvaceous body, astonishing hair and scaly mermaid hips emerged from the sea before a halo of radiant light.⁸ (Fig. 3)

Although Victorian corset advertisements appear innocuous when compared with the gratuitous depictions of female nudity today, they can still be read

SEWELL'S
RIVAL CORSET

TRADE MARK REGISTERED. TRADE MARK REGISTERED.

Materials Unexceptionable in Quality.

THE VENUS DE MILO

It is an indisputable fact that this Corset, possessing the following absolute requirements, is the Corset most generally worn, most conducive to health, and most adapted to the ideal presented in the Venus de Milo. These requirements are—

SIMPLICITY: avoidance of all those absurd complications which irritate the figure without giving support.

FLEXIBILITY: being and supporting the figure without giving pressure, the extra wide stout bones giving a support to the sides, which contains the necessary side steel.

The many THOUSANDS I have manufactured of my REGISTERED "RIVAL" CORSET would alone demonstrate this to be the CORSET OF THE DAY, and the constantly increasing demand proves the fact beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Prices: 4th Quality, 4/11; 3rd Quality, 6/11; 2nd Quality, 8/11; 1st Quality, 10/8.

IN WHITE, DRAB, BLACK, AND CARDINAL.
May be purchased of Drapers, Ladies' Outfitters, and through the principal Wholesale Houses.

Factories: LONDON, IPSWICH, AND LANDPORT.
Warehouse: 255a, WHITECHAPEL ROAD, E.

Fig. 2: The Venus de Milo as featured in Sewell's Rival Corset advertisements in Sylvia's Home Journal, 1884.

as highly exploitative representations of femininity. As Ludmilla Jordanova has convincingly argued,⁹ any public "unveiling" of women can be read as an expression of "masculine desire allied to fantasies of ownership and display". Unveiling women publicly is not just a prelude to sexual possession, says Jordanova, but an "encounter with [the] risks and dangers . . . excitements and pleasures" associated with women's bodies. Jordanova's arguments, though concerned with images of women as representatives of scientific, legal or humanistic thought, can be applied equally well to corsetry advertisements. Indeed, even more than the classical representations of women critiqued by Jordanova, the corseted representations of women were, because of the widely acknowledged sexual *puissance* of the garment, explicit reminders of the intimate "excitements and pleasures".

By the latter decades of the century both art and advertising were richly sown with classical allegories and metaphors woven about women's bodies. Marina Warner has explained this abundance of female allegorical figures as the method by which women's bodies have historically facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and shared aspirations. The "symbolic form of the female figure", says Warner, whether it manifests in quasi-realistic sculptures or whether it appears as artistic renderings of abstract ideas, can be viewed as a "tap root" which even today "runs deep in classical Christian culture".

Warner's argument is borne out in particular advertisements placed by Warner Brothers whose promotions were often characterised by curious amalgamations of both Christian and



Fig. 3: Y & N's corseted mermaid

pagan referents. Their Coraline Corset advertisements (popular in the 1880s) generally featured one or two cupid- or angel-like figures. One was usually winged and peeped from inside the garment above the breasts, while another, devoid of wings, carried a star-tipped wand and gazed admiringly at the waistline of the garment.

The figures within this widely circulated illustration may have been recognised metaphorically (or at least subliminally) by the educated Victorian as a mythic narrative in which the corset represented Venus with the cupid as her son (Eros) by her side. The inclusion of cupid imagery within these advertisements simultaneously operated to suggest that glances of love and admiration from earthly suitors might follow once the corset was purchased and worn. By the late 1880s Warners dispensed with the standing cupid figure in its advertisements but retained the peeping, winged cupid within the garment. (Fig. 4) This lent a peculiarly religious aspect to the advertisement. The peeping cupid appeared to be disembodied, with only a pair of feathery wings to support its head. This figurative disembodiment elevated the image from that of Graeco-Roman myth and reinscribed it as the Christian *putto*, the winged, angel-headed spectre that hovers above members of the holy family in Renaissance religious art.

Less irony (but more angels) characterised the advertisement for Madame Dean's Spinal Supporting

Corset, which flagrantly appropriated religious iconography. In this advertisement¹⁰ (Fig. 5) seraphim-like creatures bore a corset above a cluster of adoring women, who raised their arms in homage to Madame Dean. A testimonial within the advertisement iterated the religious fervour. Mrs. W. Papes of Iowa revealed to readers that she had been an invalid for six years, and, despite travelling extensively in the pursuit of health, she had never received "as much benefit as [she] had in a few weeks' wear of . . . Madame Dean's corset". It was, she intoned, "a *godsend*".

Madame Dean's corset advertisement is a perfect example of the ways in which Victorian advertisers skilfully negotiated both the sacred and the profane. While the illustration of the corset depicts it as empty, it is nonetheless a fulsome if invisible embodiment of a curvaceous female torso. This advertisement neatly implies that the imaginary or invisible occupant's secondary sexual characteristics have been enhanced by Madame Dean's spinal corset. Any potential criticism regarding the objectification of the female torso was neatly defused by the presence of the angels whose presence implied that the corset was ascending (or descending) to rescue womankind from ill-health.

Perhaps the most elaborate amalgamation of the sacred and profane in corset illustration was an advertisement published by Warners later in the century. In this advertisement several religious and mythological signifiers were juxtaposed to create an Edenic scene reminiscent of the Fall. The advertisement depicts a walled garden that could easily be read as the Garden of Eden. A small, tousle-haired, naked child or cupid, standing in a pair of adult boots, directs a hose at a corset suspended in a tree. The corset in this advertisement can

be seen to represent an apple, which in turn represents the body of the first woman (and first temptress) Eve. The child can be read either as a cupid or as Adam, the first man, while the hose is the obvious phallic device of Eve's impregnation. Interestingly, the inability of the hose to dampen, spoil or penetrate the corset might have been a whimsical device on the part of the advertisers to suggest that had Eve been adequately corseted

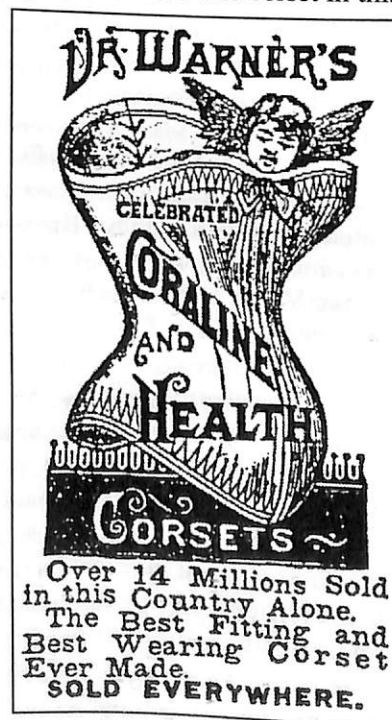


Fig. 4: Corset with cupid, from the *Woman's Journal*, 15 June, 1889.

by the brothers Warner, the human race might have been saved from the ignominious consequences of the Fall.

That so many cultural vectors can be delineated in corset illustrations makes their study a rich and amusing project. While these advertisements are often self-parodic and gently humorous, it is important to note that they can also be read as forerunners to the sexist "page 3" depictions of semi-naked women in newspapers a century later.

Prior to the publication of corset advertisements, women were rarely depicted in the press (at least outside the pornographic canon) as naked or semi-naked subjects. Canny Victorian advertisers skillfully manipulated high art and religious iconography to validate and justify corset imagery and to deflect potential criticism.

Understood in this way, corset advertisements offer denizens of the twentieth century a wonderful resource from which we may glean new insights into the psycho-sexual world of educated middle-class Victorians.



Fig. 5: *The Adoration of the Corset*
Advertisement for Madame Dean's Spinal Supporting Corset, "a godsend".

Footnotes:

- ¹ George Roberts, *Address to Ladies*, self-published catalogue, London, 1851, p. 11.
- ² See *Today* magazine, 21 March, 1896, p. ii.
- ³ For an incisive discussion of these issues see Justine Clarke, "The Female Nude: the Objectification of Women" in *Ormond Papers: A Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 1994, pp. 97-111.
- ⁴ See Ronald Pearsall, *Tell Me, Pretty Maiden: The Victorian and Edwardian Nude*, London, 1992, pp. 20-22.
- ⁵ See Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, London, 1985, p. 236.
- ⁶ The Corset Sylphide advertisement cited here appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, 22 April 1899, p. 597.
- ⁷ The Persephone advertisement cited here was regularly published in *Myra's Journal*. See 1 January, 1890, p. 23.
- ⁸ Reproduced in L. De Vries, *Victorian Advertising*, London, 1968, p. 71.
- ⁹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New York, 1994.
- ¹⁰ Reproduced in L. De Vries, *op. cit.*

Dr. Leigh Summers has an Honours Bachelor of Arts in History and a Post-graduate Diploma in Museum Studies from James Cook University and a Ph.D. from the University of Melbourne. She has worked as the Curator of the Townsville Museum Inc. and as the Manager and Curator of Ayers House Museum, as well as publishing articles on the history of costume and sexuality and on contemporary museum practice.

She is currently a freelance historian and Visiting Research Scholar in the Department of Social Enquiry at the University of Adelaide. Her book, *Breathless with Anticipation*, a study of the impact of corsetry on the minds and bodies of Victorian women, will be released by Berg Publishers, Oxford, next year.

Websites

<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~fliranre>

Flinders Ranges Research is an indexed web-site compiled by Nic Klaassen, HSSA member who spoke on the history of the Birdsville Track at our May meeting. It consists of over 100 articles, most of them concerning the history of the far north, exploration, mining and pastoralism, but also including entries on many other South Australian figures and themes. For example, under 'B' there are 22 topics, including John Baker, Daisy Bates, Beltana, Bethany, Blinman, Bremer Mine, J.B. Bull and Burra.

Nic has not cluttered the web-site with fancy art-work. This is a very readable source of factual information about the northern areas of the state, written in a straightforward style and clearly well-researched. It has a chronology of events from 1836 to 1930, a number of useful biographies and a clearly explained article on the Special Surveys.

<http://www.holdfastdatasa.mtx.net>

The Holdfast web-site has been compiled by Kath Crilly from primary sources and contains a great deal of well-presented information focusing on Colonel Light and the early settlement of Adelaide. It includes a summary of Light's life and career, an account of his arrival here and his subsequent activities, extracts from his journal, details of his monuments and the full text of the Letter of Instructions issued to him by the Colonization Commissioners.

The web-site also features a set of maps showing the boundaries of the colonies and states up to 1901, a chronology of events from 1788 to 1901 and details of the South Australian Association, the Foundation Act and the Proclamation. --- J.H.

Books

Russell Smith: *Curiosities of South Australia 3* (Smithbooks, Norwood, 2000)

Russell Smith continues to prove how intriguing small pieces of history can be with his third book of tales about curious objects, unusual characters and long-forgotten events from South Australia's past. This collection, which includes two articles previously published in *History SA*, certainly lives up to the reputation of its predecessors.

It contains stories of Adelaide's first balloonist, the German mines that killed two sailors at Beachport, the extraordinary seaweed collection of a Port Elliot lady, the two Graham's Castles and the ghost of Holland House. There are lych-gates, tree-houses, dry-stone walls, bat caves, bird-baths and belfries, all entertainingly described and illustrated with the author's black-and-white photographs.

The book retails in softcover at \$10.95 and is available from most bookshops.

Exploring the Stuart Highway & the Oodnadatta Track
Exploring the Eyre Highway across the Nullarbor
Exploring the Duke's & Western Highways from the Toll Gate to the Goldfields
 (Tourist Information Distributors Aust., West Beach)

These three books are intended primarily as tourist guides for people travelling on any of the three major highways out of Adelaide but they also feature lively and informative articles on the history of the routes, the early explorers and significant places and events. The Stuart Highway book, for example, contains an absorbing account of John McDouall Stuart's 1862 expedition, with contemporary illustrations, extracts from his journals and a four-page fold-out reproduction of the printed map of his discoveries. It also has shorter articles on the Hermannsburg mission, the Overland Telegraph Line, the northern goldfields, and Darwin during World War II.

Similarly the Duke's & Western Highways book has articles on the gold rushes of the 1850s, Tolmer's Gold Escort route (with fold-out map), paddle steamers, the overlanders and the S.A./Vic. border dispute. The Eyre Highway book features Eyre's overland journey to King George's Sound in 1840-41 (with map), Forrest's reverse expedition in 1870, whaling and the East-West Telegraph Line.

The books also contain lots of colour photographs and details of tourist attractions. They are available at HSSA meetings for \$7.00 each. --- J.H.



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