

# HSA

History

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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No. 155, July 2001

## Handing down the handcraft

With the crocodilian advance of technology, which looks only in the direction it is travelling, many of the old manual skills and trades are falling by the wayside. Some of these have a history going back to the Middle Ages but are now vanishing within a generation. In his illustrated lecture "Rare Trades: the Disappearance and Resurgence of Skilled Manual Work", to be given in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 8.00 p.m., Mark Thomson will look at people who physically make things, how they learn their craft and how they pass it on to others.

In researching the subject, he has met blacksmiths, wheelwrights, horse-collar makers, stonemasons, well builders, shingle splitters, farriers, haystack builders, whip makers, signwriters, shipwrights and dry-stone wall builders. He has noticed certain common features. Many of them are very modest about their accomplishments, they are continually learning and improving their skills, they are usually keen to share their knowledge and, not surprisingly, they have exceptional hand-to-eye co-ordination.

Mark is particularly interested in the process of learning --- what motivates the practitioners of rare trades, how they solve problems and how they pass their skills on. Teaching an apprentice a manual craft invariably involves a slow, steady, hands-on approach rather than the "instant learning" that has come to characterize the computer age. Mark has also noticed the transformation of some trades into "boutique" art forms --- for example, the making of stained glass and fancy metalwork. "Trades can be just as creative as art", he says, "but without the pretentiousness."

Born in Adelaide, Mark Thomson attended the South Australian School of Art in the 1970s and has since worked as a graphic designer and journalist. He has edited several union journals, made a number of short films and played guitar in a band. In the last five years he has published *Blokes and Sheds, Stories from the Shed and Meat, Metal and Fire*. 


## Travellers in skirts

Australia does not seem to have produced famous women explorers like those who ventured into the wilds of other continents but there have been a number of daring and determined women adventurers who have braved the harshness and isolation of our country and who deserve to be remembered. In her lecture "Travellers in Skirts: Australian Women Explorers", to be given in the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, at 8.00 p.m., Valerie Sitters will present a series of vignettes of women who were not content to stay at home.

Three women accompanied Charles Sturt on his Mt. Bryan expedition in 1840 - his wife Charlotte, the maid Eliza Arbuckle and Julia Gawler, the Governor's daughter. Eliza and Julia both recorded their adventures, the former in a colourful autobiography and the latter in a less embellished diary. In 1863 Amalie Dietrich was commissioned to travel from her native Germany to Australia to collect ethnographical, botanical and zoological specimens which included a large number of spiders and the previously unknown taipan snake.

We will also hear of Rose de Freycinet who stowed away with her husband on his voyage round the world in 1817-20, of Elsie Masson, an early motorist who braved the horrors of travel in the Northern Territory before roads were built, of Jean Robertson and her companion who always packed their evening clothes in the Lancia when they took part in reliability trials in 1928, and of three women who trekked the outback with camels.

Valerie Sitters has worked for the State Library since 1966 in a number of areas including the Country Children's Book Service, Periodicals, Acquisitions and Children's Literature Research. Since 1994 she has been the Librarian of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia, where she does a magnificent job of assisting researchers in finding just what they are looking for. Her particular interests are Antarctica and maritime exploration.

Note: Her e-mail address was printed incorrectly in the last issue of the Newsletter. The correct address is [sitters.valerie@slsa.sa.gov.au](mailto:sitters.valerie@slsa.sa.gov.au). 

## The Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

Founded 1974

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

E-mail: [hssa25@hotmail.com](mailto:hssa25@hotmail.com) Web-site: [www.history.sa.gov.au/hssa](http://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 readings, lectures, discussions, field trips & 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:** Mr. D. Cornish

**Vice-President:** Mr. M. Keain

**Secretary:** Mrs. G. Brown, Ph. 8278 5370.

**Treasurer:** Mrs. A. Huckel, Ph. 8277 2953.

**Members:** Dr. G. Bishop, Ms. J. Callen, Mr. S. Dawes, Mr. C. Deed, Dr. C. Garnaut, Mr. J. Healey, Mr. T. Saunderson.

**Journal Editors:** Dr. C. Garnaut, Ph. 8302 0204, and Ms. J. Palmer, Ph. 8373 6538.

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

### APPOINTED OFFICERS:

**Consultants:** Mr. R.M. Gibbs, Dr. R.P.J. Nicol

**Records Officer:** Mrs. E. Ulbrich

**Auditor:** Mr. A. Kovaleff, C.P.A.

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## Massaging the truth


This year's Brock lecture, "Double Vision: the Voyage Narratives of Flinders and Baudin" by Tony Brown, will be jointly sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society of S.A. and the HSSA. It will be held in the Armoury Lecture Theatre (rear of S.A. Museum, off Kintore Ave.) on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, at 7.30 p.m.

Voyage narratives are often more than they seem. The authors have reputations to protect, careers to promote and past scores to settle. Seamen, no less than other autobiographers, massage and manipulate reality in their own interest and Tony Brown will examine the narratives of Matthew Flinders, Nicolas Baudin and Francois Péron from this viewpoint.

Flinders wrote his *Voyage to Terra Australis* more than ten years after the event, having spent over half that time detained by the French on the island of Mauritius. He had ample opportunity to brood over his ill-treatment and a significant part of his book is devoted to this period. He had also come to regret the mistakes he had made, in particular, his decision to return home on the *Cumberland*, a small ship in very poor condition. He desperately wanted his name to be second only to that of Cook in the history of maritime exploration and there are several episodes in the *Voyage* where he embroiders on the truth to make himself seem more important.

The journal of Nicolas Baudin, on the other hand, was an almost daily record written during his voyage and, as such, contains his frank and unrevised opinions. His relations with his officers and scientists started badly and got steadily worse, partly because of his authoritarian manner and partly because he was looked down on for his humble origins and his earlier career as a merchant captain.

A particular thorn in his side was Francois Péron who started the voyage as an assistant zoologist but came to wield considerable authority over the other scientists. He developed an intense hatred of Baudin, refused to obey his orders and was at loggerheads with him for most of the trip. After Baudin died on Mauritius in 1803 (shortly before Flinders' arrival), Péron conveyed all the natural history collections to Paris, gave his own side of the story and was appointed to write the official history of the voyage. This featured a sustained and vicious rhetoric against Baudin and survived as the accepted version for over a hundred years.

Tony Brown was Chief Librarian of the South Australian Institute of Technology from 1969 to 1976 and Director of Learning Resources in the Department of T.A.F.E. from 1976 until his retirement in 1987. He is a former member of the RGSSA Council and historical adviser to the Encounter 2002 committee, and last year published *Ill-Starred Captains*, an account of the Australian voyages of Flinders and Baudin. 

## On your Council

### David Cornish

While undertaking work placement at Old Parliament House as a tourism studies student in 1989, our new President recalls asking Pat Stretton what the Historical Society of South Australia was all about. It was her enthusiasm for the Society that prompted him to join and he attended his first meeting in March the following year. He was also encouraged to participate by a special friend, Daphne Gum, a founding member of the HSSA and an active member of the West Torrens Historical Society.

In 1990 he attended the Society's first annual dinner, held at Prince Alfred College, where he assisted with the tour of the main building and museum, conducted that evening. This, together with regular attendance at the lecture nights, resulted in his joining Council in 1992, serving for a term before working interstate for twelve months.

Holding a Bachelor of Business from the University of South Australia, David worked as the Economic Development Officer at the District Council of the Copper Coast, Kadina, for five years, and as Manager, Economic and Business Services, for the Corporation of the Town of Gawler for eighteen months. In February of this year he took up his present position as Development Officer at Prince Alfred College. Throughout this time he has maintained his links with the Society and has attended many of its meetings.

His particular interests in the field of history include rail transport, politics and education. He also enjoys classical music, travel, cycling and wine.

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### 2002 programme

Council will soon be considering our programme for next year. If you have any suggestions for speakers, field trips or other events, please forward them to the Secretary, P.O. Box 519, Kent Town 5071.



## Annual Dinner

The guest speaker at the HSSA Annual Dinner this year will be the Hon. Christopher Legoe, former judge of the South Australian Supreme Court, who will talk on "Highways and Byways of the Law". He will entertain us with historical anecdotes about various personalities of the legal profession, both English and Australian, and will also include reminiscences of his own time at the Bar and on the Bench.

He was admitted to the English Bar in 1952 and began practising in South Australia the following year. In 1955 he became the first lawyer in this state to practise solely as a barrister and in 1964 was a founding member of the S.A. Bar Association. He was appointed to the Supreme Court Bench in 1979 and continued to preside until his retirement in 1994.

The HSSA dinner will be held in the Gartrell Room at Fernilee Lodge, 569 Greenhill Road, Burnside, at 6.30 p.m. (for 7.00) on Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. The cost will be \$36 for a three-course meal, exclusive of drinks, and parking is available next to the restaurant.

Booking is essential, so please forward your name and phone number, together with your cheque or money order, to Jenny Palmer, 62 Esmond St., Hyde Park 5061, by Friday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. Enquiries to Jenny on 8272 9507.

### New members

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Ms. Margaret Anderson, Mr. John and Mrs. Jan Kleinig, Mr. Simon and Mrs. Denise Kleinig, Lady Anne Miller, Mr. James Potter, Mr. Anthony and Mrs. Yvonne Sitters, Mr. Stewart Sweeney, Mr. Trevor and Mrs. Keren Wicks, Mr. Glen Woodward and Ms. Amy Worswick.

### History SA deadline

The deadline for all material for the September 2001 issue of the Newsletter is Friday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore, S.A. 5019.

### A plea from Council

*The lectures always prove a treat,*

*The evenings are convivial.*

*Forgive us if we now repeat*

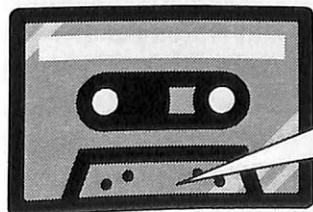
*A point that's far from trivial.*

*We're sure you'd find it boring*

*With nothing but a cuppa.*

*So please, we are imploring,*

*Do bring a plate for supper!*



Our  
speaker  
tonight . .

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

Send your order, with payment, to the Treasurer, 9 Sierra Nevada Blvd., Pasadena 5042. If the tape is returned, further orders are \$3.00 each.



## Cricket and politics


Readers may be amused by the following extract from the letters of Audrey Lady Tennyson, wife of Hallam Lord Tennyson, Governor of South Australia from 1899 to 1902 and Governor-General of Australia in 1903. The letters were published as Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days (National Library of Australia, 1978).

17 March 1902

I should think [the English Test team] will one & all be delighted to start home again on Thursday. I only wish they had done better. They are all much disgusted at the Australian team going by the same steamer, & several of the wives too, & there is scarcely a gentleman among them, but they one & all insist on calling themselves amateurs & not professionals, tho' they also insist on being tremendously paid, whereas our Englishmen who are *paid* call themselves professionals & are treated as such, & only expect to be; & the gentlemen don't get a penny except that their expenses are paid. Each of the E. professionals gets £300 for the trip, & Hayward & Lilley have had an extra bonus of £100 each, & each bowler gets £5 for every 5 wickets he bowls in an innings or match. I am not sure which. On Friday Braund & Gunn each got £5 for bowling 5 wickets each but then all these are professionals.

Harold has taken violently to cricket & plays with his poor Nana if he can't get anybody better, abusing her play the whole time. The other evening he asked Hallam & me to come & watch them, with a kerosene tin [wicket]. (Regular Australian: you see all the little urchins & men also who can't afford wickets playing with kerosene tins -- these are bought by *everybody* -- packed & sent out in cases from America & put to every conceivable use you can imagine -- flower pots, buckets, packing cases -- and there is even a house inhabited but built chiefly with them beaten out, near Adelaide.)

The Federal Parliament etc. are getting more & more unpopular hourly. They certainly have managed in one year to put everybody's backs up --- rushing everything to such an extent instead of going slowly & tactfully, & trying to keep the whole power in their own hands. Several individual people have told me lately that if the Commonwealth were put to the vote in the States tomorrow, there would not be one single vote in favour of it, & I firmly believe it, it has not done anybody any good except the well-paid Federal Parliament, & has raised everything in price. The people say they have been entirely deceived & that Federation is absolutely different from what they were promised.

A man from Queensland who mixes with all classes of men told me the other day that in Queensland the people are quite ready for a revolution, they are so furious with the results of Federation, & say they are quite strong enough to stand by themselves and break off from it. 

FROM THE DIARY  
OF AN EDWARDIAN LADY

Oh Cedric  
please!  
Not the  
watering-can  
again!



J.H.

## Do you remember?

Do you remember when:

- you could leave your bike in the street without a lock and it would be there when you got back
- loaves of bread smelled like loaves of bread
- you could get a Coke and a Koola-Pole for a bob (if you drank the Coke in the shop)
- you could find a government department easily in the phone book
- no matter what phone number you rang, a human being answered
- you didn't have to pay banks to borrow money from you
- supermarket cashiers could do sums
- things didn't keep breaking down
- if something did break down, it could be fixed
- suburban shopkeepers had the commonsense to close for lunch
- and the only thing that could ruin your weekend was acne?

### WANTED

#### Guides for the Glen Osmond Mines

The Burnside Historical Society is looking for people to become occasional guides for the historic Glen Osmond mines. Tours are held on the third Sunday of every month, but each guide would be needed for only one or two tours per year.

Full training, including First Aid, is given and all equipment is supplied by the City of Burnside. Guides work in pairs and a high level of safety is maintained. If you are interested, please ring John Clark on 8331 7582.

## 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>. The list does not include archival material, which is covered in Neil Thomas' column on this page.

### MONOGRAPHS

Australian National League: **The Truth about the Transcontinental Railway** (Co-operative Printing and Publishing Company of S.A. Ltd., Adelaide)

A.J. Bott: **S.A. Electoral Rolls 1852 – 1904** (Bott, Adelaide, 1999)

C. Campbell *et al*: **Toward the State High School in Australia: Social Histories of State Secondary Schooling in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia 1850-1925** (Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Sydney, 1999)

**Electric Tramways for Adelaide** (W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide)

J. Elliott: **Memoirs of a Barrister** (Wakefield Press, Kent Town, c. 2000)

**Facts and Figures in regard to the Adelaide Tramways** (S. Aust.)

A. Fitzpatrick: **A Guide to the Preservation of Health in South Australia** (Robert Thomas, Adelaide, 1843)

P. Furby: **In Context: Australian Women Modernists** (Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, 2000)

A. Hoyle (comp.): **Ancestors in Archives: A Guide for Family Historians to South Australia's Government Archives** Rev. ed. (State Records of S.A., Netley, 2000)

R. Linn: **A Land Abounding: A History of the Port Elliot & Goolwa Region, South Australia** (Alexandrina Council, Goolwa, 2001)

J. Luly and P.S. Valentine: **On the Outstanding Universal Value of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh/Naracoorte) World Heritage Area: A Report to the World Heritage Unit** (James Cook University, Townsville, 1998)

P. O'Connor and J. Mayell: **A Most Suitable Place, Mount Gambier: From Crater and Cave** (O'Connor & Mayell, Mt. Gambier, 1997)

P. and B. O'Connor: **Out of the Ashes: The Ash Wednesday Bushfires in the South East of S.A., 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1983** (O'Connor, Mt. Gambier, 1993)

B. Samuels: **History and Heritage in the Port Centre and Inner Harbour: Notes for a Walk around the Port Centre for the Historical Society of South Australia, 22/10/2000** (Heritage SA, Adelaide, 2000)

B Santich (ed.): **In the Land of the Magic Pudding: A Gastronomic Miscellany** (Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2000)

**The Tramway Question: Points against Municipalization and State Control** (W.K. Thomas and Co., Adelaide, 1900)



## Mortlock Archives

by Neil Thomas

Material donated in the last two months covers diverse subjects ranging from the far north of South Australia, family papers, contemporary life and action groups to papers from World War II and emigrant observations of Australia.

A plan dated 1880 of the Hundred of Arkaba in the Flinders Ranges includes a town plan of Chapmanton, which never developed beyond a few buildings. Pencil annotations show the positions of named wells and their construction. Another plan from 1914 of William Drennan's pastoral lease 1235, east of Mount Gardiner in the Yardea area, shows gates and wells. A land grant in 1916 to camel driver Shama Khan, of blocks in Hergott Springs (later Marree), was found among records of Port Augusta storekeepers Young and Gordon.

The reminiscences of Frank L. Ward (1969) cover a range of stories. He was the owner and manager of the Yongala Butter Factory, south of Peterborough, before the turn of the nineteenth century, and father of Gladys Ward, the historian of Yongala. The records of the butter factory came to the State Library some years ago.

Papers of the Pointon family include shipboard diaries from 1847 and 1849, kept by James Pointon, Willunga pioneer, and his son's father-in-law Henry Dowty, and also letters covering two generations. The family's history was published in 1988 as *A People called Pointon*.

Herbert Stanley Skipper was a grandson of the colonial artist John Michael Skipper and kept a scrapbook with some interesting theatrical illustrations in pen and ink dating from around 1865. An addition to the impressive collection of architectural drawings assembled under the present company name of Jackman & Gooden is a set of plans by English & Soward for the Hon H. Tassie's house in Partridge Street, Glenelg, demolished in 1968.

Three letters from 1943-44 written by Pilot Officer Douglas R. Abell, R.A.A.F., born at Gladstone, to a friend Hughie Roe in Adelaide mention his part in the war effort. He was killed while on an "op" over Danzig, Germany, in October 1944. The papers of Dieter Hinze, born in Berlin in 1938, include family documents, letters and photographs from World War II and his own papers relating to his education, apprenticeship and employment as a journalist. He and his English wife came to Australia in 1977 and he wrote articles on Australia for German publications until his death in 1989.

Peter Jesser was a member of the 1970s Adelaide rock group Rashamra and has donated a scrapbook about the band. The South Australian Unemployed Groups in Action has transferred its records (1984-2000) dealing with unemployment issues.



# Book Reviews

**Roger Cross: *Fallout: Hedley Marston and the British Bomb Tests in Australia* (Wakefield Press, 2001)**

It was at an HSSA meeting in 1999 that Dr. Roger Cross first presented his research into the 1956 atomic bomb tests at Maralinga and the subsequent attempts by Hedley Marston to alert scientists and the Australian public to the dangers of the radiation. This book is a detailed exposition of the whole affair.

Marston was Chief of the CSIRO's Division of Biochemistry and General Nutrition when he was asked to monitor the effects of the radiation on animals. He collected the thyroid glands of sheep and cattle from a vast area of inland Australia and discovered a significant increase in their radioactive iodine content after the bomb tests. He also sampled the air over Adelaide after the third test on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1956 and found a very high level of radioactivity. A secret report to Prime Minister Menzies, issued at the time, contained a map showing a major cloud of radioactive dust heading straight for Adelaide but in a paper published later by the Australian Government's Safety Committee the path of the cloud was falsified, making it appear that it had drifted east.

The attempts of the Committee to muzzle Marston and delay the publication of his data led to a long and bitter dispute. The senior scientists involved in the cover-up broke all the codes of etiquette in one of the worst cases of politically-motivated interference in the history of Australian science.

Cross guides the reader through the complex fields of physics, biology, politics and ethics to present a chilling account of the deceptions practised by the Australian government and its irresponsible Safety Committee who deliberately misled the public as to the danger it was in. Marston comes across as a flawed hero who could at times be domineering and vindictive and who seriously underestimated the ruthlessness of his opponents.

The book contains a comprehensive bibliography and is available from the bookstall at HSSA meetings for \$22.50 or from major bookshops for \$24.95.

**Eliza Randall: *and the dog came too: being an account of a voyage from London to South Australia on the ship Templar in 1845* Introduction by Neil Thomas (Libraries Board of South Australia, 2001)**

When Eliza Randall emigrated to South Australia in 1845, she did it in style. She and her husband were accompanied by their two young sons, Eliza's parents, a groom, a gardener and two maids. They also took with them a huge stock of furniture and household goods, a piano, over 1,000 books, a telescope, two globes, a blacksmith's anvil and a St. Bernard dog. On board as well were a number of workers whose fares were paid in return for their agreement to work for the Randalls in any way required once in the colony.

Eliza's 51-page journal gives an account of the voyage and their first two weeks in Adelaide and presents a useful counterpoint to the more common tales of deprivation and ill-health suffered by lower-class passengers. The most that Eliza had to endure was two days of sea-sickness and the worry of her younger son having "taken the Hooping Cough of some Children in the intermediate".

She tells of storms, the death of a child, the sighting of whales, much piano-playing and communication by flags with other ships. Of more interest are her comments on Adelaide and its populace. "The Torrens is a fine stream in the winter but in summer . . . a mere brook the contents of which, as has been said, might very well run thro' an Irishman's hat." She also observes, "The greatest bore in the Colony . . . is the scarcity of female servants together with their consequent pride . . . and audacious independence."

Neil Thomas provides an informative introduction, outlining the background to the trip and the family's subsequent life in South Australia. The book contains both a facsimile of the fair copy of the journal and a transcript in modern typeface. It is available at \$18.00 from the State Library, North Terrace. -- J.H.

## Secondhand bookshops

The following list of secondhand bookshops that have reasonable stocks of South Australian literature and history may be of some use to members.

**Acacia Out of Print Books**, 189 Hutt St., Adelaide. Phone: 8223 2140 (Mon. - Fri. 10.30 - 5.30, Sat. 10.30 - 1.00, Sun. 3.00 - 5.00)

**Adelaide Booksellers**, 6A Rundle Mall, Adelaide. Phone: 8410 0216 (Mon. - Thurs. 9.30 - 5.30, Fri. 9.30 - 9.00, Sat. 9.30 - 5.00)

**Antique Market Bookroom**, 32 Grote St., Adelaide. Phone: 8212 6421 (Mon. - Thurs. 10.00 - 5.00, Fri. 10.00 - 5.30, Sat. 10.00 - 2.00)

**Beulah Park Books**, 325 The Parade, Beulah Park. Phone: 8331 0005 (Tues. - Fri. 10.00 - 5.00, Sat. 11.00 - 5.00, Sun. 1.00 - 5.00)

**Bookends**, 136 Unley Rd., Unley. Phone: 8271 0050 (Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri., Sat. 10.00 - 5.30, Thurs. 10 - 8.30, Sun. 12.00 - 5.30)

**Edmonds Book Gallery**, 350 Magill Rd., Kensington Pk. Phone: 8332 1750 (Mon. - Fri. 9.30 - 5.00, Sat. 9.30 - 12.00, Sun. 10.30 - 5.00)

**D.A. Horn**, 66 Wyatt St., Adelaide. Phone: 8223 5066 (Mon., Wed., Fri. 11.00 - 4.00. Closed in July & August)

**Michael Treloar Antiquarian Booksellers**, 196 North Terrace, Adelaide. Phone: 8223 1111 (Mon. - Fri. 10.00 - 5.30, Sat. 10.00 - 3.00)

**O'Connell's Bookshop**, 62 Hindley St., Adelaide. Phone: 8231 5188 (Mon. - Thurs. 9.15 - 5.30, Fri. 9.15 - 5.30 & 7.00 - 9.00, Sat. 9.30 - 4.30)

**The Odd Book Shop**, 427 Portrush Rd., Toorak Gdns. Ph. 8364 5272 (Mon. - Sat. 10.00 - 5.00, Sun. 1.00 - 5.30)

# In quest of gold

## Part II

by Henry Anson

*Concluding extracts from the account of a South Australian chemist and photographer's journey to the Gympie goldfields in 1868. The text and photographs have kindly been supplied by Mrs. Dorothy Wright of Ashburton, Victoria.*

At this time Gympie was a very lively place. Adventurers from all parts were hourly arriving, some to dig, some to speculate on reefing shares, some to trade, and a great many to loaf. Hundreds, however, turned back the very day of their arrival, disgusted and disappointed. The township of Gympie, or Nashville as it was more recently called after the first discoverer of gold there, consisted of one very long, narrow and crooked street, intersected about the centre by Nash's Gully, where the great alluvial deposit of gold was found. Mary-street, as it is called, is about a mile long, and in wet weather was so cut up by traffic that it was no uncommon sight to see teams of horses and bullocks stuck with empty drays.

The buildings were all wooden, and for the most part occupied as stores or public houses, of which latter I counted altogether seventy-five. The Post office was a strongly built edifice of pine slabs, the Gold Commissioner's office, by whom all licences were issued and all disputes settled, was a bark hut. The only buildings having any architectural pretensions being the chapels and theatres, one of which adjoined our place of business and narrowly escaped destruction by fire soon after I arrived. Provision being plentiful and cheap, diggers could live well as also sufficiently for about 8s or 10s a week. Vegetables, produced as is usual on goldfields and supplied by Chinamen, were reasonable in price and abundant. At that time mutton was the only article of food that was scarce, as sometimes beef only was to be had for weeks together.

As to the people, of course, the fact of Gympie being a goldfield would suggest the certainty of meeting as heterogeneous a collection of the lords of the creation as may possibly be conceived, every nation and almost every grade being there represented. A rough place is a diggings, a rough life and some exceedingly rough neighbours, and sometimes too on most unexpected occasions presents some very queer scenes. I went for an hour's stroll one Sunday morning before breakfast, and in that short space saw portion of a Billiard match,

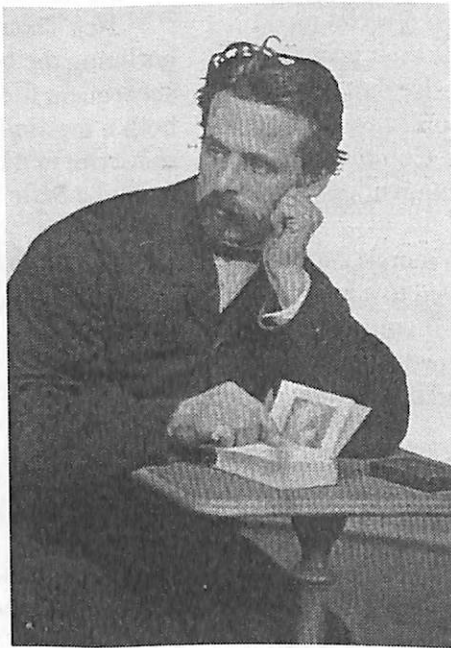
a cricket match and a prize fight, one of the principals in the latter being the landlord of rather a low Pub. where the row originating the fight occurred. This I believe was not the only one that took place that day, Sunday being usually set apart for such important events. When I first arrived at Gympie, the Public houses were open all Sunday, but very soon after this was prohibited and the law tolerably well enforced. The Police, however, generally had their hands pretty full and what with the gambling dens in the Chinese quarter, the rows in some of the more disreputable Pubs. and an occasional bit of bushranging, they had a pretty lively time of it.

Abundant inducements were there offered in the way of amusements to tempt the lucky digger to part with his earnings. At the time I speak of, the Leopold Troupe, with Fraulein Fanny, "Thatcher the songster", "Billy Barlow, of blue-tail fly notoriety", and Ashton's Circus were all in full fling. Besides these there were several Billiard rooms, and a free-and-easy to be found almost anywhere. . . .

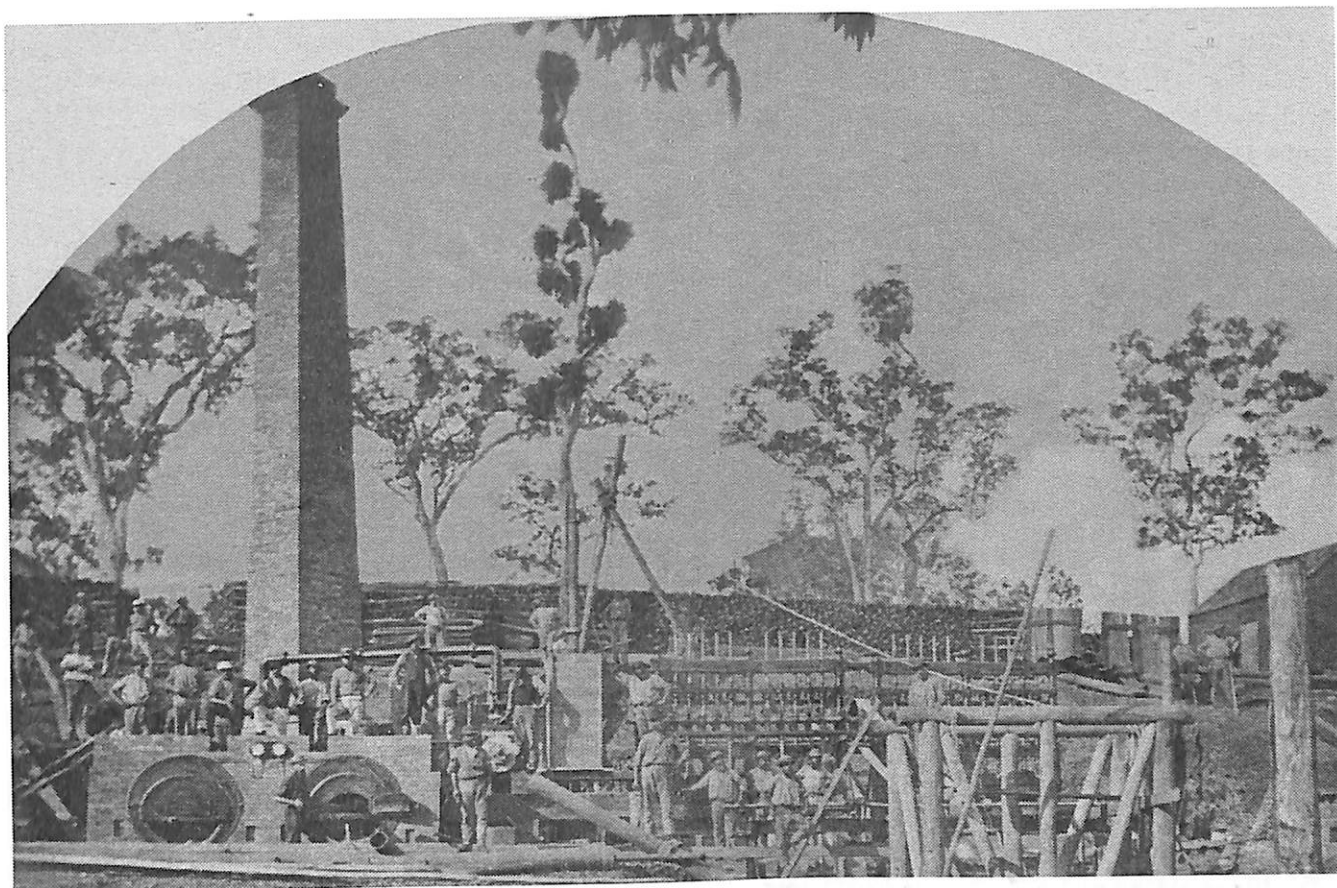
Personally I had very little share of adventure while on the diggings and I think once only suffered anything like excitement on my own account. This was on the occasion of my being sent for to take a photograph of a new crushing machine that had been erected on the bank of the River Mary, and found when I arrived that there was no available point of sight, with one exception, and this was from the top branches of a very tall tree, which overhung the river itself. This I explained to the manager and surmised the impossibility of getting a picture. "Oh, not at all," said he, "we'll soon rig

you up a stage there and hoist yourself and apparatus up together." Now those who, like myself, are slightly nervous climbers, and feel uncomfortable at great heights, will no doubt realize how gratified and pleased at such a prospect I must have felt. However, it had to be done, though [why] an important citizen and accomplished photographer should be "up a tree" [I do not know]. 'Twas done. I am happy to say it was in due time a *fait accompli*, and photographic records of the enterprising Crushing Machine and seven batteries [were] ready to hand down for the information of future Chronicles of the History of Gympie. [See photograph on next page.]

Whilst on the subject of crushing it may be interesting to refer to the production of some of the reefs at that time. Amongst the principal of them, the Lady Mary was the oldest, and had had already large crushings of five and seven ounces to the ton. The Perseverance, the Smithfield and the Gould and Carrie were turning



The author, Henry Anson



*The crushing machine, or stamp battery, photographed by Anson 'from the top branches of a very tall tree'.*

out good stone and Dodds reef, on the prospector's claim, yielded from ten tons of picked stone the magnificent result of eleven hundred ounces of Gold. The most extensive reef of all, however, was the Monckland, on which there were altogether about twenty claims, none of which had struck gold except the prospectors. Since then Mr Müller, writing to me in June 1874, informed me that Nos. 7 and 8, in which claims he was fortunately a shareholder, had struck the precious metal at a depth of 275 feet and that during the last twelve months had had four crushings, yielding 21,913 ounces of gold from 4,007 tons of stone.

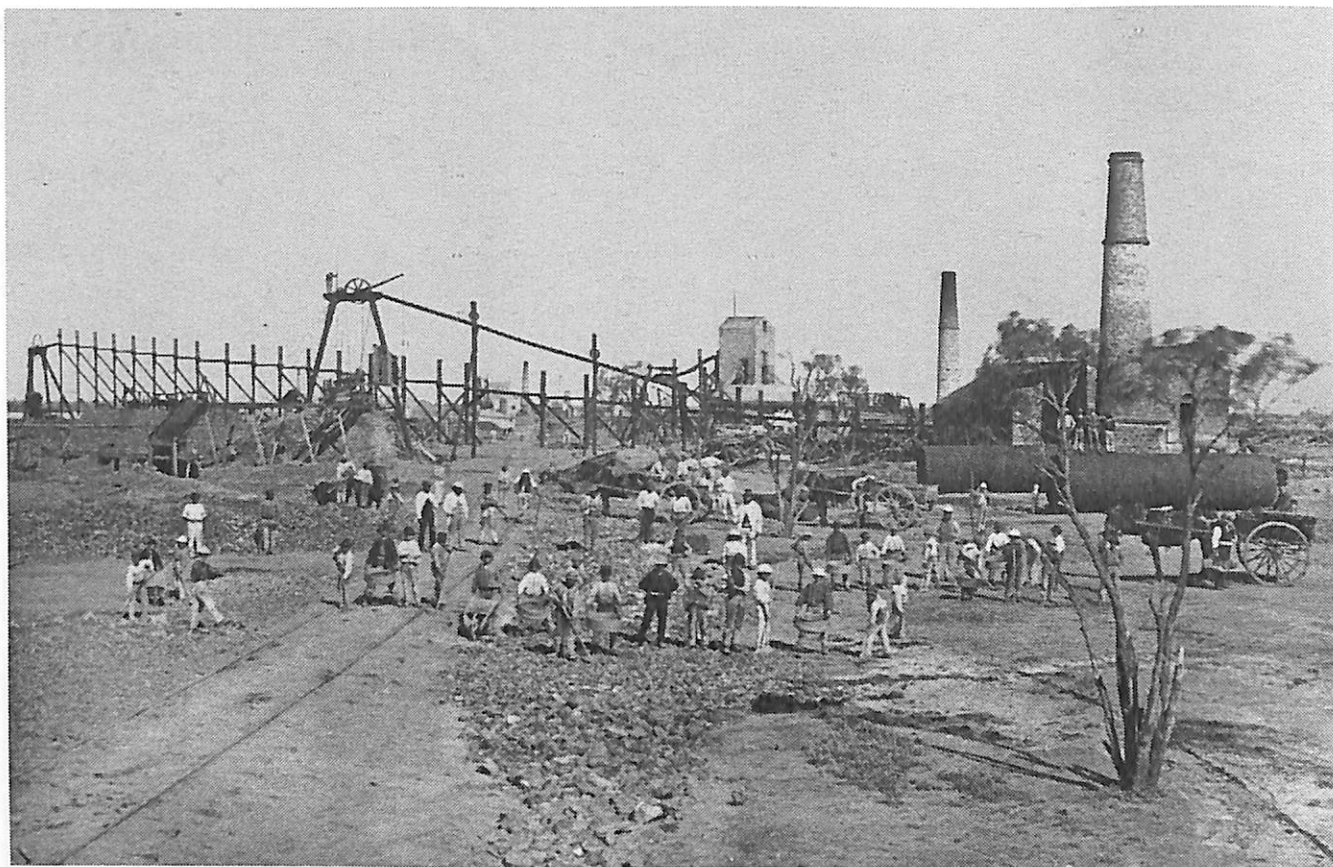
These references, of course, bear only on those reefs that were then or subsequently established as paying, and will give no criterion whatever as to the number or value of others that were under trial and since proved failures. The system adopted and allowed at that time was for, say, three men to take out a six men's claim. They could then take three sleeping partners who were styled backers and contributed a pound a week each as wages to the three men who worked the claim and as soon as payable gold should be struck, the regulations required that the full number of men should be employed. This system seemed to work satisfactorily for all parties, and nearly every tradesman had an interest in one or more prospecting claims.

The foregoing will suffice to give a sort of general idea of Gympie and its belongings at that time, and I shall be able to conclude this narrative with a few of the principal incidents that came under my observation

during my sojourn on the diggings and return through Brisbane, Sydney and back to Adelaide.

The influx to Gympie now began rapidly to diminish and soon ceased altogether, comparatively very few indeed but the old stagers remaining. There were several from Adelaide, however, still determined to stay and try their luck, and notably amongst them two or three well known on the [Yorke] Peninsula, of whom poor Mackie, formerly accountant at the Wallaroo Mines and since lost on the ill-fated *Gothenburg* [wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef in February 1875], was one who worked hard and perseveringly but with no success.

Another, familiarly known to his friends as Pack, was working on the South Australian reef about four miles from Gympie and one afternoon, in company with two or three others, I went out to his camp. He returned part of the way with us and shortly after we parted was met by three tipsy Hibernians who stared so impertinently that Pack, who was rather more respectably dressed than is usual with diggers, was induced to ask the reason, to which one of the trio replied, "Be jabbers, it vexshes me to see yez togged out like that," and without further comment he knocked Pack down. This occurred near a place called the One Mile which was then rather celebrated for the facilities there offered a stranger or visitor to get his head punched or his nose softened at the shortest notice, or on the least possible provocation. There were indeed a great many roughs located in that quarter whose principal business lay in that particular line ⇒



*The Gympie goldfields, showing engine houses, winding equipment and 'picky boys', photographed by Henry Anson in 1868.*

and I think they managed to find plenty of active employment at it too.

In the course of a few months, the continued emigration of people from Gympie put a serious check on trade in general, and as my stay was only to be a temporary one in any case I began to make arrangements to facilitate my own departure. Two or three of my Adelaide friends were by this time getting tired of the diggings and bad luck, so we decided to make up a party and tramp back to Brisbane at an early date. The liberal terms of my engagement with Mr. Müller and the success attending it had removed all pecuniary difficulties in the way of standing homeward whenever I wished, but this was unfortunately not the case with most of my friends, and by the time I was quite ready to leave the number of our party had dwindled to two --- myself and another.

This was a little disappointing, more especially as news came on to Gympie one morning that the mail coach had been stuck up by three bushrangers and all the male passengers robbed; not that the mere trifle of being stuck up would have troubled us much, as we had very little to be robbed of, and the excitement might tend to break the monotony of our journey, but then there was just this unpleasant contingency attached to the risk, whenever those valiant knights of the road waylaid a traveller and found that his pockets had nothing in them they revenged his impecuniosity by making him fast to a tree and leaving him there with nothing on. This was quite a favorite amusement with one fellow who was known by the euphonious

title of Podgey and, I am happy to say, he was subsequently rewarded by being compelled to accept a ten year engagement under Government, with the usual privileges. We decided, however, not to wait any longer, so I wound up my business transactions with Mr Müller, leaving in his care an interest I had taken in the Beehive Reef, wherein, as the result proved, my small capital and great expectations alike found a last resting place. . . .

On Wednesday, November 11, 1868, my companion and I turned our backs on Gympie, and left the treasure that still lay buried there to be unearthed by someone born under a luckier star than ourselves, having now only the associations of home and reunion with home friends to cheer us on what I knew by past experience to be a pretty rough march. During the few months that had elapsed since my last tramp, a new route had been laid open to Brisbane and we elected to travel by it instead of the way I came, as it could scarcely be worse than the old and would at least have the charm of novelty. Cobb & Co. were driving on this track and we had the pleasure of seeing their coach pass us when about twelve miles from Gympie. We trudged on about twenty-five miles and camped for the night. My notes record nothing of importance for that day, and only mention that we had great difficulty in getting to sleep on account of the number and importunity of the mosquitoes, which I distinctly remember were specially numerous and specially large in that locality, it being moreover a very common occurrence for many of the larger variety to sit on the trees and bark.

Two more days tramping with the usual routine of bush life and over similar country to that I had already travelled, brought us within fifty-six miles of Brisbane, and as by this time my companion had quite enough of shank's pony, he determined to get a seat in the coach which we expected would overtake us about this time, which it did at midday Friday. Unfortunately it was quite full, and the only chance he could get of a lift was to pay half fare and run behind, an offer he did not avail himself of. To give my friend as much chance as possible I carried our comparatively light swag, consisting only of blankets, billy and pannikins, leaving him unencumbered to make the best of what locomotive power he had remaining, and on the fifth day out we were glad enough to find ourselves in comfortable quarters at a pub. kept by Dinsdale, formerly of North Adelaide, and whom I had known previously as a companion in the goose step and awkward squad business, whilst drilling for the Adelaide volunteer artillery some years before.

A comfortable bed and a good night's rest removed all traces of the past few days' fatigue, and as no steamers would be leaving for two or three days, I was free to do the honors of Brisbane and interview one or two residents to whom I had letters of introduction. My first duty however was to hunt up my old comrade Dick, whom I was pleased to find in capital health and a good billet. To my great surprise Pack turned up the day after we arrived, having left Gympie a day and a half later than ourselves.

Our time being very short we could not see much of Brisbane, but it appeared to me to be a rather slow place, and was indeed at that time very dull, at night looking very dismal as, the Corporation and Gas Company having for some time past been at loggerheads, the company had stopped the supply of Gas and taken the lamps away, leaving the bare posts as a standing record of their dispute. . . . I spent a good portion of one morning at the Botanic Gardens which are prettily designed and neatly kept but will not bear comparison with those of Adelaide, which may justly claim to far surpass those of either Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.


A rather rough but rapid passage of three days took us once more into Sydney Harbour, and we made our way to the same quarters as Dick and I had occupied before. . . . In any large city a stranger may spend a day or two quickly and pleasantly enough even though he should have little else to spend, and certainly Sydney affords plenty of facilities to fill a little idle time in a cheap and desultory manner. If you are an admirer of beautiful scenery, land and water combined, go any fine day to either of the quays and looking across the Harbour you will have before you as charming a prospect as the eye could possibly rest upon. . . . If however, your proclivities have no romantic tendency, abundant occupation may be found in studying the different phases of human life there daily and hourly

exhibited. In Sydney alone of all the colonies may be seen some of the most objectionable of the old world street belongings. Turn out at however early an hour you may, you will not fail to see some poor bloated blear-eyed specimen of humanity sitting outside a Pub. anxiously waiting the doors to be opened to get his or her threepennyworth of rum, that may perchance restore the circulation which a night in the street has somewhat checked, and later in the day you will have every opportunity offered you to contribute a penny to a blind beggar or assist an old salt who has lost both legs. In all such street curiosities, Sydney, at the time I refer to at any rate, was particularly rich.

On the Wednesday following our arrival, we took our passage for Melbourne by the s.s. *City of Adelaide* and hauled off the wharf in the evening, having fine sea weather and a fair wind. The night being particularly mild and the atmosphere in the cabins particularly unpleasant, Pack and I remained on deck the whole of the passage, and slept on some bags of rock oysters, but I cannot recommend such a kind of bed, and think feathers would probably be softer.

By Friday evening we arrived at Sandridge and took train to Melbourne where we were at once besieged by a small army of touts for the different pubs. and boarding houses. . . . Here, as in Sydney, we could only do the cheap sights, and Paddy's market on Saturday night, Henderson's Chapel on Sunday, and as much as we could see of the Public Institute on Monday and Tuesday, filled up all the spare time we had at our disposal, but did not afford us anything like a fair opportunity to do justice to any one speciality. The public library and museum, however, may be justly singled out as the one object deserving and demanding all the time and attention a visitor can devote to it. A magnificent edifice, beautifully appointed and richly stored with references and information on every branch of literature, science, and art, it cannot fail to convey an impression of astonishment that such an institution can be found in the southern hemisphere.

Notwithstanding, however, the attractions which Melbourne offered us at little cost, we were glad enough to find ourselves on board the *Coorong* bound for the farinaceous village [Adelaide], which, if not possessed of the gilded temptations of a Gympie, or the wealthy indication which the Goldfields only have brought for her sister colony, yet has a solid steady prosperity of her own, and had for us at least the charm of being our home.

A pleasant and speedy run from Melbourne brought us into Port Adelaide once more, where as a fitting finale to the luck that had attended our expedition, we had to borrow a few shillings to pay our fares by rail to town. Full of hope we left, like the proverbial bad penny we returned. But I at least felt a sort of philosophical satisfaction on believing that we might have fared very much worse, and came to the conclusion that it is not always profitable to travel far in quest of gold. 

# Ghosts of the Garden

by Russell Smith

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 1855, six of South Australia's leading citizens met at the office of the Gawler Town Railway Commission, on North Terrace, Adelaide. Making up the distinguished group were William Young-husband, Charles Bonney, Dr. William Wyatt, Matthew Moorhouse, John Bentham Neale's and the Mayor of Adelaide, Joseph Hall.

Following a brief discussion they marched off together to a portion of the parklands between North Terrace and the River Torrens, in the neighbourhood of the Adelaide Hospital. Their purpose was to select and mark out with pegs an area of about 40 acres to be developed as a Botanic Garden.

Within a few short years the area those gentlemen pegged out had been transformed into the most beautiful corner of colonial Adelaide and on any fine Sunday up to one fifth of the city's population would congregate in the fast developing Garden. A need had been satisfied, thanks to the foresight of the colony's elders and the creative genius of the Garden's first Directors, George Francis and Dr. Richard Schomburgk.

Nowadays, almost a century and a half later, the admiring public continue to come in their droves but the scene has changed. Although Adelaide is still blessed with one of the most magnificent Botanic Gardens imaginable, gone forever are many of the wonderful old buildings and structures, classical statues, fussy flowerbeds, ornate fountains, rustic seating and bridges. This series of articles will take us back to those early days to record some of the features that have disappeared and to highlight a few that have survived.

Where else to begin such a study of the Adelaide Botanic Garden but at the main entrance on North Terrace, particularly when that entrance is adorned with so imposing a set of old gates?

## By the main gates

The present gates are indeed old, having been positioned in 1880. They were manufactured in London by the firm of W. Allen & Co. and cost £182.10s. The stone pillars came from Sydney and cost £62 while local tradesman N.W. Trudgen was paid £130 to erect the gates under the supervision of the Colonial Architect-in-Chief. A close inspection of the panel of the tastefully crafted iron railing immediately to the west of the gates will reveal that it has been installed upside down!

The original gate was not as impressive as its 1880 replacement but it was nevertheless substantial. It was installed in October 1855 at the completion of construction of the first fence around the boundaries of the Garden, a fence of wooden palings in some sections, posts and rails in others. The gate cost £4. Its placement put an end to the problem of cattle wandering from

North Terrace into the Garden and causing untold damage to initial plantings.

Later, in 1869, that old gate featured in an amusing incident. The flamboyant and troublesome John Baker was severely reprimanded by his colleagues on the Board of the Botanic Garden for ordering staff to open the gate to allow the Governor, Sir James Fergusson, to drive through on his way to open the Agricultural and Horticultural Show being held in the Exhibition Grounds on Frome Road. That was against regulations, Mr. Baker, even for Her Majesty's representative.

After the installation of the gate came the bell, in January 1856. Now visitors, contractors, suppliers or anyone doing business with the new Botanic Garden had to ring the bell by the gate to summon a gardener to let them in. It would be nice to know if that early bell is the one still held in the Garden's administration office. The latter, obviously a very old bell, was once in position by the kiosk, where it was rung to warn visitors that closing time was approaching.

Opening day for the Garden finally arrived in September 1857. That brought a need for a 'Rules & Regulations' notice-board to be placed just inside the entrance. It was not long, however, before it became necessary to have a physical presence at the gate on the busier days, someone to ensure that the rules and regulations were observed, to keep out the drunken, dirty or disorderly members of the public, to turn away those with dogs, children without supervision, and men smoking or wearing flowers in their buttonholes.

During the winter of 1859 a shelter was built for the man at the gate, a type of sentry box. The employment of a second man became necessary at times so another sentry box was built. The six-sided shelters were quaint little structures which, as an afterthought, were given windows in the side panels to allow the gatekeepers to see better and to be seen.

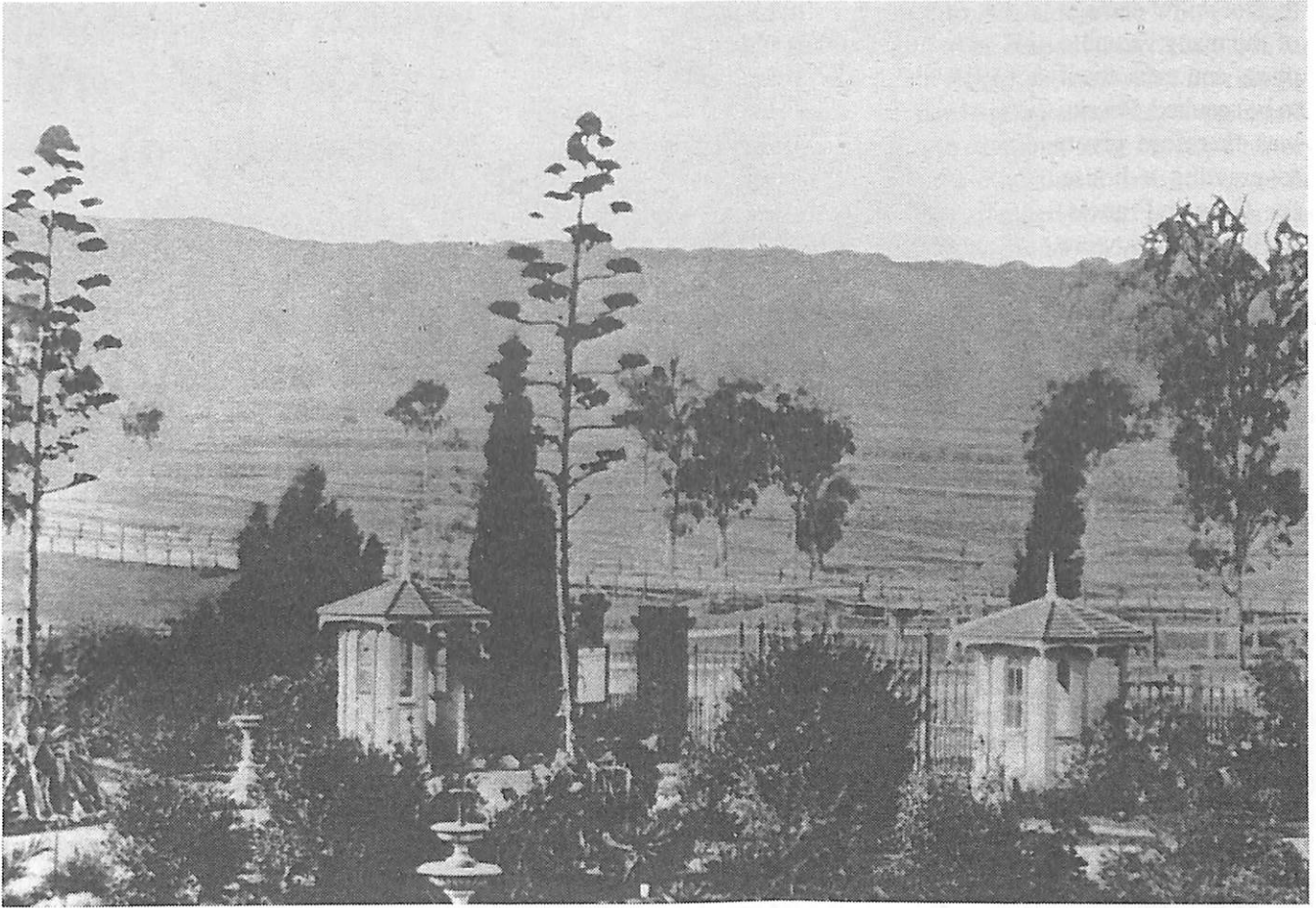
The present stone wall along North Terrace replaced the old fence in 1860 and the following year water was laid on to the Botanic Garden, resulting in two small decorative fountains and a drinking fountain being installed by the gate. The main entrance now presented to visitors a permanent, attractive and welcoming appearance, something it has continued to do to this day.

Plantings in the vicinity of the gate have altered from time to time but the huge, gnarled, old pepper tree on the western side of the entrance is a survivor from those early days. It dates back to 1863.

## The obelisk

To the north-east of the main gate is an obelisk which is possibly the oldest South Australian memorial to an individual, outside of a burial ground. The two-metre-tall obelisk honours the first Director of the Botanic Garden, George William Francis and was unveiled on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1866.

Francis certainly deserved a fitting memorial within the confines of the Botanic Garden. It was his



*The sentry boxes at the main gate, c. 1863 [Courtesy of Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, Archive Collection]*

perseverance that resulted in the Garden being established and his subsequent effort that saw it take shape. He was appointed Secretary and Superintendent in April 1855, the position being upgraded to that of Director in October 1860. He handed in his resignation on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1865 due to severe illness and passed away just four days later. An unusual situation followed. The Board officially accepted Francis' resignation on August 18<sup>th</sup>, nine days after his death.

It is not known how the Garden acquired the unusual obelisk. Its purchase, or perhaps donation, cannot be found in early Garden records. The first mention of it appears five months before the unveiling, in the Board Minutes of January 5<sup>th</sup> 1866: "The Director was requested to lay before the Board at their next meeting a draft inscription to be placed on the obelisk."

The accepted inscription read: "In remembrance of the late George William Francis Esq. F.L.S., F.H.S., first Director of this Garden by whom it was planted and laid out in the year 1855. Unveiled 28 May 1866."

The bronze plate on the memorial was manufactured by Edward Gemeinhardt and engraved by a Mr. Schmidt of Gawler Place. It cost £9. The design of the plate has been attributed to Julius Schomburgk, brother of Francis' successor, Dr. Richard Schomburgk.

A delightful anecdote is associated with the obelisk. In her excellent book *George William Francis*, Barbara Best tells us the family story of a pet monkey of Francis'

being buried beside the obelisk. The little fellow, who clearly must have outlived his master by at least nine months, is reputed to have handled Francis' wheelbarrow for him during the days of laying out the Garden.

#### **The director's residence**

Further down the Main Walk, on the eastern side, is a Chilean Wine Palm. This fine old specimen was planted in July 1901 by the Duchess of York. The Duke was to have planted one as well but as the Garden's official records tell us: "His Royal Highness was prevented to do so." We are left to wonder why. Later that same day he did, however, plant a ficus (also still standing) at the Adelaide Oval.

A few paces back up the Main Walk, on the opposite side, are some scattered, not-very-old trees and shrubs rising out of an ivy ground-cover and behind them a half-cement, half-wire-netting fence separating the Botanic Garden from the hospital grounds. A totally different and much more appealing vista presented itself for the Garden's first eighty years. Over there, on the other side of the fence and within the surrounds of the present towering hospital wing, stood a magnificent building, the first to be erected within the Botanic Garden. It was the residence of the Director, or Superintendent as he was then called.

The first work in laying out the Garden began in May 1855. It became imperative that the ground be occupied as quickly as possible, to safeguard against ⇒

theft or wilful damage of the many valuable plants and trees about to be acquired. Priority was therefore given to erecting a house for George Francis. Different plans were considered by the Government and there were some annoying delays as bureaucracy took its time deciding on the most suitable. Some details of the final plan were still unacceptable, such as the lack of windows on the northern side, which faced towards the Garden, and the unfortunate placement



*The Director's residence, 1881 [Courtesy of Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, Archive Collection]*

of the kitchen window from which only the hospital would be seen. The various anomalies were eventually dealt with prior to the beginning of construction and George Francis and his family finally moved in during February 1856. The planting out of the Garden then began in earnest.

It was a large and splendid house. A newspaper correspondent a few years later gives us a hint of its attractive appearance. "Proceeding down the Main Walk, a nice view of the Director's residence can be obtained, standing, as it does, almost obscured by trees and the climbers which are trained over its walls, amongst which can be seen the quaint old ivy green. There is also a fine variety of Bougainvillea, whose purple flowers contrast from the dark-green foliage from which they spring."

The two-storey house had thirteen rooms, an upstairs balcony looking out over the Botanic Garden, a cellar, various outhouses and a large, private, fenced-in backyard. Ornate garden beds were quickly established along the paths leading to the residence from the Main Walk and it certainly must have been a delightful home for the various Directors who lived there over the eighty years. There was a rear entrance as well, down a private track from the North Terrace "side gate" of the Garden, by the boundary wall with the hospital. The Botanic Garden's stable was also off this entrance, on the North Terrace side of the house.

The office was at the front of the house, on the southern side. It was there that all general administration work was done for several years and where early meetings of the Board were held. When gas lighting came to the Garden in 1863 it came only to this room in the residence, the remainder of the house continuing to be illuminated by candles, which probably did not impress Mrs. Francis.

Many leading colonists of the mid- to late-1800s served on the Botanic Garden Board and would have been regular visitors to the office-cum-boardroom at the front of the residence. They included several figures whose names now feature prominently in our history books, such as seven-times Premier and hard-headed businessman Sir Henry Ayers, Colonial Secretary and originator of the Torrens Title system (and Premier for a week) Sir Robert Torrens, pioneer physician and Protector of Aborigines Matthew Moorhouse, explorer and overlander Charles Bonney, Colonel Light's deputy and successor Sir George Strickland Kingston, leading physician and founder of the Wyatt Benevolent Institute Dr. William Wyatt, merchant and politician William Younghusband, and politician and pioneer pastoralist George C. Hawker. If the now non-existent walls of the beautiful old house could speak, they could tell us many of the hidden details of the history of South Australia.

The strip of land on which the residence stood was handed over to the Adelaide Hospital in 1937 in exchange for a larger slice of land on the Garden's eastern boundary. The residence itself was finally demolished during the late 1950s, allowing the present east wing of the hospital to be built.

*[To be continued in the next issue of History SA]*

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Third Prize -- History Essay Awards 2000

## Was Adelaide a “holy village” at the turn of the century?

by Johanna Palenschus

Thistle Anderson’s scathing remarks about Adelaide, as published in her pamphlet *Arcadian Adelaide* in 1905, caused controversy. Adelaide was a planned city which had gained a reputation for being respectable due to selective emigration in the Wakefield scheme. The development of Adelaide attracted a large number of dissenters to the colony, who aimed to uphold the morality of the settlement. When Anderson belittled Adelaide by referring to it as a “holy village”, she was met with outrage. While there is justification for some of her criticisms, others were clearly exaggerated. There is no doubt, however, that her comments initiated discussion and controversy.

She was the daughter of George Anderson, Deputy Master of the Melbourne Mint. Originally from Glasgow, the family resided at an exclusive North Adelaide address. Following convent schooling, Miss Anderson pursued a career in ballet, appearing in Adelaide in 1900. Despite her later opinions in 1905 of Adelaide men being “poor, narrow-minded fools”, she married Mr. Herbert Fisher, a thirty-five-year-old stockbroker, and took to moving through Adelaide society.

Thistle made her mark on the city with the Twin Street publication of her pamphlet *Arcadian Adelaide* in April 1905. “The bitterer, the better I like it,” she commented of her red pamphlet which attacked Adelaide’s morality and size, particularly in the title of its first chapter “The Holy Village”. Such was the damaged pride amongst colonists that she was met with outrage. The *Advertiser* had a single comment on her book: “We are sorry for Miss Anderson.” In response to her comment about Adelaide women being like “cats”, a pamphlet was produced in reply, entitled *A Scratch from an Adelaide Cat* by a Mrs. Ellis.

It seemed that Thistle Anderson had achieved what she had intended. Derek Whitelock questioned why she should choose to criticize Adelaide when morality issues affected every city “from Melbourne to Manchester”. However, her remark that “Adelaide has clothed itself in a self-constituted halo of excess virtue” suggested that it was the idea that the people were so proud of their settlement and unwilling to admit to social problems that compelled her to point out the city’s faults to its residents.

In the nineteenth century Adelaide gained a reputation for morality and respectability and was known as the city of churches. In 1900 there were thirty-three churches and chapels within the city’s square mile.

Anderson’s reference to Adelaide as the “holy village” challenged its claim to be respectable. “Holy”, in the context of *Arcadian Adelaide*, was used mockingly, not only with reference to religion but also to the morals of Adelaide society. An examination of the city’s history shows why the people considered themselves to be virtuous and were thus offended by her comments. Yet there is also some justification in the idea that Adelaide was not so “holy”.

The city was planned to be socially respectable. The origins of this idea were owed to Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s theory of systematic colonization in which he proposed selective emigration to attract the right kind of citizens. A convict-free settlement with a balance of the sexes was a primary aim. Wakefield himself wrote that “Equal numbers of men and women would eliminate these social evils [drunkenness and prostitution]”.<sup>1</sup>

This became the basis for Adelaide’s image of respectability and thus the virtuous attitudes of the colonists that Thistle Anderson so disliked.

The Wakefield scheme’s principle of voluntary religion encouraged a number of dissenters to emigrate. Fleeing discrimination by the Church of England, they were influential, particularly during the 1890s, in maintaining the morals of Adelaide society. Social purity and the restriction of alcohol and gambling were the aims of “God’s Police”. The colonists’ ideas of being morally superior and “holy” really arose out of the origins of the settlement.

The dissenters’ work aimed to keep clean the morals of Adelaide. Therefore, when Thistle Anderson said that Adelaide’s “hills are not the greenest, or your morals the cleanest”, there was anger. The dissenters had prompted the formation in 1882 of the Social Purity Society which was concerned with sexual matters, particularly lobbying to raise the age of consent to sixteen. Similarly, in the quest for a new social era, the dissenters initiated the Anti-Gambling League in 1892 to prevent “the insidious disease [which] enters in through eyes and ears, and steals in upon the soul”.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most significant of their campaigns was the fight against alcoholism. In the 1880s the Total Abstinence League was formed, which lobbied for anti-liquor legislation. Furthermore, women’s work in the community was taken into consideration as alcohol, prostitution and gambling all affected the woman’s sphere. The League gained the support of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, established in 1886. The dissenters’ influence on the colony was aimed at maintaining the respectability of a morally upright settlement.

Yet, even with the work of dissenters, Adelaide was not without its seamier side. Anderson referred to the evil of alcohol when she commented on the “‘come and have a drink’ formula which is repeated at intervals of five minutes”. Despite the temperance movements, which did achieve the closure of pubs on Sundays in 1896, the prevalence of alcoholism was a justifiable criticism of Adelaide. Drinking was the

most significant means of escape for hardworking colonists. "They [pubs] provided a sanctuary away from the harsh reality of work or home."<sup>3</sup> In 1880 there were 120 hotels operating in Adelaide.

Gambling was another social evil that Anderson criticized. There is no denying that it was prevalent amongst the colonists who would visit "the pubs, clubs, two-up schools, races and football".<sup>4</sup> To a certain extent there is justification in Anderson's questioning of the city's morals. Furthermore, she claimed that "Adelaide has more prostitution and more young girls on its streets than any other city in Australasia". While her comment is exaggerated, there was some justification in raising the issue of prostitution. Particularly in the West End, life was described as "difficult for young single mothers, widows, deserted wives",<sup>5</sup> many of whom had to resort to prostitution as a means of survival.

Thistle Anderson continued to expose Adelaide's immorality, which in years gone by had remained safely hidden. She claimed that Adelaide had more opium dens than Melbourne which had three times the population. According to the *Observer* in 1850, there was "a number of pestiferous dens [that] exist in Light Square and its neighbourhood which may be considered the moral cesspools of the city of Adelaide".<sup>6</sup> While statistically Anderson's comment is not justified by evidence, there is justification in her comments which exposed the presence of opium dens. They did jeopardize the reputation for morality that Adelaide was claiming to live up to.

While there may be justification in questioning the morality of Adelaide, referring to it as a "village" seemed to significantly underestimate the physical and cultural development of the city, which had the amenities of the modern era. One source of pride in the city was the development of the botanic garden, described as "worthy to be numbered amongst the most lovely public gardens in the whole world".<sup>7</sup> There was also a number of commercial and institutional buildings that Adelaide could boast of as significant material development. Notable constructions by the turn of the century were Government House, the Town Hall, the G.P.O., the Supreme Court, the Children's Hospital, the T&G skyscraper and St. Peter's Cathedral.

Adelaide had the material evidence to disprove the term "village" bestowed upon it, but it also had the culture of a city. One of the more notable aspects of Adelaide was that it had its own municipal council, formally titled "The Council and Corporation of the City of Adelaide". This was separate from the Government of South Australia and was elected. With such an organization, Adelaide could hardly be described as a "village".

Theatre and sport were important components of Adelaide's development and together they contributed to its cultural life. George Coppin, who is described as "the Father of the Australian Theatre", was responsible for initiating the rebuilding of the old Queen's Theatre

and renaming it the Royal Victoria Theatre, which became host to a number of performers and a cultural centre for the city. One of the memorable sporting events of the late nineteenth century took place in the summer of 1874, following the opening of the Adelaide cricket ground. The English Eleven, captained by Dr. W.G. Grace, a cricket great, came to play. With such significant events in sport and theatre, Adelaide was a thriving city, not a humble village.

Thistle Anderson certainly was "a thistle under the municipal bottom". An examination of Adelaide's history in conjunction with her criticisms shows that there was some justification in her comments. Alcoholism, prostitution and opium dens existed in Adelaide at the turn of the century, yet they were not widely publicized. Adelaide did, indeed, have its seamier side but no more than any other city, and so perhaps did not warrant the scorn with which Thistle Anderson treated it. It may not have been as "holy" as its citizens liked to think, but there was no strong justification in referring to it as a "village". The physical and cultural surrounds of Adelaide at the turn of the century certainly pointed to the idea that it was a city rather than a "village". While her comments did ignite controversy, it can be seen from the planned settlement of Adelaide why this was so.

However, the hysteria arising from her statements was somewhat short-lived. She was bold and brash, and perhaps it would have been in her best interests to experience what she believed was the best thing about Adelaide --- "buying a train ticket to Melbourne at the railway station".

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#### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Eric Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 97  
<sup>2</sup> Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 197  
<sup>3</sup> P. Sumerling in Dickey, *op. cit.*, p. 35  
<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33  
<sup>5</sup> Dickey, *op. cit.*, p. 30  
<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33  
<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126

All other quotations are from Thistle Anderson's *Arcadian Adelaide* or from Whitelock's introduction to it.