

# History SA

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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## Re-discovering an ancient culture

Until recently little systematic research had been done on the Ngadjuri Aboriginal people of the mid-north of South Australia, though valuable knowledge had been recorded in the 1940s when Barney Waria, a Ngadjuri man, had travelled from Point Pearce to meet with Adelaide anthropologists. In 1997 Fred Warrior, a relative of Waria's, asked Sue Anderson, now a Ph.D. student at Flinders University, to assist him in investigating the history and archaeology of his people.

In addition to researching the available material at the S.A. Museum, State Records and the Mortlock Library, and recording oral histories from Ngadjuri descendants, Sue conducted an archaeological field survey of the mid-north, photographing and recording campsites, scarred trees, engravings, paintings, burial sites, hunting hides and stone arrangements.

She will present an overview of Ngadjuri culture, customs, art and landscape in her illustrated lecture, "The Ngadjuri People of the Mid-North of South Australia", to be given at the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, at 8.00 p.m. The lecture will incorporate both photographs and video footage and Sue will be accompanied by a member of the Ngadjuri people, who will give some insights into the value of the research from an indigenous perspective.

Sue Anderson has a B.A. from Flinders University and an M.Litt. in Archaeology from the University of New England. She is currently researching indigenous oral history as a Ph.D. student in Cultural Studies at Flinders University. She has published several articles on Aboriginal history and archaeology and is now preparing a book on the Ngadjuri people. 



A Ngadjuri rock engraving near Yunta, S.A.

Photo: Sue Anderson


## Marriage patterns in early South Australia

When the colonization theorists were planning the settlement of South Australia, they were aiming for a well-regulated, highly moral society based firmly on marriage and the family. In order to explore the outcomes of this approach, Ann Herraman, post-graduate student in the History Department at Flinders University, has been engaged in a demographic and sociological analysis of the population of the Mount Barker region

between 1836 and 1886. In her lecture, "For Better or Worse? Marriage Patterns in a Wakefieldian Colony", to be given at the Prince Philip Theatre, Prince Alfred College, Kent Town, on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> July, at 8.00 p.m., she will present some of the results of her work.

By focusing on Mount Barker, a rural area with an identifiable and reasonably stable population, she has been able to follow the patterns of marriage and settlement there

and to assess the implications of the Wakefieldian theory in a well-defined local context. She will examine the immigrants' reasons for coming to Australia, how particular they were in finding spouses, their age at marriage, their employment status, their literacy levels, and how much contact they retained with their fellow passengers. Her primary sources include letters, diaries, reminiscences, church records, local newspapers and marriage registers.

Ann Herraman has a B.A. (Hons.) in History from Flinders University and in 1994 won the James Miller Main Prize. She is the President of the Mount Lofty Districts Historical Society and in 2000 was the coordinator of a Centenary of Federation interpretative display portraying the history of the district over the last 100 years. 

## 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.

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## Memorabilia from the front line

On Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, we will be conducted on a tour of the Army Museum at Keswick Barracks by the curator, Lt.-Col. (Ret.) Sven Kuusk. This is not a field trip just for military buffs. There are many items that will intrigue anyone interested in South Australian and Australian history.


From the pre-Federation period there are a percussion pistol brought here on the *Duke of York* in 1836, an 1855 Volunteer Militia private's tunic that belonged to James Harvey who came out on the *Buffalo*, a musket purchased for the Militia by the South Australian Government in 1867, and a sabretache (an elaborately decorated message pouch carried by senior officers).

There is a host of memorabilia from the Boer War, including rifles, spurs, tunics and medals, as well as a silver Vesta box for wax matches, a heliograph (used for signalling), a spotting telescope, and a water bottle used by Banjo Paterson when he served as war correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. There is also a photograph of the 2<sup>nd</sup> S.A. Contingent on the parade ground near the old Exhibition Building, which shows, seated on his horse in the foreground, the notorious "Breaker" Morant.

The World War I section features, in addition to numerous weapons, uniforms and personal effects, several items from Gallipoli, including a remnant of barbed wire, a trench periscope, a Turkish bayonet and a Light Horse saddle. Of particular interest is a collection of "silks" --- colourfully embroidered postcards made by French women for Allied soldiers to send home. They consist of pieces of silk pasted onto small cards and embellished with patriotic or floral emblems and messages such as "To My Dear Sister From Her Loving Brother".


We will also see examples of trench art made from shell cases, and a number of souvenirs brought home by Australian soldiers, including a Zulu knobkieri, a sjambok whip made from elephant hide and, incredibly, an eighteenth-century stone cannonball pinched from Colchester Cathedral in England and smuggled home by five diggers during World War II.

The Army Museum was established at Keswick Barracks twelve years ago and is now housed in the old stables, which were built in 1912.


The cost of the tour will be \$4.00, payable on the day. Please assemble outside the museum by 2.00 p.m. The entrance is via the main gate of the Barracks on Anzac Highway, 200 yards south of Greenhill Road, next to bus stop No. 2. Parking is available in the grounds. Please note that you will be required to show a photo I.D. at the gate. 

## S.A.'s Greats corrigenda


Members who bought copies of the first printing of *S.A.'s Greats: the men and women of the North Terrace plaques* may wish to note the following list of corrigenda, which has been included in the reprint of the book. (Line numbering includes headings.)

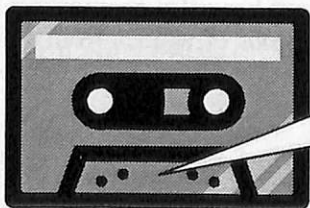
- Page xiv Line 38 For 'Territory', read 'Territory'.  
 Page 58 Line 33 For 'Bail', read 'Ball'.  
           Line 34 For 'Dulcif', read 'Dulcify'.  
 Page 69 Line 23 For 'December', read 'November'.  
 Page 110 Line 10 Delete 'On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1849  
                   he married Elizabeth McConnell.'  
 Page 121 Line 9 For 'Gawler Place', read 'Freeman  
                   Street (now part of Gawler Place)'.  
           Line 14 Delete '(now part of Gawler  
                   Place)'.  
 Page 122 Line 14 For 'Kensington', read 'Kensington  
                   and Norwood'.  
           Line 37 (ditto)  
 Page 123 Line 9 For 'Fanny', read 'Fannie'.  
 Page 144 Line 27 Delete 'Scientific'. 

## New members

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Mr. Steven Birchby, Mrs. Loretta Ford, Mrs. Elizabeth Harris, Dr. Frank Hollis, Mr. Anthony Laube, Mr. Gavin Parry, and the Tea Tree Gully Historical Society. 


## Website

*The Gazetteer of Australia* (2001), first published in book form in 1975, is now available on the Internet at <http://www.auslig.gov.au/mapping/names/natgaz.htm>. It contains over 274,000 place names, compiled by the Committee for Geographic Names in Australia, and includes cities, towns, suburbs, mines, schools, post offices, piers, mountains, lakes, dams, billabongs, roadhouses, homesteads, springs, shipwrecks, and many more. A place name search gives you the latitude and longitude, to the nearest minute of degree, and the number of the topographic map on which it can be found. It does not appear possible, however, to browse the list, as one can with the book. 



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. 

## Mortlock Archives


by Neil Thomas

Mrs. Elizabeth Simpson, née Cleland, has deposited papers reflecting her interests in travel, anthropology, local history and natural science, and her research into the Cleland family. Amateur films by Delamere grazier and bookmaker the late Jim Long include two home-made comedies and will be available when the films have been transferred to video. Papers of Pamela Zeplin, lecturer at the University of South Australia, relate to her work, as theatre critic and arts festival organizer, in the history and theory of set design.

Sheila Trafford-Walker, née McKinnon, has written reminiscences of her childhood living along the River Murray, her teaching career, family and church life. University papers of former Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court Sir Frederick Richards (1869-1957), following his law studies at Cambridge, London and Adelaide, have been donated by his grandson.

Reminiscences of Rosemary McGann of her childhood during the years of World War II at Penwortham centre around her acquaintance with an Italian P.O.W. Amedeo Bonvecchi, who worked for her grandparents, his letters to her after the war and their meeting again in Italy in 1980 and 1985. The late Marlow S.G. Kimber served in the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the Western Desert, North Africa; his autobiography *Early Days* includes a poignant poem "Home" written while at Tobruk. Charming examples of a young lady's 1898 school exercise books can be found in the small group of papers of Eva Holly Smith, who later attended Hardwicke College at East Adelaide in 1900.

In March 2001 a reunion of old scholars of Miss Evelyn Allnutt's Tiverton Preparatory School, Cross Road, Hawthorn, resulted in reminiscences of nine former students, including Judge Robin Millhouse, and one of the teachers there over the period 1939-45. Additional records of former Congregational churches included a large deposit from Clayton Church on The Parade, Beulah Park, covering 130 years. Small society record groups have been processed from diverse bodies such as the South Australian Hardcourt Lawn Tennis and Lawn Tennis Umpires' Associations, the South Australian Council of Christian Education and the Yorke Peninsula Caledonian Society.

Business records include those donated by the former Oldfields Bakery Pty. Ltd., covering 110 years of operations, with employee records, photographs and apprenticeship papers. More than six metres of records of the former Tanunda wine company Leo Buring Pty. Ltd. from 1896-1994 include a diary written in 1896 by the founder as a young man while studying in Germany. Kelvinator Australia Ltd. has donated a large collection of photographs, catalogues and manuals spanning 70 years. 



# 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 page 3.

## MONOGRAPHS

Adelaide, Glenelg and Suburban Railway Co. Ltd.: **Annual Report**, 1st (1872) -- 3rd (1874) (Sth. Aust.)

Adelaide, Glenelg and Suburban Railway Co. Ltd.: **Directors' Half-Yearly Report**, 31 May 1872; 30 May 1873; 31 March 1874 (Sth. Aust.)

T. Bott: **Pastoral 150: An Overview of the Pastoral Industry in the Central Flinders Ranges 1851-2001** (Bott, South Plympton, 2001)

R.J. Bridgland: **Civil Engineering at the University of Adelaide 1878-1974** (University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1981)

A.L. Cobiac (ed.): **South Australian Marriages Index of Registrations 1842 to 1916** (South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society, Adelaide, 2001)

D.A. Cumming & B.A. Hamidon: **South Australian Parliamentary Papers as a Source of Engineering History** (University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1986)

P. & J. Donovan (eds.): **From Paddocks to Plaza: Essays on the Development of the City of Tea Tree Gully, 1945-2001** (City of Tea Tree Gully, Tea Tree Gully, 2001)

**The Federation Files: Fifty 6-7 Minute Programmes about the Road to Federation in South Australia** (Radio 5UV, Adelaide, 2000) [Sound Recording]

M. Geyer: **Celebrating 100 Years of Real Estate: Jackman & Treloar Pty. Ltd., 1901-2001** (Jackman & Treloar, Adelaide, c. 2001)

D. Gill: **Iron Tracks and Dusty Trails: The Life of Benjamin Herschel Babbage** (Seaview Press, Henley Beach, c. 2002)

J. Ibbotson: **Lighthouses of Australia: Images from the End of an Era** (Australian Lighthouse Traders, Surrey Hills, 2001)

Metters Limited: **Metters Aluminium, Enamelled and Tinned Steel Hollow-Ware Utensils** (Metters Limited, Adelaide, 1935)

M. Muller (ed.): **Exploring the Anatomy of a Region: Proceedings of an Interactive Lecture Series on the History of the South East of South Australia, April 2000 -- May 2001** (South East Book Promotions, Mount Gambier, 2001)

P.J. Payton: **The Cornish Overseas** 1<sup>st</sup> subscribers ed. (Alexander Associates, Fowey, Cornwall, UK, Marina Del Rey, Calif., 1999)

W. Prest (ed.): **The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History** (Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2001)

S.A. Centre for Economic Studies: **Estimating the Benefits of Electricity Reform** (Office of the S.A. Independent Industry Regulator, Adelaide, 2001)

Seppelt Family: **150 Years at Seppeltsfield 1851-2001** (Seppelt family, Seppeltsfield, 2001)

E. Silsbury: **State of Opera: An Intimate New History of the State Opera of South Australia 1957-2000** (Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2001)

Mrs. J. Smith: **The Boandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines: A Sketch of Their Habits, Customs, Legends and Language** (South East Book Promotions, Mount Gambier, 2001)

**Souvenir of the Adelaide Municipal Tramways Symphonic Band** (A.M.T.S.B., Adelaide, 1924)

F. Stropin & S. Marsden (eds.): **Twentieth Century Heritage: Marking the Recent Past** (Australian Heritage Information Network, Adelaide, 2001)

D. Tonkin: **A Truly Remarkable Man: The Life of H.H. Finlayson and his Adventures in Central Australia** (Seaview Press, Henley Beach, 2001)

P. Wallace: **A River Woman: Australia's First Female Riverboat Captain Tells** (Southern Cross University Press, Lismore)

V. Woodrow: **Boats Across the Lake: The Milang, Narrung, Meningie Boat Service** (Milang and District Historical Society, Milang, 2001)

L. Yelland: **Holding the Line: A History of the South Australian Dog Fence Board, 1947- 2000** (PIRSA, Adelaide, 2001)



## PHOTO CORNER

There was a drought in South Australia in the summer of 1944-45 and at its height some graziers were forced to bring their sheep into Adelaide to feed on suburban reserves and footpaths.

This photograph was taken in front of No. 46 Allinga Avenue, Glenunga, in January 1945.

Photo: Eileen Curgenvin

## Fifty years in the Public Service!

In August 1902 an Adelaide newspaper reported, in a tone of bemused admiration, that "there is a gentleman in South Australia who has spent 50 years in the Government service and is still hale and hearty." The man was Samuel Summers, who was painted in quite Dickensian colours by the reporter who interviewed him.

*Mr. Summers is superintendent of the Money Order Office, and it was amongst his energetic staff, and surrounded by many evidences of his busy life, that I found him --- a slim, energetic gentleman, with geniality beaming through his spectacles, and a cordial nature which has endeared him to all his friends and colleagues. Much less than 50 years of active work gives the average mortal his fill, but Mr. Summers has become so inured to the hurry and bustle of life in a busy department that he glories in his existence.*

The article informed the reader that Mr. Summers was born in London in 1830 and emigrated to South Australia in 1849 on the *Anna Maria*. He soon obtained a situation as an assistant at the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and three years later, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1852, was given a position in the Post Office. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1902 he was presented with a saddlebag chair by the Deputy Postmaster-General, Sir Charles Todd, to mark his completion of half a century of public service in South Australia.

Summers' recollections of life in the early postal service are as interesting now as they were, no doubt, to readers one hundred years ago. The editor of *History SA* would like to thank HSSA member Elsie Ahrens for providing a copy of the article. [Unfortunately, I have not been able to ascertain its source or exact date.]

*"Yes," he remarked in answer to a question, "life in Adelaide was very different from what it is now. The settlement was a young one and possessed a novelty which made it attractive, especially to me as a young man. Architecture has made great strides since those days, as witness, for example, the difference between the one-storey building which did duty for the post-office and the noble pile which stands to-day. When I first made acquaintance with the institution, it occupied the north-west corner of the block at the intersection of King William and Franklin streets --- where the money-order office is now situated. Besides the post-office the building did duty for a police court, police station and local court, and was a very busy corner of the town."*

*What was the post-office like prior to your appearance on the scene, Mr. Summers?*

*"On the first establishment of the colony, Mr. T. Gilbert, the colonial storekeeper, acted as postmaster.*

*The mails were received at his residence, where they were sorted and delivered. In December, 1838, however, the increase in work justified the appointment of a Postmaster-General, and Mr. Henry Watts was given the position. After the passing of the Post-Office Act in 1839 the rate of inland postage was fixed at 2d. per letter, or packet, irrespective of weight or size, but on ship letters only one . . . [illegible] . . . 3d., as on one occasion advantage was taken of it to send a chest of tea by post."*

*What were your first duties?*

*"I was stationed at the receiving window. There were no letter boxes, as there were no stamps. Consequently letters had to be handed in and the postage given to the receiving clerk. The official marked on the letter in red ink the amount paid, and the parcel was then handed on for transmission. People sending letters to England had to pay 6d. at this end, and the same amount was charged to the recipient, so that communicating with friends at home was not such a cheap matter as it is at present. After serving for some time in this capacity I was moved to the delivery window. Mr. Henry Watts resigned his position as P.M.G. in 1841, and Captain Watts was his successor. I was appointed assistant to him, and was afterwards given clerical work in what is now the accountant's department."*

*Then I think you took charge of the money-order office?*

*"Yes. This system of forwarding money by post was introduced on January 1, 1859. I assisted Mr. U.N. Bagot, the first money-order clerk, in making the initial arrangements, and when he resigned, after six months service, I was given charge of the department. There were 15 offices in the State --- at Adelaide, Angaston, Clare, Gawler, Goolwa, Gumeracha, Kapunda, Koorlinga, Mount Barker, Port Adelaide, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Robe, Strathalbyn, and Willunga. The system was at first confined to the State, the maximum amount of an order being limited to £5, while country offices were not allowed to issue orders on each other, but only on the chief office. This was situated in the old post-office, but when the new building was erected the office was removed to where the sale of stamps and registration of letters are now conducted."*

*What became of the old building, which had been of such service?*

*"After being vacated by the post-office part of it was used as a police station. As time went on, however, and the State improved, the post-office work increased in proportion, and the money-order office was shifted back to the old building. It remained there until the place was pulled down to make room for the new edifice. We conducted our business in Torrens Chambers, on the western side of Victoria square, while the alterations were being effected."*

*Your department has developed greatly since then.*

"Yes, but for the first two years the business was very small, only 1,236 orders being issued. Kadina was added to the list of towns with offices in 1861, and between July 1, 1861 and June 30, 1862, the average annual number of orders was 1,216. In the next six months the system was extended to Victoria, Queensland, West Australia, and the United Kingdom, and 1228 orders were issued and 1,114 paid. At about this time a large number of additional offices were opened, and the restrictions on the issue of orders at country offices were withdrawn. At present it is possible directly or indirectly to send an order to any place of importance in the world. There are close on 200 offices in the

State, and the number of orders issued in 1900 was 93,928, representing money to the value of £256,542, and 82,546 orders were cashed, amounting to £287,760. Postal-notes were first issued in 1893, the number paid during 1900 being 284,340, and their value £94,500.

You referred to the fact that in the early days there were no stamps?

"Yes, and the procedure I have already related was peculiar. The first stamps were issued in January, 1885, the design on the penny stamps being the Queen's head in green, while the twopenny stamps were of the same design in red. There was no perforation in those days, and each stamp had to be cut off with a pair of scissors."

## Governors of South Australia

From time to time *History SA* will publish lists that may be of use to members researching South Australian history. The following is a complete list of S.A. Governors from Proclamation to the present, with their terms of office. It is taken from the South Australian Year Book, 1999. (N.B. This has now been replaced with the biennial *South Australia: A Statistical Profile*, the first issue of which appeared in 2001.)

Capt. John Hindmarsh, R.N., K.H.	28 December 1836	--	16 July 1838
Lt.-Col. George Gawler, K.H.	17 October 1838	--	15 May 1841
George Grey	15 May 1841	--	25 October 1845
Lt.-Col. Frederick Holt Robe	25 October 1845	--	2 August 1848
Sir Henry E.F. Young	2 August 1848	--	20 December 1854
Sir Richard G. MacDonnell, C.B.	8 June 1855	--	4 March 1862
Sir Dominick Daly	4 March 1862	--	19 February 1868
Rt. Hon. Sir James Fergusson, Bart.	16 February 1869	--	18 April 1873
Sir Anthony Musgrave, K.C.M.G.	9 June 1873	--	29 January 1877
Lt.-Gen. Sir Wm. F.D. Jervois, G.C.M.G., C.B.	2 October 1877	--	9 January 1883
Sir Wm. C.F. Robinson, G.C.M.G.	19 February 1883	--	5 March 1889
Rt. Hon. the Earl of Kintore, P.C., G.C.M.G.	11 April 1889	--	10 April 1895
Sir Thomas F. Buxton, Bart., G.C.M.G.	29 October 1895	--	29 March 1899
Rt. Hon. the Lord Tennyson, K.C.M.G.	10 April 1899	--	17 July 1902
Sir George R. Le Hunte, K.C.M.G.	1 July 1903	--	18 February 1909
Admiral Sir Day Hort Bosanquet, G.C.V.O., K.C.B.	18 February 1909	--	22 March 1914
Lt.-Col. Sir Henry L. Galway, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.	18 April 1914	--	30 April 1920
Lt.-Col. Sir Wm. E.G. Archibald Weigall, K.C.M.G.	9 June 1920	--	30 May 1922
Lt.-Gen. Sir George T.M. Bridges, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.	4 December 1922	--	4 December 1927
Brig.-Gen. the Hon. Sir A.G.A. Hore-Ruthven, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.	14 May 1928	--	26 April 1934
Maj.-Gen. Sir W.J. Dugan, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.	28 July 1934	--	23 February 1939
Sir Charles M. Barclay-Harvey, K.C.M.G.	12 August 1939	--	26 April 1944
Lt.-Gen. Sir C.W.M. Norrie, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.	19 December 1944	--	19 June 1952
Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert A. George, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., M.C.	23 February 1953	--	7 March 1960
Lt.-Gen. Sir Edric M. Bastyan, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B.	4 April 1961	--	1 June 1968
Maj.-Gen. Sir James W. Harrison, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E.	4 December 1968	--	16 September 1971
Sir Mark L. Oliphant, K.B.E.	1 December 1971	--	30 November 1976
Sir Douglas R. Nicholls, K.C.V.O., O.B.E.	1 December 1976	--	30 April 1977
Sir Keith D. Seaman, K.C.V.O., O.B.E.	1 September 1977	--	28 March 1982
Lt.-Gen. Sir Donald B. Dunstan, K.B.E., C.B.	23 April 1982	--	5 February 1991
The Hon. Dame Roma Mitchell, A.C., D.B.E.	6 February 1991	--	19 July 1996
Sir Eric James Neal, A.C., C.V.O.	22 July 1996	--	3 November 2001
Marjorie Jackson Nelson, A.C., M.B.E.	3 November 2001		

# Ghosts of the Garden

## Part VI

by Russell Smith

We are now in the north-eastern section of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, across the path from the Sunken Garden with its large pond and floral displays. On this northern side of the path an open stretch of lawn separates the old morgue (see Part V of this series) and the Brownies toadstool. The latter is a memorial to Mrs. Henry Rymill, Brownies Commissioner from 1935 to 1942, and was placed there by her Brownie and Guide friends.

### The wading pool

For over forty years the above lawn was the playground of countless children. This was the site of a public wading pool and, for a time, a sandpit as well. The pool was first installed in 1939.

From the beginning it was quite large, 60 feet by 15 feet, and when remodelled in 1955 an extra five feet was added to its width. Clearly this was a popular corner of the Botanic Garden over many summers. The good times ended in 1982 when health regulations caught up with the pool, which had neither filtration nor chlorination systems. It had also been leaking for some time and major repairs were necessary, so the decision was made to remove the facility completely and return the area to open lawn.



### Once a rosary

From the site of the wading pool we move across to the Italianate Garden, behind the Museum of Economic Botany. This formal garden is bordered on its eastern and western sides by wisteria arbours, which each October become a highlight of the Botanic Garden's regular annual displays. The oldest of the arbours, on the western side, was planted in 1912.

At the southern end of the Italianate Garden stands Canova's Venus, purchased by the Garden in 1867 from Julius Schomburgk (brother of the Garden's Director). The quaint pavilion at the northern end was built in 1893 and refurbished in 1979/80.

When visiting the Italianate Garden one has the feeling that it is an old established feature, but not so. It is relatively modern. This area was first the site

of a beautiful rosary (*shown below*), established in 1867, and then a dahlia garden. The Italianate Garden did not eventuate until the 1970s.

The rosary was one of Richard Schomburgk's earliest major undertakings, hurried a little towards the end to ensure completion in time for the visit of Prince Alfred. It was laid out in an oriental style, in circular rows sloping up and outward from the centre. Initially there were over 500 rose bushes with blooms shading down from carmine to white. Most of the roses came from the Royal Gardens at Sans Souci, near Berlin, and represented about 80% of the total rose species in South Australia at the time. The statue of the Amazon was given centre position in the rosary and remained there for many years.

The Botanic Garden Board had agreed to Dr. Schomburgk's request to employ extra hands "to get the Garden into proper order" for the Prince's visit, but additional help was still required to complete the rosary in time. Dr. Paterson, Superintendent of the neighbouring Lunatic Asylum, came to the rescue. He offered the services of some of the Asylum inmates and a selection of trusted and able patients was subsequently put to work in the rosary, thus ensuring the desired result.

By the 1890s the condition of the plants was not so rosy. Poor growth was blamed on

the surrounding large pines and pressure was mounting for a better location for the roses. It took several years, however, for that to eventuate. The new rose garden on the site of the original class ground to the north of the Palm House was finally established in 1917.

J.F. Bailey was then the Director. He turned the vacated area into a spectacular dahlia garden and over many ensuing years masses of decorative blooms attracted thousands of visitors annually. One report in 1955 stated that 4,000 visitors a day were coming into the Botanic Garden just to see the dahlias.

### The well, the Friends Gates and the old North Lodge

Midway along the western wisteria arbour, on the edge of the Plane Tree Lawn, is a reminder of the days before the Botanic Garden opened its gates to the public. Not much to see really but there, beneath a square of heavy iron, is the 26-foot-deep well, dug by Director George Francis and his workmen in 1855 to supply water during the establishment days. Flexible rubber tubing ran from the well to various

sections of the infant garden. Water is still pumped from here but now it is used solely to operate the fountain in the Top Lake.

From the well we move back to the Moreton Bay Avenue and then north to the Friends Gates (*shown right*), donated as recently as 1987 by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide. The gates are in fact quite old, having been imported from England in 1880 for the Benacres Estate at Glen Osmond. It is interesting to note that the bluestone plinths came from an old bear cage at the Adelaide Zoo.

North Lodge, the lovely old cottage by the Friends Gates (*also seen in the photo right*), dates back to 1866. It was built as the residence for the foreman of the Garden shortly after Dr. Schomburgk took over as the second Director. At the very beginning, in 1857, first Director George Francis had petitioned unsuccessfully for a foreman's cottage. He tried again in 1861, pointing out that all the colonial botanic gardens in neighbouring states possessed a foreman's cottage and that here in Adelaide surveillance and other nightly duties were the responsibility of the sole resident in the Garden, the Director himself. Once again, no result. The luxury of a second family living on site eventually came in 1866, the year after Francis' death.

### The carriage drive

Moving out through the Friends Gates we find ourselves on Plane Tree Drive in Botanic Park. This was once part of a carriage drive connecting Frome Road and Hackney Road while at the same time encircling the Park.

Work on developing Botanic Park on a grand scale had commenced in 1874 and the completed carriage drive was opened twelve years later, in 1886. The first portion of the drive, in use two years earlier, led from Frome Road across "the pretty Gothic bridge" and on to Hackney Road to a point a little south of the Hackney Hotel. It was lined on each side with two rows of mainly elm and plane trees, separated by a pathway. The new 1886 section branched off near the Gothic bridge and ran along the north bank of First Creek until it reached the footbridge leading to the old Exhibition Ground. It then entered the plane tree avenue along the rear of the Botanic Garden and the Lunatic Asylum. The plane trees at that stage were already well established and had reached heights of between 30 and 40 feet.

The eastern ends of the two sections of the carriage drive were linked by an eleven-year-old avenue of pine trees that ran parallel to Hackney Road. That then



became part of the overall drive. One could then, at the beginning of 1886, enjoy a leisurely carriage drive, buggy ride or cab ride around the circumference of the Park, or, if preferred, one could ride a horse, bicycle or tricycle, or simply walk. Dr. Schomburgk proudly claimed it to be one of the first and finest carriage drives in the southern hemisphere.

Heavy vehicles were banned from entering the drive and the permitted light vehicles were not to deviate from it while passing through the Park. Gatekeepers were stationed at each of the entrances to see that the regulations were observed.

The "pretty Gothic bridge" is still in existence, although it was rebuilt and remodelled somewhat in 1954. Today it is used only as a bridge for cyclists and pedestrians. It was originally constructed in 1878/79 by Peter Anderson of Meadows, at a cost of £1,200. The unfortunate Mr. Anderson failed to complete the bridge in the time agreed and was subsequently docked £82.10.0, which represented a fine of £1 per day for the number of days over the period stated in the contract.

### Dead dog creek

The aforementioned footbridge leading to the old Exhibition Ground had been in place for many years prior to the building of Peter Anderson's bridge. It was situated a little to the west of the present weir by the Garden's trades entrance.

In 1868 dog catcher Benjamin Ellis, who was employed by the Adelaide City Corporation, used the footbridge regularly, not only as a convenient crossing place but also as a repository for dead dogs. Ellis had full licence to shoot on the spot any unregistered dogs found wandering the city and, apparently, was free to dispose of their bodies in any way he liked. Dumping them under the footbridge in Botanic Park was clearly easier than burying them but it was not a cleverly chosen spot. Many visitors to the Garden =>

came and went through the back gate when it was open on Sundays and complaints began coming in. The disgusting sight and smell of rotting canine carcasses was simply not appreciated by the majority of those who passed that way.

Dr. Schomburgk inspected the scene and counted no less than thirteen dead dogs under the bridge. A letter to the Mayor followed and presumably it was effective for after that date no further references to the dead dog dump can be found.

### The bridge to nowhere

There is another interesting bridge story linked to Botanic Park. In early 1865 George Francis convinced the Board that an iron bridge was needed to span the newly-created ornamental pond at the bottom of the Main Walk. An order was subsequently sent off to London and a master plan of paths, garden beds and tree plantings was worked on in anticipation of the arrival of the bridge, expected well within the year.

However, the big day did not come for another eighteen months. No doubt there was much excitement as the bridge, in kit form, was offloaded at Port Adelaide and transported to the Botanic Garden. A complicated assembly process would have been anticipated but what would not have been expected was that someone had blundered. When all the unpacking of iron rods, bars, girders and bolts had been completed, it became apparent that what they had was a bridge large enough to span the River Torrens. Francis had died just a few months after the order was placed and Richard Schomburgk inherited the problem. It could not be determined if the error had been made in the ordering, the interpretation of the order or in the bridge's despatch. Despite several searches through the files of various Government departments the original plans of the proposed pond bridge could not be found.

The Government washed its hands of the matter, declaring it to be the Botanic Garden's mistake. Attempts were then made to sell the oversized bridge to the Government, to replace the ageing Frome Road foot-bridge, but these fell on deaf ears. Over the ensuing months many other attempts were made to sell the white elephant to various municipal bodies but nobody wanted it. And so, for many years to come, an immense pile of iron bits and pieces lay beside the riverbank in Botanic Park, simply rusting away.

The end of the embarrassing blunder came 33 years later when the Board of the Botanic Garden accepted £42 for what was by then just a heap of rusty

scrap iron that had originally cost the struggling Garden £600.

### A place to meet and to play

Botanic Park has altered considerably since the days of the carriage drive and the bridge sagas. Now, as well as being less formal in design, it is also much smaller, for initially it included the land handed over in the 1880s for the formation of the Adelaide Zoo.

The map drawn up in 1874, when the Park was first established, shows provision for an archery ground, a croquet lawn, an orchard, a vineyard and a reserve for horticultural exhibitions and musical performances. At a later date there were also tennis courts. In 1904 the St. Peter's Botanic Tennis Club rented space from

the Garden at £1 per annum, while the following year the Garden itself had its own courts built and let them out to the public at 2/6d an afternoon. The Garden's courts were situated beside Plane Tree Drive, just a little way in from Hackney Road.


Botanic Park has always been a venue for gatherings and communal activities. Some have been of national significance, such as the inaugural Australian Salvation Army service, conducted there in 1880. A memorial tree, a replacement of the original next to which the service was held, marks the spot (*shown left*). Another notable gathering took place in 1893 when South Australian participants in the "New Australia" movement met in the Park on the eve of their departure to join the settlement in

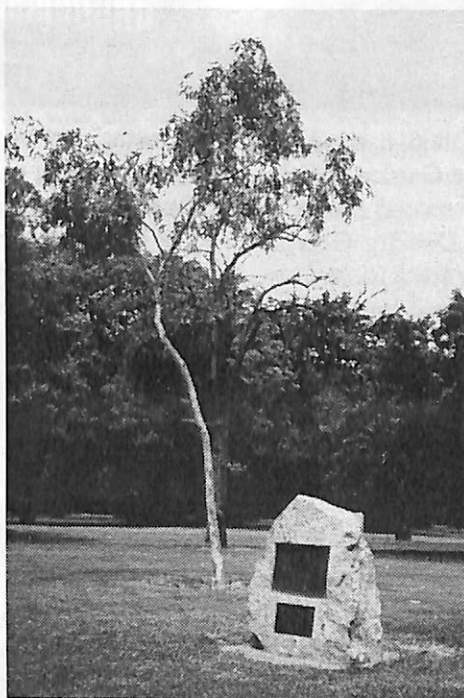
Paraguay. Political meetings were once commonplace and Speaker's Corner, close to Peter Anderson's Gothic bridge, became a popular gathering place at weekends.

### Conclusion

When wandering around the Adelaide Botanic Garden and Botanic Park, searching out the sites of the many and varied features that are now nothing but memories or folklore, a growing appreciation develops of the early work of George Francis and Richard Schomburgk and of the many beauties and hardships of their time.

One wonders how those gentlemen would react if they were able to return and wander around their legacy. No doubt they would be overwhelmed and puzzled by many modern features but generally, I think, they would be suitably impressed and delighted to see that many of their initiatives are still in place.

Photographs of North Lodge and Salvation Army tree by Russell Smith. Photograph of rosary courtesy of Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, Archive Collection. 



# Phenomenal sounds in the interior of Australia

by Thomas Gill

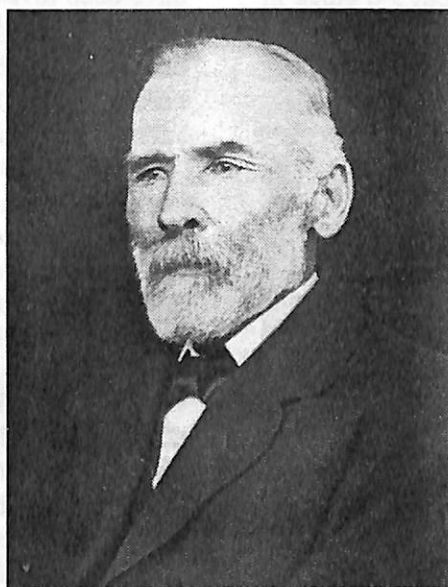
*Thomas Gill was born at Glen Osmond in 1849 and, after working in a number of government offices, joined the South Australian Treasury in 1883 as an accountant. In 1894 he was appointed Under Treasurer and continued in that position until his retirement in 1920. He also served as Public Debt Commissioner, Comptroller of Imperial Pensions and Executive Officer of the Public Service Superannuation Fund, as well as holding positions on several boards and trusts. He was appointed I.S.O. in 1903 and C.M.G. in 1918.*

*But Gill was more than just a dedicated public servant; he was also an enthusiastic collector of South Australiana and amassed a substantial library of works on history, geography, exploration and Aboriginal life. In his capacity as Treasurer of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S.A. Branch), he was instrumental in acquiring for the Society the impressive York Gate Library. His own collection also went to the R.G.S. upon his death in 1923.*

*Gill published a number of books and articles, including Bibliography of South Australia (1886), Bibliography of the Northern Territory (1903), The History and Topography of Glen Osmond (1905), A Biographical Sketch of Colonel William Light (1911), and Brief Sketch of the Coinage and Paper Currency of South Australia (1912).*

*The following article, which collects together some intriguing accounts of strange sounds heard in the outback, was published in 1913 by the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, of which Gill was a member.*

I am somewhat diffident in submitting to the Geographical Section of this Association the following particulars, chiefly obtained from explorers' journals, and personally from explorers and old bushmen, who have traversed the interior of Australia. I do not presume to offer any explanation as to the cause of the phenomena recorded here, but humbly submit the reports and opinions of different travellers on the mysterious sounds which are of frequent occurrence in certain localities, and which bewilder all who have heard them.



Thomas Gill, C.M.G., I.S.O.

"Phenomenal Sounds" should contain references to "Meteoric Stones" and "Obsidian Bombs", but the inclusion of these interesting subjects would make the paper inordinately long.

A few of the reports herein were collected as far back as 1888, about which time my attention was called to a small book published in Sydney, under the title of *A Mother's Offering to her Children by a Lady long Resident in New South Wales*, printed at the Gazette office, Lower George-street, Sydney, and dedicated to Master Reginald Gipps, son of His Excellency Sir George Gipps, 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1841. In the first chapter on "Extraordinary Sounds", the author relates the following:--

"A gentleman was telling me some time ago of an extraordinary circumstance which took place at Yass. I will endeavour to repeat it in his own words:-- 'On my way to our sheep stations, in the year 1833,

I passed a night at the residence of the hospitable Mr. Hamilton Hume, at Yass. While we were engaged in conversation, in the evening, we were surprised by the apparent report of musketry, as if a smart fire of about five-and-twenty guns was kept up, near the house. We hastened out, supposing the Mounted Police had come to the spot and were engaged with bushrangers. The evening was dark, and we could discern nothing, though the firing still continued; but it now appeared ascending into the air, higher and higher, till it gradually ceased, as if those who were firing had ascended as they fired their muskets. We remained a short time listening with awe, wondering what

this strange phenomenon could portend. All was still. After expressing our astonishment, we withdrew within the doorway, when Mr. Hume related a similar phenomenon which had occurred during an exploring journey which he took with Captain Sturt.'"

The first record I have found dealing with this subject is by Captain Sturt, when he was exploring on the Darling, in 1829, as follows:--

"About 3 p.m., on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, Mr. Hume and I were occupied tracing the chart upon the ground. The day had been remarkably fine, not a cloud was there in the heavens, nor a breath of air to be felt. On a sudden we heard what seemed to be the report of a gun fired in the distance of between 5 and 6 miles. It was not the hollow sound of an earthly explosion, or the sharp cracking noise of falling timber, but in every way resembled a discharge of a large piece of ordnance. On this we all agreed, but no one was certain whence the sound proceeded. Both Mr. Hume and myself had been too attentive to our ⇨

occupation to form a satisfactory opinion; but we both thought it came from the north-west. I sent one of the men immediately up a tree, but he could observe nothing unusual. The country around him appeared to be equally flat on all sides, and to be thickly wooded. Whatever caused the report, it made a strong impression on all of us, and to this day the singularity of such a sound in such a situation is a matter of mystery to me."

Again, when exploring in Central Australia, in 1844, Captain Sturt (*shown below*) records having heard similar noises in the far north of this Colony. In Vol. II of his narrative he says:--

"I would also advert to a circumstance I neglected to mention in its proper place, but which may be as forcibly done now as at the time it occurred. When Mr. Browne and I were on our recent journey to the north, after having crossed the Stony Desert, being then between it and Eyre's Creek, about 9 o'clock in the morning, we distinctly heard a report as of a great gun discharged to the westward, at the distance of half a mile. On the following morning, nearly at the same time, we again heard the sound, but it now came from a greater distance, and consequently was not so clear. When I was on the Darling, in latitude 30°, in 1829, I was roused from my work by a similar report; but neither on that occasion nor on this could I solve the mystery in which it was involved. It might, indeed, have been some gaseous explosion, but I never, in the interior, saw any indication of such phenomena."



The next published account, which appears to have been atmospheric, is by Mr. James Allen, junior, who, in his *Journal of an Experimental Trip of the "Lady Augusta" on the River Murray*, published in 1853, page 39, says:--

"I may here mention a very singular phenomenon which appeared at Swan Hill (on the Murray) some two years ago, and which has been so well authenticated, both by the natives and the settlers in the district, as to leave no doubt as to its occurrence. About a month previous to the Christmas of 1851 a small dark cloud was seen to rise above the horizon, towards the north-west. Immediately after its appearance it emitted a flash of fire, succeeded by a rumbling noise like thunder, or the trampling of a large body of horse, but considerably louder, and passed over to the east, dispersing itself like smoke. The day was remarkably bright and clear, with a perfectly unclouded sky. Its

passage occupied from four to five minutes, and the noise resulting from the discharge of the flash, I am told, was most terrific. The natives were dreadfully alarmed, and even to this day have a vivid recollection of the circumstance. This account is not in the least exaggerated, and, if the occurrence had not been well authenticated by respectable settlers in the neighbourhood, I should not have described it in my journal. As it is, it will be food for speculative minds, and interest those fond of the marvellous."

The Reverend J.E. Tenison Woods, in his work entitled *Geological Observations in South Australia*, published in 1862, when referring to the lakes in the south-eastern district, appends the following as a note to Chapter III:--

"There is a curious circumstance connected with these swamps, which have an underground drainage, which, in any other than a new country, would surely have been invested with some ghostly legend. Every evening, during spring and the early part of summer, distant groanings are heard, like the lowing of a large herd of cattle, and very resonant, near a few swamps, such, for instance, as that situated near Mr. Donald McArthur's Station, Limestone Ridge. Generally, three such echoing sounds are heard, and then about half-an-hour's repose. I believe the sounds are entirely due to a column of air resisting a column of water, which is draining through the limestone, and finally being driven back or forwards, according to the periodical increase of the weight of water. To one ignorant of the cause, the sounds are mournful and startling in the extreme, and they are not heard in the day, probably because there are so many other sounds of cattle, &c., to mingle and be confused with them. On the coast also, where there are sandstones, noises like distant artillery are heard on windy days.

"Dr. Phipson mentions these sounds as being very common on the sandy parts of the coast of England, and is at a loss to assign a cause. It seems, however, to be in some way connected with large collections of sand. Sturt mentions that when in the Australian Desert, surrounded by high hills of red sand of that inhospitable country, he was startled one morning by hearing a loud, clear, reverberating explosion, like the booming of artillery. The next morning he heard it again. The mornings were calm and clear, and they were, at least, 600 miles from the settled districts. My brother (Mr. T. A. Woods), when at Mount Serle, in the horseshoe of Lake Torrens, which is a very sandy desert, has frequently heard the same loud boomings on fine clear days. They seemed to come with a startling echo from the sandhills, and reverberated for a long time among the hills.

"Mitchell and Sturt have observed the same thing in other parts of Australia. May the cause not be similar to that which makes the sand musical at Eigg (see Hugh Miller's *Cruise of the Betsy*, chapter IV); the sonorous moving sand at Reg Rawan, Cabul; and the

thundering sand of Jabel Nablous, in Arabia Petraea? In the latter case, the mere falling of the sand on the rock beneath made a sound like distant thunder and caused the rocks to vibrate. The ultimate cause is quite unexplained."

At Nakous, near the shore of the Red Sea, there are heard, at intervals, underground sounds resembling the tinkling of a bell. This phenomenon is probably due to some sort of suppressed volcanic agency. I addressed Mr. W.H. Tietkens, who had accompanied Mr. Ernest Giles through Central Australia, and later revisited Central Australia, when he named Lake Macdonald, and who had also travelled in the Eucla district, with a view of obtaining his experience and ideas on this subject, to which he replied:--

"I am afraid I cannot help you with very much material for your paper, except giving my own impressions and recollections of Fort Mueller. In the Cavenagh Range there exist large masses of iron ore carrying a high percentage of metal, and in no part of the Continent have I seen such enormous masses of highly magnetic ore. The Cavenagh Range may be said to form a low detached series of bald hills, the timber becoming especially scarce towards the western end, and where the masses of ore are to be seen, though I may say similar were met with upon one occasion at the Bell-Metal Rock of Giles, which, upon referring to Giles' map, will be seen to be some considerable distance to the eastward.

"The diary of Mr. Gosse does not give us any special remarks upon this range, although he camped near Fort Mueller for some weeks. We were bound up as rigidly as in any Arctic ship in winter ice for some months at this spot, nor did we get away from there until the Rawlinson was discovered. Since the time of Sturt, at the Depot Glen, in 1844, no travellers were ever so securely penned in as we were; the recollections of the place are somewhat vivid, for it was necessarily a critical time.

"Very distant shocks of earthquake were noticed (I think in November), accompanied by strangely uncomfortable earth rumblings; large masses of the loose iron ore of which the adjacent hills were composed were sent with a tremendous noise into the little valley or gully below, and through which a little ti-tree creek ran (there is no gum timber there); this little watercourse was perfectly fresh, clear, and beautiful water, the strange peculiarity being its intermittent character, as regular as the tides of the ocean, its flow being at night and its ebb during the day, the little rock basin at the camp receiving its fresh supply every night. I can offer no explanation for this, nor have I noticed such at any other inland springs.

"The earth tremors or waves took a north-west and south-east direction, approximately, and the subterranean booms and rumblings always succeeded the shock by some few seconds. I use the plural, for, though only the first shock was violent enough to

displace the rocks (each many tons in weight), there were many other shocks for a fortnight afterwards, each accompanied by rumblings sufficiently distinct and uncomfortable."

Colonel Egerton Warburton (*shown below*), an old explorer of Central Australia, said he had a vivid recollection of hearing, on one occasion, about 6 a.m., a loud report in the vicinity of Lake Torrens, in 1857, and which he described as similar to an explosion of a barrel of powder at about a mile distant. He imagines the cause due to vents of mud volcanoes, of which he had seen traces

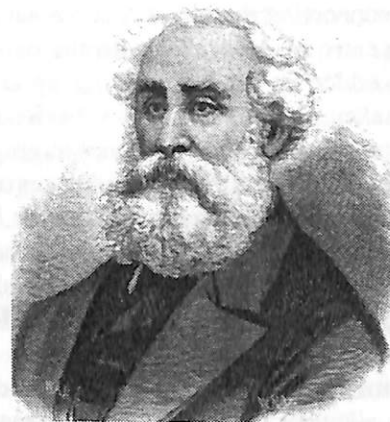
of several during his northern explorations. These inactive outlets resembled holes from which trees had been grubbed, and lying around the holes were small pieces of what the Colonel thought were fossilized chips of wood. Some of these chips were submitted to the Rev. Tenison Woods, who pronounced them to be pieces of dried mud. At the time the Colonel heard the report, he was not aware of the existence of the holes, and could not recollect whether they were in the vicinity of the reports.

Mr. Christopher Giles, who has resided some years in the central portions of Australia, namely, at Charlotte Waters, on the overland telegraph line, has heard several reports like discharges of artillery in the vicinity of Dalhousie Springs. He has no dates, but, so far as he can recollect, the sounds occurred at different times of the day. Mr. Giles attributes the cause to outbursts of fresh springs.

Mr. R. R. Knuckey, formerly of the Telegraph Department, who is, I suppose, better acquainted with South Australia than most travellers, says he has heard these peculiar sounds only in the vicinity of the Peake and Dalhousie Springs. Whilst camped at the Peake on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1870, he was startled about 1 a.m. by a loud report, and the next day a new artesian spring was found at Coppa-toppa. Again, near Dalhousie Springs, between Mt. Crispe and Edith Springs, he heard three distinct reports in January, 1871, and three new artesian springs were subsequently found in the vicinity.

Our late Government Geologist, Mr. H.Y. Lyell Brown, in his first annual report, makes the following remarks on the sandhill country between the overland telegraph and the Queensland border, in Central Australia:--

"The sandhills rest indiscriminately on the clay flats and plains or the stony downs, their elevation above these varying from 10 to 70 or 80 feet, and ⇒



width from 100 to 200 yards at the base. There is no evidence of the sand having been blown along the surface, or transported from a distance by water flowing over the surface of the ground, which is, as a rule, quite clear of sand between the hills. I have reason to believe that in many cases, particularly in those of the isolated ridges and mounds traversing the stony desert at long distances apart, the sand has been derived from an underground source through the pressure of subterranean water.

"There was, in all probability, an outlet at one time connecting the old cretaceous sea, which occupied the centre of Australia, with the ocean. If we suppose a sudden or gradual closing up of this outlet to have taken place through the subsidence of the land, or any other cause, the water, not having any vent to escape by, would accumulate in the porous strata until, under sufficient pressure, it would force its way to the surface along cracks or through holes caused by such pressure, and bring with it the sand, in a similar manner to the present mud and sand springs. The eruption of sand in large quantities would cause a subsidence of the surrounding area, whereof there is evidence in the valleys of the Cooper and Diamantina, and thus have created the great lakes into which these rivers now flow.

"About 35 miles south-east of Clifton Hill Station, on the Diamantina, there are two parallel red sand ridges traversing a stony plain in a north-north-westerly direction; the plain is covered with a pavement-like coating of flinty quartzite stones. On the east side blocks and boulders of the same rock are scattered about, amongst which are numerous low circular mounds of white clayey sand, the centres of which are formed of blocks of stones piled up, which are encircled by other smaller blocks, and these by scattered stones, the whole bearing the appearance of having been erupted by springs from below. At numerous other places similar appearances present themselves, mounds of sand, gravel, and clay, and scattered stones occurring on the surface of many of the plains and flat areas, the presence of which it is difficult to account for in any other way, as there are no rocks at a higher level in the neighbourhood from which sand or gravel could have been washed."

At a later date, when discussing with Mr. Brown the booming sounds occasionally heard in the far north, he was inclined to the opinion that the eruptions of sand referred to in his report were probably accompanied by detonations.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1877, over the signature "Tom Porter", the following appeared in the *South Australian Register*:--

"Possibly some scientist will kindly explain what caused some, to me, strange noises I heard just as it was getting dark on 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> May, on a run in the north-west. I was riding facing the west when a flash of very red light filled the air, and made me pull up and look in every direction, for it was totally different

to the flash of a shooting star, and the sky was quite clear, excepting for a few fleecy clouds that were thinly obscuring it in places, so that I knew it was not lightning, or, at any rate, did not proceed from thunderclouds. After the first flash I saw nothing more of the kind, and rode on, concluding that I must be mistaken in thinking it was not a shooting star, as I could account for it in no other way.

"I had ridden at a walk about 100 yards, got off my horse, and led it through a gate, and was preparing to vault lightly and gracefully into the saddle, when I was startled by an explosion which appeared to come from some high and rough granite ranges and gorges that lay about 2 miles behind me. The first report or explosion was followed by five or six others, about as quickly as one could fire off a self-cocking revolver, with a loud, vibrating, rushing noise running through the reports and linking them together. I should think it was fully a minute before the rushing sound and vibration died away.

"I am quite positive it was not the falling of rocks and their echoes, as it was a most distinct explosive detonating sound, and was totally different to the noise of the discharge of firearms, also there was no white man in that direction for 200 miles. I've read of such sounds being often heard in the Sierra Nevada mountains, but I had no idea that any colonial hills were equal to such mysteries."

Mr. William Russell, of the Semaphore, near Port Adelaide, a student in meteorology, has sent me the following:--

"According to promise, I herewith enclose a few extracts having reference to meteors, which show that sometimes these interesting visitors from space, when not seen, cause disturbances which may be mistaken for ordinary earthquakes.

'Snowtown, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1888. --- The heaviest shock of earthquake ever experienced here was felt this morning at half-past 3 o'clock. The shock lasted about 30 seconds. It was accompanied with a very distinct rumbling sound.'

'Red Hill (same date). --- Residents were rudely startled from their slumbers about half-past three this morning, when the whole place suddenly became brilliantly illuminated, followed by a loud crash similar to that of thunder, and causing considerable vibration to buildings, &c. The sky was perfectly clear.'

'Same place, same date. --- At twenty minutes past three this morning a very brilliant meteor was seen to fall. After travelling some distance it burst with a terrific report. The inhabitants were greatly alarmed, as the explosion made the earth tremble. ''

Later Mr. Russell received a letter from a friend, who described the meteor of 28<sup>th</sup> August as the most gorgeous and beautiful spectacle he had ever witnessed. He said:--

"I was going home from the office with a friend, and was walking down Flinders-street, when what

seemed to be a flash of light, or rather the reflection of one, attracted our attention to our left. We both turned, and then saw a magnificent meteor steering away towards the north-east. It appeared to light up the whole of the city for an instant. It very quickly changed; the head seemed to swell, and in an instant it spread out, apparently bursting into thousands of pieces of all the colours of the rainbow, but with no noise --- the tail remained a beautiful white."

A resident of Muntoora also wrote Mr. Russell as follows:--

"I saw the meteor of 28<sup>th</sup> August when walking home. Beautiful moonlight night, no clouds, clear frosty atmosphere. Direction due west, and altitude when first seen about 6 degrees, as near as I can guess; direction when it burst was due east, and altitude about 8 degrees. It went right across the sky from west to east. The light was brighter than moonlight --- could have read the smallest print.

"When the meteor was passing, and when it burst, the light was as bright as sunlight, of a blue colour, like the electric light, and the noise was terrific --- like tremendous cannonading, and was followed by a rattle like thunder right across the sky. I seemed to see the noise as it was travelling, if you can understand the feeling. I did not feel the earth tremble, and was standing firmly wondering what was going to happen next. It was truly a wonderful sight --- I saw it at the start, and was walking due west at the time."

Mr. Russell quotes another instance, which occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1896, of a brilliant meteor which was observed at various places from Queensland to Broken Hill. At Wilcannia it was succeeded by a rumbling sound, and houses shook as if an earthquake had taken place.

Mr. L.A. Wells, explorer, reports:--

"On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1897, whilst myself and party were returning from the Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia, after an unsuccessful search for the missing members of the Calvert Expedition, and travelling down 'Jirgurra' Creek, *en route* for the Fitzroy River and Derby, we had camped for the night, and shortly after dark a most brilliant meteor appeared in the sky and lit up the surrounding country. It was travelling from east to west, and appeared to explode, ending in a shower of sparks. Some minute or two afterwards we heard a terrific explosion or report like cannon. I asked my native boy what it was, and he replied that there were plenty like that in his country.

"Again, on or about the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1898, whilst camped in the open air, at 'Cariapateena', a run on the western shores of Lake Torrens, and some time after dark, I saw another brilliant meteor. After timing one and a half minutes by my watch, I concluded there would be no report, when almost immediately afterwards I heard another loud report resembling the one previously described. This was also heard

by James Trainor, whom I had left camped at a hut about 14 miles to the southward. He heard the noise, and thought it was thunder, but on going out of the hut saw nothing but a clear starlit sky. This meteor was seen from the railway line between Quorn and Beltana. On both occasions referred to the sky was perfectly clear and the weather calm."

The Government Geologist of Tasmania, Mr. W.H. Twelvetrees, in 1904, stated:--

"The sounds are occasionally heard in different parts of Tasmania. At the northern foot of the Western Tiers they have been heard, and rather absurdly attributed to blasting at Mt. Lyell mines, at the western part of the island. Miss Maclean, who resides on Clarke Island, in the Straits, has told me that they are often heard there in still weather, day and night, and that they always appear to come from the direction of Cape Barren Island, further to the east; hence they call them Cape Barren guns. The sound is like the booming of distant cannon, and seems to come from the horizon. Once they thought it was a ship firing distress signals.

"I heard them last May (1903) on the west bank of the River Tamar in the forenoon on a cloudless, calm day. The sound was that of artillery in the distance firing minute guns, and came from the west, the direction of the hill ranges, or rather from behind the ranges. It was repeated at intervals for several minutes. The previous night, between 9 and 10 o'clock, these sounds were heard for half-an-hour at a time, and the following night also. This was about 17 miles north of Launceston, and 50 feet above sea level. In December, 1899, I heard the same sounds twice repeated when I was on the top of Mount Victoria, in the north-east of the island, 4,000 feet above the sea level. The residents of Tamar tell me that the sounds are heard frequently."

The captain of the Victoria Tower Gold Mining Company, at Wadnaminga, Mr. F.D. Johnston, reported to the Royal Society of South Australia his observations during the years 1888 and 1889 at Gill's Bluff, Flinders Range (see Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. XII, p. 157). He compared the sounds with those of blowing off steam from a large boiler. Captain Johnston, when referring to slight rumbling sounds at 8 p.m. on the 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1888, said:--

"Visiting Mount Rose a few days afterwards, I found that a very loud rumbling had been heard by John McCleish at the same time. Thinking a storm was approaching, McCleish rose and questioned the blacks, who were a few yards below him in the Gammon Creek. The natives said, 'That one growl alonga ground.' "

This remark evidently shows that the natives considered the noises to be subterranean. McCleish stated that reports similar to mining blasts, followed by dull booming sounds, are noticeable every week in the vicinity of Gammon Range. ⇒

The late Mr. Victor Streich, who was geologist to the Elder Expedition, referred to booming sounds heard at Fraser Range Station, at Yilgarn, and at Annean Station, Western Australia (see Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. XVI, pp. 119-120). He said:--

"I feel convinced that this noise is not caused by any force of geological or terrestrial origin; but as these places from which the phenomenon in question is reported belong to the most arid regions of Australia, in which nothing but the meteorological conditions are alike, it must be assumed that these subaerial conditions are the cause. I should think that they are detonations resulting from electrical discharges, in the form of a glow discharge, which, while spreading over a large area, is less perceptible, and is said to occur more frequently in a dry continental climate during a dry thunderstorm."

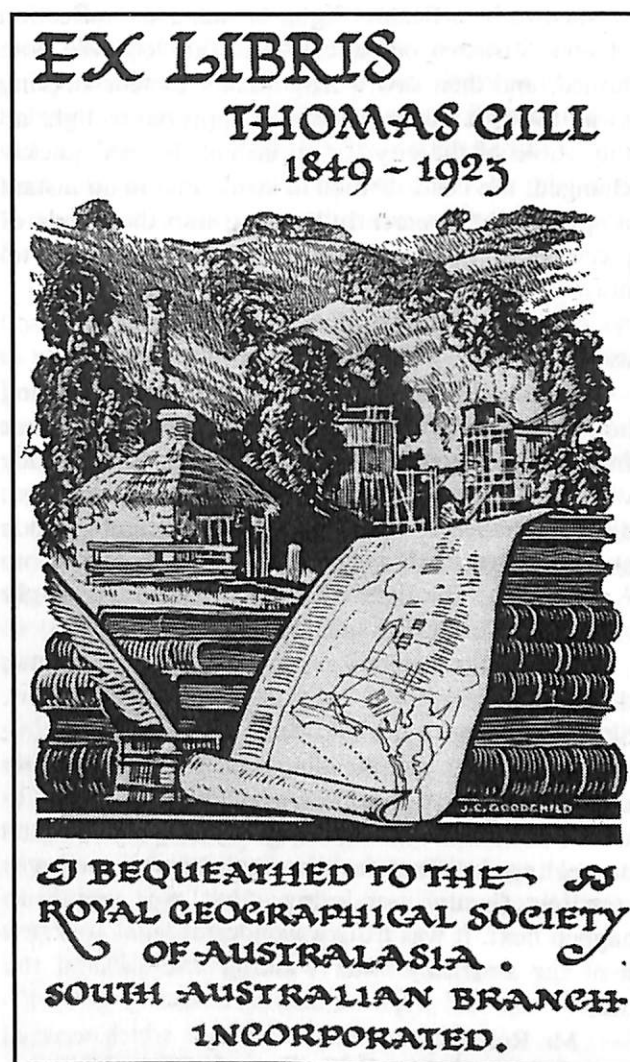
Although the opinion expressed by Mr. Streich is quoted herein, it is only just to say that he did not hear the sounds himself, and, as he was not acquainted with the diversity of sounds heard in different localities in Central Australia, his opinion can only apply to reports he received in Western Australia.

#### Acknowledgements:

Photograph of Thomas Gill from *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S.A. Branch)*, Vol. XXIV, 1922-23.

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Thomas Gill's bookplate courtesy of Royal Geographical Society of South Australia.



*Bookplate designed by J.C. Goodchild and placed in Gill's books in the R.G.S. collection.*

## Book Review

### **A Pioneer History of South Australia: In the Wake of Flinders and Baudin (Pioneers Association of South Australia, 2001)**

This is a very handsomely produced volume comprising extracts from the many booklets issued by the Pioneers Association since its inception in 1935. They are arranged in roughly chronological order of subject matter and cover the foundations of the colony, the uncertainties of emigration, the joys and hardships of living in a strange land, and the gradual spread of settlement into the rural areas.

The articles are both informative and entertaining. They include stories of pre-1836 sealers and whalers, a summary of the first 19 colonizing ships, accounts of first contact with Aborigines, descriptions of journeys out of Adelaide into unfamiliar bushland, the early inns and taverns, the unsophisticated gaiety of the Queen's Theatre, and the primitive conditions of the city and its various forms of accommodation. There are tales of convict escapees, nervous passengers (both well-to-do and steerage), struggling squatters, women of

extraordinary perseverance and stamina, determined capitalists, and dedicated doctors and schoolmasters. Also included is S.T. Gill's moving account of the death of the explorer John Ainsworth Horrocks.

By virtue of the wide variety of topics, the range of social classes presented, the many autobiographical excerpts, and the intriguing details that scatter the narratives, we are given a colourful picture of life in the early years of the colony.

The book contains over 100 illustrations, including paintings, engravings and photographs, a third of them in colour and several of them previously unpublished. It is available in hardcover at \$50.00 at HSSA meetings or from the Pioneers Association office, 23-25 Leigh Street, Adelaide (open on Tuesdays 10 a.m. -- 12 noon, Thursdays 11 a.m. -- 1 p.m.).

-- J.H.

## **History SA deadline**

The deadline for all material for the July 2002 issue of the Newsletter is Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore 5019.