

HSA

History SA

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia

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No. 163, November 2002

The HSSA in 2003

HSSA Programme Co-ordinator, Terry Saunderson, has been busy organizing our schedule of lectures and field trips for next year, based on suggestions and advice from Council. The programme brochure will be sent out with the January Newsletter but we present here a brief preview of what is in store for members.

At the first meeting of the year Margaret Ford will give a talk entitled "An Outback Odyssey: Adelaide to Darwin in a Crossley Car, 1925". Margaret's grandfather, with two mates, drove their roofless, four-cylinder car across the continent and back in fifty days, using railway tracks, the overland telegraph line and horse trails to find their way.

At our March meeting, architect Kate McDougall will speak on "Heritage Planning: The Protection of Historical Buildings and Areas", and in April David Clayton from the South Australian Tourism Commission will talk on "Selling Ourselves Short: Another View of Our Heritage", concentrating on the legacies left by people (such as Sir Sidney Kidman) rather than the built environment.

In May Dr. Peter Howell will give a lecture on some of the challenges he encountered and the interesting discoveries he made in writing a history of twentieth-century South Australia, and in June Paul Depasquale will discuss the role of sport as a substitute for religion in unifying Australian society and the part played by the mass media in imposing a set of cultural values.


In July Bob Sexton will tell us the story of the *Casuarina*, the Australian-built schooner that Nicolas Baudin bought from a Sydney ship-building firm and used to assist the *Géographe* in exploring our southern coast. At the August meeting Gary Workman will talk on "Carnival Glass", with a display of some thirty colourful examples. (As an added treat, members will be invited to bring their own pieces for identification.)

In September Colin Harris will discuss the historical geography of the South Australian Murray Mallee, and in October Dr. Christine Garnaut will present a lecture on Charles Reade's town planning activities in the 1910s. Finally, at our November meeting, Rob


Linn will talk on the life and exploits of Captain S.A. White, naturalist, author and conservationist.

The first of our field trips next year will be a tour of the North Road Cemetery, where we will inspect a host of historic grave sites, and the General Manager, Robin McKnight, will tell us the stories of some of the eminent South Australians who are buried there. In April HSSA Vice-President Dr. Geoffrey Bishop will lead an all-day coach tour to Angaston and the Barossa Hills. We will visit a number of buildings in the township, as well as "Waterways" farm at Keyneton. In July, HSSA President David Cornish, who is also Development Officer at Prince Alfred College, will take us on a tour of the school, looking at the old buildings, the museum, and the gallery, which features an exhibition on P.A.C. old scholars.


Our field trip in October will be quite a coup for the Society. Alan Fulwood, who joined Council this year, has arranged for us to visit two properties at Mount Pleasant --- "Rosebank", the grand home of the Melrose family from the 1850s onward (which has been open for public inspection only once before, and is currently being used as one of the sets for the television programme "McLeod's Daughters"), and the nearby "Stoneybank", a much humbler abode that provides a fascinating contrast.

Best wishes to everyone for Christmas, and we look forward to seeing you next year. 

Ghosts appear in book!

Russell Smith's series of articles on former features of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, printed in recent issues of *History SA*, has now been published in book form. *Ghosts of the Garden* is a beautifully designed paperback with over twenty sepia-tinted photographs. It is available at \$9.95 from bookshops, newsagents and from the North Lodge shop in the Gardens. An ideal Christmas present! 

New members

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Mr. Mel Davies, Mr. Darryl Day and Mr. Michael Leach. 

The Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

Founded 1974

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

E-mail: hssa25@hotmail.com Web-site: www.hssa.org.au.

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.

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

APPOINTED OFFICERS:


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

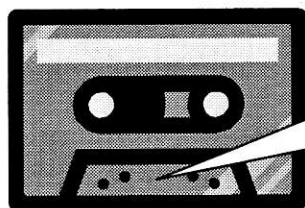
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Bequest to the HSSA

The HSSA Council would like to acknowledge with gratitude the bequest of \$200 to the Society by Gordon Ragless, who passed away on 8th March 2002. Gordon had been a member of the Society since 1976 and was a descendant of pioneers who came to South Australia in 1838. He spent most of his life working on his family's vineyard and almond orchard at Marion. He was also a keen amateur radio operator and during World War II was part of a secret group based at Somerton Park who monitored enemy radio traffic. He was interviewed about his wartime experiences in the November 2000 issue of *History SA*. 




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.

History SA deadline

The deadline for all material for the January 2003 issue of the Newsletter is Friday, November 29th. It should be addressed to John Healey, Editor, *History SA*, 27 Germein St., Semaphore 5019. 



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Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I have just received a copy of your excellent publication, *S.A.'s Greats: the men and women of the North Terrace plaques*, and being particularly interested in the history of the Burra Mines, I turned to the biographical details on Sir Henry Ayers. Can I point out a qualification in relation to his situation at the South Australian Mining Association? I recognize that in many previous sources he is referred to as "Managing Director" of the company, and described as a major shareholder. Both these statements are untrue. He was always the Secretary and never the Managing Director (though with the influence he had there were no doubt people who believed he wielded the power of a person of that designation). As for his being a major shareholder, the records of the S.A.M.A. show that he never held more than 28 shares in the concern, and this was in 1868 when the value of shares had dramatically declined.

The misconception that he was a major shareholder is no doubt derived from his voting power. This arose because, as shareholders left the colony between 1845 and 1877, many of them gave their proxy votes to Ayers as Secretary of the Association. For example, at a Special Meeting called in 1866 to discuss the dissolving of the company, Ayers controlled 776 shares out of a total of 1,569 represented at the meeting (see S.L.S.A., B.R.G. 22/959, Accounts 1866). Many shareholders and their appointed attorneys did not bother to vote at meetings, which gave a handful of resident Board members, but especially Ayers, almost complete control over the affairs of the Association.

In the light of this evidence, the statement that by 1847 (two years after the opening of the mine) Ayers was one of the major shareholders is a fallacy, as he held at that time only 11 shares (see S.L.S.A., B.R.G. 22/1250, Deed of Settlement, 21st April 1847, where it is recorded that Ayers held 45 shares; these were listed as "11+22+12", the latter two figures being proxies for absentee shareholders).

As for his fortune, while he was paid a few hundred pounds a year salary for acting as Secretary to the S.A.M.A., most of Ayers' wealth was derived from his private activities. In particular, he acted as agent for a number of wealthy colonists, and for his service was paid commission. Included in his duties as agent was his action as an intermediary in using his clients' spare funds to service lenders and borrowers.

I hope you don't mind my pointing out these discrepancies but, as he was a leading figure in South Australian politics and economic activities in the 19th century, I thought that you would appreciate the matter being brought to your attention.

Yours sincerely,
Mel Davies,
University of Western Australia

Dear Sir,

As mentioned in the September issue of *History SA*, the text on the monument to Captain Collet Barker, contains errors. Now, 100 years after its unveiling in January 1903, it is perhaps opportune to consider how and why the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S.A. Branch), which commissioned the monument, was able to rationalize the distortion of the truth.

The tablet claims that Barker discovered Mount Barker, a falsehood of which the Acting President, Simpson Newland, was well aware. In his speech, reported in the Society's *Proceedings* (Vol. VI, 1902-03), he states: "Sturt's party undoubtedly first beheld their mount from the Murray, but Barker and his two companions were the first white men to look upon the beautiful woodland scene amidst which the town of Mount Barker nestled." Throughout this key part of his speech, Newland restricts the use of "Mount Barker" to the township, while referring to the nearby geographical feature as "the mount", "their mount" and in one instance "Barker's mount". By maintaining this terminology, the truth, by his definition, was preserved.

With regard to the claim that Captain Barker traversed the district, speakers at the ceremony knew they were on fragile ground. H. Monks, representing the District Council, was reported as saying that he had great pleasure in accepting the custody of the handsome memorial to Captain Barker, "who, so they were told, was the first white man to set foot on the fertile valleys". Told by whom? Newland, at one point in his speech, reverted to the language of a nineteenth-century novelist: "Had he lived, no doubt Barker's pen would have portrayed in eloquent terms the picturesque country that his eyes beheld and his footsteps pressed."

Why did the Royal Geographical Society bend the truth in this way? In 1901 thoughts were to the future of the Commonwealth, and the Society was using this opportunity to look backwards so as to honour the advances made by white settlement. The centennial of Flinders' 1802 voyage (see *History SA*, January 2002) gave them the opportunity to pay respect to this pre-settlement explorer by erecting monuments on Mount Lofty and at Victor Harbor. A further ceremony the following year for Barker would have enabled them to continue this theme. In these circumstances a minor twisting of the facts might have been thought allowable.

Simpson Newland was, of course, a recognized fiction writer, and had recently published *Paving the Way: A Romance of the Australian Bush*. His speeches often demonstrated a certain poetic licence. Referring to Barker's death, he commented that Barker "lay dead by the hands of ignorant savages on the edge of that restless surf whose thunder they must almost hear from where they stood that day". The distance from Mount Barker to Goolwa is over 50 kilometres!

Yours sincerely,
James Potter,
Clarence Park



Adelaide Oval

1871-1901:

More than a cricket ground

by Bernard Whimpress

When the first Adelaide Oval Act (1871) was passed, it created the Oval as a "central cricket ground" to be used for "cricketing purposes". The second Adelaide Oval Act (1897) widened the use of the ground beyond cricket to sport and public recreation, the current lease provision. Between the two Acts the ground's use had expanded to include other sports, such as Australian Rules football and cycling in particular, and a range of non-sporting uses. It is these non-sporting occasions with which I shall deal here.

Corroborees

The most unusual events were probably the two Aboriginal corroborees, which were staged on the ground in 1885, the second before the Governor of South Australia. The first corroboree, on 29th May, followed an Aboriginal football match and drew a very large crowd, with estimates as high as 20,000, while the second, on the following night, drew around 5,000 patrons.

There must be some doubt about the crowd figure for the first corroboree but it was large enough to cause entry problems due to the lack of ticket boxes, while inside the ground there was a lack of police to control the numbers, which spelt potential for disaster. The corroborees were part of a package of events organized by entrepreneurial South Australian Cricketing Association (S.A.C.A.) Secretary John Creswell to maximize the use of Adelaide Oval. The previous December he had been the chief instigator in gaining the first cricket Test match at the Oval. Two further Aboriginal football matches were held in June and July against the Adelaide Football Club and a Combined Colleges team, and an electric-light football match between South Adelaide and the Adelaide clubs was played in July before a crowd of 8,000.

The corroborees were the most financially successful of these events, making a net profit of £100 compared with £50 for the electric-light football match, £30 for the Aboriginal football matches, and a loss of £271 on the Test match. They were not repeated, however, partly because of the intense criticism they attracted. The *South Australian Register* made a number of

vehement attacks on the S.A.C.A. and printed a letter from one correspondent saying that the corroborees were both "disgusting" and "a disgraceful affair", with the writer going on to wonder whether Creswell and his committee would "paint themselves and hold a whitefellow's corroboree if it would augment their funds".

Wesleyan Sunday School demonstration

A major religious ceremony was held on the ground on 9th November 1886 when a Wesleyan Sunday School demonstration involved 5,600 children, who marched under the banners of their schools from Victoria Square to the Oval. In mid-afternoon a thousand-voice choir was formed in the pavilion, singing such hymns as "All Hail the Power", "Song of the Soldier", "Oh, Where are the Reapers?", "Hallelujah for the Cross", "Onward Go" and "He Will Hide Me", to the accompaniment of the Gawler Band. There were at least 8,000 people, including the children, at the ground during the afternoon.



Edwin Thomas Smith, Mayor of Adelaide and a leading light in the South Australian Cricketing Association.

[Photo courtesy of the State Library of S.A.]

The Flower Girl of Freiburg

Musical concerts by military bands were popular in the 1880s, and an operetta, *The Flower Girl of Freiburg*, was staged over ten nights from December 1886 to January 1887, in conjunction with a Swiss Fair. The show was described as a "serio-comic opera" and "the most perfect and enjoyable promenade entertainment ever seen in South Australia", but the *dramatis personae* of Mayor, Town Clerk, Crier, Janet and Agnes (the Flower Girl) leave little clue as to the content. In addition, there were 100 instrumentalists and choristers, Herr Berhrndt "the favourite basso", a Mr. Stephens the "inimitable

comique", and twenty Morris Dancers. However good (or bad) it was, it ran for a reasonably long season at a cost of one shilling admission.

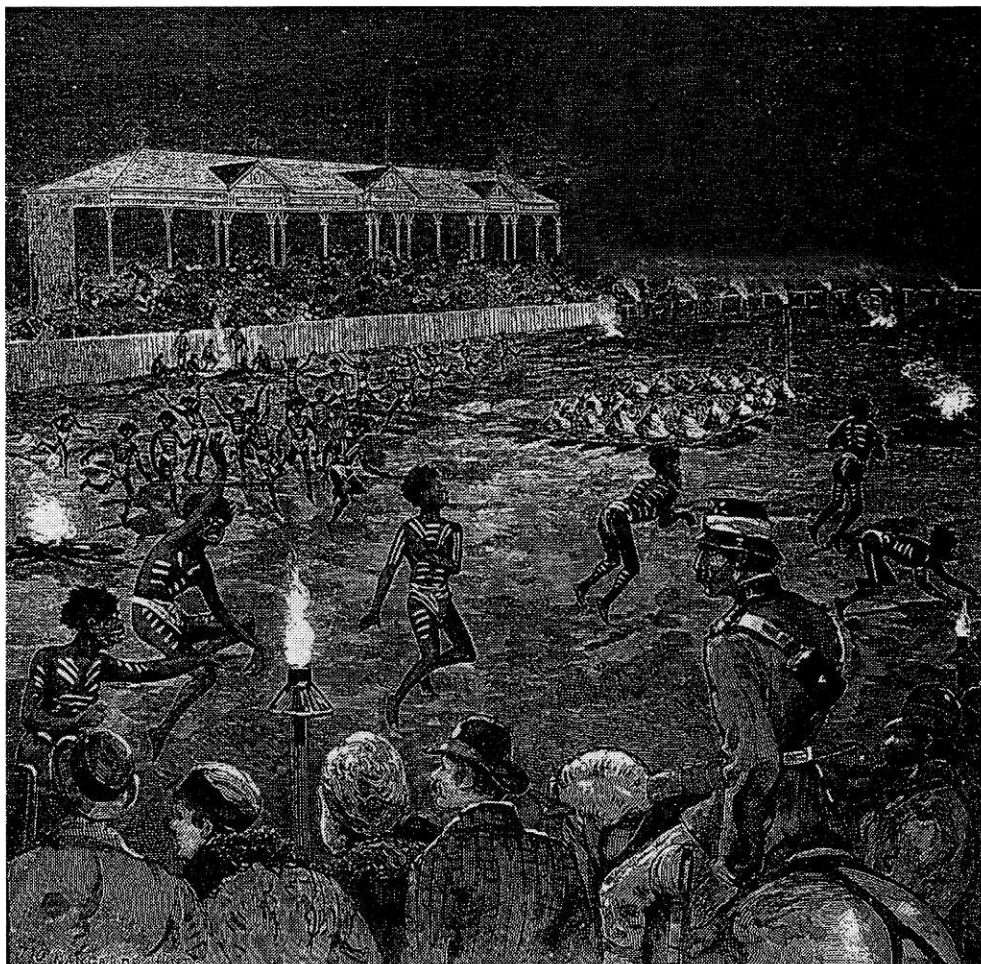
Fireworks

Drawing a crowd similar in size to the first corroboree was a huge fireworks display in March and April 1887. The opening night on 16th March featured a "fire portrait" of Adelaide Mayor and S.A.C.A. Vice-President, Edwin Smith (pictured above), and attracted around 20,000 people. The admission price of two shillings in the grandstand and one shilling in the ground did not deter a huge number of people from pouring into the Oval as soon as the gates were open at 8 p.m. The pyrotechnic display by C.T. Brock & Co. won the approval of the *Register* as "a complete success" and S.A.C.A. Secretary Creswell was praised for looking after the comfort and convenience of the

paying customers. The displays continued into the middle of April.

Whether the S.A.C.A. or Brock & Co. exercised a proper duty of care to viewers outside the ground was another matter, however. In its report of the first display the *Register* noted:

The people who want to pose as "deadheads" on Montefiore Hill were considerably warned that the heights would be bombarded and made untenable with spent rocket-sticks. However, the rocket-sticks must fall somewhere, and it was certainly considerate to warn the outside public that their point of vantage had been shrewdly selected as the locality of the shower of wood, and show them that expenditure of a shilling would procure them unqualified pleasure and immunity from danger.



*The Aboriginal corroboree at the Adelaide Oval, May 1885.
[From the Australasian Sketcher, Vol. XIII, No. 194, 29 June 1885.]*

The issue created spirited debate among newspaper correspondents. On 17th March, one Thomas Harry stated that he believed the pyrotechnists were responsible for the safety of persons "both inside and outside the Oval" and argued that the term "deadhead" could become literal. On 4th April W.J. Thompson of Ovingham wrote in support of an injured person taking action for damages against S.A.C.A. Thompson's language was highly inflammatory but he raised the following questions:

First of all, what right have the S.A.C.A. to order the fireworks to be fired in the direction of Montefiore Hill? Is it because they imagine for a moment that the people congregating thereon cannot speculate the paltry amount of one shilling? Secondly, are the Association or their Secretary such maniacs as to think that persons with young children and infants are going on to a crowded Oval? Sir, I consider the police, the Corporation, or whoever is in charge, have committed a great breach of the public trust by allowing Her Majesty's subjects to be exposed to such an immense danger.

This letter caused a lot of ire for "W.R." of North Adelaide, who, on 6th April, labelled Thompson as a person unable to see beyond his nose, although W.R.'s defence of the Oval as a safe place to take children in a crowd at night was nonsense, given the safety concerns at the first corroboree less than two

years earlier. A further query from a correspondent known as "Taxpayer", asking by whose authority the S.A.C.A. allowed Brock & Co. to discharge fireworks on the Oval, brought the reply that the Association had to obtain the consent of the Corporation before using the Oval for other purposes than cricket and other sports.

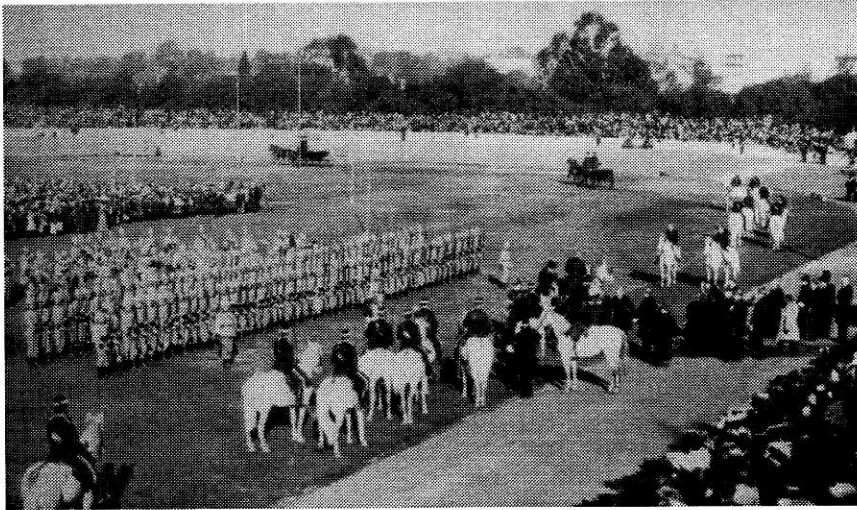
The effect of these complaints was not immediately forthcoming. The following year Brock & Co. were back again with another fire portrait of Edwin Smith. They accompanied high-wire heroine Ella Zuila, assisted by her daughter Little Lulu and the acrobat Nyra the Cloudflyer, whose specialty was diving from a height of around twelve metres. Handel's *Messiah* was staged at the Oval on Christmas Day 1888 and regular classical musical concerts were held, sometimes, rather oddly, in conjunction with the newly installed switchback railway. In 1889 fireworks supported the Great Maori Troupe, which had been touring the Australian colonies giving haka haka and war dances.

In March 1889 a large advertisement for the Gaylord Silbon Troupe, an acrobatic company that made a claim to be "the most daring, thrilling, sensational, astounding and marvellous entertainment ever witnessed in the southern hemisphere", with the capacity to attract "30,000 persons able to see ⇒

the whole performance without inconvenience" upset theatrical entrepreneurs and caused the issue of the Oval lease to be raised again. Obviously there would be complaints by proprietors of other places of amusement which had much higher running costs than a cricket ground with a low rental.

Pain's Fireworks presented a show in 1890 with a colossal representation of the newly built Eiffel Tower and the destruction of the Spanish Armada, although in its annual report that year the S.A.C.A. reported that "the public, judging from the attendance, appear to have had enough of fireworks for the present". A four-night programme in March 1897 returned scarcely enough profit to the S.A.C.A. to cover expenses.

The range of entertainments at Adelaide Oval began to narrow to sporting contests during the 1890s, so in some respects it was a surprise when the lease was widened as part of the Adelaide Oval Act 1897, as noted earlier. With an increase in grandstands and mounding at the southern and northern ends of the Oval, after the establishment of a banked cycle track in 1899, the ground was thus ready for its biggest event.



*The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York arriving at the Adelaide Oval for the public schools demonstration on 11th July 1901.
[Photograph courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia.]*

Royal Visit 1901

The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V and Queen Mary) visited South Australia between 9th and 15th July 1901 on their way home from opening the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne. Amid a rushed programme, the Adelaide Oval featured in three events: an intercollegiate football match between St. Peter's and Prince Alfred Colleges on 10th July; a public schools demonstration on 11th July and a military tattoo on 12th July.

The annual football match between the two colleges at the Oval had been one of the most popular engagements of the year since 1880 and this game was watched by the Duchess. A record crowd of 12,000 people attended on the Wednesday and paid half-a-crown a head for seats in the grandstand. Before the game the Duchess presented silver tokens, engraved "Royal Match 1901", to the boys in each team.

During the first quarter of the match it seemed as though P.A.C. would win easily, taking a 17-point lead and keeping their opponents goalless, but thereafter the teams were evenly matched. St. Peter's came back

strongly in the second half but at the finish the scoreboard showed Priace's winning 4.12 to 4.5. The Duchess found the game "a most exciting contest" and there were extra rewards for the students of both schools, who were granted a week's holiday.

Thirty thousand people attended a public entertainment given by 5,800 schoolchildren on the Thursday. The programme began at a quarter to two when the children entered the arena, their colourful costumes, mostly using sailor patterns, producing a brilliant effect. Around £6,000 (or £1 per child) was reckoned to have been spent by parents on costumes for the occasion. Students from the major metropolitan public schools presented a range of physical drills, including club swinging, a scarf and ring drill, exercises with poles

and dumbbells, a flag drill, a cutlass drill and maypole dancing.

The Duke and Duchess arrived in carriages at 4 p.m. and were driven around the Oval on the cycle track. Just as the royal couple were about to alight at the entrance to the vice-regal box, an exciting incident occurred. A horse ridden by one of the troopers forming

the escort slipped on the asphalt track and threw its rider. For a moment the horse frisked around at close range to the Duke and Duchess but the Governor, Lord Tennyson, seized the reins and brought the obstreperous animal under control.

When the official party was seated, the children massed together on the grass and sang the national anthem, which was followed by ringing cheers and the waving of thousands of coloured flags. Little wonder that the parochial press reported the royal couple as remarking that it was the best entertainment of its kind they had seen since leaving England. Nor was it surprising that before the last item on the programme the students (like those of the colleges the day before) were rewarded with a week's holiday.

The programme had not quite ended, however, as the Duke and Duchess agreed to plant trees on the north-western mound in honour of their visit. The Conservator of Forests, Walter Gill, held a young specimen of *Ficus australis* in the prepared hole while the Duke heaped soil around the roots with a silver-plated spade, the gift of Sir Edwin Smith (now K.C.M.G. and President of the S.A.C.A.). A second fig tree was planted by the Duchess. Three hearty cheers were led

by Sir Edwin who stated, "The trees will grow. His Royal Highness said so."

The grand naval and military tattoo held on the Friday evening brought another large attendance, despite competing attractions such as the illumination of the streets and a concert in the Adelaide Town Hall by the band of the royal yacht *Ophir*. The troops who took part in the event assembled at the statue of Queen Victoria shortly before 7 p.m. and marched to the Oval, headed by the combined 1st and 2nd Battalions, Locomotive, and various suburban and country town bands.

Facing the members' grandstand, a wide avenue of acetylene lights was placed, comprising 50 lamps of 200 candle power each. The programme was performed between these rows of lights and included a series of trumpet and bugle calls, bayonet exercises, artillery troops changing gun wheels in action, tugs-of-war by infantry and mounted men, cavalry sword exercises, fire-club swinging and a rescue race. One of the best items of the evening was the smart skirmish between a detachment of the naval brigade and a horde acting out the role of Chinese Boxers. This ended in the

complete rout of the Boxers. The final item was another battle contested a few minutes later, with a presentation of a British camp at night being attacked by a body of Boers. After "fierce fighting", the Boers were, unsurprisingly, dispersed.

Overall, Adelaide Oval proved an important venue during the Royal Visit with the schools' demonstration, in particular, providing a source of local pride as well as giving pleasure to the royal couple.

Note: For fuller details of the corroborees, see B. Whimpress: *Corroboree: Adelaide Oval 1885* (Adelaide, 2000)

References:

South Australian Register, 1 June 1885, 10 November 1886, 1 January 1887, 17 March 1887, 4 & 6 April 1887, 1 February 1888, 20 March 1889, 27 March 1890
S.A.C.A. Annual Reports, 1889-90, 1896-97
Observer, 6, 13 & 20 July 1901

Dr. Bernard Whimpress has written eight books on sporting history. For the last seven years he has been the S.A. Cricket Association Historian and the Curator of the Adelaide Oval Museum.

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 www.slsa.sa.gov.au. Neil Thomas' "Mortlock Archives" column has been deferred until next year due to a temporary suspension of the processing of archival accessions.

MONOGRAPHS

Arbor Day in South Australia: Programme of Proceedings (Vardon & Pritchard, Adelaide, 1889)

Austral Archaeology Pty. Ltd.: **Oodnadatta Track Heritage Survey: Part of the Far North & Far West Region** (D.E.H., Adelaide, 2001)

H.K. Bailey: **James Boor's Bonanza: A History of Wallaroo Mines, South Australia** (Bailey, Kadina, c. 2002)

K. Beard: **Miss Australia: A Retrospective 1908-2000** (Crawford House Publishing, Hindmarsh, c. 2001)

Beautiful Stonyfell (Dunstan Limited, Adelaide, 1936)
 Corporation of the City of Adelaide: **Report of Town Clerk on Town Planning and Housing Bill** (W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide, 1916)

G. Couch-Keen (ed.): **Tom Downer's Legacy: The Story of the State Horse-Drawn Vehicle Collection of the National Trust of South Australia** (National Trust of South Australia, Springton, 2002)

P. Derriman (ed.): **Our Don Bradman** 2nd ed. (A.B.C. Books, Sydney, 2001)

J.-A. Ellis: **Tried by Fire: The Story of the S.A. Country Fire Service** (S.A.C.F.S., Adelaide, 2001)

W.A. Gilbert: **A Study of the Development of Beaumont House** 2nd ed. (Beaumont House Committee, Adelaide, 1991)

History of Adelaide Central Market 2nd ed. (Adelaide, 1977)

T. Isaacson: **Jewels of the Sea: A Marine Education Resource Guide for Children in Primary and Middle Years Bands** (Marine Life Society of South Australia, Adelaide, 2001)

S. Magarey (ed.): **Dame Roma: Glimpses of a Glorious Life** (Axiom, Adelaide, 2002)

S. Nicol: **Outback: South Australia and Central Australia** 2nd ed. (Royal Automobile Association of South Australia, Adelaide, 2002)

R.J. Noye: **Clare: A District History** 4th ed. (District Council of Clare & Gilbert Valleys and Clare Regional History Group, Clare, 1997)

Y. Reynolds: **Pubs of Port Adelaide** (Hourglass Books, Port Adelaide, 2002)

T. Rodda: **Record of Northern Yorke Peninsula Agricultural Bureau Field Trial and Show Society 1894-1945** (Farmer Press, Kadina, 1945)

R.H. Smith and P. Burgis: **Peter Dawson: The World's Most Popular Baritone: With Complete Song Title Discography** (Currency Press, Strawberry Hills, 2001)

I. Watson: **Looking at You Looking at Me: An Aboriginal History of the South-East** Vol. 1, New ed. (Watson, Nairne, 2002)

E. Wauchope: **Cleve: The Way We Were: A Look at Streets, Buildings, Landscapes and the Progress of Cleve from its Early Years** (National Trust of South Australia, Cleve, 2002)

Who invented “Australia” ?

Part I

by John Healey

Most people, if asked, would say that it was Matthew Flinders who coined the term “Australia” to refer to our island continent. In fact, he was not the first to use it. That honour belongs to George Shaw (1751-1813), an English naturalist who never came to Australia.

Shaw was a deacon and a doctor of medicine whose love of natural history eventually took precedence over his other pursuits. He was a co-founder of the Linnaean Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society and for the last six years of his life Keeper of Natural History at the British Museum. His output of publications was prolific and included *The Naturalist's Miscellany: or, Coloured figures of natural objects: drawn and described immediately from nature*. This was issued monthly from 1789 to 1813 and contained over a thousand hand-coloured, engraved plates, together with descriptions. Among the latter, in 1799, was the first published description of the platypus.

Shaw was also responsible for the text of *Zoology of New Holland* --- the first book ever produced on Australian fauna. It was illustrated by James Sowerby and published by him in London in 1794. A facsimile edition was issued in 1998 by the Friends of the State Library of South Australia, with an introduction by Valmai Hankel (from which the above information on Shaw is taken). The book contains plates and descriptions of twelve Australian animals, the first of which is the nonpareil parrot, *Psittacus eximius*. Shaw's commentary on this bird opens with the words:

The vast Island or rather Continent of Australia, Australasia, or New Holland, which has so lately attracted the particular attention of European navigators and naturalists, seems to abound in scenes of peculiar wildness and sterility.

This, then, is the first recorded instance of the term “Australia” applied to the actual continent. The name was, however, used by a number of writers prior to this, to refer to *Terra australis incognita*, the unknown southern land, seriously hypothesized or creatively imagined to exist somewhere below the equator. So before we deal with Flinders' first use of the word in 1804 let us look at the previous two hundred years, in which the term “Australia” and its various derivatives was used by navigators, mapmakers, chroniclers, antiquaries and novelists.

(The reader must be warned that we will make several detours and deviations along the way, for we have tangled stories to weave, intriguing digressions

to pursue, idiosyncratic personages to call upon and obscure volumes to sift. But this is what history is, the dirt roads and winding by-ways often having more to interest us than the straight, black highway. And life itself is a detour, is it not, dear reader, for who would wish to go straight from the cradle to the grave?)

Let us begin with the Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, who sailed with two ships from Callao, Peru, in December 1605, voyaged across the Pacific and in May 1606 discovered the islands of the New Hebrides. Unfortunately, he could not tell the difference between a chain of small islands and a huge continent and he thought he had found the unknown southern land. He took possession of “all this region of the south as far as the Pole, which from this time shall be called Austrialia [sic] del Espiritu Santo”. Quiros' enthusiasm over his discovery led him to indulge in rather grandiose proceedings. He declared that a great city would be founded, to be named the New Jerusalem, he nominated its municipal officers and even established a new order of knighthood (subject to confirmation by King Philip III of Spain and Portugal). There were processions, religious dances, high masses and fireworks.

Shortly after this, however, Quiros fell ill and, when his ship became separated from that of his second-in-command, Luis Vaez de Torres, he decided to return to Spain. Torres continued westward to explore the southern coast of New Guinea and discover the strait that now bears his name. Quiros spent the rest of his short life writing “memorials” (or petitions) to King Philip, describing his voyage, pleading for his debts to be paid and presenting his case for another expedition. He wrote fifty memorials in as many months, but to no avail. He died in 1615 at the age of 50. His voyage and the various accounts of it, however, continued to exercise an extraordinary influence on subsequent exploration of the Pacific. His name is mentioned time and time again by navigators and chroniclers over the following two hundred years.

In his first memorial of 1607 Quiros explained to the King that he had called the land he had discovered “Austrialia” --- “in happy memory of Your Majesty, whose dynastic name is Austria”. (King Philip III of Spain was also Archduke of Austria.)

It is the eighth memorial, written in 1610, that is of interest in the present context. It begins:

I, Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, say that with this I have presented to Your Majesty eight memorials relative to the settlement which ought to be made in the land which Your Majesty ordered to be discovered in Austrialia Incognita.

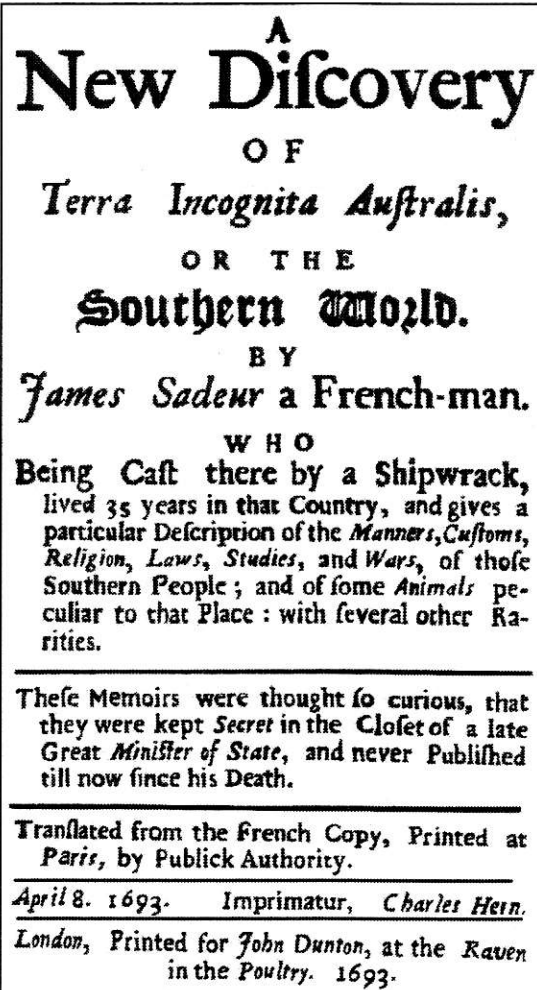
In 1625 Samuel Purchas, an English clergyman, published in four volumes a work entitled *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and others*. Purchas was one of a number

of literary gentlemen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who collected, transcribed, translated and edited accounts of voyages and travels that might otherwise have been lost or relegated to obscurity. *Purchas His Pilgrimes* included a translation of Quiros' eighth memorial and in the first paragraph Purchas, by mistake, rendered "Austrialia" as "Australia". This is the first recorded instance of the word "Australia" in print and although it was a misprint of a name, coined by a misguided Portuguese to flatter a Spanish king with dynastic links to Austria, given to a land that wasn't Australia in the first place, it was quoted repeatedly by subsequent writers, leading directly to its use by Flinders two centuries later.

Our next port of call is a totally fictitious one that sprang from the fertile imagination of a disgraced Franciscan friar, Gabriel de Foigny (1630?-1692). He was born in north-eastern France and, after studying well in literature and theology, joined the Franciscan order of the Cordeliers de l'Observance. He then proceeded to scandalize the Church with his licentious behaviour and, threatened with excommunication, fled to the city of Geneva, where he married a widow and found work as a proof-reader, a teacher of music and grammar, and a church cantor. He persisted in his lewd ways, however, being accused of indecent assault, committing "some undecent things at church" and turning up drunk to a communion service.

De Foigny was the author of several books, but the one on which his reputation rests is *La Terre Australe Connue*, published privately in Geneva in 1676. It purports to be the narrative of a Frenchman, Jacques Sadeur, who was shipwrecked near the coast of an enormous southern continent and lived there for 35 years, studying the customs, pursuits, language, laws and religion of the inhabitants. The book contained a number of elements deemed by the Church to be blasphemous and immoral, and it was banned forthwith. De Foigny was imprisoned for some weeks but on his release he ignored the authorities and continued to sell the book and to issue further editions.

In 1693 an English translation was published in London by John Dunton as *A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis, or the Southern World*. The title page (shown above) bore the spurious declaration:



Title page of the 1693 English translation of de Foigny's *La Terre Australe Connue*.

"These memoirs were thought so curious that they were kept secret in the Closet of a late Great Minister of State, and never Published till now since his Death."

The original French version of the book contained numerous occurrences of the words "Australien" and "Australienne", and in the 1693 English translation we find "Australia" and "Australians" used throughout. The table of chapters (*reproduced overleaf*) includes, among other headings, "A Description of Australia", "Of the Constitution of the Australians", "Of the Australian Tongue" and "Of the Animals, or living Creatures peculiar to Australia".

In de Foigny's novel (for it must be regarded as an early example of the form) Australia extends from the South Atlantic to the South Pacific. The narrator, Sadeur, describes how, when they were in sight of Madagascar, a violent storm drove the ship over a thousand leagues (3,000 nautical miles) to the west, where it was wrecked near the coast of an unknown land. From the elevation of the sun he judges the latitude to be about 35° South. In the fourth chapter he gives a complicated description of the geography of the continent, stating that "the Australian Territories contain twenty seven different Countries, which are all very considerable, and are altogether about three thousand leagues [9,000 miles] in length, and four or five hundred in breadth."

The inhabitants, of whom there are 96 million, are eight-foot-high, naked, red-skinned, vegetarian hermaphrodites, sharing all property in common. They live in perfect freedom, in complete harmony with nature, and are never ill. Readers will also be

interested to know that this Australia has no insects, spiders, serpents, nor any venomous beasts. In this Utopia the Australians spend their days meditating, studying history and philosophy, gardening and doing physical exercises. They have no internal strife but are occasionally invaded by a foreign nation, the Fondins, whom they are generally able to repel. Sadeur, after spending 35 years there, during which time he conducts numerous philosophical discussions with leading sages, is eventually accused of showing sympathy towards the Fondins and is forced to flee Australia on the back of a monstrous bird.

There is an explicit link with Quiros. De Foigny was familiar with the latter's eighth memorial, ⇨

for he refers to it in his preface, attempting to give some credibility to his fiction by generously acknowledging that Quiros had also "made some Discovery" of the land that his own hero Sadeur had investigated so thoroughly.

Upon comparing the Description that Ferdinando de Quir, a Portugal, gives of the Southern Continent, with that which is contained in this book, it must needs be allowed that he hath made some Discovery of that Country. For we read in his eighth Request to the King of Spain, that in the Discoveries which he made in the year 1610 [sic] of the Southern Country, called here Australia, he found a Country much more Fertile and Populous than any in Europe; that the inhabitants were much bigger and taller than the Europeans; and that they lived much longer than they.

We now return to the real world and the work of Charles de Brosses (1709-1777), a man of letters and President of the Parliament of Burgundy. Like Samuel Purchas, he was concerned to preserve the maritime narratives of others and in 1756 he published his *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes*. This was a collection of over sixty first- and second-hand accounts of voyages in the southern hemisphere by men such as Vespucci, Magellan, Drake, de Gonneville, Alcazova, Hawkins, Tasman, Dampier, and, among many others, Quiros. De Brosses provided his own introduction to each extract and also wrote a long prefatory essay entitled "Où il est traité des utilités de la découverte" --- "In which is discussed the benefits of discovery". The greatest of these benefits, he declares, is the glory of the enterprise, but he goes on to discuss not only the exploitation of resources and the profits to be realized from trade but also the advantages to be gained from the deportation of criminals, vagabonds and foundlings.

Later in the essay he becomes the first to use the term "Australasie" --- Australasia.

Our globe is composed of three great tracts of land --- Asia, Africa and America --- and three great tracts of sea --- Ethiopian or Indian, Atlantic or Northern, and Pacific or Southern. Comparably to this, one can in the same way divide the unknown southern world into three parts, each one to the south of the three mentioned above. The one in the Indian Ocean to the south of Asia I shall call, for this reason, Australasia.

He gives the name "Magellanique" (Magellanica) to the supposed land lying to the south of Cape Horn and extending across the South Atlantic, and coins the name "Polynésie" (Polynesia) to refer to "the multiplicity of islands" in the South Pacific. It should be noted that de Brosses was one of those educated men in the eighteenth century who firmly believed that a great mass of land must exist in the southern hemisphere in order to counterbalance the weight of land in the northern. He attempts to prove this with calculations involving the relative densities of earth and sea-water, and the proportion of land to sea above and below the equator.

De Brosses is particularly enthusiastic about the

possibilities for trade with the natives of Australasia, waxing lyrical about the opportunities for selling them items such as coloured glass beads, paper, clothes, hand-mirrors, alcohol, and especially iron goods. He claims that the islanders of this region have an "insatiable avarice" for iron, far greater than Europeans have for gold, and comments:

The Australians, in fact, can only gain by giving us something, whatever it might be, for a spade, a saw, or a pair of scissors.

Included in the *Histoire* was a chart (see detail on next page) drawn by Didier Robert de Vaugondy. It was entitled "Carte Générale qui représente les Mers des Indes, Pacifique et Atlantique, et principalement le Monde Austral, divisé en

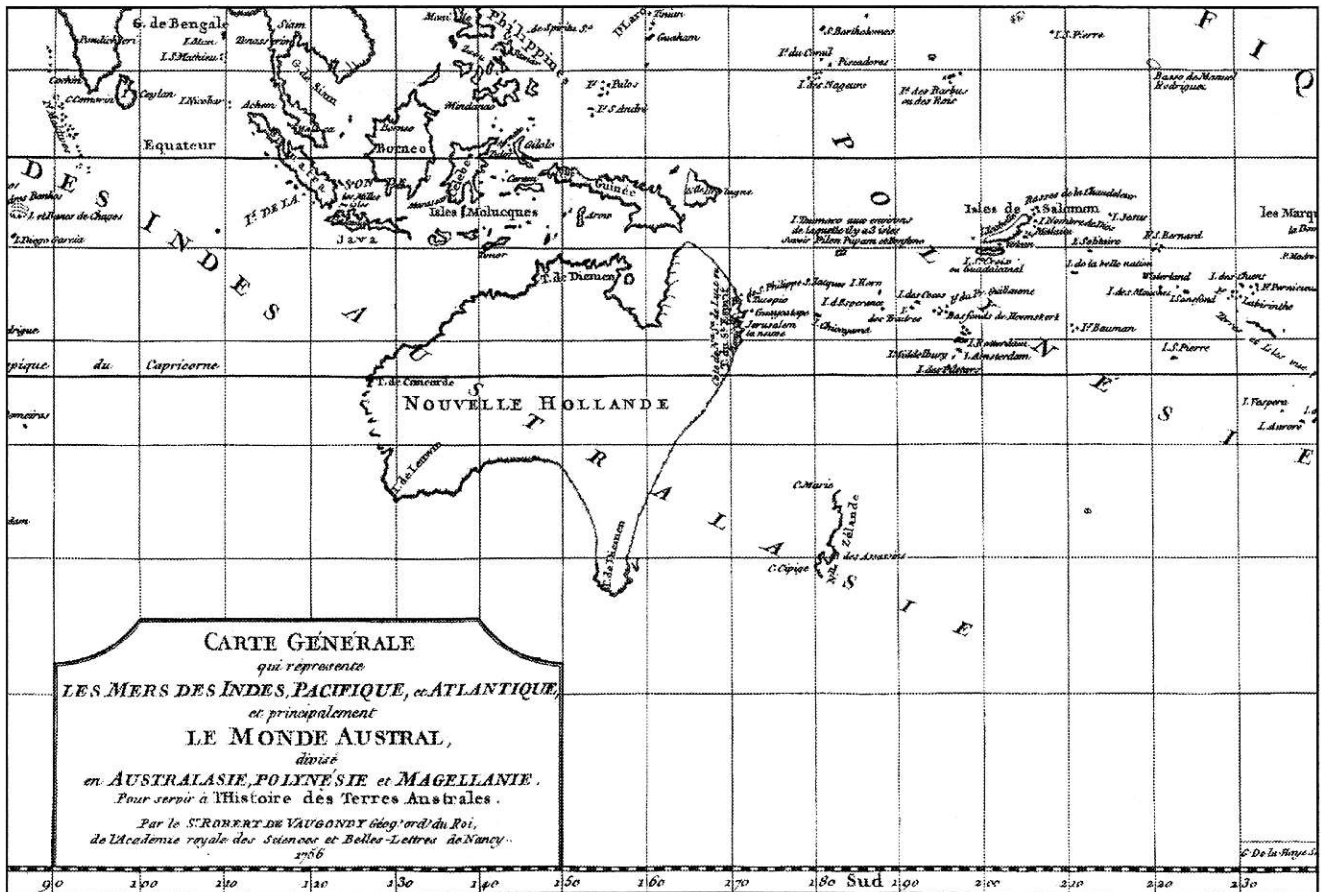
Australasie, Polynésie et Magellanie" --- that is, "General Chart showing the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and principally the Southern World, divided into Australasia, Polynesia and Magellanica". The outline of Australia, except for the north-western coast, is very crudely delineated, its eastern extremity reaching as far as the New Hebrides. The label "Australasie" extends across Australia and New Zealand --- a definition that still holds today.

In 1766-68 a Scottish antiquary, John Callander, published a three-volume work, *Terra Australis Cognita; or Voyages to the Terra Australis, or Southern Hemisphere, during the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries*. This was nothing more than a very free translation of de Brosses' *Histoire*, though Callander's only acknowledgement was to "the French writer from whom we have drawn many helps in our present undertaking". De Brosses' "Australasie" is rendered

Table of the Chapters.

- C**hap. 1. Of Sadeur's Birth and Education.
 Chap. 2. Of Sadeur's Voyage to Congo.
 Chap. 3. Of the accidents which brought Sadeur in to Australia.
 Chap. 4. A Description of Australia, with a Geographical Map of the said Country.
 Chap. 5. Of the Constitution of the Australians, and of their Customs.
 Chap. 6. Of the Religion of the Australians.
 Chap. 7. Of the Opinion of the Australians concerning this Life.
 Chap. 8. Of the Exercises of the Australians.
 Chap. 9. Of the Australian Tongue, and of their Studies.
 Chap. 10. Of the Animals, or living Creatures peculiar to Australia.
 Chap. 11. Of Australian Commodities, and Rarities that might be useful to Europe.
 Chap. 12. Of the ordinary Wars of the Australians.
 Chap. 13. Of the Return of Sadeur to the Island of Madagascar
 Chap. 14. Of the stay that Sadeur made in Madagascar, and the occurrences that happened in that time.

Chapter headings in the 1693 English translation of De Foigny's *La Terre Australe Connue*.



Detail from Robert de Vaugondy's chart of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, printed in Charles de Brosses' *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes*, 1756. "Australasie" is shown extending over New Holland and New Zealand.

as "Australasia", in the text and in the reproduction of Vaugondy's chart. Callander also reprints Quiros' eighth memorial, using Purchas' translation containing the words "Australia Incognita".

In his introductory essay de Brosses had urged the French nation to vigorously pursue its colonial interests, but in the period between his *Histoire* and Callander's translation the Seven Years' War had taken place. Britain had deprived France of its colonies in Canada and India and had proved overwhelmingly superior in sea-power. Callander, in his preface, could not resist a dig at the French when he, in turn, predicts great things of British imperialism.

Vain are the repeated exhortations of the French Writer, addressed to a nation which is so far from being able to prosecute new discoveries, that they have been stripped, by the late war, of the best foreign settlements they possessed; and, by the ruin of their marine, seem totally disabled at present to attempt any thing of moment in this way.

In Part II of this article, to be printed in the next issue of *History SA*, we will look at the industrious but egotistical hydrographer, Alexander Dalrymple, the missionary voyage of James Wilson, and that most literate navigator and mapmaker, Matthew Flinders.

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The River Torrens and its bridges

by James Potter

Part II: The Saga of the City Bridge

The City Bridge we know today is the third on the present King William Road site. There were, however, two earlier sites. This article traces the history of this important link between the city south of the River Torrens and the road to the Port and the north.

The early years of European settlement saw Glenelg as the preferred landing place for vessels, but by 1838 Port Adelaide was becoming more frequently used. This posed the problem of finding a place for vehicular traffic to cross the River Torrens safely. An old colonist, James Chittleborough, noted:

The river in those days, particularly that portion from Hindmarsh to Walkerville, was very beautiful, as every old colonist can testify. There was a chain of large waterholes connected by a small stream (nearly level with the top of the bank), which rippled over a gravelly bottom through thick tea-tree scrub, reeds and rushes. The large pools (varying considerably in length, but extending generally to the outer bank of the present watercourse and being from 30 to 100 yards apart) remained full all the summer, and were surrounded by overhanging eucalypti. Most of the waterholes were very deep, so much so that divers could not reach the bottom in some parts, though frequent trials were made. It was a common saying among the first colonists that some of the waterholes were large enough to float a seventy-four gun ship or man-of-war frigate. [Register, 27/12/1906]

A fording place was found between two of these rock pools at a point about 200 metres east of the present Morphett Street bridge. Chittleborough reminisced about the old ford:

Before there were any bridges over the river the traffic to North Adelaide and the Port (by the old Port Road) crossed at the ford, the entrance and exit of which may still be seen [in the early 1900s] above the boatsheds east of Morphett Street Bridge. The ford was at the lower end of a waterhole that extended to near the old Government Garden. It was from this waterhole that the whole supply of water for the town was taken. The ford had a solid pebbly bottom, on the eastern

side of which the watercarts were backed until about 2 or 3 feet deep, and the large watercasks on wheels were filled by the drivers standing on the shafts or side and dipping the water up with ropes and buckets.

Another early settler, John Adams, noted that this ford, also known as Hack's Crossing, was "the only place where we could cross with safety". The deep waterholes were a danger to travellers, particularly at night and in times of high water level. An 1844 correspondent to the *South Australian Register* shared these fears:

Whilst I write there are amongst us parents weeping for their children. The Torrens is uncertain, dangerous and deceptive; its ever varying fords are on the brinks of its fatal depths. He who sinks into one of its dark caverns finds his passage upwards obstructed by sunken logs and branches, and by projecting banks, and is rarely able to emerge without assistance. [20/1/1844]

A bridge at this site became essential.

Now that rains have commenced, all communication between Port Adelaide and the capital must be virtually suspended, or the draymen and cattle must swim across the stream at the risk of their lives and to the great detriment of their cattle and loads.

[South Australian, 21/7/1838]

It is uncertain when the first bridge was open to the public. There was no bridge in June 1839 when the *Register* said:

The inhabitants of Adelaide in general and particularly merchants and other gentlemen whose interests require them frequently to communicate with Port

Adelaide are earnestly requested to aid in defraying the cost of a strong temporary bridge across the Torrens, the construction of which was commenced 5 weeks since and might be completed in 10 days if sufficient funds are forthcoming. [15/6/1839]

But the *South Australian* in August of that year included the bridge as one of the recent improvements made in Adelaide. Although basically of wooden construction, it did boast stone piers and cost £200. In October the bridge was lit by lamps, although not the approaches.

A correspondent complains of the want of one or two lamps at that part of the road which has lately been lowered near the bridge over the Torrens. It is a serious inconvenience to persons returning from public worship on Lord's Day evenings.

[South Australian, 20/4/1841]



*The first bridge over the River Torrens.
(Detail from engraving on next page.)*

And so, although not officially named as such, Adelaide had its first City Bridge. It can be seen depicted in a plaque on the present City Bridge and on a number of engravings that originate from an 1841 sketch (*see right*).

Its position suited William Light, who had always seen the North Terrace and Morphett Street intersection as the entrance to the city. This is why he chose this area as the site for Trinity Church, built in 1838. (Otherwise we might expect to find Adelaide's first church at a point of high ground such as the Newmarket corner.) We can imagine the final stages of the route from Port Adelaide to the city (*see map on next page*), although today it is difficult to recreate this walk because of rail tracks. There being, of course, no

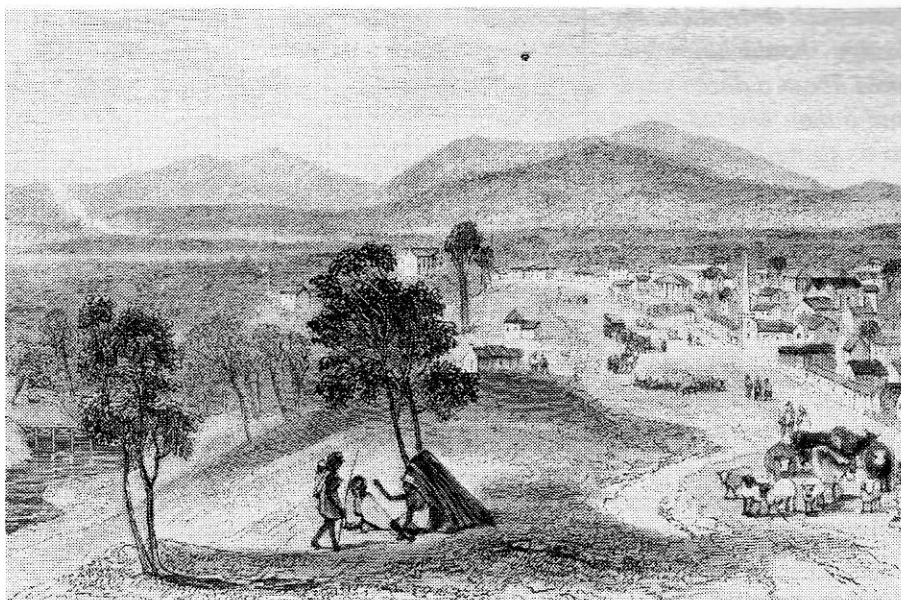
bridge at Hindmarsh, the traveller would continue along the north bank of the Torrens, passing the Iron Stores situated about 300 metres east of the junction between the Port and Gawler railway lines. With Montefiore Hill on the left and the Native School (Piltawodli) on the right, Trinity Church would have come into view between the trees as the road led to the bridge just to the east of the area we call Pinkie Flat. The bridge could be a very busy place:

... people of different nations constantly passing and re-passing; the Englishman known by his honest bluntness and sometimes his coarseness; the Irishman by his rich and mellifluous brogue; the Scotchman by his canny wariness; and the Malay, the Indian, the Chinese, the New Zealander, or the German, by his costume. Vehicles too of every kind, from the light and popular britscha, down to the heavy bullock dray, or even to the baker's dog cart, making this line of communication between North and South Adelaide, and between Adelaide itself and the Port.

[South Australian Magazine, 1841]

On reaching the south bank, the traveller had the choice of a path to the left (winding between the Government Garden and a small quarry) which reached North Terrace opposite King William Street, or a road to the right that met North Terrace at a point west of Morphett Street. The latter was the major route because at this time the north-west sector of the city was by far the most populated. In 1840, 47% of the city population lived in this area. Hindley Street was "Adelaide's Regent Street", "as full of houses as the principal street of any provincial town in England".

Clearly Adelaide's inhabitants were satisfied with the position of this bridge. In 1841 improvements were



Engraving (c. 1852 from a sketch made in 1841) showing the first City Bridge on the far left. The picture is inaccurate in some respects --- the spire on Holy Trinity Church never appeared as shown. However, the position of the bridge is roughly correct, though a little too close to the line of Morphett Street.

[From the collection of James Potter.]

made to the road leading from the bridge to Morphett Street. It was enclosed with posts and rails, and several drains were built beneath the road. Unfortunately the condition of Morphett Street remained a problem. An "impetuous torrent" flowing from the vicinity of Light Square in the wet season formed deep gullies in the road, causing sprains to foot passengers and damage to horses' knees and the springs of vehicles. The *Adelaide Independent* commented that as Morphett Street was the first street that strangers entered on their coming to the city, it needed a proper state of repair.

Inadequacies in the length of the bridge were becoming apparent. Following heavy rains in October 1842 it was all but swept away and by April 1843 the *Register* was asking:

What is to be done with the Old Bridge over the Torrens? After being left in a state of dilapidation for the last 6 or 8 months, is it to be swept away by the first of this season's floods? . . . It is up to landlords, tradesmen and shopkeepers. [26/4/1843]

Some 130 citizens contributed a total of £105 for restoration. The job was achieved for £70 and the bridge was opened by Mayor Thomas Wilson on 17th June 1843, when it was officially designated the City Bridge. No money seems to have been spent on the approaches and by June 1844 the *South Australian* reported widespread damage to carriages and danger to pedestrians.

Following heavy rains in August 1844, part of the bridge collapsed but was quickly repaired. The *South Australian*, however, noted that there was

. . . one grand error --- the span is too confined, there being a strong current at the place where the bridge was erected, and the force of water damaged the ⇨

framework at the sides. The bridge should be lengthened about a dozen yards and a dam erected below so as to make still water below the bridge.

[27/8/1844]

A month later, on 21st September, the river rose eight feet and during the night the bridge was "completely undermined with huge masses borne downstream".

The Government promised to erect a new stone bridge on the same site if the public could find £150 to help the depleted Treasury coffers. There was, however, a move to have the bridge resited in line with Morphett Street. This raised considerable public discussion. The estimated £1,000 cost at the new site could be halved by using the old approaches and some remaining foundations. However, at the new site the bridge would "be at

right angles with the current and we may reasonably calculate upon its enduring for some years". Events were to prove these words of the *Register* quite wrong. There was also the question of the best approach to the city.

The present entrance to the town appears to me [said a correspondent to the newspaper] to be the prettiest and most sightly that can be chosen, the two branching roads leading to either end of the city adding very much to its picturesque appearance.

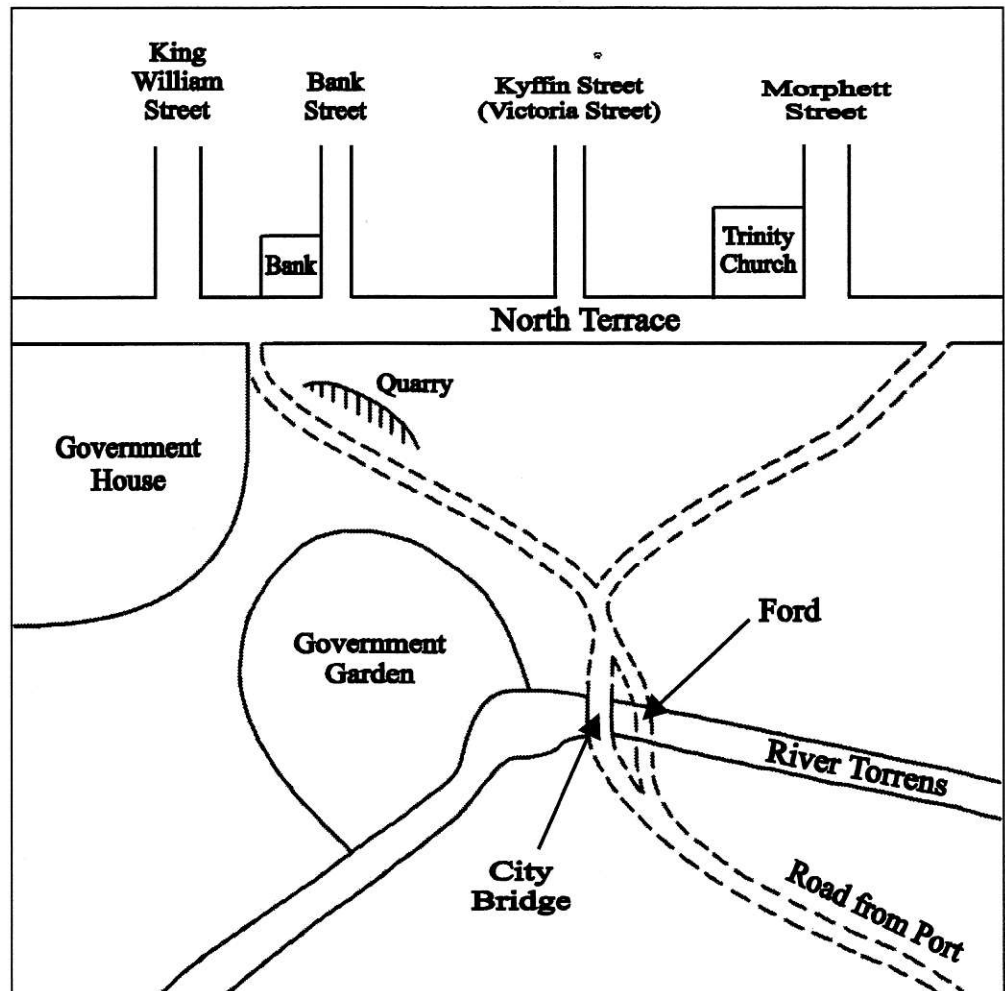
[5/2/1845]

Whereas, by using the new site,

... the elegant monument to the memory of our lamented Surveyor-General, Colonel Light, [in Light Square] would be the first object to attract the attention on approaching the city, which owes so much to his exertions. [from another letter writer, 8/2/1845]

Initially the financial argument won the day and a new stone bridge was begun on the old site. A flood in June 1845, however, damaged the foundations and approaches, and later events in July of the following year ended all hopes.

Damage to City Bridge is serious. Every particle of the scaffolding upon which the incipient arch was



Probable layout of the approaches to the original City Bridge in the early 1840s.
Map by James Potter (not drawn to scale).

formed has been carried away, along with part of the stonework.

[14/7/1846]

Attention turned to the Morphett Street site and in May 1847 the *South Australian* reported:

The opening of the City Bridge should be on Monday next. The bridge is nearly ready except for a small piece of road at the northern end. It is a creditable piece of solid stonework and seems built for eternity. Span of arch 60 feet; breadth 24.5 feet; height 17 feet from the spring and approximately 20 feet from the bed of the river. It stands 6 feet askew to accommodate itself to the direction of the stream. The view of the town from the bridge looking directly on Col. Light's monument, with the church on the left, is very pleasing.

[18/5/1847]

However 1847 was a very wet year. In June:

... the new stone bridge, commonly known as that of the City, received a rough baptism from old Father Torrens, instead of a gentle sprinkling from the hand of some lady fair, and although at one time assailed by overwhelming billows, escaped the watery ordeal, and remains (itself) unscathed, albeit the approaches already require what a banker would call a renewal of metal.

[Register, 23/6/1847]

And on 22nd July:

... the fine new stone bridge, recently built over the Torrens, gave way. It is supposed that the abutment on the left bank had sunk several inches; the centre of the arch on the east side then fell, carrying about half the roadway, and making the bridge impassable for carriages and dangerous for foot passengers.

Capt. E.C. Frome (right), of the Royal Engineers, blamed the collapse on "extraordinary changes in the course of the river", which meant the full force of the water was hurled against the abutments. It was seen as an unsuitable site and no attempt was made to build there for more than twenty years.



However, there was a problem in removing the remains of this erstwhile City Bridge. In August 1847 the Register reported:

The ruin of the City Bridge is being used by drivers with heavily-laden drays from the Port. On Wednesday the rashness reached its climax and the effects became so visible that on the following day police constables were appointed to forbid the passage to any but persons on foot. We wish that the Colonial Engineer would either blow up the remaining portion of the arch or take proper measures to prevent injury to foot passengers, which might be easily done with little expense. The best prevention we know of is a bag of powder well applied. [14/8/1847]

And then in October:

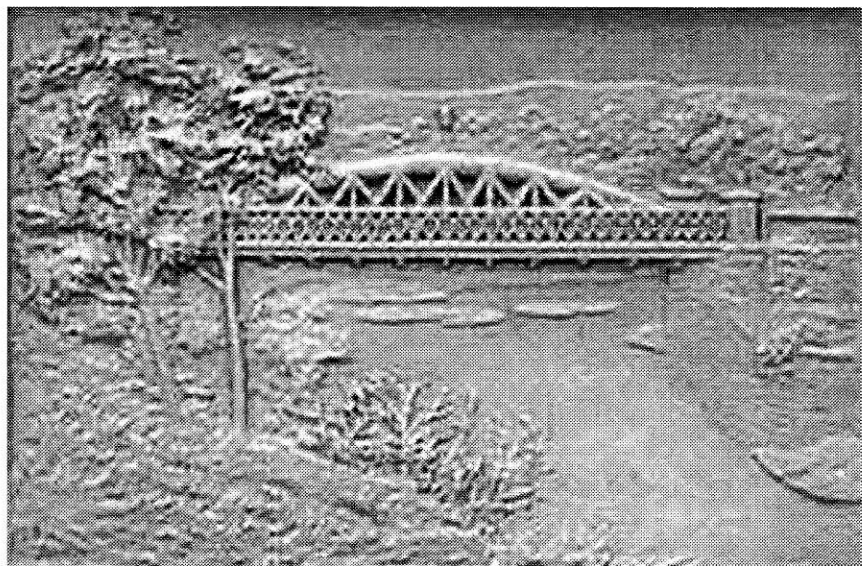
The discreet inhabitants of Adelaide were startled from their propriety on Wednesday last by a loud explosive report and violent concussion, which gave the glaziers an unexpected benefit, without at all obliging the graziers, some of whose cattle set off tail on end, and did not stop till they were far beyond the free pasturages of the municipal district. The first alarm at length subsided, and the good folk having picked up their scattered thoughts, some of them recollected the sentence of final condemnation passed upon the city bridge, and were thus enabled to attribute the extraordinary rumpus to the right cause, whilst they hastened to scrutinize the effects.

It would appear that, his Excellency having given permission to blow up the bridge, a stage was erected under the crown of the arch,

and upon this was placed a small platform supporting an iron-bound box, into which the contents of 8 or 10 quarter barrels of powder (25 lbs. each) were emptied; and the whole being closed and secured as well as the frail structure permitted, a long fuse was appended, and, in due time, lighted in the presence of his Excellency, the Lieutenant-Governor, several members of the Legislative Council, the Surveyor-General, and a number of spectators of inferior rank, including those of our sable brethren who had not decamped, and were courageous enough not to turn their backs upon the scene of approaching destruction, which many stout-looking fellows did; rejoicing not a little when they found themselves in whole skin after the tremendous explosion of such a quantity of powder.

When the smoke cleared away, the arch appeared almost unscathed; for, although the charge had forced up one stone and broken others, it had principally extended itself in scattering to the winds --- and waves --- the materials of comparatively frail structure which were set up for the destruction of the ponderous arch, and signally failed, the balance of resistance being in favour of the inert superincumbent mass.

On the following day a councillor of the same class as the man recorded in the Scripture as having saved a city from destruction, advised the sinking a pit behind the springing of the arch on the Adelaide side; and this being charged with about 50 shillings' worth of powder in a box, the pit was carefully filled in and closely tamped, and, after being scientifically primed, and unsparingly overloaded with damp sand and rubbish, the result was all that could be desired, for the complete prostration of the arch was effected without a tythe of the noise which accompanied the unsuccessful attempt of the previous day; which drew many an anxious inquirer into Adelaide from the village groups, who could not divine the true cause of the astounding report and earthquakelike vibration. ⇨

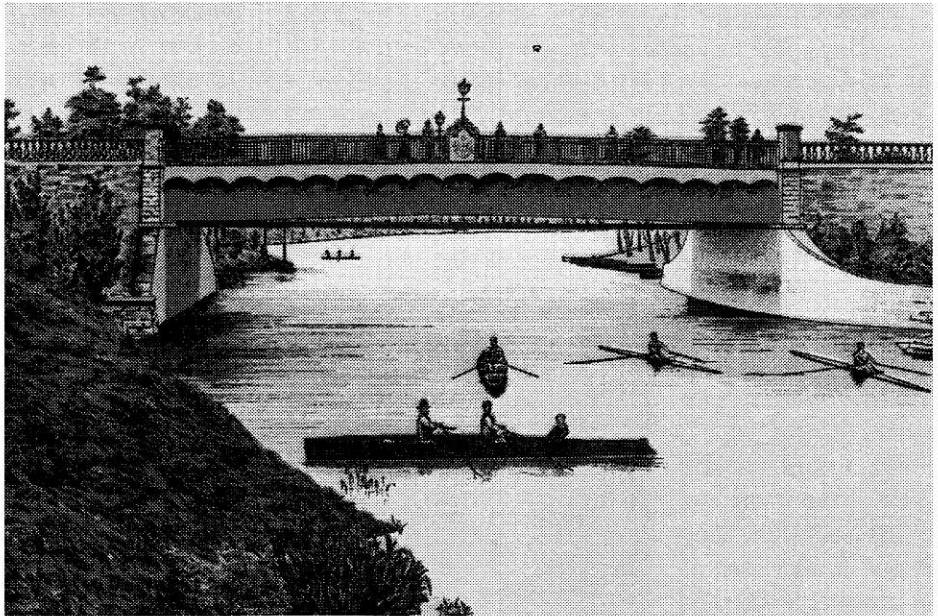


The first City Bridge on King William Road, depicted on a plaque on the present bridge. Photograph by James Potter.

Thus endeth the new stone "City Bridge". [Register, 2/10/1847]

In July 1853 the Colonial Architect submitted plans for a new City Bridge in line with a proposed continuation of King William Street. Until this time the major north-south corridor through the city terminated at North Terrace. By moving the boundaries of Government House to the east, a clear passage could be made for an extension of King William Street to provide an easy descent to the river, and a bridge in this position would give a more central approach to North Adelaide. The estimated cost for the new road and bridge was £15,000. This included ironwork to be sent from England. It was open to traffic, without ceremony, in early October 1856, with a span of 100 feet and a final cost of £22,000.

By 1867 there were ever-increasing complaints about the inadequacy of its 23-foot-wide carriageway, and 5-foot pathway. The *Register* noted that "in one place a jaunting car driven along the road close to the kerb would sweep everything off the footway". It was also becoming extremely busy. A City Council survey in 1871 found that during the daylight hours of a six-day period, the bridge carried 21,023 foot passengers, 1,033 horsemen, 7,798 vehicles and several thousand sheep. Tenders were called for a new bridge in 1874, this time Councillors adamant that it would be built in South Australia, not England. It was opened,



The second City Bridge on King William Road, built in 1877.
[From The New Album of Adelaide Views, W.W. Winwood, c. 1890.]

with ceremony, on 25th April 1877, with the length still 100 feet, but with a carriageway of 40 feet and footpaths 7 feet. It remained for over fifty years, withstanding the huge floods of 1889, when the water level reportedly rose ten feet in a matter of minutes, and 1898, when, from its safe vantage point, spectators watched:

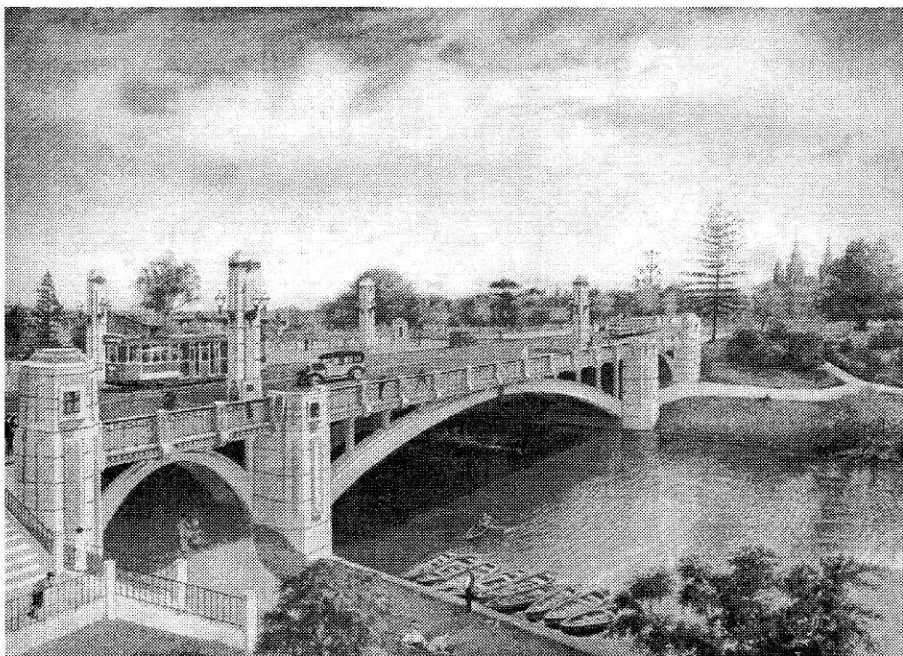
... the ocean of waters as they leaped and bounded with headlong speed, tossing on their heavy bosoms huge logs and gigantic tree trunks as though they were merely reeds.
[Advertiser, 15/6/1898]

By the late 1920s the bridge was again a traffic bottleneck (trams were now adding to the problem) and on 6th March 1931 a new £65,000 bridge (the present one) was opened. The design provided a roadway width of 92 feet and footpaths of 20 feet. At the time it was thought to be the widest reinforced concrete bridge in the world --- and it may still be so. It may also be unique in having a width greater than its central span.

References:

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Photo of E.C. Frome courtesy of the History Trust of S.A. Illustration of second King William Road bridge courtesy of Dr. Jeff Nicholas.



The present City Bridge, drawn by commercial artist Albert V. Adlam in 1930, the year before it was opened. [From the collection of James Potter.]

Next issue: Part III: William Wilkins' Cranky Bridge