



No. 225 May 2014

From the President

Since our March Newsletter, we have celebrated our 40th anniversary and experienced a variety of history events across South Australia. *About Time: South Australia's History Festival* must surely be one of the World's great celebrations of history and heritage. The folk at History SA do a wonderful job in staging this event and we duly pass on our congratulations for a job well done. Thanks, of course, are also due to all the numerous groups who stage events during the month. It is impressive to see the variety of groups that are involved; many do not have 'historical society' before their name and this augurs well for our interest in history and heritage.

Many of our historical societies (and other groups) collect and collate documents and publications as part of their programs. This aspect of history came up in an article I was reading about the Burney Collection of 17th and 18th- century newspapers. As a joint project of the British Library and Gale, the educational publisher, it is available on-line through university and other research libraries. The article about the

collection is by Ruth Walker who writes a column in *The Christian Science Monitor Weekly* called 'Verbal Energy' in which she discusses language (CSM 20/1/2014).

The newspapers, published in London, elsewhere in the British Isles, and in the British colonies 'comprise the most comprehensive collection of early English newspapers anywhere in the world', according to Gale. The collection was the work of Rev. Charles Burney (1757-1817), a classical scholar, schoolmaster, and clergyman. His collection went to the British Library at his death and it shows how constant is the impulse to have a common public political conversation, even if in the guise of 'letters' coming through the 'mail'.

The names of the papers include the familiar and those now lost in time. Ruth Walker, who lives in Boston, mentions *The Boston Gazette* and *The Daily Courant*, and then there is the oddly named *All Alive and Merry; or the London Daily Post*, from the early 1740s.

From the President

The papers contained 'recent' reports of current events. For instance, one issue dated Saturday 11 August 1684 reported on the defeat of the Ottoman Turks in the Battle of Vienna in 1683 (not quite the instantaneous reporting we expect today); 'General Veterani has advanced with the Forces under his Command to the Iron-gate, to cover Transylvania against the Tartars, and to favour the Expedition of the Poles, who according to the last letters from Warsaw, were drawing together in Moldavia.'

'It is astonishing', Ruth Walker writes, 'how blog-like some of these papers are - for good or ill. The "account" begins, "We have been this Week in great Impatience for want of News, and the Holland Mail we had on Thursday, has not yet quenched our thirst; for what we heard was not very material."'

Even at this time, some papers were considered better than others. *The Daily Courant*, for instance, stated that it is 'being design'd to give all the Material News as soon as every Post arrives: and is confin'd to half the Compass to save the Publick at least half the Impertinences, of ordinary News-Papers.' I think some of our current day newspapers could learn something here.

Society matters

Our AGM was held at the May meeting and the following officeholders and Council Members were elected:

President - Dr Geoffrey Bishop

Vice-President - Andrew Buxton

Secretary - Terry Saunderson

Treasurer - Anne Bowman

Council Members - Dr Adrian Brown, Margaret Cliff, Colin Deed, Margaret Ford-Feckner, Margaret Lucas, Patricia Sumerling.

My thanks, on behalf of the Society, to all our Council members who have done such a great job in running events over the past year. Two members have retired at this election, Margaret Young and Dr Bernard Whimpress; our thanks to both of them for their contributions (Margaret is going to continue to help run the book table at our lecture meetings which is much appreciated). I will foreshadow here that a number of current members will be retiring at or before the next AGM so the Society will need to give serious thought to replacements.

Details of upcoming events, both lecture meetings and visits are given in this edition, so do put them in your diary.

Geoffrey Bishop

The Historical Society of South Australia is grateful to Wakefield Press for their ongoing support through the donation of books for raffle prizes at meetings.

From the President



Images of the Society's 40th
Anniversary Celebration, 30 March

Friday 6 June 7.30 pm

Ron Gibbs

A Fine Place to Live In? – South Australia in the 1880s

An insight into the colony's history and citizens' experiences in that decade

The 1880s was a difficult decade for South Australians. The 1870s had been a period of outstanding growth – perhaps no other decade has been so significant in its impact on South Australia. The 1880s should have witnessed further expansion and consolidation; instead came a withering of crops, hopes and personal fortunes. The cruellest year was in 1886: while neighbouring Victoria was entering a period of unrestrained boom, South Australia experienced a measure of disasters, including a bank crash, which made its people doubt whether meaningful progress might ever occur again. The year 1886, the colony's fiftieth, was celebrated soberly, and even the planned Jubilee Exhibition could not take place until the following year. South Australia had even lost its reputation as the 'granary of Australia'. The decade exposed economic weaknesses, but it also revealed a willingness to experiment.



Strikers' meeting at Port Adelaide October 1887
- State Library of SA

It was further redeemed by the colony's readiness to look beyond its borders, especially to the new phenomenon of Broken Hill.

Ron Gibbs was the first president of the Historical Society of SA (1974–79). After teaching in Adelaide and Pennsylvania in the 1960s, he served as consultant in history in the Education Department and as a member of the SA Heritage Committee and the History Trust. His published work includes *Under the Burning Sun: a history of colonial South Australia 1836–1900* (2013). He was awarded the History Council of SA's Life-long History Achievement Award in 2013. He holds the conviction that the history of South Australia's first hundred years or so has recently been much ignored; such a study would bring a better understanding of South Australia today.

Friday 4 July 7.30 pm

Brian Samuels

The Evolution of Adelaide's North Terrace Cultural Institutions, their long-lived buildings and the streetscape they helped to create.

The concentration of Adelaide's educational and cultural institutions along North Terrace has long been a source of pride for South Australians. However, what is perhaps now unknown to many is that the three major cultural institutions and their precursors were all managed by a single board from 1856 until 1940. What is more, their genesis on the Terrace can be traced to a single building, the South Australian Institute building, still standing on the east corner of Kintore Avenue.

Most of the succeeding buildings have also survived. Hence the history of the institutions has more than usual interest, entailing the evolution of the North Terrace streetscape as it stands today as well as the development of services and collections that have become 'old friends' to generations of South Australians.

All lecture meetings commence at 7.30 pm on the first Friday of the month at the Burnside Community Centre, corner of Portrush Road and Greenhill Road, Tasmore.



The original 1860 SA Institute Building in 1875. It comprises the southern half of the present building. Image courtesy of SLSA: B10391

Brian Samuels was one of the founders of the Historical Society of South Australia in 1974. Subsequently he had long careers with the History Trust of SA (now History SA) and the State Heritage Branch (under its various titles), where he was the Principal Heritage Officer for many years and from which he retired in 2011.

He joined the newly-formed History Trust in 1981 and helped to establish its head office on the first floor of the Institute Building later that year. As a strong advocate of the value of understanding the history of one's immediate surroundings, he practised what he preached and researched the history of the North Terrace Cultural Precinct in some depth. His talk will be richly illustrated and will provide an overview of the evolution of both the institutions and their buildings.

Visiting SA's History

Thursday 12 June - Visit to St Augustine's Anglican Church, 183 Unley Road, Unley. The tour of St Augustine's commences at 10 am and will include morning tea. Bookings essential, \$10 per person. Contact Margaret Cliff to book, by telephone 8362 9517, or at the June lecture meeting.

This is the first of two visits with a general theme of stained-glass windows, but there is much else to see at St Augustine's (built in 1922) and:

St Dominic's Priory, 139 Molesworth St, North Adelaide, which we visit on 13 August

The Principal of St Dominic's Priory College, Sr Jill Havey, invites members to visit this hidden treasure of North Adelaide on Wednesday 13 August at 10 am. The tour will last an hour and will include viewing some beautifully worked vestments, calligraphy and a valuable book collection. Further details available from Margaret Ford-Feckner on 04 388 388 94. Cost \$5, bookings required.

VISITING SA'S HISTORY KONDOPARINGA HOMESTEAD

Sunday 28th September 2014

Bus leaves Burnside 9.00am -- Returns approx. 4.30pm

- * A 25 roomed mansion once owned by the Rymill Family
- * Nestled amongst Australian flora and fauna on the banks of the Finnis River
- * Largest display of side-saddles in the Southern Hemisphere along with antique furniture, clothing, tapestries and collections
- * Guided tours with commentary on the house and contents
- * Two course hot cooked lunch with choice of 4 mains and 3 sweets
- * Lecture with discussion on Rymill Family
- * Mystery stop for morning tea
- * Comfortable Woodside Coach

OUR ONLY FULL DAY EVENT IN 2014
BOOK NOW - ONLY \$50.00 per head

Phone Margaret Cliff - 8362 9517 - or see Margaret at the Friday night meetings

Contributing to SA's History

NEW COUNCIL MEMBER

Andrew Buxton was recently co-opted onto the HSSA Council and he is keen to contribute to the workings of the Society. Andrew, a semi-retired History teacher, has been a member of the HSSA on and off throughout his teaching career. A History Honours graduate of the University of Adelaide, Andrew has taught and researched widely across a variety of historical periods and places. He has previously served as President of the History Teachers' Associations of South Australia and Australia and was awarded Honorary Life Membership in 1995. Additionally, he has been Vice-President of the History Council of SA and more recently Chief Examiner in Modern History for the SACE Board. In 2014 he is organising the 150th anniversary commemoration of the arrival of the Buxton family in South Australia. Andrew is a second generation historian, being son of the late Gordon Buxton, author of *South Australian Land Acts 1869-1885* and *The Riverina, 1861-1891: An Australian regional study*.

CHARLES PLATTS: BOOKSELLER

Glen Ralph offers to the public his research notes on *Charles Platts (1813- 1871) Adelaide's first bookseller*. Glen had intended to publish a book, but poor health has constrained him to offering a CD and booklets of his notes. These are available from Glen at the Wilmar Library, 15 Brian St, Lockleys 5032; Tel: 84437728; Email wilmarlibrary@internode.on.net

BOOK NOTICE: David Tuckwell & Vivienne O'Neill, *A Package Tour: A Guide to South Australian Tins, Packaging and Giveaways*, Hindmarsh, 2014.

In recent decades there has been a steady trickle of books designed to serve collectors of South Australianiana that are little-known outside their target audiences. They are often well-illustrated, and bring together much hard-to-locate information about both small and large businesses.

The latest such work, *A Package Tour*, runs to 373 pages and includes approximately 2000 high quality illustrations, mostly in colour. Tins and other forms of packaging predominate, supplemented by promotional items such as souvenir badges and fans. There are also brief histories of both small and large businesses and their premises.

The book would be a useful acquisition for museum and historical society libraries, Local History Collections and anyone with an interest in the history of SA manufacturing and retailing. David may be known to members for his *Brewers and Aerated Waters Manufacturers in South Australia 1836-1936* (1993: co-author Hallett Schueard) and his three books on Swan Reach. Vivienne is the author of *Yesterday's Paper - Collecting Ephemera in Australia* (2007).

A Package Tour is available only from the authors. Over the counter from David at Chateau Dorrien (cnr Barossa Valley Way & Seppeltsfield Rd: open 7 days) or Vivienne at Gilbertside Antiques (21 Burra Rd, Saddleworth: open Fri-Sun 12-4.30). Credit card or cash sales only at both places. Alternatively, mail order sales via cheque, money order or direct deposit (\$55 + \$9 postage and packing) are handled by Vivienne - tel. (08) 8847 4147 or gilbertside@bigpond.com

Brian Samuels

[PS: Vivienne O'Neill has donated *A Package Tour* and *Yesterday's Paper* for Shed Prizes. They will be on display at the Book Table for your perusal. *Colin Deed*]

Contributing to SA's History

WARD FOR GUMERACHA

All the shenanigans connected with
politics over the last year or so
reminded me of this piece of doggerel
penned in 1870 about Ebenezer Ward:

Electors, if you want a man
Who'll surely sell you if he can;
Who never stuck at trifles yet
A billet or a lift to get;
Who seeks to reach some future day
By your assistance place and pay -
If such a man you find a pleaser,
Give your votes to Ebenezer.

Remember how he sneaked his way
To second rank at Adam Bay,
Proved his unfitness for promotion
Before he got across the ocean,
And earned unenviable laurels
Contriving nicknames, rows, and
quarrels -
If you're in want of such a teaser
Give your votes to Ebenezer.

Sent back with other worthless cargoes,
He started then the *Southern Argus*,

Assisted by a private friend,
Who was rewarded in the end;
For when had burst the short-lived
bubble,
He got his head punched for his
trouble -
The usual fate, it seems to me, Sir,
Of all befriending Ebenezer.

Rejected then for Gumeracha,
With Fuller for a secret backer
He next brought out his sporting paper,
And hoped he cut a splendid caper;
But soon, like Jolly Dog, alack!
It left him sprawling on his back.
His tumble was an awful sneezer,
But none the worse seems Ebenezer.

And now he comes before you all
(As once at Gumeracha ball)
With specious show and manners
charming,
And at a sacrifice alarming,
With Fuller, who may want his votes,
Helping to cram him down your
throats.
If you can swallow such as he, Sir,
Elector, vote for Ebenezer.
(*The Adelaide Observer* 26 March
1870)

Contributing to SA's History

The journalist and politician Ebenezer Ward led an interesting and somewhat controversial life. He arrived in Adelaide from Melbourne in 1861 when he joined the *South Australian Advertiser* and wrote a series of articles, published in 1862 as *The Vineyards and Orchards of South Australia*. He returned to Melbourne, but soon after, in 1864, joined the SA government's expedition to the Northern Territory as clerk-in-charge, accountant and postmaster. It was on this expedition - both on the voyage there and time spent in the fledgling settlement at Adam Bay - that Ward showed his idiosyncratic character. He annoyed Boyle Travers Finniss so much he was dismissed for insubordination.

On his return south he rejoined the *Daily Telegraph* and became its editor in August 1865. He was secretary of the South Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1866-68 and in 1869 published *The South-Eastern District of South Australia: Its Resources and Requirements*.

He decided to go into politics in 1868, but failed to be elected. In 1870 he won the seat of Gumeracha for the House of Assembly. He had now become a radical land reformer advocating better deals for farmers. He established his own newspapers, the *Northern Guardian* and the *Farmers Weekly Messenger*, which enabled him to further promote his ideas, while remaining in the ministry during the 1870s.

His private life was just as fraught with controversy as his other occupations. In 1861 he eloped with 17 year-old Matilda Simmons. Five years later she sued for divorce, charging adultery and cruelty. Ward counter-petitioned

alleging adultery and was granted a divorce in June 1870. Six months later he married again.

By 1880 he was bankrupt, but it did not stop him from standing for parliament and he served as member for Burra from 1881-84 and Frome 1884-90 when he was chairman of committees. He then represented the Northern District in the Legislative Council from 1891-1900, but was unsuccessful in his bid to be elected to the Federal Convention. He left politics in 1900 and moved to Western Australia in 1911 where he died in 1917.

Described as fiery, disruptive, eloquent, outspoken, with various other epithets, Ward could always attract comment. At the opening of a new cellar at the Walkerville Co-operative Brewery at Southwark in 1899 he spoke out against the temperance movement stating:

There were some unfortunate (because badly taught) people who, if they thought they had a possible chance of doing so, would legislate for the total abolition and absolute prohibition, manufacture, sale and consumption of that detestable liquid known as beer in this community ...

Naturally, the audience agreed with him. (Painter, *Brewers and Hoteliers* p.129)

Alison Painter

Ref: J. B. Hirst, 'Ward, Ebenezer (1837-1917)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ward-ebenezer-4799/text7995>, published in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 7 April 2014.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TROVE uncovered material I never thought to find! The magic of searching by word uncovered unknown letters that my great grandfather, John Ford, wrote to the editors of Adelaide newspapers. He was a frequent writer of such correspondence, reacting to a current theme being discussed. One letter in the *Register* is my favourite, transporting me back to John's boyhood in Devon UK, in about 1855, at the time of the Crimean War¹ when he was a school boy at a 'penny a week' school. John Ford² was born on a farm near Plympton, Devon (a suburb of Plymouth now) in 1848. In 1908 he responded to the question of the naming of a suburb in Adelaide, i.e. Plympton, with the following letter.

REMINISCENCES OP PLYMPTON. To the Editor. Sir— I think you must be wrong about who named Plympton, although the derivation is correct. I am quite certain the name was bestowed here by the late John Crews³, who died some years ago, and who was one of the earliest colonists. He was born in the village of Plympton, five miles from Plymouth, and went to school with my father. His brother had a brewery⁴ for a great many years in the village, and I expect their families are still carrying it on. He had

a dairy farm on the Bay road when he first came here, and afterward had a farm near the Horseshoe [Old Noarlunga], five miles to the left of that place. When visiting him from Adelaide Mr. Crews often told me that he named Plympton after his birth place in England. His son (Fred Crews) was a driver of Cobb & Co.'s mail coaches that ran to Strathalbyn and is now a squatter at Geraldton, Western Australia. Plympton, on the River Plym, is one of the noted old Devonshire villages and the old saying is 'Plympton was a busy town when Plymouth was a fursy⁵ down.' Part of Sir Joshua Reynolds's place was standing when I was a lad. I went to an old woman's school at a penny a week. That was during the time of the Crimean war. When the mounted soldiers travelled by the turnpike road from Exeter to be shipped from Plymouth, the boys used to sing out that the 'sodyers' were coming, and the old lady would shut the school, and the boys would rush off to see them pass. The troops would rest for a while under the trees opposite to the George Inn, and the laboring men's wives, to show their loyalty, took them pots of beer and oranges, and would say: 'The poor fellows will never come back.' King Stephen's Castle is still existing in the village. I am, Sir, &c., JOHN FORD. Orroroo, July 16⁶ [1908]

(Source: *The Register* Wednesday 22 July 1908 p 5)

¹ Crimean War 1853 – 1856.

² John Ford, 1848 – 1926, born at Butlas Farm, near Plympton, Devon UK; arrived in South Australia in 1870.

³ In about 1852 *Frederick Albert Crews* was born at Plympton, South Australia. His father, John Crews, gave Plympton its name, and young Crews when a lad ploughed the paddocks on which today stands the suburb of that name. He remembers when Morphetville Racecourse was a cow paddock owned by a man named Walker. TROVE *The Mail*, Adelaide, 16 April 1927, page 1.

⁴ In Plympton St Maurice, Devon, UK.

⁵ Fursy down refers to a bare field covered in gorse or furze, a yellow flowering prickly plant.

⁶ *The Register*, (Adelaide, SA) Wednesday 22 July 1908 p 5.

It is strange to think of the Bay Road area as carrying dairy farms!

I sent John Ford's letter to the editor of *The Devon Family Historian* and received the following reply⁷.

Dear Margaret, Thank you for your piece from the newspapers ... It particularly interests me as I live in Plympton ... The George Inn has stood on its present site since about 1735 but previously to that it stood the other side of the highway and was probably ancient. I have found evidence that at one time it was called The George and Dragon which denotes its antiquity. I enclose a copy of an old postcard c1907 of the view of the George on entering Plympton Ridgeway⁸ from Exeter, 40 miles away. The brewery was in Plympton St. Maurice which was the Borough Town. Plympton St. Mary formed around The Priory. Also I will be sending postcards of The Castle, and Sir Joshua Reynolds' school where his⁹ father taught. I too have gleaned quite a bit from the Australian papers online. When I first lived in Plympton (1956) I belonged to The Townswomen's Guild and we used to keep up a correspondence with a lady in Plympton [South] Australia and I understood it was two brothers who went out originally and that may well have been Mr. Crews. Hope this helps you. Sylvia Guthrig¹⁰

⁷ Dated 29 July 2011

⁸ Main Street of Plympton, Devon, UK.

⁹ Sir Joshua Reynolds' father.

¹⁰ Sylvia Guthrig, Editor, *The Devon Family Historian* published by the Devon Family History Society.



Photo of the road described in the letter, showing the George Inn, Plympton, Devon

It seems I continue the practice of writing to editors!

Margaret Ford-Feckner

[Editor's note - In his *Place Names of South Australia*, Geoffrey H Manning argues that the dates involved make it impossible that John Crews named Plympton, and that it was named in 1838 by H M Boswarva, who also came from the village of Plympton in Devon. *Robert Martin*]

The Islington Railway Workshops and the war effort 1939-45

At our March meeting in the question time following Dr Peter Bell's address information was requested on the nature of war work undertaken at Islington. This and a good deal more is covered in the little-known 78-page booklet *The Public Service and the War*, published by the State Government in March 1944 and available in the State Library.

Brian Samuels

Contributing to SA's History

NOTICE BOARD and TABLE

Your help is appreciated to supply notices, posters, brochures and any material you may think could be of interest to our members and friends.

Need help? See Colin Deed at meetings or phone 8277 2953.

THE SHED PRIZE

Your donated book(s) have been so good it has enabled The Shed Prize to be 2 - 3 books per raffle which in turn gives the ticket holder a better chance of scoring a prize.

Looking forward to more books in 2014. If you need help to carry or collect, please see Colin Deed at meetings or phone 8277 2953.
[PS: See Page 7 of this Newsletter under 'BOOK NOTICE']

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