



No. 232 September 2015

## From the President

The start of September signals the start of Spring and with it a strong sense of renewal.

The Society's day-long field trip to Kapunda and Anlaby on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September helped reinforce that sense of new beginnings in several ways. Firstly and most obviously was the return of more regular sunshine after an unseasonably cold winter. Secondly, the gardens at Anlaby were literally blooming as plants dormant throughout the colder months sprang into life. These two developments alone, replicated across South Australia, contribute to everyone's sense of well-being. Thirdly, the restoration in evidence at Anlaby confirmed that the past can be made relevant to today's generations. Whilst the nature and purpose of Anlaby, along with its principal activities may have changed, with careful thought and not insignificant expenditure, it still remains relevant in the modern world. Finally, it was very pleasing to see a resurgence in numbers for this

year's field trip, with a full busload of members and friends (50) enjoying the trip back into South Australia's past. Special thanks are owed to the owners of Anlaby, Andrew Morphett and Peter Hayward, and the members of the Kapunda Historical Society, notably Secretary, Meredith Mells and President, Malcolm Johncock, not only for hosting our visit to Kapunda but for their ongoing efforts to promote the study and preservation of South Australia's history.

The sense of renewal evidenced on the field trip is also evident in the most recent deliberations of the HSSA Council, as it commences a series of reviews of the Society's key business, in order to assist in future planning and effective governance. Too often, groups like the Council can become a little preoccupied with the management of the minutiae surrounding its regular business, although I hasten to add that the current Council are well aware of this risk. In August Council members agreed to allocate time

# From the President

at every Council meeting during the next twelve months to review key areas of the society's operations. This dedicated time means that Council can step back from the everyday necessities of managing activities and consider the 'big picture' of effective governance of the HSSA by reviewing the status quo, by envisioning possible futures, whilst ensuring that the Society continues to meet the needs of its members and fulfils its original charter. This is an exciting but also challenging time and I strongly encourage all HSSA members to support their Council as it considers the future of the Society.

September is also the closing phase of preparation of the HSSA Journal under the careful stewardship and professional editorship of Associate Professor Peter Monteath. Council congratulates Peter and his peer review panel for their compilation of another extraordinary contribution to the literature on South Australia's past. We trust all our members enjoy what is another excellent read.

Finally, Spring marks the conclusion of preparations for the 2016 monthly lecture series, under the leadership of Patricia Sumerling. We are confident that all members will once again discover a program rich in its variety and designed to stimulate

audiences intellectually, whilst also entertaining. I commend Patricia and the members of Council for maintaining such a high standard year after year.

Yours in history,

*Andrew Buxton*, President



Shots at Anlaby, from the field trip of 13 September

The website of the Historical Society of South Australia is again up and running. Consult it at [www.hssa.org.au](http://www.hssa.org.au)

## HSSA GRANTS SCHEME

The Historical Society of South Australia invites applications for grants to worthy historical projects. Grants are made of up to \$1,000. The deadline for applications is 2 November. Further important information, and application forms, are available at the Society's website [www.hssa.org.au](http://www.hssa.org.au)

## What are you reading?

T.G. Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914*, Cambridge University Press 2014. This diplomatic history will become a standard work for all those wishing to measure larger socioeconomic and strategic forces against the record of fallible individual elite decision making which precipitated the Great War, which had such a devastating impact on Australia and the wider world.  
*David Faber*

Annie Proulx *Bird Cloud*, Scribner: Simon & Schuster 2011. Perhaps best known as a novelist (*The Shipping News*) and writer of short stories (*Fine Just the Way It Is*), this is the story of the building of her house (a very frustrating time) at Bird Cloud, Wyoming, and much more. She tells the story of her French-Canadian family and the natural and human history of Wyoming. The parallels with colonial South Australia were a revelation – pastoral enterprises, overgrazing leading to landscape degradation, and conflict with the indigenous peoples. She describes her passion for observing native wildlife, especially birds, and for restoring native grasses to this harsh environment. The book is beautifully written. Highly recommended.  
*Geoffrey Bishop*

Denis Molyneux, *Time for Play: Recreation and Moral Issues in Colonial South Australia*, Wakefield Press 2015. Absorbing and elegantly written. I learned that the fight for the 8 hour day led to the upsurge in organised sports, with more recreational time in general. Together with the facilities for new clubs and societies, public transport rapidly developed. But losing the battle were the moralist Nonconformists who condemned the 'social evils' taking place on Sundays. This book evolved from Denis' PhD that he completed in 2009 when he was a mere 84 years old.  
*Patricia Sumerling*

Readers are invited to share information on books they have been reading. The entries should be short, giving title, author, publisher and a short comment on why you like the book. We are restricting this to books on history, but from wherever, not just South Australia or Australia.

-----  
**'TO THE EDITOR. Music.** – Anyone desirous of securing the maximum of music at the minimum of trouble, should visit the establishment of Mr. Woodman, in Hindley-street. Mr. W. has just imported a quantity of musical snuffboxes, playing operatic airs, with flute and clarionet accompaniments. The softness and sweetness of this fairy-like music is proverbial, and investors in concertinas, and those who intend to torture cheap harmoniums, would do well to see how much better and cheaper they can have their work performed for them than there is any reasonable anticipation they will ever be able to do it for themselves. Some of the instruments play the popular tunes which "little Johnny"\* has made so familiar to many South Australians.' – *Bunyip*, 6 April 1867.

\* This was John Gourlay, a visiting boy singer and comedian enjoying great popularity in South Australia at the time. *Editor*

[The above extract was submitted by Brian Samuels.]

# Discovering SA's History

Friday 2 October 7.30 pm

Phil Butterss and Keith Conlon

Poet of the larrikin and the Anzac: C.J. Dennis

Enormously popular during the First World War and afterwards, C.J. Dennis had a profound impact on Australian culture with his humorous books about larrikins. He had times of great happiness, but also struggled with alcohol, depression, and financial difficulties. This talk - illustrated by readings from Keith Conlon - will give a brief overview of his life, and a taste of some of his best work.

Phil Butterss teaches Australian literature and film at the University of Adelaide. His *An Unsentimental Bloke: the Life and Work of C.J. Dennis* was released by Wakefield Press in 2014. This book has won the 2015 National Biography Award, from a large field of competitors. Phil is currently writing a history of literary Adelaide.

Keith Conlon's career in the media includes working as an ABC TV newsreader, a 5AN and 5AA radio presenter, manager of 5UV, and host of *Postcards* on the Nine Network. A self-described 'passionate South Australian', Keith has had a long interest in C.J. Dennis. Among



C.J. Dennis

the many acknowledgments of his contribution to the community are an OAM and a University of Adelaide Distinguished Alumni Award.

**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.**

'Delusion about history is a serious matter; it can gravely affect the history that is waiting to be made.'

*John Terraine*

Friday 6 November 7.30 pm

Dylan Walker

**'The Only Fun We Have  
Once in Three Weeks':  
South Australian Picture  
Showmen from Colonial  
Times to the Great  
Depression**

The importance of picture shows in rural and regional communities in South Australia has largely been overlooked. Very few South Australian local histories give any detailed account of the regular screening of films in local community halls. Yet the picture show was the dominant all-year-round amusement in rural South Australia and, as elsewhere in Australia, the vast majority of exhibition outlets were in the country. Based on this alone, the rural cinema deserves a larger place in social histories.

Central to rural cinema was the travelling picture showman. The picture showman would traverse large areas of the State screening in small halls, often away from home for weeks at a time. In the early 1930s, one picture showman screened *Sunshine Susie* (Saville 1931) in 35 towns in six weeks covering over 1,600kms. This talk will discuss how the early picture showmen overcame barriers of distance with a focus on Wybert Reeve's 1897 tours,



Wybert Reeve (1831-1906) - South Australia's, and possibly Australia's, first travelling picture showman.

the Corrick Family's 1906 tour, and the travelling picture show during the Great Depression. The talk will be supported with photos and film.

Dylan Walker is a screen studies doctoral student at Flinders University researching film distribution and exhibition in rural South Australia during the 1930s. His book *Adelaide's Silent Nights*, published in 1996, dealt with the history of picture houses in South Australia during the silent era. Dylan has had articles published in refereed journals and wrote the narration for two documentaries on early South Australian filmmakers.

## Finding an Architect

In our May edition of the Newsletter, I put out a plea for any information that might lead to the discovery of the architect of Château Tanunda Winery. A few suggestions were made but none proved fruitful. The search continued but I had little to go on.

As I commented, there is much that is known about the origins of the winery and its construction in 1890 by the newly formed The Adelaide Wine Company. We know that the builder was Johannes Christoff (John) Basedow, a prominent Tanunda builder and grape-grower, and we even know where the stone came from and who made the bricks. However, the architect is never mentioned in any newspaper reports and the company records contain nothing regarding the architect.

When I had virtually given up hope of finding the architect, a chance comment by Tanunda historian Don Ross led to a discovery. Over 20 years ago Don purchased a pen and wash drawing of the winery at a clearing sale at Tanunda. When he described it to me it was apparent that this was an architect's drawing, not a work of art (though it is). Well, where is it now? The drawing went to a local historical society so we went looking for it. The original eluded us but we did come across several photographs of the item. These were poor but did verify that it is an architect's drawing and it is signed by the architect. The poor image plus some water damage made the signature virtually unreadable, but I suspected the first name was 'Thomas'.

A week later, a jubilant Don called me to say the drawing had been found. The architect was indeed 'Thomas', the English-born architect and building contractor Thomas Frost.

Thomas Frost (1825-1910) was well-known in building and philanthropic circles in Adelaide during his lifetime. He was born at Leamington Priors, Warwickshire, and from the age of 13 worked for his uncle's building firm, Samuel Letts & Son. He studied drawing and painting and became experienced as a carpenter, plumber and general builder. Thomas, his brother Lewis and the Letts family emigrated to South Australia in 1839.

From 1849 onwards, Thomas developed a career as a builder, contractor and architect. His contracts included the Gawler to Freeling railway, Redruth Gaol and additions to Adelaide Gaol. Frost's main architectural works date from the mid-1870s. He also worked for the Town of Hindmarsh and in 1886 he took on the role of Town Surveyor to the Kensington and Norwood Council.

Frost was a prominent figure in the Congregational Church in Adelaide and many of his contracts were for fellow Congregationalists. He was living at North Adelaide when the North Adelaide Congregational Church (Brougham Place) was built (1860) and he supervised its construction. He later designed the church hall.

His architectural designs included Whinham College, Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide (1882); Commercial Inn, Tynte Street, North Adelaide (1881; later North Adelaide Hotel); lecture hall, classrooms and organ gallery at the Brougham Place church (1878-1880); church manse, Kermode Street, North Adelaide (1879, later Creveen Girls' School); 22 houses in West North Adelaide for the City Land Investment Company (1884); various private houses at North Adelaide, Norwood, Kensington, Mitcham, Mount Lofty; commercial premises at

Rundle Street, Adelaide, Brompton and Port Adelaide, notably the huge wool stores (at Port Adelaide) and city offices of Messrs Elder, Smith, & Company (1888, 1890). He died at his home in Ward Street, North Adelaide, on 4 June 1910 aged 84. *The SA Congregationalist* said of Frost, 'his exactness of method was a distinguishing characteristic through life. His works praise him.'

*Geoffrey Bishop*

**'Reflections', the 22<sup>nd</sup> State History Conference**, convened by History SA, will be held in Robe from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 October. There will be a busy time of workshops, papers, tours and discussion, especially on the history of the South East.

Visit the State History Conference website for further information.

## **Congratulations to the 2015 South Australian History Council Award winners:**

Lifelong History Achievement Award:  
Tom Gara and Graham Jaunay

Historian of the Year: Peter Donovan

Regional History Award: John Mannion

Emerging Historian of the Year: Carly Osborn

Wakefield Press, our generous sponsors, have moved their premises to 16 Rose Street, Mile End. The new telephone number is 8352 4455.

## **Letter to the Editor**

### **MORE ON HAT PINS**

The article from the *Register* published in last month's newsletter merits a reply.

Ladies' hat pins certainly were used as weapons, particularly at association and league football matches in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. I don't know what sort of lady would jab an opposition player as he ran on or off the field but it certainly wouldn't be the sort I would like to meet. Nor would a player fancy meeting such a lady's female chum who was likely to belt him over the head or around the ears with an umbrella. When young larrikins would also fill deep pockets with lumps of road metal to pitch at players and umpires it could be said it was safer on the field than off it.

Tunnels (or races) offering a more secure entry and exit for players were erected at suburban grounds early in the 20th century but surprisingly no race appeared at Adelaide Oval until 1955. Its construction followed the infamous all-in brawl just before half-time of the 1954 SANFL grand final between Port Adelaide and West Adelaide. On that occasion punches were thrown by just about everyone on the field. Jostling and further fisticuffs continued between players, trainers and officials as the two teams left the oval through a gate in the south-west corner of the ground to reach their rooms at the rear of the old Sir Edwin Smith Stand.

Ah! the good old days.

*Bernard Whimpress*

# Contributing to SA's History

## NOTICE BOARD and TABLE

The Notice Board and Table need your help in supply. Whether it is advertising for other clubs or societies, notices, brochures, booklets etc, all would be greatly appreciated.

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

---

**Historical Society of South Australia Inc. PO Box 519 Kent Town SA 5071**

Email: [secretary@hssa.org.au](mailto:secretary@hssa.org.au)

Website: [www.hssa.org.au](http://www.hssa.org.au)

President: Mr Andrew Buxton

Vice-President: Dr Adrian Brown

Secretary: Ms Anthea Buxton  
0417 834 990

Treasurer: Ms Anne Bowman:  
8362 7772

Bookings: Ms Margaret Cliff:  
8362 9517

## 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 2015. If you need help to carry or collect, please see Colin Deed at meetings or phone 8277 2953.

---

Newsletter Editor: Mr Robert Martin 8362 8262  
[psumerling@optusnet.com.au](mailto:psumerling@optusnet.com.au)

Journal Editor: Dr Peter Monteath 8201 5568  
[peter.monteath@flinders.edu.au](mailto:peter.monteath@flinders.edu.au)

Newsletter of the Historical Society of South Australia Inc.  
ISSN 1444-8459

Articles may be reproduced without permission provided they are unaltered and HistorySA is acknowledged.

Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. The deadline for submission of articles for the next Newsletter is Sunday 17 January.