

No. 237 September 2016

## From the President

In a new initiative for our HSSA, I recently requested Council support to welcome new members by posting their names in our newsletter. Whilst many other societies similar to ours have been doing this for some time, it seems timely for us to follow this practice and thereby acknowledge those who have joined our ranks. I encourage all existing members to welcome new members, as we together explore South Australia's history. New members who have joined in 2016 are listed below. Welcome, we look forward to getting to know you.

Heritage matters have dominated public debates on the subject of history since our last newsletter. Firstly, there has been ongoing discussion surrounding the future of the site of the Glen Osmond silver and lead mine. Whilst the Burnside Council has allocated not insignificant money to improve signage and

landscaping around the site, it has yet to commit any funds to support the reopening of the mine's upper and lower adits for public tours. I have been pleased to support the ongoing efforts of Meredith Ide, President of the Burnside Historical Society, and her team, in their endeavours to achieve this goal.

The President of the National Trust of SA, Emeritus Professor Norman Etherington, captured media attention following his group's successful negotiation with the state government to gain management control of the much loved Fort Largs. This outcome of 'behind the scenes' negotiations shows how effective groups in the history field can be when they work in concert with governments. It is to be hoped that its other bid for Martindale Hall is equally successful.

Recently we were approached by the *Advertiser* newspaper, seeking contacts for an

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upcoming feature on the historical merits of Edmund Wright House, a building that has previously housed the History Trust of SA (now History SA) and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, amongst many other roles. The reason for the approach is that the building was recently advertised for a very long term lease and not surprisingly there was a degree of public interest and concern about the future of such a historic public asset when it is offered for commercial use. A similar issue arose with the earlier sale of significant portions of the Glenside Hospital site.

Pleasingly, in respect of the building that housed Z Ward, lobbying by the National Trust and the local historical society means that the site's owner, Beach Energy, has significantly varied its conditions so that much greater access has now been provided.

Just in the first week of September, members of our society participated in a public protest meeting on the planned retrenchment of approximately 20 percent of the staff of the State Library of South Australia. These cuts, if proceeded with, mean the inevitable loss or degrading of assistance for every researcher attempting to access the

historical records housed by the State Library, not to mention the concurrent loss of the professional skills of library staff. As Brian Samuels so eloquently stated in his address to the gathering, the proposed cuts are tremendously short-sighted. Our culture, our heritage, indeed our identity are all impacted by such changes.

In the history community, of which our society is an integral member, we have an obligation to participate when public consultations are held into such matters. Bystanders are bypassed. Members of the history community of the state, as well as elsewhere, are not blind to the economic and efficiency imperatives that drive such decisions and realise that arguments for the retention of heritage sites and staff who work in heritage areas need to be couched in terms and arguments that acknowledge these imperatives. The Historical Society of South Australia remains committed to joining with the members of similar societies, under the leadership of the History Council of SA, to advocate for the retention of heritage places central to our history and supporting adequate staffing levels at public institutions that

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recognise the fundamental importance of researching and recording our history, not just to acknowledge where we have come from but to inform our futures, whatever they may be.

Our next big event, which will have already occurred by the time you receive this newsletter, is our annual day-long field trip, which in 2016 takes us to Port Adelaide and the surrounding district. Whilst 'the Port' has been a destination of previous day trips, members never tire of recommending it as a focus for tours, given the myriad of different heritage sites to visit and stories to tell. Alberton Oval, Dolphin cruise and lunch on the river, along with the Port Adelaide Uniting (formerly Congregational) Church are new features of this year's visit. We hope to publish photos from the tour in the Journal and the first newsletter of 2017.

I look forward to catching up with you at our next monthly lecture.

Yours in history,

*Andrew Buxton, President*

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)

## Welcome New Members in 2016

Douglas Alexander, Jenni Bailey, Gillian Dooley, Leila Griffiths, Ken Jacobs, Frank Leane, Julie Marcus, Pam Rajkowski, Judith Symon, Neil Thomas, Graeme Turnbull



Seen at the protest on behalf of the State Library.

Friday 7 Oct. 7.30pm

Jenni Thurmer and  
Fran Zilio

## Conan Doyle in South Australia

In September 1920, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the celebrated author of the Sherlock Holmes series, arrived in Adelaide on a 4 month lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand on the subject of Spiritualism.

Conan Doyle had renounced Catholicism and materialism to search for scientific evidence of life after death. In 1917, after 34 years of investigation, he publicly announced his conversion to Spiritualism.

At this time Spiritualism was gaining momentum, offering consolation to the friends and families of soldiers who lost their lives in WWI. In September 1918, Conan Doyle was invited by the Australian Government to visit their troops in France. Here he witnessed Australian soldiers take the Hindenburg Line. So later when the invitation came from Australian Spiritualists he could not resist.

Accompanied by his family, Conan Doyle 'does what he can to understand the country' in between official engagements organised by his agent, Carlyle Greenwood Smythe. His visit included a tour of the SA Museum given by the 'very



Conan Doyle at Humbug Scrub

capable zoologist' and Director Edgar Ravenswood Waite. Conan Doyle took a liking to Waite so invited him as his guest to visit Thomas Paine Bellchambers at Humbug Scrub. Information gathered on these visits appears later in Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger series.

Jennifer Thurmer has been at the SA Museum 25 years preparing scientific illustrations, designing and copy editing books and scientific journals. She has been associated with the Friends of SA Museum for 40 years as councillor and newsletter editor.

Francesca Zilio had 15 years' experience in working for national and state government archives before transferring to the SA Museum. Her current management responsibilities include the archives, library, Aboriginal family and community history, and the Ara Irititja Archive project.

Friday 4 Nov. 7.30pm

David Faber

## F. G. Fantin: A Legacy Retrieved

This presentation will relate the life and legacy of the Italian political émigré to Australia Francesco Giovanni Fantin (1901-42) and what historians have made of it, for better and for worse. Beginning with the shaping of his Anarchist politics in his formative years in his native land, his career in Australia is sketched from Italian intelligence sources. This it is maintained is the background to his assassination at Loveday Internment Camp 14A. Lastly the presenter will attempt to clear the name of H.V. Evatt from insinuations that he sought to cover-up the political dimension of Fantin's death by suborning the Supreme Court of South Australia.

Dr David Faber is a labour historian and currently an Adjunct Senior Lecturer with the Flinders University School of Education. As an undergraduate he majored in history, philosophy and politics, which he considered a single blended subject. From 1985-8 he lived in Italy, acquiring the Italian language and an interest in leftist political culture,



Francesco Giovanni Fantin

researching in particular the figure of the émigré F.G. Fantin and patterns of political migration from the Schio district in the Veneto Region to Australia during the Fascist Era. His historiographical influences include Marx, Gramsci, Collingwood and Hobsbawm.

### THIS IS A SPECIAL EVENING

Collect your 2016 Journal and join with fellow members, friends and Committee for our End-of-Year Celebration.

Please bring a plate for supper to share. Drinks will be supplied.

## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

A. C. Grayling, *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century and the Birth of the Modern Mind*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016. This distinguished author practises the clarity and rationalism that he preaches as he argues that the seventeenth century saw a transition in the intellectual world from a predominantly religious attitude to a predominantly secular attitude - 'the greatest ever change in the mental outlook of humanity' - this connected paradoxically to the turbulence of the time and especially the Thirty Years War.

*Robert Martin*

Mark Kurlansky. *Cod: a biography of the fish that changed the world*, Vintage, 1999. Who would have thought a history about cod, the Atlantic fish, would be such a page-turner? The amazing white-flaked fish, so beloved by the Brits for their fish and chips, was the hub of several countries' economies fronting the Atlantic for centuries, usually as a salted commodity. Then as technology saw fishing boats transform from sail to steam and increase in fishing efficiency, so the world's stock plummeted, sparking several Cod Wars and 'friendly naval battles'. The Brits were not impressed when the German government told them that the entire problem could be solved if they learnt to eat Red Fish or Pollock instead. As far as I know they haven't. To protect its economy Iceland started a trend in international waters when their restrictions lengthened from 2 miles to 200 from their shores. With fishermen the world over in denial over the decline of 'their' fish stocks, including off our own shores, to ignore the facts

has dire consequences for the future. Consider, when did you last dine on King George Whiting?

*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. Send your contribution to the Editor, Robert Martin, at [psumerling@optusnet.com.au](mailto:psumerling@optusnet.com.au)

## CAN YOU HELP.....?

We have a new member from Ormond, Victoria who has an incomplete library of our Journals and is looking to obtain the missing ones. If you have any unwanted Journals consistent with the following numbers they would be appreciated:

A5 size Nos 4, 23, 24 and A4 size Nos 29, 30, 31 & 36, 37, 38, 39.

If you can help please deliver to Colin Deed at our monthly meeting or phone 8277 2953 to arrange collection.

**WHILE ON THIS SUBJECT...** if you have Journals you no longer require they too can be redistributed to members who need them and to schools which will help promote our Society and History.

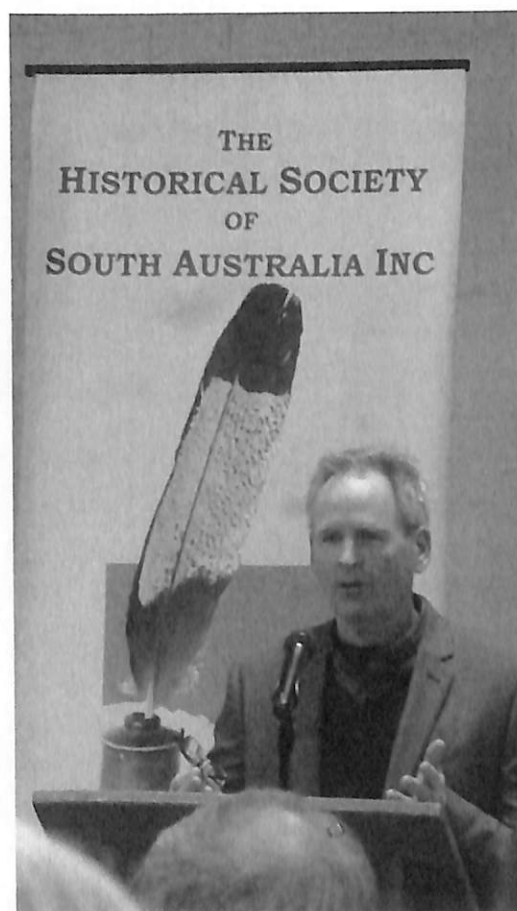
Colin Deed  
Council Member

## Contributing to SA's History



Denise Schumann, speaker at the August meeting

**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, Tusmore.**



Peter Monteath, speaker at the September meeting

# 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

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## 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 2016. If you need help to carry or collect, please see Colin Deed at meetings or phone 8277 2953.

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Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. The deadline for submission of articles for the next Newsletter is Sunday 8 January.