



HISTORY SA

Newsletter of The Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated

No. 239 March 2017

From the President

As I mentioned in the corresponding newsletter last year, the passing of Ron Gibbs meant that I came into possession of copies of the minutes of many of the early meetings of the Society, along with several letters between our founders at the time of the Society's establishment. As I noted then, rather than 'dry and dusty' records of our Society's past, the documents bring our past to life, giving interesting insights into the actions and thoughts of our founders.

In their enthusiasm for the new venture, our founders could be forgiven for not having envisaged the fluctuations in membership numbers and difficult economic circumstances that would face the Society over the years. In reality they showed remarkable foresight, from the beginning, making plans to generate funds to be invested against times when income from membership fees and savings no longer covered all expenses.

Successive members of Council, the management group of the Society, have in recent years had

to grapple with how best to meet our objective of actively developing interest and knowledge about South Australia's past through public lectures, publications and the encouragement of research. The appointment of a paid Journal Editor and a paid Treasurer, whilst adding to expenses, have helped to add a level of professionalism to the Society's work. This is not of course to diminish in any way the very capable efforts of our volunteer Newsletter Editor, Field Trips Coordinator, Supper Coordinator, Lectures Coordinator and Meetings Set-up crew, most of whom meet bi-monthly as our Council. Like many societies we simply could not survive without volunteers.

A relatively new expense incurred has come from building our online presence, through constructing and maintaining our website www.hssa.org.au. The latter is vital, not only in informing members of our events but a much wider audience across

From the President

the internet and State and national boundaries. Supper costs, the price of postage and printing of newsletters and the Journal, the significant hire charge for our meetings venue, amongst other costs, all combine to mean that members of Council are mindful of the balancing act involved in protecting the legacy of our founders and subsequent Council membership, whilst avoiding stagnancy, by providing a vibrant program that adds to the legacy of the past. Should any members feel inclined to contribute more by sponsoring aspects of our program now and in the future, such as the Grants Scheme, then our Vice-President, Adrian Brown and Treasurer, Anne Bowman would be pleased to discuss what you have in mind.

In April we will host a tour of "Dragon Trees and other Gems of the Waite Arboretum", chaperoned by the Friends group, and assisted by Geoffrey Bishop. Following on Geoffrey's popular lecture in 2016, we anticipate good numbers at this, our first field trip for 2017. Whilst discussing field trips, I am pleased to inform members that Dr Pamela Rajkowski has kindly agreed to take on the role of coordinating our tours program and taking bookings. Pamela would be very pleased to accept your bookings and address your queries at our regular meetings, along with any suggestions you

have for future tours. Our recent plan is to attempt to prepare the Field Trips Program for 3-4 years ahead, in order to give members and friends improved notice.

I am pleased to report that membership renewals have come in steadily since the start of the year and we have been pleased to welcome new members and the return of lapsed members. A healthy membership strengthens the ability of the Society to support new initiatives, as well as maintain traditional activities. The deferment of the Grants program in 2016 means the Council is now in a position to offer a new round of Grants for awarding at the History Festival lecture meeting in May. Information was circulated at our meeting in March and via our website and the History Council of SA. We look forward to seeing what new projects are planned by applicants. The May meeting will also see the announcement of the winner of the 2017 Maurice Keain Medal for the publication on South Australian history adjudged the best published in 2016. With ongoing support from members and an improving national economic outlook in coming years, I remain hopeful our grants program, a vital element of the society's activities, will continue better and stronger.

Yours in history,

Andrew Buxton, President

From the President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given that the **Annual General Meeting** of the Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated will be held at 7.30 pm on Friday 5 May 2017 at the Burnside Community Centre.

We are hopeful that His Excellency, the Honourable Hieu Van Le AC, Governor of South Australia, and Patron of the Historical Society, who has been invited to present the Maurice Keain Medal at the May meeting, will be able to attend.

Nomination forms for the following office bearer positions will be available from the Secretary: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Council Members.

For further information please contact Andrew Buxton on 0431 738 111 or Anthea Buxton on 0417 834 990.

Andrew Buxton, President

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

John Barnet
Pat Booth
Perry Snodgrass

KEAIN MEDAL

Nominations for the Keain Medal for the best publication on South Australian history during 2016 are open until 7 April. Details at hssa.org.au

A QUESTION ANSWERED

At the meeting addressed by Barbara Santich in February on the topic of confectionery, the question arose of the origin of the term 'lolly'. Barbara has since sent us an email: "You might like to pass on to members that the Australian 'lolly' is derived from the English 'lollipop', which originally referred to a sweetmeat (such as a lozenge at the end of the eighteenth century) but now refers to an ice-block or similar on a stick. 'Lolly' referring to a sweet is particular to Australia and New Zealand, and dates to the mid-nineteenth century."

Friday 7 April 7.30 pm

Dr Tom Gara

The 'Petrified Native' from Naracoorte; Aboriginal remains, fakes and con-men

The so-called 'Petrified Native', the desiccated body of an Aboriginal man, is a well-known story of the early days of SA's South-East. Found in a cave near Naracoorte in the 1850s, it was stolen in 1861 by a showman who took it to London. The body was exhibited for a few years but then disappeared, and its subsequent fate remains unknown.

Tom Gara will discuss what is known of the 'Petrified Native'. He will also talk about the 'Marble Woman', unearthed in the Burnside area in 1904 and alleged to be the petrified body of an Aboriginal woman. Later exhibited as the 'Petrified Woman from Naracoorte', she toured the country show circuits in the eastern states in the 1910s and 1920s, and was also shown in the USA and South Africa. There is an interesting connection between the 'Marble Woman' and two famous overseas hoaxes, the 'Cardiff Giant', found in the USA in 1869, and the 'Causeway Giant', found at the Devil's Causeway in Ireland in 1876.



Naracoorte Cave. From a print, c. 1880s.

Tom Gara is an historian specialising in Aboriginal history. He currently is employed in the Native Title Section of the South Australian Crown Solicitor's Office. In 2015 Tom Gara was awarded a Life-long History Achievement Award by the History Council of South Australia.

**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.**

Friday 5 May 7.30 pm

Dr Don Hopgood AO

Jitterbugging with the Yanks - The Adelaide dance scene in World War II

From the 1920s Adelaide's dance scene largely followed the trajectory of popular music and vernacular dance particularly as influenced by the American experience of jazz and swing. The foundation of the Palais de Danse (later renamed the Palais Royal) is a significant stepping-off point. By the mid-1920s there were a number of American bands in Australia and the American pianist Tom Swift led the orchestra at the Palais Royal.

The Depression slowed things down, with a reversion to 'old style' dancing, but a number of factors finally changed all that - the revival of New Orleans jazz caught the imagination of the young, the emergence of be-bop was a taste of things to come but, more than anything, the arrival of the 'Yanks' in wartime with their bands presented a challenge to local musicians. A new dance hall, the Astoria, attracted American servicemen because it allowed patrons to jitterbug, a dance regarded as too dangerous, or insufficiently decorous, in the older venues.



Don Hopgood

Suddenly the local dance scene was alight, its costs being to a degree covered by the American taxpayers.

Don Hopgood has been a school teacher, university tutor, parliamentarian (including seven years as Deputy Premier), Moderator of the Uniting Church and, in more recent years, Archivist at the South Australian Jazz Archive. In this last position he has contributed two articles to the *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* - 'Hello Central Give Me X 2350' (Number 29, 2001) and 'A Fairyland of a Thousand Twinkling Lights' (Number 34, 2006). He plays cornet and flugelhorn in the Onkaparinga City Concert Band, in his own 'Jazz Bandits', and in church.

This address will be a contribution by the Historical Society to this year's History Festival. It will be preceded by a brief Annual General Meeting.

Visiting SA's History

DRAGON TREE TOUR

Sunday 9 April 2017 1.30pm - 3.30pm

Dragon Trees and other Gems of The Waite Arboretum

The Waite Arboretum is an extraordinary collection of plants being grown for scientific reasons. It was established on land given by Peter Waite to the University of Adelaide, to be held on trust as a park for the enjoyment of the public. Planting of trees from around the world began in 1928.

It occupies 30 hectares and contains about 2300 specimens representing more than 800 species in 200 plant genera, all growing under natural annual rainfall conditions of 624 mm. Every tree is labelled and mapped. Special collections include eucalypts, palms, dragon trees, pears and oaks. To enhance your visit download the free Waite Arboretum app in the App Store or Google Play.

Our tour will focus on the Dragon Trees and what is happening seasonally in the Arboretum. The visit will include an introductory talk and a guided walk. Hosts will be the Arboretum Curators and the Friends Group.

The tour will commence at 1.45pm. Please meet at 1.30 on the lawns on the western side of Urrbrae House. In case of bad weather, meet under the verandah of Lirra Lirra Café off Waite Road.

Transport: Make own arrangements:

Bus route 171, stop 12 on Fullarton Rd. Walk up the long driveway. Note this can take 15 mins. or more depending on your pace.

Parking: in Waite Rd and Claremont Ave, Netherby, and limited parking near Urrbrae House (enter via Walter Young Dr off Fullarton Rd).

Tour cost: HSSA Members \$10.00 Non-members \$15.00
(The tour fee supports the upkeep of the Arboretum).

Bookings and payment can be directed to HSSA Secretary, Anthea Buxton, at 0417 834 990 and by email to secretary@hssa.org.au
Alternatively, bookings can be made with Pamela Rajkowski (Tours/Booking Officer) at our monthly Lecture Meeting.

BYO picnic afternoon tea on the Rose Garden Lawns to follow the tour. (BYO mug, hot water, other drinks and a plate to share). Seating is available.

'But is this really history?' asks *History SA* Editor Robert Martin of Patricia Sumerling's favourable review of Kiera Lindsey's pacey novel *The Convict's Daughter*, Allen & Unwin 2016 (*History SA* No. 238 January 2017). Sumerling notes that 'where facts are unknown but the story needs input of probable events' conjecture pieces out a narrative, 'well supported by references.' The easy, but perhaps philistine prejudice might be that history is based on fact, not conjecture.

But if history is evidence based, is it not partly based on probability and possibility? R.G. Collingwood, the 20th century English historiographer, thought it was. He argued that historiography was an inferential science, interpreting the relics of the historical process as incompletely laid down in the historical record to deduce the former by inference from critically verified facts, probabilities and possibilities. History does not afford the historian the luxury of dealing only with dead certainties. Historians must critically interrogate and weigh purported data before facts acquire sound historical status.

Yet Collingwood disparaged the 'historical' novel as typically a work of fiction. Doubtless he was thinking like the disillusioned Ranke of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, rather than Lindsey's more modern and soundly based, historically informed work. Nor are we working here a vein of few works. Sandy Tolan's 'narrative non-fiction' *The Lemon Tree* ekes out facts with reasoned and documented inference based on probability, surely one of the founts of knowledge, to furnish a balanced account of the enduring friendship of an Israeli and a Palestinian brought together amidst conflict by a house once Palestinian and

later Israeli. Simon Schama is one historian who has used a similar method, at least on one occasion. And if Collingwood is right, he is not alone, for all historians do this to some extent.

The historian and the fictionalist both narrate truths, but different aspects of truth. Herodotus' truth is not that of Homer, though both are humanists, relating the saga of the human social individual in community. Both have recourse to imagination, and both historical reasoning and creative fiction are creative, but in different ways. Histories and stories evoke human experience. In the first case, to evoke Collingwood again and Einstein, imagination is necessary to evoke the unity of past, present and the dimly defined future. In the second case, truth is evoked by respecting imagined unities and realities. Historical and creative narrative are poles of a continuum, rather than antagonistic opposites.

David Faber

GOOD FRIDAY.—Yesterday was kept throughout the colony as a close holiday, and the streets of Adelaide wore quite a Sunday appearance. Religious services were conducted in the Anglican and some other Churches and at the Roman Catholic Cathedral. Good Friday is always a favourite day for Sunday-school treats, and there were as usual a large number of these juvenile excursions. The Botanic Gardens were visited by a great many persons, but were not inconveniently crowded. The objects of interest in the Museum at the Institute were inspected to a considerable extent, and numerous families resorted to the hills, the seaside, and other places where fresh air is readily obtainable. The weather was not all that could be desired, being especially in the morning cloudy and close, but it was far from being so disagreeable as the climate sometimes is at this season. The inclusion of the Saturday amongst the Easter holidays, which is every year becoming more customary, enabled many persons engaged in business to leave town for a few days, and the coaches on Thursday afternoon as well as the trains on both Thursday and Friday were well filled.

From *Adelaide Observer* 15 April 1876.
Submitted by Brian Samuels.

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

Website: 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 Pamela Rajkowski
0400 810 196

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 2017. 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

Journal Editor: Professor Philip Payton
philip.payton@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 7 May.