



HISTORY SA

Newsletter of The Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated

No. 240 May 2017

From the President

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT (ABRIDGED) 20 APRIL 2017

The core business of the Society, namely a program of lectures, the newsletter and Journal, along with field trips and the Grants Scheme, has continued since the last AGM. However, like similar bodies, the Society has faced challenges. The ageing demographic of members has impacts on membership numbers and in consequence finances. Financial investments saw lesser returns, requiring further amendments to the Grants Scheme. The field trip program, for all the efforts put in, attracted reduced attendance, requiring a re-evaluation. The small but dedicated group of members of Council welcomed Pamela Rajkowski, but regrettably had to farewell Dr Daniela Rose, due to work commitments.

Attendance at lecture meetings has fluctuated a little more than usual, in the range of 130 to 85. Nevertheless, the level of engagement, as measured by

questions following lectures, suggests the program continues to address the interests of members. The program owes much to Patricia Sumerling. The other members of Council, Dr. Adrian Brown, Colin Deed, Margaret Cliff, Dr Geoffrey Bishop, Anne Bowman, Pamela Rajkowski, Anthea Buxton and Daniela Rose, have been equally important in conducting monthly meetings. It is pleasing that our Patron, His Excellency the Hon. Hieu Van Le, Governor of South Australia, is able to join us for the May 2017 meeting.

The Society's main publications, the newsletter, the Journal and the website, continued to be well received amongst the membership and in the broader history community. Associate Professor Peter Monteath brought his tenure as Journal Editor since 2013 to a successful conclusion with the 2016 Journal, for which we thank him, whilst welcoming his successor, Professor Philip Payton. Robert Martin's efforts in editing the newsletter are to be

From the President

commended. Our Society's online presence, through its website, owes much to Richard Venus, whose role has since January 2017 passed into the expert hands of Terri Mitchell-Smith. Council continues to look at ways to further expand this aspect of the Society's work. We thank all who contributed articles to the publications. The work of the support crew behind the printing and distribution, in hard copy and online, namely Colin Deed, Robert Martin, Anthea Buxton, Margaret Cliff and Richard Venus, is gratefully acknowledged.

The field trip program, with trips to Adelaide's south-west corner to examine our Afghan heritage, the day-trip to Port Adelaide, along with a planned but regrettably deferred visit to the Waite Arboretum, whilst ably compiled and managed by Colin Deed, Margaret Cliff, Pamela Rajkowski and myself, was beset by low numbers of attendees and is subject to evaluation.

Pleasingly, Council can offer a, albeit reduced, number of Grants in 2017 to further South Australian history. Council is well aware that such seed funding can deliver quality products and is a tangible way to promote research and interest in SA's history. More details of successful projects will appear in our newsletter.

A highlight of the past year was the award of the Maurice Keain

Medal for publications on the history of South Australia. Such was the calibre of publications nominated that Council agreed to award two Highly Commended certificates, alongside the Medal itself. The winner was Denis Molyneux for his outstanding *Time for Play: Recreation and Moral Issues in Colonial South Australia*. Highly Commended certificates were awarded to Barbara Santich for *Haigh's Chocolates: Enjoyed for Generations* and Edwin Curnow for *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia 1850-1900: A Biography of Chapels and Their People*. A shift in scheduling means the next award of the Keain Medal will be in May 2017.

Council reviews begun at the start of this period have led to more formal and transparent budgeting for the Society's activities and improved consolidation of membership records. The financial situation remains challenging, though it is stable due to prudent management by Anne Bowman and Adrian Brown. A review and consolidation of membership databases promises improved capacity for Council to monitor trends across time and greater efficiency in our contacts with members. I again thank all members of Council for their efforts to develop new visions for how and where the Society goes. It is with regret that I inform members that Colin Deed,

From the President

Anthea Buxton and myself have decided for various reasons not to re-nominate for Council membership in 2017-18, meaning that new nominations are urgently required. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the HSSA and now is the time for others to take up the mantle of service.

In conclusion, the Society continues to be in good health, notwithstanding the regular challenges we face. All the Society's members are commended for their support which makes the efforts of the Council members so rewarding.

Andrew Buxton, President

NOTICE OF DEFERRED AGM

The Annual General Meeting scheduled for 5 May was carried out in part, but then deferred, due to a need to address the lack of nominees for Council positions, especially those of President and Secretary. The deferred AGM will take place at the beginning of the normal monthly meeting of Friday 7 July. In the meantime nomination forms for Council positions can be obtained from Anne Bowman 8362 7772 .

KEAIN MEDAL

The Keain Medal for the best history book of 2016 on a South Australian topic was awarded at the May Meeting. The joint winners were Alison Mackinnon for *A New Kid on the Block: The University of South Australia in the Unified National System*, and Patricia Sumerling for *Elephants and Egotists: In Search of Samorn of the Adelaide Zoo*. Congratulations to both!

GRANTS FOR 2017

The Society announced at the May Meeting that grants would be given to aid the following projects:

Blackwood Action Group: Publication of a history walk brochure for the Blackwood business district.

Mount Lofty Districts Historical Society: The 'Poppy Series' of four special issues of the Society's newsletter with local World War One stories.

Dr Yvonne Lesley McLean: Publishing a biography of Alison Gent.

Ms Carolyn Semple: Historical marker and other commemorations for Gum Creek School near Burra.

Friday 2 June 7.30 pm

Lady Mayoress, Genevieve Haese

**The Lady of the Town Hall:
The Lady Mayoresses of the
City of Adelaide**

In this address Genevieve Theseira-Haese will examine the lives of some of her predecessors as Lady Mayoress, with insightful and entertaining 'tales from the Town Hall'.

Our speaker became Lady Mayoress of Adelaide when her husband Martin Kinnear Haese became the 37th Lord Mayor, elected in November 2014.

Genevieve was born and educated in Singapore and left at 17 to study Psychology and Communications at University in Los Angeles, later moving to St Martin's in London to focus in Advertising Communications and graduating with a BA (Hons). Genevieve remained in London and worked in Advertising, mostly at the global Advertising agency Leo Burnett, managing the agency's Pan European clients. She lived in Europe for 12 years.

Returning to Singapore, she was invited to set up and become the Chief Executive of a Government-backed Singapore Advertising



consultancy. After four years, Republic Advertising grew to become a A\$15 million billing agency. She managed this outcome by the age of 35 whilst also undertaking various board and leadership positions.

During this time, Genevieve became a founding board member of the Entrepreneurs Organisation (Singapore). She also served for 12 years on the board of the Singapore Home Nursing Foundation, which supports palliative care.

During her time in Singapore, Genevieve founded another business called Breathing Space, a holistic well-being portal to support corporations and communities in the area of stress management.

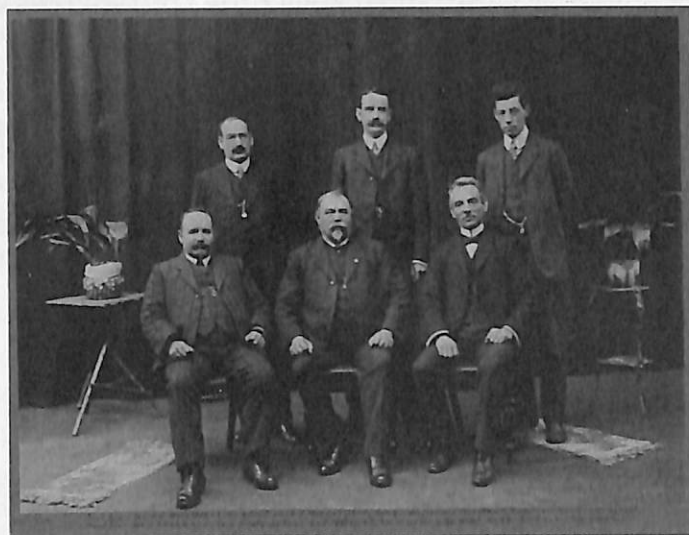
Friday 7 July 7.30 pm

Professor Philip Payton

'Where were the golden streets?' The Rise and Fall of John Verran and the World's First Majority Labor Government

This talk looks at the extraordinary career of John Verran, the Cornish miner from Moonta who rose to become Premier of South Australia in 1910 and thus, as trumpeted at the time, leader of the first majority Labor Government anywhere in the world. It also examines the fortunes of the Verran government and charts its difficulties - strikes and labour unrest, an obstructionist Legislative Council, increasing public unease - which led to its downfall in 1912. It concludes by assessing Verran's later political career, including his estrangement from the Labor Party.

Philip Payton is Professor of History at Flinders University, and was previously Professor of Cornish and Australian Studies at the University of Exeter. His most recent books are *One and All: Labor and the Radical Tradition in South Australia* (Wakefield Press, 2016) and (as editor) *Emigrants and Historians: Essays in Honour of Eric Richards* (Wakefield Press).



John Verran and his Cabinet

Among his other books, those of particular interest to South Australians are *Making Moonta: The Invention of Australia's Little Cornwall* (University of Exeter Press, 2007) and *Regional Australia and the Great War: 'The Boys from Old Kio'* (University of Exeter Press, 2012).

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.

The website of the Historical Society of South Australia is again up and running. Consult it at www.hssa.org.au

What are you reading?

As a school student I recall the cursory way in which the Dutch maritime explorers of the Great South Land were covered. We were told little of the story behind these visitors; it was just the bare facts. The wreck of *Batavia* amounted to a Dutch ship wrecked on Houtman's Abrolhos in 1629, the captain Francisco Pelsaert sailing to Java and returning to rescue those stranded after the wreck. That summary is but a tiny part of the true story which is related by **Henrietta Drake-Brockman's *Voyage to Disaster*** (University of WA Press, 1995; first published by Angus & Robertson in 1963).

Drake-Brockman relates the story of the terrible events that followed the wreck using the then recently translated journals of Francisco Pelsaert. The events engineered by Jeronimus Cornelisz, the undermerchant turned tyrant, are horrific and bring to mind William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. A well-researched book and 'a solid read'.

In contrast, **Rob Mundle's *Great South Land*** (ABC Books/Harper Collins, 2015) is written in an easy to read style and is most engaging. Mundle is a journalist and sailor. His intimate knowledge of sailing adds a fascinating dimension to the story and makes one

appreciate how dangerous the west coast was for the early vessels entering these waters, often unintentionally. He relates the stories of a number of Dutch navigators - Janzoon, Hartog, Carstensch, Tasman - and concludes with the extraordinary life of William Dampier. He traces Dampier's career from the navy to buccaneer to explorer to best-selling writer. There is enough first-hand material surviving about Tasman and Dampier that the reader can gauge what they were like as people and, I think, both would have been good to know. An informative, enjoyable book.

Geoffrey Bishop

Norman Etherington - *Big Game Hunter: A biography of Frederick Courteney Selous* (2016 Robert Hale).

Norman Etherington, President of the National Trust of SA and guest speaker at our Society in November 2015, has recently published a biography of the 'biggest game hunter of his time', Frederick Selous, who had been all but forgotten.

You could say it's about a hunter who shot African elephants and other game purely for ivory or to be stuffed for museums, gentlemen's clubs and private display. However, it's more than this as Etherington claims 'big

Contributing to SA's History

game hunting and empire building went hand in hand'. We follow Selous' early life and career as he transforms from hunter in the 1870s into a naturalist and then conservationist by the time of his death in 1917.

Likened to Rider Haggard's character of Allan Quatermain, Selous' tales 'outclassed his contemporaries because of his writings' that sold not only his books but Haggard's too. Before the First World War Selous and US President Theodore Roosevelt (on safari together) were involved in conservation plans for national parks. Aged 66 Selous was killed in the First World War while on active service in a paramilitary organisation in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), earning him the DSO. Also discussed in this biography, are his relationships with his English wife and children as well as gossip of his secret black family. Selous' writings inspired both Hemingway and Wilbur Smith.

Patricia Sumerling

**Edward J. Erickson,
*Palestine: The Ottoman
Campaigns of 1914-18*
(2016 Pen & Sword)**

This is a well-researched and written military study of 'the other side of the hill' by a US Marines soldier-scholar. It

comprehensively charts the course of the campaigns from the Ottoman 4th Army's 1915 advance on the Suez Canal to its final disintegration at the Battle of Megiddo (ancient Armageddon) in Northern Palestine in 1918 at the hands of British general Sir Edmund Allenby, who employed to good effect Australian Light Horse as he had at Beersheba in the Negev Desert in Southern Palestine in 1917. The book is indispensable reading for those who want to command the factual basis of the British imperial conquest of Palestine from which consequences flow to this day. The account of Beersheba is particularly pertinent this year in view of the contentious commemorations in program at Beersheba to celebrate its supposed place in current Israeli-Australian relations.

David Faber

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

RELIEF WORKS AT THE MURRAY BRIDGE.

[This article 'By our Special Reporter' appeared in the *Evening Journal* of 17 May 1886. As a township Murray Bridge was growing rapidly, at the point where a bridge had been placed over the river, intended for road and rail transport. In a time of depression and unrest, the government was providing work for the unemployed.]

Eighteen months ago the township of Murray Bridge was comparatively a wilderness. Insignificant and desolate, the place was remarkable only for the unsightly swamps which skirted it on the east, and during the greater part of the year lay submerged under the overflow of the Murray. Till then not a single building of any pretension had been erected. Its prosperity dates from August, 1884, when, following the natural sequence in the progressive history of colonial localities, a public-house came into existence—not a rural inn, comfortless and ill-conditioned, but an imposing double - storied stone structure, boasting the conveniences and appointments of a first-class metropolitan building. Then came the Working Men's Club, followed by several private houses— all built of the serviceable sandstone found in great abundance in the immediate neighbourhood—a branch of the Town and Country Bank, a commodious temperance hotel, and five stores (which apparently do not suffice for the requirements of a population of about 300 souls, as their number will shortly be increased to seven). I have said a population of 300, but this figure must be largely increased almost immediately, as now that the railway station is connected with the river many of the river traders will in all likelihood transfer themselves and their belongings

thither. Indeed some of them have begun to do so already, and accommodation for this supplementary population can be seen in the various dwelling-houses in course of erection. As evidence of the growing importance of the place may be remarked the general expectation that the whole of the produce of the Murray country will be brought down by river, landed at the Bridge, and transported thence by rail; whereas formerly the entire produce, excepting, of course, what was appropriated for local consumption, found its way down by the main road. In this connection it is as well to notice the lamentable absence of wharfage accommodation. There should be no difficulty in the way of providing it, as there is a natural bank, for which sheetpiling would answer admirably. As a matter of fact a sum of £7,500 was voted last year for the purpose of constructing a siding to connect the railway with the river and building wharfs and goods-sheds, but while the former has been attended to the Government have yet made no sign in connection with the much-desired wharf. And this is a matter calling for early attention, as it is obviously a difficult task at present to land goods or to transfer them to the shipping. It appears that there remains an unexpended balance of the grant, and it would surely be wise to lose no more time in devoting it to the purpose for which it was originally allotted, in view of the rapidly increasing traffic of the place. In the present circumstances a wharf would be a convenience not only to the shipping, but would supply a pressing necessity, as from the nature of the construction of the railway siding it is easy to infer a catastrophe like a landslip after the passage of a heavy train, which if it occurred would inevitably precipitate the siding into the river. Besides the Murray might overflow its banks at any time, and in

Contributing to SA's History

such an event there would be no means of transshipping cargo from the Bridge. While on the subject of the wants of the township I would draw attention to the too scanty post-office accommodation. Fancy a room 12 feet square located at the railway station, which is geographically the least convenient situation in the township, and in this pigeonhole, almost unendurable in the heat of the summer, the Postmaster does his business, while probably with longing eyes he looks in the direction of the neglected site once selected for the Courthouses, but now abandoned as a suitable spot for the erection of more commodious post-office premises. But the wants of the good people of Murray Bridge do not end here, as a public meeting was to have been held there on Saturday night for the purpose of representing to the Government the inconvenience of the present limited train service. At present the only passenger train to Adelaide leaves at 6 23 p.m., arriving at its destination at 9.30 p.m., while the only train returning thence to the Bridge takes its departure at 6 a.m., so that any one going to town on business must either transact it between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. or remain here twenty-four hours thereafter. This applies to the whole country between Nairne and Murray Bridge, comprising—as I was informed with great gravity and even solemnity—no less than three District Councils, to wit, Nairne, Monarto, and Mobilong, all well populated. This is very hard on the District Councils. The needs of Murray Bridge are evidently insatiable, as I have yet to say that a movement is on foot to place a steamer on the river to run between the Bridge and Mannum, a distance of about 30 miles, and a request will be made to subsidize the steamer carrying the mails between Caloote, Wall and Mannum. If this can be done it is expected that there will be a very large increase in both the

passenger and goods traffic of the railway.

As a sporting community that of Murray Bridge is going to take first rank. The Government have assigned to the inhabitants 16 acres of land between the railway station and the river as a recreation reserve, and in the confident language of one of its members, "it is the intention of the local Sports Committee to make their annual gathering a prominent feature in aquatic and athletic sports." They aspire to having Beach and other celebrated scullers taking part in their contests, and a contribution of £50 towards the expenses has already been promised by a gentleman. Undoubtedly there should be some large and interesting contests on the Murray, the reach being a magnificent one, 3 miles long and perfectly straight.

To the south-east of the township lies the swamp, about 1,000 acres of which are at present being reclaimed. Between it and a precipitous range of hills the river pursues its winding course. About a mile to your left as you face the hills are a cluster of a dozen or more tents dotting the swamp, and a dozen more a mile further on. These are occupied by the "unemployed" on relief works. The total number of men sent up was 191, and twenty others were engaged on the spot; but for various reasons many of them have either left voluntarily or been discharged. Apparently the earlier drafts were recruited at haphazard, and the result was that many undesirable characters thus found their way to Murray Bridge, to set examples of indolence and drunkenness and sow disaffection amongst the rest. Many of these worthless fellows make it a practice to go from camp to camp in the same way, making off so soon as they have earned sufficient for a spree. Others, again, left, having found more

Contributing to SA's History

suitable and presumably lucrative employment elsewhere. In course of time the larrikin element was weeded out, and the eighty-two men remaining are useful workmen and tolerably contented, upon whose behalf the attempt to get up public sympathy with fanciful grievances was gratuitous and misleading. To me the men now on the works freely admitted that there is no foundation for the statements contained in a letter published in the *Register* last week, and purporting to be attested by bona-fide relief workers. As a matter of fact, most of the latter had never been at the Murray Bridge works at all, but one or two of them who had been there were sufficiently troublesome to render their discharge a necessity. Difficult as it always is to control large gangs of labourers, their natural impracticability and proneness to suspect employers of overreaching them is increased tenfold by the inevitable presence in their midst of the bush lawyer. Creatures of that class might be trusted to disorganize any body of men however well disposed, and then to ventilate their imaginary wrongs in the columns of a newspaper. The following statement, as far as I have been able to gather on the spot, should be a complete answer to the disaffected reports that have been circulated:—Taking the camps together there are thirty-four men engaged on piecework and forty-eight on daywork. Payment for piecework is by results, but he who elects to take daywork receives a fixed rate of 4s. 6d. per day. Either is optional, and presumably the untrained labourer, doubtful of his capacity, prefers the guaranteed rate, small as it is, to the risk of earning even less if he elected to be remunerated by results. Experience has proved, however, that such risk is too small to be calculated, and so far there has been not a single instance in which a man at piecework got less than 4s. 6d. for a day's work. The average earnings under this

arrangement according to the latest figures were a little over 5s., while in one case, notably a lad, though unused to the work, was credited with as much as 6s. 3d. Piecework, it has come to be understood by the men, pays better, and but for the fact that a portion of the swamp is under water a great many more would be engaged at it than there are at present. As a proof at least that the work is scarcely beset with as many hardships as agitators claim for it, many of those who returned to Adelaide are now applying to be reinstated. I satisfied myself by enquiry from the men themselves that they are contented, as indeed they ought to be, for what provision it is possible to make for their comfort at Murray Bridge has been made by those in charge of the works. Among other things there is a sufficient supply of wood kept for their use, and the tents, immediately upon their receipt from headquarters, were distributed amongst the men. The storekeepers, unfortunately, have shown the workmen only scant consideration, and one of them in particular, who had been netting as much as £100 a week from them, suddenly stopped supplies, and insisted on receiving a guarantee from the Government before he would continue them.

The works appear to have been carried on well, but with this reservation, that a mistake was made in not having in the first instance dammed up Edwards's Creek, and in consequence of which omission portions of the flats have become inundated in spite of the embankment. Owing to this omission, the river in rising has flooded out the places where the men were working, and while they are now engaged in excavation on a higher level the submerged spots can only be resumed when the water has subsided, which, by-the-way, it is rapidly doing. The

Contributing to SA's History

question as to whether the undertaking will be reproductive is one which I should be inclined to answer in the affirmative if the work is prosecuted systematically. It will not only reclaim a great area of valuable land, but should afford provision for many families. The flats generally will require to be drained after the embankment has been completed, and as the rainfall is only small the land will need irrigation from the river, which could be easily done, and at comparatively little cost, seeing that the flats are on nearly the same level as the water of the river. The flats which are now being enclosed should serve as a fair test as to whether it will be desirable to extend the embankment to other and as valuable low-lying land alongside the river. The soil is a rich black loam of probably unlimited fertility, although at present its capabilities have not been fairly tested, as even the areas reclaimed by Sir William Jervois and Sir John Morphett have only been utilized for raising sheep. The embankments sheltering these tracks are of course entirely unconnected with the one under consideration, and if it is true that they are defective it might be wiser to

replace them by something more substantial, in view of the great advantages depending upon a more enlarged cultivation of the soil. Of course it is a question whether the embankment now in course of construction will serve to keep all the water out effectually, as proximity to the river means percolation. Still I should apprehend no serious danger on that head. The growth which the sides of the embankment are already displaying must in a great measure help to check excessive percolation. The ditch out of which is taken the material for the embankment will be the main drain for both flats. Touching the character of the soil, I should mention that three enterprising Chinamen have proved its richness beyond a doubt. They have been a few months at Murray Bridge pursuing their avocations as market gardeners, and in that time have raised splendid vegetables of all kinds.

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

Can you help? Where is it?



This photograph was taken by SA artist Ronald Coudrey, probably in the 1960s. The location is not

known but seems from the street kerbing to be in a town, probably a country town. The 'For Sale' sign states that the building is *c1849 and is a former temperance hotel*. Please let Geoffrey Bishop know at 8390 3138 if you can identify the subject.

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:

Vice-President: Dr Adrian Brown

Secretary:

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 9 July.