

No. 246 July 2018

## From the Co-President(s)

*Luck is ever waiting for something to turn up. Labour, with keen eyes and strong will, will turn up something.*

Richard Cobden (1804-1865)  
British Radical and Liberal statesman

This is the first time our Society has had two Presidents (at the same time) and we are presenting this column as such. The Society is looking to the future and this is a year for planning directions, as might be said. After some 45 years of presenting South Australia's history we find our community has changed and we need to adjust to this.

Having said that, I never cease to be amazed from whence historical material appears. Our 'European' presence in Australia goes back 200 or so years but even in that relatively short time so much has been lost or forgotten.

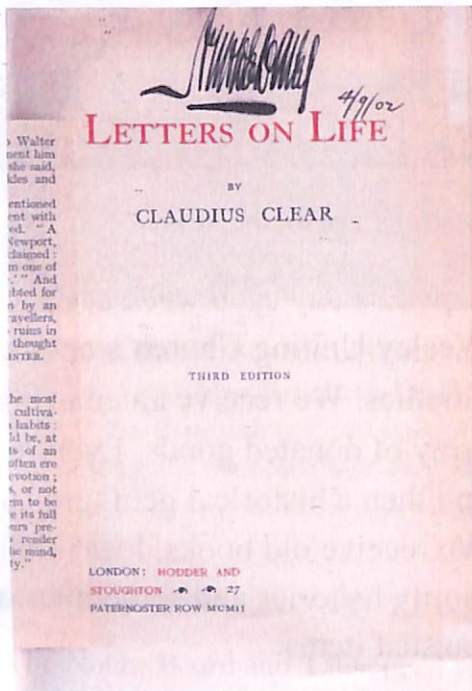
### Letters from the past

I spend a day each week at Clayton Wesley Uniting Church's op-shop Goodies. We receive an amazing array of donated goods. Every now and then a historical gem turns up. We receive old books, local and family histories and sometimes quite unusual items.

Late last year, one of our volunteers gave to me an old book into which the owner had pasted original documents. On a cursive look I quickly realised that this was something special.

The book itself is 'Letters on Life' by Claudius Clear and was published by Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1902. The inscription on the title page is 'Arnold E. Davey 4/9/02'. Over the following years Edwin (as he was known) Davey had pasted original letters into the book. Some were addressed to him and others dated from before his time. Arnold Edwin Davey (1862-1920) and his family were prominent flour-millers and grain merchants.

*Claudius Clear* was a pseudonym of William Robertson Nicoll CH (1851-1923), a Scottish Free Church minister, journalist and writer. He



wrote a weekly column, 'Correspondence of Claudius Clear', in the *British Weekly*. The book comprises a discussion of how to live 'a good, virtuous life'. In addition to the letters, Edwin Davey pasted in hundreds of quotations from famous persons covering all sorts of topics (he has provided a subject index to these). It is an extraordinary collection.

From a historical perspective, the original letters are of particular interest. Many relate to the Davey family's Yorke Peninsula (Honiton and Oakville), Angaston, Nuriootpa and Eudunda connections. There are also letters concerning his association

with the Congregational Church (although he was a prominent Wesleyan), Prince Alfred College (which he had attended) and Methodist Ladies' College. The Daveys were significant donors to these schools and a number of charity organisations.

One letter, dated 4<sup>th</sup> April 1888, is to the Zoological & Acclimatisation Society's Gardens from Mr R.E. Minchin concerning the pending sale of his residence at Grove Street, Unley Park. In his letter (presumably seeking a potential buyer) he gives details of the house and property which included a paddock facing Cross Road. Minchin states that he is selling as his new role at the Gardens required him to live on site.

Another letter, dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 1887, from Mr A.W. Clark of Angaston to Edwin Davey, mentions that the Smiths [S. Smith & Son, Yalumba] are 'putting money into fruit preserving' which he applauds as he did not support them 'in wine production'.

To conclude, a quote from Robert Louis Stevenson, that superb writer of prose and verse, which could well relate to researching history:

*All my old opinions were only stages on the way to the one I now hold, as*

*itself is only a stage on the way to something else.*

Perhaps our next lecture meeting may be one of those stages for you.

**Dr Geoffrey Bishop**  
**Co-President**

### **HSSA Events**

These voices of early settlers in South Australia are from among those who settled in the colony of South Australia after 1836. Many settlers came under the plan of a company based in London and had qualities of commitment, determination, passion, ambition and freedom. Research continues today both overseas in England and locally in South Australia in admiration of those who as proponents of the nineteenth century's systematic colonisation movement contributed to the design of the foundation of this colony. They included Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the lesser known Jeremy Bentham who was a radical thinker for his time. He was an early advocate for universal suffrage, religious and economic freedom, gender equality, the abolition of slavery, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and animal rights. Along with Edward Gibbon Wakefield he played a critical role in South Australia's foundation when in 1832 he wrote the "Colonisation Company Proposal",

from which his ideas contributed to the Wakefield Plan. His innovative proposal for the establishment of a free colony was based on a public-private partnership which he imagined might be named 'Liberia'.

I hope some of our members were able to hear Bentham's colonisation plan outlined by, and discussed with, Dr Tim Causer, Senior Research Associate, Bentham Project, University College, London, Faculty of Laws, who visited Adelaide as a guest speaker for the Adelaide Festival of Ideas held in west Adelaide in mid-July. (HSSA notified our members via email of this event). Most pertinent to our members today is hearing in Dr Causer's two talks an explanation for the current bid to include the **Mount Lofty Ranges on the UNESCO World Heritage List**. This bid "builds on the case that this region has an outstanding and continuing expression in its Aboriginal culture and its globally significant colonial history...".

### **Our August lecture meeting**

It is worthwhile noting the connection with Edward Gibbon Wakefield's Plan as a motivation for South Australia's first dentist's arrival in South Australia from Britain in 1836. Emeritus Professor Wayne Sampson

will present to our Society on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> August the background to the history of dentistry in South Australia, which commenced in 1836. In the 1840s this free settlement attracted dentists from as far afield as the United States of America who set up practice in the commercial centre of Hindley Street.

### Visiting Our Heritage

Our HSSA members visit to the David Roche Foundation, on Tuesday 19th June, proved to be most successful. After the Director of the centre introduced us to the personality, working life and motivations and ambitions of David Roche, a famous South Australian international dog judge and collector of a boundless number of rare antiques from Europe and Russia, two very knowledgeable guides led us on tour through the rooms of Roche's original house and the new museum. The whole experience was astounding and afterwards members passed on very positive feedback on the opportunity provided by the visit.

**Pamela Rajkowski OAM**  
Co-President

### WHAT IS IT?.



A volunteer working in the Scotch College Archives has found this peculiar polished brass object which includes the college crest with a crudely lettered motto. There is no record of its purpose. If you have seen anything like it, can add information, or hypothesise its use please advise [john.radcliffe@csiro.au](mailto:john.radcliffe@csiro.au)

**All lecture meetings commence at 7.30 pm on the first Friday of the month at the Burnside City Uniting Church, corner of Portrush Road and Fisher Street, Tasmore.**

**Friday 3 August 7.30 pm**

**Emeritus Professor Wayne Sampson**

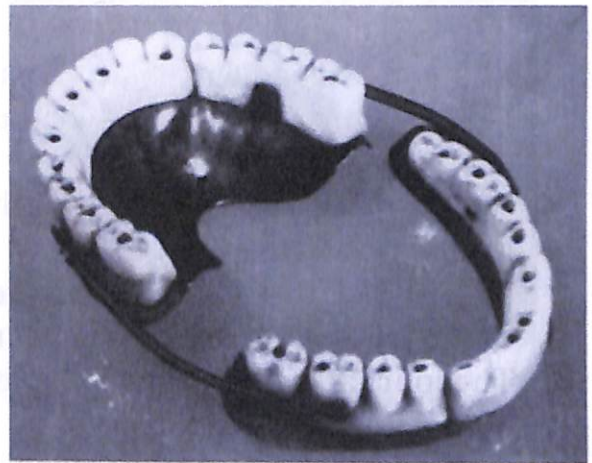
**A History of Dentistry in South Australia 1836-1936.**

South Australia began as an inspiring business venture and has experienced a roller-coaster development with periods of financial boom and bust along with innovative social reforms. Within our rich history, dentistry has grown and South Australia now enjoys dental services and education standards amongst the best in the world. Long gone are the days when dentistry was an unpleasant, painful experience to be endured.

This presentation focuses upon the century of dentistry from the colony's founding, and is based upon a book compiled by Arthur Chapman for the Australian Dental Association. It touches upon the provision of dental services, early legislation, effects of the First World War and the education of dental personnel.

Wayne Sampson trained as a dentist at The University of Adelaide after an initial year at Flinders University in 1967. He specialized in orthodontics, also at The University of Adelaide, and was on the academic staff from 1976 until retirement at the end of 2014.

As an Emeritus Professor, he continues to teach postgraduate students in orthodontics. An interest in dental history was kindled some 15 years ago when he became a member of the South Australian Medical Heritage Society, serving as President 2015-18.



**Award for Margaret Ford**

Congratulations to Margaret Ford, a former member of this Society's Council, for the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) that she received in this year's Queen's Birthday honours. This honour recognises her years of work with children and the community, including historical work.

*[Editor's note: Some while ago I embarrassed Margaret my mistakenly adding a gong to her name in an article in this newsletter. Now I feel vindicated! – Robert Martin]*

**Friday 7 September 7.30 pm**

**Dr Rhondda Harris**

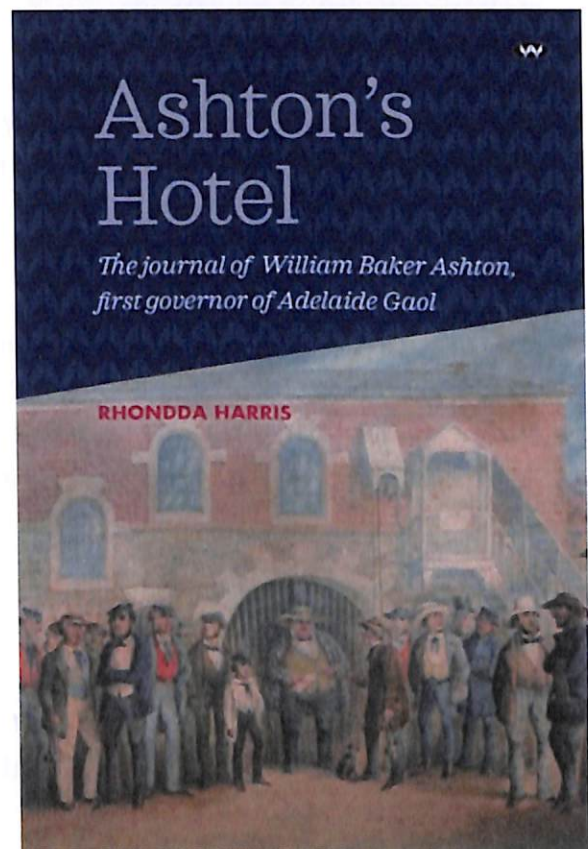
**True crime in early Adelaide: stories from the journal of the first governor of the Adelaide Gaol.**

Adelaide was never the utopia it has been made out to be – virtuous and free from convict taint. A recently discovered journal, written by William Baker Ashton, first governor of the Adelaide Gaol, tells of the dark side of our early years. The journal is like a saga, peopled by the unfortunates of early Adelaide and reveals what was really happening in early Adelaide. In the process it brings to our attention the extraordinary character of the writer, Ashton, who cared as best he could for those in his gaol, now known as the Old Adelaide Gaol but called 'Ashton's Hotel' by the early colonists.

Hear from Rhondda Harris, author of a book on Ashton's journal. Rhondda is a retired archaeologist and for decades has been fascinated by the history and archaeology of Aboriginal Adelaide and early colonial Adelaide. She knew when she came across this journal that it was a real find. She has been able to use her knowledge and persistence to not only decipher the handwriting and bring this journal to light but has been able to place it in context with early Adelaide.

Rhondda will be introduced by Rose Ashton, great grand-daughter of William Baker Ashton.

Rhondda's book *Ashton's Hotel. The journal of William Baker Ashton, first governor of Adelaide Gaol* is published by Wakefield Press and was released in May 2017. It's available for sale on the night or at any time through Wakefield Press.



Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. The deadline for submission of articles for the next Newsletter is Sunday 9 September.

## Meet the Old Colonists: The Adelaide Hospital's first matron, Johanna Briggs

*The State Library is nearing the end of a ten-year project to preserve and digitise a unique collection of photographic mosaics, and to identify the 1700 men and women depicted. The images are now online - most for the first time.<sup>i</sup>*

*This is the second of a series of articles that will introduce some of the men and women who came forward in the early 1870s to identify themselves as Old Colonists and have their portraits taken by photographers Henry Jones and Townsend Duryea.*

The discovery of the Adelaide Hospital's first matron among the women Old Colonists was exciting; previously no photograph of her was known to exist. The original index to the women Old Colonists' portraits was simply a list of surnames. The 'Briggs' portrait shows an older woman dressed with a relatively ostentatious show of accessories and a wedding ring on her left hand. Research to determine whether there were other Mrs. Briggs to consider in identifying the portrait (there were not) revealed that Johanna Briggs' career involved a degree of public notoriety not previously recorded in South Australian nursing and hospital histories.<sup>ii</sup>

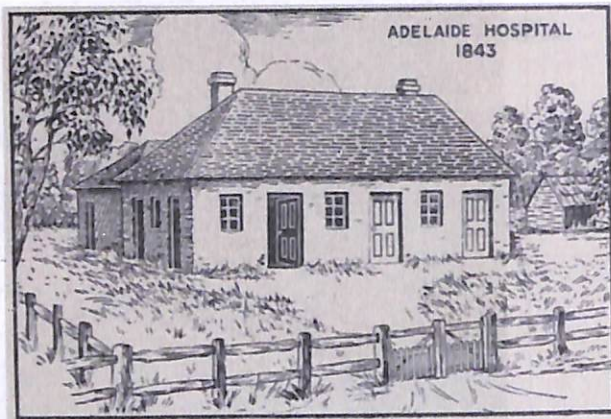
The first Adelaide Hospital was built in the north parklands during 1840 on the site near Hackney Road where the



Johanna Briggs, 1805-1880,  
Photograph by Henry Jones, c. 1872,  
State Library of South Australia,  
B 19985/29ZZ

National Wine Centre stands. It was designed to accommodate 30 patients, as well as a hall which acted as dining room, board room and operating theatre; an apartment for the dispenser; and rooms for two female nurses. Adelaide doctors formed a panel of honorary medical officers.<sup>iii</sup>

The professionalisation of nursing would not begin until 1860, when Florence Nightingale established her nursing school at St Thomas' Hospital, London. The first trained nurses did not arrive in South Australia until 1879. The women who nursed at Adelaide Hospital were expected to be competent through life experience alone. One of the first was Sarah Bairstow, widowed soon after arriving in the colony in February 1839 with six dependent children.<sup>iv</sup>



Adelaide Hospital 1843

Artist unknown

SLSA, B 43330

When Johanna Briggs began nursing in 1849 she was already living on the premises with her husband, the hospital's third resident dispenser Henry Briggs. The Briggs with two children had arrived in South Australia in November 1836 on board the 'Tam O'Shanter' from London. Johanna had borne five more children by 1849, three of whom did not survive, and would give birth for last time the following year.<sup>v</sup>

Johanna's maiden name was Buckley, but to date little more is known of her background. She and Henry married in the Church of England's St Georges, Bloomsbury, but identified themselves as Catholics in South Australia. So too did Henry's sister Ellen Briggs who followed them to Adelaide in the 1850s.<sup>vi</sup>

Henry's father was Gregory Jeremiah Briggs of Gravesend, Kent who came to the attention of the authorities in various guises during Henry's childhood: coal-merchant (partnership dissolved); slopseller (bankrupt); agent for petty officers and seamen

(licence withdrawn); and Secretary to the East Country Dock Company (embezzlement and absconding). His role as a company secretary indicates literacy, and while Henry had emigrated as a labourer he too was literate, a prerequisite for dispensing doctors' prescriptions.<sup>vii</sup>

Henry had already been a government employee for about eight years and had influential supporters: Dr James Nash, the Colonial Surgeon; Thomas Gilbert, the Colonial Storekeeper; and chemist Robert Lowe. All provided testimonials when he applied for the dispenser position in 1847.<sup>viii</sup>

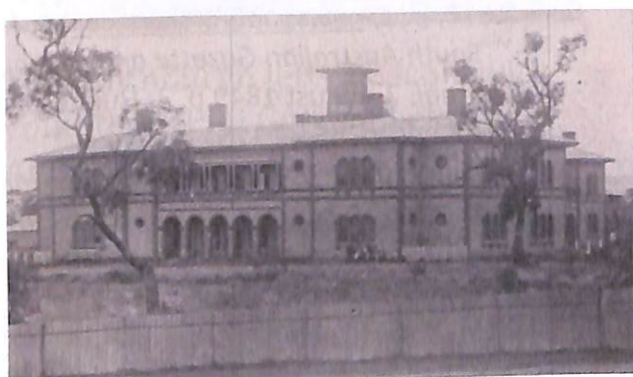


Henry Briggs, 1807-1873,  
Photograph by Henry Jones, 1872,  
SLSA, B 47769/25R

The medical profession was as febrile as the politics in colonial Adelaide. In 1851 the Briggs and Dr Nash made an implacable foe in Dr Robert Waters Moore. Adelaide Hospital historian Dr J. Escourt Hughes dismissed Moore's behaviour as 'nothing more serious than outbursts of temper', but Henry and a female patient lodged

complaints and Dr Nash named Dr Moore as an instigator of interference by honorary medical officers in the management of the hospital. Dr Moore resigned in protest.<sup>ix</sup>

Johanna was promoted to the new role of matron in 1855, the same year that construction began on a bigger hospital on the North Terrace site it would occupy until 2017. The new hospital opened in 1860, with eight wards of 20 beds. A question in parliament adds a hint of sectarianism to Johanna's story. Is it true that only Roman Catholics are employed as nurses? The answer: exclusive of the matron, four were Protestant, and five Catholic. Meanwhile, Dr Nash had resigned as Colonial Surgeon and in 1858 Dr Moore was appointed to the role, which he held until 1869.<sup>x</sup>



Adelaide Hospital, c. 1860,  
Photographer unknown,  
SLSA, B 21363

In 1863 a government-appointed enquiry reviewed the burgeoning hospital. Johanna, now in her late fifties, must have been accustomed to having her name in the newspapers. She was referred to in letters to editor from patients and visitors, and in reports about accident victims and

coronial inquests - usually in positive terms. That was about to change. The enquiry's commissioners criticised her about 'the want of thorough cleanliness in the wards ... the defective state of the linen' and insufficient control of the nurses. This was tempered by expressions of respect for her long service, and the commissioners stopped short of recommending her dismissal.<sup>xi</sup>

Not satisfied, Dr Moore arranged an enquiry focused solely on Johanna, comprising himself, the house surgeon and his assistant and no less figures than the Postmaster-General and the Police Magistrate. Their recommendation in mid-August 1866 was unambiguous - Johanna was given two weeks' notice.<sup>xii</sup>

There followed a public outcry. Supporters and detractors submitted wildly conflicting evidence to the newspapers. A fellow 'Tam O'Shanter' emigrant observed 'the present ruler of the Hospital is not her friend'. Dr Moore fuelled the fire, stating 'that a more useless servant of the Government does not exist.'<sup>xiii</sup>

The uproar moved into parliament where the House of Assembly debated at length whether or not to award Johanna compensation. Way down in the south east the *Border Watch* printed a mischievous summary of Adelaide press reports: 'Mrs Briggs ... has developed kleptomaniac qualities which rendered her retention inadvisable.'<sup>xiv</sup>

## The Veneto & SA

*I would like to go by train once again to get a volume of my old friend the old fox, of proletarian Schio and the Malversa, their lordships of other days.*

Our history is sometimes the history we do not know we have, the unknown record of events we know not of, or which have influenced us in ways we have not thought much about. Historical inquiry, of course, involves constant rethinking of community relations with the past, which have moulded our present and are shaping our future. This is particularly true of Australian national history for as a settler society we have always been a host community for migrants. The history of our hundreds of migration homelands is thus national pre-history. From Croatia to Scotland, these societies laid down cultural templates for our own, especially in the multi-cultural era. Many must be the multi-lingual students qualified to research these hinterlands of Australian history.

My experience of this came as a biographer of Francesco Giovanni Fantin, the Veneto Anarchist Anti-fascist assassinated at Loveday Group Internment Camp 14A at sundown 16/11/1942. What sort of man was this humble activist, selected by antagonists for violent death? His identity was forged in the furnace of class struggle in the little industrial city of Schio in the semi-rural countryside of Vicenza Province. There is a historical consensus that

the Veneto Region of Italy was a basin of emigration to the antipodes. How did this process commence? My investigations of the circumstances of Fantin's formative years made it apparent that political emigration in the wake of the 1921 National Textile dispute in the district had initiated chain migration to Australia from the Schio locality. This insight was of a piece with other findings about working class political culture at Schio. These clues as to how dissident politics had arisen in antagonism to the formation of a capitalist socioeconomic structure based in the industrialization of the woolen industry in the modern and contemporary eras was principally enabled by two Italian historians. The first was Professor Emilio Franzina, renowned historian of Veneto migration and proletarian political traditions in the Province of Vicenza. He introduced me to Ezio Maria Simini, historian of working class resistance to Fascism in the Schio district. Access to their local knowledge was of inestimable value. They were indeed historians after my own heart. They shared my conviction that material culture in general and political culture in particular is fundamentally shaped by socioeconomic structure. Already an incipient Marxist on my arrival in Italy, their historiography bore out my leanings, confirming me in hypotheses destined to bear fruit in oral interviews and archival soundings.

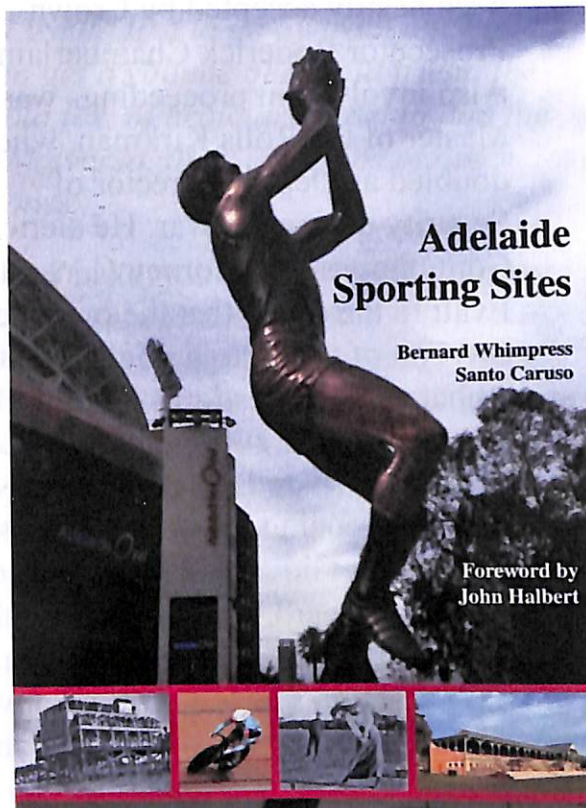
Thus it is that I dedicate these nostalgic musings to the late Ezio Maria Simini, historian of the modern and medieval eras of his native Schio, who mentored me in its highways and byways, to which I would love to return, if only for a visit, and to buy another of his books.

But before closing, I must mention the Adelaide connection to the Fantin case as it drew to its judicial culmination in the Summer of 1942/3. It touched the lives of a number of Adelaide identities in what was the twilight of 'British' monoculture in Australia. The first of these was Charles Jury, a distinguished humanist graduate of St Peter's College who had matriculated to Oxford, where he had volunteered for a British regiment. Wounded on the Somme, he had sojourned in southern Italy between the wars. Returned to Adelaide, he had again volunteered in middle age, and served as an Intelligence Officer at Loveday, keeping his finger on the pulse of political tensions among Italian internees as the Italian war effort approached its crisis in late 1942. He translated the dead man's internment diary and sought in other ways to alert his superiors to the significance of the killing. Likewise strove Dr Alan Finger, social physician, father of venereology in South Australia and one of its leading Communist identities. Dr Finger and his wife Joan, secretary of the banned Party's legal front the Political Rights Committee, sought to have the killer re-tried on a charge of murder, after a

plea of guilty of manslaughter had been hastily accepted by Crown Prosecutor Roderick Chamberlain. Also involved in proceedings was Master of the Rolls Kirkman, who doubled as Deputy Director of Security during the war. He alerted Commonwealth Attorney General Evatt to the effect that the proposed revision of the charge might lead to embarrassing questions. Evatt replied that it would be sufficient if the Judge in the case spared the Army's blushes in his sentencing remarks. The case of Rex versus Giovanni Casotti was one of the last heard by Richards J in the Supreme Court of South Australia, and culminated in the handing down of a sentence of two years hard labour in March 1943. Although justice miscarried in this matter, in so far as conviction of an individual for manslaughter hardly did justice to the friends of the deceased, who were aware that a conspiracy to murder had been carried into effect, the case received the benefit of due process and there was no high level conspiracy to cover it up as has been alleged. Evatt as a result accelerated his efforts to wind down preventive internment of 'enemy aliens', which had principally targeted the Italian community. As such, the Fantin affair represents a turning point in the evolution of 'British' into multicultural Australia.

**David Faber**

## About a Book



A sense of place is fundamental to human sense of self according to the social psychologist Hugh Mackay. Virginia Woolf liked a room of her own but for many Australian men it has been the backyard shed. Others like the beach, the bush, the end of a jetty with a fishing line, or a favourite table in a coffee lounge. Places define us and there's a term for a love of place – topophilia. Sports fans often love places where the action occurs more than their favourite teams or players because they represent continuity in their lives.

Around eighteen months ago I published a photographic book documenting the Adelaide Oval before its redevelopment. When it became evident that the old stands were due for demolition I began

photographing them to provide a record of a lost place and time. Some would argue that bricks and mortar don't matter, and that real history is what occurs on the field. However, spectator experience stretches further than this: to social occasions with families and friends on the mounds (north and south), in and behind the grandstands, and especially at Test match time in the parks outside.

When former Melbourne bookseller (now publisher) Santo Caruso first approached me about a year ago to edit a book on *Adelaide Sporting Sites* I could see its possibility but to turn possibility into reality requires effort and commitment.

This book would have elements of nostalgia but is stretched onto a broader canvas. It would grow to encompass 63 sporting sites and would become a story of venues present and past. Of Adelaide Oval, Football Park, Memorial Drive, the City Baths, Morphettville and Victoria Park racecourses, Norwood Oval and Norwood Velodrome, Wayville and Globe Derby trots, Rowley Park and Mallala speedways. Of events and associations: Crows/Power derbys, Magpies/Redlegs rivalry, Australian Tennis and Golf Opens, the Bay Sheffield, of Phar Lap racing at Morphettville, Tulloch at Cheltenham, and Ayrton Senna, Alain Prost and Nicki Lauda on the East Parklands and Adelaide street circuit.

In making the choice of sites there had to be some limitations and the reason for inclusion was that at some

time a site must have attracted significant crowds of generally more than 5000 people. A definition of 'Adelaide' was also extended to include Oakbank, Gawler and Mallala, principally because patrons attracted to venues in those places were primarily from the city.

While a broad span for the book was established early it evolved along the way with an example being of how a place like Victoria Park Racecourse would be treated. Was it primarily a former horse racing venue or would it need to incorporate Grand Prix and V8 motor racing, and the Three Day Equestrian event? It was then that the decision was made to have separate entries for the parklands which opened up these places which had been rich sites of sporting endeavour for mainly community-based teams since colonial times.

In examining the structure of this book the reader will note that around three quarters of it is pictorial yet the textual entries, which range from 300-1800 words with an average of about 800, are long enough to fulfil two aims – to provide a brief history of each place and how it developed over time. To avoid confusion geographical place names such as Glenelg Oval or Richmond Oval are used rather than those of invariably short-term sponsors such as Gliderol Stadium or City Mazda Stadium.

I was invited to co-ordinate the project because of my expertise in South Australian sport but I knew that such expertise was limited. Working

on this book has been a learning experience and I have attended my first harness racing and dog racing meetings, seen only my third Australian Soccer League match, and visited the North Adelaide Aquatic Centre and SA Athletics Stadium for the first time.

For this book to become a reality it was necessary to call on other experts and to that end it has been wonderful to draw on the knowledge and commitment of 24 fellow writers, nearly all of whom are, or have at some time been, regular attendees at the South Australian chapter of the Australian Society for Sports History. Writing books is often a solitary experience so it is a delight to be involved in a collaborative effort and in this instance work with and guide a great team.

*Adelaide Sporting Sites* is available from selected bookshops and the author of this piece.



Crowds at Henley Beach jetty and kiosk for the Henley to Grange swim, 1919.

**Bernard Whimpress**

## From last meeting



L-R: Alan Burns (Friends of Glenthorne), Dr Bob Brummit, Jane Brummit, Dr Pamela Smith. Mrs Brummit is a descendant of Thomas Porter who purchased Lizard Lodge from the O'Halloran family and renamed it Glenthorne.

## 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

## THE SHED PRIZE

Your donated book(s) have been so good it has enabled The Shed Prize to be several books per raffle which in turn gives the ticket holder a better chance of scoring a prize. Looking forward to more books in 2018. If you need help to carry or collect, please see Colin Deed at meetings or phone 8277 2953.

## ITEMS FOR SALE

The Historical Society invites offers for well-kept equipment no longer needed for Society use:

Kodak Ektalite 1500 slide projector, carousel, remote control, power lead and strong carry case.

Brother Cassette 1912 (not the date of manufacture!) Correction electric typewriter with case, manual and power lead.

Please email your offer(s) to the Secretary [secretary@hssa.org.au](mailto:secretary@hssa.org.au)

Consult the website of the Historical Society of South Australia at [www.hssa.org.au](http://www.hssa.org.au)

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

Patron: His Excellency Hieu Van Le, Governor of South Australia

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

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

Co-Presidents: Pam Rajkowski 0400 810 196  
[pamraj@bigpond.com](mailto:pamraj@bigpond.com)

Dr Geoffrey Bishop 8390 3138  
[gcbishop@westnet.com.au](mailto:gcbishop@westnet.com.au)

Secretary: Dr Bridget Jolly 7200 5455  
[secretary@hssa.org.au](mailto:secretary@hssa.org.au)

Treasurer: Ms Anne Bowman: 8362 7772  
[treasurer@hssa.org.au](mailto:treasurer@hssa.org.au)

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

[Guest Editor for this issue: Dr Bernard Whimpress]

Journal Editor: Professor Philip Payton  
[philip.payton@flinders.edu.au](mailto:philip.payton@flinders.edu.au)

Bookings: Pam Rajkowski 0400 810 196

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