

No. 253 September 2019

MEET THE COUNCIL MEMBERS:

JENNY HEIN

The Historical Society of South Australia's Council member Jenny Hein has been unsuccessfully trying to avoid history all her life. She is the daughter of an art historian turned archaeologist father (who put together most of the family history) and a mother who taught herself to classify the 11th-14th century South-East Asian pottery from the excavations. Growing bored with the dates and names of colonial Australian history, Jenny dabbled in Russian, British and American history at high school before turning to languages and completing a Bachelor of Arts (which necessitated German and French history).

While working for the public service, Jenny thought she was safe from history, but it kept popping up in holidays – the Kennedy Space Center remains a highlight. She returned to study later in life, but discovered that biblical studies and theology require



a reasonable knowledge of ancient and Reformation history. This somehow resulted in a doctorate researching the early history of The Salvation Army in South Australia. It was at this time that she joined the Historical Society of South Australia, which was a great help in understanding the context of her studies.

Finally succumbing to the inevitable, Jenny has worked as an adjunct lecturer in Church History at St Barnabas Theological College, Adelaide College of Divinity and

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Booth University College (Canada). As a Historical Society of SA Council member, she manages the website and represents the Council on the journal committee.

Married to Dennis, who is interested in engineering history, Jenny has produced two history-minded children – Christian, who is a self-taught military historian and Kathryn, who has an interest in ancient Mediterranean history. Jenny's main hobby of geocaching has brought her to numerous obscure historical locations in search of little plastic boxes. And she has just taken on the role of teaching Salvation Army history to potential members at her church in Ingle Farm, so history will remain a part of her life for many years to come!

If you want to understand today,
you have to search yesterday.

- Pearl Buck

The past changes a little every
time we retell it.

- Hilary Mantel

Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/HistoricalSocietySA

The Society's facebook page is to be a social media companion to the official website. Through 'liking' the page, reminders for speaker meetings and excursions will appear on personal facebook pages. It is the place to share significant concerns relating to the history and heritage community.

The username [@HistoricalSocietySA](https://www.facebook.com/HistoricalSocietySA) has been created for the Historical Society of South Australia Inc. It's now easier for people to find your Page in search. People can also visit your Page at fb.me/HistoricalSocietySA and send your Page messages at m.me/HistoricalSocietySA.

FALIE FAMILY FUN DAY

Celebrating Port Adelaide's maritime history with the centenary of the ketch FALIE. The only WWII vessel still afloat, and the last of the coastal traders to retire. Food & entertainment on the wharf, Falie open to public.

McLaren Wharf (end of Timson Street) Sunday 29 September 11am to late (around 5pm) followed by Illuminart's outdoor light show 'Port to Port' at 6.30pm.

details on FACEBOOK -
[@historicketchfalie](https://www.facebook.com/historicketchfalie)

NEW EDITOR FOR THE ANNUAL JOURNAL

I am very pleased to advise you that Carolyn Collins has agreed to take on the role of Editor of the Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia after Philip Payton steps down later this year. Philip will mentor her while she 'learns the ropes' and of course the Committee will provide her with as much support as possible.

Dr Carolyn Collins is a Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Adelaide and a casual staff member in the History Department at Flinders University.

Dr Christine Garnaut

DENIS MOLYNEUX

The Historical Society of South Australia is saddened to learn of the death of Denis Molyneux, aged 94, on 16 August 2019.

Denis and his wife Marjorie have been regular attenders at HSSA meetings. Denis's book, *Time for Play: Recreation and Moral Issues in Colonial South Australia* (Wakefield Press) was a deserving winner of the

Maurice Keain Medal for a South Australian history publication in 2016. It's a rare person who takes an MA in 1957, a PhD 52 years later, and publishes such a fine book at the age of 90. Denis was a pioneer in the discipline of physical education in the UK and SA, and an adviser to government on recreation planning and development in both countries. He was awarded membership of the Order of Australia in 2005 for his work on sport and recreation for disabled persons.

Bernard Whimpress

MARGARET LUGG

Margaret Lugg, who has died aged 91, and her sister Nancy were regular attenders at the Historical Society meetings until ill-health prevented Margaret from coming this year. They would sit with their friend Alison McPharlin, another teacher. Miss Margaret Lugg taught Latin for many years and was a well-regarded Deputy Headmistress at Enfield High School in the 1960s and also at Gilles Plains High School – among her tasks was checking the length of uniforms of the female students! Margaret was a friend to several former teachers in the Historical Society.

Elizabeth Harris

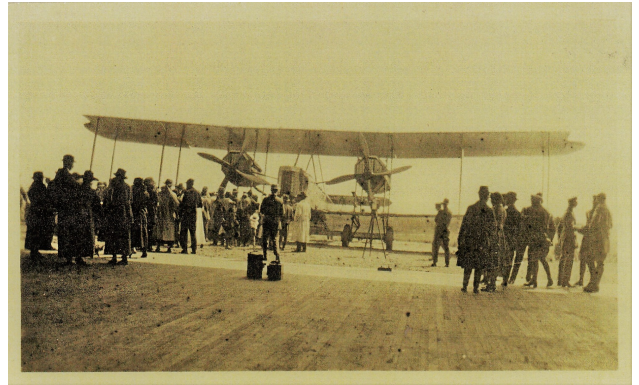
Friday 4 October 7.30 pm

Lainie Anderson

The epic flight that shrank the world: Sir Ross Smith and the 1919 Air Race from England to Australia

Aircraft were absurdly basic in 1919: open cockpits; held together with wood and fabric; a compass for navigation. Airfields were non-existent in many parts of the world, too. Yet when Prime Minister Billy Hughes offered a £10,000 prize for the first Australians to fly from London to Darwin in under 30 days, six crews took up the challenge. Two crews died. Two others crashed out. And only one crew made it home in 30 days – after overtaking a daring Frenchman who'd threatened to steal the glory.

South Australian brothers Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith shot to global fame after landing in Darwin on 10 December 1919. A century on, South Australia is celebrating their epic flight and their Vickers Vimy plane that can still be seen at Adelaide Airport.



Arrival of Ross and Keith Smith at Melbourne Photo by Rev. L. G. Bond

Lainie Anderson has been a columnist with Adelaide's *Sunday Mail* for the past 11 years. In 2017 she travelled overseas on a Churchill Fellowship to gauge the significance of the flight and retrace the route of the 1919 Air Race. She has since written a novel, and is now an ambassador for the Epic Flight Centenary while also producing a TV documentary on the feat with astronaut Andy Thomas.

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.

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Friday 1 November 7.30 pm

Dr Gertrude Glossip

**Queer style(s) then and now:
Hats, Gloves and Parasols!**

Will Sergeant and Dr Gertrude Glossip PhD (Formal Drapery) Curtin University are two sides of the one coin. Will grew up in rural South Australia in the 1950s when 'boys were meant to be boys', love football and cricket and not 'dressups'. Will loved the latter and not the former!

Fast forward – Adelaide early 1970s. After years of repression Will finally admits he's gay and throws himself into the fledgling Gay Liberation Movement, participating in the first Adelaide Pride March in 1973 and the first Sydney Mardi Gras in 1978.

Will's been involved in many aspects of Adelaide's gay community: the Uranian Society, Parkestone Foundation, AIDS Council of SA and the Feast Festival.

Gertrude was created in 1993 for the Uranian Society to lead a history walk and has subsequently led history walks at every Feast. Factual of course, a focus of the walks has been that they should be fun and entertaining. Gertrude's choice of



outfit has never been mere whimsy but designed to complement the particular walk's theme. Gertrude is not a traditional drag queen but rather a persona in the style of Dame Edna Everage, but far more politically correct!

'Hats, Gloves and Parasols!' is a joyous romp through 22 seasons of Feast history walks in which Gertrude expounds on her tastes and wardrobe choices. There's even a 'sneak leak' at this year's Feast walk titled 'Close Encounters'.

After this presentation the Historical Society will host its End of Year Celebration. Participants are requested to contribute \$5 towards the cost of refreshments.

UNCLE ALBERT by Jenny Hein

Family history often devolves into interminable lists of who begat who, so that researchers long for a salacious family secret to spice up what can be a very dry read.

Unfortunately, my family consists of hard-working, honest folk, with little to recommend them to an outside reader. However, while piecing together their history a chance find in the National Archives uncovered one story which acts as a corrective to the somewhat depressing stories of German internment during the world wars.

On 12 January 1877 Albert Rudolph Hein (26/12/1874-10/8/1960) arrived in Adelaide, South Australia, on the steamship *Herschel*. His parents, Julius August Louis (19/9/1837-17/11/1917) and Ida Frederike Eleonore nee Karow (1835-22/10/1925), had successfully applied to emigrate from their home town of Hamburg on assisted passage as unskilled labourers, along with their five children and Marie, a young woman who was probably a child of an earlier marriage. Julius was an experienced pastrycook and soon opened a bakery in Mount Gambier, where the couple had settled.

Their youngest son Albert spent most of his life as an itinerant labourer in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. In the early 1890s Albert and several of his relatives moved to the Roma district in Queensland and subsequently took up land leases in the Waldegrave county in 1893. However, he did not stay the requisite five years in order to obtain freehold title to the land and it was forfeited to the Crown. It is likely that Albert returned to South Australia, but was soon on the move again, working at the Moolyella Tinfields near Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. While there he joined the 10th Light Horse Regiment as a reserve, but never saw overseas military service. He also continued as a reserve in the Light Horse on his return to South Australia. In 1934 he won the Coutie Gold Medal for rifle shooting.

Albert took over the Crown Lease of land in Kongorong on 18 January 1926, which he held until he moved to Cape Douglas near Port MacDonnell. There he lived as a recluse on a property of 40 acres in an area now known as Hines Bay, subsisting on fishing and rabbit hunting.

Contributing to South Australia's History

For the time, Albert lived a remarkably unremarkable life and one which was replicated by many other hard-working immigrants. The most unconventional portion of his life occurred when he attempted to apply for an old age pension at the age of 65. It was at this point he discovered, to his surprise, that he was not an Australian citizen.

Albert's lifestyle had not triggered any reminders that he was not a naturalised citizen of Australia. The one time he had returned to Germany was in 1889 as a 14 year old child, too young to be naturalised along with his siblings before the journey. For unknown reasons (had they intended to remain in Germany?), his parents travelled as German citizens and Albert was 24 when they were naturalised in 1899. According to the laws of the time regarding underage children, had they done so before he turned 18 Albert would have automatically become an Australian citizen. Nevertheless, Albert was unable to speak, read or write German – a testament to how quickly the Hein family had been absorbed into the local community – and considered himself wholly Australian.

Albert had not stayed on his land in Queensland long enough to claim freehold title, which would have required him to prove he was a naturalised citizen. As a volunteer lighthorseman who did not see combat, there was less impetus to check his credentials. He never married and did not register to vote, somehow failing to realise that it was compulsory in federal elections, possibly due to his self-imposed isolation and itinerant rural lifestyle. (Compulsory voting in South Australian elections was not introduced until 1942.) There were no other events that would have revealed his status.

Having been informed of his nationality, Albert wrote to the Minister of the Interior and asked for naturalisation papers, which he duly submitted. Applying for naturalisation might have been a simple matter, if not for bad timing. It was 1939, war had recently been declared on Germany, and he was, in fact, an enemy alien. To make matters worse, on 22 June 1939 a blitz on unregistered firearms had resulted in his being fined ten pounds and ten shillings costs for a breach of the Firearms Registration Act, and he was now an enemy alien with a serious firearms conviction. Despite

an endorsement by the local Port MacDonnell judge, E. Carrison JP, Military Intelligence advised that it was not considered advisable to grant a Certificate of Naturalization.

His plight was taken up by the local community. Albert was reported as being in poor health and no longer able to support himself by hunting and fishing. Given his skill as a marksman, this may have been an exaggeration designed to elicit sympathy from the relevant authorities.

A long exchange of correspondence followed: further applications, letters of support, statements of character, endorsement by politicians, etc. The District Clerk, Earnest Allan Milstead, wrote a letter of recommendation to the Federal Member of Parliament, George McLeay, stating that Albert was 'well and favorably known to all members and officers of the Council, he is a true and loyal subject of the British Empire'. Mr Pascoe, the councillor at Port MacDonnell, Thomas William Haig, the local shopkeeper, and Arthur John West, the local police officer (who had probably arrested Arthur for the firearms offence) all wrote similar letters of support on his behalf. Their pleas had the desired effect. On 10

September 1940 George Shaw Knowles, Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, who had no connection to the case, wrote to the Minister of the Interior to advise Albert's request for naturalisation should be granted, adding an annotation in his own handwriting, 'I am told Hein was 2 years old when he came here. If you go on I won't have any constituents to draw upon. Now how about it?'

The appeals were successful. Albert renounced his German citizenship and took his Oath of Allegiance to the Queen on 22nd April 1941 in Mount Gambier. He was granted naturalization on 29 May 1941 and was able finally to receive his old age pension.

Having been granted citizenship, Albert took on its responsibilities and registered to vote. He is listed in the 1943 Electoral Roll for Mount Gambier (Barker) as living at Port MacDonnell as a fisherman. In 1949 he sold his land and moved to Donovans in Victoria. On his death in 1960, he left his property to his niece Maude and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Old Mount Gambier Cemetery.

The recent centenary of World War I also prompted reflection on the fate

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of German immigrants in South Australia. The changing of German place names to more patriotic British ones is well known and it is ironic that the name of the bay that commemorates Albert has been subsequently anglicised. The internment of foreign nationals and even Australian-born descendants of enemy countries is a history which we might prefer to be quietly forgotten. There have been stories of those who took the opportunity to denounce business or social rivals. The mistreatment of internees at Torrens Island during World War I is a particularly shameful story.

During World War II foreign nationals were interned in similar numbers. Two camps were situated near Mount Gambier at Wandillo and Nangwarry, holding mainly Italian POWs. If they had been so inclined, Albert could easily have been consigned there by the authorities. However, there is no record of Germans from the area being interned in either war, in stark contrast to other locations.

The Mount Gambier district saw a significant German influx from the 1850s onwards. Albert's father Julius was himself joining a sister who had emigrated twenty years earlier.

However, unlike other German areas, the integration of immigrants into the local community had occurred from an early period, although there were still reflections of their heritage in the prominent German Club and other societies. All of Albert's siblings married non-German partners – a not unusual circumstance in the area. It is possibly this factor which prevented internment of the local 'enemy aliens'.

Whatever the social factors that influenced it, Albert's story and the determination of his neighbours and the local authorities to ensure this eccentric itinerant was cared for by the state stands as a counter-example to other German mistreatment in South Australia. For my family, a more important story than the standard skeleton in the closet.

Wakefield Press, our generous sponsors, have their premises at 16 Rose Street, Mile End. Their telephone number is 8352 4455.

Meet the Old Colonists: Harry Birt and the Northern Pioneers

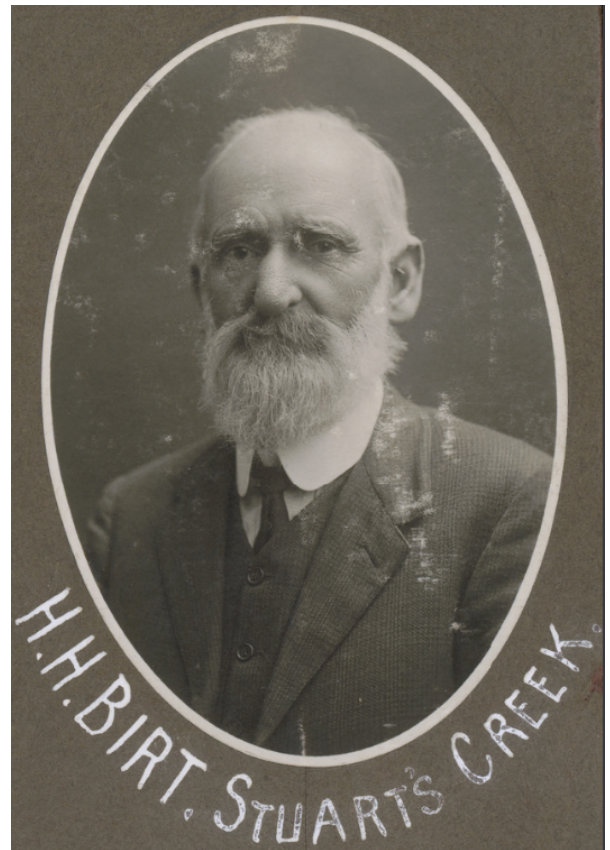
This is the eighth in the series of 'Meet the Old Colonists' articles which have introduced some of the men and women depicted in photographic mosaics created in the early 1870s to commemorate South Australian Old Colonists.

The State Library's collection of mosaics includes several created in the early twentieth century. They depict men associated with northern and western pastoral regions of the colony in the 1840s, '50s and '60s.

The Old Colonists mosaics were the work of individual photographers. The largest 'pastoralists' mosaic had a very different genesis.¹

Henry Howard 'Harry' Birt was 11 years old when he arrived in South Australia in 1855 on board the 'Warren Hastings' with his parents and two sisters. His parents had been master and matron of the Biggleswade Union Workhouse in Bedfordshire. Thomas, aged 55, emigrated as a schoolteacher but worked as a bank messenger in Adelaide. Sarah, nee Howard, aged 46, resumed her calling – first as matron of the Female Refuge, Norwood, and then for over 20 years as matron of The Orphan Home, Carrington Street, Adelaide.²

At least two of Harry's older brothers



Harry Birt, 1844-1932, probably by Mora Studio, c. 1908, SLSA, B 6912/15.

preceded the family to Australia; Peter and William were at the Victorian gold diggings in May 1854. Harry went bush in June 1858, 'bound north, riding and leading another horse from the old Commercial Hotel, Grenfell street'.³

For the next 20 years Birt roamed the pastoral regions of Australia as a drover and stockman. He also did:

a great deal of what he called "deepsea droving" – taking stock from one part of the [country] to another by boat.⁴

He returned to Adelaide and married Helen Mary Williams in 1880. They had five children but only their

second son, Harry junior, survived infancy. Birt 'sampled city life' as a butcher in Bowden for five years before re-engaging with the pastoral industry. Based in Adelaide, he sold sheep for stock and station agent E. Laughton & Co. in the 1890s and acted as a stock agent until he retired in his late seventies in about 1920.⁵

The Birts' son, Lance-Corporal Harry Williams Birt of the 48th Infantry Battalion, was killed in action in France on 6 August 1916. It was a year to the day after his enlistment. He was 26 years old and unmarried; leaving his ageing parents childless.⁶

However, his father had already created another legacy. On 31 March 1908 an article in *The Advertiser* newspaper announced,

Mr. H. Birt, formerly of Stuart's Creek, but now of Adelaide, has spent two years collecting photographs of pioneer settlers in the far north in order to form a large picture-group, and the result of his labor will be exhibited at the studio of the "Mora" photographic shop in Rundle-street.⁷

Birt's inspiration for this gift to posterity is unknown. Described by his wife as a bookworm, perhaps he had seen Townsend Duryea's massive 'Old Colonists' mosaic at the Public Library on North Terrace where it adorned 'the southern wall at the turnstiles'. Or perhaps in the course of



S.A. Northern Pioneers 1850-59 by Mora Studio, 1908, SLSA, B 6912. 73.1 x 50.1 cm.

business he had visited the Adelaide or Lake Albert homes of pastoralist Thomas Bowman and seen Henry Jones's pair of men and women Old Colonists mosaics that Bowman owned until 1910.⁸

Most of the northern pioneers in Birt's mosaic had died before its creation in 1908; twelve had died in the 1860s. Many had begun their working lives in South Australia but dispersed across the continent. Nevertheless, 'a large majority of those depicted [had] been personally known' to Birt. One can only marvel at the network of contacts that

allowed him to locate photographs not only of prominent explorers and pastoralists but also obscure station managers, overseers, stockmen and drovers.⁹

The Mora Studio, operated by Arthur Brown, was praised for its technical role in the creation of the mosaic, particularly for the 'uniformity in the shade' of the reproductions. There is no indication that Brown initiated the project or capitalised on it by advertising copies of the works.¹⁰

Two versions were made of the mosaic. The one depicted on page 11, with 122 portraits, is a variation. It substitutes eight portraits among those listed in initial newspaper accounts, as well adding two more (one of which is lost, leaving a blank oval frame). This version was given to the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (RGSA) in 1915 and subsequently transferred to the State Library (then Public Library) in 1939.¹¹

The version of the mosaic originally displayed at the Mora Studio, with 120 portraits, was acquired by pastoralist and stock and station agent Samuel Joseph Stuckey. He died in 1912 and the fate of the original work is unclear. The State Library holds only a poor quality photographic print.¹²

In old age Birt never failed to recall his creation when interviewed as a pioneer drover. Indeed, he took pride in outliving every other pioneer depicted, including his brothers.¹³

While the Old Colonists portraits have only been available online for two years, the S.A. Northern Pioneers were put online with the Library's initial release of images in 2003. However, each portrait was identified only by the initial, surname and place written under it on the mosaic.¹⁴

Research has revealed inaccuracies in some of those names, the full names, life dates and arrival dates of most of the men, and that many of the place names are given as variant spellings, rendering them invisible in catalogue searches. New catalogue records will replace the old shortly.

When I began working on the S.A. Northern Pioneers I assumed that the portraits would all be replicated in the contemporaneous *Cyclopedia of South Australia* or later *Pastoral pioneers of South Australia*. It is a measure of the value of Harry Birt's visual legacy that over 80 of his fellow northern pioneers are not shown in either of those works. They are now much more accessible to frontier and family historians alike.¹⁵

Beth M Robertson
State Library of South Australia

¹ The three largest mosaics are 'The Old Colonists Banquet Group' by Henry Jones, B 47769; 'Group of [women] Old Colonists' by Henry Jones, B 19985; and 'Old Colonists 1836-40' by Townsend Duryea, B 8235/1.

² **'Warren Hastings' passenger list** – www.theshipslist.com; **Birt family at Biggleswade Workhouse** – 'Researching other Birts ...' family tree by jnamugridge, Ancestry.com.au; **bank messenger** – *The South Australian advertiser (Advertiser)*, 19 September 1860, p.3; **matron** – *Adelaide observer (Observer)*, 6 February 1858, p. 3, *South Australian register (Register)*, 17 July 1862, p. 2, *South Australian weekly chronicle (Chronicle)*, 19 July 1884, p. 8.

³ Peter and William also had 'Howard' as their second name, *The argus*, 31 May 1854, p. 2; **went bush** – *News*, 19 March 1924, p. 7; the horses belonged to Birt's first employer, Charles Swindon – *Observer*, 27 March 1926, p. 47.

⁴ *Register*, 20 March 1926, p. 4.

⁵ **Marriage** – 'Researching other Birts ... family tree; **sampled city life** – *News*, 19 March 1924, p. 7; **butcher** – *Register*, 10 November 1880, p. 2 and Sands and McDougall annual directories; **sheep salesman** – *News*, 19 March 1924, p. 7; **stock agent** – directories. Birt also ran the House-that-Jack-built hotel, Stanley Flat, 1899-1900. There was another H. H. Birt in Adelaide in the late 1870s. He was Howard Birt, secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in South Australia. He returned to England in 1880.

⁶ *Chronicle*, 16 September 1916, p. 43.

⁷ *Advertiser*, 31 March 1908, p. 9.

⁸ **Bookworm** – *Observer*, 27 March 1926, p. 47; **Duryea at the Public Library** – *Advertiser*, 21 July 1903, p. 8; **Bowman's donation to Public Library** – *The express and telegraph*, 16 November 1910, p. 4.

⁹ **Personally known** – *Register*, 7 April 1908, p. 4. Birt was probably assisted in obtaining photographs of prominent figures by

pastoralist, politician and Birt's occasional employer John Howard Angas – *Observer*, 25 December 1930, p. 38, *Advertiser*, 12 March 1932, p. 16, *News*, 19 March 1924, p. 7.

¹⁰ **Brown** – *Daily Herald*, 4 September 1916, p. 5; **uniformity** – *Chronicle*, 4 April 1908, p. 40.

¹¹ **Given to RGSA** – Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia: South Australian Branch ... Session 1915-16, Vol. XVII, p. x, donor's name not recorded. The Society published the work as four plates in its 1915-16 proceedings. **Transfer to SLSA** – RGSA SA Branch Council meeting minutes, 1 March 1939 and 3 April 1939.

¹² **Acquired by Stuckey** – *The South Eastern Times*, 16 June 1908, p. 2; **fate of original** – Birt referred to the mosaic being in 'the Art Gallery and Museum' and 'the Archives Department' but these may be confused references to the RGSA donation – *News*, 19 March 1924, p. 7, *Observer*, 26 March 1926, p. 47, *The Mail*, 13 December 1930, p. 5; **print** – SLSA B 8502, 56.5 cm x 36 cm.

¹³ **Outlived** – if the 'probable' identification of George Henry Dean, 1859-1953, at B 6912/A2 is correct, Birt was not the last survivor of the northern pioneers; **brothers** – Peter Howard Birt, 1836-1905, was the long-term manager of Keeroongooloo Station, Queensland, William Howard Birt, 1838-1915, was a station manager in Wentworth, New South Wales.

¹⁴ The State Library became part of the National Library of Australia's Picture Australia in 2003, making an initial 63,000 images available via the national website, 56,000 of which were viewable worldwide.

¹⁵ *The cyclopedia of South Australia in two volumes: an historical and commercial review...* edited by H.T. Burgess, Adelaide, Cyclopedia Co., 1907-1909; *Pastoral pioneers of South Australia*, Adelaide, Publishers Limited, 1925-1927.

Book Review:

**Penelope Curtin and Tansy Curtin,
*Blooms and Brushstrokes: A Floral
History of Australian Art*, Wakefield
Press, Adelaide 2019**

Few people know less about botanical matters than me.

I once lived for a decade in a suburban home surrounded by around 100 plants and flowers and knew the names of not much more than a handful. I tended the roses – no idea of the variety – and lilies, watered the buffalo lawns (front and back), but apart from that could identify only the peach tree (good yields), lemon tree (poorer), diosma (a hangover memory from my father's garden in my youth), and the birds of paradise in the extreme back corner of the backyard.

I am more familiar with Australian art, a frequent visitor to the Art Gallery of South Australia, and major and minor galleries whenever I travel. I have even written a long introductory essay to a book on the painters of the Heidelberg School.

The magnificent front cover of *Blooms and Brushstrokes* featuring *Blinded*, a late work by Melbourne photographic artist Polixeni Papapetrou, who died last year, will certainly catch the eye. Once opened, a sample of the pages will reveal a glorious array of images by many names you might expect such as Margaret Preston, Nora Heysen, Dorrit Black and Grace Cossington Smith as well perhaps as those you won't



such as William Dobell and John Brack. All the main Heidelberg artists – Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder and Frederick McCubbin – are represented, and Charles Douglas Richardson, a fringe member of the school, receives a double-page layout for his 'romantic goddess-like nude', *Fleur de lys*.

The book is organised as an 'A to Z of' with 64 flowers from anemone to zinnia and although there are none beginning with the letters K, O, Q, U, V, X and Y there is a veritable feast of 85 paintings and photographs of banksia, dahlia, foxglove, magnolia, peony, rose, snapdragon and wisteria among others in between, as well as the dozen pictures which accompany a long introduction, and the quirky Lionel Lindsay wood engraving *Goat and rhododendrons* on the final page.

While the visual aspects of the book may be spellbinding it would nevertheless be a shame if other essential elements were overlooked for this is a scholarly history – witness the extensive notes and indexes of both flowers, art works and artists – delivered in lively lucid prose.

Authors, mother and daughter team, Penelope and Tansy Curtin are certainly ideally well-placed to undertake the work:

Penelope as a gardener whose homes in Aldgate, Aldinga and Bendigo have at various times featured in *Open Gardens South Australia and Victoria*, as an editor among whose major clients are the Art Gallery of South Australia, and as a former bookseller with a strong concentration on art and photography; and Tansy as curatorial manager of the Bendigo Art Gallery, holder of a master's degree in art history, and a keen gardener herself.

One mark of a fine historian is to express oneself confidently; another is to express uncertainty with confidence. In discussing Indigenous artist Trevor Nickolls's representation of the banksia, *Homage to Margaret Preston*, Tansy writes that it is 'politically charged':

Nickolls's work can be seen as both acknowledging the importance of Preston in creating widespread acceptance of Aboriginal art while simultaneously reclaiming Australian flora and reasserting the sovereignty of Australia's First Peoples.

While on the same flower, Penelope notes:

Apart from the eucalypt and acacia, no plant has been so singularly associated with Australia as the banksia ... In May Gibbs's Cuddlepot and Snugglepie stories for children, the knobbly, hairy and many-eyed cones, 'Big Bad Banksia Men', are the villains, having terrified (unfairly, I think) generations of Australian children.

The bracketed personal comment is characteristic of the warm tone of Penelope's remarks throughout, of which those opening and closing her observations on the canna lily must suffice:

What do I remember of Brisbane's lush, now heritage-listed Botanical Gardens from my childhood? Not the many rare and unusual botanical species, or the collections of cycads, palms, figs and bamboo, but the cannas! Bed after bed of them, either flowering loudly, or cut to the ground, depending on the season ...

I wonder if the Brisbane City Garden, as it is now called, still has the cannas? Bendigo's magnificent Rosalind Park certainly has a fine collection.

And Tansy's authority is most to be admired in her discussion of four works on the daisy by Arthur Streeton, Olive Cotton, Jean Bellete and Charles Blackman, particularly her strong ending:

Blackman developed a distinctly figurative style, often utilising the figure of the

schoolgirl as a leitmotif, and along with his fellow Antipodeans, adopting a modernistic aesthetic to create figurative and narrative works ... *Angry young girl* is focusing her full attention on us, the viewers, seemingly daring us to argue with her; the whimsical beauty of the haphazard flower arrangement belies the fierceness of her expression. This angry young girl is certainly evocative of the heightened emotional state of childhood, when every experience, no matter how insignificant, heralds the end of the world.

Multiply this authority, the richness of language, the undeniable love of subject, 64 times, 85 times, add the range and quality of the imagery beautifully presented by Wakefield Press, and *Blooms and Brushstrokes* is an Australian classic in waiting.

Only dull souls with short arms and deep pockets will resist such an exquisite purchase.

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