



No. 275

May 2023



SLSA B 48684 1926 the opening of the new building for Walkerville Boys' Home known as Kennion House, on Smith Street Walkerville

MEMBERSHIP SUBS WERE DUE IN JANUARY –
have you renewed? – We value your support

SUPPER VOLUNTEERS

The HSSA Council would like to reinstate the traditional suppers after general meetings. Please consider volunteering to help. This would involve bringing supplies, managing the urn, preparing tea and coffee, putting out biscuits and cake (optional), collecting gold coin donations and, of course, clearing up and washing up afterwards. It would be much appreciated by many members if the convivial suppers were returned, starting with the June meeting. Please contact the Secretary, Bridget Jolly 7200 5455 brimar@esc.net.au

FIELD TRIPS & EXCURSIONS

Phone/email Lyn O'Grady 0409305908 to book your place

Anyone needing transport, let me know, and if anyone would like an extra passenger, also let me know.

SA POLICE MUSEUM - Wed 24 May 11am: \$10 (coffee extra). We are joining another group booked on the day for a guided tour of the Police Museum. Parking on Gaol Road. Meet at Thebarton Police Barracks gates 11am. (The last chance open day is Sun 28 May 10 to 2)

Option to then go to ADELAIDE GAOL \$13.50 Seniors.

UNLEY MUSEUM - Wed July 19 - FREE. Meet at 80 Edmund Ave. This is an award winning museum. If you haven't been, it's worth a visit. They have changing exhibitions on top of permanent displays. (then to Unley shopping centre for a cuppa).

JUNE MEETING: FRIDAY JUNE 2 at 7.30pm
Burnside City Uniting Church, 384 Portrush Rd Tusmore

THE CAMPBELLS OF ANLABY: Working and Social Life in Mid North South Australia - Dr Janet and Sue Scarfe

Anlaby in the Mid North of SA is mainland-Australia's longest continuous working merino stud, dating from 1839 and owned by the wealthy Dutton family until 1978. The talk will cover a history of three generations who lived and worked on the station from 1860 to 1940.

Whereas other accounts concentrate on the Dutton dynasty, this talk focuses on the Campbell family, in particular Hugh, a shepherd in the 1860s and 1870s, and his son Charles, overseer from 1904 to 1938. The talk describes the impact of various changes over the decades and places the property and the employees in their wider context in the district and in South Australia – droughts, fires, World War I, the Depression, the emergence of new occupations and social change.

The speakers are the co-authors: Dr Janet Scarfe is a professional historian and biographer. Her research interests include family history and biography, Australian Army nurses in WWI and WW2, and controversies around the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. She is currently writing a biography of Dorothy ('Puss') Campbell and her service overseas in WW2 with the Australian Army Nursing Service and plans to publish in 2023. Sue is a genealogist who undertook the initial research into the book.

JULY MEETING: FRIDAY JULY 7 at 7.30pm
Burnside City Uniting Church, 384 Portrush Rd Tusmore

THE BRIEF PARLIAMENTARY CAREER OF MISS KAY BROWNBILL -- SA's first female Member of the House of Representatives - Jenny Tilby Stock

Kay Brownbill (1914-2002), well-known journalist, playwright and media personality in her day, has faded from public memory, her popular 1962 historical novel *Blow the Wind Southerly* long out-of-print. An independent single woman, she broke new ground in several professional fields, including that of parliamentary politics at the Federal level. Her term as Liberal member for Kingston in the turbulent years 1966-69 made headlines mainly because she was only the third woman ever to be elected to the House of Representatives, sitting alone among 123 men for the full three years.

Why did she seek such a novel career change? How did she overcome the hurdle of preselection to a winnable seat? What external forces contributed to both her success and then her defeat? What did she expect to achieve as a modest backbencher in the Holt Government? What if anything, was her legacy? Comparisons will be made with the experiences of the other fellow 'first female' South Australian MPs, Senator Nancy Buttfield, Jessie Cooper MLC and Joyce Steele MHA.

About the speaker: Jenny Stock taught Australian politics and political history at Adelaide University for many years. Since retirement, and as a Visiting Research Fellow in the Politics Department there, her research has focussed largely on early South Australian women MPs, with the career of Australian Democrat leader Janine Haines a major project.

ANNUAL REPORT given at the AGM 14 April 2023

The year past was a time of rebuilding the Society following the height of the Covid-19 Epidemic in the previous two years. This was a period during which both attendance at our lecture meetings and membership fell off. We were not alone in experiencing this – many community groups were similarly affected.

Covid remains very real in our community and we need to be aware of the threat it poses to health and well-being. However, attendance at meetings by members and visitors during 2022 and into this year continues to grow.

The year featured our usual run of 10 lecture meetings that covered a diversity of topics concerning South Australia's history. It was the final set of talks assembled by Patricia Sumerling, our lecture coordinator over a good few years. Thank you, Patricia.

We continued to build our web and Facebook presence during the year thanks to Council members Lyn O'Grady and Jenny Hein. Interest shown in both is growing but is not reflected in membership (just as other groups find) but they do raise awareness regarding our history and heritage matters which is one of the Society's stated aims. Our heritage, built and otherwise (vide the threat to Trove earlier this year), remains under threat, viewed, I suspect, as an impediment to so-called 'progress'.

The members of the Society's Council are to be warmly thanked for their ongoing devotion to the smooth operating of the organisation. We continue to keep our head above water in a financial sense but in no small part due to income coming from our investment portfolio. Our major costs are ever increasing and include meeting venue hire, storage of our records, our well-regarded annual Journal, our bimonthly newsletter and grants scheme. These eat up more funds than the income derived purely from membership fees alone.

So, thank you to our Council members, also to Robert Martin and now Lyn O'Grady for editing our newsletter, and of course you our membership for your continuing support as we approach our 50th anniversary in 2024.

Geoffrey Bishop
Acting President

Postscript: Congratulations to Lyn O'Grady, our new President, and our newly elected members of Council, some returning and others new faces on the management group.

(Auditor's report available on request)

WALKERVILLE BOYS' HOME - part 2 Lyn O'Grady

*Continuing the early history of the Walkerville Church of England Boys' Home ...*in the 1920s it was decided that a new Home was needed, one that didn't require so much maintenance and had lots of fresh air and space.

Land nearby on Smith Street became available and was acquired, a home was built with up-to-date laundry and kitchen facilities. There were two dormitories for the younger boys and the older ones slept on the verandah sheltered from the weather by an awning to prepare them for the harsh life ahead for them when a placement is found for them. It was to be known as Kennion House after the Bishop of Adelaide.

SLSA B48679
Kennion House,
Smith St
Walkerville 1927

(photo by WS
Smith, for the
Register)
Walkerville
Uniting Church
left of image.



Each Matron/Supervisor had their own style

There had been a constant parade of matrons over the decades; spinsters and widows each brought their own style of bringing up the boys. One constant feature was the harsh treatment to prepare them for their later life.

Breakfast was porridge and never changed throughout the decades. The boys came home from school for a hot lunch every day and then washed the dishes before returning to school. Teatime was usually bread and dripping or jam.

That was until 1931, when Susie McGillicuddy and her husband 'Mr Mac' came to the Home. She brought some warmth and stability to the home. Each boy got a locker to keep their few belongings, she introduced pillows and individual quilts to be kept by the boys when they moved on. Pictures went on the walls, and there were bedtime stories on Sunday nights.



The dormitory for the younger boys at Kennion House – Walkerville local history collection.



Mr Mac looked after the maintenance around the Home, taught the boys boxing and leather-work and how to repair shoes. There was a dairy cow for

milk. They each had a pet and could choose from rabbits, guinea pigs, pigeons, budgerigars, cats and dogs. They bred from these and sold the offspring to friends at school for pocket money. This was useful in understanding animal husbandry as many of the boys would end up on a farm after the Home.

On Saturdays, the boys were sent out to scavenge the district for hard rubbish which was then buried in 10 foot deep trenches they had dug in the open land behind the Home. The idea behind this activity was that they were kept busy and too tired to get into mischief. On Sundays they attended all the services at St Andrew's Church.

A high number of the boys signed up to serve in the armed forces in WWI and WW2. They had missed the camaraderie of being in a group, and it gave them an escape from farm work.

Mr Mac died in 1940 but Matron McGillicuddy stayed until 1951 (after 20 years as matron) and was honoured in the 'King's birthday honours' of 1950. What followed was the appointment of a 'bad character' as Supervisor who abused some of the older boys. He was sent packing, and I believe he served gaol time after a similar appointment in WA.

After 1952 the boys were educated at Walkerville Primary to save on some of the running costs of the Home. The headmaster often visited the Home, had tea with the boys and helped them with their homework.

During the summer holidays, the boys bundled up their bedding and clothes and spent a few weeks at Victor Harbor exploring the beaches and generally having lots of free time, while maintenance was undertaken at the Home. In later years they camped on the floor of Grundy Hall at Brighton and later still they were billeted out for Christmas week in private homes in the city and country.

In 1954 Ivor Snaith, and his Australian wife and two daughters, came directly from England for his appointment to the Home. He had a Social Service Diploma and had worked some years at an Institute for boys in Liverpool. A cottage was built close by for his family to live separately from the Home.



Ivor Snaith made drastic changes, the main one being the boys were relieved of their daily chores and were encouraged to play sport instead. Ivor had the verandahs enclosed and all the lads then slept inside, and ate in the dining room with a staff member at each dining table to help teach etiquette and engage in conversation. Before this the boys ate on trestle tables on the eastern verandah and the staff ate in the dining room. He set up a

library too. The boys had jobs on Saturday morning but Ivor would work alongside them. Later Ivor's elderly father came to live with them; the boys called him Grandpa.

Mr Paget, 'Pagey' was the handyman - a former Rat of Tobruk. He stoked the coke-burning stove, mended boots, taught the boys to mend their bikes and was greatly liked by the boys. He had a trained choir voice and could be heard singing gloriously with improvised lyrics while killing chickens for the table.

An additional dormitory block was built for the boys showing academic potential so they could stay on and attend Adelaide Boys High School (riding their bikes to school). Some lads were sponsored by Prof Mitchell to attend University.

Some of the boys had sisters in care. Regular films nights were a great excuse to bring them together. A number of Aborigines from Northern Territory came to the Home and they became enthusiastic sportsmen.

In the 1970s there were more changes, with the introduction of cottage homes with 6-8 children per family. Houses were purchased or built nearby and the children lived with a 'father' and 'mother'.



Kennion House was then used for weekend sport, social get-togethers, barbecues etc. Kennion House closed in 1984.

Until the 1970s, income support or community services for families in need were almost nil, nothing like we know today.

There was no day care, and no before and after school care. Children became 'unwanted' and were treated as if they had little value to society, in fact, they were seen as a threat, they could grow up to be juvenile delinquents. *(continuing next issue)*

NEW PUBLICATIONS - by Robert Martin

Helen Hennessy and Patricia Booth, *THE DEFIANT ANTI-CONSCRIPTIONIST: The curious life of Ephraim Henry Coombe*, Wakefield Press, 2022.

This is a fine biography, exhaustively researched and very well-written. E.H. (Harry) Coombe had a full life as, amongst other things, a journalist, newspaper editor and parliamentarian. He also wrote a history of his home town of Gawler, one of South Australia's earliest local histories.

A man of principle, Coombe struggled during the First World War to protect South Australians of German origin from persecution, and campaigned against conscription. He was prosecuted and vilified. It is arguable that his life was cut short by his travail, as in 1917, when he was only 58, he suffered a seizure which proved fatal.

Amongst its many bounties, it provides insights into life in the dynamic town of Gawler in late 19th and early 20th centuries. (This Society's grant helped to produce this book.)

Ian J. Sellick, *EARLY THEATRE LIFE IN ADELAIDE S.A. 1836-1856*, The Author, 2022.

The author combines the stories of the early theatres of Adelaide with 'the story of all the vagaries of life endured by the early colonists who had arrived in this somewhat hostile country from the comfort and safety of Mother England'. Ian Sellick has previously published *The Early Theatres of Adelaide* and this volume expands upon that work. The book includes lively and rambunctious tales that demonstrate the early days of South Australia were not always as polite and well-behaved as some historians have tried to make out. For copies contact the author: cedric@senet.com.au

Geoffrey C. Bishop (compiler), *WALKING URAIDLA, East Torrens Historical Society's Self-Guided Walking Trail of Historic Sites in the Township of Uraidla*, East Torrens Historical Society Inc., 2022.

Subsequent to his book *Uraidla, "Hope you haven't forgotten this township"* (2021), Geoffrey Bishop has put together this booklet so that those who would enjoy learning the history of the township by actually walking around it can refer on the spot to an authoritative text and copious photographs, contemporary and historical, covering 51 sites in all. For copies contact Lesley Richards 8390 3390 or ask at various outlets in Uraidla.

**BUSINESS, CHARITY AND SENTIMENT
SUSAN MARSDEN**

Susan Marsden's first SA Housing Trust history 1936-1986 has been republished.

The book can be bought online at Booktopia (Paperback, 552 Pages, ISBN: 9781761282010) - or as an ebook for \$12.

REMINDER –

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Her Excellency the Hon. Frances Adamson AC

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CONTRIBUTIONS (no more than 1000 words) & **COMMENTS** are welcome by 28 June 2023. Email lyn.ogrady@gmail.com

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