



**No. 280      March 2024**



The Destitute Asylum (SLSA B796) was the nearest Australia ever had to a British workhouse. It housed the aged and infirm, the sick and convalescent, people with disabilities, orphaned and neglected children, and pregnant women, ie a refuge for people who were destitute and had no means of support themselves.

## **The 50<sup>th</sup> AGM of HSSA will be held on April 5.**

Nominations for Council are welcomed – please use the enclosed form and email our Treasurer your intention to stand for election.

**KEAIN MEDAL Nominations** for a 2023 book published on history or biography, and **GRANT SCHEME Applications** for up to \$1k close 31<sup>st</sup> March (check our website for details).

**SUNDRY EVENTS OF INTEREST** shared at our monthly talks are posted on our Facebook page. You don't need to be 'on Facebook' to be able to see our page because it is 'public' – just like an ordinary webpage. Have a look and you will see what I mean. <https://www.facebook.com/HistoricalSocietySA>

**PHOTOS WANTED!** Do you have any photos that were taken whilst on HSSA field trips, dinners or other events? We would like to have copies for the booklet on HSSA 50 years that will be launched at our Anniversary event in October. Let us know, we can scan originals or take copies of digital images.

### **UPDATE ON FIELD TRIPS & EXCURSIONS:**

**Z-Ward – Behind the Walls** – 2pm March 10 (book online, there may still be tickets available if you want to join in)

**Cummins House** – March 3 (cancelled due to the fact that those interested were not available on that date)

**SAHMRI tour** – June 6 at 10am – (this tour is full and those on the waiting list are booking online for another date)

**Lot 14 North Terrace** – (not having tours this year)

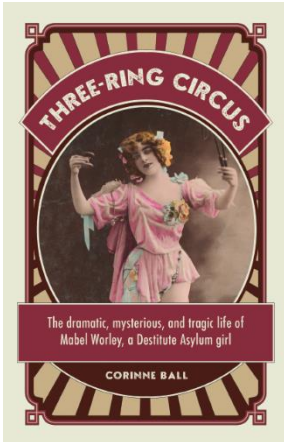
**Gawler Tour** – is anyone interested?

**Heysen's Cedars** – sprintime (details to come later)

Ian Sellick will convene field trips this year. If you have any suggestions, I am sure he would love to hear them.

MONTHLY TALKS are held at 7.30pm sharp at the  
BURNSIDE CITY UNITING CHURCH,  
384 Portrush Rd, off Fisher St.

**FRIDAY APRIL 5 --- THREE-RING CIRCUS: The dramatic,  
mysterious and tragic life of Mabel Worley, a Destitute  
Asylum Girl. Corinne Ball**



Mabel Worley was at first glance a nobody - a working-class girl who had an illegitimate child at 16, fell into a life of booze and crime and died alone as a sad old woman. But Mabel's life was much more than these bare bones. As a 'bad girl' making her way as best she could, Mabel lived an extraordinary life that was in many ways typical but in others so very different. She was a sinner, a strumpet, and a circus star, in a world that chewed poor women up and spat them out, but still, she persisted: she adapted, she dissembled, she acted, and she endured.

Corrine uncovers Mabel's sensational story of love, family, rebellion, loss, sex, secrets, and circus, and untangles a family mystery left unsolved for over 100 years. Mabel's story will give you an insight into a lost world of public and private lives and show how one woman's lifetime encompassed the snowballing changes happening in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia and beyond.

**About the speaker:** Corinne Ball is a senior curator at the History Trust of South Australia with a particular interest in social welfare history, migration, women's history, and disability. She was one of the curators who produced the MAGNA award-winning exhibition *In this place: a history of the Migration Museum site* in 2016, and continues to research, and write about, residents of Adelaide's Destitute Asylum.



**FRIDAY MAY 3 --- A CITY PUB CRAWL:  
an Illustrated History     Patricia Sumerling**

This talk includes the architectural merits of some hotels, from the most modest, to the more evocative styles that characterise Adelaide. It also discusses biographies of publicans, barmaids and patrons, as well as the many planned and unplanned events that take place in a hotel.

Taken from her latest publication *Hotels of Adelaide: an Illustrative History* (Wakefield Press), this talk is only the second she has presented about Adelaide's pubs to HSSA meetings. Having a long-term interest in the State's pubs, her first book was *Down at the Local: A History of Hotels in Kensington, Norwood and Kent Town*, 1998. (image: Southern Cross Hotel SLSA B757)



**About the Speaker: Patricia Sumerling**, a professional historian for 40 years, is co-author of the landmark publication *Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide*, 1990. She is the author of *The Adelaide Park Lands: A Social History*, 2011, and of *Elephants and Egotists: In Search of Samorn of the Adelaide Zoo*, 2016. In 2010 she debuted as a novelist with the 1902

historical crime mystery, *The Noon Lady of Towitta* (nominated for the Ned Kelly Crime Awards in 2011). She was winner of the Catherine Mary Gilbert Prize organised by History SA in 2006 for her article on a notorious abortionist, Madam Harpur. In 2013 she was awarded South Australian Historian of the Year by the History Council of South Australia. She has also been awarded the Maurice Keain Medal for SA history publications on two occasions.

## In the papers 1840 - ELEANORA RAU Ian Sellick

An inquest was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1840, at the church in the German village of Klemzig, on a male infant that had been found



in the River Torrens. The verdict was *'wilful murder against a person or persons unknown'*. The newspapers report the details as they are revealed...

'Police constable William Moore, while in attendance at the inquest, became suspicious when the German interpreter and some of the German jurors left and went into a house nearby. Moore also noticed a girl in the window of the house and she looked ill.

Dr Nash had examined the girl a few days later and he determined that she had recently given birth, a fact which she denied. The girl, Eleanora Rau who was 22 years old and a native of Germany, had until recently lived at Mt Barker working as a servant to Mr J.W. Bull but had returned to Klemzig.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> July Eleanora was brought before the Magistrate`s Court on a charge of being an accessory to the death of her child. Eleanora was again brought before the Magistrate`s Court on the 17<sup>th</sup> July with Reverend Kavel delivering a statement made by Eleanora at a private meeting with him at her request:

"She had been delivered of a child on the 18th June, about six o`clock in the evening, in the room next to that in which she and her relatives live. The child was the same male infant whose body was found on the banks of the Torrens, near Klemzig. (Image: Pastor Kavel GermanAustralia.com)

“When the infant was born it opened its mouth two or three times, trying as it were to breathe or cry, but without uttering any noise; it immediately expired in her arms. Considering then whether or not she should show it to her mother who was outside, she thought it best not to, as it was dead. She would have never concealed the birth if it had been alive, and although she had concealed even from her mother the knowledge of the state she was in, yet she never entertained the slightest thought of killing her child.



“She considers that the child not living was owing to it being born a few days premature, the delivery having been hastened by her running fast down a hill some little time back. As she saw the child had so soon expired, she put it under a tree near the house to bury it when she conveniently could.

“Meanwhile the father of the child, Mr Fiedler’s eldest son, at Klemzig called on her, knowing she was ill; she told him what had taken place, and asked him what she was to do. He wanted her not to mention a word about it to anybody and asked for the body of the infant. She gave it to him when they went out; he returned sometime afterwards, and told her he had put the corpse into the Torrens.

“The reasons Fiedler wanted her to conceal the birth, was partly to escape the disgrace of their connection and partly because (he being a young man of 19) he thought they would both be hung.”

She was then fully committed for trial, for concealing the birth of her infant. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, Eleanora was brought before the Bar at the Supreme Court, charging her with child murder and with concealment of pregnancy. The Grand Jury subsequently found a true bill against her for concealing the birth of her child, but ignored

the bill charging her with child murder. **She was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment and hard labour.**

Eleanora was committed on the 17<sup>th</sup> July and was bailed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. **She was recommitted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September but was discharged by order of His Excellency on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1841.**

Eleanora Rau (Johanne Eleonore Rau) age 21 years had arrived in South Australia with her widowed mother Anna Maria Rau on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1838 aboard the *Prince George* from Hamburg. The father of the deceased infant, Johann F.A.A. Fiedler had also arrived with his parents on the *Prince George* on the same day. (Other passengers on that voyage were Charles Flaxman, agent for G.F. Angas along with Rev. Kavel and his family).

Sourced from Southern Australian 14 July 1840 p2; Adelaide Chronicle 22 July 1840 p3; South Australian Register 5 September 1840 p3.



SASSi is a pilot project, initiated by the History Trust's Greg Mackie OAM, and Dr Kiera Lindsey, with assistance from historian-consultant Dr Heidi Ing. SASSi seeks to survey the diverse forms of research being undertaken across the State on South

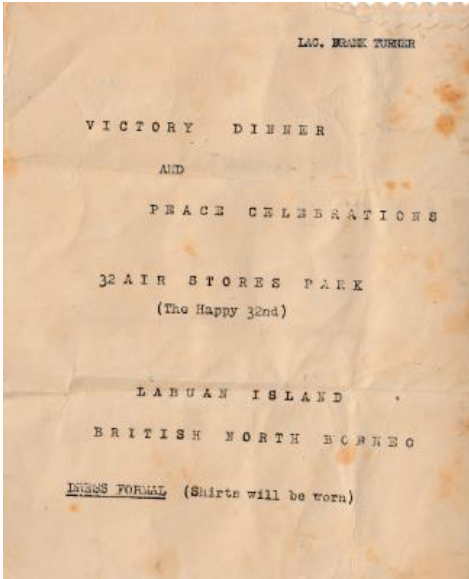
Australia's past, in order to 'join the dots' between organisations and individuals to further the depth and breadth of research and storytelling state-wide. SASSi helps to foster greater connectivity and collaboration.

**If you are working on a research project, you are asked to complete the SASSi survey, 20 questions, before it closes on 7<sup>th</sup> April.** You don't have to answer all the questions and remain anonymous if you so wish. If, however you would like to be connected with likeminded organisations or seek assistance in promoting your research, then add your contact details.

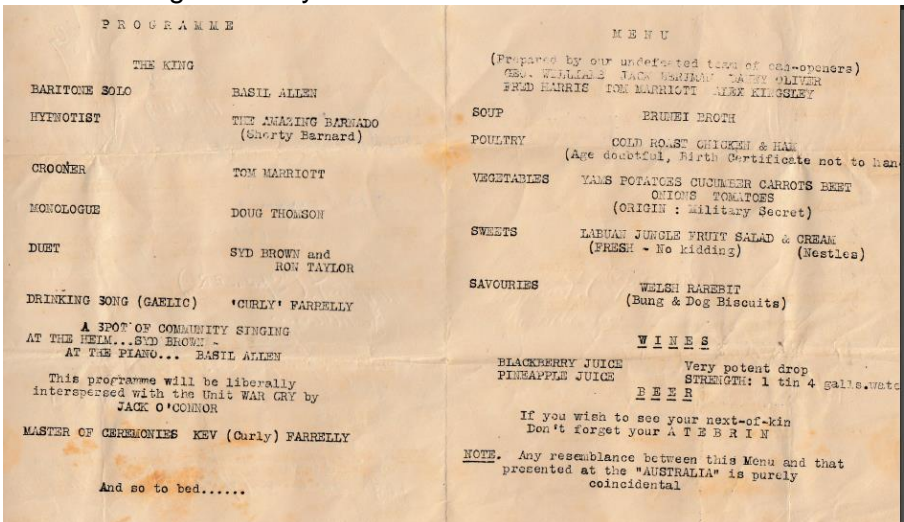
In addition to revealing gaps in research, and potential areas or significant anniversaries for future focus, it is hoped that SASSi will kick-start a conversation on the issues which are crucial to our future. Its success depends upon broad support and public participation. **Visit the History Advocate page of the History Trust of SA website.**

# 'VICTORY DINNER AND PEACE CELEBRATIONS' 1945

Lyn O'Grady



Found amongst our family ephemera was a souvenir of a dinner for Victory in the Pacific held at **32 Air Stores Park, Labuan Island, British North Borneo** for members of the 32<sup>nd</sup> RAAF Squadron - *'dress formal – shirts will be worn'*. It gives an insight into some of the celebrations held after VP Day. Inside the cover is a programme of entertainment and menu *'prepared by our undefeated team of can openers'* including cold roast chicken and ham *'age doubtful, birth certificate not to hand'* and alongside the vegetables it reads in brackets *'origin military secret'*.

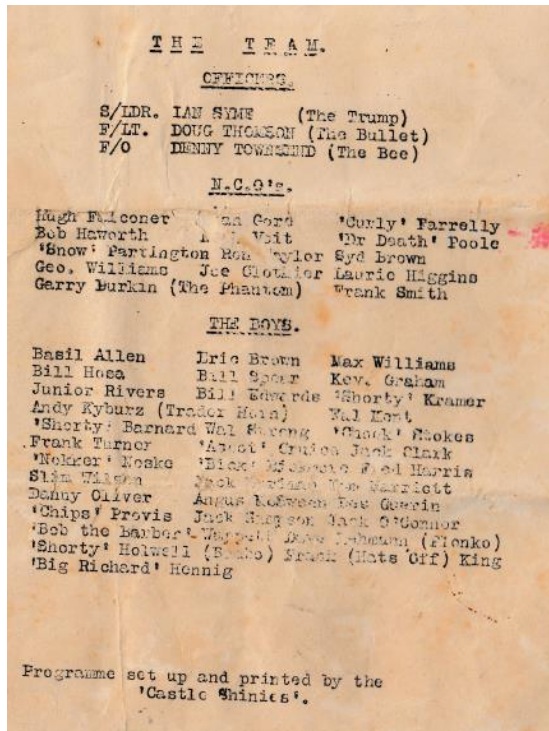


A note at the bottom reads: ‘any resemblance between this menu and that presented at the [HMAS] Australia<sup>1</sup> is purely coincidental’. On the back page is a list of names include Snow Partington, Dr Death Poole, Chips Provis, Hats Off King, Chock Stokes, Shorty Kramer, Nokker Noske, Plonko Lehmann; and officers Trump, Bullet and Bee.

This must have been a special memento for our uncle, NCO Kev ‘Curly’ Farrelly – we never knew any of this; he never spoke of his service. Uncle Kevin became after the war a publican, a great host of Port Noarlunga Hotel.

From what I can gather, the 32 Squadron came out of RAAF Base East Sale, Victoria. The squadron was raised in February 1942. Equipped with Lockheed Hudsons, it was tasked with anti-submarine, anti-shipping operations, bombing and reconnaissance missions in New Guinea and the east coast of Australia.

The squadron was disbanded in November 1945.<sup>2</sup>

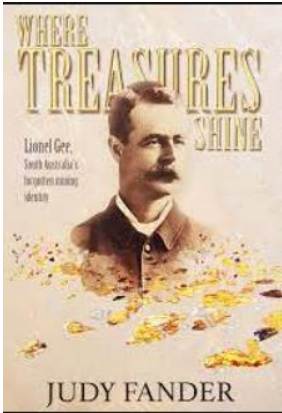


<sup>1</sup> Battle cruiser *HMAS Australia* was the Navy's first flagship, built in UK in 1910 and commissioned 1913. <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-australia-i>

<sup>2</sup> Further reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No.\\_32\\_Squadron\\_RAAF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._32_Squadron_RAAF)

## BOOK REVIEW by Bridget Jolly

### WHERE TREASURES SHINE: Lionel Gee, a forgotten South Australian Mining Identity. By Judy Fander.



The greater number of the 16 chapters (241 pages of main text and notes) of Judy Fander's biography of Lionel Gee (1854–1936), are ordered by, and devoted to Gee's work locations and his connections to professional colleagues as he travelled over much of South Australia and the Northern Territory. Gee was a surveyor (for 18 years), goldfields warden, chief registrar and recorder of mines, and, by default, an explorer. The author guides us confidently to the surveys and mining discoveries that Gee described in

his diaries, notebooks and parliamentary reports. North-eastern Eyre Peninsula, Teetulpa, Tarcoola, Arltunga and Tanami were his main destinations. Through Gee's writing, Fander shows that there were a large number of far-flung prospecting and mining attempts less than 20 years after the colony's settlement, and that the rule of law was firm in those pioneering decades, with Magistrate Gee a thoughtful and sympathetic solver of on-site legal problems. The description of the hearings of miners' wrangles and of legislation that were necessarily interpreted is given very clearly. There are snippets of 'making-do' for survival or to enliven the somewhat harsh working conditions co-existing with this civil activity; for instance, salt-bush roots were burnt to cook damper in the treeless regions; Gee had sapper's scarlet uniform twill cut to make highly visible flags on chaining markers.

Fander draws well his temperament and those of the government geologist, Henry Brown, and assistant Herbert Basedow, bringing a degree of intimacy to our understanding of their complementary and sometimes conflicting motivations and skills. The author gives clear political and public service context to these accounts. Facts about early explorers' and pastoralists' discoveries and way-markers are

made pertinent to Gee and his parties' work. With altering political and social contexts over time, we learn something of the knowledge disciplines developing across the Australian environment, some on their way to specialisms.

Gee edited (from 1903) and wrote for the *Mining Review*, contributed to the *Public Service Review* and in later life re-lived his experiences in his writing for newspapers and in his book, *Bush Tracks and Goldfields, reminiscences of Australia's 'back of beyond'*, published in 1926. Gee also edited and compiled the 4th edition of the *Record of the Mines of South Australia* (1<sup>st</sup> edition published 1887). This 'definitive' 4<sup>th</sup> edition of 1908, an 'encyclopaedic approach' has been thought worthy of facsimile reproduction and like other editions of the

*Record* is available online at [archive.org](http://archive.org).)



(Image: Aboriginal tracker Dick, Henry Brown and Lionel Gee 1905 Daly River - SLSA PRG326-4-122-1)

The book is an engaging read and a product of obvious devoted application to understanding and

describing Gee's childhood and adult life, his relationship to his wife and her family, and his years of community involvement on his retirement. The story has a completeness. Excellent colour maps provide clear locations in this vast land. A generous number of photographs extend the story well. The extensive bibliography is proficiently ordered under the categories of research material. By the end of the book one knows much about the many-sided career of Gee, a public servant who began his work in the Surveyor-General's office in 1870 and from 1896 to his retirement in 1924, was solely linked to the Department of Mines. There are needed corrections that I have let the author know of. Minor criticisms aside, Fander's biography is a highly engaging and revealing narrative told well and, I believe, is a significant contribution to South Australia's history. **Sturdee Press, 2023. ISBN 978-0-9805201-6-3. 280 pp. Available from Red Kangaroo Books online \$50** (NB. The title of the book comes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse of Song of Australia by Mrs CJ Carleton)

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### COMMENTS & CONTRIBUTIONS

*(no more than 1000 words) are welcome by 27 April 2024*

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