



## No. 284 November 2024



Port Dock Station 'before 1927'. SLSA B 4282

This was the original Port Adelaide station which opened in April 1856. Later, in 1916 a new station was built on Commercial Road and became the main Port Adelaide Railway Station, and this became known as 'Port Dock' (it was eventually demolished)

## HSSA 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY HIGH TEA

The Anniversary High Tea at Walkerville Hall on 20 October went off without a hitch, thanks to all our Council members who pitched in and helped out. About 60 people listened to Brian Samuels, Geoffrey Bishop and David Cornish (pictured right) reminisced about the Society's beginnings and its highlights.



Council members: Bridget Jolly, Ian Sellick, Jenny Hein, Lyn O'Grady (back) Robert Martin, Geoffrey Bishop (back), Joshua McDonnell, Anne Bowman, Terry Saunderson.

In addition, David Cornish launched the Society's book - *An Audience with History* - compiled by Robert Martin. It was actually a draft of the book as it is still with the designer. It will be distributed to members in due course. Bridget Jolly's history quiz had 25 of the hardest questions and the winning table got 16 of them right, runners up had 15 right.



Helen Prior, Sally and Melody Boxall, Glen Woodward



– David Cornish



Pam Rajowski, Pat Sumerling, Sue Marsden, Brian Samuels



Pauline Payne, Jeff Pickett, Gerald Varley, Janet and Brian Dickey

The catering was arranged through the Salvation Army ladies who had been cooking over the last month in preparation. The money raised by them will go towards Christmas boxes for needy families. All in all an enjoyable day.

## REMINDERS:

**WHAT'S ON SLIDES on FACEBOOK:** A slide show of various history-themed events during the coming month are shown after our guest speaker's address each month, and these are uploaded onto the Society's Facebook page for those who wish . If you miss a meeting you can still check what's on.

**KEAIN MEDAL NOMINATIONS:** Have you read a good book on history? Was it published in 2024? Then nominate it for consideration for a Keain Medal. Nomination forms are on our website. Books will be assessed under two categories - best biography and - best book on SA history.

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS:** It's that time of the year again, when membership fees are due on January 1.

## SUMMER BREAK!

*Your Council will have two committee meetings before we meet again on February 7 but are looking forward to a break. Details for the 2025 program will be distributed with the January newsletter.*

*In the meantime, stay safe (Covid is on the rise again), and have a Joyful Aussie Festive Season with family and friends and see you next year.*



## WHO WAS MINNIE THWAITES? by Patricia Sumerling

This story was unearthed in 2022 while undertaking research for a talk on Port Adelaide hotels. The story relates to the Exeter Hotel at 152 Semaphore Road, first licensed in March 1854 as the '*Lefevre's Peninsula*'. Twenty five years later in 1878 architect, James MacGeorge was commissioned to produce designs to replace the old hotel with a 'superior two-storied house' for publican, John Peterson who renamed it the *Exeter Hotel*.

In 1892 publican Mary Moore employed a new domestic servant by the name of Mrs Minnie Thwaites whose husband, she declared, was in Broken Hill. Highly educated, musical, refined and indeed of a 'superior kind'; such attributes for an ordinary domestic were a rarity. Gossip soon alerted Mary Moore when her servants confided to her that Minnie's husband, Rudolph Knorr was actually in Melbourne Gaol. Mrs Moore took no notice of the gossip, but forged a pleasant relationship with her domestic, not knowing for some time that she was pregnant. Finally, when it was time for Minnie to be confined, Mrs Moore took her to hospital where a daughter was born. Minnie then returned to Melbourne with her infant.

Surprisingly, months later, Minnie returned without her baby and tried to get her job back. As Mrs Moore couldn't find a placement for her but feeling some empathy towards Minnie, she let her stay a few days at the Exeter Hotel before returning home to Melbourne. Unfortunately, in those few days at the hotel, Minnie stole money and items, not only from the hotel's servants, but Mary Moore herself.

When the police were called in to investigate the robberies, the servants working at the hotel were obviously pretty upset by Minnie's deception and betrayal but their sense of being let-down became more so when the police explained that the overall value of the theft did not warrant them applying for an extradition order to bring her back from Melbourne. On making further inquiries through the police, Mary Moore was in for a rude shock.

Information about her once model domestic left her in disbelief and horror, for she was none other than the notorious Melbourne 'baby farmer' Frances Knorr, whom the police were trying to track down while she was hiding out in Adelaide. Events in Melbourne moved pretty fast once Minnie/Frances was arrested, brought to court and convicted. Within 18 months, on 15 January 1894, she was hanged in Melbourne for murder for killing one child, confessing to two others, and was suspected of disposing of a dozen more infants. (image Wikipedia)



Frances Knorr, c. 1892-1894

Frances Knorr was one of several women involved in the practice of 'baby farming' where an impoverished unmarried mother is forced to work for a living and pay for a wet-nurse to look after her infant. The brutal reality was that after paying a lump sum of several pounds for a 'baby farmer' to take care of their child, it was often starved to death or strangled.

One newspaper account stated that, although there was a midnight attempt to gain a reprieve, the execution went ahead and was over in a very few minutes. Another newspaper declared 'Knorr died without a struggle, all the arrangements being perfect.' Women were rarely hanged but when one of society's worst type of murderers was revealed, it caused a sensation. So, it was, that such a murderess, Frances Knorr, had been hiding out at the Exeter Hotel for most of her pregnancy in 1892.

**[Editor:** Frances had apparently killed at least three babies, and 'although Knorr found little support among the newspapers of the day, the public was deeply divided on her sentence. Many letters to the editors of newspapers called for clemency. Thomas Jones, the state's hangman, committed suicide nine days before the execution after his wife threatened to leave him if he hanged Knorr.' Read about baby farming at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby\\_farming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_farming) and about Frances Knorr's case at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances\\_Knorr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Knorr). Further, Patricia is extending her Honours Thesis, 'Infanticide, Abortion and Baby Farming 1870-1910']

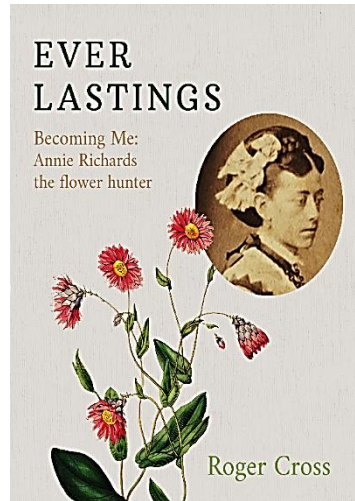
## A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FLOWER COLLECTOR by Roger Cross

My book entitled, *Everlastings Becoming Me: Annie Richards the flower hunter* brings to life a forgotten and ignored South Australian plant collector. Annie (1845-1930) with determination and persistence collected specimens for 20 years for Baron Ferdinand von Mueller in Melbourne and for Professor Ralph Tate at the University of Adelaide.

Although married to a policeman she thought of herself as a 'Lady'. Her husband Tom was moved from place to place, mainly in the sparse mallee woodlands of the upper Eyre Peninsula. They lived for many years in lonely Fowlers Bay, close to the Head of the Bight, with the dreaded sand hills plaguing her simple but beautifully kept home and garden. With a sometimes difficult husband, she wrote in her journal that life was a 'fearful' trial. Yet, a chance meeting set her on her way to become one of the most prolific plant hunters of her generation.

Through her one existing journal we are able to go with her on a grand collecting trip as she and Tom make their way up to Fowlers Bay from Port Lincoln in 1882 by buggy.

Other women, usually those in the upper-classes, were honoured with a native plant named after them, but not Annie. As a policeman's wife she had none of the social advantages of many of the other women who collected for Baron von Mueller. While this lack of recognition would have caused her some regret, she did receive a most remarkable honour from Professor Tate who recognised her worth and elevated her far above the expectations of any other women of that era. She also wished to become a naturalist, and an example of her efforts now resides in the vast Natural History Museum in London.



By writing the book I make a case for her to be included and honoured in the rich pantheon of 'lady' collectors of the nineteenth century who gradually broke through the prevailing expectations for women of the period. While I have in part written the story of neglect and hardship experienced by a woman living in the Outback, I reveal her triumphs over her difficult and often 'fearful' life. I have also written this book out of a deep love of the much maligned mallee of Southern Australia. It was in the mallee that Annie found herself and achieved so much.



If you would like to know more about Annie's life and the beautiful plants she delighted in, you can purchase this sumptuously illustrated book from Amazon Books (search "Roger Cross").

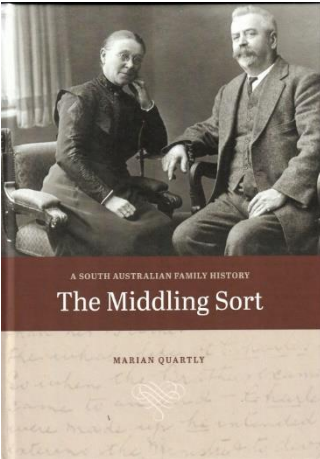
Left: Anne Frances Richards - SLSA D 6462/6 (L)

**About the author:** Dr Roger Cross, and his wife Jenny Carter live in retirement in Burra. He was a member of staff of Melbourne and La Trobe Universities, teaching science education and researching the social responsibility of science. He co-wrote *Ginger for Pluck: The life and times of Miss Georgina King*

(Carter & Cross, Wakefield Press, 2013), Australia's first woman geologist. Roger wrote the highly successful *Fallout: Hedley Marston and the British Bomb Tests in Australia* (Wakefield Press, 2001, 2018), and *Beyond Belief - The British bomb tests: Australia's veterans speak out* (Cross & Hudson, Wakefield Press, 2005). Both Roger and Jenny are members of the Historical Society of SA. He also has another book in-press with Wakefield: *The Romance of Australia's Windjammers: The Last Hurrah*.

[Editor: This is a second review of this book, written at the same time, but missed the deadline for the earlier newsletter.]

BOOK REVIEW by Dr Geoffrey Bishop  
**THE MIDLING SORT. A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FAMILY HISTORY.** Marian Quartly 2023; published by the Author) ISBN 978-0-646-88409-7



Dr Marian Quartly's family history, *The Middling Sort*, is a most engaging tale and goes well beyond the 'normal' family history.

Discovering at the age of 14 that she was a part of history through a family possession, a China afternoon tea set from the 1840s, set Marian off on her research, in part to find the true origin of the tea set, but also to debunk family myths and discover the real stories of her ancestors.

She relates the stories of the Hall family, from Homerton, Hackney, London, and the Quartly family, from Molland, Devon, of travelling to South Australia and of their joys, trials and tribulations at Adelaide, Riverton, Minlaton and Wandearah where they attempted life as farmers.

The story flows well back and forth between the related families and she bravely confronts the considerable ups and downs in the lives of some of her relatives. In many ways, they were 'typical' (or 'middling', as she calls them) of what the new settlers from the middle social strata in Europe experienced.

Marian's understanding of the broader state of affairs of the world in which they lived adds greatly to the story that she relates. Her family did not exist in social or economic isolation. Circumstances aided the endeavours of some to attain financial and social success (she calls

these people ‘citizen capitalists’), while others struggled to survive, in spite of their innate ability – luck was not on their side.

It is an inviting saga to read, and I found myself asking, ‘What will happen next?’ but, at times, quietly fearing the worst. Her summary family trees are a boon to the reader as the repetition of given names, across families and generations, at times becomes confusing.

The book lives up to the author’s concluding words, ‘And for good and evil, they and others like them built a fair bit of twentieth century South Australia in their own image’.

The author is Professor Emeritus of History at Monash University. The cover of the book depicts Caroline ‘Lillie’ (nee Quartly) and Jonathan Kurll of Wandearah, c. 1906

## NEW - PORT DOCK RAILWAY STATION

The new Port Dock line which opened recently, shares its route with the Outer Harbor line until north of Alberton where it branches along a short 1km spur. It became necessary for the increase in residents in that part of the Port to be able to access transport to the city - the service runs every 30 mins every day. The station is alongside the Port Dock Museum.



## GUY FAWKES DAY - IN THE PAPERS

**Editor:** There is little doubt that we have strong memories of 'cracker night', even though it has been banned in all Australian States (except ACT) since the early 1980s.

"Please put a penny in the old man's hat" - The doleful wail of children requesting assistance to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day awakened many a citizen from his slumber early this morning. Despite the passing of the years, November 5 has still a great interest for the children. ... From 6 o'clock this morning, some even earlier, there were numerous "guys" dragged round the suburbs, lending assistance for their own burning tonight. Vendors of fireworks did a brisk trade today. (News, 5 November 1923 p 8)

Significance for children [of] the day has none, save that it is an occasion when they are licensed freebooters. ... Hear them at five o'clock in the morning rousing the household from dreams of peace with raucous shrieks of "Guy! Guy! Guy! Stick im up 'igh; Stick 'im on a lamp post; There let 'im die." and woe betide the person who is callous enough to deny the little imps a copper. Their execrations pursue him down the street, or rouse the household, and personal opinions of an unflattering nature concerning him are shrieked aloud. (Port Adelaide News, 7 November 1913, p 6)

In 1856 Thomas Field was charged by the police with 'keeping "Guy Fawkes Day" in rather too riotous and dangerous a manner'. The residents of Weymouth Street were alarmed when his lit cracker fell upon a shingle roof in hot weather and might have caused 'incalculable amount of mischief'. He was fined 10s. (South Australian Register 7 November 1856, p 3)

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