



The
Historical Society
of
South Australia
Inc.



Newsletter No. 88 May 1990



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA Inc.

Institute Building, 122 Kintore Avenue, Adelaide 5000

OBJECTS

- (a) to arouse interest in and to promote the study and discussion of South Australian and Australian history,
- (b) to promote the collection, preservation and classification of source material of all kinds relating to South Australian and Australian history,
- (c) to publish historical records and articles,
- (d) to promote the interchange of information among members of the Society by lectures, readings, discussions and exhibitions,
- (e) to co-operate with similar societies throughout Australia,
- (f) to do all such things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

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FOUNDED IN 1974

Cover illustration. Sunday outing in horse and sulky circa 1900. Ernst and May Harmstorf. (Private collection)

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* A REMINDER :
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* MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW OVERDUE!
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday, 1 June 1990, 8.00 p.m.

Venue: State Library Lecture Theatre
(Corner Kintore Avenue and North Terrace, Adelaide
- enter from Kintore Avenue)

Dr Reg Sprigg: The Heroic Era of South Australian Geology
1900 - 1950

By 1900 thanks to the pioneering efforts of Johannes Menge, Professor Ralph Tate and others, South Australian Geology had come of age. The great copper discoveries of Kapunda, Burra, Blinman and Wallaroo had already saved the State from bankruptcy and set up Adelaide as a university city with its own, now full-time, professor of Geology.

In parallel with government geologist H.Y.L. Brown, Professor Howchin set about elucidating State geology and drawing international attention to its widespread, 720 million year old, glacial tillite deposits. Mawson related these further to his Antarctic studies and expanded knowledge of our oldest rocks in detail.

Professor Edgeworth David drew world attention to his ancient 'Lipalian' ('pseudo-') fossils leading finally to Reg Sprigg's discovery of the world's oldest (620 m.y.o.) animal fossils in the Flinders Ranges in 1946. Government geologist Lockhart Jack alerted explorers to oil-field type structures in the N.E. corner of the State, while Mawson, Madigan, Hossfeldt and Sprigg elucidated much of the structure of the Flinders-Mount Lofty Ranges through to Kangaroo Island.

Ben Dickinson in leading the 1940s search for uranium, and along with the advent of aerial photography, and a relative plethora of young geological talent, ushered in the new psychodynamic geological era of the present.

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Friday, 6 July 1990, 8.00 p.m.

Venue: State Library Lecture Theatre

Sister Margaret Press: John Henry Norton -
The Bishop of Railways

John Henry Norton, (1855 - 1923), third bishop of the diocese of Port Augusta, was atypical in many ways. As a child in Bendigo, he was a prizewinner for scripture at his Methodist Sunday school; he became a Catholic bishop in outback South Australia. Australian-born, he was chief pastor in a predominantly Irish community. His urban education and experience was succeeded by Irish and Roman seminary training; he was then called upon to spend most of his time in the sparsely settled areas of the north of the State, many of the settlements being accessible only by horse-drawn vehicle or on horseback. No wonder he showed such interest in and familiarity with the railway system.

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***** THE INAUGURAL DINNER *****

of the

*** HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA ***

Saturday, June 23rd at 7.30 p.m.

Venue: Prince Alfred College

Cost: \$23.00 all inclusive

This promises to be a very enjoyable social occasion for members and their friends.

Dinner will be preceded by a brief outline of the history of PAC, given by Mr Ron Gibbs, together with an inspection of some of the historic interiors.

In keeping with the rules of the college, and also in deference to the history of the venue, no alcohol will be served. However, appropriate temperance beverages will be available, and the President is already delving into his archives to come up with some interesting and historically accurate alternatives. Suggestions from members are welcome and will help to ensure that an appropriate spirit (pun intended) pervades the evening.

After dinner, Professor Alex Castles will regale us with some of the more amusing aspects of his recent research in Tasmania.

Booking is essential. Please ring Avis Huckel on 277 2953.

**** CORRECTION TO A PREVIOUS ANNOUNCEMENT ****

PLEASE NOTE: The Society's Fund Raising Tour of the Performing Arts Collection will take place on **Sunday, May 13th**, not May 12th as previously announced.

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NEWS

'RELATIONS' MAY NOT HAVE GENUINE RELATIVITY

[Taken from the Advertiser, 17 February 1990.]

If you have an unusual name watch out, you may be receiving a letter soon - from a "relation" you never knew you had.

A mail order scheme selling history books which claims to trace the origin of Australian family names, and operating in South Australia, seemed to be targetting uncommon names, a spokesman for the Department of Public and Consumer Affairs (DPCA), Mr Norman Prentice, said yesterday.

Questions have been raised about a new twist to the scheme, which had been operating in the State for several years, he said.

Letters sent to people on behalf of the United States-based company behind the direct mail campaign were signed by a "relative", or someone with the same surname as the recipient of the book called "Smith (or the name of the householder) Families Around The World".

"We believe it is unusual for so many people to operate from the same address in Ohio," Mr Prentice said.

For \$39.90 plus \$3 postage and packaging, Family Heritage International promises a collection of historical information about the family, how the name arose, what it means, where others with the same name live in Australia and throughout the world, and even claims to have discovered a medieval coat of arms "granted to an early Smith hundreds of years ago".

The letter reads: "As you may already know, I have been working in cooperation with Family Heritage International on a project relating to our Smith family name. Finally after years of effort and considerable expense, we are ready to publish a new book entitled Smith Families Around The World and you are listed in it".

The books provide a list, or "International Registry", of people with the same name in Australia, New Zealand, England,

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Canada and the United States.

Although not a "sinister" operation, Mr Prentice said consumers needed to be aware that they were not buying a specific study of their family tree.

Instead, the book provided information readily available from public records such as voter rolls or telephone books.

Several inquiries have been received at the DPCA about the scheme. A money-back guarantee was honored when tested by the DPCA.

In 1987, the NSW Department of Consumer Affairs investigated a similar scheme which in 1986 was the subject of an NSW Supreme Court injunction after the department objected to what it claimed was false and misleading information in the letters being sent out.

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SOUND SUPPORT FOR FOLK MUSIC

[From Fedmag, April 1990]

The National Film and Sound Archive has confirmed its interest in folk music by appointing Terry McGee as deputy head of its Research and Information Branch. Branch head, Dr Jeff Brownrigg said Terry McGee had excellent credentials for the job which encompassed both folk and multicultural music.

'He has been recording folk music in Australia for more than 20 years, and has specialised in the rise and development of the folk revival in this country', he said. 'He brings to the position a performer's understanding of the music and his background as an engineer and recordist will be invaluable to this new role.'

Terry has run several folk clubs in Canberra, toured English, Irish and Scottish institutions and presented regular folk music programmes on the new local community radio station, later becoming its chief engineer. He started teaching tin whistle and went on to establish with Gillian Alcock, a workshop for making flutes as well as hammer dulcimer and harpsichord, family instruments for both local and international markets.

After joining the NFSA in 1986 to look after its sound preservation area, Terry continued to support Canberra Public Radio as its engineering manager and folk music convenor. He presently plays guitar, flute and whistle for Dancerye, a Canberra group specialising in traditional European music.

Terry said he was keen to hear from people who believed

they had something to offer the national collection in Canberra.

'It might be a recording of a singer or musician in their own family, or a recommendation about someone we should record or even an offer to record on our behalf,' he said. 'It might just be a press clipping about a local musician, storyteller or character, but it could also be that one piece of information that a future researcher needs.'

CONTACT Terry at the NATIONAL FILM & SOUND ARCHIVE, GPO BOX 2002, CANBERRA, ACT on (062) 67 1737.

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CURRENT ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

[Reproduced with permission from Word of Mouth, No. 18, January 1990 (Newsletter of the Oral History Association of Australia, South Australian Branch).]

Interviews concerning the past history of the **State Bank of South Australia** (incorporating the former Savings Bank of SA and the State Bank) are being conducted by Denise Schumann of Johden Consultancy.

A history of the **Highways Department** (1926 - 1989) will be undertaken by Donovan & Associates and include about 20 hours of recorded interviews.

A history of the second 50 years of the **Department of Mines and Energy** (1944 - 1994) is being organised by Bernie O'Neil and up to 70 interviews with the directors, politicians and employees are planned.

Barbara Baird at Flinders University is planning an interviewing programme about **abortion** in South Australia prior to its legislation in 1970.

Dr John Tregenza has already embarked upon a series of interviews as part of his research on a history of the **Le Messurier family in South Australia** over five generations, including its interests in shipping and timber.

The **Andamooka Progress and Miners' Association** has provided funds for a community based oral history of the area.

The Salisbury Public Library has received an Innovative Grant from the Libraries Board of South Australia to develop a model and guidelines of how business and industrial records can be included in local history collections in public libraries. Their pilot programme will include the collection of **oral accounts of work and industry** in the local area. (Contact: Jane Oerst)

Murdoch University in Western Australia is co-ordinating a national oral history of the Australian fishing industry. About 30 interviews are scheduled in South Australia. (Contact: Malcolm Tull)

FILEF (the Federation of Italian Workers and Their Families) is beginning a long planned interviewing programme to record the marital and migration experiences of Italo-Australian women. The project should result in a theatre production by Doppio Teatro as well as a publication by FILEF. (Contact: Marina Berton)

It is hoped to present more extensive reports about the development of these projects in later issues of Word of Mouth.

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DOCUMENTS

THE COORONG ROUTE TO MOUNT GAMBIER

[Extracted from the Tourists' Road Guide for South Australia, 14th edition, published by W.K. Thomas & Co in 1924.]

Via Meningie, Kingston, Robe, Beachport, Furner, and Millicent. ...

There is very little choice of roads connecting Adelaide with the South-Eastern Districts and the Eastern States for use of motorists, and it seems likely that the Coorong route will be the most reliable and expeditious medium of communication for many years. Already marked improvements have been effected - thanks to local residents and enthusiastic South-Eastern motorists; many formidable sandhills and drifts have been removed or reduced, whilst notice boards furnishing useful directions are in evidence.

The information contained in maps published with this edition of "The Guide" can be relied upon. (Several sandhills, &c., shown on the map have been removed since map was drawn.) If motorists travel this part of the journey in daylight, and observe ordinary precaution, there is no reason why the Coorong trip should be regarded with anxiety, especially if undertaken at suitable time of the year - between October and March.

Scores of motorists - car, cycle, and cycle car - have travelled through the Coorong without any serious trouble during the last few years.

The attractions of the South-East are beyond all question, and comprise shooting, fishing, surfing, boating, and visits to the celebrated Naracoorte Caves and Blue Lakes at Mount Gambier.

KINGSTON -

185 miles from Adelaide - is the terminus of the branch railway from Naracoorte, has four hotels, is one of the oldest shipping seaports of South Australia, with one of the longest jetties in the State; and in normal times is a large export depot for wool, wheat, skins, and wattle bark. Several rabbit preserving factories were, at one time, in active operation in the town.

ROBE -

27 miles from Kingston - is situated on a peninsula, which assures most welcome relief from hot winds and scorching heat. Robe is an old established town, and much frequented by visitors during summer months. Unless travelling by motor, the only medium of reaching the town is by train to Kingston, and motor from there. Or train to Millicent and motor. One hotel.

BEACHPORT -

28 miles from Robe. On coast; terminus of railway from Mt. Gambier. At one time this town was an important Government depot, and several substantial buildings were erected. There are a jetty and wharf for shipping purposes - wool, wheat, barley, and skins; and across a narrow strip of water a substantial lighthouse affords warning to vessels bound east or west across the Southern Ocean. As a seaside health resort Beachport is very popular.

MILLICENT -

Is reached via Furner (33 miles). ... This town is the centre of a very flourishing farming and stock breeding district. On main track Adelaide to Melbourne. Three hotels. Good accommodation for tourists. several garages and mechanics. Passing through Tantanoola (9 miles) the route leads to Mount Gambier.

MOUNT GAMBIER -

29 miles from Millicent - 297 miles from Adelaide. This is the largest and most important provincial town in South Australia. Long established, sound commercially and financially, the district has enabled the town to base its public and social institutions on a sound foundation. The extent of business and solidity of its public, official, and religious buildings are striking evidence of prosperity. The chief attractions for tourists are the bracing, health-restoring climate, beautiful surroundings, including large park-like estates, prolific cereal and dairy products; the famous Blue and other Lakes, Gordon's Monument, magnificent views from tower at summit of the Mount, enjoyable drives to MacDonnell Bay (in which district is situated Dingley Dell,

the old home of the poet Gordon, now the property of the State), Nelson River, Glen Burnie, and numerous suburban places of interest. There are several hotels - most commodious and comfortable - and coffee palaces.

PENOLA -

32 miles from Mount Gambier, northerly direction. Two hotels. An old established town in centre of large pastoral estates. Adjacent to Victoria, and connected with Adelaide by rail and Victoria by mail coach to Casterton. The roads in vicinity are very good in summer months - liable to floods in heavy winter weather. On main road to Naracoorte.

NARACOORTE -

67 miles north of Mount Gambier. Junction of Mount Gambier and Kingston lines. Celebrated for underground caves. An old established district, surrounded by extensive pastoral and agricultural country. Adjacent to Victoria. Substantial business, financial, public, and religious buildings. Very pleasant holiday resort, and easy of access by train or motor from Adelaide. Three hotels.

There are several other places of interest in the south-eastern portion of South Australia available to motorists. By reference to map it will be easy to select route. In dry weather it is possible to travel anywhere in the South-East.

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ROBE AND ITS VICINITY - PART 1

By T.L.M.

[Reprinted from the Children's Hour, February 1906. Number 17 in a series entitled 'Our Own Country'.]

The tourist on his way to Robe is still twenty-seven miles from his destination when the slow-going narrow-gauge train carries him as far as Kingston, arriving at the latter place about 8 p.m. Arising with the lark in the morning, he swallows a hasty breakfast and mounts the coach for Robe. Although from a study of the map you might fancy that the road skirted the coast nearly all the way, as a matter of fact it is some little distance inland, and though occasionally the sullen roar of the waves may be heard, no view of the ocean is obtainable till you are well into Robe.

The district passed through comprises farm land, grazing country, and the virgin scrub. Half way down you come to Messrs Wight & Wilke's bark mills, situated in the centre of what you might term the wattle country.

In August and September the beautiful golden wattle-bloom diffuses its scent around, and for miles the road on both

sides is lined with the trees, the effect being very pleasing. Great quantities of the bark are carted to the mills, and there ground down, and afterwards sent away via Kingston for tanning purposes. It seems a pity to have to kill the tree by the removal of the bark, but the wattle-grower does not look at it from a sentimental or poetical standpoint. The produce of the tree adds to his income, and therefore it is a matter of business with him.

Just over the half-way mile post you leave a low wooded hill to the left. This is Mount Benson. The country all around is devoted to farming and grazing. Mount Benson district till 1901 was a sheep run, but in that year about 8,000 acres were bought by the Government, cut up, and let to farmers and graziers. It is for the most part an undulating and well-grassed country, thoroughly suitable for cattle and sheep, and many of these animals may be observed enjoying the succulent herbage and calmly surveying the scene.

As you near your destination the scenery changes. The open farming and grazing land gives place to dense scrub. You have wattle, mallee, ti-tree, broom, blackwood, and honeysuckle present in profusion on both sides, the foliage at times approaching very near to the metalled road itself. Besides the trees enumerated there is another, a kind of scrub wattle, very easy to grow and very difficult to eradicate. As the young tree attains a fair size the branches spread out on all sides and eventually touch the ground, the growth proceeding vigorously and radiating outwards from the common centre.

One misses in this vicinity the stately gums which are found in other parts of the State, for the vegetation, though profuse, is mostly dwarf and stunted.

Of the road itself - and, indeed, of most of the South-Eastern main roads - you can only speak in terms of praise. They are well-metalled and level as a rule, and free from ruts, so that the drivers, horsemen, pedestrians, or cyclists who have occasion to use them have very little cause for complaint.

Within a mile or two of Robe some lakes are passed, and these sheets of water, with their well-wooded banks, give an aspect of peace to the scene.

Robe is one of the "has beens" of South Australia, and when you encounter a place of this kind you can rely on finding the ruins of some of buildings used as residences or paces of business when trade was brisk and population numerous. Such is the case here. More than one collection of broken and crumbled masonry marks the spot where once an hotel stood, or a store, or a boarding-house. As one surveys these ruins, now moss-grown and silent, one can hear in fancy the sounds of the life and excitement of by-gone days, and

can see the sturdy forms of pioneer graziers and farmers as they passed along with their teams bearing wool and grain for shipment. Many of them now rest in the pretty little cemetery yonder, within the sound of the angry ocean billows; many have gone to other parts; and some few are still with us, forming a happy and interesting link between the present and the past.

The early history of Robe may be summed up by the statement that it was once an important wool-growing district, and that it was also the chief port of the South-East. Please do not forget the was, for, as I told you just now, Robe, from a business point of view, is one of the "has beens". No seasons of prosperity or adversity, however, can ever rob it of its fine, healthy, and most salubrious climate, for which it is noted all over this State.

The township was named in honour of the former Governor of South Australia - Colonel Frederick Holt Robe, who ruled our State in the forties, a period with which you have no personal acquaintance. After the same Governor the county of Robe was named, and there is also a Robe Ward - one of the municipal divisions of North Adelaide. Colonel Robe was our only Governor who did not bear a title. All the others have been either members of the British nobility, baronets, or knights, having the prefix "Sir". It was first called Robetown, and still bears this name among the oldest inhabitants.

Soon after the township was laid out the country in the vicinity began to be taken up by woolgrowers, and the face of the district was dotted with homesteads. An era of prosperity at once dawned on the place, and business became brisk. The sight of bullock teams bringing in wool and wheat began to be very common indeed; in fact; strings of these were seen in the township daily. Not only were they bringing in the produce of the district, but from many miles in the interior came the long slowly-moving teams carrying goods for export. That, of course, was years before the railway line penetrated to the South-East, and for its position as the port of the South-East Robe had then no competitor. A few years passed on, and all Australia became agitated over the discovery of gold at Ballarat and Bendigo, in Victoria. In common with the rest of the State, Robe lost many of its residents, who were attracted by the stories of wealth to be obtained across the border.

If, however, Robe lost many people, it gained, at any rate temporarily, a very large population in the shape of the almond-eyed Mongolian from China. These Chinese, like other people, were interested in the alluring accounts of the wealth of the new fields in Victoria, and had decided to try their luck. So shipload after shipload of Chinese came from the Flowery Land, and landed - not at some Victorian port, as you would imagine - but at poor little Robe, whence they made

their way overland across the border into Victoria. By this means they escaped the poll-tax levied on all of their race who landed on Victorian soil. At one time there were nearly 4,000 Chinese camped close to Robe, and the presence of such a horde of olive-skinned Mongolians near the town became a menace and a danger to the community. At this time the 40th Regiment of Infantry was stationed at Adelaide. They were not like our volunteers or militia, but a portion of the regular British army. It was decided to send a company of these soldiers down to maintain order in view of the large influx of Chinese.

By the way, the Chinese immigration was a good thing for some of the residents of Robe, for they made a considerable sum of money by landing the Celestials in boats, and also by conducting parties of them over to the gold diggings.

At this time there were a great many blacks in the South-East, and the dusky race conceived a violent dislike to the Chinese, whom they could not understand at all. They were acquainted with the whites and with their own people; but the almond-eyed and pig-tailed yellow man puzzled them very much. "What name that feller?" they would remark to the whites, in reference to the Chinese. "Him no white feller; him no black feller; him more like 'possum."

The soldiers and civilians had some trouble to keep the blacks from openly attacking parties of the Chinese. But the landing of the celestials at Robe was stopped by the South Australian authorities compelling them to pay a poll-tax similar to what they would have had to pay had they landed at a Victorian port. Henceforth the vessels conveying them proceeded to Portland or Melbourne.

At this time the place was at the height of its prosperity. Teams arrived daily from all parts of the South-East and the western district of Victoria, laden with wool and grain. Many vessels also came from oversea, bearing cargoes of general merchandise, and each vehicle, as soon as its load of wool or grain was removed, was at once piled up with various requisites for the people of the station it had come from - clothing, groceries, boots, tools, and all the thousand and one little things that are needed by a wayback settler and his family and workmen.

About this time a Circuit Court was established, which means that twice or three times a year the Chief Justice or one of the other Judges came down from Adelaide to try any persons accused of offences against the law committed in any part of the South-East. A gaol was also built, wherein to confine the prisoners. The building still stands, but its only use now is to afford shelter to passing tramps.

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BRIEF NOTES ON NEW PUBLICATIONS

R.D.Jordan & P. Pierce (eds.): The Poets' Discovery
Nineteenth Century Australia in Verse (M.U.P. 1990).

Organised by colony, this book provides easy access to a rare range of South Australian verse. \$22.95 at the Migration Museum Bookshop.

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The Italians from Campania Now Living in South Australia

Published by the Federation of the Associations of Campanian Emigrants in South Australia, 1989. Price \$1.50. Available as above.

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CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING HISTORY EVENTS

Saturday 21.4.90, 4.30 pm. Friends of the SAM will present a special viewing of "Dreamings". Presentation by Dr Peter Sutton in the Museum and Royal Society Rooms. There will be refreshments. Enquiries: 223 8864

Tuesday 24.4.90. Salisbury and District Historical Society: SA Funeral and Burial Customs. Speaker: Dr Robert Nicol.

Wednesday 25.4.90, 1.10 - 2.15. A/U will hold a Staff/Post Graduate Seminar. Common Room, 4th Floor, Napier Building: "Grandmothers at the Manor House". Speaker: Tania Jeffries.

Wednesday 25.4.90, 12.30 - 1.30. Films for Lunch. State Library Theatre, Kintore Avenue. "The Ten Year Lunch". From 1919 to 1929 in New York's Algonquin Hotel. 56 mins duration

Wednesday 25.4.90, 8 pm. Enfield and District Historical Society will be holding a meeting in the Enfield Civic Centre, entitled "Victorian Lives", An Evening with the Magic Lantern, by Dr Scroop and Friend.

Thursday 26.4.90, 7.30 for 8.00. Association of Professional Historians AGM, Old Parliament House. All those interested in working as historians are welcome to attend.

Thursday 26.4.90. Australian Society of Archivists, AGM of the Adelaide Branch. For details ring Secretary: John Love 223 8922.

Friday 27.4.90, 2.00 - 3.00. Colonel Light Ceremony, Town Hall. A ceremony to commemorate the birth of Colonel William Light.

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29.4.90. Carrick Hill will be holding an Autumn Festival and Open Garden Weekend. For information ring Jaqui 278 7785.

Thursday 3.5.90, 7.30. Aurora Heritage Action AGM. Metropolitan Hotel, Grote Street.

Friday 4.5.90 to July 30. Forum Exhibition M.N. "What Choice Have We Got?" Migrant Women and Out-Work. Working Womens Centre.

Tuesday 8.5.90. Association of Professional Historians "Off the Terrace" lunches. 29 Renaissance Arcade. All those interested in working as historians are welcome to come and buy their own lunch.

Sunday 13.5.90, 2.00. HSSA "The Performing Arts Collection", Festival Centre. For details ring Secretary: Ms A. Huckel 277 2953.

Tuesday 15.5.90 to June 15. SAMM. Australian National Maritime Museum display.

Wednesday 16.5.90, 8.00. Port Adelaide Historical Society. Monthly meeting at Uniting Church Hall, Commercial Road, Port Adelaide. "Cycling in Port Adelaide", Speaker: Gordon Brooks.

Friday 18.5.90, 3.30 - 5.00. Research Centre For Womens Studies. A seminar, "Social and Literary History in Early Modern English" will be given by Felicity Hughes, Senior Lecturer in English, F/U. Security House, 233 North Terrace. (Second Floor)

Saturday 19.5.90 to 11 June. SAMM Maritime Miniatures.

Wednesday 23.5.90, 7.45. SAGHS Public meeting. "Research and the Lands Title Office", Speaker: Gilbert Materne. Library, 201 Unley Road, Ph. 272 4222.

Wednesday 30.5.90, 9.30 - 12.30. A family history seminar, "Researching, Writing and Publishing a Family History", is to be held in the Main Chamber, Mortlock Library (MLSA). Guest speakers: Susan Marsden, State Historian, and Alan Phillips of Gould Books. Enrolments close on Wednesday 23 May. Ring Ann Burrows, Genealogy Librarian, (08) 223 8975.

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