

**Uniting Church in Australia
S A Synod**

Historical Society



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**NEWSLETTER
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Editorial

In 1947, Robert G. Menzies contributed a foreword to a biography of Edmund Barton, Australia's first Prime Minister. Included were these words:

"We somewhat lack pride in our predecessors. There is a cynical disposition in these days to reject tradition as 'reactionary', though a healthy and proud sense of continuity is one of the greatest steadying influences and a superb element of sanity in a mad world..."

These words are still relevant in 2002. In this newsletter can be found both the call to have pride in our predecessors and the challenge to deepen our understanding of their contributions to the pre-Union days of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Here is presented a modicum of the vast store of similar material, much of it still to be recovered. The hope is that some of our readers will come forward with leads to more materials needing to be incorporated into our historical record.

How ordinary people expressed their faith, both in what they said, and did, is also of utmost importance in any presentation of the history of life in local congregations. That is the area in which we really need help to piece together the evidence. All such help will be gratefully received.

Kevin Secomb.

A warm invitation to All
to attend a lecture on Sunday, 21st April, 2002,
at 2.30 pm

Lecture Topic:

"The excitable little pastor"

The Ministry of Rev. J. Day Thompson in the
North Adelaide Primitive Methodist Circuit (1892 -1898)

Lecturer:

Kevin Secomb

Place:

Islington Uniting Church
Cnr. Reddin and King Streets, Prospect.

Islington was the second Primitive Methodist congregation to be formed in S.A. J.D. Thompson had a most interesting ministry, including surviving a heresy charge!

Afternoon Tea to follow the lecture

Edward Spicer - A Wesleyan Benefactor

Jim Everett

Edward Spicer was born in London on the 1st January 1817, and arrived in South Australia in 1838, together with his brother, and Henry Waterhouse, on the S. S. Winchester. He purchased a piece of land at the west end of Currie Street for 20 pounds, and it is reported that he personally erected a one-room tenement on the block at the cost of another 20 pounds. This dwelling became his headquarters as he pursued his ambition to become a pastoralist. He selected a piece of land four miles from Adelaide in what was then known as the Black Forest. We currently know it as Edwardstown.

In 1839, Edward Spicer undertook a journey to New South Wales and brought stock back to South Australia to commence pastoral activities. After his marriage in 1840, Spicer established sheep runs at Noarlunga, Middleton, Maria Creek (Kingston South East) and Wellington on the Murray. In addition, he also owned pastoral land at Bremer Range and Poonindie, near Port Lincoln. This latter station was later sold to Archdeacon Hale, who established a mission for aborigines on the property.

During this time Spicer retained 70 acres of his original holding at Edwardstown and this became a base for his pastoral operations. In 1851 he sold all pastoral holdings and returned to England to visit his family and recover from poor health. Returning to Adelaide, he entered into partnership with his brothers, Henry and George, as an importer and general merchant. The operations of the firm were extensive and prosperous, and kept pace with the expansion of the colony.

Although Edward Spicer retired from active business in 1893, at the age of 76, he lived until his ninetieth year in 1906. He was not involved in public office, but took a very practical interest in the Adelaide Jubilee Exhibition in 1887, and was one of the major promoters, and guaranteed the Exhibition to the amount of 500 pounds. In recognition of his successful business operations, Edward Spicer is described as a "merchant prince". (Cockburn: *Pastoral Pioneers of SA*). On retirement in 1893, his place in the business was taken by his son, Edward Spicer junior.

Mrs. Elizabeth Spicer had died on 24th January 1889, aged 70 years, and she was the first burial in the newly constructed family vault at West Terrace Cemetery. Mr. Spicer married again, and Mrs. Emma Spicer, his second wife, also supported his community involvement. Following his death on 7th May 1906, Mrs. Spicer returned to England and died at Ramsgate, Kent, in 1927.

Mr. Spicer's residence was at 135 Fullarton Road, Rose Park. This house has since been demolished, but part of the original wrought iron fence can still be seen from near the roundabout at Dequetteville Terrace, Fullarton Road corner.

Support for the Wesleyan Methodist Church

Mr. Spicer was, for many years, a very active member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and was a regular worshipper at the Kent Town Wesleyan Church, Fullarton Road, Kent Town. Amongst his many gifts to the Wesleyan Methodist Church was

a gift of 1000 pounds to Prince Alfred College in 1893, to provide a scholarship. Mr. Spicer was at that time a member of the managing committee of Prince Alfred College. This scholarship is no longer awarded but the Edward Spicer Prize is awarded on a triennium basis, together with the Dunn and Waterhouse Prizes.

The gift of the Spicer Cottages Trust was announced to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference meeting in Adelaide on 23rd February 1897. The purpose of the gift was to provide for widows and for supernumerary ministers who were in "straight end circumstances". To provide for this Edward Spicer had three cottages erected in Fourth Avenue, St. Peters. His letter indicates his intention that the claims of the widows should have first consideration, and also for the first ten years the claims of widows and ministers of the *Wesleyan* Methodist Church should have precedence. This was in view of the possible Methodist union.

In 1898, Mr. Spicer made a gift of 1000 pounds for the building of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Fourth Avenue, St. Peters, and this was followed by a further 500 pounds in 1904 for the addition of transepts to the original building. This gift did not stipulate the attachment of the name Spicer Memorial to the building, but it was only following his death that the trustees of the East Adelaide Church passed the following resolution:

"To perpetuate the memory of our esteemed fellow trustee, the late Edward Spicer, through whose liberality we were enabled to erect a beautiful church at East Adelaide, this meeting of trustees unanimously decrees that this church shall henceforth be called The Spicer Memorial Church."

This particular resolution is engraved on Edward Spicer's memorial plaque in the Fourth Avenue Church.

This suburban church has served the community for over 100 years and is still an active congregation.

In 1900, Mr. Spicer had two houses built for the Spicer Cottages Trust at Wattle Street, Malvern, and in 1902 two more homes at Victoria Street, Payneham.

It is estimated that in 1902, together with cash endowment of 450 pounds, the Trust was valued at approximately 4000 pounds. In addition, Mrs. Emma Spicer, on her death in 1927, left the Trust 300 pounds.

Today the Trust provides accommodation in 11 units, which over the last 10 years have been updated to provide modern retirement accommodation.

Restoration of the Spicer Family Burial Vault

In the year 2000, the trustees of Spicer Cottages Trust, aware that the burial grant over the Edward Spicer vault in West Terrace Cemetery had expired, took steps with the cemetery authority to renew the licence so as to preserve the grave for historical purposes. The transfer of the licence to the Trust was completed at the end of the year 2000, and Mr. John Schubert of Schubert Memorials, Flinders Street, was asked to inspect the grave and report on repairs. As a result of Mr. Schubert's

work, the vault has been restored and, in addition, a commemorative plaque installed, detailing Mr. Spicer's gifts to the Church. The trustees are also grateful to Mr. Schubert who sourced a piece of Murray Bridge granite from what is now a closed quarry to enable the production of the interpretive plaque, to match the surrounds. Dr. Robert Nicol, the former State historian, assisted with the wording and layout of the commemorative plaque:

EDWARD SPICER 1817 - 1906

**ARRIVED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEPTEMBER 1838
ON THE S.S. WINCHESTER
PASTORALIST 1838 - 1851
MERCHANT 1852 - 1893
KNOWN IN HIS DAY AS A MERCHANT PRINCE
PROMOTER OF THE ADELAIDE JUBILEE EXHIBITION 1887**

**BENEFACTOR OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH
WITH BEQUESTS OF**

**1893: A SCHOLARSHIP/ PRIZE AT
PRINCE ALFRED COLLEGE, KENT TOWN
AWARDED FROM 1893**

**1897: THE COST OF BUILDING THE CHURCH AT
FOURTH AVENUE, ST PETERS, KNOWN AS
SPICER MEMORIAL CHURCH**

**1897: SPICER COTTAGES TRUST
A BODY CORPORATE TO PROVIDE HOMES FOR WIDOWS
OF, AND RETIRED CLERGY.**

SPICER COTTAGES TRUST 2001

A rededication ceremony was held at the West Terrace Cemetery on Sunday 2nd December, 2001. This was led by Rev. Kyle Waters. It was entirely appropriate that Ecclesiasticus 44: 1-15, "Let us now praise famous men..." was read for the occasion by Mrs. Cherylee Lloyd, the secretary of the Spicer Cottages Trust. The trustees were glad to undertake the restoration work in order to perpetuate the memory of this fine pioneer, and his contribution to the life of this State and the Church.

* * * *

Advance Notice

A "History Walk" in Norwood is being planned for
September
Further details in the next newsletter.

Book Review

PETER MATHEWS - A MEMOIR

Robert J. Brown, (ed.)

(Prospect, S.A., G.W. Pope, 2001) 182 pp.

My association with Peter was during the Parkin College days. Characteristics of his personality then were the core of his future career and development. The ability to focus completely on the task in hand and eliminate unnecessary side issues often left others gasping for breath! His brilliant mind could have opened doors to many different vocations, but he chose to home in on the social implications of his Christian faith.

The Memoir on his life is amazing reading, with Peter accepting challenge after challenge as he enters uncharted territories of life in the 20th century. For those who, like myself, knew him in just one or two periods of his life the Memoirs fill out the whole fascinating story.

Ian Green
Montacute.

"Wavertree" - A House with a History

On Sunday, 24th February, 2002, a plaque, devised by Kensington and Norwood Historical Society, was unveiled at 64 North Terrace, Kent Town. It draws attention to the significance of "Wavertree" house, built at the above address in 1865/66 for Richard Wells, a newspaper reporter. The two-storey bluestone house was to become the residence of a succession of prominent citizens, including:

1878 - 94 Rev. W. Roby Fletcher, Minister of Stow Memorial Church (now Pilgrim Church), a very learned man who had great influence on the intellectual culture of Adelaide in his day.

1901 - 09 Sir Frederick Holder, Speaker of the House of Representatives in the first Federal Parliament, and prominent Methodist layman in S.A.

1910 - 70 Bought by the Parkin Trust for the establishment of Parkin College for the training of Congregational ministers. In 1920 "Wavertree" became the home of the second principal and his wife, the Rev. Edward Kiek and Mrs. Winifred Kiek. In 1927 Mrs. Kiek became the first woman in Australia to be ordained to the Christian ministry.

Beth Brittle, the Honorary Historian of the Kensington and Norwood Historical Society, presented a brief account of "Wavertree" house and those who had lived there.

The Hon. Neil Andrew MP, the Member for Wakefield and present Speaker of the House of Representatives unveiled the plaque.

Some members of the UCA Historical Society were pleased to be able to attend this function, and to be reminded of the contribution made by church members in former days.

A Little Book That Speaks Volumes

I have had a rather shabby little book on my shelf for many years without realising the full significance of the inscription on the front page. That book is F.W. Bourne's *The Centenary Life of James Thorne of Shebbear*, published in 1895.

Born in 1795, James Thorne became a foundation member of the first Bible Christian society in 1815. Later he was the leader of the Bible Christian Connexion 1829 - 1869. He died in January, 1872.

The book is dedicated to John Thorne and his sisters Kate and Mary. John Thorne was James Thorne's youngest son, who became a Bible Christian minister in South Australia. As he never married, his sister, Kate, acted as his housekeeper.

The handwritten inscription reads:

*To the Rev. H.J. Pope
This record of a noble life
From his friend
(signed) S. Way.*

*Gov. House
Adelaide
20th Sept. 1895*

This was obviously a book "hot off the press", because F.W. Bourne's Preface is dated July 5th, 1895.

The book is a gift to H.J.Pope (Primitive Methodist minister) from Sir Samuel Way (Bible Christian layman). It is obviously a gift in friendship, a reminder of the spirit in which the negotiations for the forthcoming Methodist Union in 1900 were being conducted. As the Bible Christian Connexion was the first to raise the subject of union between the Methodist bodies in South Australia it is very likely Sir Samuel Way was instrumental in getting the move under way.

Henry Pope was an influential leader in the Primitive Methodist Connexion. He was President of their South Australian assembly in 1899 - 1900, at the time of Union.

The address, "Government House, Adelaide", indicates Sir Samuel was Acting-Governor at the time. This was a role he often filled during his long career. According to J.J. Pascoe (ed.) *History of Adelaide and Vicinity* (1901) he was designated as "the most distinguished citizen of South Australia".

The only book-length biography of Sir Samuel Way has focussed on his legal career. There is room for another major study of his contribution to 19th century church life in South Australia and beyond. Who will take up the challenge?

My little book has therefore increased in significance for me. Do you have a similar story to share with our readers?

Kevin Secomb

From the Secretary's Desk

Inquiry from the University of New York

Jenny Lloyd is the Associate Professor of History, and a great-grand-daughter of William O'Bryan, the founder of the Bible Christian movement. She was seeking information about Serena Thorne, whose mother was a daughter of William O'Bryan.

Serena Thorne came to South Australia in 1870 as an Evangelist, and was one of a very small group of women to be active as preachers.

She kept a diary from 17 May 1870 to 9 April 1876, and it is a valuable record of her work in S.A. It is recorded that some two thousand people attended Serena's meetings in the Adelaide Town Hall. Evangelistic meetings were also conducted in country areas as well as Victoria. She married Octavius Lake, a South Australian Bible Christian minister.

A microfiche copy of the Diary was despatched to Prof. Jenny Lloyd.

(The Diary was written about in the first edition of this Newsletter in January 1978. However, there is much more to be documented about the contribution made by Serena Thorne Lake in church life and other organisations in S.A. during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. - Ed.)

Inquiry from the United Kingdom: Spencer Williams came as a Wesleyan minister to South Australia in 1854. He ministered at Adelaide North 1854 - 57, Mount Barker 1858 - 59, Adelaide South 1860 - 61, Norwood 1862. He then went to Tasmania and Victoria. He was secretary to the Wesleyan General Conference in 1884 and again in 1888.

Rev. George Potter (Phone: 8382 5658) would be very pleased to hear from anyone who has any information about Spencer Williams.

Historical Records: The records held by the Society at 19 Malvern Avenue are being catalogue so that a database will give easy access when inquiries are received. A computer with suitable programmes for this work has been purchased. The Society plans to have its own web-site soon. This will greatly assist in advertising the work of the Society.

"Year of the Outback" celebrations, 2002-03-12: These also coincide with the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Australian Inland Mission. Frontier Services are planning an historical display at the National Museum, Canberra. At the last meeting of the Council of the Historical Society it was agreed to lend the replica of John Flynn's 1925 Dodge Buckboard for such a display, which will probably be in September, 2002.

Compact Disc "Great Hymns of Faith" is again available: This CD of well-known hymns presented by the Adelaide Harmony Choir sold out so quickly, that many people missed out on purchasing a copy. A further 500 copies have been made and orders may be placed with either: UCA Historical Society, 19 Malvern Ave., Malvern, 5061. Phone: 8382 5658. Or Harmony Choir Secretary: Ms Judy Langford, 32a Hauteville Tce., Eastwood, 5063. Phone: 8272 0117. Cost: \$20 plus \$5 packaging and postage.