

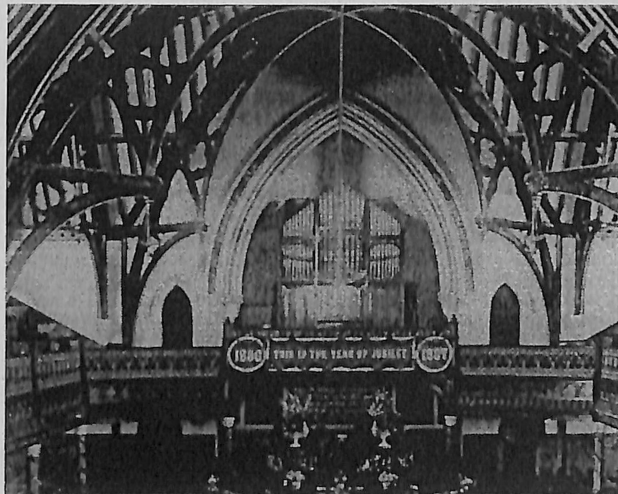


Historical Society

of the Uniting Church
in South Australia

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NEWSLETTER
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Interior, Wesley Uniting Church, Kent Town
(formerly Kent Town Methodist), pictured
during Jubilee year, 1886-7.

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EDITORIAL

In the 1960s, historians began to approach their craft from a different angle. Instead of focussing on the "big" events and famous names they began to ask what ordinary people could contribute to an understanding of history. So began the movement of recovery of the sort of history that could be told "from the bottom up".

Many local church histories are pre-occupied with ministers, prominent lay leaders and buildings. Little is written about how ordinary members experienced life in their congregations.

Therefore it is adding another dimension to the historical record when people write their memoirs and include some of their experiences of Christian life. We are also grateful when they are prepared to share their narratives with a wider readership. Such contributions can provide details that add a sense of immediacy to what finds its way into more formal records.

In this newsletter, Mr Max Johnson, who lives in Queensland, remembers with gratitude his boyhood experiences at the Kilburn Methodist church, 1942 – 1952. Mrs. Nancy Sheppard has written of her life among the Pitjantjatjara people as a teacher at the Ernabella Presbyterian mission 1955 – 1963. Her book *Sojourn on Another Planet* contains many stories that illustrate her experiences of Christian mission activity on that era.

It was announced in our last Newsletter that Rev Bernard Clarke would review the April lecture "*From Mission Law to Self-Determination*" by Rev Jack Goodluck. This is still in the pipeline and will appear early next year as an essay.

Mrs Dorothy O'Neill's little book on Kate Cocks is also reviewed in this newsletter. Her subject is one which requires an in-depth study of the life and work of a great South Australian. Meanwhile Mrs O'Neill does us a service by keeping alive the memories of Miss Kate Cocks.

Kevin Secomb

An Invitation to hear

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANDREW DUTNEY

**give the ANNUAL LECTURE
of the Uniting Church Historical Society**

**on Friday, 18th November, 2005
at the History Centre
44a East Avenue, Black Forest, 5035.**

**The subject of his lecture will be:
*"So different so quickly": the impact of Church
Union on the ministry***

**The Annual Meeting of the Society will be held
at 7.30 p.m., with the lecture following at 8 p.m.
(See further details on page 9.)**

"CALIFORNIA" TAYLOR IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On Sunday August 7th this year, Wesley Uniting Church, Kent Town, celebrated the 140th Anniversary of the opening of the present church building. This had been erected in 1864-5 to commemorate the Jubilee of Australian Methodism. The preacher at all services during the week beginning Sunday 7th August 1865 was the Rev William "California" Taylor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

In 1856 William Taylor had published a book of his experiences: *Seven Years Preaching in San Francisco, California*. When Taylor began this activity, California was in the grip of "gold fever", and San Francisco was very much a frontier town. Taylor had already had some experience of street-preaching in other parts of America, following his ordination in 1845. This is how he described his first street-preaching event in San Francisco:



On the third of December 1849, I announced to the congregation in 'Our little church on the hill' that at three pm of that day I would preach in the open-air, on Portsmouth Square, known more familiarly as the Plaza. It was regarded by most persons present, if not all, as a very dangerous experiment; for the gamblers were a powerful and influential party in the city, and the Plaza was their principal rendezvous, and the best day of the seven for their business. The Plaza was nearly surrounded by gambling and drinking houses. The gamblers occupied the best houses in the city, and had them furnished in the most magnificent style. Each house employed a band of the best music the country could afford... These places, especially at night, all night, and on Sunday, were crowded with moving masses of humanity, of every age and complexion. So powerful was this class of men in the city, that I do not

remember of ever hearing of one of them, in those days, being arrested, even for murder. Now, should a poor preacher presume to go into their midst, and interfere with their business, by thrilling every house with the songs of Zion and the peals of the Gospel truth, he would be likely to wake up the lion in his lair!

When the appointed hour arrived, I took with me my 'sweet singer in Israel' the partner of my youth, who has stood by me in every battle; and down I went to the field of action. I selected for my pulpit a carpenter's work-bench, which stood in front of one of the largest gambling houses in the city. I got Mrs T. and another lady or two comfortably seated, in care of a good brother, and taking the stand, I sung on a high key,

*Hear the royal proclamation
The glad tidings of salvation...*

The novelty of the thing had a moving effect. The people crowded out of the gambling houses, and gathered together from every direction, as though they had heard the cry, 'Fire! Fire! Fire!'. By the time the echoes of the song had died on the breeze, I was surrounded by a dense crowd, to whom I introduced the object of my mission, as follows:

Gentlemen, if our friends in the Atlantic States, with the views and feelings they entertained of California society when I left there, had heard that there was to be preaching this afternoon on Portsmouth Square, in San Francisco, they would have predicted disorder, confusion, and riot; but we, who are here, believe very differently. One thing is certain, there is no man who loves to see those stars and stripes floating on the breeze (pointing to the flag of our Union)), and who loves the institutions

fostered under them; in a word there's no true American but will observe order under the preaching of God's word anywhere, and maintain it, if need be. We shall have order, gentlemen. I apprehend that for the last twelve months at least, you have all been figuring under the rule of 'loss and gain'. In your tedious voyage 'found the horn', or your wearisome journey over the Plains, or your hurried passage 'across the Isthmus', and during the few months of your sojourn in California, losses and gains have constituted the theme of your thoughts and calculations. Now, I wish most respectfully to submit to you a question under your favorite rule. I want to employ all the mathematical power and still you can command, and patiently work out the mighty problem. The question may be found in the twenty-sixth verse of the sixteenth chapter of our Lord's Gospel by St Matthew. Shall I announce it? 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

Every man present was for that hour 'a true American'. Perfect order was observed, and profound attention given to every sentence of the sermon that followed. The warrant for street preaching was thus acknowledged, and the precedent of good order, under the

preaching of the word in these 'highways', was thus established. That sermon proved to be the first of a series of nearly six hundred sermons preached in these streets, the confluence of all the various creeds, and isms, and notions, Christian and heathen. And yet, through the restraining providence of Him who sent me, and the good common sense of the people of California, I have never lost a congregation, nor suffered any serious disturbance...

(From ch.1 of Taylor's book under the heading, "First preaching on the Plaza", pp.11-15.)

A careful reading of this account provides insight into Taylor's skill in connecting with what was obviously a very diverse crowd of people.

During his visit to South Australia, Taylor not only preached to a crowded congregation at Kent Town, but also to an open-air audience, estimated at 5000, in Adelaide. He was equally well-received at some pre-planned country centres during the week.

Dr Arnold Hunt assessed Taylor's visit in 1865 as "proving to be the harbinger of a procession of evangelists, many of them from overseas..." (*This Side of Heaven*, 1985, p.127)

SITES OF INTEREST to those planning to visit England and Scotland

The Society has brochures of historical interest covering sites significant to the following churches:

Congregational: prepared by Brian Jones

Methodist: prepared by the late Dr Arnold Hunt

Presbyterian prepared by the Rev Jack Bentley

KILBURN METHODIST CHURCH 1942 – 1952

[Mr Max Johnson has given permission for a copy of a part of his unpublished memoirs to be lodged in the Historical Society collection.

The extracts below provide a description of this local church sixty years ago, and the influence the congregation has continued to have in Mr Johnson's life over the years.

It is interesting to note the uniformity of Methodist culture and practice. The activities which took place in this very humble church building in a working-class area would also be easily recognisable to anyone whose childhood years were under Methodist tutelage in more affluent areas, whether urban or rural. *Editor]*

My first memory of the Methodist Church at Kilburn is of my Mother taking me along to Sunday School after a visit from Sister May Story to our home.

Sister Story was a Deaconess appointed to the Prospect North Circuit during the war years when many Methodist parsons were serving as pastors in the armed forces. She had come to welcome us as newcomers to the district and of course to establish if we were Methodists.

The Church in 1942, was located at No.1 Kintore Avenue, behind a vacant allotment that faced Lower North Road. The block belonged to Mr Tom Townsend, who later built a high fence around it and proceeded to fill it with scrap metal.

The building had originally been a Lodge Hall. It was constructed of fluted galvanised iron, sides covered in vertical sheets. The windows were narrow sash windows painted with white wash, and blinds, or paper had been stuck on the inside to meet with the wartime blackout requirements. Double brown painted timber doors opened into the front of the hall and down a fairly broad driveway on the left hand side a single brown painted door gave access to what originally had been the Supper room.

The front doors opened straight into the interior of the hall, a room approximately thirty by fifty feet lined in white fibrous plaster covered with chocolate painted battens. The ceiling in the same material followed the roof line part way then flattened out. Long steel rods stretched from wall to wall across the width to tie the walls together. Two doors in the back of the main hall (church) led to the old supper room that was used as the Kindergarten department of the Sunday school and the choir vestry. It was also used in the mornings for Christian Endeavour.

My early recollections of the furnishings were of wooden single chairs and a few old long wooden pews that proved to be very uncomfortable. Mum often complained of getting a bad back and a sore 'tail' from sitting on them for the Church Service. Services of Worship were held at 11.00 am and 7.00pm. Sunday School was conducted at 2.00pm and Christian Endeavour at 10.00am. Each of these services usually lasted for one hour, except when a 'long-winded preacher' visited - then the service might stretch to ninety minutes.

Music for the services came from a reed pedal organ that had to be 'pedalled' to pump the air required to sound the notes. It was made of timber stained dark brown. Its cabinet was carved and decorated in the style of the period the organ came from, probably fifty years or earlier. This stood in the centre of the hall and, if memory serves me correctly, a piano stood at the side of the hall, though this may have been used in the back room for kindergarten and rolled in for special occasions like a visiting Male Quartet, or soloist.

The pulpit, the place the Minister conducted the service from, led the singing and preached the sermon, was a small table about three feet by eighteen inches with a box-like lectern sitting on top of it, upon which reposed a large, black-bound, King James version of the Bible with

pages edged in gold leaf. It had large print to make it easy for the Minister to read the lesson. The place usually marked with a broad red ribbon bookmark with gold tassels. It lay on a plump red cushion edged with gold fringe.

When we first attended the Church the notice board in the street still read "Chicago Methodist Church", the suburb's previous name, although this had been changed on the 5th of May 1930. Local residents had objected to the comparison with the unsavoury reputation of Chicago in the United States with its gangsters and gang wars. Sister Story enlisted the aid of my Father, Peter Johnson, to repaint and re-letter the sign. This he did after taking it down and carrying it back home on his pushbike.

Mum agreed to become a Sunday School Teacher in the 'junior' section of the senior Sunday school. We used to walk almost a kilometre to the Church, along Lower North Road (now Churchill Road). Mum and I would walk there and back in the afternoon, then again at night for the evening service. In those war years, daylight saving was in force - so it was still daylight when we returned home after the evening service in the summer.

Dad did not attend with us; he was what was known as a 'regular attender', that is he regularly attended the Sunday School Anniversary Service each year. He

always helped to erect the platform of wooden planks set on tiered framework upon which we kids sat for the performances. The 'platform' filled the complete width of the church and was about seven tiers high. It seated about a hundred and fifty children.

The Sunday School Anniversary was an annual event that was held over two weekends. Three performances were given, morning, afternoon and evening, culminating with a special Monday night performance after which book prizes were given out to the top three students in each class in the Sunday School. The Kindergarten and Cradle Roll Children all received a book prize or special Bible verse card usually on the last Sunday afternoon....

...The Church filled my Sundays with activity and played a large part in influencing my mind, setting the rules for acceptable conduct, establishing values that would stand me in good stead as I grew up and became an adult. It would also establish and mould my conscience, draw the parameters for my life, boundaries that even today rule my life, causing stress and guilt if I cross them. Though time has widened some of those boundaries, shown the need to pull some of them down, rebuild others, the precepts learnt in those times still remain a rock to hold my anchor firm in troubled times.

Max Johnson

The Society has several historic photographs of local churches, such as the one shown of Parkside West SSA. However, we have none of the Kilburn Church.

We are interested in acquiring photographs and other memorabilia of former churches or existing congregations, should members know be aware of material.



Parkside West Sunday School Anniversary, 1925

BOOK REVIEWS

NANCY SHEPPARD, *Sojourn on Another Planet*,
(Underdale, SA, Gillingham, 2004) 98 pp, \$20 + \$5 p & p.

On 7 March 1955, a 21-year old woman left her parent's home in New South Wales and journeyed to a remote part of South Australia, where she was to spend the next seven years of her life. Nancy Sheppard describes those years as being like "a sojourn on another planet". Life in the remote community of Ernabella, at the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges was so different from what the newly-qualified teacher had ever experienced before. It also provided her with her first meeting with some of Australia's Indigenous people.

As Nancy Sheppard candidly admits, although she was there as a teacher, she had much to learn. Fortunately she made learning the language of the people a high priority. This enabled her not only to communicate with her pupils and their parents, but to gain over time a deep appreciation of their rich culture. Many of the anecdotes recorded in this book are to do with the unwitting clash of her culture with the culture of the Pitjantjatjara people. However when this happened, generosity of spirit was displayed by all concerned.

Through the anecdotes we gain a picture of the process of change, with all its dangers as well as opportunities. Interestingly, Nancy Sheppard returned to Ernabella on a visit in March this year, fifty years later to the very day. Again she recalled her descriptive phrase, "sojourn on another planet". So much had changed in fifty years. This is an interesting, insightful little book that adds materials to grass-roots history of Christian mission endeavour in mid-20th century Australia.

Dorothy O'Neill, *Kate: Fanny Kate Boadicea Cocks, MBE (1875 – 1954)*
(Henley Beach, Seaview Press, 2005) 68 pp \$15 + \$5.00 p&p

Dorothy O'Neill, who arrived in Adelaide as a migrant in 1968, first heard of Kate Cocks through Mrs Phyllis Bonython. Mrs. Bonython, the Superintendent of the Brighton Babies Home, was guest speaker at a meeting of Malvern women's fellowship, and Dorothy O'Neill found she immediately wanted to know more about the woman who had made such a significant contribution in the field of social welfare in South Australia.

During her lifetime, Kate Cocks achieved some significant "firsts". She began working with juveniles in 1900 and eventually was appointed the first full-time Juvenile Court Probation Officer. Her outstanding work in this field was brought to the attention of South Australia's Chief Secretary. As a result, in 1915, Kate Cocks became the Principal Police Officer in SA, and thus the first woman police officer in the British Empire.

Mrs. O'Neill includes a number of stories from the era (1915 – 1935) that indicate what a perceptive and courageous woman Kate Cocks was. After her retirement from the police force, Kate Cocks became aware of the needs of unmarried mothers. In the ensuing years, Kate Cocks developed the Brighton Babies Home under the auspices of the Methodist Church.

This is a small book that tells a big story of faith and determination. Dorothy O'Neill has done us a service through her own appreciation of the woman she heard about from others. Those of us who met Kate Cocks in person all those years ago are reminded again that she was a truly great person.

Back to Burton



*A Reminder of the
Biennial Gathering*

Sunday, 23rd October, 2005

You and your family are warmly invited to attend the Biennial Back-To-Burton event to be held

behind the Old Pepper Trees
on Bolivar Road, Paralowie.
commencing at 2.30 p.m.

There will be a short program with information and stories of early days followed by afternoon tea and a catch-up at 3 p.m.

This is a great opportunity for a reunion of family and friends. Please bring a plate of afternoon tea to be shared. BYO drinks (including hot water for tea or coffee, as there is no power on the site.) Please also bring folding chairs.

You are invited to inspect the individual information plates that have been erected on each gravesite. These plates have been made possible through a government grant and the generous support of Salisbury Council.

Please encourage the 'next generations' to attend this event so that the historical and family significance of the cemetery will not be lost.

If the weather is inclement, we will depart in convoy to a local hall. Note: Toilets facilities are not available at the cemetery.

Enquiries, apologies, changes of address to the
'Friends of Burton' Committee:
Dennis Wright 8251 1417; Ian Brown 8289 7636;
Anne Fry 8847 2680; Murray Diment 8327 0848;
Douglas Wright 8368 1708.



Burton Cemetery

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING: AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

Because the Historical Society has now been recognized as an Agency of the Synod, has responsibilities for the History Centre property and investments, and is expanding its work, it is necessary that wording of the Constitution should include these responsibilities.

Voting on the amendments and additions (shown below with accompanying explanations) will be at the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON FRIDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 7.30 p.m. at the History Centre, 44a East Avenue, Black Forest, 5035..

Should you have questions or comments please attend the AGM. Please read the Constitution on the following pages. The amendments and additions are shown in italics.

2. OBJECTS:

- (1) *To assist the Synod in fulfilling its responsibilities to preserve archival and historic records;*

As the Historical Society is now an Agency of the Synod it is necessary to state the relationship of the Society to the Synod and its function in the Synod.

- (3) ... *State Library;* change of name from Mortlock Library to State Library;

- (5) ... *and such other materials conducive for the historical record of the Church;*

This provides for the publication of other materials necessary for the historical record of the Church.

- (6) ... *forums, workshops,*

Two further activities planned to become part of the Society's program.

3. MEMBERSHIP:

The subscriptions for the various categories of membership shall be determined from time to time by the Council.

This is self explanatory as from time to time it is necessary for the subscriptions to be re-considered.

5. COUNCIL:

- (1) (a) *Those Officers shall be the executive of the Council.*

Because of the added responsibilities it is necessary for an Executive to be established and for it to meet as necessary.

6. PROPERTY:

Property held by the Society for the purposes of a History Centre shall be the responsibility of the Council to administer and maintain.

A clause is now necessary which states clearly the responsibility for the property.

7. FINANCE:

- (3) *income ... and a balance sheet for the previous calendar year ...*

As the Society now has a significant income from an investment portfolio, it is necessary that greater attention be given to the Society's financial record.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION:

- (1) ... *and subject to the endorsement of the Synod.*

This is to comply with the Synod requirement.

Rev'd George W. Potter,

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION

1. **NAME** - The name of the Society shall be THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, hereinafter called the Society.
2. **OBJECTS** - The objects of the Society shall be:
 - (1) *To assist the Synod in fulfilling its responsibilities to preserve archival and historic records;*
 - (2) To promote the collection, preservation and exhibition of historical documents and records;
 - (3) To preserve and store adequately the artefacts and documents which are not required by the Synod to be lodged at the *State Library*;
 - (4) To arouse interest in and to promote the study and discussion of the history of the Uniting Church and of the three churches existing prior to union;
 - (5) To publish historical articles, lectures *and other such materials conducive for the historical record of the Church.*
 - (6) To promote the interchange of historical information by lectures, *forums, workshops*, readings and discussion;
 - (7) To co-operate with other societies interested in South Australian history and/or the history of the Uniting Church and the bodies from which it was formed;
 - (8) To do all such things as are conducive and incidental to the attainment of any, or all the above objects.
3. **MEMBERSHIP** - Membership of the Society shall be open to persons, Congregations and organisations agreeing with the objects of the Society and paying the prescribed subscription. The following shall be the categories of membership:
 - (1) Life members
 - (2) Ordinary members
 - (3) And such other members as the meeting may from time to time determine.

The subscriptions for the various categories of membership shall be determined from time to time by the Council.

4. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: The Annual General Meeting shall be held between the first day of October and the thirty-first day of December.

- (1) Special General Meetings may be called at any time by the Secretary of the Council within thirty (30) days of the receipt by the Secretary of a requisition signed by ten (10) members in which the objects of the meeting shall be specified.

5. COUNCIL.

- (1) At the Annual General Meeting a Council of up to sixteen (16) members shall be elected by those present at the meeting, and shall include the following Officers:

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Editor

(a) Those Officers shall be the executive of the Council.

(b) In each case Office shall be for one year with the opportunity of re-election.

- (2) Unfilled and casual vacancies may be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by the Council.
- (3) The administration of the Society shall be in the hands of the Council.
- (4) Six (6) members present at a Council meeting shall form a quorum.

6. PROPERTY.

Property held by the Society for the purposes of a History Centre shall be the responsibility of the Council to administer and maintain.

7. FINANCE.

- (1) All moneys received shall be deposited in the Society's bank account(s).
- (2) The Council shall have the power to invest any bequests, endowments, legacies and surplus income in securities authorized by the Trustees Act of South Australia.

- (3) A statement of *income* and expenditure, and a *balance sheet* for the *previous calendar year* together with an auditor's report, shall be presented at the Annual General Meeting and a copy of such statements shall also be forwarded to the Secretary of the Synod.
- (4) The income and property of the Society shall be applied solely to the promotion of the objects of the Society.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION.

- (1) The Constitution may be amended by a three-fifths majority of the votes cast by members present at an Annual General Meeting *and subject to the endorsement of the Synod.*
- (2) Notice of a proposed amendment shall be sent to the Secretary twenty-eight (28) days prior to the Annual General Meeting, and all members shall be advised in writing of the proposed amendment at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the meeting.

9. DISSOLUTION.

- (1) In the event of the dissolution of the Society all assets shall be transferred to the Secretary of the Synod for the Synod to determine their disposition.

10. REPORT TO SYNOD.

A report of the activities of the Society shall be presented to the Synod annually.