

EXPLORE

The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.

CHARLES STURT MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to another Explore newsletter. This year we celebrated Sturt's 223rd Birthday anniversary on 28 April 2018 at his home Grange. About 80 people attended including Matt Cowdrey MP for Colton, Angela Evans, Mayor of the City of Charles Sturt, Deputy Mayor Tom Scheffler and Councillor Rachel Tullio. It was unfortunate that the Fort Glanville Historical Association gunners were unable to attend but a representative attended to fire a three gun salute with a Martini Henri Rifle. The presence of the members of the Adelaide Rifles and the Victoriana Society of South Australia in period costume were very welcome guests. We were very pleased that the Hon. Dean Brown AO, our Trust Patron could provide the annual Sturt Address:



"Today we meet here, to once again revere the memory of Sturt and his contribution to the foundation of South Australia. Everyone is aware that the establishment of South Australia was directly due to the efforts of the advocates of the Wakefield Theory of Colonization. Wakefield's famous publication 'A Proposal for Colonising Australasia' in June 1829 led to the formation of the National Colonization Society in 1830 to give practical expression to Wakefield's ideas.

Knowledge of Sturt's discoveries had reached London by December 1830. The details of a magnificent river recently discovered, gave rise to a decision to found a colony in South Australia for the operation of the Wakefield system. While several attempts were made to initiate colonization, it was not until, the almost simultaneous publications of 'Wakefield's England and America' and 'Sturt's Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia' in 1833 that the whole scheme was revived, leading to the formation of the South Australia Association, consisting of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Robert Gouger, Robert Torrens and George Fife Angas. Sturt's journal became a best seller and containing as it did, the records of the 1831 exploration of the Mt Lofty Ranges by Captain Collect Barker, it provided the stimulus that led to the South Australian Foundation Act of 1834.

In an official minute by the Colonial Land and Emigration Office on 11th August 1834, it is stated: "We do justice to the character and motives of Captain Sturt. By his enterprising expedition down the Murray he may be considered the discoverer of South Australia, and to that journey, the settlement may be said, in one sense, to have owed its existence".

It has to be noted that, until Sturt's arrival in England, and until the publication of his story, the whole Wakefield scheme had languished. Thereafter it came to life, received official recognition and a colony was, by law, established. His great influence, and his status as one of the real founders of South Australia, cannot be doubted.

Although the South Australian Association had wanted a virtually independent colony, Parliament insisted that the new settlement was to be jointly run. Authority was divided between the British Crown, represented by a Governor, who held full authority to govern the colony, and the London based Board of the South Australian Colonization Commission, who were represented by a Resident Commissioner, Surveyor-General, an Emigration Agent and other officers. But the slow progress of Government to initiate anything, saw the formation of the South Australia Company in London on 9 October 1835. A private company, comprising of merchants, wealthy investors, philanthropists, religious dissenters, and social reformers, the company became the catalyst for action.

Colonel Light, the Surveyor-General, arrived at Port Adelaide on 21st November 1836. He had absolute authority to determine the site of the capital, and selected the locality recommended by Sturt, to whom he made full acknowledgement. Governor Hindmarsh followed a month later, landing at Glenelg where he proclaimed the Province on 28th December 1836. As the representative of the Crown, he was determined to assert his authority and immediately came into conflict with Light and the SA Colonization Commission. Naturally the South Australian Company, being responsible for land sales and promoting immigration under the Wakefield Scheme favoured any notion that allowed them to pursue their own aims. This tripartite of power, inevitably created difficulty for the new colony.

Siting of the capital became the key element of the discord. The SA Company favoured Port Adelaide as did Hindmarsh for its potential as a shipping harbour. Light's survey team had already undertaken their surveys and chosen a site on the Torrens River nearer the foothills. Light refused to concede to their demands, so his selection, was accepted, if only temporarily. In November 1837 excitement was caused by the re-discovery of Encounter Bay's fine harbour at the mouth of the Murray. Hindmarsh declared his intention of moving the capital there. Light, now in conflict with the Board of Commissioners, resigned in June 1838, as did most of the survey staff, leaving the land surveys in chaos. Land prices tumbled, and government revenue plummeted, threatening the implementation of the Wakefield Scheme.

As a result, Governor Hindmarsh was recalled in July 1838 and replaced by George Stephen, who acted as Administrator until the new governor arrived in October. During this interim period, there was no Governor, no Surveyor-General or Survey staff. As debate raged over the siting of the capital, Captain Charles Sturt arrived in Adelaide.

By 1838, Sturt had married Charlotte Greene, sold his army commission and returned to New South Wales to become a farmer. But devastated by a long severe drought, Sturt decided to improve his fortunes by overlanding cattle to the new colony of South Australia, where it was reported that stock was in short supply and fetching good prices.

Setting out with three hundred head of stock from the present site of Albury, he followed and mapped the course of the Hume River to its junction with the Murrumbidgee and from there on to the Great Nor-West Bend near Morgan to Mount Barker. The journey took four months and upon his arrival in Adelaide on August 28, 1838, Sturt found there was no market for his cattle due to a lack of money in the Colony. This situation was caused in part by the probability of a change of the capital to Encounter Bay.

However, the settlers accorded Sturt a tumultuous welcome and on the 7th September a public dinner was given in his honour. Regarded by the citizens as a founder of the Colony, his opinion was sought on the potential of the lake as a sea port. George Stephen urgently requested he visit the locality and to give advice as to its potential.

Sturt left Adelaide for Encounter Bay on 11th September arriving at Victor Harbour 3 days later. The following day Sturt set off to the mouth of the outlet where he saw a line of breakers that rose a full fifteen feet before they burst on the sand bar across the mouth. He then made three attempts to enter the outlet from different directions but all failed and on one occasion the boat was almost capsized. Sturt finally concluded that it was too dangerous to continue, abandoned any further attempts and returned to Adelaide on the 22nd September. There he reported to the

acting Governor that the mouth to Lake Alexandrina could not be safely navigated. The question being so settled, the site of Adelaide was finally fixed. Investment in land and commerce was resumed.

On 12th October 1838 Governor Gawler arrived and assumed office. Sturt talked with him about conditions in South Australia and the opportunity of Sturt's appointment to the post of Surveyor General. Sturt returned to Sydney a week later and within a few months had been offered the position of Surveyor General. He sold his property in New South Wales and the family arrived in Adelaide on 2nd April 1839 to take up his appointment.

Over the next ten years his life in the colony was balanced between a harmonious home life and a rigorous public life. The anxious times under Governor Grey, the grievous expedition into central Australia, and his continuing health problems saw Sturt seek leave from public service to return to England in 1847. While in England he published his journal of the Central Expedition and considered whether he should return to Adelaide. An offer to become the new Colonial Secretary in South Australia, drew him back to Adelaide after a 2 year and 3 month absence.

As Colonial Secretary he was a member of the Legislative Council, a new Council of sixteen elected members and eight members nominated by the Crown. Sturt in fact, supervised the introduction of an electoral system in South Australia. However on 5th December 1851 Sturt decided to retire due to ill health.

The Legislative Council presented an address to the Governor requesting His Excellency to introduce a Bill for the purpose of granting an annuity for life to the Hon. Capt. Sturt. The amended Bill was passed and became law on 18th December 1851 and included the following preamble:

"Whereas the discovery and exploration of the River Murray by the Honourable Charles Sturt have greatly tended to facilitate the establishment and prosperity of the Province of South Australia; and, in the prosecution of such discovery and exploration, and in other public services of similar character, the said Honourable Charles Sturt hath sustained great toils and privations to the permanent weakening of his health, and hath thereby become less capable of the performance of public duties: And whereas it is expedient by way of reward of such discovery, and of compensation for such toils and privations and loss of health, to provide for the honourable retirement from the Public Service of the said Honourable Charles Sturt by conferring upon him an annuity for the term of his natural life"

Sturt had served as a member of Council from its creation in June 1843 till his resignation on 31st December 1851. In that time Sturt showed himself to be a man of intelligence and culture, with an eagerness to advance human knowledge. He played a leading role in Holy Trinity Church affairs, the South Australia Club, the Adelaide Hunt Club, Agricultural & Horticultural Society, the Adelaide Literary and Scientific Association, the Mechanics Institute and the Hope Lodge of Oddfellows. He was Chair at the foundation meeting of the Steam Navigation Company seeking to advance steam navigation on the River Murray and was firmly behind the establishment of a steam railway to Port Adelaide.

Sturt left Australia on 19 March 1853. He spent his last years peacefully at Cheltenham, being widely respected and continually consulted about Australian affairs, particularly the preparations for the North Australian expedition of 1854. He applied unsuccessfully for the governorship of Victoria in 1855 and of Queensland in 1858.

In recognition of his services to Queen and Country it was decreed that he be awarded the Order of St. Michael and St. George (K.C.M.G.) but fate intervened. On June 16, 1869 before the award was gazetted, Captain Charles Sturt died suddenly from heart failure.

Captain Charles Sturt, a soldier, explorer and public servant, may have passed away but his legacy remains. His explorations opened up vast tracts of land for settlement thereby accelerating the growth of the nation, whilst his journals provided the catalyst that resulted in the establishment of the colony of South Australia, in which he became one of its foremost pioneers.

His obituary stated:

“His scientific attainments were of no mean order, his faculties of observation were keen, and his literary abilities not at all to be despised. The works which he has written have been pursued with interest by thousands, and are likely yet to have myriads of readers, for they supply an important link in the romantic story of exploration. His energy, mental and physical, was extreme; his perseverance indomitable. As a leader he was resolute and fearless but withal so considerate that those associated with him were ready to follow him through every obstacle.”
It is for this reason, we hold Sturt in high esteem.



It was unfortunate on the occasion of this year's Sturt's Birthday, that none of the members took any photographs. We were so enjoying the beautiful weather, the memorable catering and the pleasure of talking to guests, no one considered it. We are most grateful to the City of Charles Sturt for providing \$700 for the marquee, pie oven and wine glasses and the provision of forty chairs. Without their support, the Birthday celebrations would not be the success that they are each year.

It is with great dismay we reported an act of vandalism at the museum on Sunday evening 17 June 2018. Using a fire extinguisher, brought by the perpetrators, they smashed the windows of the toilet and the window outside the back entrance to the gallery, plus a security light. Thankfully a local resident notified us of the damage and all was repaired by Tuesday. The police reported a week later that the culprits had been arrested and would appear in the Youth Court.



Our Heritage Garden Project is progressing well. Many thanks to our energetic volunteer gardeners and funding from the City of Charles Sturt. The new pathway to the back garden is almost complete and the garden along the southern verandah has been widened and replanted. A display of fuscias will be planted which were identified in Charles Sheppey Sturt's plan as part of Capt. Sturt's garden while several rows of heritage roses and climbing sweet pea will be planted to the farthest end. The front cottage garden has been planted with new plants as a temporary measure until a decision is made on the type of display to be grown. City of Charles Sturt re-laid the paving and laid edging bricks to improve the exterior of the cottage.



We are pleased to share a photograph of our first Sturt Pea, propagated by Jesse, a student from Grange Primary School.



Regrettably our Holm Oak near the Cottage Wing is due to be cut down in the coming weeks. It has been suffering badly since the 2007 Drought and now has Honey Fungus which is eating into the trunk of the tree.



The History Festival in May gave the museum the opportunity to present a new temporary exhibition – *Men of the Central Expedition* – researched and written by Margaret Phillips B.A. GDAHS. Funding was received from the History Trust of South Australia for design, production and purchase of images. The exhibition attracted many visitors to the museum and will remain on display until 2019.



There are twelve panels in total giving a place in history to the men who accompanied Captain Charles Sturt on his Central Expedition. Frequently the commander of an expedition received the glory and fame – a Gold Founder's Medal, government position, prestige, money and possibly a knighthood. Yet the men who made up the exploration party received minimal acknowledgement in the annals of history. Some went on to achieve success while others languished in an asylum. This exhibition gives voice to their stories.