

# EXPLORE

The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.

CHARLES STURT MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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The Sturt Address by Prof. Scott Smith



Hon. Dean Brown AO and Prof. Scott Smith

Sturt's Birthday Celebrations this year were a small affair due to the construction of the Visitor Centre. Trust members and guests met at the Grange Golf Club at 3.00pm for two hours of cocktails and drinks on the Beeston Balcony. Prof. Scott Smith gave an entertaining speech on *The Grange* and its restoration, the influence of change in museum methodology and the adaption of the caretaker's cottage to a museum gallery.

Professor Smith explained how the new Visitor Centre will expand the precinct's museum facilities which will enable the Trust to showcase the Sturt Collection in a more engaging way. Professor Scott Smith commented favourably on the detailed design strategy developed in the exhibition plan "Antipodean Dreams" produced by Denise Schumann, Cultural Heritage Consultant of Schumann & Associates.

Professor Smith stated that Schumann's creative approach was to take artefacts and artworks and present them in such a way as to challenge the visitor to reflect on the process of European colonization of Australia and its consequences for First Nations people. He quoted the following excerpt from the concept plan.

*"As Sturt pushed the boundaries of human endurance, of rationality and of life itself, he came to understand and respect the Australian landscape and the Aboriginal culture that was such an important part of it long before European settlement. Sturt's dream ended in the Great Stony Desert – its despairing songline lay traced across some of the most unyielding and magnificent terrain in all of Australia." (Schumann 2021)*



With respect to funding the construction of the Visitor Centre, the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust has incurred building costs of \$513,000. The upgrade includes much needed modern kitchen and ambulant toilet facilities and access ramps which have had to meet current building standards.

The addition of the new slate roof to the extension which blends the old with the new has been beautifully done. However, due to the increase in building costs the Trust has had to make up the difference between bequest/donations for the project by using a significant portion of its reserve funds. The budget has been tight but as anyone undertaking a building project will know prices for materials have gone up 20% in a year.

In vision of "Antipodean Dreams" is exciting and as part of the new interpretive centre its execution requires urgent funding. Currently, the centre is a blank shell and requires new museum flooring, display lighting and purpose built museum cabinetry that meet Australia standards for all four galleries.



In recent months, on the basis of the concept outlined in "Antipodean Dreams" funding has been secured from the Copland Foundation of \$48,898 to cover the purchase of a large display cabinet for Gallery 3 which will enable key elements of the Sturt Collection to be exhibited.

The cost of this cabinet alone is nearly \$20,000. The grant will also cover the cost of new track lighting for Galleries 3 and 4 and conservation and re-framing of the Sturt Desert Pea collected on the famous Central Expedition in 1844. A recent grant application to the History Trust of SA for \$17,545 was made for another display cabinet with the Trust notified in June that its application was successful.

The Charles Sturt Trust is currently looking to raise an additional \$25,000 to cover the cost of the following items. If you wish to contribute to a specific item please let us know.

**Mila Exhibition Wall for Gallery 1** (similar to the Art Gallery of SA movable exhibition walls for northern wall in Gallery 1) Cost \$6,000.

**New Large Interpretive Wall Panels for Gallery 1** Cost \$5,000



**Bespoke Conservation & Book Display Cabinet Gallery 3**

Cost \$3,300



**Replica Costume Lieutenant Charles Sturt** Cost \$1,200



**Reframing of the Central Expedition Flag** Cost \$5,000



**Please help us by donating to the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc. Monies can be deposited to Bendigo Bank BSB 633-000 Account 146066840. All donations are tax deductible.**

The Trust is a voluntary organization and as such is not attached to any government body. The Board of the Trust wishes to publicly acknowledge and thank all donors for their contributions to the Visitor Centre and to recognize the significant donations of

John Howland \$200,000

Merle Weston \$54,000

Heather Sturt-Haaga and Paul Haaga \$5,200

Hon. Dean Brown AO and Rosslyn Brown \$5,000

Mary Starck \$3,000

Anne McCutcheon \$3,500

Prof. Scott Smith and Lisa Smith \$1,000.

Lions Club West Beach \$1,000

City of Charles Sturt \$5,500 DWA for the security system



## VISITOR CENTRE



Construction is well under way with the slate roof laid, render applied to exterior walls, the plasterboard interior walls and ceilings erected, doors and locks fitted, kitchen installed and tiling completed in all wet areas. Now waiting on second fix electrical and plumbing, painting and installation of floor coverings.

The completion date has been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> August with the installation of the new exhibition to begin in September. A launch of the Centre is proposed for October. We will notify everyone when the date and details have been finalized.

## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION



Anne McCutcheon and Richard Nolan were both awarded a Volunteer

Recognition Award for their leadership of the Grange Heritage Garden Project. Awarded by the Federal Member for Hindmarsh Mark Butler, Merle Weston, President, accompanied Anne to accept Richard's award as he was unable to attend. They both work extremely hard to present a beautiful garden and offer up great advice on heritage plants available in South Australia in the period of Sturt's residence at the Grange, and show leadership and guidance to all our dedicated volunteer gardeners.

## A different perspective on Charles Sturt – THE WRITER

This is an abridged version of an introduction to an article titled *Amid Th'Encircling Gloom: The Moral Geography of Charles Sturt's Narratives* written by Adrian Mitchell and published in the Vol 24 Issue 66 September 2000 Journal of Australian Studies. P85-94. The article raised some interesting issues and provided a different perspective on Sturt.

*"In the current climate of revisionism, it would be rash to pronounce on the estimation of Australian explorers; but Captain Charles Sturt was one of the finest and most highly regarded of them. Or so it was accepted, ....*

*"For all his achievement in drifting down the river or plodding across the dunes, we know Sturt not as an explorer but mainly as a writer, and it is his writing that I concentrate on here. My interest is in the published Narratives as literature, not as history or geography or barely concealed autobiography. The kinds of questions I ask of a text are not, I suppose, those of the historian or geographer or biographer. Yet aspects of all these readings come into play in some respect when we consider how Sturt envisioned his Australia, how he looked at it and how he wrote of what he saw"...*

*"Sturt was an elegant writer. The accounts of his various journeys of exploration are lucid and interesting to read. On occasion he expressed himself very well; he carefully varies his material, so that there are descriptive impressions, vignettes, dramatic moments, reflective intervals, and always a steady sense of progression. It is also clear that he suppresses material -- he even tells us so from time to time, reminding us that he is reminding himself that he is writing for an audience, though not specifically a local one. He leaves out of the account excessive meteorological detail, though because he knows his readers will be interested he records some of the more extreme temperatures in the desert, or when the thermometer burst (it seems to have done so several times). He compressed the account of his returning when that is substantially a re-tracing of his outward journey. He integrates his narratives not just along the longitudinal trace that Paul Carter has noticed as determining the narrative line of the exploration journals, but through carefully repeated figures, and allusions to what has preceded or what is to come (and thereby indicating that this is not written to the moment but at a secure and informed distance after the event). He amplifies the significance of his narratives by interlocking them with other current geographical activity and by keeping a weather eye out to the possibility of making history; and as Ross Gibson argued in the *Diminishing Paradise*, he was also consciously tailoring his record to its mythic possibilities. In other words, Sturt deliberately shaped his material."*



## BUCKLAND PARK

Buckland Park is a new residential subdivision between Virginia and Port Gawler. It was recently given major development status by the State Government and is currently being developed by the Walker Corporation. But how many people know that there is an important connection between Buckland Park and Captain Charles Sturt?



It was Sturt's friend Edward John Eyre, who recommended John Harris Browne for the position of surgeon on Sturt's expedition into Central Australia of 1844-46. John had trained as a doctor in Edinburgh and his medical advice during the expedition played a valuable role. The expedition party suffered greatly from scurvy, and it was said, that if it was not for Browne's "*courage and professional skill*", that all but one in the party returned safely to civilisation.

What the "unusually observant and intensely practical" Browne did notice was that, while the men were stricken with scurvy, the 200 sheep that accompanied the party, survived surprisingly well. Their desert diet included considerable amounts of saltbush and bluebush.



B62394 SLISA Buckland Park C1870s

On return to Adelaide, Browne gave up medicine, formed a joint venture with his brother William and they became successful pastoralists. In 1851 they owned 155km<sup>2</sup>, and by 1867 they held 15 properties totaling 5180km<sup>2</sup>. In 1856 they purchased Buckland Park and made it the headquarters of their pastoral empire. At its height their business was exporting more wool than anyone else in the colony.

Sturt's Expedition into Central Australia is often described as a tragic failure. People place it alongside Gallipoli and the Burke and Wills expedition, as episodes that define the character of Australians. In pursuing the doubtful goal of finding an inland sea, Sturt did so with great grit and determination, but without immediate success. Some lessons are slow to be learned. The growth over time of the wool industry, to the point where Australia was being described as living off the sheep's back, can in part be credited to the discoveries of Sturt and Browne.

By Paul Hilbig, Vice President, C.S.M.M.T.

Another related story to the Central Expedition is told by historian Bruce Pascoe in an ABC Education Program called *Roast the Duck and Cake in the Desert*. This can be viewed online at

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/aboriginal-ingenuity-ch-7-charles-sturts-encounter-in-1846/13500222>



## JOSEPH CLAYTON

### Convict, wheelwright, carpenter on Sturt's River Murray Expedition

Clayton had arrived on the convict ship *Manilus* on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 1827. He had been sentenced to death at the Lancaster Assizes for his part in smashing up the newly installed power looms in the East Lancashire mills in 1826 as part of the hand weavers' riots. His sentence handed down on 8 August 1826, was commuted to Transportation for Life to Australia.

As a 30 year old, he left behind his wife and five children. A fate that may have weighed heavily on his heart. On arrival he had been assigned to the Engineer Department. It wasn't without incident - he served

3 days solitary confinement for drunkenness

24 hours for going to Sydney on Market Day

Detained in barracks on bread and water for visiting a disorderly house at a late hour of night

It was his skills as a carpenter and wheelwright however which contributed to his selection as a member of Sturt's party for the River Murray Expedition in 1829. Clayton was given responsibility for the assembling of the whaleboat and construction of the skiff for the river trip.

On Clayton's return he received a Ticket of Leave No. 30/423 on 13 July 1830, "granted in consequence of his good conduct whilst employed on the late expedition under Captain Sturt into the interior and he was allowed to remain in the District of Parramatta." A release, he normally would not have qualified until he served 10 – 12 years of his sentence.

In September 1832 Clayton was assigned to William Sherwin at Clyde, part of Parramatta as a sweep and brazier before being reassigned to Mr E.W. Bayliss, a coach master of Philip Street. It was in the employ of Mr Bayliss that Clayton died in the early hours of Sunday 13th April 1834. A Coroner's Inquest was held the same day in the "Australian" public house where he had died.

Evidence presented by Mr Kellick, "that the deceased came into his house on Saturday evening, between nine and ten, and partook of some liquor in company with another person.

He sat down upon a stool, attempted to force a quarrel with a butcher, and rose to strike him, but fell upon him, without either giving or receiving any blows. He was directly picked up, and his appearance some time after, gave indications of illness. Mr Hilton (surgeon) was sent for, and attended immediately. Medicines were administered by him and he remained with the deceased till he expired, about a quarter after one am."

At the Inquest "The jury expressed that a post mortem examination should take place, the Coroner then requested Dr Neilson to perform the operation, and he left the room with that view". A certificate was issued, "that death had been occasioned by a diseased state of the lungs and excessive indulgence in ardent spirits". The jury deliberated for about an hour and returned a verdict of "Died by the visitation of God". – *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser Tuesday 15 April 1834 page 2*

## A LITTLE BIT OF *THE GRANGE* HISTORY

Like all houses, they go through stages of new, renovated, relapse and restoration.



The Grange was no different in 1903 when the widow Mary Matilda Howard bought the Grange in April 1903. She had arrived in Adelaide in November 1883 aboard the *Cuzco* with her four children aged 7 – 11 years.

Her husband had died the previous year so she travelled in the companionship of an old friend Arthur Meeks and they set up home in Norwood.

Mary seems to have been financially independent as Arthur died in 2 April 1904, a year before she bought *The Grange* on a mortgage with the State Bank of South Australia. Her youngest child, Paul, an accomplishment concert pianist, had established the Howard Commercial College in 1902 so may have assisted her financially.



Mary breathed life into the old residence, introducing a touch of the *art nouveau*.

She added lead lighting windows on verandah, a circular insertion into her bedroom wall and an arched coloured pictorial window in the dining room, the creation of a breakfast room, the addition of a new bathroom and decking.

Lattice work and hanging pot plants were a feature of the verandahs and the establishment of a new garden.

Unfortunately for Mary, the existing salt damp in *The Grange*, had an impact on her health and she was forced to sell five years later, moving to Hughes Street, Woodville where she died in 1934.