

EXPLORE

The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.

CHARLES STURT MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018

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Welcome to another year of the Explore newsletter. This is the fourteenth year of our publication and we hope you still find it an enjoyable to read.

In our first edition, I reminded readers that the Trust and Museum could not operate without the services of its members and volunteers and the newsletter was a way of acknowledging their service.

This year we recorded the passing of John Raymond Dyer OAM ON 13 October 2017 aged 87 years. John was for many years a Chairman of the Trust resigning in 2002 but returning as a Board member in 2009 and retiring in 2014. . He served as Councillor and Mayor of Hindmarsh and Woodville councils 1979 – 1997 and Mayor of the City of Charles Sturt 1997 – 2000 and served a term as President of the Australian Local Government Association. He will be fondly remembered as a true gentleman, dedicating himself to many state and local organisations including the Trust. He always had a smile at Sturt's birthday celebrations, knowing that he shared the same birthdate as the great man himself.

This year we also accepted the resignation of Arthur Jeeves OAM as Acting Treasurer of the Trust. Arthur has guided the Trust finances since 2006, ensuring that our finances were managed well and that a sound investment portfolio was developed. His many years of service and dedication to managing the Trust's finances should be recognised as he has left the Trust in a strong financial position. When he accepted the role in November 2006 as Acting Treasurer, it was until a *suitable candidate* could be found. Eleven years later, we now need to seek another *suitable candidate*.



The Trust has accomplished much this year.

We added to the Sturt Collection with a donation of an oil painting of Sturt's second son, Major General Charles Sheppey Sturt, just prior to his military retirement. It now hangs proudly in the Grange dining room.

We are extremely grateful to David Davies, the great great grandson of Captain Sturt who not only made the donation but also paid for the shipment. This is his second major donation, the first being the oil painting of Charles and Evelyn Sturt C1852. David also donated a series of letters dated 1918 from Beatrix Sturt, wife of Napier Sturt to her great nephew Frank Alderson and uncle to David Davies.

We continued our association with the Children's University as a Student Learning Destination and became members of the Historic Homes of Australia. The Grange is one of only three registered historic homes in South Australia with that organisation.

The Heritage Garden Project is progressing well, with more developments to occur during 2018. If you would like to join our Garden Group, we gather mid week and Saturday, dependent on the weather at 10.00am. Please ring myself - Margaret Phillips on 0422 434 403 to enlist.



Many thanks to the volunteer services of Richard Nolan and Anne McCutcheon, members of the Australian Garden History Society of South Australia for their very valuable contribution to the redevelopment of the garden. Richard drives down from Uraidla to work in the garden, and his garden plan has inspired the Trust and its volunteers to progress to the next stages of development. Anne is a guiding light on the every day issues of garden maintenance and a regular (1-2 times a week) to make sure the fruit trees don't swelter under the summer heat. We now have Turkey Fig, Lemon, Pear, 3 Apples, Loquat and Apricot. Richard is now propagating some orange trees.

Anne worked with the students of Grange School to propagate the Sturt Pea and we are very grateful to her for the many plants and seeds that she has generously donated to the garden. Special mention to Dr Liz Burge, member of the Council of the National Trust of South Australia. Liz is always on hand for gardening and house cleaning and is a great promoter of the museum and the work done by the C.S.M.M. Trust. Craig Nicholson has also been invaluable. Young and energetic, he takes on the more physically demanding tasks of creating paths, installing the timber edges, painting, gutter cleaning and moving masonry and stone. Board members regularly put time in to maintain the garden, lawns and keep up the maintenance of the building where specialised services are not required. They also work to conduct tours, provide catering for events and deliver wedding packages to happy couples.

In December, some of our volunteers got together for a Christmas barbecue. It was a great evening and thanks to all those who attended. We hope to have another in the next few months.



Sally Pentland & Graham Pike in light banter



Rhona & Bill Parry cooking up a storm on the BBQ



The table is set but where's the food ?



Richard Nolan & Craig Nicholson, garden planning?

In December a select number of Year 5 class students from Grange Primary School came to the grounds to replant their Sturt Peas which the class had propagated earlier in the term.



Replanting seedlings



Propagating seeds

We thank their teacher Lesley Peters and the students for their involvement in the garden project and hope we can involve them further in 2018.

The Trust was a beneficiary of two grants to continue our work to improve the museum. The City of Charles Sturt via Historical Societies Funding provided \$4,160.20 to continue the heritage garden project, prepare new artefact labelling and to repair the Wittunga heritage sign, damaged by vandals. The History Trust of South Australia provided \$3,025 for a temporary exhibition "Men of the Central Expedition 1844-46" which will be launched during the History Festival in May 2018. Please take the time to drop by on the last two weekends of May 1.30 – 5.00pm.

A small article in the *Adelaide Observer Saturday 29 April 1893 p29* is a reminder of how historic items that were once cherished possessions, can perhaps be lost forever.

“Memento of Captain Sturt.—The thermometer referred to in the article "The Toilers of the Hills" published in last week's *Observer* is now in this office. It is the property of Mrs. J. W. Nicholls, of Marryatville, to whom it was presented by the gallant explorer the day after his return from the interior. Mrs. Nicholls was Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Start's constant friend and companion during her husband's absence on his memorable trip in 1844-5. Captain Sturt's home was then at the Reedbeds, near where the Grange is now situated. He carried the thermometer in his pocket throughout the journey. The tube of the instrument is mounted on an ivory face, and is enclosed in a morocco case, and it bears the name of its maker, Thomas Jones, 62, Charing Cross. We have also a portrait in pencil of Captain Start, which is the handiwork of Mr. A. L. Montefiore, and was taken on the occasion of a social gathering held at the explorer's home shortly after his return. It is said to be an excellent likeness, and both mementoes are much prized by Mrs. Nicholls, to whom the discoverer of Broken Hill, the Barrier Range, Mount Browne, and Cooper's Creek presented them.”

In 1965 Mrs J.D. Yeatman, the god daughter of Mrs Nicholls donated to the Trust, a doll's nightgown made by Fanny for Charlotte (Missie) Eyre Sturt. One can only wonder what happened to the thermometer and pencil sketch as Fanny had no children of her own.

Just to recap the story from a 2005 newsletter article on Fanny Conway, a companion to Charlotte Sturt

Fanny had been born 1809 in the village of Cappanara in the County of Leix, not far from Dublin. She arrived in South Australia with her eldest sister Hannah, aboard the *Navarino* (ex *Gravesend*) on 6 December 1837 to reside with their brother-in-law Alfred Watts. Hannah's husband Capt Henry Watts of the 59th Regiment arrived from Ireland in October 1838 and with excellent references, he was appointed Postmaster General.

Within the small community of Adelaide citizenry, the Watts family had some social standing. The province was only a year old when Fanny arrived, and as an attractive and witty teacher and daughter of a Dublin solicitor, she found herself attending a variety of Levees and Drawing Room occasions organised by His Excellency the Governor and Mrs Gawler.

Governor Gawler was certainly taken by this vivacious 28 year old lady's charm and asked for her to accompany his family on a voyage to Port Lincoln in March 1840. Presumably as teacher and companion to Julia, his young daughter. Historian Rodney Cockburn retells the story that the party camped ashore one night on Boston Island in a snug place near the shore, and at about daybreak the tent in which Miss Gawler and Miss Conway were sleeping collapsed. The young ladies took shelter amongst the bushes until the gentlemen of the party came to their aid by re-erecting their tent. Gawler was so amused that he laughingly declared that he would name the place after Miss Conway and he did – Fanny Point.



Fanny, with friend Miss Caroline Cooper, sister of the eminent magistrate Judge Cooper, sewed and embroidered the Union Jack that Sturt carried on his Central Expedition. On Sturt's departure, Fanny became a companion and confidante to Charlotte in the absence of her husband.

At a dinner at Government House, she witnessed an argument between two prominent colonists over a land deal and was summoned to Court to give her account of the incident. The Magistrate, John Warner Nicholls was so charmed with her beauty and able manner in which she gave her evidence that shortly afterwards they were married. She passed away at home in June 1902, and was described as a “really a wonderful old lady”.