



INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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Our July Meeting

Excursion to West Terrace Cemetery

A beautiful, sunny day was turned on for our July excursion to West Terrace Cemetery. After meeting at the 1910 curator's house for tea, coffee, and cookies we had a short introductory talk from Adelaide Cemeteries Authority CEO, Robert Pitt, who then led us on a 90-minute tour of the cemetery.

A great difficulty with some of the early cemetery records is that the curator, John Monk, wrote down the names of the people he buried, but did not record where he had buried them. Unless there was a surviving headstone, the location was lost – a terrible state of affairs for family historians and grave-diggers alike!

West Terrace Cemetery was one of the first ten public cemeteries in colonial Britain. Church cemeteries tended to become over-crowded and to create public health problems, thus the move towards public cemeteries away from residential areas.

Among the monuments Robert showed us was one to the overland Telegraph workers who died while on the job – the causes being various and sometimes unusual. Another was the Coglin Vault, which was made from marble shipped from Italy at enormous expense, although only one person was ever interred within.

Robert told us of the attempts to preserve the monumental masonry. Headstones facing west were more subject to flaking and deteriorated more quickly, so an army of volunteers have photographed the headstones and written down the wording so that it will not be forgotten. Cameras have been installed throughout the cemetery to detect activity at night. Headstones damaged by vandalism are being repaired, often using metal pins and a paste made from lime.

We saw the very last example of a wooden

headstone in the cemetery, that of Benjamin and Eliza Morely, who died in 1892 and 1895 respectively. This is soon to be replaced with a replica, and the original to be displayed in the curator's house, protected from the elements.

Robert also showed us the remains of the old crematorium, which was uncovered by an archaeological dig several years ago. It was the first to be built in the southern hemisphere. It had originally been a Gothic building but was demolished in 1969 after 10 years of disuse. The first cremation here was in May 1903. There were four cremations that year. At that time a cremation took four hours, as only wood was used for fuel.

The recently restored Smythe Memorial Chapel was another highlight of the tour. Bishop Smythe and two other prominent Catholic clergy are interred beneath the floor. All three played a part, whether positive or negative, in the life and ministry of Mother Mary McKillop.

George Strickland Kingston, Carl Linger and Marion's own Henry Nixon were also covered on the tour. Unfortunately, there is no monument for Henry Nixon, although his colleague, B.T. Finnis, has both headstone and historical signage to mark his resting place.

We saw Australia's first military cemetery, which had its first burial in 1920. Here lay many survivors of the two world wars, although many of them did not survive for long – those whose injuries or privations took their lives just a few years later. The imposing "Cross of Sacrifice" was installed in the military cemetery in 1924.

The last stop on the tour was at the grave of the unknown man who was found dead at Somerton Beach on December 1st, 1948 – a tantalising mystery for which a solution remains elusive.

Altogether, it was a most interesting and informative tour, led by a passionate and eloquent host.

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A Quiz Question

*How well do you know your
South Australian History?*

*Who named Mount Gambier and Mount Schank
and when?*

Answer to the Quiz Question

*These two “hills” were named by Lieutenant
James Grant in December 1800.*

The question is problematic as the hills were named before the proclamation of South Australia.

James Grant was in command of the Lady Nelson, a surveying schooner, and was on his way from the Cape of Good Hope to survey the southern coast of New Holland as it was then called. At that time it was not known that Tasmania was not part of the continent but whilst at the Cape he was instructed to sail through a recently discovered strait between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. This would shorten his voyage and enable him to survey the strait.



A map of New Holland, 1800. By John Stockdale.
(Photo by Buyenlarge/Getty Images)

After first sighting the southern coast of New Holland in the vicinity of the present South Australian and Victorian border Grant named two capes, Northumberland and Banks, and “two high mountains, a considerable way inshore”, Mounts Gambier and Schanck (later renamed Schank).

Grant continued on his voyage surveying the southern coast and sailing through Bass Strait.

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The early map shows how little was known of the continent of New Holland at that time but the development and naming of parts of Australia was a fascinating process. It is interesting to note that New Zealand was part of New South Wales.

The website “The Riverina State”, Formation of the Australian States, 1788 – 1989, provides a changing map showing the evolution of Australia and lists the changes.

<https://theriverinastate.com.au/2017/10/11/evolution-of-australian-states/>

News from the Marion Heritage Research Centre

The Marion Heritage Research Centre is open to the public on our normal days, **Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10am to 4pm.** Due to number restrictions it is advisable to make an appointment before coming, to avoid disappointment. Our sanitising & distancing protocols must be observed.

Contact us via phone **7420 6455** or email heritage@marion.sa.gov.au

Due to covid19, the MHRC has cancelled most of its live events/talks this year. However, depending on how things go, we have an archaeologist guest speaker tentatively booked for **2pm Wednesday 21st October**, on the topic ‘**Digging Up An Irish Past**’. If it cannot be in person we hope to have it online.

Some exciting news! Marion Council has approved funding for the scoping of a possible extension built on to the MHRC for a museum/interpretive space. This is largely thanks to the hard work of the Marion Historic Village Museum (MHVM), curator Courtney and others. This would be an excellent space for displaying a selection of museum items, plus vintage objects suitable for handling, changing displays/exhibitions, hosting talks, presentations and groups such as schools. Watch this space! 😊

Marion Historical Society Next meeting:

Wednesday 16th September 2020

David Jarman

Sir Hubert Wilkins – Who’s He

Time – 7.30pm

Venue to be determined