



INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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Our February Meeting Professor Philip Payton Cornish Immigration

What a great start to the year, to have such a good turnout for such an excellent talk! Professor Philip Payton gave an edifying address about Cornish Immigration to South Australia and put us in the picture of the background to this phenomenon.

England in the 1830s was a time of reform and the first steps toward true democracy were being taken.

The radical project of colonising South Australia with free settlers appealed strongly to the people of Cornwall, which had become a centre of discontent. Pervaded by the Methodist religion, which espoused the values of making the best use of one's talents, self-help and self-improvement, emigration offered opportunities to the Cornish people which were hitherto unimaginable.

Emigration was a way of using talent in a way that was not possible in England. The Methodist maxim of self-help and self-improvement came strongly into play in motivating Cornish families to come to South Australia.

The Morning Chronicle, a leading newspaper in the push toward democracy, was also instrumental in the drive for emigration. Mr I. Latimer of Truro, a prominent voice for that newspaper, was appointed as an emigration agent. The South Australia Commissioners came to Cornwall for meetings with the people. They guaranteed that the South Australian Company would set the colony up well, and that it would not have the same problems of other colonies.

Mr Latimer stressed the benefits for the working classes, with free passage offered to the right people. Married men were wanted with families

to create the good life in South Australia.

Stephens, in *The Land of Promise* (1839) said that 10% of the applications to come to South Australia were from Cornwall. It was an escape from religious discrimination, poverty and bondage.

Cornish immigrants have been closely associated with mining, but that is not how it all began. By 1838, 170 applications had been made by Cornish immigrants to South Australia, which doubled in a few years. The mineral deposits had not been found at this time, so the earliest flood of Cornish immigrants did not come here for that reason. Later, the financial downturn of the 1840s was overcome by mining. This coincided with the Cornish potato famine and the downturn in the Cornish mining industry, which drew even more Cornish immigrants to South Australia.

The Professor's 1978 PhD thesis has been digitised and is available here: <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/81955>

A quiz question

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

Where was the first school opened in the colony?

Places in South Australia

Whyalla - from humble beginnings.

Matthew Flinders was not favourably impressed by the arid lands when he "discovered" and named Hummock Hill in 1802. A small settlement based on sheep grazing developed during the second half of the century.

The development of minerals at the end of the century in the Middleback Ranges, 40 km from the coast included mining at Iron Knob and Iron Monarch. The sandstone ranges contained large deposits of ironstone that had been worked in a

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small way by Mount Minden Mining Company. The company forfeited the leases due to non-payment of rent and Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (BHP) took over claims to secure the mineral, ironstone, not to produce iron but to use in its Port Pirie smelting plant in the treatment of the ores from Broken Hill, producing silver, lead and zinc.

Initially the ore was taken to Port Augusta by bullock cart and then shipped to Port Pirie by barge. In 1900 BHP applied to build a tramway from the mines at Iron Knob to Hummock Hill and a jetty at False Bay to ship the ore to Port Pirie. Port Augusta opposed this, but the SA Government granted permission for the construction of the tramway and jetty. In January 1901 work commenced and the first ore train ran in August 1901.

The jetty was completed in 1902 and was used to ship other goods with wool being shipped to Port Adelaide. This was the start of the settlement at Hummock Hill with women and children living there. Kangaroos, fish, emus and wild turkey provided meat and goats provided milk. Other supplies were brought in by sea or bullock cart and in 1905 a public hall was built and used for church services and concerts, as a school and an institute. The settlement was developing.

Iron ore from Iron Knob, first smelted at Port Pirie in 1907, was found to be of good quality and from 1911 BHP constructed a steelworks at Newcastle in NSW to manufacture steel from the iron ore from the Middleback Ranges.

In 1914 the settlement of Hummock Hill was officially proclaimed a new town to be known as Whyalla, although the name Hummock Hill was still in use until 1920.

With the need to ship the ore to Newcastle the town grew rapidly with the expansion of the port facilities and electricity supply and the rapid development of social facilities and services including education, churches, a dairy farm, golf club, aero club and a rifle range.

The 1938 decision to build a blast furnace to produce pig iron marked the major change for Whyalla from being a port to becoming an industrial centre. And as the saying goes, the rest is history.

With war looming the decision was made to build a major shipyard. The first vessel, the corvette HMAS Whyalla was launched in 1941 followed by a further three. BHP then built vessels for its own use. The 64th and final vessel was launched in 1978.

A most unusual vessel was built in 1967, the submersible oil rig, Ocean Digger - at 300 feet wide, 365 feet long and 204 feet high and with hollow legs.

The water supply for Whyalla was a problem from the early days. Initially water from soaks was used and reservoirs built. Water was also brought in as ballast by ships that were coming for the iron ore. The construction of a pipeline from Morgan on the Murray benefited Whyalla and other northern towns.

Some towns have large "models" of their produce, - a large pineapple or a large banana. Kingston has a large lobster but Whyalla has a large ship, the original corvette HMAS Whyalla, built in 1941.

John Hoult

Sources: The South Australian Year Book 1975 and various websites

Answer to the Quiz Question

The Colony's first school opened on Kangaroo Island with open air lessons delivered for a penny a day in 1836.

Sources: South Australian Year Book 1975 and Kangaroo Island Community Education ([KICE](#))

News from the Marion Heritage Research Centre

Hello. We hope you are hunkering down to enjoy some history, while staying home.

Although our public events & access to the MHRC are cancelled, we can still help with your historical enquiries. Contact us on heritage@marion.sa.gov.au

We wish you a safe and healthy year ahead, & look forward to keeping in touch and helping you with your history, always.

Marion Historical Society Next meeting:

Meetings are cancelled until further notice during COVID-19 restrictions.

The secretary will maintain contact with members by email and the Facebook page will be updated each month to advise about the status of that month's meeting.