



## INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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### Our October Meeting Cheryl Williss

#### Women at the Bay on Proclamation Day

There was a good turnout to hear Cheryl Williss talk about some of the first women to arrive in South Australia.

In 1836 nine ships arrived on South Australian shores, and amongst the passengers were at least 200 women and girls. Most had left their homeland forever, endured an arduous journey and began a new life devoid of the comforts of home. Cheryl didn't show pictures of most of the women she talked about, as they had mostly been quite young when they arrived and the only photos available of them are as older women. Cheryl therefore decided to leave their pictures to our imagination.

Elizabeth Ann Fisher, wife of James Hurtle Fisher, was one of the eldest of the women aboard *HMS Buffalo*, the 9<sup>th</sup> ship to arrive. They brought with them five sons and three daughters: Elizabeth (Bessey), 21; Francis (Fanny), 13; and Marianne, 9. Elizabeth Snr was 44 when she came to South Australia. The six-month voyage was unpleasant for her, with carpenters working directly above her cabin, and she was also expecting another child. Arriving at Holdfast Bay in 40-degree heat, and heavily pregnant, Elizabeth elected to remain aboard ship with her younger children during the ceremony on shore. Her sons built her a reed and bark hut, after which she was transported to Adelaide on a mattress in the back of a cart. Baby Emily was born the following year. The hut caught fire a few years later, after which they moved to a brick dwelling. A portrait of the elder Fisher children was still in its metal cylinder and survived the fire. Elizabeth lived to the age of 65, dying in 1857. Her daughter, Bessey had married John Morphet (later Sir John) in 1838. Fanny

married John James, an Inman Valley pioneer, in 1851 and they returned to England in 1855. Marianne never married, and she lived to be 100 years old – clear-headed and never having forgotten the day she arrived in South Australia as a nine-year-old.

Harriet Gouger, wife of the Colonial Secretary arrived on *Africaine*. Harriet made the already difficult journey while pregnant and suffering from consumption. She suffered constant sickness, headaches and liver and stomach symptoms for the whole voyage. The day after Proclamation Day she gave birth to her son, much to her husband's joy. However, just three and a half months later, Harriet died, followed two days later by her son. Poor Harriet. All that she suffered was for nothing when even her baby did not survive to grow up in the new colony.

Travelling on board the brig, *Rapid* with Colonel Light and her brother was Maria Louisa Gandy. She was 24 years old and was Light's housekeeper, companion and mistress. There was no prospect of a marriage between Maria and Colonel Light, as he was already married and separated, but not divorced. They began their time in Adelaide in a reed and bark hut in the parklands, next door to that of the Fishers. When their hut burnt down in 1839, Light and Maria's hut went with it, destroying most of Light's documents. Their cottage *Thebarton* was unfinished at the time they moved in. Colonel Light was already ill with consumption when he arrived, and Maria nursed him through his illness until he died age 55. He left everything to Maria. Maria later married Dr George Mayo and had four children, her youngest dying just before her in 1847. Maria had herself contracted consumption while nursing Col. Light. Maria was buried in an unmarked grave at West Terrace Cemetery.

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Anne Francis Finnis was the 18-year-old wife of Boyle Travers Finnis. She had her first child on New Year's Day 1837, at Rapid Bay. A reed and grass hut had been built for her by Aboriginal women, who also nursed baby Fanny Finnis. Three weeks later they were moved to Holdfast Bay, where Anne continued in ill health. Finnis moved her to Adelaide on a coracle fitted with wheels. She had two more daughters and four sons over the next ten years. She died after a long illness in 1858, aged 39 years.

Cheryl talked of many other pioneering women, from many other ships but there is not room to record them all here. So many made the journey pregnant, ill or both. So many lost babies and/or died young themselves. All had to face leaving behind family and friends to travel to a new world, quite unlike that they had known. All endured the hardships of a new colony without infrastructure or proper housing. Yet they soldiered on until fate intervened.

*"..in almost every civilised country, women afford a better representation of the national character than any portion of the male sex."* – From the diary of Boyle Travers Finnis.

### **News from the Marion Village Museum**

The Village Museum is located in Township Road behind the Wesleyan Chapel.

Managed and operated by members of the Village community, the 1927 Sunday school building has been operating as a display centre and museum since 2010.

The centre now has a state-of-the-art touchscreen showcasing rare historical images of the village

One of newest exhibits is the police station; Peter has managed to recreate a very believable copy of a typical police station office as it would have appeared in the early days.

A great deal of research has gone into personalising this exhibit with information and photos of the police officers and residents involved in the original Marion Police Station which was established in 1933 as a result of the growing Marion population.

The station functioned up to 1963 when the Darlington Police Headquarters was opened.

Make a plan to come in soon and meet Constable First Class Bobby.

See changing exhibits and learn about the history of the village, the people and their stories.

Be sure to pay a visit in the near future to learn even more about Marion's unique history.

Just a reminder that the Museum is open every Sunday 2pm to 4pm and is now open on Tuesdays 10am to 12pm as well. Come and have a look at our new displays. Just the thing for school holidays.

For more information please call Judy Morphett on 8298 5585.

### **News from the Marion Heritage Research Centre**

Thank you very much for your support of the Heritage Research Centre this year. It has been a busy one, as always, with several interesting new items donated to the collection.

We will close to the public for Christmas at 4pm on Wednesday 18th December and will re-open in the New Year at 10 am on Monday 3rd February 2020.

Watch out for our events listed in the Marion libraries' *What's On!* brochure, and the local newspaper. Or just stroll in any Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.

*In the meantime, Danielle and the MHRC Volunteers wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and joyous new year.*

### **Marion Historical Society Next meeting:**

7.30pm at Coinda  
**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020**  
**Prof Philip Payton**  
*Early Cornish Immigration*

*Wishing you and those you love a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year*

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