



INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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Our August Meeting Clem Latz

Georgiana Molloy, Pioneer Settler and Botanist

We had an interesting talk, illustrated with many slides, from Clem Latz at our August meeting, about Georgiana Molloy, an early Western Australian settler and botanical collector.

Born Georgiana Kennedy on 23 May 1805 in Cumberland, England, she married Captain John Molloy in Scotland in 1829. The couple sailed for the Swan River Colony in Western Australia soon after their marriage. They were part of the original group of settlers who formed the new sub-colony at Augusta in south-west WA.

As an upper middle-class Englishwoman, Georgiana experienced a very hard life in the new colony. She bore seven children, mostly without medical help, losing her first child soon after birth and another, her only son, when he drowned in a well. Georgiana was courageous in the face of the privations of a settler's life and applied herself conscientiously to her lot. Clem showed a much later picture of her remaining five daughters looking very healthy and happy – having been born to the life must not have been quite so hard!

In 1836, Georgiana received a letter which was to give her life new direction. It was from Captain James Mangles, requesting that she collect botanical samples for him. Georgiana embraced this task, although she had not previously thought much of the local flora. She and her husband spent most of their spare time on the task of collecting, sorting and documenting the botanical specimens of south-west W.A. Clem showed many slides of the unique flora in that area, as well as those of Georgiana's own neatly mounted and labelled specimens. Mangles, who had also asked others to collect specimens, found those sent by

Georgiana to be the most useful for his purpose because of the care and precision applied to the task. Even one professional botanist had not done the job half so well. The seeds she provided were grown by many horticulturists and botanists in England, enabling the previously unknown species to be described.

The Molloyes moved to the Vasse district in south-west WA in 1839. Here, they received visits from English and German-born botanists. Mangles had sent Georgiana books, from which she taught herself the basics of botany. She also learned a great deal from the local Indigenous people.

Georgiana continued her work for her remaining years. Sadly, she never recovered after the birth of her seventh child. She died on 8 April 1843 at the age of 37. While she wasn't widely recognised for her work during her lifetime, she has a shrub, a street in Canberra, a school in Busselton, and Molloy Island near Augusta named after her. Her specimens are kept in several herbariums and botanical gardens in England and Germany. Three biographies have been written about her, all of which were displayed by Clem at the meeting, and her diaries and letters are kept in the Battye Library in Perth and the Cumbria Archive Centre in Carlisle, England. Clem also showed a slide of one of Georgiana's "cross-written" letters.

After her death, the horticulturist George Wailles wrote to Mangles:

"Not one in ten thousand who go out into distant lands has done what she did for the Gardens of her Native Country, and we have indeed as regards her specially to lament, that "From Life's rosy Chaplet, the Gems drop away.""

A Quiz Question

How well do you know your SA History?

When was the column on Mount Lofty summit erected?

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From the Newspaper - 100 years ago

Looking back 100 years it is sometimes surprising that issues raised then are still pertinent to society today.

The issue of a workforce in rural areas is current, especially for the agricultural sector.

The growth of the major cities and the depopulation of the country areas is also of growing concern to planners.

Southern Argus (Port Elliot, SA : 1866 - 1954),
Thursday 15 September 1921, page 4

IMMIGRATION.

Immigration has been preached throughout Australia but practically little results have been achieved. The instability of the industry markets together with the unrest prevalent everywhere, have made governments chary [sic] of carrying out big schemes. The Federal Government have a proposal for the opening up of the waste places of our land, to be worked under a policy of Settlers' Clubs, but South Australia is not favorable to this action, and prefers to act on her own. As youth is the flower of a nation so is our government desirous to make up the wastage of war when we lost fully 6,000 gallant men, by the introduction of as many youths and boys from overseas, first, however, making provision for their absorption in the rural areas. The State recognises that the high cost of living and the pressing shortage of house accommodation precludes any efforts of bringing whole families from other climes. By the way, it might be mentioned that according to the census statist, there are over 4,800 empty houses in South Australia, but diligent sarch [sic] by house hunters has revealed these more of a will o' the wisp than otherwise. The scheme proposed to be adopted for the trnsference [sic] of these young lives into Australia has not been made public, but the government is fully cognisant of the need of providing places ready for them before landing, otherwise there shall simply be an influx of people into the metropolitan area and an increase in the unemployment difficulty. Increased production is the salvation of this young land, and all political parties should work unitedly to overcome the steady trend of population to the city centre for at present Adelaide carries more than half the entire population of this fertile State.

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Answer to the Quiz Question

In 1885 the column on Mount Lofty summit was erected as a prominent landmark for mariners.

The column (obelisk) replaced a stone cairn at the summit that was originally used to mark the trig point.

In 1902 the column was officially named in honour of Matthew Flinders who, from Kangaroo Island, discovered and named Mount Lofty in 1802.

In March 1938 the column had an aerial beacon installed to guide night flying aircraft to the Parafield aerodrome.

Elevation 727 metres

Sources: South Australian Year Book and Wikipedia

Marion Heritage Research Centre

Hello, and happy Spring, from the MHRC!

We hope you are enjoying the sunshine and have been able to spot almond blossom in Marion's remnant almond orchards. What a sight the acres and acres of almond blossom in bloom must have been in the 1930s – 50s, when people came from everywhere to see it! What are your memories?

We have one more public talk to present this year. It is the story of the friendship between an American girl and Marion's own Colin Phelps, both serving overseas during World War 2.

Lusette's Letters

10.30 am, Wednesday 6th October

Book soon, as places are limited.

Call 7420 6455 or heritage@marion.sa.gov.au

Watch out for all our events listed in the Marion Libraries' What's On! brochure, and on the City of Marion/Libraries social media pages.

Marion Historical Society

Next meeting:

October 20th

at 7.30pm at Club Marion
Hills View Room 2/West

Greg Drew

**Brickworks and Pugholes of the
Western Suburbs**

All visitors are Welcome