

Grange: An Introduction to Captain Sturt's home



Rear of Grange prior to restoration 1957

WELCOME to Grange, the home of Captain Charles Sturt from 1840 – 1853.

Charles Sturt is remembered primarily as an explorer, his discovery of the River Murray was extremely important as it solved the riddle of the rivers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. What today we call the River Murray Basin. His second major expedition in to Central Australia, which came within 280kms of the centre, was the catalyst to open up the interiors of Australia.

In South Australia, the colonists regarded him as a Founding Father. The publication of his River Murray Expedition journal with the addition of Collett Barker's account of the Mt Lofty plains, inspired the British Parliament to establish the Province of South Australia in 1836. A province free of convicts and based on economic principles of land sales and assisted migration.

During the crisis of 1838 when land prices were falling, the survey department was in chaos with the resignation of Light and many of his staff, the site of the capital not settled and meat in short supply, in rode Sturt into Adelaide with 300 head of cattle. He was welcomed as the Founder and immediately directed by the Acting Governor Stephen to Encounter Bay to assess it as a site for the capital, in a bid to stem further economic crisis. He returned, determining that Light's choice on the Torrens River to be excellent. This settled the question of the capital. Land prices went up and money flowed into the Province.

From 1839 – 1851 he worked as a Public Servant – initially as Surveyor General, Land Commissioner, Register of Lands, Treasurer and Secretary

Sturt had served as a member of Council from its creation in June 1843 till his resignation on 31st December 1851. In that time Sturt showed himself to be a man of intelligence and culture, with an eagerness to advance human knowledge. He played a leading role in Holy Trinity Church affairs, the South Australia Club, the Adelaide Hunt Club, Agricultural & Horticultural Society, the Adelaide Literary and Scientific Association, the Mechanics Institute and the Hope Lodge of Oddfellows. He was Chair at the foundation meeting of the Steam Navigation Company seeking to advance steam navigation on the River Murray and was firmly behind the establishment of a steam railway to Port Adelaide.

As Colonial Secretary he was a member of the Legislative Council, a new Council of sixteen elected members and eight members nominated by the Crown. Sturt in fact, supervised the introduction of an electoral system in South Australia. However on 5th December 1851 Sturt decided to retire due to ill health. With his eyesight failing, his sons in need of a good English education and the servants already heading for the gold fields of Victoria, it was time to go home.

Sturt left Australia on 19 March 1853. He spent his last years peacefully at Cheltenham, being widely respected and continually consulted about Australian affairs, particularly the preparations for the North Australian expedition of 1854. He applied unsuccessfully for the governorship of Victoria in 1855 and of Queensland in 1858.

In recognition of his services to Queen and Country it was decreed that he be awarded the Order of St. Michael and St. George (K.C.M.G.) but fate intervened. On June 16, 1869 before the award was gazetted, Captain Charles Sturt died suddenly from heart failure.

THE GRANGE



The Grange property had been granted to Sturt in 1838, by way of the two land grants of 80 acres each. He decided on the area because it reminded him of Dorset England where he had spent many happy years. It was built in what was named the Reedbeds. A place where the Torrens River merged into the upper reaches of the Port River. During heavy rains the whole area flooded and it was not until 1935 that the outlet to the gulf was constructed.

The builder was most likely Thomas Scown, a Cornish builder who came highly recommended by Governor Gawler and whose bricks from the newly installed Pug Mill at Mr Morphet's Brick Fields on the Torrens River, were considered superior quality.

Construction of both wings of the Grange was completed in 1841, the design based on the home of Sturt's good friend, George McLeay - Brownlow Hill in Camden N.S.W. The house was L-shaped, had rendered brick walls with a tiled roof. Living room, dining room and main bedroom had French door /windows with square glass panes. Sturt obtained many of his plants for his garden from Macleay including Couch grass for his lawns.

The northern part of the building was the Nursery Wing which housed the children's bedroom, bathroom, toilet, kitchen, laundry and servants quarters. The southern section was the formal part of the home – Sturt's Study, the main bedroom, Drawing Room and Dining Room. The lean-to part housed the spare bedroom for guests, two servants room, a pantry and store room. To the northwest were the workmen's cottages, to the west the stables, harness room and wood yard and in the middle of the yard an underground dairy. Sturt's 4000 fruit trees grew to the south east while beyond to the south and west were high sandhills, kept at bay from the house by a billabong.

The home itself offered the Sturt family 'a little paradise' of leafy shade, choice fruits and flowers' where a variety of friendly beast and birds sought solace. The Port River wound its way to the west of Grange where the children floated rafts and fished, where the sand hills rose steeply and tea trees flourished, an idyllic frontier between house and beach.

Within a six years the property measured 385 acres, much of it prime grazing land, orchards and vines while the farm yard boasted horses, cows, bee hives, partridges, guinea fowl, geese and ducks. Sturt boasted that it was the most English looking residence in the province and land agents toted it as a beautiful marine residence.

When Sturt returned to England in 1853 the property was leased to various tenants until Lady Sturt finalised the sale of Grange in July 1878, nine years after her husband's death. The land was bought by three prominent gentlemen and subdivided for sale, with most of the sandhills levelled for housing and roads. Grange was reduced to 9 acres and leased to the Newland family until purchased by Mrs Matilda Howard in 1901 who carried out substantial renovations. She sold the property in 1905 to the Hardy family of Yorke Peninsula who used the property to fatten stock for market. They remained in the home until 1920. The home became an investment property for subsequent owners who rented the house to a variety of occupants who primarily used the property for a poultry farm. In 1947 the Grange was purchased by the Russenoff family, Bulgarian market gardeners. The house was falling into disrepair particularly the cottage wing which had almost collapsed. Concerned that the Russenoff's would sell the property for development, the Henley and Grange Corporation determined it would buy the Grange. Russenoff retained much of the property to the south along Beach Street while Council procured that facing Jetty Street.



Historical background to the restoration of the Grange

The Trust began as a small committee in 1955 to generate support for the rescue and restoration of the *Grange*. Its formation co-incided with demands by the National Trust for the protection of heritage buildings in South Australia and the *Grange* became one of the earliest victories.

The Henley & Grange Corporation finalised the purchase of the *Grange* on 29 April 1957, one day after the first celebration of Sturt's birthday at the Grange. Three years later the Council gifted the *Grange* to the Committee under the proviso they form a Trust and an Appeals Committee to raise funds to establish the *Grange* as a Memorial Museum. Within a few weeks of Council agreeing to the gift, the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust was formed with steps taken to incorporate a few months later in July 1960.

An Appeals Committee was organised. Noted Adelaide architect F. Kenneth Milne was elected Chairman. Other members included John Bonython Jr, chairman of Santos Ltd., David Sturt-Bray (great grand nephew of Charles Sturt), lawyer Robin Millhouse MP, Miss Audrey Cummins Morphett, well known social worker and recent recipient of an OBE, Mrs Lance Lewis, socialite of Benacres,.

The Lord Mayor of Adelaide Lance M.S Hargrave was asked to launch the Appeal. Milne met personally over lunch with Sir Lloyd Dumas (The Advertiser) Sir Roland Jacobs (Associated Brewery), Sir Arthur Rymill (Bank of Adelaide) and was able to secure subscriptions of £500, £500 and £150 respectively. Meanwhile a deputation met with the Premier Tom Playford and found the Premier willing to subscribe £1,000 pa over three years on behalf of the State Government. Eventually £10,000 was raised by way of subscription, £6,000 from public donations. and £3,000 donated by the Government. The South Australia Housing Trust through the generosity of the General Manager Mr Alexander Ramsay and its Architect S.W. Thurston pledged to rebuild the Nursery Wing. This reconstruction was imperative to provide accommodation for a caretaker to oversee the site during renovations of the main house.

As the project neared completion arrangements were made between John Bonython and the Sturt Family in England for a shipment of Sturt's furniture, library and artworks to be despatched aboard the P & O Lines *Orcades* on the 13th June 1967. Miss Caroline Sturt, great granddaughter of Charles Sturt was flown to Australia under the patronage of Sir Lloyd Dumas of The Advertiser to officially handover the Collection to the Trust President renowned Adelaide surgeon Sir Henry Simpson Newland. Its arrival and installation marked the official opening of the Grange as a museum dedicated to memorialising the achievements of Sturt.

The museum opening offered an opportunity for the Trust to take possession and display the two Union Jacks carried by Sturt on the Murray and Central expeditions as well as a portion of the whale boat used during the River Murray Expedition. These relics had been donated by Capt. Geoffrey Sturt to the State Government in 1945 and entrusted to the Royal Geographical Society pending the development of a museum dedicated to Charles Sturt. Other historical items were soon added to the collection including the gold medal presented to Sturt by the Royal Geographical Society, two Sturt Peas collected by Sturt on his Central Expedition, and the silver cup presented to Sturt by the staff of the Survey Department. The Collection quickly became one of the most significant in the history of Australian exploration.

The *Grange* itself is registered on the State Heritage Register and was gazetted as an Historic Reserve in 1968 under the European and aboriginal Relics Preservation Act. The Grange is also included on the Register of the National Estate and the National Trust of South Australia.

In 2004 the caretaker's cottage, formerly known as the Nursery Wing was converted into a Gallery Wing. Significant renovations were undertaken and exhibitions installed. The main house was permanently lighted with sound scaping installed.

TOUR OF GRANGE HOME

Entry Foyer

On entry you will notice the stone flooring, said to be the ballast from a ship, possibly a tug. The J3 number referring to its place in the hull. The lead light door was installed by Mrs Howard who restored Sturt's home in 1903.

Guest Bedroom:

Bedsread is a replica of the original 1790 Canadian Log quilt used by the Sturt family while living at the Grange. The Trust has the original in archives.

Floor boards from a shipwreck at Encounter Bay.

Fanny Conway, an Irish school teacher stayed in this room, while she acted as companion to Mrs Sturt when Charles was on expedition to central Australia 1844 -46. Another important overnighiter was Governor Fox Young who had sailed a whale boat from Port Adelaide to rescue the family during a severe flood. The Sturt's deemed themselves not to be in danger and invited the Governor to stay for dinner and sleep the night.

Study:

The room was an office for Sturt. He could tether his horse outside and enter the room, even when muddy and wet and refresh and change for his evening meal.

The room has a large collection of Sturt family memorabilia which forms the basis of the Grange's collection. This is Sturt's desk, washstand and ink stand, we have the hair locks of the family, cut and identified by Charlotte. The three sea scapes were painted by his brother Richard and on the other wall are his three sons. Sturt placed all his sons in the army, not being able to afford them a place at university. Napier joined the Royal Engineers and Charles and Evelyn the Indian Army. The cost of their kit forced the Sturt's to move to France for two years to recoup their finances before returning to Cheltenham Gloucestershire.



The travelling writing desk belonged to the wife of George Strickland Kingston, possibly Emma, his third wife and daughter of Captain Lipson the Controller of Customs. Throughout the house are items that belonged to contemporaries of Sturt and were donated by family members.

Hallway

Dinner at Waterloo: Steel engraving. Sturt was serving in Canada when Napoleon escaped and arrived in Paris two weeks after the Battle of Waterloo. The fact he never received a Waterloo Medal may have been the reason he had to wait ten years for his captaincy.

Paintings of the Hunt: The Adelaide Hunt Club was formed in about 1842 and their hounds were kept at Lockleys. The Grange was a frequent destination for the Club. On one occasion the pack spotted Sturt's dog and began to chase it. While some of the pack was turned away, at least 4 dogs continued the chase right into the dining room in pursuit of Sturt's dog.

Main Bedroom

A very large room with high ceilings which helped keep the room cool in summer. Sturt designed the house to face the hills and capture the morning light. All the main windows are on the eastern side, while only a few smaller windows exist on the western side to minimise the heat in the house.



The main feature of this room is Sturt's travelling wash stand which he would have used aboard vessels or when on expedition. It closes up to form a box which makes it easy for transportation.

The commode, table and mirror, all belonged to Lady Sturt. The embroidered hand towel was made by Charlotte "Missie" Sturt for a lady at Victor Harbour who was instrumental in having Sturt's statue erected in Victoria Square.

Dining Room

Houses a significant collection of Sturt furniture – dining room table and six chairs, the Rockingham Dessert Set and cupboards, a large collection of books, which are in our archives, the grandfather or long drop clock and the cellaret or wine cooler. We have the paintings of his three sons, painted before they departed for England, and one of Charlotte Eyre Sturt when she was ten years old. Another is a painting of Sturt's son, Charles Sheppey Sturt on his retirement as a Major General. The two seascapes were painted by Sturt's brother Richard.



Originally the table sat 12 people but the Sturt family only sent up 6 chairs and a table with only one centre leaf. If you could imagine, if you were invited to dinner in the 1840s you would have had your carriage drop you at the Terrace and you would enter through these double doors to dine. During a soire (conversation), the dining room and drawing room would have been cleared of most items, Charlotte and her lady friends would assemble of the Terrace with their musical instruments and entertain the guests.

All the ceilings in the house are original except for the drawing room which had partially collapsed prior to restoration. The centre ceiling rose in the dining room is original to the house as is the chandelier.

The chandelier had been purchased after the Sturt's left and was found by the Furnishing Committee at Balaklava. At that time there was another carved section underneath with more crystals. The family had it hanging above their pool table and refused to give it back. However one day it fell from the ceiling and bottom section was broken. It was at this time they decided to return the chandelier to the Grange.

The stained glass window you see, is a result of Mrs Margaret Howard, who bought the Grange in 1903. She had a flair for the art nouveau and introduced a number of elements to the house. A large circular lead light was installed in her bedroom on the northern wall, a section of lead lighting installed at the end of the verandah, decking from the study, a breakfast room in the cottage wing and lattice work and hanging pots around the verandahs.



Unfortunately for Mrs Howard the dampness of the house impacted on her health as she sold the house to the Hardy family in 1908.

The door to the south was only discovered during the restoration period. It had been bricked up when Captain Dashwood rented the house just after Sturt left. He also installed a fireplace which had to be removed during restoration. When they had removed the render from the outside of the house, they discovered a brick lentil and believed that Sturt had not put in a fire place as he intended to create another set of double doors when planning an extension to the house.

Drawing Room

This room was primarily for ladies to withdraw to after dinner, leaving the men in the dining room to drink port and talk of politics and business. The harp and piano indicate a pleasant evening of entertainment. The card table perhaps a game of whisk, the stereoscope a chance to share 3D images of a recent holiday, and a beautiful sewing table for some quite needlework.



The rosewood chairs and pole screens were owned by Sturt in his Cheltenham home. The embroidery sewn by Lady Grey, his niece. The footstool embroidered by Governor Gawler's wife. The piano stool was donated by the Sturt's as was the sideboard. The black japanned cabinet belonged to Charlotte prior to her marriage and is initialled with CG for Charlotte Green.

Pantry

The pantry area was used for food preparation before service in the dining room. The most important item is the butter safe which belonged to Governor Hindmarsh and brought to South Australia by the HMS Buffalo. He gave it to Sybil Hardy prior to his return to England. The Hardy's passed it down through the family until they donated it to the museum.



Storeroom

The storeroom is exactly that. During Sturt's time it probably had cupboards and shelving for bed linen, candles, cleaning products, cutlery and crockery or items like this bath. It was a bath you placed in front of a fire and sat on a chair. A servant would fill the bath with water, place a surround around the tub and chair. You would have a quick body wash, be given a robe and the servant would clear away the bath, chair and surround.



The box is a travelling box which you would have placed on the back of a wagon. This box belonged to John Ainsworth Horrocks who was a young farmer and explorer who settled Hope Farm near Penwortham up near Clare. He decided to make an expedition up north through Port Augusta. He took with him S.T. Gill a young painter and a very cranky camel called Harry. On

dismounting his horse and loading his musket to shoot a bird, the camel knocked him and the musket discharged in his face, blowing much of his face away. Gill stayed with him while others rode off to get a doctor. While waiting Gill kept a painted record of the Horrocks last dying days, Horrocks was returned to Hope Farm but died of Septicaemia a few days later. The story goes that the camel was then shot – not for the purposes of vengeance but to preserve the good name of camels in general.

Servants Room



There were two servants room on the back verandah. Possibly for those who had to rise early. Another servants room was adjoining the kitchen in the nursery wing. It is very small, but given servants rose at dawn and perhaps did not go to bed until late into the evening, only a bed to sleep was all that was necessary. Girls only required two dresses – one for work and one for church. During working hours they covered their dress with an apron which may have to be changed a number of times during the day, dependent on their chores. Most only worked for food and board and were only given a half day on Sundays to attend church.

Heritage Garden

In 2017 funding was provided by the City of Charles Sturt to develop a heritage garden based on an 1896 garden plan drawn by Charles Sturt's son, Charles Sheppey. The biography of Captain Sturt details some of the plants he established in his garden and the Trust was fortunate to have received 10 packs of original seeds and list of plantings from the Sturt Family. The garden continues to be developed, with plans to recreate the carriage way.

