

EXPLORE

The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.

CHARLES STURT MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019

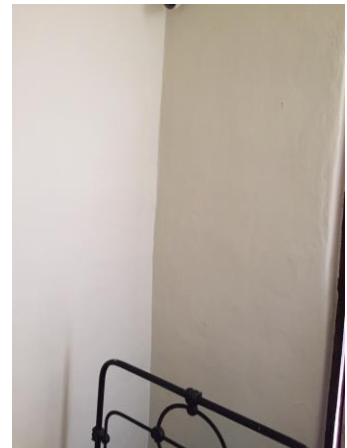
ISSUE NO. 31

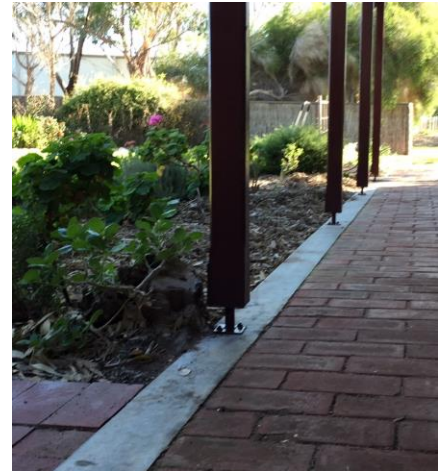
The last six months have been extremely busy for the Trust. We have convened three Strategic Planning Sessions, completed our Self Review for the History Trust of South Australia's new program Museums and Collections and ventured on a program of building maintenance. The lichen has been removed from most of the slate tiled roof, broken tiles have been replaced, the servant's quarters were restored, repairs were made to the western window, three verandahs, including the replacement of the pole supports plus various other small anomalies in the building fabric. The drapery has been dry cleaned after many years of neglect. Three new tool sheds have been erected and paved and we have purchased a white marquee and 45 new white chairs, funded by **GrantsSA**. The **City of Charles Sturt** has again supported our Heritage Garden Project with a grant of \$4,400. Our next project is to replace the wall paper in the dining room which has been deteriorating over the last 20 years and to repaint all the front shutters and fascia. We are hopeful of receiving a **Heritage SA** grant later in the year to implement the project.



Servant's Room – chased, rendered, timber floor laid and walls painted.

Lichen removed from cottage roof.





Volunteers erecting our new marquee purchased through the support of the State Government Grants SA program.

We have welcomed new members and volunteers who will help the Trust to progress its agenda of raising the museum's profile. The Messenger Press, Advertiser and Sunday Mail have given us great support in advertising our open days and events.

In April, Senator, the Hon Simon Birmingham held a Garden Party and the following day the Charles Sturt Probus Club held a picnic in the garden. Both events attracted many favourable comments about the garden setting and well maintained home of Captain Sturt. We also welcomed two coach companies in June for tours of the museum, with the expectations that other visits will be arranged. Another four tours were held in June including sixty five students from the Australian Islamic College.

In April we joined the History Festival's Open Door – Built Heritage and held an Open Day on Saturday 27th, serving afternoon teas in the garden and providing participation in a game of croquet. Many thanks to Milton and Jan Moat of the West Lakes Croquet Club. The Messenger Press published an article and ran advertising in What's On which attracted a large contingent of visitors.

On Sunday 28th Captain Charles Sturt's 224th Birthday celebrations attracted over hundred visitors. It was a beautiful day and the garden development was praised by all guests with many enquiring about holding their own events in the garden. Advertising for the event also attracted a number of public admissions. We thank most heartedly, Dr Liz Burge for her donation of \$1,200.00 to enable the hire a marquee for both days and the hire of the Amicus Stringed Trio for the birthday celebrations. A donation that made the weekend events superb. Not only did she make a donation but she put in a wonderful effort on both days from early morning to late afternoon assisting with making the events a great attraction. We would also like to thank Merle Weston for her donation of \$200.00 and Glenda Couch-Keen of \$100.00 to the event.

The attendance of the Victoriana Society of South Australia and the Fort Glanville Historical Association gunners were a highlight of the event. This year they were joined by four members of the Adelaide Rifles 1862 who marched in and provided a three gun salute. The firing of Sturt's cannon brought much delight and some guests could be seen covering their ears in anticipation of the large bang.



Amicus Strings



Adelaide Rifles 1862
Fort Glanville Historical Association



The toast to Captain Sturt



Guests: Joyce Walkley, Ray Cowley
Joan Pfeiffer, Mary Starck enjoying the festivities



Our President, Merle Weston welcomed guests while our Patron, Hon. Dean Brown AO, provided the Kurna welcome and introduced our guest speaker, Michael Burdett, Surveyor General of South Australia. A copy of his speech follows.

Sturt Address on the occasion of Captain Sturt's 224th anniversary birthday celebrations on 28th April 2019

Michael Burdett, Surveyor General of South Australia

Introduction



Through my early years as a young surveyor I travelled through much of the far north of South Australia and into the Northern Territory. This travel was at times arduous even in a vehicle and it gave me a great respect for those explorers who travelled into the harsh centre. I travelled on formed dirt roads, I knew where I was going and what was there, and I knew what provisions were needed to get me there and back. The explorers in the 1800s of course had no knowledge of what was in front of them or where they would next find water.

I grew up at Mannum on the Murray River so feel a great association with the river. Captain Charles Sturt was a man highly spoken of in the town and through the local schooling. So I am particularly pleased to speak of the man who opened up the river to the settlers so many years ago.

People here today are likely experts in the history of Captain Charles Sturt so I won't try to repeat much of the facts, but rather try to give a few insights that build this history. In that I will read some of the words of Sturt from his journals published in 1833, shortly after his first two major expeditions. And please, I am not a historian, so if you are and I get a fact misplaced, forgive me. May I start with a quote that I think speaks well of the drive behind the man-

"For though most men are contented only to see a river as it runs by them, and talk of the changes in it as they happen; when it is troubled, or when clear; when it drowns the country in a flood, or forsakes it in a drought: yet he that would know the nature of the water, and the causes of those accidents must find out its source, and observe with what strength it rises, what length it runs and how many small streams fall in, and feed it to such a height, as make it either delightful or terrible to the eye, and useful or dangerous to the country about it."

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE'S NETHERLANDS.

This heads the journal of Captain Sturt on his two expeditions into the interior of Southern Australia in 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1831. It is also titled "with observations of the soil, climate and general resources. An exploration of the new country and what wealth and community it might bring to the European settlers.

When I look at the map of Sturt's journeys they are annotated with the nature of the terrain and the vegetation, as well as some notes of their journey. It is for this reason I love looking at old maps of our state, they tell not only of the geography, but the unfolding story of the settlement of South Australia.

River Explorations

His great Australian expeditions commenced in 1828 when the Governor of NSW, Sir Ralph Darling sent him off to explore the Macquarie River in western NSW. He travelled its full length discovering what he named the Darling River. I found it interesting in Sturt's travels. He named only the significant land features where some explorers were prolific with their naming. If you look at Sturt's maps, although they are descriptive in the nature of the terrain and vegetation, they are less covered with new names for the hills, valleys and waterways.

Then on his second endeavour and perhaps most valuable expedition commencing on the 7th January 1830 he headed off to explore the Murrumbidgee (Morumbidee was Sturt's spelling). So you head off with a few drays laden with supplies, a bunch of stock for transport and food. But where reading Sturt was different from the other journals I have read, he carried a boat, with a sail and oars. And when he reached a point on the river with sufficient water he stopped to build their boat. If I can read in Sturt's own words.

BOAT BUILDING.

The attention both of M'Leay, and myself, was turned to the hasty building of the whale-boat. A shed was erected, and every necessary preparation made, and although Clayton had the keel of the small boat already laid down, and some planks prepared, she was abandoned for the present, and, after four days more of arduous labour, the whale-boat was painted and in the water. From her dimensions, it appeared to me impossible that she would hold all our provisions and stores, for her after-part had been fitted up as an armoury, which took away considerably from her capacity of stowage. The small boat would still, therefore, be necessary, and she was accordingly re-laid, for half the dimensions of the large boat, and in three days was alongside her consort in the river. Thus, in seven days we had put together a boat, twenty-seven feet in length, had felled a tree from the forest, with which we had built a second of half the size, had painted both, and had them at a temporary wharf ready for loading. Such would not have been the case had not our hearts been in the work, as the weather was close and sultry, and we found it a task of extreme labour. In the intervals



And in these boats, Captain Charles Sturt and his crew travelled down the Murrumbidgee.

Throughout his journals Sturt talks of his interaction with the Aboriginal people- Natives as he referred to them- those who helped him, those who were curious, those who were frightened and those who threatened. His words showed kindness and respect, somewhat admirable for the day.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE NATIVES.

In reference to the natives, I hope sufficient has been said of the manner of communicating with them to prevent the necessity of a repetition here. The great point is not to alarm their natural timidity: to exercise patience in your intercourse with them; to treat them kindly; and to watch them with suspicion, especially at night. Never permit the men to steal away from the camp, but keep them as compact as possible; and at every station so arrange your drays and provisions that they may serve as a defence in case of your being attacked.

The natives appeared to me to be indifferent to our presents, in most cases. Tomahawks, knives, pieces of iron, and different coloured ribbons for the forehead, were most esteemed by them. They will barter and exchange their fish for articles, and readily acquire confidence.

But there were times Sturt felt threatened. Whilst in a narrow part of the Murrumbidgee a group of aboriginal men with spears ran along the right bank of the river looking ready to attack. Sturt moved to the left part of the channel. But then a group appeared on the left bank. So flanked left and right, and with his military background, Sturt recognised that they had formed a strong attacking position. Fortunately those on the left bank then swam the river to join those on the right. Sturt was perplexed because they had lost their strategic advantage.

Being late in the day and with his party fatigued, he stopped, made camp, calmly walked down to the group of men and brought the circumstance to a peaceful conclusion.

The Murrumbidgee was in parts treacherous. Sturt talks of defending the boat by placing men at each corner to watch for snags in the water. They used poles to steer the boat clear of them. At times they leapt overboard to push the boat clear of logs.

Sturt again came to the Darling River, many miles south of where he had found the junction with the Macquarie River. He could not say with certainty that it was the Darling but correctly suspected so. He and his crew sailed up the Darling for a short distance where they raised the flag and offered three cheers before hastily returning to the Murray.

So it was with some delight in the mid-afternoon, that one of the crew- Hopkinson called out that we were approaching a junction, and in less than a minute afterwards, they hurried into a broad and noble river:- This was the discovery of the Murray River.

Junction of a Large River- Character of the River

"It is impossible for me to describe the effect of so instantaneous a change of circumstances upon us. The boats were allowed to drift along at pleasure and such was the force with which we had been shot out of the Murrumbidgee, that we were carried nearly to the bank opposite its embouchure, whilst we continued to gaze in silent astonishment on the capacious channel we had entered.

To myself personally, the discovery of this river was a circumstance of a particularly gratifying nature, since it not only confirmed the justness of my opinion as to the ultimate fate of the Murrumbidgee and bore me out in the apparently rash and hasty step I had taken at the depot, but assured me of ultimate success in the duty I had to perform."

Sturt had been looking for the inland sea but instead found that all of the rivers ran into the mighty Murray

By February of 1830 he had reached lake Alexandrina and then onto the mouth, all in a couple of months. They then returned, but ran into hardship rowing against the current and enduring the severe summer heat. The trip sent Sturt blind for several months and he never fully recovered his health. The heat and lack of supplies had taken its toll.

It was fitting that in 1839 Sturt's wife Charlotte was one of three white women- the first female Europeans to travel on the Murray.

Inland Explorations

His great Australian exploration was not complete, he still wanted to find the illusive inland sea. The Eyre Creek, the Warbarton River and the Cooper Creek had to flow somewhere. So in 1844, he set out with 15 men, 200 sheep, 6 drays and of course a boat to advance from NSW, west to the centre.

John McDougall Stuart travelled with him as his draftsman. A good apprentice no doubt. They crossed the Sturt Stoney Desert and further into the Simpson Desert until they could go no further. In all they travelled 4800km. When you look at the map of their exploration they would push north and where they found water would set up a depot. From there, they travelled out for a few days at a time searching the landscape to the east and west.

At the northern most point Sturt's map states:

"Halted at sunset in a country such as I firmly believe has no parallel on Earth's surface and one which was terrible in its aspect. Not a blade of grass. We stopped near a few acacia bushes: almost without food since we left the creek on the 6th, now on the evening of the 8th we camped a second night without water.

Today we rightfully marvel at these expeditions but can never really comprehend the physical and mental toll such excursions have on a man. Sturt must have been built of tough material for he lived a full life to the age of 74

And so what is the legacy of this man

This property is part of his legacy- the records in my office show:-

The original land grant was to John Gardiner in July 1938 who sold the two 80 acre sections to Captain Charles Sturt for £170.00.00

Sturt bought another 182 acres from George Angas in July 1847 for £220.00.00 pounds, and then in 1850 Sturt bought further 40 acres for £100.00.00

And it is evident from records that Sturt's house was built in 1840 as the building etc were mortgaged in 1841.

It seems that Sturt was never a man of great wealth and the government of the day offered him a lifetime pension (£600 pa) in recognition of his contribution to the settlement of South Australia.

But of the man-

Firstly - we are here today 150 years after his death to remember him. We do so because of his great contribution to the opening up of South Australia. We perhaps more than ever before consider the River Murray the life blood of our State, and Sturt was the great explorer that exposed it to European settlement.

He was recognised here more than in his British homeland. Governor Darling had recommended to the Colonial Office that he be promoted following his great explorations in 1828 - 1830 but they declined. Sturt in later life applied for the position of Governor of both Queensland and Victoria but was not accepted. An application for a knighthood was approved but unfortunately he passed away before it was gazetted.

But here in South Australia we have many geographic and community features named after him.

City of Charles Sturt
The Sturt River
Sturt Street
Sturt's Range
The Sturt Highway
The suburb of Sturt
The Sturt Stoney Desert
Sturt's desert pea
Charles Sturt University in NSW

He was a Captain in 39th Dorset Regiment a Foot
The Commander of Norfolk Island
The Colonial Secretary of South Australia
The third Surveyor-General of South Australia
and was awarded the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Gold Medal

This is surely a lifetime's worth of achievements- one truly worthy of continued celebration 224 years on.

This year, we not only remembered his birthday, but also contemplated his passing on 16 June 1869. His biographer and daughter-in-law Beatrix Sturt wrote of his passing

"There was no sign of pain or struggle; he smiled placid as a child asleep. On the brow unadorned by man death had gently laid the crown of a great life's fulfilment"

To honour the 150th anniversary of his death, Trust members attended a service at Holy Trinity Church on North Terrace Adelaide, where Sturt was once a Trustee.



Judith Seedsman, David Duffner, Paul Hilbig, Rosslyn Brown, Margaret Phillips, Hon. Dean Brown AO, Merle Weston