

# EXPLORE

The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.

## CHARLES STURT MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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Sturt's Birthday Anniversary was another successful celebration with everyone enjoying the beautiful weather. We were pleased to greet Dr Pamela Wall AO, a distinguished South Australian philanthropist, as a guest. She was enthusiastic to discover the Trust's endeavours and recognised the significant contribution the Trust has made to memorialising Charles Sturt.

The attendance of the Victoriana Society of South Australia, The Adelaide Regiment 1862 and the Fort Glanville Historical Association are always appreciated. This year we were especially pleased to welcome the musicians of the Pulteney Grammar orchestra who entertained guests throughout the garden party.

The Sturt Address this year was a family affair. Prof Scott Smith offered a reading of Sturt's last letter to his wife Charlotte, followed by a poetic dedication to Sturt, by Scott's son Kaiden which was penned by his wife Lisa, in Chinese and translated. Scott's mother and sister travelled from interstate to be part of the festivities.





The month of May is a celebration of South Australia's history. The museum's contribution to this year's History Month was a Candle Light Soiree. An invitation to an evening of music, conversation and refreshment to celebrate the retirement of Captain Charles Sturt, as Colonial Secretary in December 1851.

The Soiree was a highly enjoyable evening. Guests were welcomed by Captain Charles Sturt (Nic Grguric) and Charlotte Sturt (Danielle Grguric) to the tantalizing melodies of a Pulteney Grammar trio. The musical entertainment gave way to a dining experience with bright and lively conversation. Trust Chairman, Tony Botten provided the homily dedicated to Captain Sturt's achievements..



The Grange's new house lighting added to the impact of the Candle Light Soiree and presents an opportunity to open the museum for evening tours.

The Trust continues its program of restoration of the Sturt collection and The Grange. The Sturt family piano stool was restored while the fretted seat of the drawing room chair was stabilised and the cushion back and sides were reupholstered.



The Grange pantry and adjoining hallway were scraped of flaking paint, cornices repaired and walls, ceiling, doors and skirting painted.



We acknowledge the financial support of the **History Trust of South Australia** for funding the restoration of the drawing room chair \$1,710.00, the **City of Charles Sturt** for funding the new lighting of The Grange study, main bedroom, drawing room, dining room and hallway \$3,714.00 and our President, **Merle Weston** for the restoration of the piano stool and the painting of the pantry and hall way \$3,659.00. We thank Tony Botten for arranging the performances of the Pulteney Grammar students and the attendance of Dr Pamela Wall AO.

We have had a new boundary fence erected between the Grange Primary School and our Precinct. The School has suffered a number of illegal entries into the school grounds and substantial damage caused. The Education Department believe a new fence around the whole school will stop the vandalism.



We would like to congratulate Bill and Rhona Parry for being acknowledged by Mark Butler MP Hindmarsh, with a Volunteers Recognition Award for their services to the Trust. Bill is a Trustee and our Disaster Plan Co-ordinator. He and Rhona have attended several workshops on Disaster Planning and Collection Conservation. If you want silverware polished, they are the couple to call. They both contribute to the maintenance of the museum and its Collection, and are always on hand for event catering, particularly Rhona who is a whiz at assisting with catering for our mid week tour groups. As a wood turner, Bill has been handy when it comes to sanding and painting exteriors, revamping our folding map table and making a flower press for use by students. Congratulations to you both.

## **STURT ADDRESS ON THE 229<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CAPTAIN CHARLES STURT'S BIRTHDAY**

Delivered by Professor Scott Smith  
Trustee, The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc.  
Professor of Structural Engineering, The University of Adelaide

### ***CHARLES STURT...A LIFE IN VERSE***

Good afternoon, and welcome to the 229th birthday celebration of Captain Charles Sturt. It is such an honour to be delivering this year's address, on this beautiful autumn's day. For this year's address, I would like to utilise poetic form through two articles to convey the achievements, obstacles, and reflections of Charles Sturt. As per Plato; "Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history".

The first article is a lengthy letter written in poetic form by Charles Sturt to his wife Charlotte, in his home in Cheltenham, England, prior to his passing in 1869. This is last letter that Charles Sturt wrote to his wife. You will recognise historical references to activities and geography of the time in the letter. Charles Sturt also writes in a philosophical and reflective manner about key activities in his career, especially related to achievement, support and recognition.

A copy of the letter was passed to our museum in 1960 by the Sturt family, and it resides in the museum's archives. Interestingly, the letter was published in April 1889 in The South Australian Register. This was South Australia's first newspaper from 1837, and later became The Advertiser in 1931. It is this newspaper version that I will recite forthwith.



### **Sturt's Last Letter to his Wife Charlotte**

Dear wife the shades of n'ght are near,  
And weird-like clouds are scuddling by:  
I've watched them come and disappear.  
Like grey ghosts flitting o'er the sky;  
And while I watched I wander'd far  
In waking dreams to that fair land  
Where first I followed Fame's bright star.  
Through deserts drear and forests grand;  
Again I stood, in manhood's prime,  
A leader of the gallant few  
Who labour'd for the after time,  
With dauntless hearts and courage true;  
Again beneath the yellow blaze  
Of Austral's summer sun we marched  
Across the plains where Darling strays  
Through wildernesses pale and parched.  
Once more on Murrumbidgee's flood  
We swept along – my mates and I,  
While on the banks the wild men stood  
And raised their spears with savage cry.  
But one grand object fired my soul,  
And God's protecting hand was near  
To guide me to the wished-for goal -  
I felt His power and knew not fear.  
I was His humble instrument,  
His harbinger to lead the way -  
The herald of His grand intent,  
With message of His coming day.  
I knew that in the wilderness  
A prouder Britain soon should rise,  
That millions yet unborn would bless  
Salvation's emblems in the skies,  
Which pointed to the golden shore  
Where Peace would rule and Progress reign,  
And Plenty keep her richest store,  
And Commerce sway the southern main.  
With thoughts like these, in danger's face  
I boldly looked with fearless gaze,  
I felt my mission was to trace  
New paths through Nature's hidden ways.  
Oh, happy hour! when floating through,  
By bank and bend and leafy sweep,  
The Murray burst upon our view,  
And caused our hearts with joy to leap.  
Eureka! it is ours at last.  
Thank God, we've found the silver key  
That can unlock an empire vast



And ope a gateway to the sea.  
Then floating down by wood and wold,  
And islets in fresh verdure drest,  
We came to where the Darling rolled  
His waters into Murray's breast.  
You know the sequel – well 'twas mine  
To help to build that thriving State,  
Famed for its corn, its wool and wine –  
A future nation proud and great.  
'Twas mine to serve my native land  
Beneath that man of noble mien,  
Who knew the secret of command,  
And sway'd the sceptre of our Queen.  
He still remains our faithful friend,  
Though years have rolled away since then;  
Ah! that reminds me, I must send  
An answer to his note. A pen,  
My love, there's ink and paper here;  
My hand is trembling, yet I'll try  
To write to him, our friend so dear,  
And warmly thank him ere I die.

'Tis finished, I have told him why  
I sought some honour from the State,  
Some thanks to those in stations high;  
He knows I've earn'd a better fate  
Than that I've met with, but alas!  
I've learned how Governments bestow  
Their favours here – but let it pass;  
What are distinctions here below  
Compared to those that wait above  
For souls that do their duty here?  
The light of God's eternal love  
To me shall soon make all things clear.  
I care not for earth's honours now,  
Men's praise is as the passing wind  
I sought a wreath to bind my brow  
For sake of those I leave behind.  
Nay, weep not, wife, be not downcast,  
Despatch this missive to our friend;  
Tell him this letter is my last -  
I see the shadow of the End.

The second article is a poem that my wife, Lisa, has written in memory of Charles Sturt, titled "Today, Our Captain". The poem was originally written in Chinese and has been translated into English and then refined by my sister, Nicole and son, Kaiden. Thank you very much Lisa, Nicole and Kaiden, who are sitting here in the audience today. I would also like to take the opportunity

to introduce my mother, Sandra, who is a first cousin four times removed to Charles Sturt. Mum and Nicole have travelled from Sydney to join in today's celebration.

I would now like to invite my son, Kaiden, to recite the poem. Kaiden is a first cousin six times removed to Charles Sturt. In addition, his middle name is "Charles", in memory of Charles Sturt. Thank you Kaiden.

### **Today, Our Captain**

As Birds are singing  
You find new pastures  
Only you of chivalry and courage  
Can endure this mission

The spread of civilisation and progress  
The opening of new places  
The tough continent  
Waits for the tougher to open it

You send a farewell kiss  
As you lead the team forward  
Advancing out from Sydney  
You pioneer new land

Neighing horses gradually fade  
If there is no map  
How do you know where to go?  
The doubts cannot stop your steps  
The stars in your heart your guide

Dense bushes  
Hinder your horses  
But the warriors open the way  
Come and go  
Thousands of miles of mountain mazes  
All valleys of the unknown, unknown destinations

With guns and sickles  
Tents and food  
And a compass to guide  
In the furnace of the sun  
You walk the desolate hayfield  
You walk with heavy steps

You do not stop  
You stare into with a firm face  
Uneasy faces you see



But in time of conflict you do not draw your dagger  
Nor do you shoot  
You embrace the faces  
You stop the storm with your kindness

Stepping on hard rock  
You have strength in your heart  
No hurt needs to shed  
Friendship and empathy you show the faces

The ancient land no longer silent  
You see a wider space  
You solve our mysteries one by one  
Our rich and beautiful land  
You name mountains, rivers and lakes  
You climb peaks and plant a flag  
You fire your gun three times

Your diary a story of adventures  
Extraordinary times and scenes  
Axle sunk into soft soil  
Your horses forced to halt  
Your trek does not stop  
Loved ones seeing you under their skies

You hold up flowing water  
Your strength cannot be crushed  
The sunset sky so gorgeous  
The dawn light will soon come

Our Captain you lead the brave souls  
Row miles in storm and wind  
You find new inlands  
A mystery no longer  
You find new fields  
Your journeys brings great news

Streams flow in mountains  
Birds sing softly  
The breeze carries sweet fragrance  
Winding rivers lead to the sea  
You find new lands and waters

Today,  
Our magnificent land  
In light of freedom and civilisation  
The people who built our cities  
Of pastures and vineyards plenty

Today,  
We reward your bravery  
Your statue forever etched in our world  
Your name on the map of our land  
Your footsteps will never stop

Today,  
Autumn winds blow  
Our faces as one  
With high respect  
We salute you

The soaring seagulls speak your legend  
Our captain

### **Closing**

Thank you very much Kaiden. What a wonderful recital. I hope through these two writings that you have all developed a deeper appreciation and understanding of Charles Sturt, as well as the tremendous support provided by his loving family and friends. The writings may also help us to develop a deeper understanding and connection to this museum precinct.

Friends: volunteers are a key element to the success of the museum, and the Trust is always on the lookout for dedicated volunteers. That is, volunteers to join the Board to participate in the running of the museum, as well as volunteers to maintain the historical gardens and surrounding facilities, and to also conduct tours. Please do spread the word to your networks to become involved in activities to support the museum, to in turn support our community. We all have a duty to ensure that the legacy of Charles Sturt, via the Charles Sturt Museum Precinct, will be passed down and used to inspire generations for years to come.

If you have an interest and the capacity to become involved in the museum, then please do reach out to one of the Trustees today or in the future. We would love to hear from you.

Today we celebrate the birthday of Charles Sturt. Happy Birthday Captain Sturt!





## VALE: RICHARD NOLAN



It was with much sadness that the Trust received the news of the passing of Richard Nolan, the designer and developer of the Grange Heritage Garden. He passed away comfortably at Clayton Church Homes of Summerhill on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May.

Richard Nolan was a member of the Australian Garden History Society, when in 2017 he offered his services to develop a heritage garden at the Museum. He had extensive garden experience in developing heritage gardens, bringing with him a vast botanical knowledge and arborist experience. He had studied at Roseworthy Agricultural School and Lincoln College, New Zealand. Richard won a Churchill Fellowship, which offered him study in the U.S.A., Mediterranean and Middle East focussing primarily on dry land farming techniques. He worked extensively in the Botanic Gardens and Old Government House gardens. Throughout his involvement with the Trust, he travelled from his Goat Stud in Uraidla, to work in the garden 1 – 2. days a week. His knowledge, his tireless work ethic and his keenness to educate the garden group will always be appreciated. Our Heritage Garden is a memorial to his dedication.



## VALE: DAVID DUFFNER



The passing of David Duffner on 21 June 2024 was more tragic news for the Trust. He had been in palliative care in since mid May, another member succumbing to prostrate cancer. David grew up in Grange and volunteered as a tour guide in 1991. He was still serving as a tour guide a few weeks before being admitted to hospital. David also gave valuable service as a member of the Board, serving two terms on the Board 1995 – 2000 and 2014 – 2020.

David was a wonderful tour guide and had a special talent with visiting school students, having been a school teacher for over 20 years. He was particularly good in asking them questions rather than just talking at them. David volunteered as a tour guide at St Peter's Cathedral and as a Red Cross driver once a week.



He loved doing sudoku and crossword puzzles and always brought one to Museum open days to fill in time should few visitors attend. He never seemed to have much time to get past the first clue, before visitors arrived or we sat down over a cup of coffee for a chat. David was the loveliest man you could meet, with a ready smile even when he wasn't feeling the best. Never a harsh word, always humble in his touring abilities, no matter the good feedback from visitors. He was always keen to acquire new insights into the life of Sturt to be well prepared for visitor questions or just to add a new anecdote to his guiding. David was keen to attract visitors to the museum, engaging with seniors' groups and making a number of appearances on ABC Radio. David will certainly be missed by all. A tragic loss.