

# Donovan News

Number 10

Celebrating Twelve Years of Donovan & Associates

Spring 1992

... keeping in touch with clients and other friends...

## 21 in 2001

The first year of the new millenium will be a significant year, marking our nation's centenary. The year will also represent 21 years of operation for **Donovan & Associates**.

It may appear presumptuous to make such a statement at this time, but we do so as an indication of our long-term commitment to the history business. As our masthead indicates, we have already been in existence for 12 years: we intend to be around for much longer.

One by-product of this commitment to the long term is that we are presently winning repeat business from clients. We have not yet been commissioned to update earlier histories, but we have been contracted to provide some of the additional services that we have developed. After many years in the history business, we are able to do more than simply write commissioned histories or manage heritage surveys. We also have learned to prepare small publications, like the report of the first 10 years of the Connellan Airways Trust, or the commemorative booklet for the City of West Torrens.

We have always striven to meet our clients' needs and believe that after discussion and negotiation we are able to tailor any project to the needs and requirements of the client. Some clients are alive to the importance of their history but do not see much value in publishing a detailed history, due to the expense that this might entail. For some clients we have simply provided an oral history which succeeds in capturing much of the current history and preserving it for the time when a comprehensive or published document is required. Presently we are providing a client with a comprehensive and detailed history in manuscript form for private circulation in very limited numbers: this will provide the basis for a smaller history that will be more appropriate for wider distribution.

Like many of our clients we are a project-driven business. We believe that we understand the needs of such clients and can produce a history product appropriate to their needs. This is part of **Donovan and Associates'** efforts to provide the personal touch in the history business.

YOU'RE AN HISTORIAN ROBOT!  
I'M SORRY, BUT WE'VE  
ALWAYS PROVIDED  
A PERSONAL  
SERVICE...



## PROJECT UPDATE

**Donovan & Associates** has been active on several fronts since the previous **News**. At that time the main project was the researching and writing of the history of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital which had to be completed delivery to the printer at the end of June. Work was completed on schedule and the book is due to be launched on 26 October.

As the Eye and Ear project neared completion, **D & A** was also asked to undertake other projects. The Army became the client for two of these heritage projects. The first of these called for a conservation plan for Keswick Barracks. The second, required the compilation of conservation plans for the Army's training depots at Clare and Kadina. (The Keswick project is described in more detail on page 2.)

About the same time we were also asked to prepare a management and development plan for the Cobdogla Irrigation Museum. The Museum was established in 1986 by the Engineering and Water Supply Department and is special because it features a Humphrey Pump, the only one in the southern hemisphere and the only one in the world that remains in working order. This pump served the irrigation area from 1925 until 1965. Not only is it of interest because of this, but it is also of particular engineering significance because of its technology. The Humphrey

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## Project Update continued

Pump used a column of water, rather than a piston, in order to lift the water. The pump played a major role in the irrigation of the area near Cobdogla. It became a feature of the Museum which, in addition to several static displays, also features a restored Fowler steam traction engine and a Bagnell locomotive.

In view of the proposal by the E&WS Department to divest itself of the responsibility for the Museum, we were asked to provide suggestions for its future management. The report was completed in July.

A major new project which began in August is the commission to research and write a history of Roche Bros. The company began by building roads in country Victoria in 1921 and has since become a major civil construction firm, and one of Australia's major contract miners. The company is presently mining The Big Pit at Kalgoorlie and more recently won part of the job to build the new Hong Kong Airport. The feature of Roche Bros is that it remains a wholly-owned family company, and part of the fascinating story is the manner in which it has managed growth, where many early contemporaries have failed, have had to go public, or have been taken over by others.

More recently, in a joint venture with Bernard O'Neil, we have been asked to undertake an oral history of SAGASCO Resources. This company, originally the South Australian Oil and Gas Corporation, was formed in 1977 to administer oil and gas resources in the Cooper Basin and to explore for new reserves. SAGASCO Resources currently holds exploration permits in several parts of Australia and in Papua New Guinea.

## South Australia's Army Heritage

HISTORIAN FIRST CLASS  
PETER DONOVAN REPORTING  
FOR CONSERVATION  
DUTIES...



During recent years there have been numerous reports to the federal government on the suggested role and organisation of Australia's Army. Such reports, the government's commitment to rationalise commonwealth-owned assets and Defence policy of preserving items of known heritage significance persuaded the 4th Military District to commission a conservation plan for Keswick Barracks, on the south-western edge of the Adelaide Parklands.

**Donovan & Associates** was commissioned to prepare this conservation plan, which Alison Painter researched the history of the site, while Pat Sumerling documented the individual buildings and Barry Rowney undertook the architectural assessment. June Donovan was responsible for the preparation of the report.

The first buildings were built on the site in 1912/13 and still remain. This is a relatively late date when compared to the main Army headquarters in other States, but it marks a significant stage of the history of defence in South Australia and also the history of the Australian Army. The Barracks was one of the first established by the Australian Army and the first buildings on the site represent the first significant Commonwealth buildings constructed in South Australia.

Several of the older buildings are significant in themselves because of their design and construction, especially the headquarters building. Also, one complex was originally built as sleeping accommodation but became 7th General Hospital during World War I and, afterwards, the Repatriation Hospital. The original stables also remain. They are considerably altered, but still reflect features of the Army at the time when the Barracks was established.

The main headquarters building is already on both the Register of the National Estate and the Register of State Heritage Items. We believe that the whole of the Barracks warrants inclusion on these heritage lists.



A view of the headquarters building in 1917 before the addition of an extra storey.

## Repeat Business

Repeat business is welcome to any business because it generally reflects satisfaction with the standard of service already provided. **Donovan & Associates** has had a fair amount of repeat business in the heritage field because it is a specialised area with limited clientele. However, we are delighted to be winning repeat commissions for the history side of our business, particularly because it indicates that clients are beginning to appreciate that we are able to do more than simply write large books for which there is usually little call for companion volumes.

Our work in editing and producing Eddie Connellan's story of his outback airline proved to be very beneficial in this regard. During the course of this work we were also asked to produce a small colour booklet outlining the history of the airline for its diamond jubilee. Later we were called upon to produce publicity material reporting the first 10 years of the Connellan Airways' Trust.

Recently, **Donovan & Associates** was commissioned by the City of West Torrens to produce a booklet to commemorate the opening of the new Civic Centre later this year. This booklet will focus on a broad review of the civic history of West Torrens. Our first introduction to West Torrens was in 1983 when we won the commission to research and write the history of the City for publication in South Australia's Jubilee 150 year. The history, *Between the City and the Sea*, was launched in August 1986.

More recently still, in a joint venture with Bernard O'Neil, who is presently writing the contemporary history of South Australia's Mines and Energy Department, we have been asked to conduct an oral history programme for SAGASCO Resources. Our introduction to both oral history, and to corporate history occurred early in 1985 when we were commissioned to write a history of the South Australian Gas Company, *The Unquenchable Flame*, which also was published in 1986.



Pictured at the launching of the history of West Torrens at the Rex Hotel on 15 August 1986, (from left are) Peter Donovan, Professor Brian Abrahamson, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Flinders University, who launched the book, and Steve Hamra, then the Mayor of West Torrens.

## BOOK NEWS

Eddie Connellan's story, *Failure of Triumph*, was published in May. EJ began writing the manuscript soon after the sale of his airline in 1980. Friends and lawyers considered some parts to be potentially libellous and suggested that it should be culled. Unfortunately EJ was unable to have the book published before his death in 1983.

EJ's son, Chris undertook to publish the book and commissioned **D & A** to edit the manuscript, provide an introduction to sketch EJ's other activities, and to produce the book. The result is a volume of 420 pages, with an index and many illustrations. Besides giving the story of Connellan Airways, later Connair, it also records a great deal about the history of the Northern Territory since 1938.

## Failure of Triumph



Two other books soon to be published include Peter Donovan's *'an ornament to the City; a History of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital*, which is to be launched on 26 October, and Dame Nancy Buttfield's autobiography, *Dame Nancy*, which will be launched early in November.

## FIELDWORK NOTES

The eminent English historian, R.H. Tawney, suggested that a good pair of walking boots was essential equipment for any historian. If he had been an Australian he probably would have suggested the need for a motor car, perhaps even a four-wheel drive vehicle, a handy companion and a good tool set.

Many years of writing about features of Australia's history has taken **D & A's** people to many parts of the nation including the remote interior. Research in April 1984 into the European heritage of the Mound Springs region in South Australia took them to parts off the track beyond Marree a few weeks after major rains in the area. Discounting the first night at the Marree Hotel, the sense of adventure started at about 4:30 pm on the first day out of Marree when Graham Boulter and Peter Donovan became bogged in a shallow creek bed. The two finished up jacking a score or more stones into the mud before they were able to lift up the vehicle sufficiently to put some brush under the wheels. By that time it was dark so they camped there that night. After getting bogged again at about the same time the next evening, they decided to take more care in the late afternoons.

Punctures also proved a problem on that trip. The two had taken spare wheels and about half a dozen patches for the two-week expedition but, after three flats in one day, returned to Marree with nothing in reserve. However, the trip had many memorable moments. Camping in many remote places made it easy to relate to the experiences of the first white travellers through the region. They also managed to swim in Lake Eyre and attend the William Creek Races which neither had done before.

A trip into remote parts in 1991 in search of railway heritage also had its moments. Looking for the western terminus of the BHP line from Port Lincoln, Graham and Peter had to enter through a farmer's property. Entry proved no problem because the gate was open when they arrived. However, when they tried to return an hour or so later, the gate was closed, padlocked, and there were no other means of exit. They found a neighbour who drove them around Coffin Bay for an hour in a fruitless search for someone with a key to the gate. The only solution was to take the gate off the hinges. But the bolts had rusted to the nuts and broke when Graham tried to remove the nuts. There was no hardware store in Coffin Bay but, fortunately, the two had suitable replacements in the tool kit and so managed to repair the damage after freeing the vehicle.

Tawney would have approved of the initiative shown.

HISTORY-  
BE IN IT..



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