

Donovan News

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

Timely History

History is about change. In some instances change can mean death and extinction, and it can happen to important institutions.

The South Australian Department of Lands had responsibility for overseeing the surveying, alienation and management of land in South Australia from the early days of the colony. But no comprehensive history of this department was written before its functions were divided between other departments in 1992. Aspects of the history of the department might be featured in such works as the history of the Pastoral Board, but this will do little to reflect the significance of the department to South Australia.

Similarly, the South Australian Railways played a fundamental role in the economic and social development of South Australia. Unfortunately, no comprehensive history of the Railways was written before the country services were transferred to the Commonwealth when Australian National was formed in 1978. Records upon which a history of the Railways might be based are preserved in repositories. However, there is now little likelihood of an organisation sponsoring the compilation of a comprehensive history. And, as time passes, much of the potential oral evidence is lost. Co-incidentally, what remains of Australian National is being prepared for sale but, fortunately, D & A and Bernard O'Neil had the opportunity in 1987 to record the first ten years of its history.

There have been fortunate instances. D & A was asked to write a history of the Highways Department, before it lost its identity when it became part of the Department of Road Transport. The firm is now looking forward to recording the history of Asset Services and its predecessors before the business is sold in June 1997. Asset Services, through the Commonwealth Department of Works, traces its origins to Federation in 1901. The recording of the history of this significant organisation could well have been lost if the decision had been made to wait for its centenary.

Anniversaries rarely coincide with significant periods in the life of an organisation. So an anniversary, in itself, should not be the main determinant in the decision to record the history.

WE'RE LOSING
HISTORY JUST AS
FAST AS WE'RE
RECORDING IT.



PROJECT UPDATE

Business continues to be brisk at **Donovan & Associates**.

Several projects have been completed since the previous *News*, or are now nearing completion.

The publication to celebrate 60 years of Oakhill College, Castle Hill, NSW, was launched on 27 October.

The history of the Strzelecki Track was launched by South Australia's Minister for Transport, the Hon. Diana Laidlaw, on 19 November.

The history of Quality Bakers Australia is in the final stages of production and is to be launched prior to Christmas.

The Wakehurst Golf Club project has moved to the production stage. So, too, has the centenary history of Sacred Heart College. Both of these books are to be launched early in the new year.

Our contribution to the preparation of the Torrens Catchment Management Plan has also been completed and the final report is currently being prepared. D & A was contracted to identify the heritage issues relating to the development of the plan.

NEW PROJECTS

Donovan & Associates has also been engaged on several new projects since the previous *News*. These projects build upon work the firm has already undertaken.

Work has already been completed on a CD-ROM which outlines the transport history of Australia, and about which the firm has already written at length. Details appear on page 3.



The firm has undertaken additional work for the City of Marion. It was called upon to assess the heritage of the Pioneers' Hall.

A recent commission to undertake a heritage survey of the Victor Harbor District Council means that the firm continues to be involved in heritage assessments. This work will be undertaken in 1997.

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Project Management

One of the messages that we have often repeated in the pages of the *News* is that history projects can take many forms, that historians can be involved in many ways and that **Donovan & Associates** is concerned to ensure that clients receive products appropriate to their needs and budget. The recent publication from Oakhill College, Castle Hill, is a good example of this.

Oakhill has undergone a great deal of change in recent years. The headmaster wanted to acknowledge this and mark the 60th anniversary of the College. He sought advice from us on an appropriate means of doing so. Early discussions indicated that the Board was reluctant to commission a detailed history, both because of the expense and the time available to complete the project. We suggested a different form of publication that would not preclude the eventual production of a comprehensive history, and might even help to identify and attract material for this later publication.

The current publication reflects these suggestions. Introduced by a short history of the College to provide context and highlight many milestones, the booklet includes a variety of lists to acknowledge those who played important roles in the life of the College. Most importantly, and the feature of this publication, is the inclusion of recollections of College life from seventeen principals, teachers and students covering the period from 1943 to the present. As well as providing information for this publication, the oral history program was designed to gather and preserve an important oral record against the time when a more comprehensive history could be commissioned.

Donovan & Associates's role included editing the historical introduction, transcribing and editing the transcripts and advising generally on the content and production.



Acorn to Oak Tree: Oakhill College 1936-1996, published by Oakhill College, Castle Hill, NSW. The book is in softback, measures 295mm x 210mm, has 84 pages, and is illustrated in black and white and colour. Copies of the book may be obtained from the College.

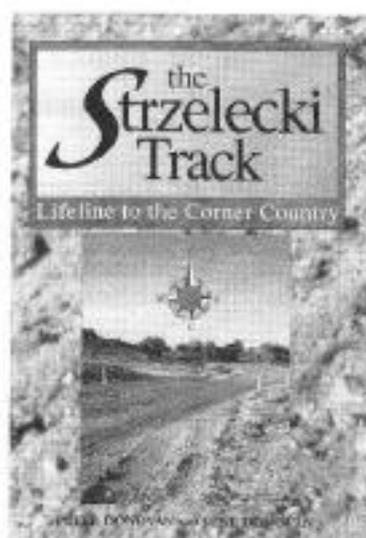
New Publications

The launch by the Hon. Diana Laidlaw, South Australia's Minister for Transport, of the history of the Strzelecki Track means that **Donovan & Associates** has completed another book about outback Australia. The launch took place at the Innamincka Hotel on 19 November 1996, immediately after the Minister had opened the new northern alignment of the Track.

The Strzelecki Track: Lifeline to the Corner Country by Peter Donovan and June Donovan, was produced by Donovan & Associates and published by the Department of Transport. The book is in softback, measures 250mm x 175mm, has 100 pages, an index and is illustrated in colour.

Publication of the book was assisted financially by Santos. Proceeds from sales are to go towards the local communities at Innamincka and Lyndhurst and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Donovan & Associates has kept abreast with current trends in publication with its involvement in the production of *An Australian Journey: Images from our Transport History at the State Library of S.A.* The CD features 500 images from pictorial collections held in the Mortlock Library of South Australia which deal particularly with different forms of transport. The images on the CD have been grouped in accordance with road, rail, sea and air transport.



D & A's role in the project was to provide an organisational framework to enable the images to be subdivided into each of the four main groups, and also to provide the historical text and commentary.

The project was a satisfying one which enabled the firm to draw upon its broad experience in writing transport history.

New Projects continued

D & A began work on a history of the River Red Gum forests near Deniliquin in southern New South Wales during June. A draft of the history has been completed and Peter Donovan is to report upon the project to the Forest History Conference to be held at Jervis Bay in late November.

Work began on a history of Asset Services in late September. Asset Services, a part of the Commonwealth Department of Administrative Services, is marked for sale by June 1997. The Department of Works, a predecessor of Asset Services was once the largest construction authority in Australia. It was responsible for building Canberra and Woomera, as well as undertaking a great amount of work in the Northern Territory.

June and Peter Donovan have undertaken to edit the 1997 journal which is to feature papers to be delivered at the national oral history conference in Alice Springs in September 1997.

Copy editing of the *News* is by Bernard O'Neil. The cartoons are by Stephen Stanley.

The Benefits of Hindsight

A historical perspective is meant to make people wary about making predictions. Historians are particularly reluctant to do so, although as close observers of change they should be more qualified to do so than many others.

The following bold predictions have been gleaned from a message to one of the History Lists on the Internet. We cannot vouch for their authenticity, but concede that they make interesting reading.

'Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.' —*Popular Mechanics*, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949.

'I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year.' —The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957.

'There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.' —Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977.

'Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.' —Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.

'Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value.' —Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

'640K ought to be enough for anybody.' —Bill Gates, 1981.

HISTORY-
BE IN IT..



DONOVAN & ASSOCIATES History & Historic Preservation Consultants

Donovan & Associates is a consulting firm which specialises in matters relating to aspects of historical research, writing and historic conservation. The firm undertakes a wide variety of tasks based upon these specialties. Major projects completed by the firm include large commissioned histories and heritage studies, recording of oral history, and providing advice on records management.

Donovan & Associates was established in 1980 and since that time has undertaken work for clients throughout south-eastern Australia on projects that have involved research and work in all parts of the country.

Donovan & Associates' services include:

- Corporate and institutional histories
- Regional and local histories
- Heritage surveys and assessments
- Oral history programs
- Advice on cultural tourism
- Advice on historical displays

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