

Donovan News

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

History as Dialogue

One of the features of the histories written or prepared by **Donovan & Associates** is that they seek to engage readers in a manner that is not possible to those historians who explore distant periods and must rely primarily on documentary sources. Another, is that our histories are generally written with a specific readership in mind, at the request of clients who value the historical record. This contrasts with a great deal of history that is the product of the personal research interests of a historian who writes with no specific readership in mind.

The nature of the commissions we receive means that there is already a measure of interest in what we are asked to write about. The client, at least, believes the history to be important. We have generally found this belief to be shared by those who identify with the business or organisation: they are only too willing to communicate this to us. Our concern is to ensure that this interest and recognition of the importance of the history of the organisation is conveyed to those we meet in the course of our research.

Much of the history we are engaged to record and interpret concerns near-contemporary developments. This means we have the opportunity to speak with people who have been active participants in, or close witnesses to, the events we seek to explain. We are able to quiz them about these matters and seek their comment on and reaction to alternative interpretations of what happened. We like to think this gives our history a sense of comprehensiveness and immediacy not readily obtained by those who deal only with documents.

In addition, the contemporary nature of our work means that we are able to write for readers who have an immediate personal interest in the story we have to tell. This means that we are able to engage the reader directly and make history pertinent to them.



D&A's Scope of Work

Several projects have been completed during the past six months.

The history of the De La Salle Brothers in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand was launched by Professor Peter Drake, the first Vice Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University, in Melbourne on 26 November 2001. (See p. 3 for details and p. 4 for a review.)

Our history of the real estate agency Jackman & Treloar was launched on 4 December. Fifteen days later, on 19 December, the mayor of Tea Tree Gully launched a collection of essays on the recent social development of the city. **D&A** was responsible for editing and producing the collection. (See p. 3)

Meanwhile, the history of Tip Top Bakeries is with the printer. The launch is anticipated in May 2002.

Similarly, the Conservation Management Plan for what is now called the Edinburgh Defence Precinct (formerly the Salisbury Defence Site) is currently in production.

Work on a conservation management plan for the former Smithfield Magazine Area has been completed and delivered.

As indicated in the article on this page, D&A was recently involved in an oral history project conducted by the State Library of South Australia. In early 2002 D&A was chosen to be part of another program one managed by The Institution of Engineers, Australia, which has an ongoing program to interview significant Australian engineers. The first to be selected in South Australia is Keith Smith, AM, OBE, BE. Keith began his railway career as an apprentice with the New South Wales Railways, served as Commissioner of the Commonwealth Railways for 21 years and finally retired from the position of Chairman of the Australian National Railways Commission. Peter Donovan had the privilege of interviewing Keith at his home in Orange, NSW, in December 1987 as part of research for the history of Australian National, ultimately published under the title *The Long Haul*. Keith, now 87, has since returned to South Australia, and recently published the first volume of his autobiography (*Tales from a Railway Odyssey*).

D&A has recently been commissioned to undertake additional work on the Edinburgh Defence Precinct, this time documenting the history and use of particular buildings.

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

Honoured Women

W e at D&A attach a great deal of importance to oral history. We use recorded oral interviews in most of our projects though do not always go to the extent of transcribing them. Occasionally, however, we are asked to conduct more formal interviews as part of an oral history program. For example, during the latter part of 2001, we participated in the Honoured Women Program managed by the oral history officer of the State Library of South Australia. The idea of the program was to interview women whose contribution to the community had been recognised with an Australian honour. June Donovan interviewed Mary Davidson, AM, and Margaret Atkins, OAM; Peter Donovan interviewed Mary Newport, OAM.

Mary Davidson is noted for her many years of work for the Meals on Wheels organisation. She joined the Unley Branch of Meals on Wheels in 1972 and became increasingly involved in the organisation's management. She became a member of the State Executive in 1980, State vice-president in 1993 and national president in October 1994. In these roles Mary has been largely responsible for the current development and management of the organisation.

Margaret Atkins was recognised for her services to special education. She was born with cerebral palsy but, despite prejudice borne of ignorance, succeeded in graduating with an Honours degree in psychology from the University of Adelaide and becoming a qualified psychologist. Margaret joined the Education Department and had charge of physically and mentally disadvantaged children at several Adelaide special schools.

Mary Newport, a South Australian by birth and schooling, became the prime minister's assistant press secretary in 1962 and moved to Canberra. She worked for five Prime Ministers from Menzies to McMahon and had a unique view of a tumultuous period in federal politics. After leaving the public service she established the media office for the Catholic Bishops of Australia. Mary has the added distinction of being honoured as a Dame of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Each of the three is a remarkable woman.



For Youth and the Poor: The De La Salle Brothers in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, 1906—2000 was written by Peter Donovan and published by the De La Salle Provincialate, Kensington, NSW. It is hardback, measures 170"x245"mm, has xvi + 372 pages with an index and is illustrated in colour.

The story begins in Rheims, France, in the late 17th century when Jean Baptist De La Salle founded a congregation of religious brothers to teach boys who were denied an education. The congregation became an international one, opening its first Australian school in Armidale, New South Wales, in 1906. Schools were later established in all mainland states, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Associated works included the development of BoysTown in Queensland, the San Miguel Family Centre in New South Wales and Kids Help Line, that operates nationally.

The book's emphasis is on the diverse works of the De La Salle Brothers in Australia, but it also reflects features of the history of the Catholic Church and education in 20th-century Australia.



New Books



From Paddocks to Plaza: Essays on the Development of the City of Tea Tree Gully, 1945—2001 was edited by Peter Donovan and June Donovan and produced by Donovan & Associates for the City of Tea Tree Gully. It is softback, measures 210"x240"mm, has xviii + 70 pages with an index and is illustrated in black and white.

The book is one of the City of Tea Tree Gully's initiatives to commemorate the Centenary of Federation. The project, co-ordinated by Margaret Tuffin of the Tea Tree Gully Library, became a means of garnering information and artifacts concerning the city's recent history. The material now forms part of the library's local history collection.

The book comprises essays written by people who were part of the urban development of the district in the latter half of the 20th century. It features original illustrations provided by the authors and others.

From Paddocks to Plaza is introduced with an overview essay and a chronology that provide historical perspective and context. Part One records the physical changes to the district since World War II. Part Two documents much of the associated social history.

Celebrating 100 years of real estate: Jackman & Treloar Pty Ltd, 1901—2001 was written by Mary-Louise Geyer and Peter Donovan and published by Jackman & Treloar, Unley, S.A. It is softback, measures 178"x245"mm, has viii + 92 pages and is illustrated in black and white.

Jackman & Treloar opened for business in Adelaide in 1901. The company has since undergone changes of ownership and has had to contend with many challenges as the Australian economy and the fortunes of the real estate industry have waxed and waned. It has been concerned with sales, auctions, property development, and currently focuses on property management and valuations. This ability to change with the industry has ensured Jackman & Treloar's survival as one of the nation's oldest real estate companies and an industry leader in South Australia: four of its directors have led the Real Estate Institute of South Australia.

However, the history is more than that of a successful company. It also reflects key features of the suburban development of Adelaide and that of the real estate industry in South Australia since 1901.



For Youth and the Poor

Our history of the De La Salle Brothers was reviewed by Michale Bohan in the April edition of Catholic journal *AD 2000*. The reviewer was complimentary and noted several of the features which we claim to be typical of the D&A approach to written history.

Past students of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (FSC), known in Australasia as the De La Salle Brothers, will welcome this history

It is long overdue because the De La Salle Brothers have made an enormous contribution to the work of Christian Education in Australia

Peter Donovan has structured the history essentially along the timelines of the successive Visitors [Provincials]. In this format the author deals with high policy and the difficulties, challenges and frustrations, as well as the many successes and highlights which eventuated in those first 60 years, as the numerical strength of the District climbed to its peak in 1967.

Since the early 1970s, of course, successive Visitors and their Provincial Councils have had to grapple with declining [numbers of] brothers. Painful decisions to withdraw from foundations where the brothers had established a presence over three or four generations have also had to be made.

Donovan has not produced a sugar-coated history. The tensions and failures which naturally arise in an organisation run by human beings, with all their faults even one animated by such high ideals and founded by a great Saint in John Baptist De La Salle come through in an honest and compassionate way. The book is well illustrated throughout and has a very readable style.

In the final analysis this book is a tribute, not so much to the leadership of the District but to the 'rank and file' who followed the Rule, were faithful to their prayers, went where they were sent without question, lived and worked in spartan conditions, and cheerfully endured long days of teaching and studying. To them a great debt of gratitude is owed.



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 has since undertaken work for clients throughout southeastern 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
- * Land tenure research
- * Oral history programs
- * Advice on cultural tourism
- * Advice on historical displays

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