

Donovan News

Number 6

Celebrating Ten Years of Donovan & Associates

Spring 1990

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

HISTORY IS A SEAMLESS TAPESTRY

Past and prospective clients, among others, sometimes express surprise at the apparent diversity of the historical work that **Donovan & Associates** undertakes. This variety certainly contrasts with the work of many historians who spend a lifetime confined to one area of research.

But by its nature, our work is different to those historians, and the diversity is more apparent than real. We consider all our projects as different aspects of a single reality, with each related to the others, though sometimes indirectly.

There are common threads woven through many of our projects. We wrote about many men when we compiled the history of the 2/9th Australian Armoured Regiment. One of the unit members was a land salesman prior to World War II and was able to provide information about the real estate industry during the depression for our history of the Real Estate Institute. After the war our informant became the property officer in the Highways Department and he has been able to give us a perspective on this project also. A retired town clerk whom we met when writing the history of West Torrens had spent his childhood in Alice Springs and willingly provided us with a valuable commentary about 'the Alice' in the 1920s.

In a similar fashion our histories of the City of West Torrens and the building firm, A.W. Baulderstone, have provided valuable background for our Real Estate Institute project. So too, our history of Australian National introduced us to many transport issues that we also have to deal with in our history of the Highways Department and Eddie Connellan's autobiography.

As we undertake more projects we are able to make more of these interconnections, and the richer becomes the history that we write. Each new project broadens our wide and varied experience and ensures that we are able to bring greater background and understanding to each new project.



PEOPLE

In our previous **News** we noted that **Pamela Runge** had moved temporarily to Canberra to a position with the National Museum of Australia. We were looking forward to her return which, alas now seems very unlikely. She has fallen in love and is planning her wedding in late September. We are delighted with the news and wish her and Christian every happiness.

During late June we inducted a year 11 student into some of the varied activities of a public historian during a week's work experience. Following the advice of R.H. Tawney that a historian should always have a good pair of walking shoes - or in the late twentieth century, a motor car - we took her with us to visit one of the country regions of the Department of Road Transport, and the depot at Northfield: she was also involved in a little library research and was introduced to the wonders of microfilm.

KEEPING UP

At **Donovan & Associates** we try to ensure that we remain conversant with developments in our diverse areas of expertise. This philosophy led us overseas in 1980 and gave us the opportunity to develop an international perspective on our work. That visit, and others since, also enabled us to meet others working in similar fields. We have sought to strengthen and

Keeping up, continued

to extend these links: this has been a major factor in any successes that we have achieved. Invariably we have returned with new ideas or the encouragement to implement our own.

As part of this continuing endeavour June and Peter Donovan will be travelling to Europe in mid-September. The main purpose of their travel is to attend the triennial general assembly of ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, which is to be held in Lausanne in Switzerland in mid-October. ICOMOS is closely identified with UNESCO and is the premier body which brings together people and institutions concerned with the conservation of the world's built heritage.

Much of the work of ICOMOS is undertaken through a network of specialised international committees. Australia ICOMOS nominated Peter Donovan to the stained glass committee, and he is also a corresponding member of the committee concerned with cultural tourism. By attending the meetings of these committees and participating in the deliberations of the general assembly, June and Peter will gather information that should be of value in Australia.

June and Peter will be travelling to and from Switzerland via the United States and England. In the United States their time will be spent meeting other public historians, and canvassing issues of mutual interest. In England they will primarily be concerned with meeting heritage conservators and others concerned with the interpretation of heritage sites.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S FIRST LADY

The new Senator entering Parliament House for the first time.

Dame Nancy Buttfield is one of South Australia's pioneer women, having the distinction of being the state's first woman politician. And as Vincent Smith wrote in the *National Times* of 22 March 1971, 'She was the first woman - to the abject horror of fellow [federal] parliamentarians - to actually take a drink at the bar of that shrine of male chauvinism, the Members' Bar...'

Both distinctions derived from Dame Nancy's tenacity in pursuing those issues in which she firmly believed.

Since retiring from the Senate in 1974, many people have asked Dame Nancy to tell her story. She has finally relented and we are delighted to have been asked to provide assistance.

Her father was Edward Holden, after whom Australia's car is named, and who played a major role in government efforts to broaden the industrial base of South Australia. This meant that as a child she had the opportunity to meet many of the movers and shakers of the period. She was educated at Girton Girls School and Woodlands, and attended a finishing school in Paris in 1929. On her return to Adelaide she spent time at the university and captained a group of Girl Guides for five years.

After her marriage in 1936, Nancy Buttfield worked for numerous philanthropic causes, including the Queen Victoria Hospital and the Mother's and Babies Health Association. She worked for the Comforts Fund during the War and was one of the prime movers in establishing an Emergency Maternity Hospital in the inner western suburbs in 1946. Yet, while recuperating from an operation in the early 1951 she determined to enter politics. Her resolve was strengthened after a visit to England later in the year where she met several women members of parliament. She first stood for election to the state seat of Adelaide in 1954: she increased the Liberal Party vote but failed to win the seat. However, Dame Nancy was appointed to fill a senate vacancy in October 1955, and continued there until 1974 except for a period from 1964 to 1968, when she embarked on a radio career with Radio 5DN.

During her years in federal parliament Nancy Buttfield was renowned for her independence. This may have told against her political advancement and led to several clashes with Premier Sir Thomas Playford who believed that 'his' senators should be South Australians first of all; Dame Nancy endeavoured to take a national perspective on all issues.

Dame Nancy Buttfield is a remarkable woman and her story provides fascinating insights into the social and political life of Adelaide and Australia in the twentieth century.

THE HIGHWAYMEN

One of our current major projects is a history of the Highways Department of South Australia which, in late 1989, ceased to exist when it was subsumed in the Department of Road Transport.

This project has many fascinating thematic overlays. The history concentrates on the development of the road network in South Australia and the construction of one of the state's most significant economic assets. It also touches on development of motor vehicles and the legislation introduced from time to time to regulate them.

At another level this history reflects changes in the South Australian public service. The *Highways Act* of 1926 created one of the more powerful and significant South Australian departments. However, since World War II the department has become increasingly accountable to its minister and to parliament.

However, as the working title suggests, this history is primarily the story of the generations of people who have contributed to the development of the department. The major theme underlying this story is the fundamental change of the department from being a provider of roads to that of a manager of one of the major public assets necessary for the economic development of South Australia. This is a major change with which present Highwaymen - and Highwaywomen - are having to contend.

The story begins in the immediate post-World War I period when the Roads and Bridges Department under the control of Daniel Fleming became part of the department of local Government. In 1923 Fleming initiated a plan to seal all of the arterial roads leading from Adelaide for a distance of about 100 kms. This programme waxed and waned in accordance with the South Australian economy, war and depression, but was finally completed when the Stuart Highway was sealed in early 1987. Since that time the department has been concerned with maintenance of the road network rather than new construction.

The history is drawn largely from the records of the department, but also draws heavily on interviews with past and present Highwaymen who have valuable perspectives on the development of the department.

The completion of the manuscript is scheduled for May 1991 and is due for publication before Christmas.



PROJECT UPDATE

Work continues on a number of projects in addition to those featured elsewhere in this *News*.

Our account of the history of the **Real Estate Institute of South Australia** has been completed and is now with the Griffen Press. It is anticipated that *Real History* will be launched early in November.

The second stage of the **Salisbury Heritage Survey** began with the new financial year and is expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Barry Rowney has returned from Gubbio in Italy so work for the **Australian Heritage Commission**, the Typological Survey of Adelaide Churches has recommenced in earnest.

We have continued our association with **Australian National** and during the past few months we have continued transcribing the oral history interviews conducted during the course of our history of the organisation. These tapes and transcripts provide valuable background information and interpretation of the early days of Australian National provided by many of the key participants.

Our work for the **Australian Submarine Corporation** has gone into temporary recess. We have recorded much of the early history of the company up to the time of the laying of the keel for the first submarine. We are due to recommence work again at the end of the year to bring the record up to date.



Hoarding outside the Mounted Police Barracks

RETROSPECTIVE

As we have highlighted in several issues of the *News*, a major part of the work of **Donovan & Associates** during its first ten years has been concerned with heritage conservation and the identification of features of South Australia's built heritage. This has ranged from broad regional surveys in country and metropolitan areas to identify likely heritage items to conservation studies for individual buildings.

This heritage work has given us a deep appreciation of the history of South Australia and of its capital. During 1981 and 1982, along with Susan Marsden and Paul Stark, we were involved in the City of Adelaide Heritage Study, during which we looked at as many as 7000 buildings in the City and made recommendations to the Lord Mayor's Heritage Advisory Committee for inclusion on the City of Adelaide Heritage Register. This work received an Australian Heritage Award in 1987 and is the basis for a book documenting the City's heritage buildings which is to be published by the Council in October.

We have also been closely associated with conservation work on some of the major heritage buildings within the City. During the late 1970s, we undertook with Barry Rowney, a conservation study of the Old Legislative Council Building, one of the first thorough studies to be undertaken in South Australia. That building became the Old Parliament House Constitutional Museum.

A little later we were also involved with conservation studies for the Old Destitute Asylum complex and the Armoury and Mounted Police Barracks. The former has since become the Museum of Migration and Settlement, while the Police Museum has been established in part of the latter. During 1989 we were engaged to undertake an oral history of the Adelaide Gaol.

Outside the City, we have undertaken several heritage surveys since 1978, and have also undertaken a conservation study of the former Customs House at Port Adelaide, and we were part of the team which was commissioned to undertake the conservation study of Fort Glanville, immediately prior to the Bicentennial year.

Such work, yet again forms part of the seamless tapestry.



DONOVAN and ASSOCIATES

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We offer a number of services, including:

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