

# STRATHALBYN

*Celebrating 185 years*



A special publication

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# SteamRanger celebrates 140 years

While Strathalbyn has the 185th anniversary of European settlement, SteamRanger is also celebrating a milestone of its own.

The heritage railway will have the 140th anniversary of the opening of the railway from Mount Barker to Strathalbyn on September 15, 1884, and will be celebrating by holding a Transport Festival at Strathalbyn Station on September 14 and 15.

Five hundred men were employed on the difficult terrain between Mount Barker and Strathalbyn before its 1884 opening, which completed the rail link between Adelaide and Victor Harbor, which eventually led to steam traction from Adelaide to Victor Harbor in 1885.

For over 30 years until 1968, a turntable was used daily for the Model 75 railcar which operated the Strathalbyn-Milang service.

Between 1986 and 1989, AN crews worked SteamRanger trains from Adelaide to Strathalbyn where volunteer crews took over, and from 1990, the changeover point became Mount Barker.

As mentioned in ARHS Bulletin, Strathalbyn at one point recorded about 50 per cent of the goods and livestock traffic on the Victor Harbor line and had an extensive station yard with loco watering facilities and a 53 feet turntable.

The line from Mount Barker Junction to Strathalbyn was officially closed on February 28, 1990, which made way for a line upgrade which was the biggest single undertaking ever tackled by SteamRanger at the time.

Beginning this June, SteamRanger will introduce its New Highlander train service which will operate twice daily between Mount Barker and Strathalbyn on the first, third and fifth Sundays each month until the end of November 2024, then it will recommence in March 2025.

*SteamRanger is celebrating its 140th anniversary of the opening of the railway from Mount Barker to Strathalbyn.*



SteamRanger is now a member of the Strathalbyn Tourism Association with the desire of promoting local attractions and businesses.

This year, passenger train services between Strathalbyn to Goolwa have been suspended until late next 2025 while the State Government undertakes the refurbishment work on three significant bridges located

at the Finnis River, Tookayerta Creek and Currency Creek.

Planning has just started on the Transport Festival weekend, on September 14 and 15, which will include regular steam-hauled shuttle trains between Strathalbyn to Gemmells.

Further details will be released closer to the date.

SteamRanger has about 150 volunteers

operating train services between Mount Barker and Strathalbyn, and Goolwa and Victor Harbor, whose skillsets vary from selling tickets, track maintenance, locomotive driving, and rollingstock restoration.

For further information on SteamRanger and its range of train services, refer to the website at ([steamrangerheritagerailway.org](http://steamrangerheritagerailway.org)).

**NEW!**

# The Highlander

Between Mount Barker and Strathalbyn

Departing on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month between June and November

<b>Mount Barker</b>	<b>Strathalbyn</b>
9:30am and 2pm	11:30am and 4pm

Book your tickets at [steamranger.org.au](http://steamranger.org.au)  
Tickets will not be available at the station on the day of travel

# A lifetime of memories of Strathalbyn

Gwenda Knights has a lifetime of memories in Strathalbyn. Photos: Tara Nash



By Tara Nash

One of Strathalbyn's long-running residents, Gwenda Knights, has an impeccable memory of her life in the town, right back to when she was a child.

Sharing a love for Strathalbyn with her late husband Kenneth, the pair lived locally almost all of their lives for one simple reason – “why would you want to live anywhere else?”

“The people around me have always been very supportive,” Gwenda said.

“I grew up having women in the community that I looked up to as mentors.

“The world used to be a slower pace... time changes everything – that’s something we all have to be prepared for, change.”

Their lives were intertwined with significant local history, which Gwenda shares during history tours, starting with her first house, the home of the founder of Strathalbyn, John Rankine, which he built in 1839, exactly one century before she was born.

Growing up on a farm, her family lived happily without electricity until she was 11-years-old, using wood fires, lamps, candles and lanterns, and a cool chest for food.

With no flushing toilets, Gwenda also remembered a night cart that would travel around and empty buckets.

Farm work was done with horses, and



her mum May would often swap their meat coupons as they kept sheep on the farm.

May was often known as “Queen of the sale yards”, for getting the best price for her Murray Greys at the Strathalbyn sale yards.

Living on a farm, some of Gwenda's closest connections outside her family became shopkeepers at Strathalbyn, including Bell's Store, and the butchers where – like other children – she would get a piece of fritz.

As a young girl, Gwenda often visited relatives Walter and Annie Gilbert – whose family were involved with Gilbert's Motor Museum – with her nanna.

Their home was purchased by the hospital in the mid-1990s to provide safe care for residents with memory loss, and Kenneth's mother was one of the first residents there.

Gwenda initially attended Bletchley School with just 22 other students, before

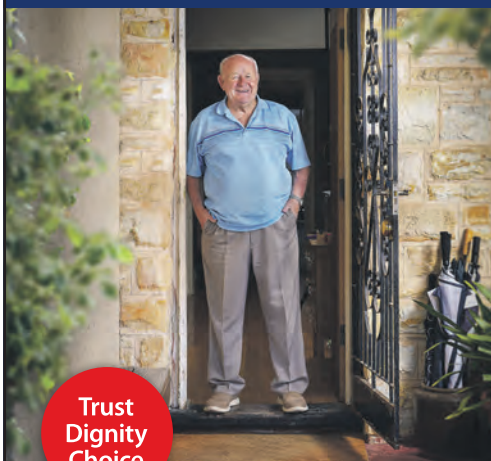
moving to Strathalbyn schools and reunited with past students earlier this year.

Gwenda's late husband Kenneth – born in 1935 – similarly had early memories of Strathalbyn, which he wrote in a book.

His grandfather Bert Joy was a builder and stonemason, and left a mark on much of Strathalbyn that can still be seen to this day, including St. Andrew's Church, and Soldiers Memorial Gardens' sun dial, retaining wall



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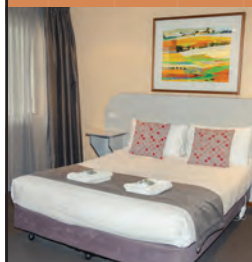
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and seat.

At one point, his parents lived in one of Strathalbyn's early cottages built for people who worked for the Rankine family.

The whole town was under threat of a bushfire in 1939, and he remembered that while his father Kenneth and grandfather were among those fighting the fire, while others – including him and his mum Eileen – retreated to Soldiers Memorial Gardens.

The glow of the fire coming over the hills was imprinted in his memory, but luckily, a sudden wind direction saved the town.

When World War II began, his dad Kenneth was one of the first from Strathalbyn to enlist for service, and sent letters and photos, then was reported missing and became a prisoner of War in Stalag XVIII A in Austria.

To raise funds, Kenneth's mum Eileen became Strathalbyn's Miss Red Cross competition entrant.

Later in the war, with a threat of Japanese invasion, Kenneth joined other students in digging slit trenches for air raid shelters into the bank in front of the school about five-feet deep.

The end of war was 1945 and his dad returned later that year, reigniting his passion as an artist.

Gwenda and Kenneth were the definition of old-fashioned love.

She first caught his eye when she was riding her bike to school, but met on his 21st birthday, when his mum set him up with her colleague from Bells Tailoring.

Some of their courting years were spent at a picture theatre, formerly at the corner of Donald and Catherine streets, which was refurbished in 1966 and was the most modern country theatre in South Australia.

Notable local musicians played piano in the coffee lounge during interval and after the show.

From 1950 to 1960, Kenneth worked there as a projectionist, while Gwenda rewound reels of film.

For young couples, it was a "place of romance" with leather double lounges at the back, before theatre went into decline



The late Kenneth Knights – whose family was also from Strathalbyn – pictured with Gwenda in 2022. The couple were the definition of old fashion love.

when TV arrived in 1961.

The Knights wed at St. Andrew's Uniting Church, Strathalbyn, on November 21, 1959, and bought their existing land with 100 pounds, gifted as an engagement present, from Gwenda's grandma.

Their tight-knit family grew to four children and grandchildren, and over the years, welcomed a total of 22 exchange students which were considered extended family.

The Knights have lived a colourful life, and wore many different hats in the community, most notably as owners of Tower Poultry, and a takeaway shop on South Terrace.

Gwenda's sister Shirley worked for them for 30 years and grew a close bond with the pair.

Over their lifetimes, the community has greatly benefited from their volunteering and mark they have left on the town.

As their son has a disability, the family were strong disability advocates and were among five families who started CLASS, Community Living and Support Services.

Gwenda has been involved in Strathalbyn Probus Club, St. Andrew's Uniting Church, the Health Advisory Council, Strathalbyn & Communities Suicide Prevention Network and local history projects, and in 2018, she

“ I believe the challenges faced have made each of us a stronger person as we have lived, worked and enjoyed these previous years together... ”

– Gwenda Knights

was awarded Citizen of the Year.

At one stage, Mr Knights was on 14 different committees and chairing eight, and has been involved in Rotary, Probus and Strathalbyn Woodshed.

He was also a South Australian representative for a Chicken Meat Federation.

With a sentimental love for history, the Knights documented memories in books, and Mr Knights' final message is a testament to the loving man he was.

“To share most of my life with one woman has been a wonderful journey,” he wrote.

“I want to thank my darling Gwenny for putting up with me... through the good times and bad times and sickness and all of my health problems.

“For the love we share and being my wife, my working partner and also my travel companion on our many journeys.”

Gwenda wrote that she was “blessed” to share decades with a “wonderful, caring man.”

“I believe the challenges faced have made each of us a stronger person as we have lived, worked and enjoyed these previous years together,” she wrote.

“Surrounded by our loving family, who could ask for anything more.”

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Adelaide Hills Toyota Dealer Principal and fifth generation in the business, Tom Gilbert, is proud of Gilberts long-standing history in Strathalbyn. Photo: Georgina McKay. INSET: Staff stand outside Gilbert's Garage located in High Street in 1928.



# Gilberts keep the 'wheels of industry turning' in Strathalbyn



By Georgina McKay

One local garage has kept the wheels of the automotive industry turning in Strathalbyn for more than a century, from manufacturing

to preserving history as a museum. Initially formed as a bicycle manufacturing business by Stephen Gilbert in Milang, Gilbert Motors has been servicing the people of Strathalbyn and surrounds since 1895.

It started when Stephen realised people had

difficulty procuring bike parts at the riverports, so he began manufacturing his own.

"My great-great-grandfather Stephen Gilbert was an engineer on paddlesteamers out of Milang, and he began manufacturing bicycles," Adelaide Hills Toyota Dealer Principal and fifth generation in the business,

Tom Gilbert, said.

"He could lathe up bike parts and he noticed when he came to the riverports – because cycling was a relatively new thing and it was a high-end, expensive sport to get into, and there were no bike shops – that people couldn't get bike parts, so he

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**The team at Gilbert's Motor Museum is proud to celebrate Strathalbyn's 185th Anniversary! With 116 years of local automotive history, we're honoured to contribute positively to the town's unique charm!**

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started manufacturing bicycle parts and selling them.

“When he semi-retired in Milang, he started building bicycles and they used to race them throughout the district.

“The brand became more well-known over time and then when they moved to Strath, it went to the next level.”

Looking to expand his market, Stephen and his family moved to High Street, Strathalbyn, in 1902 and started Gilbert’s Garage.

One of the most popular vehicles to come out of Gilbert Motors was the Treblig – Gilbert spelt backwards.

Treblig became a household name not just in Strathalbyn, but in cycle racing circles all across the state for their quality, longevity, and success on the race track.

“The racing bikes were the cutting-edge bikes that were creating the reputation, while the men’s and women’s bikes for general transport were the bread and butter, and they were desirable because the brand was winning races,” Tom said.

The business – a cycle and motor engineering one – predominantly centred around bicycle manufacturing but began working on cars and trucks, and even started engaging in motorcycle manufacturing as well.

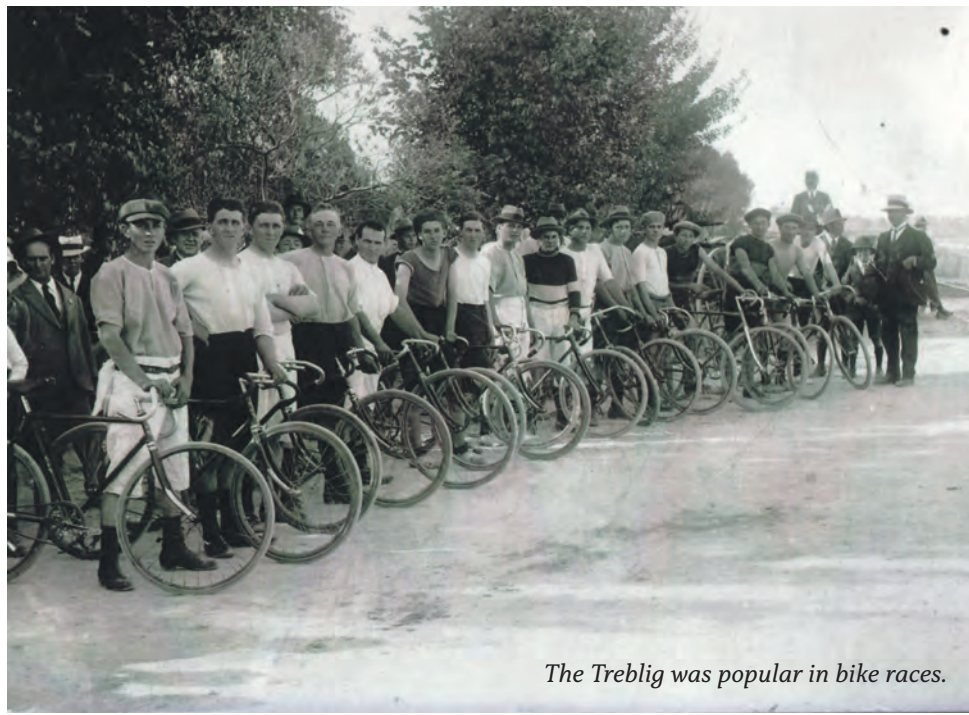
“They got smart and started putting engines in their bikes, which they would subsequently race on Goolwa and Sellicks Beach amongst other places,” Tom said.

Gilbert Motors was important to the fabric of the town, so much so that when World War I came around, Tom’s great-grandfather was asked not to enlist.

“It was very important because there weren’t many garages, so people relied on Gilbert Motors to service their agricultural and transport equipment,” Tom said.

“Even in World War I, my great-grandfather didn’t get enlisted because they requested he stay back to keep the wheels of industry turning – to keep the garage running, so the farmers could still farm, and all the trucks could be maintained.

“Then, in 1926, Gilbert Motors became an



The Treblig was popular in bike races.

agent for Manns Motors who sold General Motors products.

“My great-grand father Wally started selling General Motors products – Pontiac Chev, Buick, etcetera – which is when we started our car dealing properly.”

The family expanded to Mount Barker in 1926, and almost a century later, in December 2018, closed the doors to Gilbert Motors in Strathalbyn after almost 120 years of trading on High Street.

It was not an easy decision and one the family grappled with, but commercial reality dictated a dealership was unsustainable in Strathalbyn in that form.

However, the closure afforded a brand-new opportunity.

The building now serves as the Gilbert’s Motor Museum, keeping the family’s legacy in town while also preserving historic vehicles.

Tom is not only a fervent supporter of the museum, he is also an ambassador,

combining his love of family history with his passion for old cars.

“We didn’t know what to do with the building when we were approached by (the Strathalbyn Tourism Association),” he said.

“The way they’ve gone about it – the professionalism – it’s such a brilliant museum and the best possible outcome for such an historic site.

“We love the fact we can contribute in a small way to the history of Strath by hosting the museum in our building and for us, it’s just a great fit.

“They really did transform it from a grungy, old workshop into a magnificent museum that the town, district and indeed South Australia can be really proud of, and it’s all through the extremely hard work and foresight of the volunteers.”

Tom is extremely proud of the longevity of the family business, and for the service it



An old Gilbert Oldsmobile advert.

provided to the town, both in a manufacturing and an employment capacity.

“I think our greatest achievement of being in business for so long is employing so many people who raised families, built houses and contributed to society in a meaningful way – many of whom went on to be successful business people in their own right,” he said.

“And the service of the family to the community over many years.

“In Mount Barker, for example, my grandfather Roy was the Charter President of the Rotary Club, he was on the hospital board, and he was Charter President of the bowls club, so they got involved in the community a lot.”

Gilbert’s Motor Museum is open Wednesday to Sunday from 10am-4pm.

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# A place to step back in time

By Deirdre Graham

The Strathalbyn Museum has its own long history, being a fixture in the town since 1974, and with ties back to 1939.

Museum Chairman Warren Doman said history displays at the Rankine Street venue cover from early pioneer days to Eastern Fleurieu School's 'Solar flare'.

"The museum collection started about 1939 with the centenary of the town, when town clerk Harold Stowe collected a lot of items for display at the time," Mr Doman said.

"Over time he received a lot more donations of objects because it became known that he was a historian, and he liked to collect and try to preserve them.

"At a time that he was looking at leaving the job as town clerk, he was concerned about what was going to happen with the collection, so he and some other pioneer families in the area got together and called a public meeting, and from that, the National Trust of Strathalbyn was formed.

"They heard the police were planning on shifting from the building where the museum is now, down to Commercial Road to a new police station.

"So, they started to contact the government to try and get access to the station to use as a museum, and eventually, in 1973, they got approval to use it, and in July 1974, they opened both the police station and courthouse as a museum."

Some of the current displays include:

- Period displays of clothing and artefacts
- Early schooling and transport
- Wedding fashion
- Police and courthouse items
- Town industry and agriculture
- World War I and World War II

Being an old police station and courthouse, both were high on the list as the first



Strathalbyn Museum's displays include one devoted to the history of policing in the town.

displays to tackle.

The police station opened in 1858, and over the next nine years, the courtroom, cells and stable were built, starting within 20 years of the town being inhabited by Europeans.

"We have in the courtyard three cells – these are the original cells the police used to use," Mr Doman said.

"We have got one of them set aside as a storage room, which is a secure fire proof room, one cell as it used to be – so very bleak – which is where the prisoners would be put in, and we have the other as a photography display."

Unfortunately for fans of stories about bushrangers like Ned Kelly, no such famous law breakers resided in Strathalbyn.

"Prisoners in Strath were mainly overnighters," Mr Doman said.

"They were quite often drunk and disorderly, and they would throw them in

the cell at night, and in the morning they would head off home again.

"It would give them a roof over their heads, and keep them out of harm's way of other people.

"We had some that were slightly longer, but the longer-term ones were basically waiting for transfer to Adelaide, so they might only do that once a week."

Fast forward to the late 1990s and the museum has a very different type of display – that of the 'Solar Flare'.

The 'Solar Flare' is a recumbent bike powered by solar panels, batteries and leg power, and built by students from the then-Eastern Fleurieu High School.

"Over the top, they had solar panels, and (they) would collect energy from the sun, convert it to electricity and put it into two batteries, and then on the back wheel, it had

a little electric motor, so the rider could use that to assist him in moving," Mr Doman said.

"They might have started it in 1998, but in the year 2001, they put this vehicle in the Alice Springs to Adelaide solar bicycle race – the 2001 World Solar Cycle Challenge.

"This bike came first in its class, and as well as that, it won first past the post, so it was a top machine.

"This race was an international race, so there were entries from overseas – at least half a dozen of them – and it beat all of those.

"The shape was quite unique at the time, – it was aerodynamic and looked a bit like a giant cockroach."

The students were then invited to take part in a 100km race at Topeka, Kansas in the US.

"They would have three or four different riders and they would do so many laps as fast as they could, and then hop out and the next go as fast as they can," Mr Doman said.

"They had a very big front cog where the pedals are, and this was very hard to push, so what they would do is get this up to power, and then once they got it up to speed, they would flick the motors on and that would help them maintain a much higher speed than what they could do themselves.

"So, it was about 20 per cent of the power through the battery, and 80 per cent through the pedalling."

When the school needed space for another project the museum volunteers jumped at the chance to give it a home.

"We took it, and then we did a display of it," Mr Doman said.

"We have some properly printed boards that show the history of it, and a video which is partially slides that show the races."

With so much Strathalbyn history on display Mr Doman believes the museum is "a hidden gem".

## Congratulations Strathalbyn 185th Anniversary

Working with our individuals and local communities to develop better understanding about building upon and maintaining our personal mental health and wellbeing

Key words and Concepts that we encourage and empower you to think about and act upon in relation to your mental health and wellbeing and that of others; Change and its impact on you, (singularly and cumulative), Vulnerability, your Toolkit and the coping capacity it allows you to have. Risk factors, Warning signs, Protective factors. HELPING YOURSELF and OTHERS Conversation, listening, not

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- Collaborating and working with various community groups and organizations
- Attending various community group and organization events
- Attending Expos with focus on Youth, Older Persons, Rural Mental Health issues, Men's Health

If you want to know more or join our group; contact us, via our facebook page or Viv Maher 0411 816 544, Gwenda Knights 0400 722 782, Cliff Sweetman 0409 853 686.



Strathalbyn and Communities  
Suicide Prevention Network

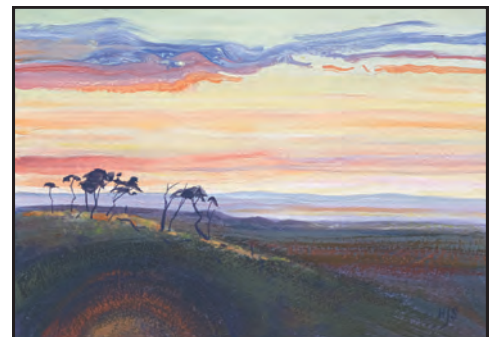
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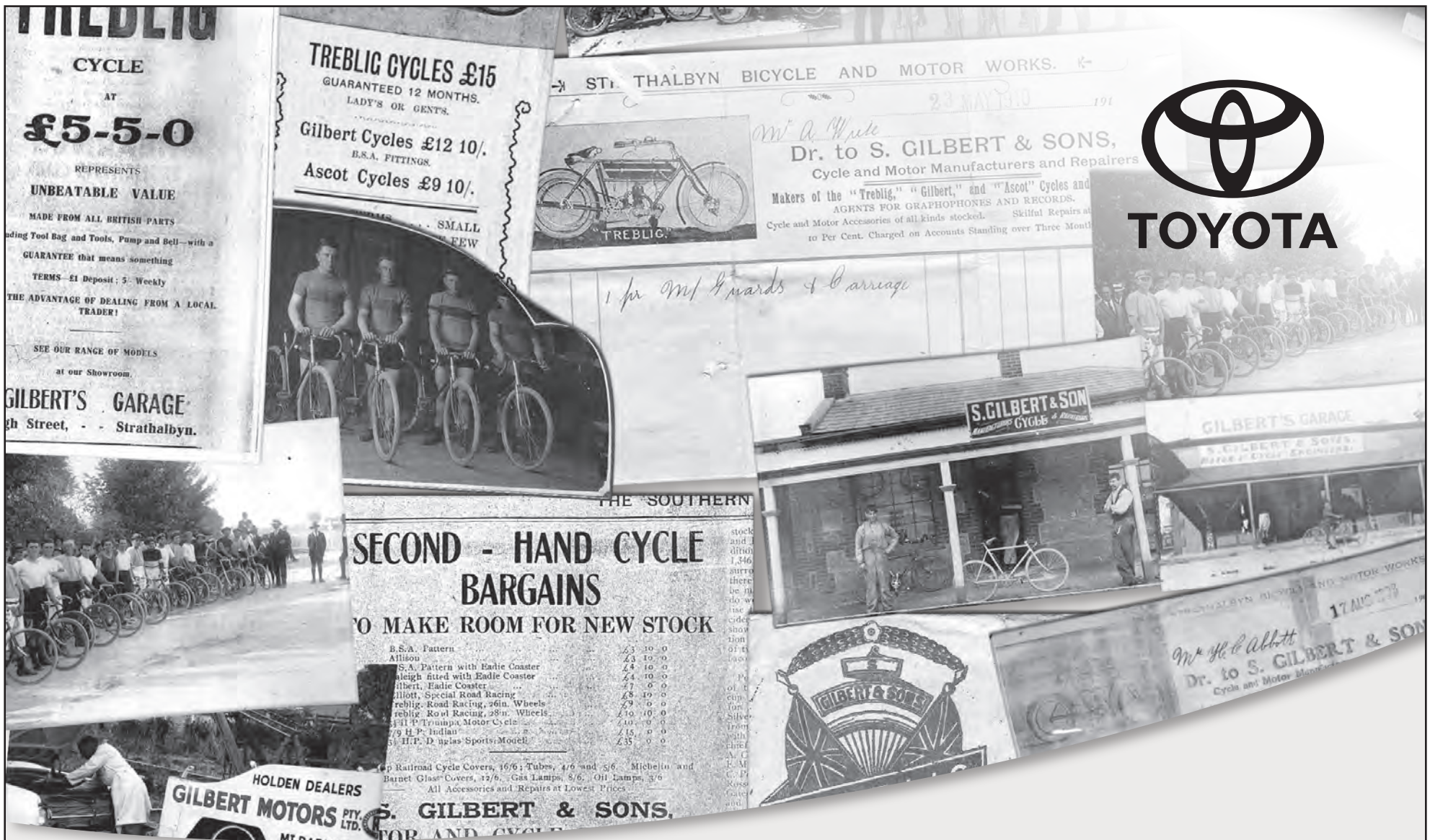


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**Tom Gilbert**  
Dealer Principal  
5th Generation

brief

## THE GILBERT FAMILY HISTORY

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1895</b><br/>S Gilbert &amp; Son bicycle manufacturer established in Milang</p> | <p><b>1926</b><br/>Gilbert's Garage appointed GM dealers in Mt Barker &amp; Strathalbyn</p> |
| <p><b>1983</b><br/>Gilbert's purchase Fred Tanner Toyota</p>                          | <p><b>2018</b><br/>Tom and Sally Gilbert aquire Adelaide Hills Toyota</p>                   |
| <p><b>2024</b><br/>Tom and Sally Gilbert aquire Murray Bridge Toyota</p>              |   |

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## Arts and entertainment in Strathalbyn

Strathalbyn Orchestra 1909, *They Built Strathalbyn*, Howard J. Stowe, 1972, p.135) (back) L. Harvey, W. Wallis, A. Scougall, C. Elliott, (front) K. Marsh, Clara Wallis, and Ruby Brown. INSET: Stationmaster's Gallery volunteer Karen Gowing, holding artwork by Jen McCallum. Photo: Catherine Pallin

**By Helen Stacey Bunton**

For some 45,000 years, song, dance and storytelling by First Nations People reverberated along the riverbanks of Munarown/Munaroo – now known as Strathalbyn.

Early European settler families entertained themselves with songs, stories and music from their 'home country' with fiddles, accordions, brass instruments, and even pianos.

As local halls were built, country dances facilitated meetings and many a marriage. Gradually arts and entertainments flourished in the new community.

A brass band was formed in 1867 and no doubt performed in Coleman's Grain Store building (corner Commercial Road & Mill

St) – the venue for dances, concerts, and even circuses.

A splendid Rotunda for band concerts was built in the town gardens in 1909, entertaining the wider community.

An orchestra was established in 1908-1914. Silent motion pictures with piano accompaniment were shown in the Institute on High Street from 1910 to brighten people's lives. The 'talkies' came in 1932.

The Town Hall was a venue for concerts, dances and balls such as the annual regional Waterloo Cup Ball.

Strathalbyn's magnificent Vogue Theatre (corner of Donald St and Catherine St) rivalled the best in Adelaide.

Its luxurious double settees in the back

row furthered many a romance.

The Strathalbyn Players, founded in the 1960s, started in the refurbished Town Hall and then in 1983 purchased the Methodist Church (Commercial Road) now the Chapel Theatre.

Unforgettable plays and Youth Theatre productions brightened community life.

The Strathalbyn District Concert Band commenced in 1981 and continues to flourish.

The Alexandrina Singers, formed in 1999, welcomes all comers and delights listeners with two enthusiastic events each year.

Since 2015, a collaboration of actors, singers and historians from four community groups have brought local history to life through Theatrical-Historical tours each May.

Visual arts and crafts have sustained the

lives of people from earliest times through making tools, weaving textiles, creating decorative objects and conveying beliefs.

Artists depicted a new country and a new life through drawing, painting, photography and crafts.

In 1905, the Institute in High Street was the venue for some notable exhibitions.

Later, The Gasworks on South Terrace became a commercial gallery for several years.

In 1998, Alexandrina Council made the Stationmasters house (South Terrace) available as a community gallery that's known for its diverse, quality work by professional and emerging artists and craftspeople.

Some eight professional artists now reside in Strathalbyn.

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# Law firm's historical commitment to Strathalbyn



By Deirdre Graham

Boylan Lawyers on Albyn Street in Strathalbyn is one of the state's oldest continuing law firms.

Official records have the firm being established by Edward Jones Tucker in 1875, although current partners Sebastian Hill and Paul Boylan believe they have legal documents tracing back earlier in Strathalbyn's history in their safe to 1860.

Edward Tucker served three terms as Mayor of Strathalbyn, and by all accounts had a stellar career in law, acting as conveyancer, executor, and legal adviser to local residents.

He was instrumental in establishing the ground-breaking Married Women's Property Bill of 1883/1884, with South Australia the first of the Australian colonies to pass a bill that allowed females to own property.

Beforehand, married women were unable to own property, and had few rights if deserted by husbands or fathers, or found themselves in violent relationships.

Under the Act, women were awarded "financial personage" for the first time, meaning they could now buy, hold and dispose of property, and were able to sue and be sued.

Tucker went on to become the longest practicing solicitor in South Australia until his death in 1939, and at one stage had two sons working in the business with him.

It meant the Tucker family practiced in Strathalbyn for more than 100 years.

The modern version of the firm came about in 1983 when Jeremy Moore became the principal, and it became known as Moore Law.

He would practice for more than 22 years.

When Mr Moore moved onto his role as President of the Guardianship Board Jane Moore became principal of the firm, merging



Boylan Lawyers' Managing Partner Sebastian Hill in the firm's vault that contains records going back to 1860.

it with brother Paul Boylan in 2013, when the Strathalbyn firm officially became part of Boylan Lawyers.

The current building is where the first office was established.

Mr Boylan said, as a country practice, the firm still works as a general practice covering a wide range of law, including Employment Law, Family Law, Conveyancing, Wills and Estates, Injury and more.

"In the country, you can't really specialise, you have to do basically everything," he said.

"If something comes along and you are out of your depth, you will go off to a barrister, who specialises in that area of law."

He said technology has been a game-changer for rural law practices like his.

"Prior (to the photocopying machine), they used to have a letterpress, so you would get a letter typed and then you would press it overnight onto another piece of paper and that would come up as your copy letter for

your file," Mr Boylan said.

"(Another advancement) was the facsimile machine because you could get your letter transmitted to another fax machine instantly.

"They started with thermal paper, and then because of its nature, what was on the paper would disappear eventually, and you would just have a blank piece of paper.

"And then of course there were emails."

Mr Boylan recalled how important and valuable typewriters were to the business, even as most recently as the early 1980s.

"When Jerry took over the firm in 1983, I remember coming into the office and seeing the typewriter," he said.

"At night, the secretary used to put a cover on the typewriter, a soft cover of waxy canvas, and then she would put the typewriter on a wooden base, and then put a steel cover over it and lock it down to the base, and put the typewriter in the safe, and do the reverse in the morning.

"I suppose in earlier times they were very valuable machines and they would have lasted a lifetime, so they looked after them."

Other changes have included how titles office operate, which is now completely electronic.

"A bit more recently, it has been court hearings via Teams," Mr Boylan said.

"We don't (always) have to go to court anymore... so that has been huge in terms of time and delivery of service, and the cost of it.

"In recent years, the current Chief Justice stopped the (regional) circuits.

"They used to go to Mount Gambier and Port Augusta, (but) now the trials all take place in Adelaide."

Managing partner Sebastian Hill said that in keeping with the changing nature of women's rights, the firm has embraced equality.

"Sometimes the change in the legal profession is reflective of changes in society, and that is the case now," he said.

"I think there are now more female lawyers than male lawyers, and I think that is country wide... and that is quite a change."

Therefore, across the state, in its metropolitan and regional locations, Boylan Lawyers has achieved gender equality.

Mr Hill said there was much to be said for practicing in regional areas.

"The benefits of the changes in technology over time has meant that what we can do in terms of services is far more wide-reaching," he said.

"In Strath, (it has affected) just the amount of families that we have been involved with, helping people out when mum or dad dies, and helping to get them through that process without huge difficulty.

"There is a lot of benefit of providing that service, and it makes you far more in touch with what Law means for everyone, as opposed to up in your big office block doing commercial work that doesn't involve actually knowing the people that are impacted by the contracts, for example."



## Looking after people in Strathalbyn since 1875

Boylan Lawyers has had a presence in Strathalbyn since the Mayor of Strathalbyn, Edward Jones Tucker, established a law firm in the area back in 1875. Since then the firm has grown and changed hands. But one thing has remained the same - we have continued to be a part of the Strathalbyn community, protecting and looking after our clients' interests.

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# Strathalbyn group reviving local Aboriginal history

Strathalbyn Aboriginal Action and Reference Group (SAARG) members are facilitating a recognition, celebration and renewing of Indigenous culture in the town and district, which is steeped with history.

For thousands of years before Europeans arrived in 1839, Strathalbyn was owned, occupied and enjoyed by Indigenous people.

Clan-estates, special places, owners, kinship and agreement-based rights and obligations and individual law holders were part of the governmental and land-management system.

Strathalbyn was a border place where a number of clans met and lived.

These days, Strathalbyn's traditional owners are identified as the Ngarrindjeri federation of clans of the Coorong, Lakes and Encounter Bay region, and a group of the Peramangk peoples in the Adelaide Hills, but it was more complex at the time of colonisation.

Aboriginal Sub-Protector based in Wellington, George Mason, interpreted in court and named Strathalbyn as Maneroo in 1849 and Munarown in 1853.

Meanwhile, some Peramangk folk assert Wiljau:r is the name for Strathalbyn, named by those who came from overseas.

Soldiers Memorial Gardens was a living and meeting place for Aboriginal people both before and after colonisation, where Indigenous peoples held corroborees, traded, camped or resolved conflicts in this place.

Bark has been removed from large red



SAARG members: Polly Sumner Dodd, Dean Whittaker and Freda Jaadawa Mills are helped create a presentation at Stationmasters Art's Gallery for History Month. Photo: Tara Nash

gum trees in the centre of Strathalbyn to make shields and containers.

A scarred canoe tree remains just on the outskirts of town.

SAARG's history sub-group's co-ordinator Rev Dean Whittaker believes local Indigenous peoples in Strathalbyn cared for the land and lived quite richly

off incredible plant, bird and animal life often following rich food sources, trade and ceremonial requirements.

Weaving, creating tools and hunting and gathering were significant practices.

As stated in the South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register, on January 20, 1838, the district was first explored by

Europeans in 1837.

A group walked from Adelaide to Lake Alexandrina and back again via Mount Barker, and a subsequent report stated the group often "stopped and gazed with wonder and delight on the richness of the country around" them with "the beauty and scenery in many places".

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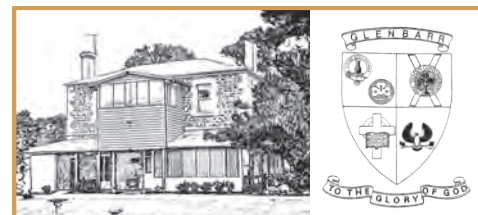
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The report stated that they didn't meet any Indigenous people, but suggested "no doubt they saw and avoided" the group, as they did spot smoke in the distance and camping places.

This group named the River Angas after the chairperson of the South Australian Company.

According to the newcomers, apart from isolated incidents, interactions between Indigenous peoples and settlers appeared to be generally peaceful, however, a militia group was involved in addressing Aboriginal disturbances in the district.

Indigenous peoples created a trading relationship with settlers, providing fish and game in exchange for goods such as blankets, flour and sugar.

Reports indicate that Indigenous peoples engaged in the European agricultural economy to a significant degree in the Strathalbyn district early on.

Indigenous peoples camped in the centre of town for about 20 years after colonisation, which Rev. Whittaker deemed as "significant", as in other towns they more commonly lived on the outskirts or were driven out earlier.

"Strathalbyn, on one hand, seemed to me to demonstrate an acceptance of Aboriginal people that I think was better than most places," he said.

Eventually, though, Indigenous communities were driven out around the 1870s, although the date is unclear.

According to *The Southern Argus*, about 10 people armed with guns and a whip drove out more than 400 Aboriginal people from Strathalbyn towards Milang, and reportedly one gun was fired, a stock-whip used excessively, and some spears thrown.

From the 1880s for a significant period, a Point McLeay football team played regular football games in Strathalbyn, and for a period of time, played barefoot.



Part of an Aboriginal encampment at Strathalbyn, with buildings in the background including Mill House, Angas Mill and William Colman's Mill Store. Photo: State Library of South Australia, B 63453.

The Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri peoples are now in different stages of a process of recovery, using memory, opportunity and the minimal written records available.

Traditional owners remain connected to this day with the town's land, waters, sky and climate.

They also connect with stories, and people living in exile on the lands now called the Ngarrindjeri, Peramangk and Kaurna nations.

For many descendants of the owners of this land, the stories written since colonisation by Europeans are a rich source of grief, hope and resurrection.

They hear and process these stories using oral cultural perspectives, and begin to re-enlive their communities.

SAARG formed a history sub-group about six months ago.

While non-Indigenous himself, Rev Dean Whittaker passionately helps co-ordinate the group at SAARG's request.

Other members are SAARG Chair Freda Jaadawa Mills, a traditional owner Polly Sumner Dodd, Graeme and Lorraine McVitty, and Kathy Gambling who recently confirmed their Aboriginal descent.

SAARG's history sub-group researches and explores Indigenous and intercultural history hoping to find almost extinguished coals and fan them into life again.

SAARG history group members state that the colonisation of Australia mostly aimed at destroying First Nations' sovereignty, culture and language, leaving little information on

the original culture and languages today.

Yet, such a long heritage does not just disappear, it renews in whatever ways possible.

Today, SAARG facilitates events such as Reconciliation Week, History Month, weaving workshops and events that focus on art, history, food and craft activities.

During May, the History group's research will be on a PowerPoint display in a broader exhibition called *Nunganya Yanurami* in a room at the Stationmaster's Art Gallery, while Auntie Freda and Graeme are also working on a small exhibit at the Strathalbyn Library.

The group has a mailing list of about 36, including Aboriginal teachers and workers from local schools, allies from Alexandrina Council, Strathalbyn Hospital, and churches, and Aboriginal people in the region, with about 10 members at meetings.

Working with many organisations, SAARG supports people seeking information about their Aboriginal heritage.

They also support Eastern Fleurieu School, including its NAIDOC Week celebration, and applaud and encourage organisations to enter into a Reconciliation Action Plan or have traditional owner representatives conduct Welcome to Country ceremonies, as long as it is not just words.

The group is seeking an Aboriginal place to operate from full-time to stand as a sign of reconciliation, serve Aboriginal people and their families, encourage co-operative art, craft and cultural pursuits, and to allow more work on history.

With little finances, the group is seeking the sole use of a building at no or minimal costs to further develop its work.

In October 2002, Alexandrina Council was the first governmental body to sign a Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement with the Ngarrindjeri Nation, representing a major step forward.

'Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan' means 'Listening to Ngarrindjeri people talking'.

The members state that things have improved but more is required, and urges community that it's time to "listen deeply".

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The Terminus Publican Stacey Phelan credits the hotel's longevity to it being "the heart of the community". Photo: Tara Nash. INSET: The Terminus Hotel and the National Bank, Strathalbyn, about 1890. Photo: State Library of South Australia, B 29234

# Long-running watering hole still serving patrons



By Tara Nash

The Terminus Hotel sits on the site of one of the first businesses in Strathalbyn after European settlement.

While some sources conflict on the history of the hotel, local historians find researcher Brian Simpson's credible sources appear to be the most likely sequence of events.

Wattle & Daub Public House & Store was built in 1840, which was replaced with the first stone building in town in 1842 called the Strathalbyn Hotel, by masons William

Rogers and Donald Gollan, the latter who owned and conducted business in the early years.

In late 1866, owner Richard Hooper made plans for an improved and larger hotel with a second storey, and there was a fire in January 1867 in the back bedroom.

The new hotel The Terminus was named as it was the terminus for the horse-drawn service Cobb & Co Coach, and was almost completed by the time of the 1867 visit by the Royal family, with people standing on the balcony to watch the proceedings.

The Terminus Hotel was officially opened on March 18, 1868, with two frontages of 66-feet and 46-feet.

The place offered refreshments to those on the line and offered dormitory-style accommodation.

The horse tram-line was extended from the railway station to the Terminus Hotel for use by 1874.

Travellers reportedly had problems carting their luggage along dusty or muddy streets from the station. Current publican Stacey Phelan – who also owns the historic The Commercial built in 1865 – is proud of the historic piece of town that survived recessions and global pandemics as it's "the heart of the community – it's everyone's go-to".

"We have regulars in the pub who, like

clockwork, are in every day... there are some that have been around for a long, long, long time – they are very loyal," she said.

"It's peoples' routine, it's what they do – they get up and they come and meet their mates and have a chat.

"That's what pubs are – good days, bad days, planning something great, talking about something crap – they're for everything.

"I want it to be that welcoming, good old-fashioned hospitality that is a country pub.

"I want it to be inclusive, I want it to feel like anyone in town can feel like they can step in the door here.

"It's just a really nice vibe – it's a good pub."

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# Brian Simpson puts a spotlight on Strathalbyn history



By Deirdre Graham

Brian Simpson arrived in Strathalbyn 50 years ago to take up a position as Deputy Principal at the local high school.

At the time, the town had about 1500 people.

Little did Mr Simpson know the population would grow exponentially, and he would develop a passion for collecting the history of the town, reading one edition of *The Southern Argus* at a time.

To date, he has compiled about half a dozen history books, some large publications, and some smaller booklets.

"I started with the Strathalbyn Golf Club way back in the year 2000, and was asked to help compile a history of the club, although, at the time, I didn't realise that the club was 100-years-old," Mr Simpson said.

"In the process of going through old *Arguses* and the golf reports over 100 years, I came across a lot of other interesting items on other subjects, and became interested in not just golf, but the wider picture of the full spectrum of activities in Strathalbyn – not so much family histories, but just of community interest really.

"The biggest book I have produced was one on the centenary of the Strathalbyn High School.

"It was opened in 1913, and in 2013 we had its 100 years."

While Strathalbyn's population has increased, many services and businesses have gone by the wayside.

"We have lost the railways, and many of the workers from the semi-government bodies like SA Water, Telecom/Telstra, and the Highways department," Mr Simpson said.

"The Strathalbyn District Council was based in Strathalbyn, but now we are an outpost of

Alexandrina Council based in Goolwa.

"So, some of the fundamental bodies have gone backwards numerically, with the banks a perfect example.

"When we came here there were four main banks, and now even Bank SA, the last one left, is closed at lunch time."

Many local businesses would also go the same way.

"There were the big stores like Bell's Store – the two-storey building in Sunter Street which closed shortly before we got here in 1971 out of nowhere basically," Mr Simpson said.

"There was Eudunda Farmers which was an iconic general store, which became IGA, and has been closed for the last few years.

"Then, in the bottom of Dawson Street there was Way's Store, which wasn't a general store – it was mainly a clothing store – and it had quite a number of employees.

"But they had the misfortune to expand and to borrow a lot of money in the early 1990s when interest rates went through the roof, and that killed that business."

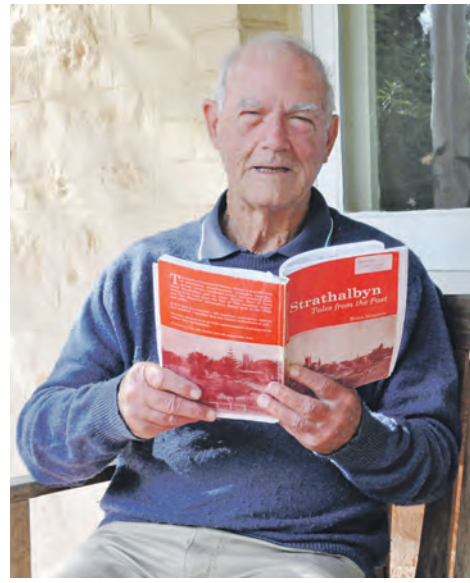
Some businesses no longer running were Tower Poultry on Marchant Road – which had 50 employees at one time – Clipsal near Dunreath Road which functioned between 1995 and 2012 with between 150 to 200 employees, the Strathalbyn Meats abattoir that once had 31 employees, and the Angus zinc mine which lasted five years but had about 115 employees.

The town hospital once presided over 100 babies being born at it each year, and the town also had its own cinema.

Mr Simpson said while Strathalbyn was built on primary industry, it now has a big service industry with education and aged care in particular.

"You used to be able to buy all sorts of things like fridges, washing machines, and appliances," he said.

"There were no computers at the time we



When Brian Simpson arrived in Strathalbyn 50 years ago, little did he know he would become a documenter of town history.

arrived, but you could buy everything that you needed in Strathalbyn.

"Now you need to go to Mount Barker or Adelaide to buy appliances."

On the sport side, harness racing, trotting, coursing, table tennis, pigeon racing, rifle club, and the swimming club and hockey club have all closed.

Mr Simpson compiles his history books to help others who are researching details on the town.

"I still collect stuff every week – one or two snippets to keep myself up to date – should anybody from any public organisation want to put together a history of their own club – a resource I would have liked to have available when I was writing those books," he said.

"When I was working on the centenary

of the Strathalbyn Golf Club, they had one minutes book covering a 10-year period, and that is what led me to look through *The Southern Argus*.

"Fortunately, there were scribes who wrote the weekly golf report that appeared in *The Argus*, and I thought if I go through 100 years of *Arguses* I will be able to pick up some of the thoughts over that period of time, so the *Argus* was far and away the best source of information."

Mr Simpson said while he had a maths and science background, and reached the level of Deputy Principal, he always wished he had been able to study history and geography.

"In my student days, I did a double maths and double science course, and they were four of your subjects locked in and not much room for some others that you might be interested in," he said.

"I do like unearthing things... I keep thinking that I have got some stories that no-one else living has ever heard of.

"Obviously, the people of the time knew about it, better than I do, so I have only learnt these things through *The Argus*, sifting through page after page.

"It is one of the finest country newspapers in South Australia and one of the earliest, and there were many articles that were well-written from the early days to the present."

There were many things he had never heard of that he came across in *The Southern Argus* pages, including reports of Southern Auroras.

"I thought that must be somebody speaking tongue in cheek," Mr Simpson said.

"I thought it was impossible to get auroras this far from the pole, but no, there have been many visible from Strathalbyn, particularly back in the 1870s, but also in more recent times."

He is yet to decide on what to do with his extensive collection of memories when he passes away, but hopes they can all be accommodated somewhere to help future historians.

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# The Southern Argus serves Strathalbyn since 1866

By Deirdre Graham

The Southern Argus is one of South Australia's oldest newspapers, but it had its origins in Port Elliot, with the first issue printed on March 17, 1866.

Politician, newspaper owner and Editor Ebeneza Ward founded the paper.

The cover price for the first edition was six pence, and in 1868, when the first copy was printed in Strathalbyn, the price was four pence.

Ward had worked as a member of the London morning press, and from 1861, spent time with the Melbourne Age and The Herald as a theatre critic.

He became a politician on his third attempt to enter SA Parliament, going on to become Minister for Agriculture and Education.

Joseph Elliott had arrived in SA from England in 1850 with his brother James.

He and William Fisher became partners in The Southern Argus in late 1871, but Fisher soon sold his share, leaving Elliott as the sole proprietor.

When The Southern Argus moved to Strathalbyn, the first issue of April 18, 1868 was produced from premises in High Street, near where Gilbert's Motor Museum now stands.

Joseph Elliott died in May, 1883, aged just 49 years, meaning his son Joseph William Elliott abandoned his medical studies to continue to produce the publication.

The paper, even after to moving to Strathalbyn, continued to have offices in Goolwa, Port Elliot and Victor Harbor.

Joseph William Elliott was a member

of the Provincial Press Association of SA, and in The Argus of April 30, 1914 records: 'Mr J. W. Elliott of The Southern Argus and The Victor Harbor Times, was unanimously appointed President of the South Australian Provincial Press Association of SA.'

He was also elected to the Strathalbyn Corporation in November 1883, aged 24, spending 16 years as councillor and 19 as Mayor.

The Southern Argus was initially a broadsheet size, but reduced to a tabloid in 1935.

In 1939, Cecil Elliott took over the paper from his father.

In 1941, the Jones family began what was to be a multiple generational partnership with The Southern Argus when Cecil Elliott and George Donald Jones formed the partnership and in 1947 moved production to premises on Albyn Terrace, where G.D. Jones had opened his own printing business.

Cecil Elliott became one of the longest serving journalists in SA, writing for the paper until about 12 months before his death.

His son Bob became the family's fourth generation at The Argus until about 12 months before his death.

G.D. Jones, and his family to follow him, had a shared interest in sport.

According to the edition on Thursday, March 17, 2016 – where the paper celebrated 150 years – it was nothing for him to ride his pushbike to Goolwa or Victor Harbor to fulfill engagements.

G.D. Jones became Secretary of the Strathalbyn Racing Club in 1922, was elected



FIRST EDITION



to the Strathalbyn Corporation in 1926, serving continuously until July 1947 when he became Mayor, serving for two years.

The George Donald Jones wing at the Strathalbyn Hospital was named after him.

Murray Leon Jones took over the paper on the death of George, becoming Editor on Cecil Elliott's death in 1969, continuing in the position until his death in October 1991.

When Murray Jones became ill sons Donald and Perry would duck across the backyard to the house for advice.

Elder son Don became Editor following the death of Murray in 1991, but in the March 17, 2016 edition, it was noted Perry "officially" also wore the Editor's hat, and Don's wife Janet was equally as important.

At one time, the paper employed between nine or 10 permanent employees, along with casuals.

The business progressed from the hand press of 1870 to letterpress printing, offset printing, and then the computer age.

From about 1979, according to historian Brian Simpson's Strathalbyn 1839-2006, revised edition, the paper was printed in Murray Bridge.

Mr Simpson noted one anecdote regarding Lance Watson, who worked for The Southern Argus for about 50 years as a typesetter and compositor up until about 1970.

He made his worst mistake when an elderly lady sent in a In Memoriam notice to say that "six lonely years" had passed since her husband's death.

Unfortunately, Mr Watson typeset "six lovely years".

At another time, an obituary to a Mr. J. Clifford was published on March 3, 1932.

The undertaker had been called when The Argus report was written, however, Mr Clifford recovered and was "quite amused" to read of his demise.

He went on to live another two years.

The Southern Argus was sold in February 2021 to the Robinson family, Angaston, who also produce the award-winning Barossa Valley publication, The Leader.

Tony Robinson is the firm's Managing Director, while Co-Directors are his wife, Angela and sons, Peter (Print Manager) and Darren Robinson (The Southern Argus General Manager).

The first publication under the new team was printed in Angaston on February 11, 2021.

Award-winning Editor Sara Gilligan was the paper's first under the Robinsons.

Journalist Giorgina McKay joined in March 2021, followed by fellow journalist Tara Nash in October 2021.

Neil Casson was the inaugural Advertising Manager, also joining in mid-2021.

Under the new team the paper took out the coveted Best Country Newspaper for a circulation under 4000 in 2022 at the Country Press SA awards.

Current Editor Deirdre Graham took on the role in August 2023, and advertising representative Heidi Fabian began in November 2023.

Current photographers are Rowan Sims and Mark Andrews.



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# Rankine bloodline still going strong

By Giorgina McKay

Many generations of families have lived in Strathalbyn, but none as long as the Rankines.

William Rankine emigrated from Dalbair in Scotland on board the *Fairfield*, arriving in Australia on April 30, 1839, accompanied by his wife Jane and their six children, along with a large party of relatives consisting of his brother James Rankine, his other brother Dr John Rankine and his wife Mary, and William's nieces and nephews.

A year later they were all in Strathalbyn, which was named by John, who later returned to Scotland.

Meanwhile, William acquired land as far as Milang, Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island, and had six sons – James, Matthew, John, William, Andrew and Gemmell – before passing away at the age of 83 in September 1882.

The Rankine family still has roots in town 185 years later, stemming from William's son Matthew, who had his own son called John who then had a son called Robert.

He married Janet Rankine and had children together that continue to live in the district, including Valerie Rankine.

Valerie felt proud that the Rankines have strong ties to the town.

"I recently got married and kept my maiden name because I think the Rankine family, not just William but also Dr John Rankine... were just instrumental in starting Strathalbyn," Valerie said.

Valerie explained the Rankine family have stayed for generations in the district predominantly for farming.

The youngest in the bloodline is now Katherine who lives in Ashbourne.

# Mayor's message for Strathalbyn

On behalf of everyone at Alexandrina Council, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Strathalbyn a happy 185th 'township' birthday.

Reaching a historic milestone of 185 years is quite an achievement.

It is a testament to the resilience of the community to overcome the ups and downs of early colonial life and the changing fortunes of agriculture and industry.

South Australia was officially settled as a British Province in 1834.

Just three years later, a group of Scottish settlers heard about the fertile, well-watered lands around the Angas River and headed out from Adelaide over the Mount Lofty Ranges to make their home in the valley they dubbed 'Strath' 'Albyn'.

Strathalbyn was the first town in South Australia established by Scottish migrants.

One of the founding fathers, Dr John Rankine, is attributed with giving the town its name with 'Strath' being a Gaelic word for 'valley with a river' and 'Albyn' being the name of an iron mill in Glasgow where he had business connections.

Strathalbyn's early prosperity has been attributed to its location on the main intercolonial route between Adelaide and Victoria.

When gold was discovered in Ballarat in 1851, Strathalbyn was an extremely popular stopover and one of the reasons the town has four hotels.

The town also prospered thanks to the profile and influence of its early community leaders.

Between 1855 and 1888, 10 men from Strathalbyn were elected to State Parliament and six served terms as either Chairman or Mayor of the Strathalbyn District Council.

They were influential people who brought with them considerable political interest



Alexandrina Mayor Keith Parkes wishes a happy birthday to Strathalbyn residents. Photo: Tara Nash

lands to the north.

Early settler records tell us that the Ngarrindjeri and the Peramangk peoples used the area now known as the Soldiers Memorial Gardens as a major meeting place.

The site remains an important community meeting place today for events such as Christmas Where The Angas Flows, and our 2024 Australia Day Award Community Event of the Year for Strathalbyn and Surrounds.

Our Australia Day Awards honouring significant community contributions are held every year in the gardens.

Council is assisting Strathalbyn in its endeavours to thrive.

We are considering options for the adjoining South Terrace properties council recently purchased next to the town's Visitor Information Centre.

Land in the centre of Strathalbyn rarely comes up for sale and as a council, we had to act quickly but consider the best long-term outcomes for our community.

Council values the heritage of our region. We are the first regional council in South Australia to endorse a full-scale Heritage Strategy and Action Plan.

In recognition of Strathalbyn's 185th anniversary of European history and South Australia's History Festival, we have decided to hold our May council meeting in the town.

The meeting on May 20, 2024, will be held in St Andrew's Church Hall, 10 Alfred Place, Strathalbyn, starting at 5.30 pm.

St Andrew's Uniting Church was built by Presbyterian Scottish immigrants and is celebrating its 180th anniversary this year which is another significant anniversary.

Happy birthday Strathalbyn, and I encourage you to come and join us at our May 20 council meeting.

## Connecting our community



**Congratulations to the Strathalbyn Community on celebrating 185 years**

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Support information and more.

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## Historians keeping local stories alive

The *Southern Argus* thanks historians Brian Simpson (right) and Strathalbyn Library history room volunteers Carolyn Tucker, Coralie Nicolson, Bronwyn Holdsworth, and Kathy Gambling for their extensive research and contribution to this liftout. Photo: Tara Nash

By Tara Nash

Without the countless hours of research by local historians, the stories behind Strathalbyn could have been lost.

But thanks to their tireless efforts, families can piece together the stories of their ancestors, shop owners can discover the history of their buildings, and locals can strengthen their ties to the place they call home.

Volunteers at the history room at Strathalbyn Library spend hours researching, indexing, filing, and cataloguing *Argus* copies, and are open for public enquiries on Mondays from 9am to noon, and Wednesdays and Fridays from 9am to 3pm.

Some of their research includes Carolyn Tucker's *Exodus from Strathalbyn*, which explores families who left Strathalbyn in the 1870s, and an extensive timeline by decade of the Strathalbyn and district, and local flooding history.

Kathy Gambling produced *Going Down the Street* – a history of Strathalbyn's business

area, and Strathalbyn's High Street alongside David Finnie.

While not a library volunteer, Brian Simpson has privately researched Strathalbyn from 1839 to 2006.

With incredible passion and dedication, they liken history to a jigsaw puzzle, and are motivated by fitting the pieces together, and Ms Tucker enjoys working alongside like-minded volunteers.

"I'm always learning something new," Ms Tucker said.

"It feels productive and feels like a useful way to spend leisure time.

"It has a purpose and is needed for a reason and it's satisfying when research helps others."

The historians played an integral role in researching and collaborating information for this special liftout.

The *Southern Argus* would like to sincerely thank the group for their support and contribution, and extends gratitude to other community members for their efforts in collaborating information to help celebrate the town's milestone.



Strath Neighbourhood Centre volunteers: Teena Cobiac, Jane Crouch, Jordan Sheffield, Julia Currie, Tina Fretwell, Jan Falkai, Raye Goldfinch, and Jeanette Leonard, preparing Tuesday lunch or busy behind the scenes. Photos: Tara Nash

## The backbone to the community

Filled with passionate community members, Strathalbyn runs on countless volunteered hours.

In the latest Census data, 22.7 per cent of the population reported doing some voluntary work in 2021, a similar proportion across Alexandrina Council, which is up from 17 per cent across South Australia, which is still a greater portion than Australia.

The town has too many volunteers and organisations to name, from service groups, to religious communities to emergency services.

Some community members have clocked decades of service with their clubs, while others have raised countless funds for worthy causes and supported others within the town.



Pauline Wittwer served 45 years to Meals on Wheels in Strathalbyn, and was recognised in 2023.



### STRATHALBYN RSL SUB BRANCH IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE 185 YEARS OF COMMUNITY

The RSL has been a cornerstone of support, camaraderie and remembrance for generations. From ANZAC Day ceremonies to community events, we stand as a proud symbol of service and sacrifice.

Discover our heritage, connect with local veterans, and find out how you can get involved. Whether it's through volunteering, attending events, or becoming a member, there's a place for you at Strathalbyn RSL.

Together, let's honour the past and embrace the future as we celebrate 185 years of community.

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## STRATHALBYN 185 YEARS



To celebrate Strathalbyn's 185th Anniversary, Council has resolved to hold its **20 May 2024 Ordinary Council Meeting** at the **St Andrew's Church Hall**, 10 Alfred Place, Strathalbyn, commencing at 5.30 pm.

The change in venue is in lieu of the Ordinary Meeting being held at the Alexandrina Council Community Chambers 'Wal Yuntu Warrin', 11 Cadell Street, Goolwa.

Council cordially invites former Council Members of the now amalgamated Strathalbyn Council and the Goolwa and Port Elliot Council to attend the 20 May 2024 meeting.

**For more information, contact Council on 8555 7000.**

## Thank you, Strathalbyn

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# 'Lest we forget'... remembering locals who served

About 350 people from the area served for the freedom of the country, with 33 from WW1 and 19 in WW2 paying the ultimate sacrifice.

Strathalbyn was an enlistment town so people came here from around the area.

Here are some of the faces of those catalogued and remembered at the Strathalbyn RSL Sub-Branch.



Henry Coleridge Blackmore, who joined the 2-10 Battalion.



Frank Crouch was born in Yorke Peninsula and joined the AIF in 1940, then went with the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion.



Clarry enlisted in the Army in 1941, in the 27 SA Scottish Regiment AIRF and served in Darwin and the Pacific. He was one of six sons from the same family who served at the same time, and a brooch was presented to Mrs Brideson for that sacrifice. Two sons and her daughter did not enlist.



James Fairley served in the Australian Army during World War II and was enlisted in 1941. His posting at discharge was 2-27 Australian Infantry Battalion.



F/LT Reginald Mattner spent four years in the RAAF enlisting in 1940. He was posted to Plymouth Great Britain early in 1942 where he served with coastal command in No.10 Flying Boat Squadron for the next three years. Reg was twice President of Strathalbyn RSL and worked tirelessly for the club. In 1981, he received the Leagues Distinguished Service Award for his efforts.



Strathalbyn's victory celebrations when the war finished in 1946. Photo: Connie Stacey



Connie and Betty Stacey (centre) had four soldiers billeted to their West Terrace property.



Gordon R Gale who enlisted in the Air Force in 1942 and initially trained at Victor Harbor, and was posted to Melbourne, Parafield where he worked on mostly Tiger Moths, and at Milne Bay, and Goodenough Island with Eighth Squadron, and Madang.

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# Building social ties for two decades



By Tara Nash

Strathalbyn Woodshed has connected community members for two decades, and this year, the charity is celebrating its 20th birthday and long success.

As well as this, the shed is expected to officially reopen this year in the wake of November's fire which initially was estimated at \$70,000 worth of damage.

An overheated saw bench sparked the fire and while members extinguished the blaze, an ember was sucked into the dust extractor and caught alight.

Since then, the shed has reopened in a partial capacity while they recover, which has allowed members to reconnect, which President Richard Carter said was important in enhancing the friendship, camaraderie, physical movement and creativity among "the woodshed family".

"A lot of these guys have sheds and workshops at home, but they still come to the woodshed because it's fun here, they can sit around and have a joke," he said.

"We have a lot of people who only get out of the house to come to the woodshed, but we also have people who are really busy and make time to come."

Strathalbyn Woodshed began when council co-ordinated a shared skill program to give young people experience in woodwork, and sought volunteers through a local Probus Club meeting in 2003.

An expansion of activities led to a formation of Senior Woodwork Group in 2004, which operated alongside the shared skill program.

The group expanded into an adjacent council garage in 2008, but over the years, the group outgrew the facility and moved outside the residential area.

The Milne Road building was fitted with insulated walls and ceilings, and painting, and funded by \$310,000 from Alexandrina Council and \$40,000 from Wood Craft Group.

The building opened on March 23, 2018, where Strathalbyn Woodshed remains today.

About 60 members now regularly work alongside each other on different



Strathalbyn Woodshed Life Members Joe Golden and Ken Knight are the two longest running members of the club of 17 and 18 years respectively. Photo: Tara Nash

projects, sharing skills and advice.

Often mistakenly referred to as a 'men's shed', Strathalbyn Woodshed is committed to offering an inclusive environment, and about 15 per cent of the membership are women.

Playing an important role in the area, the shed often partners with other organisations for the benefit of the community, for example, recently with Lions, Scouts, Strath Neighbourhood Centre and Stationmaster's Art Gallery.

Longest running member Ken Knight joined the shed 18 years ago after reading an ad in *The Argus*.

He was the President when the club moved to its Milne Road space, and played a strong role managing its build, which was "good fun and a lot of work".

With a house full of furniture from his work over the years, Mr Knight now works on the maintenance of the machinery.

"Coming from a heavy engineering background, this place just felt natural," he said.

"And it's something to do – it gives you something to think about and helps keep the brain active."

Joe Golden is the second longest running member, joining one year after Mr Knight.

"I think the woodshed is the best thing that's ever started," he said.

"You've got somewhere to come, you can work with people, you can have a good time here."



## St Andrew's celebrates 180 years

At the Centenary Pioneers Service on October 21, 1939, at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Strathalbyn are Rev Gordon Powell, Rev Samuel Martin, Rt Rev J R Fiddian, Rev David Chapman, J S Richardson, Rt Rev John Flynn OBE, Rt Rev A D Marchant, Rev J E Lloyd, Rev Ralph Blanchard, Rev J C Booth, J Logan, G M Meikle, A D Matheson, and John Flynn (centre).

By David Bunton

The St. Andrew's congregation in Strathalbyn will celebrate 180 years since the first church on the Alfred Place site since 1844 on May 26 at 10am.

The congregation pays respect to the Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri peoples, traditional custodians for millennia of the land they knew as Wiljauar or Munarown respectively.

Christian services were held in farm homesteads soon after European settlement in 1839. Then a rustic slab church was built on the Alfred Place site in 1844.

That was replaced in 1848 by a rectangular stone church, now the oldest remaining Presbyterian church building in SA.

The first two were in Adelaide and have been demolished after they moved to larger churches. Extensions of the transepts took place in 1857, and gallery, porch and spire in 1865.

A bell sent from England was too heavy for the spire, so a bell tower was built in 1869, and a clock installed in 1895.

This gave St. Andrew's the profile of clock tower and spire now celebrated on the town logo. A vestry in 1938 was the last addition.

The first resident minister was Rev John Anderson of the Free Church of Scotland, from 1851 to 1871.

A manse was built on Manse Road and Love Avenue, named later after its longest resident, Rev G C Love, 1892-1923.

A hall had been built opposite the church in 1912 on land donated by Matthew Rankine, and that served as the first high school in Strathalbyn for 12 years.

A new manse was built next to it in 1925. In 1977, Strathalbyn Presbyterians voted

to join the Uniting Church, and their first parish included the former Congregational Church in Milang and former Methodist churches in Ashbourne, Finnis, Langhorne Creek and Strathalbyn.

The Strathalbyn John Wesley Church – formerly Methodist – on Commercial Road was later sold to the Strathalbyn Players as the Chapel Theatre, and the two congregations then worshipped together in St. Andrew's as Strathalbyn Uniting Church.

The Strathalbyn congregation currently enjoys a wide range of visiting preachers, ordained and lay, but has begun setting money aside to employ a full-time Minister again.

Meanwhile, a 2020 survey showed that while the church was well built on good foundations, 170 plus years of weather and time require extensive restoration work.

Initial costings at 2020 prices totalled \$1.8 million.

Since then over \$284,000 has been raised, but heritage building costs have escalated, some quotes tripling.

So far, \$182,000 has been spent on the surveys, on making the front spire safe after loose masonry was found at the top, and on restoring the roof, gutters and masonry at the western end of the church.

The congregation is now aiming to raise another \$1 million towards fully restoring the rest of the roof, gutters, front spire and masonry.

The clock tower and the interior are later projects, which can only be costed when the time comes.

Donations can be made to St. Andrew's Strathalbyn Restoration Fund: BSB: 105-019, Account: 047 416 240.



## 180th Anniversary of St Andrews Congregation

A celebration service followed by History display & Refreshments

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# Strathalbyn history revealed one walking tour at a time

By Deirdre Graham

Back in 2015, a walk through the Strathalbyn neighbourhood sparked an idea that would go on to see the town's history presented theatrically, musically, and with a big dose of humour via popular walking tours.

Helen Stacey Bunton and David Bunton put together the Strathalbyn Theatrical Historical Tours, drawing members from the Alexandrina Singers, Strathalbyn Players, and Strathalbyn Uniting Church.

"Helen and I were just walking in our little area, with its old workers cottages, and Helen said 'wouldn't it be good to find out the history of these cottages and do a history walking tour?'" Mr Bunton said.

"A few yards later (she asked) 'wouldn't it be good if we had the Strath Players to act out some of the funny scenes?', and then a bit later, 'wouldn't it be good if there were songs?', and so it developed."

Tours with the same theme, with local history unveiled, are done in the same location for two years, and have included *Old Strathalbyn*, *Down by the Riverside*, *Kirk & Town*, and *What the Barmaid Knew - High Street*.

"These stories are hidden in these old parts of Strathalbyn, and with the stories, there is history, pathos and humour, and we had to work out how to bring all that together in an hour-and-a-half experience," Ms Stacey Bunton said.

From the start the idea was embraced. "The first tour, we knew that one of the houses along North Parade was one of the early cottage schools and another was an early cottage hospital run by two nurses, and we had their names, so the people who lived there volunteered, and they set up a room as a ward," Mr Bunton said.

"(Part of the tour was at) the butcher shop which now has the Jessie Bray sign... so we had Craig Maidment, a former butcher, or his daughter Melissa, or Ken Knights, who was the first chicken shop seller, to play the butcher



Strathalbyn Theatrical History Tour members David Bunton, Helen Stacey Bunton, Meredith Green, Jon Richards, and Gillian Tucker. Photo: Alexandrina Council

"And then the piece de resistance was the little house of ill repute.

"All the formal story of the house had been told and then the 'madam' appears on the balcony."

Likewise the second tour was popular in its own right.

"It was *Down by the Riverside*, which was the story of the Aboriginal meeting place," Mr Bunton said.

"The first swimming pool was the river, which was dammed off and it is still there.

"Dawn Fraser had come and given swimming exhibitions, and (local) Mrs Moran, she got inner tubes from large tyres and taught kids to swim.

"She had a harness that she would put on them and a big hook, and if they were sinking, she would drag them out.

"She dreamed of an Olympic size swimming pool, so we adapted 'Climb Every Mountain' to 'Swim the Angas River' Til You

Find Your Dream' and pointed to it up there."

That tour featured the pioneer cemetery - from which gravestones were moved to the town's new cemetery, but not the bones - and the tale of school children having to dig slit trenches during World War II in case the Japanese invaded.

*Kirk & Town* featured tales of St Andrews Church, Albyn Terrace, and the old picture theatre, and then last year *What the Barmaid Knew - High Street*, with its intriguing headline, was presented.

This tale returns as an SA History Festival Event on May 4, May 5, May 11 and May 12 this year.

"People just say 'Oh, it is just history', but when you say 'It is called *What the Barmaid Knew*, they laugh and say 'We might see that one,'" Ms Stacey Bunton said.

A total of 110 paying guests came along last year.

The group sources most of its information

from local historians Gwenda Knights, Brian Simpson, and *The Southern Argus*.

"But this High Street tour, the history was already written in a book about High Street by Kathy Gambling and David Finnie, the latter who is a volunteer at the Motor Museum," Mr Bunton said.

"We talked to him, borrowed a copy of the book, and included him in the tour."

This year *What the Barmaid Knew* will feature seven singers, along with one actor from the Strathalbyn Players playing the important role of the barmaid.

"For the songs, we look for some relevance, for example West Terrace had floods, and there are pictures of people rowing down West Terrace, so we sang the Skye Boat Song (during that tour)," Mr Bunton said.

"The first one we did folk songs, the second one we adapted various songs such as *Climb Every Mountain*, and now the Alexandrina Singers are members of One Music, so that gives us permission to sing a wide range of songs.

"This one, the High Street tour, at the Motor Museum we will sing *Daisy, Daisy* and I talk about the Penny Farthing races, as Strathalbyn had 10 years of (them)."

*What the Barmaid Knew* also reveals the story of two 'Gentlemen's establishments', a cow that got loose on High Street and charged through a china shop without breaking anything, before wreaking havoc in a nearby tailor's shop, an accidental fatal shooting, and the day every pub in town ran out of beer.

"We have the publican offering, 'well, we have got wine', and this soldier says 'Wine? No self-respecting Australian bloke is going to drink wine, that will never take off,'" Mr Bunton said.

"The other one we are highlighting is the secret tunnel, but I think we will leave that one as a secret until people come on the tour."

The tours now have on-standby power points of the places featured in case of wet weather.

The couple love uncovering history.

## Words of Blessing for Strathalbyn

As we celebrate the 185th anniversary of Strathalbyn, the local churches say thank you to all the people, past, and present, who have made our town a place of harmony and goodwill. We would like to share the following words of encouragement and hope with you all, the people we live, work, and meet every day.

### † OUR COMMUNITY

We give thanks to God for all the people in the Strathalbyn community, including parents and children, the young and the elderly. We pray in the name of Jesus that your lives, your homes, and your families will be blessed by the love and peace of God.

### † THOSE DOING IT TOUGH

We pray that God will give hope and strength to all those in our community who are struggling and in need of help. We thank God for the people and organisations who care for those doing it tough in life.

### † LOCAL BUSINESSES

We give thanks to God for all the local businesses of Strathalbyn, including 158 years of *The Southern Argus*. We pray that God will bless them all as they provide for the community's needs.

### † SCHOOLS

We give thanks to God for the dedicated teachers, ancillary staff and Pastoral Care Workers at our local schools and early learning centres. We pray that they will be blessed as they continue to provide quality education and a loving and caring environment for young people to learn and grow.

### † COMMUNITY SERVICES

We give thanks for the community services in our town, CFS, police, ambulance, SES, and medical facilities, and we pray for these people as they continue to show care and compassion in all situations where they are called to give assistance.

*We pray that God will continue to bless you all with his love and peace.  
From the Churches of Strathalbyn*



The repaired dispensing sign from the High Street chemist, and a collection of artefacts from the store, now on show at the Strathalbyn Village Pharmacy.

# Highlights of chemistry in Strathalbyn



By Deirdre Graham

Strathalbyn historian Brian Simpson's publication *Strathalbyn 1839 to 2006* lists Joseph Bull as the town's first chemist.

Mr Bull set up his dispensary at 12 Grey Street in about 1856.

He took his own life on January 10, 1857, leaving behind wife Jane and six children.

At the time chemists did not have to have formal training, and Mrs Bull became one of, if not the only, female chemists in SA.

She left Strathalbyn in 1877.

Mr Simpson reveals that by 1870, the town had two or three more chemists.

They were Frederick Horne, who had a dispensary in Swale Street by 1869, Mr L. Thornber on High Street opposite the Commercial Bank from 1864 to 1870, and

Francis Miller, who was also on High Street in 1868, just south of the present Town Hall.

Mr Miller sold his business to Charles L.A. Wyatt in 1898, and Mr Wyatt remained at his 'Chemistry and Dentistry' for 45 years until his death in 1943.

Keith Marsh then purchased the business and ran it until 1957 when he sold it to Owen Johnson.

According to *Strathalbyn 1839 to 2006*, the business then became a partnership with Roy Martin – who had set up a second pharmacy in Dawson Street in 1933 – and later with Mr Martin's son Kinnish – also known as Kym – from 1963.

The High Street pharmacy moved a few doors south in 1968 in its centenary year.

It was resold in 2001 to Peter Hocking, Mary Roediger and David Merry.

Since then, Markus Gebauer, 2006, Lauren Layley, 2009, Neil Kluge, 2012, and James Wittwer, 2021, have joined as partners.

On October 16, 2023, the High Street chemist relocated again – this time to the new development on Braemar Drive, bringing with it many artefacts such as a repaired stain-glass window dispensary, bottles, and books, and now named Strathalbyn Village Pharmacy.

Strathalbyn resident Colleen Hoffman worked as a pharmacy assistant in the town for 35 years, retiring five years ago.

"When I first started, it was known as Martin and Johnson – Owen Johnson had High Street and Kym Martin had Dawson Street," Mrs Hoffman recalled.

In 2013, the Dawson Street pharmacy became Amcal and last year changed to Wizard.

Mrs Hoffman said before computers there was a lot of paper work.

"There were a lot of accounts, so if people put it on their account you had to itemise everything on a docket book," she said.

"You can imagine how long it took."

Thirty-five years ago some other things were very different.

"They used to mix up the cough mixture, senega and ammonia in a big tub out the back and put it in bottles," Mrs Hoffman said.

"They would make a lot of creams on premises, and had a cooker that melted the paraffin and whatever else had to go in it.

"Mercurochrome was around for about 10 years while I was there.

"Permanganate of potash, you could mix that up and put it on things... when I was there, it came in little bottles."

Likewise, calamine lotion used to take the sting out of things such as mosquito bites, proved relatively ineffectual, as was camphor.

Mothballs were common, and people would buy sodium metabisulphite to dry their apricots.

The former High Street business, although relocated, remains one of the town's longest running entities.



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Village  
Pharmacy

WIZARD  
pharmacy

Strathalbyn Chemist  
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Shop 1/12 Braemar Drive, Strathalbyn | P: 08 8536 2612  
Hours: Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

**Wizard Pharmacy**

10 Dawson Street, Strathalbyn | P: 08 8536 2266  
Monday - Friday 8am - 7pm | Saturday 9am - 5pm | Sunday 10am - 3pm

Eastern Fleurieu  
R-12 School



8536 2455

easternfleurieu.sa.edu.au



The Milang School building was built in 1864, opening in 1865 and is the oldest purpose-built building still being used for education in South Australia.

In 2013, Strathalbyn High School and Eastern Fleurieu School celebrated 100 years of Secondary Education in Strathalbyn. Commencing in 1913 at the Primary School in Coleman Terrace (now the Community Library), secondary school classes then moved to St Andrews Hall in 1915 before the present Callington Road site opened in 1927.

Eastern Fleurieu R-12 School was established in 1996, following a review of educational provision in this area. The new school emerged as a result of an amalgamation of five existing schools in Strathalbyn, Langhorne Creek, Milang and Ashbourne.

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