

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

6 August 2013



Awards night 29 July 2013: recipients Patricia Sumerling (L) and Elspeth Grant (R), with the Governor and President; His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce welcomes guests in Government House Ballroom. (Photos: Alex Kwong)

Dear Members, Friends and Supporters

The History Council of South Australia celebrates and raises the profile of history by sharing news, hosting lectures and other events, and presenting the *Historian of the Year Awards*. The annual Awards were presented by the Governor, His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR on 29 July at Government House. I'm honoured to commend the three historians granted the 2013 Awards. They are:

Elspeth Grant - Emerging South Australian Historian of the Year Award
Ron Gibbs AM - South Australian Lifelong History Achievement Award
Patricia Sumerling - South Australian Historian of the Year Award.

The judges were unanimous in deciding that the award for Emerging Historian should recognise Elspeth Grant's wide-ranging achievements, including graduating from the University of Adelaide in First Class Honours in History, publishing peer reviewed articles, gaining curatorial experience at Ayers House and the Migration Museum, and now training to teach history in secondary schools.

There were more nominations for the South Australian Lifelong History Achievement Award than for the others, reflecting the weight of talent among senior ranks of SA historians. Ron Gibbs has done more than anyone else for the advancement of SA history in our schools. This well-known and accomplished historian has been writing about SA History for the past 40 years, including an oft-reprinted general history of the colony and state, as well as histories of the Stock Exchange, Prince Alfred College and St Andrews Hospital. (Ron Gibbs is presently travelling overseas and regrets that he couldn't attend on the night).

The South Australian Historian of the Year Award honours teaching, writing or presentation on historical topics, raising community awareness of history and heritage issues, and strengthening the community profile of history. The judges were again unanimous that the 2013 award should go to Patricia Sumerling, a freelance historian with a passion for telling stories, in books, lectures, radio talks and walks, who has eminently succeeded over the past 30 years in communicating her own fascination with SA's built heritage, as most notably with pubs and the Adelaide Park Lands, to a broad constituency of people.

The History Council's annual awards aim to recognise and celebrate the work historians in this State, and to raise the profile of history. The judges were immediate past-presidents of the HCSA: Professor Alison Mackinnon AM, Hon Dr John Bannon AO, and Professor Wilfrid Prest. They were gratified to see an increase to 19 nominations this year, and by the considerable achievements of those nominated.

We were pleased to welcome all of them on the night, with close to 100 other guests. We're grateful to His Excellency and Mrs Liz Scarce for hosting this wonderful event in an appropriately historic House, and for presenting these Awards and the inaugural awards in 2012. We also thank the nominators, the judges, and Wakefield Press for their generous book sponsorship of the Awards.

I now ask university staff to encourage students to submit their essays for the *Wakefield Companion* prize administered by the HCSA (see website), and all members to make Award nominations in 2014.

Membership

Our members are the major organisations concerned with history in SA (including universities, cultural institutions and government departments), regional and special interest historical societies, and both professional and voluntary associations, museums, archives and other organisations.

The HCSA depends on membership fees for its survival. Renewals are now due (for the new financial year). Please renew or join as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. We have a new HCSA brochure (designed with Alison Fort) that can be used to renew or join. Our Treasurer will email you soon, but you can also ask our Secretary to email the brochure to you – this can also be sent through your own networks and for AGMs, or printed.

Member news: I attended the 2013 *Heritage Heroes* awards event on 21 May. There were HCSA members both in the audience and receiving awards. These are given by the South Australian Heritage Council, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources and the Hawke Centre at UniSA, and were presented by Hon Ian Hunter, Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation. The awards recognise those who have made an outstanding contribution to the upkeep of SA's heritage, and included, I'm pleased to say, HCSA Vice President Richard Venus. The Minister also presented awards to Farina Restoration Project Group, Lorraine Pomery (Port Elliot history), Pichi Richi Trade Training Group, Engineering Heritage - South Australia Committee, Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society, Michael Bollen (Wakefield Press), Veronica Jenkin (Pt MacDonnell history), Brian Samuels (professional historian and voluntary Port Adelaide historian), Roy Taplin (restorer), and posthumously to Christine Finnimore.

More recently, I was asked to present another significant award, the *Excellence in History Teaching Award* to Deirdre Walters of St Columba's College. This was given at the History Teachers' Association of SA conference on 2 August. The highlight of the award application for Deirdre Walters was the esteem held by her from her students. The History Council lays claim to being 'The voice for history in South Australia', but for scores of schoolchildren that voice belongs to their history teacher.

Advocacy

I met with past presidents John Bannon and Wilf Prest on 6 June to discuss advocacy; and on 11 July was interviewed jointly with other HCSA members Margaret Anderson (CEO, History SA) and Paul Foley (President, History Teachers Association) by the Committee undertaking the Review of the School of History and Politics at the University of Adelaide. Topics included the professional development of history teachers due to increased requirements of the new curriculum, and issues also raised by the HCSA in its written submission to the review:

The School of History and Politics has faced considerable resource pressures since the introduction of the Relative Funding Model in the early 1990s, largely expressed in deteriorating staff: student ratios... Apart from negative impacts on both small-group tutorial teaching, and the mentoring of undergraduate writing tasks, the very onerous teaching loads carried by staff ... must seriously impede their capacity to engage in research, publication and external community engagement. The Council accordingly urges the University to ensure that the History Discipline ... is sufficiently resourced to fulfil its vital cultural and educational roles, both within this state and nationally.

The HCSA provides a representative voice for history in SA, amongst other activities by advocating to government and government agencies. Hence, in the lead-up to the next State election I have requested meetings with the Premier, Jay Weatherill, and with the Leader of the Opposition, Steven Marshall, to discuss history and heritage issues and government policy. The meeting with Mr Marshall will take place on 6 August. One topic to discuss will concern the HCSA's continued support for a Museum of Adelaide.

HCSA Operations

The HCSA is governed by a voluntary committee of 12-20 members (elected at the AGM held each September). Nominations of Council members are invited – please consider doing so for the AGM (to be held on 20 September, as detailed below).

We've greeted two new Council members since May: Sue Coppin (who joins the Executive) and Heid Ing (General Committee). Sue, a Collection Archivist at the University of Adelaide, succeeds Jacinta Weiss in representing the Australian Society of Archivists, South Australian Branch. Heidi, a Liaison Librarian at Flinders University, represents The Friends of South Australia's Archives.

Our thanks to Jacinta Weiss for her role on the Executive, particularly in giving media advice and help with membership. I'd also like to thank Elizabeth Weeks for volunteering to help the HCSA, including with the minutes and preparing website content.

The HCSA is also most appreciative of sponsorships and other assistance provided by *Brick Kiln* and *Scorpiion* wines, Ursh Richards (*onlineiq*), designer Alison Fort, the Hawke Centre and Mt Gambier Library (lecture venues), and the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund (which confirmed a grant of \$2,500 towards the costs of mounting the annual lectures).

For its part, the HCSA provided sponsorship for the State History Conference run by History SA, co-presented 'About time' events (in May) with Flinders University and the SA Film Corporation, and supplied historical advice to inquirers.

The Council (General Committee) met on 3 June, and the Executive on 3 July. Future meetings are:

- Council – 9 September, 5.30–7.30 pm, History SA Board room, Torrens Parade Ground
- 11th Annual General Meeting – 20 September, 4.45–5.30 pm (before the Annual Lecture), Allan Scott Auditorium, University of South Australia, City West Campus
- Executive – 21 October, 5.30–7.00 pm, State Library of SA
- Council – 25 November, 5.30–7.30 pm, History SA Board room, Torrens Parade Ground.

Website, Twitter and Email

The new layout of our website www.historycouncilsa.org.au is being worked on. We hope this will be up by the AGM. Please send updates and history 'bits' of interest to our Secretary Lauren Gobbett, for additions to the website, for email distribution and for tweeting. Our Twitter handle is **history_sa**. Email Twitter content to hcsasecretary@internode.on.net with 'Twitter' in the subject heading.



Left: Wilfrid Prest with Ursh Richards (L) and Alison Fort; from left, Jacinta Weiss, Annette Mills and Lauren Gobbett at inaugural awards in 2012. (Photos: Alex Kwong)

Events

The HCSA will support a workshop at the State Library of SA, on 'Using the internet: researching your family tree', as part of Adult Learners' Week between 1-8 September 2013 (details to be provided).

14 September (5.45pm) **Annual HCSA Lecture (country), Nicole Curby, 'Australian Generations: an oral history of our living memory'**, Mt Gambier Public Library, 6 Watson Tce
& 20 September (5.45pm) **Annual HCSA Lecture (city), Alistair Thomson, 'Australian Generations: an oral history of our living memory'** at University of South Australia, City West Campus, North Tce
 Refreshments provided at each event.

20 September (4.45–5.30) HCSA 11th Annual General Meeting (before the Annual Lecture), Allan Scott Auditorium, University of SA

Details: The Australian Generations Oral History Project is 'the first major national project to investigate intergenerational dynamics and the impact of dramatic social, technological and environmental changes on the experiences and attitudes of succeeding Australian generations... We will question and complicate the commonly accepted Australian generational ascriptions of Builders (born c. 1925-46), Baby Boomers (c. 1947-64), Generation X (c. 1965-79) and Generation Y (c. 1980-94)' The oral history interviews are structured around life stages, are lodged in the National Library of Australia, and will be used on ABC radio (<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/australian-generations/>.) By July 2013, 188 interviews were completed. Seventeen South Australians have been interviewed so far, mainly by South Australian historians.

Speaker Nicole Curby is a member of the project team, an interviewer, and a PhD candidate at La Trobe University. This public lecture is presented in partnership with the Mt Gambier Library. The speaker Alistair Thomson is Project Leader of the Australian Generations Oral History Project and Professor of History and Head of School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies at Monash University. This public lecture will also form part of the joint Biennial National Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia and History SA's 21st State History Conference, also at City West Campus, University of SA (21-24 September). The lecture is presented in partnership with the Hawke Centre, UniSA. Both lectures in Adelaide and Mt Gambier are assisted by a grant from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

I hope to see vast numbers of HCSA members, supporters and interested others at these events!

Susan Marsden
 President