



Fact Sheet

Friday 25 November 2005

Literature, Language and Music

Book Reviews

Jan Gaebler

The books I'd like to highlight today all focus on aspects of South Australian community life. Community history, as we will see, takes many shapes and forms, but all these books promise an interesting read, and all show how our past has shaped the future.

Brewers & Hoteliers: the Johnstons of Oakbank

By Alison Painter (RRP \$59.95)

Privately published by J & A.G. Johnston Ltd

J. & A.G. Johnston is SA's oldest family-owned business, dating back to 1839. This book is lavishly produced, and well researched. It is a hard-cover with dustjacket,, rich with archival photographs & illustrations, and comes with a special bookmark that helps the reader differentiate between the different generations of family members who have similar names.

Although it is a company history and specific history of the Johnston family, it is also a treasure trove of Adelaide's history with interesting insights to our early brewing and hotelier industries and associated businesses. The book highlights the evolving family challenges for the Johnstons, and business diversifications, over five generations in a family business that remains successful and prominent in the Adelaide of today. It provides information about early Adelaide that you simply won't find in a published format anywhere else.

Ruby of Trowutta: recollections of a country postmistress

Edited by Christobel Mattingly

RRP \$25. Paperback

This book really deals with Tasmania but I've snuck it in because of its SA connections, and it deals with an era that would have been echoed in SA. It is the 44th book of South Australian author Christobel Mattingly, who is largely known for her children's books. She has strong Tasmanian ties and in this book she has edited 30 hours of tape recorded sessions with Ruby Paul to develop this interesting biography that takes us back to another time that the world will never see again. Ruby lived for 94 years in Tasmania's isolated west and north-west, and the book provides wonderful insight into her family and community life from 1893 to the 1950s.

It is an engaging book that highlights the extraordinary achievements of Ruby Paul who considered her life very ordinary. It would be hard for most contemporary readers to imagine a life with no electricity, few roads, and lots of snakes and this book allows the reader a vicarious experience.



Mail man of the Birdsville Track :the story of Tom Kruse

By Kristin Weidenbach
RRP \$22.95 paperback

This is a classic story of the Australian outback. Adelaide's Tom Kruse was featured in a documentary called *Back of Beyond* in the 1950s when he was the mailman for the Birdsville Track—a route he covered from 1942 to 1963. Years later his Leyland Badger was restored to do a re-enactment of the 1000 km run from Maree to Birdsville. This book grew out of that project, and captures the wonderful real life stories of days we'll never see again.

'A great and glorious reformation': Six Early South Australian Legal Innovations

By Greg Taylor
RRP \$29.95 paperback

In 2007, we will be celebrating 150 years of South Australian Parliament. This interesting book highlights legal innovations, such of the Torrens System of land titles registration, the associations incorporation legislation, and several other SA law reforms, that have influenced our State, nation, and sometimes offshore. It also includes an inspirational introduction, by Justice Michael Kirby. The author, Greg Taylor, is a now senior lecturer at Monash University. He was born in SA and is a former University of Adelaide lecturer.

The next two books belong on the shelves of every South Australian home library.

The Jetties of South Australia: past and present

By Neville Collins
RRP \$29.95 paperback

Summertime is upon us and Adelaide's coast gives families and fishermen alike much joy on the jetties along our State's coastline. At one stage there were more than 100 jetties throughout our State and this interesting self-published book by retired Police Superintendent Neville Collins examines each of them. Neville gives us the interesting community stories behind the jetties, not just the facts and figures.

Manning's Place Names of South Australia

By Geoffrey H. Manning
RRP \$43.90, paperback

This is 'the bible' of South Australian place names (often quoted in *The Advertiser's what's your problem* column) but it is much more than a reference book about the meaning of place names used around South Australia. Most of the entries describe the circumstances for selecting the name and the derivation of the name and the result is a comprehensive and 'digestable' history of our State!

And the book is a bit like eating a bag of potato chips... you can't stop flicking through the pages, after reading one entry.



Black Kettle and Full Moon: daily life in a vanished Australia

By Geoffrey Blainey
RRP \$24.95

A perfect read for anyone who has a taste or smell for history. Blainey brings to life the sights, sounds and smells of ordinary Australia in the years between the gold rushes and World War 1.

Concluding note

Many of the books I have mentioned today have been self-published by the author, or published by small specialist publishers. One of the reasons for this is that the books are considered to have limited interest beyond South Australia and thus, are not taken up by mainstream publishers, who rely on mass-market appeal and volume sales for their profitability.

That means you may have to search a bit harder to find the book, because self-published authors and small publishers don't have ready access to the distribution channels of their bigger counterparts. However, any South Australian bookshop or library should be able to locate any of the titles I have mentioned today.

If listeners to Take Time do have any difficulty, they can contact me. My website at www.holdfastbooks.com.au has my phone, email and postal contacts.

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