

THE SONG OF AUSTRALIA - THE GAWLER CONNECTION

Gawler was the first community established outside of Adelaide in the year 1839.

It drew its name from South Australia's second Governor, Lieut. Colonel George Gawler (1795-1869), a distinguished soldier from the Duke of Wellington's great sieges and general actions.

He arrived on 12th October 1838 and administered the Government for 3 years. It is reported by Loyau in "The Gawler Handbook" (1880), "he seemed peculiarly fitted to call forth the resources of a new colony, while his character for calm determination and temperate vigour appeared especially adapted to extinguish dissensions and party feuds, and bring all authorities and settlers in the colony to act together in the mighty energy of mutual confidence."

In 1989 Whitelock, "Gawler - Colonel Light's Country Town" produced for the Town's Sesqui-Centenary, describes Gawler's hard work to overcome the mess left by Governor Hindmarsh, notwithstanding that Gawler was recalled because it was claimed he "spent too much" and allowed two aborigines to be executed for their part in the massacre of the people on the foundered brig "Maria".

Whitelock concludes, "However, he is now seen as perhaps the most effective of the Colony's Governors. He took a close interest in the growth of Gawler Town, which bears his crest as its coat of arms.

Always pious, he donated a silver communion service to Gawler's St. Georges Church". It is also recorded that in 1867 he donated a series of books to the Gawler Institute.

As to his crest - which is still the recognised crest of the Town of Gawler (No, not a City) the words "Sans Gauler Point De Fruit" are its embellishment. The GAULER does not refer to the family name or town, but is said to be a French took or hook which was used to pull the fruit of a tree down to allow it to be picked. The literal translation is "Without labour there is no fruit".

On Gawler's return to England the people of Gawler (among other gifts) provided an inscribed silver salver, and in 1997 after an offer from a Western Australian descendant the salver was purchased and is now in the hands of the Gawler Council.

The town of Gawler was established in the confluence of the North and South Para Rivers where they joined to become the Gawler River. The town prospered as a trading centre and a number of engineering and foundry companies were established. The best known was James Martin & Co. Well before the end of the 1800's they were manufacturing railway engines and rolling stock, agricultural machinery, and equipment for the Kalgoorlie mines including winding gear for the mine shafts. In the 1930's James Martin became part of the Perry Engineering enterprise at Mile End.

(As an aside, in 1952 Gawler which had obtained Municipal Status in 1857 was one and a half times (population) of Salisbury which at that time comprised all of the land which became Elizabeth 50 years ago this month - almost up to the Smithfield Hotel).

A significant feature of the Gawler scene in the late 1850's was its Gawler Institute organisation, which for its second anniversary in 1859 offered prizes for the composition of a song - words and music. The prize for each of the best words and the best music was 10 guineas - the old £10-10-0. The same year saw the arrival of the train service.

There were 96 poetic competitors and the words of Mrs Caroline Carleton (1819-1874) were adjudged the best.

Who was Mrs Caroline Carleton? She was a relatively obscure person compared to Carl Linger who won the prize for the music - but more of him later. Her husband was the Superintendent of Cemeteries at West Terrace. He was unwell, with Mrs Carleton carrying out his duties for two years before he died in 1861.

Caroline was descended from two people who escaped the guillotine in the French Revolution.

In 1793 after Louis XI lost his head the Count and Countess de la Mere were assisted to escape France and settle in England. Their daughter married a William Baynes. On 1st July 1819 they had a daughter they called Caroline.

At age 17 Caroline married a Charles James Carleton, a young medical student, and 3 years later in 1839 they sailed to Australia (a journey of 6 months) during which time they lost both of their children. The husband lost interest in returning to complete his medical course but became a medical dispenser to Dr Nash, our first Colonial Surgeon. In 1847 he became assayer and medical officer at Kapunda Mines, later a pharmacist in Adelaide before travelling to the Victorian Goldfields, again as an assayer, and on return became Curator of the Cemetery.

It is said of Caroline that she was sitting on a seat in the cemetery watching her children play and she composed the verses there and then - How many verses? - 5. (The 5th verse the one often sung as the second).

Influential clergymen tried to have her accepted in the post she had conducted on behalf of her husband for some 2 years, but the Government of the day refused. She then opened a school assisted by two of her daughters.

After catching a "chill" she died at Wallaroo where she was buried. A red granite obelisk, while not on the grave, bears the inscription:

In memory of
Mrs CAROLINE CARLETON
the authoress of the
"SONG OF AUSTRALIA"
who was interred in this
cemetery on July 12th 1874
aged 54 years.
Erected by her admirers
November 1923

Then follows the first verse of the "Song of Australia". Her death is still recognised each Australia Day with a ceremony at the site of the Obelisk.

Now who was Herr Carl Linger (1810-1862)?

He was born in Berlin and moved to Gawler (an accomplished musician) as one of the German "Forty Niners" on the "Princess Luise". He was a member of Richard Schomburgk's Berlin Migration Society of intellectuals who mainly settled by the Gawler River. With little in his musical ability as a means of earning a living in Gawler, Linger grew potatoes but his venture was a failure and it is stated that he moved to

Adelaide with 2/- in his pocket. In Adelaide he prospered by pioneering "a taste for good music and choral work".

Schomburgk, following community work in and about Gawler, became the Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and is still recognised in the Gawler area for having arranged the planting of the magnificent Morton Bay Fig Trees adjacent the South Para River parkland reserve.

Linger is said to have submitted three entries with the other two considered superior to the one selected.

It is reported that in 1850 he was appointed to conduct the Philharmonic Orchestra and that his presentation of "The Messiah" in Adelaide for the first time won high praise.

He died on 16th February 1862 and was buried near Charles Carleton in the West Terrace Cemetery.

In 1936 a penny fund organised in SA schools raised more than £100 for the memorial at which an annual ceremony is held in the presence of the Adelaide Liedertafel each Australia Day. It is recorded that 1,000 people sang the song at the unveiling of the memorial in 1936.

Now the song.

The song was first sung in the Oddfellows' Hall at Gawler on 12th December 1859, (the Institute was not built until 1870) by a Miss Allen who later became Mrs Limb - a relative of Bobby. I enjoyed a re-enactment of this event on 12th December 1959 - this time in the Gawler Institute. The 125th Anniversary was also recognised and was compered by Bobby Limb.

Combe "History of Gawler 1837-1908" reports "This production has gradually grown into public favour and is now regarded (1908) as the National Anthem of the Commonwealth". But more of this later.

At the same time as the song was composed and publicly aired, Gawler was frequently referred to as the "Colonial Athens" or "Athens of the South".

The Gawler Bunyip of 24th August 1914 (ever happy to mention any tribute to Gawler) quoted the Adelaide Advertiser "Not a day passes amid the excitement of the war, but what we hear the stirring stanzas of the

Song of Australia.....Australia's national song will live as long as we are a nation".

In May 1928 it is reported there was a historical visit to Gawler by descendants of Carl Linger and Caroline Carleton to present a coloured photograph of Caroline to the Institute.

In 1933 Peter Dawson made a gramophone record of the "Song of Australia".

It is now well known that "The Song of Australia" did not become the National Anthem although it still has great respect in South Australia with people standing to attention when it is played.

Of note is that it was ordered to be sung in SA schools in 1880 - and in a News article in 1959 it states, I quote "and has been so honoured ever since".

At the 2006 ceremony at West Terrace Cemetery adjacent to the eight foot high monument above Carl Linger's grave the address will highlight the input of Caroline Carleton. As usual the Adelaide Liedertafel will render "The Song of Australia".