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HISTORY ROOM

NEWS

December 2008

by Dawn Juers

No 53

Well folks, we did finally come home after an absolutely wonderful time up north. We travelled 13,000kms and were away for 7 months.

I must thank Helen, Peter & Frodo for doing such a wonderful job on the 'History Room News' whilst I was away. They produced such informative newsletters that I doubt I can keep up the standard.

Whilst in Canberra we visited the National Museum of Australia and saw the paddle steamer '*Enterprise*' which is a working exhibit at the Museum and has been moored on Lake Burley Griffin since October 1988. Also at Canberra, an interesting link with Goolwa was at Cockington Green Gardens where they have acres of manicured lawns and gardens containing hundreds of miniature buildings from around the world.



The plaque alongside says "A replica of the cottage built to accommodate the Superintendent of Australia's first railway – the horsedrawn railway between Goolwa and Pt Elliot. This model was constructed by Paul & Pauline Nicholas as a promotional item for their miniature village at Victor Harbor SA and was donated to Cockington Green Gardens when they sold their business in 2002. Scale 1-12.

**Railway Superintendent's Cottage Goolwa
Model at Cockington Green Gardens**

At Echuca I had the pleasure of meeting several members of the Echuca Moama Family History Group who have an extensive collection of material on the area. It was great to interact with people with similar interest.

In the March issue (No 44) of *History Room News* I related the story of William Stockford and William Wallace who were drowned at Goolwa on 5th September 1879 and the story of their demise in *Southern Argus* on 11th September 1879. The police constable who attended the scene was PC Thompson. On a visit to Thebarton Police Barracks I spoke to the Editor of *Hue & Cry* (newsletter of SA Police Historical Society), who did further research in their archives and found the following information on another drowning at Goolwa in June of the next year, 1880. The victim this time? – Police Constable Thompson!

SOUTHERN ARGUS JUNE 24TH 1880

CORONER'S INQUEST

DROWNING AT THE MURRAY MOUTH GOOLWA JUNE 22ND

This place was thrown into quite a state of excitement this morning, when it became known that PC Thompson had been drowned at the Murray Mouth the previous evening.

From proceedings taken at the Inquest which was held in the Court House on Tuesday June 22nd, before A. Graham Esq. Justice of the Peace, Coroner, the particulars of this melancholy event may be learned.

F. Cavill (Professor of Swimming) was sworn and deposed "*I was at Spenser's (sic) Hotel yesterday and expressing a wish to go fishing if anyone would go with me. The deceased Alfred Thompson, offered to do so. We started at about half past two and intended staying at the Signalman's House near the Flagmast all night. We saw the signal staff at about dusk and rounded the buoy and put the boat on the other tack and then lost sight of the staff and the buoy, and found ourselves in a strong current. We both got out the oars and tried to row but could not make any way. We reached the breakers and then the boat got swamped. We then got our oars off and the boat was overturned. We got onto the bottom and another sea washed us off. Then we got on the mast which was floating, but attached to the boat by the balyards. I tried to hold the deceased on the spar by putting a line around him, thinking that was the safest way until we drifted ashore or into smoother water outside. We were in the midst of the breakers. Just then, the deceased was very excited and I could not get him to do what I wanted. I got him onto the boat and told him to hold on with one hand and I held the other. The deceased was too far gone and said "Lord have mercy on our souls." Shortly after a heavy sea upset the boat and I never saw him after. I remained in the water for about an hour afterwards when I felt the bottom and walked out. I went over the sandhills and heard a dog bark and saw a light. I called out for some time but could not succeed in making anyone hear. I kept walking about to get warm for about two hours then the moon got up and I could see the opposite shore. I saw a light and started to walk to it and got to Goolwa between 11 and 12. I went to the Corio Hotel and sent notice to the Police."*

In reply to police trooper Rumball, the witness then said, "*The deceased steered the boat. He said he knew the place therefore I trusted him."*

By a Juror "*The boat was a safe one. A life boat would have been capsized in the place we were. We were both perfectly sober."*

Arthur Rededell was sworn and deposed.

"The deceased came to the Corio Hotel about 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Mr Cavill came in shortly after. The deceased said he was going with Cavill down to the Murray Mouth to the Signalmans. I lent him a gun which he asked for and also lent him a rug. He said they wanted to shoot pelicans. He took half a pint of whisky and two bottles of water. I went to the wharf and carried the things for them. I saw them get into the boat and start. The deceased was steering. They were both sober."

Police Trooper Rumball sworn.

'About 12 o'clock last night I received information of an accident at the Murray Mouth. I went over to the Corio Hotel and saw Mr Cavill the first witness. He said he was afraid Mr Thompson, his mate, had drowned. I immediately went off on horseback to the Murray Mouth, taking a half-caste with me. We went along the beach and found the body about a mile from the Mouth. The tide had gone out and left him on the beach with his hand and right arm covered with sand. It was about two o'clock when we found him. I recognized the body as that of A.E. Thompson, late Police constable of Goolwa.'

This was all the evidence and the Jury returned the following verdict.

"That the deceased A.E. Thompson came to his death by accidental upsetting of a boat at the Murray Mouth and that no blame is attached to anyone."

The Coroner remarked at the close of the proceedings that great credit was due to Police Trooper Rumball for the efficient means he had taken to recover the body and carry out the proceedings in such a short time.

[Our records show that Police Constable Alfred Edward Thompson , aged 27, was buried in Old Goolwa Cemetery. The ceremony was performed by Rev G.W. Patchell. There is no headstone.]

Thanks to Elees Pick, Editor of Hue & Cry. [Vol 30 Issue 6]

The latest issue of the *National Archives News* advise that next year sees the launch of the 1911 census online by findmypast.com. They also suggest the festive season is an ideal time to talk to your family and friends to help solve those puzzles in your family tree. What a good idea!



*Season's greetings to you all
from
The History Room Volunteers*

Genealogy help is available by appointment on Thursdays, to guide you through your research. Please phone the Library on 8555-7000 to make an appointment. For comments, suggestions or to receive this newsletter – email

historyroom2004@yahoo.com.au or phone the Library on 8555-7000.

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