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The Betrayal of Aborigines in Colonial South Australia – collected essays

- **A review of The South Australian Company**
- **The Angas Legend Revisited**
- **The Aborigines of the Lower South East**
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- **The Aborigines of South Australia (Taken from G.H. Manning, *A Colonial Experience*)**

The failure of South Australian historians to address the question of Aboriginal land rights has been a matter of more than academic interest. It has influenced the way the issue has been perceived in the nation as a whole and has spilled over into both law and politics. If the events of 1835-36 are overlooked, the interpretation of the whole history of the white-Aboriginal relations is distorted. Disregard the clear Imperial commitment to land rights - and above all, [Lord] Glenelg's insistence that land should be purchased - and all later developments are misunderstood.

(Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*)

Introduction

Shame Upon Us! We take their land and drive away their food by what we call civilization, and then deny them shelter from a storm ... What comes of all the hypocrisy of our wishes to better their condition? The police drive them into the bush to murder shepherds, and then we cry out for more police ... What can a maddened black think of our Christianity to deny him the sod on which he was born? You grow hundreds of bushels of corn on his land but deny him the crumbs that fall from the table ... They kill a sheep, but you drive his kangaroo away. You now drive him away from his own, his native land - out upon it; how can God's all-seeing eye approve of this?

(*Adelaide Times*, 24 May 1851)

The unhappiest feature of the spread of the white races over the earth was the subsequent disappearance of the natives with whom, inevitably, they came in contact.

Early Spanish colonisation in the New World was a chapter of horrors, while British expansion in North America presented, in dealing with the natives, many features from which the mind of fair-minded people recoiled.

The record of the Dutch in South Africa is stained similarly, and the whole civilised world shuddered at the exploits of the Belgians in the Congo while, in the early 20th century, Germany had a similarly unenviable record in the Pacific Islands. Indeed, it seemed to be the law, of what learned people call 'socio-politics', that a primitive race, brought in contact with a people of so called 'higher' civilisation, invariably went to the wall.

It is greatly to the credit of the British that they were the first to set their hands resolutely against the horrors that usually attended this process. The fate of the Australian Aborigine is sufficient witness that they were as incapable of arresting that process, but they did attempt to ensure that their relations with the indigenous people should be as decent as possible.

An Economic Experiment in Colonisation

It might be presumed that the native inhabitants of any land have an incontrovertible right to their own soil; a plain and sacred right, however, which seems not to have been understood. Europeans have entered their borders, uninvited, and when there, have not only acted as if they were undoubted lords of the soil, but have punished the natives as aggressors if they evinced a disposition to live in their own country,

(John Fowell Buxton, MP, cited in H. Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*)

The foundation of South Australia, which was due to the labours of a little band of economists, was an event of great Imperial importance. In the 'hungry' 1840s and preceding decades affairs, both in Great Britain and its colonies, were in an unhappy state. In the colonies there was no policy of development, Australia in particular being regarded simply as a huge overseas gaol.

At this time, almost 80 per cent of cultivated land in England was owned by the aristocracy and gentry. A gentleman did not work for his living; he lived on the income from his land, that is rents derived from leasing his land to others. Life was poor, nasty, brutish and short.

The shortness held for everyone, rich and poor alike. There was no knowledge of the principles of sanitation; infant mortality was the rule rather than the exception and survival to old age rare testimony to an unusually strong constitution. Scourges, such as smallpox, killed hundreds of thousands and disfigured many more.

In 1829, a remarkable pamphlet, *The Letters from Sydney*, was published by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a prisoner confined in Newgate, London, for abduction. In that and other works Wakefield evolved a scientific scheme of colonisation that was to solve the difficulties of the Motherland and the colonies.

His main ideas were to sell colonial land instead of giving it away in grants, to use the proceeds, or land fund, to bring immigrants from England, and give the colonies the right to manage their own internal affairs. Such proposals were revolutionary, but they attracted to Wakefield a body of young economists, politicians and adventurers, anxious to profit the Empire, or themselves, by the new theory.

They founded a Colonisation Society that gained notice rapidly and, at the end of 1830, it decided to carry out their experiment on the gulfs of South Australia. Their hands were strengthened immediately by Sturt's discovery that the River Murray reached the sea in that area and, from 1830 to 1834, the disciples of Wakefield struggled to found their colony.

They were prevented by the British government from attaining their ends by means of a company largely because, as was really true, most of them meant to make fortunes out of the scheme. In the end they were permitted to foster a Bill which, when enacted, gave them most of South Australia on terms that made the founding of the colony almost impossible.

Fortunately, the choice of the actual position of the settlement was left to the brilliant and experienced Colonel William Light and it was his decisions that counterbalanced many of the worst errors of the foundation and gave the colony some chance of success.

The Birth of South Australia - Events in England

The hunting grounds would be found there as every where else, to be the property of particular tribes. If the natives, therefore, who occupy the lands of the new colony, are not to be hunted down like wild beasts, a troublesome and expensive process ... they must be paid for their lands.

(Westminster Review, July 1835 - cited in H. Reynolds, The Law of the Land)

The *South Australian Colonisation Act*, passed by the British Parliament in 1834, declared the lands of the new colony to be 'waste and unoccupied' and, in this respect, with a total disregard of instructions to the contrary that issued at later dates from the Colonial Office, as discussed hereunder, in an 1849 judgement the Chief Justice of New South Wales referred to the 'circumstances of newly discovered and unpeopled territories'.

In the course of time various descriptions of the Australian countryside came from English courts which described same as 'desert and uninhabited', 'unpeopled' and, to add grist to the mill, in the 1880s the Privy Council 'lent its great authority to the mythology', when it proclaimed that Australia, in 1788, was 'a tract of territory practically unoccupied without settled inhabitants': these egocentric deliberations were binding on Australian courts as late as the 1970s.

Further, in 1913 Justice Isaacs in the High Court of Australia declared that:

When Governor Phillip received his commission from King George III on 12 October 1786 the whole of the lands of Australia were already, in law, the property of the King of England,

while, in 1971, in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, Justice Blackburn held that 'on the foundation of New South Wales ... and of South Australia, every square inch of the territory in the colony, became the property of the Crown.'

The 1834 Act's clear denial of the Aborigines' rights to land met with considerable opposition from humanitarian circles in Great Britain including, within the Colonial Office, Lord Glenelg, Sir George Grey and Sir James Stephen, all of whom were members of the Church Missionary Society; further, between them, they had association with social reformers, such as John Fowell Buxton, in such arenas as Aboriginal rights and the African slave trade.

In 1840, Sir James Stephen was to write one of the most momentous memorandums in the annals of South Australian land tenure and, indeed, it should still be resonating throughout Australia:

It is an important and unsuspected fact that these tribes had proprietary in the soil - that is, in particular sections of it which were clearly defined and well understood before the occupation of their country.

The Colonial Office subsequently enshrined this principal of Aboriginal land rights by inserting in the Letters Patent, the document issued to the Colonisation Commissioners early in 1836 to formally establish the colony of South Australia, a clause that recognised the prior rights of the Aborigines to the land and guaranteed that 'any lands now actually occupied or enjoyed by [the] Natives would not be alienated.'

After protracted negotiations with the Colonial Office, the Colonisation Commissioners agreed to the appointment of a Protector to safeguard the Aborigines' interests; this was set down in the Letters Patent. Among his duties, the Protector was required to ensure that any land opened up for public sale had been ceded voluntarily and purchased fairly from the Aborigines.

Further, the Letters Patent embodied this principle, the relevant clause reading:

Provided always, that nothing in these Letters Patent shall effect or be constrained to affect the rights of any Aboriginal natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or employment [*sic* – enjoyment?] in their persons or in the persons of their descendants of any lands now actually occupied or enjoyed by the said Natives.

In support of this edict, in a speech given by George Fife Angas, in London, on the occasion of the appointment of Captain John Hindmarsh as governor, he said that the colonists would treat with the Aborigines 'for the purchase of those lands which they claim as belonging to them'; at this time Angas was an active member of the Aborigines Protection Society and, as discussed later, his rhetoric was not matched by implementation of his avowed 'Christian' stance relative to Aboriginal affairs!

Earlier, on 4 June 1835, he had written a suppliant entry in his diary which, of necessity, must raise doubts as to his probity:

For the success of this colony I look to God ... If I can get pious people sent out to that land the ground will be blessed for their sake; and if justice is done to the Aborigines as was done by William Penn, then we shall have peace in all our borders.

The Colonial Commissioners agreed to set aside 20% of the proceeds from all land sales in the colony to be used for the benefit of the Aborigines but, as discussed below, this commitment and others were disregarded

Later, demands emanating from the Colonial Office, and addressed to the South Australian Commissioners, resulted in the presentation, in a draft Bill designed to amend part of the 1834 legislation, a proposed amendment stipulating that it:

Shall be lawful for the said Commissioners to assign or allot any part of the lands of the said province to the Aboriginal natives thereof free of any price ... and also to make any compensation to the said Aboriginal natives as to the said commissioners shall deem just in compensation of their interests in any Lands now occupied by them in the said Province.

Alarmed at the serious intentions of the Colonial Office, a crisis developed within the Commission and they 'proceeded to outwit the zealous reformers in the Colonial Office.' Interested readers are referred to Henry Reynolds's *The Law of the Land* at Chapter V for a comprehensive account of the subterfuge:

Clearly all the pious talk of securing 'this just and beneficial object', the written commitment, meant nothing. The leading figures of the venture knew all along that they would claim, on arrival in South Australia, that Aboriginal property rights, even the right of occupation and enjoyment, did not exist,

and later, he expounded upon the inglorious aftermath of the ignominious stance of the Commissioners:

But the self-deception went even deeper; South Australia saw itself as a child of the era of liberal reform, infused with the spirit of the Reform Bill and religious emancipation. What was discreetly dropped from the legacy was the powerful commitment to racial equality that ran through both the antislavery and Aboriginal protection movements. It was for this very reason that reform circles in Britain felt betrayed by events in South Australia.

To complete this maelstrom of intrigue in the United Kingdom, the words of John Fowell Buxton, the 'political heir of the great humanitarian William Wilberforce' and a man of some importance in the House of Commons, are worthy of repetition - in July 1834 he addressed his monarch and implored that:

The parliament act upon the principles of justice and humanity in the intercourse and relations of this country with the native inhabitants of its colonial settlements [and] of affording them the protection in the enjoyment of their civil rights, and of imparting to them that degree of civilization and that religion with which providence has blessed this nation.

An interesting aside to this subterfuge is that the military history of South Australia actually began before the colony was founded, because the provision of troops for the maintenance of law and order was one of the conditions of Colonel C.J. Napier's acceptance of the offer of being the first governor. He wrote:

I will not attempt to govern a large body of people in a desert, where they must suffer considerable inconvenience (if not hardship), without I have a force to protect what is good against that which is bad; and such force is the more necessary where, as in Australia, the supply of spirituous liquors will be abundant.

This demand was held to be at variance with the self-supporting principles of the new settlement and so Captain John Hindmarsh accepted the post but, of particular interest are the words that Colonel Napier had expressed about the 'unoccupied lands' in the antipodes as set down in the Bill before the House of Commons for he described it as 'an Act to seize by force' a territory as large as France and Spain and calling it uninhabited when it was quite clear it was populated.

It was, to his mind, a way to deprive 'an inoffensive race of people of their property, without giving them the slightest amount of remuneration.' Further, he declared he would not leave England without laws:

That shall give the same protection to the savage as myself ... we exclaim against monopolies; we must then not have a monopoly of justice.

However, such niceties were of no consequence to many in authority and, with the preliminaries being 'settled', early in 1836, the South Australian Company and SA Commissioners laid on a number of vessels in London to take emigrants to this untried land.

While South Australia is often celebrated as fortunate in being founded without the sweat and toil of convict labour, such celebration should be qualified in light of the exploitation of 'free' labour during the colonial period. The majority of the colony's population migrated to escape the poverty and want they had suffered in the British Isles. In many instances their passage was assisted by colonial landholders who needed labour

to till their land, build infrastructure and service the needs of business. Indeed, in the eyes of British capitalists the colony was planned for 'free enterprise' to flourish.

Primarily, the colony to which they came emerged because of a concern by English capitalists to find profitable investments overseas. The fledgling colony has been given the informal paradoxical title of 'paradise of dissent'; but, at the outset, it was much more a paradise for the privileged classes acting for and on behalf of English capitalists as they set about purchasing large tracts of the best land by means of the iniquitous system of special surveys.

Land prices, under the guiding policy of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, were fixed at a price sufficient to deny the working class an opportunity of purchase; thus, the colony's founders hoped that this factor would ensure a plentiful supply of labour and, indeed, of the 4,000 migrants who came out on free passages, only fifty had purchased a section of land (usually 80 acres) before the end of 1844, and 'those who acquired these sections did so not by saving their wages but by setting up as land agents, storekeepers, licensed victuallers and contractors. Indeed, in the lists of land-buyers only one name was distinguished by the title "labourer".'

The South Australian Company

Although a South Australian by birth, I am, strange to say, not feeling a bit grateful to Mr G.F. Angas, or any of those enterprising gentlemen of the South Australian Company who speculated so successfully in founding this colony. I envy them as 'lucky dogs' and perhaps admire their pluck in the same way as I admired the courage of Mr Leiter, jun., who, it will be remembered, a few years back tried to corner the world's wheat supply.

(Register, 28 October 1905)

In 1831, an attempt was made by twenty-two gentlemen, among whom was George Fife Angas, to form a South Australian Land Company and acquire a charter from the British government. However, the request was denied and so the scheme fell to the ground. Early in 1834, the South Australian Association - whose object was to colonise South Australia upon the following principle embodied in the following resolution proposed by Mr W. Hutt at a meeting held at Exeter Hall - came under notice:

That in order to promote the greatest prosperity of the new colony it is expedient that all waste lands, without any exception, shall be declared public lands and shall be disposed of to individuals by sale only and according to a uniform, impartial and permanent system.

There were only six of the old Land Company gentlemen engaged in this movement and George F. Angas was not amongst them. The South Australian Colonisation Bill was assented to on 15 August 1834.

It was necessary, to conform to the terms of the Act, that £35,000 should be subscribed by the sale of land, the price being fixed at one pound per acre. Half the land was taken up at this price when Messrs Bartlett and Beddome tendered for the remaining half at twelve shillings per acre. These gentlemen acted on behalf of a projected South Australian Company, of which Mr Angas was afterwards Chairman.

Strong representations were made to the Board of Commissioners setting forth the injustice and breach of faith to the public should the tender be accepted, for it was well

known that Bartlett and Beddome were merely trustees pending the formation of the company.

Indeed, there appears to be no doubt that the charter of the company would never have been granted if the House of Lords and House of Commons were aware that 'Mr G.F. Angas was manoeuvring as he was' with T. Smith and H. Kingscote to promote the South Australian Company.

On 2 January 1836 the company was formed, the original directors being George F. Angas (chairman), Raikes Currie, MP, James Hyde, Charles Hindley, MP, Henry Kingscote, John Pirie, John Rundle, MP, Thomas Smith, James R. Todd and Henry Waymouth. Once formed it turned its attention to practically every outlet for energy in connection with the development of the colony.

The Commissioners committed the company to protecting 'the natives in the unmolested exercise of their rights of property should such a right be found to exist.' However, in the new colony, this promise was soon forgotten and all the lands were declared open for public sale. Indeed, in 1837 in London, it was observed that while the parliament had 'laid down the general principles of equity' the South Australian authority had disposed of lands:

Without any reference to the possessors and actual occupants, and without making any reserve of the proceeds of the property of the natives for their benefit.

As was to be expected, by reason of its purchases, the company snapped up many sites in the city which, by the time of Federation in 1901, were worth thousands of pounds - if held today they would be worth multi-millions of dollars - practically one-sixth of the total town lands were purchased, along with the rural sections, but, by 1898, of the 1,044-acre blocks of which South and North Adelaide consist, the company retained only a little less than 21 acres.

Portions which the company held, when the colony was first established, were the whole of the south side of Rundle Street running from Pulteney Street to East Terrace, three blocks on the northern side of Rundle Street, six blocks on North Terrace, practically the whole section between Pulteney and Hutt, Wakefield and Pirie Streets and many others. Some of the sites were not particularly valuable when first acquired, but when Adelaide began to expand buyers were found quickly. Within 70 years of settlement the company did not hold a great deal of land in the city; the policy was to avoid holding anything for speculative purposes and to realise on city lands.

Much money was made by the company when the Adelaide land boom arose in 1881/1882 - this was caused partly by the travelling facilities accorded by new tramlines which conferred residential values upon lands formerly beyond the reach of city workers.

Land dealing was not the only activity of the company for it assisted in bringing German settlers to the colony, turned its attention to mining of copper and gold, helped to establish Port Adelaide, where it also held a great deal of property, aided in the whaling industry and shipping and, in short, took a hand with practically every new venture in the colonisation of the new country.

Of course, as in any capitalistic/democratic society, the company had its critics and many complaints were made to the authorities and through the local press concerning its perceived conduct:

[It leases its] land, expecting the tenants to effect all improvements and to leave everything at the end without any compensation. Is it any wonder that under such a system the land should be badly farmed?

The company is disliked here for the same reason that absentee and rack-renting landlords are hated by the people of Ireland. The SA Company is an absentee corporation without a body to be kicked or a soul to be damned; it is purely a money-making machine.

For the past 65 years it has preyed on the vitals of this State and will probably continue to do so until the crack of doom unless it is taxed out of existence by a material increase of the absentee land and income taxes.

The absentee should be taxed, and taxed to the full extent which his avoidance of personal obligations to the community would justify... Could they not devote some portion of their fortunes in the establishment of the very institutions the absence of which they profess to deplore.

The Angas Legend Revisited

[George Fife Angas] was not the 'Founder and Father of South Australia' as the enthusiastic Hodder describes him. Yet he was a successful merchant, who found an outlet for his energies in promoting the new colony to which his commercial interests had attracted him. He has been termed philanthropic on account of his promotion of South Australia, but that seems at any rate, after 1836, a misnomer ... His South Australian fortune originated mainly in the efforts of Flaxman, whose work has been largely disregarded and treated as reckless and self-seeking.

(Charles H. Bright, *The Confidential Clerk*)

Towards the end of his life G.F. Angas realised that he was too infirm to write an autobiography and so he instructed his private secretary, Henry Hussey, to organise certain documentation, together with family journals, for publication and this act led Charles Bright to conclude that George Fife Angas may have been 'two-faced'.

Accordingly, the material was forwarded to Edwin Hodder, 'an upright Christian who spent his life writing biographies of other upright Christians', who, according to Mr Bright:

Used the Angas papers and, counseled by John Howard Angas (son of George Fife Angas), consistently misrepresented Flaxman. For this I do not blame Hodder who, presumably, believed what he was told. Only a patient examination of the available records can disclose that Hodder was often mistaken. The unfortunate thing is that those records are sadly incomplete. As the crowning misfortune Angas' diary, which was used by Hodder, has now disappeared!

In the biography, Hodder all but deified his subject and, in 1984, Dr Robert Linn rounded off the saga when he reported that, 'the trouble is that [Hussey] removed from his employer's records all material which tended to blacken or damage Angas's name.' Accordingly, to use modern-day vernacular, the completed work must be described as a 'vanity book', but this did not stop a succession of reputable historians taking aboard most of Hodder's work without significant amendment.

Further, 'the work seems to have been received with less than enthusiasm by the reviewers.' One said that he rejected the 'suggestion, more than a suggestion, that the Angas family [was] related to the Earls of Angus' and continued:

It is by his share in the foundation of the colony of South Australia that the name of George Angas is best known. This share is a very large and important one, but not sufficient to warrant the title given to him by Mr Hodder of 'Father of South Australia' ... Mr Hodder is far from being a model biographer ...

Hodder also classified Angas as 'a philanthropist' but there is no doubt that this was a serious misstatement for Angas' capital was all but linked in his land speculations in South Australia. Therefore, when he improved the interests of the colony he was 'solipsistic rather than philanthropic'.

Indeed, there can be no doubt that Hodder wrote 'the version of events that Angas chose to perpetuate.' Accordingly, many historical facts surrounding his life have been distorted. For example, Angas did not persuade Pastor Kavel to bring his flock of Germans to South Australia, for it was Kavel, himself, who sought out Angas and asked him to provide the necessary passage. Interested readers are referred to *The Confidential Clerk* for a detailed discussion of Hodder's aberrations - one instance is as follows:

At page 284, Hodder says:

Meanwhile Mr Flaxman who was still his paid agent, was recalled and Mr Anthony Foster - whose name is to this day greatly honoured in the colony - was appointed his successor.

This statement is not in accord with facts because:

- 1 Flaxman was not a 'paid agent'. He was Angas' 'confidential clerk' in London and entered into an agreement with Angas to promote Angas' interests and his own. He sailed to South Australia in 1838 in the *Prince George* which also had as passengers Pastor Kavel and his fellow German migrants. Upon arrival he established a mercantile business with a Mr Rowlands and acted for G.F. Angas and Company and other interested English firms. The majority of the capital to establish the business was provided by G.F. Angas & Co.
- 2 He was not recalled to England but returned voluntarily against Angas' wishes.
- 3 Forster certainly held a power of attorney from Angas but, as to Forster's 'name', there appears to be room for more than one opinion. For example, it is apparent that Forster 'put about rumours' in Adelaide about Flaxman's conduct which were proved to be fallacious, while Edward Stephens, manager of the South Australian Banking Company, described him as 'mendacious, pompous, quarrelsome [and] ignorant of business.'

In respect of Aboriginal lands, G.F. Angas, on appearing before a Select Committee in London, agreed that the indigenous people had been dispossessed of their land which they formerly occupied and 'where the whites have settled down'.

Later, as discussed above, he advocated 'for the purchase of those lands which [the Aborigines claim as belonging to them] and, in 1835, in a manoeuvre that reeks of 'self-interest', persuaded the Land Commissioners to introduce the iniquitous system of special surveys that became a launching pad from which he and his South Australian Company reaped infinitesimal rewards.

This system was not implemented by Governor Hindmarsh but, fortuitously for Mr Angas, came to pass under Governor Gawler's direction in May 1838, shortly before the arrival of Charles Flaxman! Indeed, 'one is entitled to speculate as to conversations on this topic between Angas and his confidential clerk. Flaxman can hardly have been ignorant of the proposal.'

Later, Governor Grey enquired from the Colonial Office as to whether the system of special surveys was legal and pointed out the great cost involved and the unfair benefit which the 'applicant received in gaining acres to and the use of the remaining 11,000 acres in any special survey.' He was informed by Lord John Russell that 'no new special surveys were to be accepted' but, of course, by this time Mr Angas was proprietor of land included in seven special surveys claimed by Charles Flaxman in 1839 in the Barossa Valley, each of which entitled him to ask for an area of 15,000 acres to be surveyed, thus

there was a total of 105,000 acres from which, in 1842, a final selection was made of 28,000 acres for which he paid £28, 000 in cash or land orders:

The most northern point of the special surveys, which were in a compact block, was Hawker Hill and the most southern point was situated about two miles south of Springton. The surveys extended easterly from a point about one mile south-east of Daveyston to about one mile east of Keyneton. The extent ... is realised when it is noted that Tanunda, Nuriootpa, Stockwell, Truro, Keyneton and Springton were within the bounds of the special surveys.

There is no extant record as to whether Mr Angas considered making any monetary payment to the indigenous people who had been in 'occupation' of the land that he and the South Australian Company had 'acquired', without due notice and recompense; indeed, the latter factor was, if his previous undertakings were to be believed, obviously dear to his Christian heart during the formative years of South Australia!

As for special surveys, they were of immense benefit to early landholders and those persons with money but, in some quarters, away from the niggardly capitalists who were preying upon the Aborigines and usurping their land, concern was expressed about the inherent injustice of the relevant Act, so warmly supported by Angas and his cohorts in London.

A further great evil arose - the commencement of land speculation by applications for special surveys of 15,000 acres, out of each of which after survey 4,000 acres could be selected and obtained at £1 an acre - thus, the number of absentee proprietors was further increased and the surveying and opening free districts for selection to bona fide applicants, for land for immediate agricultural operations, was hindered further.

In consequence, the inhabitants were, for the first three years, wholly dependent on importations of flour and grain from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), at one time at the cost from £80 to £100 a ton. The parliament and government of the Mother Country must be justly blamed for the short-sighted and parsimonious policy they adopted in launching the colony, thereby leading to the most serious of the colony's first troubles.

The surveyors who were required to cut up the country were strong in their criticism, while Captain Charles Sturt categorised them as 'the most dreadful things that could be imagined' and, in correspondence to Governor Gipps of New South Wales, said:

I do not think the system of colonisation has been rightly understood. Certainly here the country has been deliberately and recklessly sacrificed. The Special Surveys have secured all that is valuable in the shape of water to a few individuals and rendered invaluable more than one third of the provincial lands... The idea of chequering ... [the country] as it suits the fancy of the applicants is preposterous and the consequences will be severely felt as the population increases.

Other colonial gentry such as John Morphett, as agent for The Secondary Towns Association, joined in the legal pillaging and gambled on the supposition that a large town would spring up at the point where the River Murray met Lake Alexandrina; in this venture he failed but was to gain a fortune elsewhere.

Diligent research has failed to find any misgiving emanating from Mr Angas in response to the condemnation of the scheme which he advocated, sponsored and espoused; indeed, it would appear that his involvement was for both personal benefit and the advancement of the South Australian Company to which he had committed his capital as a life-line for the future!

The modicum of extensions to his Christian beliefs, as presented in his surviving diaries and elsewhere, do not appear to have entered into his final deliberations in respect of his

decision to plead for special surveys and to, apparently, ignore any suggestion of recompense for the forsaken Aborigines!

Finally, a question must be asked - Was Mr Angas the monolithic paragon as portrayed by his biographer, or could another interpretation evolve in the wake of latter-day historical research, particularly with the formation of the South Australian Company and the introduction of special surveys where his conduct must, at best, be classified as devious?

The following is offered as a more realistic assessment of the late departed gentleman:

Angas's greatness in SA history must not blind us as to his shortcomings. He did not cope well with failure. When it was at all possible to blame others for his own failures he did so.

His position in the hierarchy of South Australia was reinforced by those who accorded him the language of habits of deference. One who didn't was Robert Harrison, author of *Colonial Sketches* which referred to South Australia and its people in general and Angas in particular in derogatory terms. On the cover of a reprinted edition of the book it was stated that 'every copy available was purchased and destroyed by the Angas family.'

He was a man of iron will and near-obsessive personality... '[and] conformed to the image of piety and sanctimoniousness in which many successful men then enveloped themselves... [His] religious scruples caused him difficulty with his business affairs when things were going well.'

At every stage of his life he found a close identity between his own business and financial interests and those of God and, according to the gullible Hodder, 'unlike most monetary institutions the Union Bank owed its existence to philanthropy.'

Like most ultra-religious men he suffered in having his motives questioned and, as Hodder explained, 'it was his answer of a good conscience towards God that sustained him in the presence of all calumniators.'

He sailed to South Australia in 1850 to a new life of wealth, success and honour where he attempted to 'try and make it a moral and terrestrial paradise.'

By shrewdness and foresight he realised a huge fortune in England, 'lost it in pure philanthropy and regained it fourfold [in South Australia] through the reckless land purchasers of an adventurer [Charles Flaxman].'

He died in 1879, aged 90, and was ancestor of the Angas family of Lindsay Park where a splendid mausoleum was built for his remains.

The hero worship of Hodder so long ago has been demolished but, of course, it does not destroy the validity of all that has been written about the said gentleman.

Finally, for the benefit of modern-day historians, it may not be inappropriate to quote a few cautionary words taken from Charles H. Bright's introduction to *The Confidential Clerk*:

There has been a tendency for later historians to continue to express the same view as their predecessors despite the later evidence. This is, perhaps, because the later material often consists of scraps of circumstantial evidence which, considered singly, present a picture which is inconsistent with earlier views. Perhaps articles written about eminent persons during their old age or shortly after their death are most to be distrusted. For they resemble lapidary inscriptions in which, as Dr Johnson reminds us, truth is not to be sought.

Betrayal - The Coming of the White Man

The hopes that the new colony would see the dawn of a better era for Australian Aborigines was dashed, There was deep disappointment, even a sense of betrayal, in humanitarian circles. For all their talk, the South Australians were doing no better than the dwellers of the convict colonies to the east.

A committee of English Quakers noted that notwithstanding the expression of 'just and humane views' the Aborigines were being 'deprived of their lands and means of subsistence without treaty, payment or compensation ... It will doubtless be asked how the worthy and honourable gentlemen whose names are attached to the [Commissioner's Report] can have allowed a system to be established so completely at variance with the sentiments they have therein recorded.'

(Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*)

When the white man arrived they proceeded to cut down the forests, destroy the kangaroos and other native game and gave the natives to understand that, if they encroached in any way against their boundaries, they would take upon themselves the task of clearing them out. In return for their land and their game what was given them? Civilisation was introduced - Yes, but what sort of civilisation? Well, they were taught to lie, cheat, smoke tobacco and drink intoxicating liquors!

While recalling this intrusion, the Rev John Blasket wrote the following about the perpetrators whom he classified as 'unprincipled and lecherous whites':

While as yet the first settlers dwelt in tents and bough booths on the shores of Holdfast Bay, notices were fastened to gum-trees offering a reward for information as to the persons who supplied drink to Aborigines.

To the shame of our race we have to acknowledge that one of the first cases tried in the infant settlement of South Australia was that in which two whites were charged with stealing a jacket and some spears and waddies from the Aborigines. Today, they are a weak, degraded race, doomed to speedy extinction.

The introduced diseases that spread amongst them had the effect of making them die off like rotten sheep. In a word, they were initiated in all the vices of Europeans, without inculcating or exhibiting towards them any of the counteracting virtues, and the result was that those natives, who had intercourse with the colonists, were more cruel, more treacherous and ten times more to be dreaded than those never brought into contact with the boasted civilisation.

From the closing months of 1836 the Aborigines use of the land, together with customs going back for thousands of years, were to be slowly, but surely, all but exterminated by the intrusion of the British settler and the accompanying laws and diseases of their so-called 'civilisation'.

Colonial officials, missionaries and others, who had close contact with the Aborigines, soon became aware that they had a well-defined system of land ownership and it was more than evident to any fair-thinking person that 'Australia was a patchwork of clearly defined tribal territories and those local blacks defended their territory against both European and traditional enemies.'

In the antipodes, the *South Australian* of 16 June 1838 reported that the Aborigines themselves 'often asserted that the land belonged to the "black fella".' Another confronted a settler and bellowed - 'Go away you white buggers what business have you here.'

In 1837, to compound the ongoing skuldugery, the Colonial Secretary, Robert Gouger, observed wryly:

No legal provision, by way of purchase of land on their behalf, or in any other mode, has been yet made; nor do I think that with proper care it is at all necessary. I can see no reason why they should not, in a comparatively short time be made to understand our notions, and to depend on

their own exertions for a livelihood... At any rate, until it and other means shall have been tried and found fruitless, the enervating effect of specific legal protection should not be tried.

Captain Bromley established a sort of location by having shelter sheds built a little to the west of 'Buffalo Row' on the south bank of a gully near the cattle sale yards. The Aborigines did not take kindly to the sheds and preferred their own wurleys. His tenure was of short duration for he was dismissed on the grounds of incompetence and, in April 1838, his dead body was found in the river not far from where he lived and the cause of his death remains a mystery.

His successor was William Wyatt who was instructed to protect the Aborigines 'in the undisturbed enjoyment of their proprietary rights to such lands as may be occupied by them in any especial manner' and to find out if they were in 'in the practice of making use of the land for cultivation' or if they had fixed abodes or if they used any land for 'funeral purposes.' Further, if such events were shown to be true he was told to report to Governor Hindmarsh 'without loss of time, in order that means may be taken to prevent [such land] being included in the survey of sale.'

In May 1838, Mr Wyatt suggested that certain land be created as a reservation for the Kurna people; the governor concurred but the Resident Commissioner, James Hurtle Fisher, who was a law unto himself, refused to entertain the suggestion! Accordingly, the Aborigines were betrayed and while the subject was being debated within the colony a correspondent reminded his readers that the Commissioners in London had decreed that any land 'in the occupation of or enjoyment of the Natives was to be considered to be their property and that a sale or cession was to be negotiated.' This plea fell upon deaf ears!

However, there was at least one man in South Australia with a conscience for, in September 1838, Robert Cock, a Quaker of Adelaide, wrote to Mr Wyatt:

Please receive herewith the sum of £3-16-6 being the interest at the rate of 10% on one fifth of the purchase money of the town lands purchased by me on 27 March 1837. This sum in accordance with a pledge given by the Colonisation Commissioners for this province and in accordance with the principles therein signified in their first annual report wherein it was stated they were to receive one-fifth of the lands to constitute a permanent fund for the support and advancement of the natives... I disclaim this to be either donation, grant or gift, but a just claim the natives have on me as an occupier of these lands.

In the wake of this denial of any semblance of justice to the Aborigines the *South Australian Gazette* opined that the Aborigines had received 'but a miserable instalment of the debt of justice we still owe them' and this statement was aptly evaluated by Henry Reynolds:

In the infant colony three Provisional Protectors performed their duties with varying degrees of enthusiasm and competence during the initial three years of settlement. The division of authority... added to the difficulties faced by the protectors, especially as Torrens and his colleagues had their mind up in advance about the Aboriginal tenure and land use.

The venture was a private one. It was always financially fragile. Any nonsense about Aboriginal land rights could seriously hinder the land sales on which the health of the whole scheme depended.

In 1839, a year after taking up the position of Protector, Dr Matthew Moorhouse wrote:

We find - what the Europeans thought the Aborigines of Australia did not possess - territorial rights, families owning and holding certain districts of land which pass from fathers to sons, never to daughters, with as much regularity as property in our own country.

Similarly, C.G.H. Teichelmann, one of the Lutheran missionaries, observed that:

Each tribe has a certain district of the country as a property received by their forefathers, the boundaries of which are fixed.

Finally, Edward J. Eyre, the explorer, noted that some districts:

Having a radius of perhaps from ten to twenty miles [were] considered generally as being the property and hunting grounds of the tribes who frequent them,

while Governor Gawler noted that the Kurna and other local 'tribes', contiguous to Adelaide, had 'very distinct and well defined proprietary rights' that accorded them 'protection from other tribes and bodily support.' At the same time, the Surveyor-General, Charles Sturt, opined that the Aborigines had a 'right of propriety in the lands of their birth right.'

One of the most inexplicable results of the Australian jurisprudence was to refuse recognition of the fact that the Aborigines had ever possessed their own land, and of denying them the inherent legality of that position. In 1840, Governor George Gawler, a deeply religious man observed that:

If the claims of the natives are not void before all, they are preliminary to all. They cannot occupy the middle station ... The Royal instructions commanded that the Aborigines [will] be protected in the free enjoyment of their property,

while the Commissioners' instructions directed that the Aborigines should not be disturbed 'in the enjoyment of lands over which they may possess proprietary rights and of which they are not disposed to make a voluntary transfer.'

When the dual system of administration was done away with, following the arrival of Governor Gawler, the question of land rights was taken up again and he and Captain Sturt received great praise from humanitarian circles when they spoke out and said that the local Aborigines had exercised 'from time immemorial ... distinct, defined and absolute rights of proprietary and hereditary possession.' However, Gawler believed that cash payments to the indigenous people would have been to their 'great disadvantage' and concluded that it would be more appropriate if reserves were provided in various districts.

In 1840, he sought approval from the Colonial Office for the reservation of 32 hectares out of 2,023 sold to settlers and, in his report, enclosed letters from disgruntled settlers who had opposed his policy. The reply from Lord Russell approved 'of the arrangement as far as it extends but adverting to the very small portions of land assigned to the Aborigines out of extensive districts, I am of the opinion that a more liberal position should have been made for their support.'

This problem was taken up again in the House of Commons before a Select Committee at which George Fife Angas pointed out that that the 1834 Act did not recognise any Aboriginal right to land and stipulated that reserves could not be created 'in their favour'.

Gawler's policy in respect of 'reserves' for the Aborigines was summarily terminated when his successor, George Grey, asked for authority to extend land grants to the Aborigines, but was informed by the Secretary of State, Lord Edward Stanley, following a change of government in 1841, that such an action was illegal under the provisions of the *South Australian Act*. Indeed, it was plain to see that there was a contradiction between the Letters Patent and the Act and had been resolved 'in favour of the Act and the land-hungry settlers.'

Thus, the Commissioners' original edict in respect of land acquisition was not implemented and the natives became increasingly hostile. The colonists acquired their lands and drove off the game while the settlers' stock began to destroy plants and shrubs that were a valuable source of food.

Later, in 1842, the *Waste Lands Act* gave the Governor the power to reserve land for the use or benefit of the Aborigines and, subsequently, small blocks were reserved for them throughout the settled districts but, by then, they had already been dispossessed of the lands occupied by themselves and their ancestors for, perhaps, a thousand generations - by 1860, there were 59 small reserves covering about 3,645 hectares and 'in themselves were the strongest indication that Aboriginal land rights had been tacitly accepted in Australia and that compensation was required from settlers.'

Social Platitudes and Public Indifference

A public flogging was prescribed at the Adelaide gaol ... having been secured to the triangle [the Aborigine] received fifty lashes of a cat-o'-nine-tails, which he bore with commendable fortitude. At the command of the Sheriff, twenty-five more lashes were administered...

Our reporter subsequently saw Monyitya's back, and described the apparent effect of the whipping as one which, although it cannot by any means be called cruel, is, nevertheless, likely to produce a lasting impression upon the mind of the culprit, if not upon his native companions who witnessed the infliction.

(Adelaide Chronicle, 24 March 1840)

In June 1837, following a proclamation by Governor Hindmarsh in respect of the indigenous Aborigines, Sir John Jeffcott, the first colonial judge, delivered a charge to 'The Grand Jury of the Province' and, in the course of his address, suggested that the colonists should avoid scrupulously giving them offence and to respect their property at all times.

He urged them not to teach them British vices which would render them more debased than when they were found but, by example, 'lead them into the paths of civilisation and virtue.'

The great Father of the human family... has placed us amongst them, and given us to enjoy the land which is their birthright, - no doubt for his own wise purposes, and, it may be hoped with a view to their ultimate conversion to His holy religion.

These sentiments echoed the expressed intentions of the Commissioners for South Australia in London as dictated by the Colonial Office who, being aware of the injustice and cruelty meted out to the Aborigines in New South Wales and Tasmania, were determined that the rights of Aborigines would be protected in the new colony, Therefore it was agreed between the parties that the following objectives should be sought:

To guard them against personal outrage and violence.

To protect them in the undisturbed enjoyment of their proprietary right to soil, wherever such right may be found to exist.

To make it an invariable and cardinal condition in all bargains and treaties entered into with the natives for the cession of lands possessed by them in occupation or enjoyment, that permanent subsistence should be supplied to them from some other source.

To promote amongst them the spread of civilisation and the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian religion.

In addition, it was enacted that they were to be treated as British subjects and that all aggression upon them would be strictly punished; to this edict Robert Gouger opined that:

So many miseries have been sustained by these unoffending creatures in different parts of the continent that I feel particularly anxious that the annals of our province should be unstained by native blood. .

Such inherent platitudes were anathema to the more ruthless settler who suggested that they should be either mercifully exterminated or left to:

The scarcely less certain but cruel fate of perishing by the loathsome diseases or excesses which [had] never failed to follow their contacts with whites.'

Conversely, the more saintly among the interlopers held the view that they should be placed in a school where 'all the mysteries of science, refinement and religion' could be 'inculcated within them.'

At times, the latter members of colonial society went a little further and pleaded for the Aboriginals who were:

Daily retreating from the footsteps of a race whose arts and powers [were] so much superior... as to leave no chance of their being able to feed or rear their young in peace amidst their accustomed haunts.

This aroused the displeasure of the self-centred exploiter whose creed was that:

The black brutes know well enough that they can obtain flour or meat by pestering you till you fling it at their heads... They will never rouse themselves from their slothful, dirty and sluggard state... Why do the Government inveigle us to these distant climes without some protection against these wretches? [Some] men try to civilise them with the Bible, elsewhere we civilise them with the Martin-Henry rifle...

For about the first three years of European settlement the indigenous Kurna people, who were shy and intelligent, coupled with an innate curiosity in respect of the whims and fancies of the white invaders, lived in relative harmony. If trouble did occur the catalyst was invariably the trading of insults or arguments about the abuse on Aboriginal women:

The all-male overlanders met up with native people whose practices allowed an exchange of women and granting of sexual favours for ceremonial and diplomatic purposes or as a form of hospitality. But the white men refused to accept the reciprocal obligations due to the Aborigines.

Many attempts were made to 'Christianise' the Kurna; a 'Native Location' conducted by German missionaries was established and, by 1840, six cottages had been built and an acre of ground placed under cultivation 'and out of 41 children in Adelaide, the average school attendance was eleven daily.' The adults were much more inaccessible for religious instruction for they were 'satisfied with the tradition of their forefathers'.

A similar experiment had been conducted in 1838 when the Government had a row of pise huts erected on the North Park Lands for the accommodation of the Kurna people who, nevertheless, stuck to their 'spontaneous pervious mansions of gum-branches and sheoak.' Although the buildings were always open to would-be occupants the authorities might as well have provided 'mackintosh cloaks and umbrellas for Gov Gawler's ducks' for the natives merely used the quarters as a wind break and chose to sleep outside 'in their customary umbrageous dormitories.'

At a banquet given in Governor Hindmarsh's honour before his return to England he offered the following lamentable advice to the assemblage:

The Aborigines are not forgotten. My power as Governor has been of little avail without being seconded by the exertion of colonists. I, therefore, call upon them to second me in this good

work and, above all things, to prevent the Aborigines from imbibing from them a taste of that bane of humanity – spirituous liquors; and I consider the most effective way the colonists can do this will be by setting them an example in forming one vast temperance society.

In May 1840, the colonial authorities organized a distribution of food and blankets to the Aborigines to mark Queen Victoria's birthday. The event was held at Government House and attended by some 300 Aborigines. About 4,000 whites watched the proceedings, which included a demonstration by Aboriginal children from the Location school of their reading and numerical skills and the recital of a hymn. The missionary, Pastor Schurmann, read out the Ten Commandments, translated into the Kurna language, to the assembled Aborigines and shirts and blankets were then distributed.

Finally, Governor Gawler addressed the Aborigines, exhorting them to obey the Commandments and not to fight, steal or drink alcohol. According to the account published in the *Register*:

The natives listened with the greatest attention... They then gave three hearty cheers, and needed no second invitation to proceed to the dinner table, on which were arranged huge trenchers of roast beef, biscuits, rice and sugar.

Pastors Teichelmann and Schurmann were soon proficient in the Kurna language and had some success with the Aboriginal children at the school, teaching them mainly in their own language. However, the missionaries and the new Protector, Matthew Moorhouse, made little progress in instilling Christianity and 'civilised habits' among the adults.

Teichelmann complained that the Aborigines did little work at the Location because they believed that as the Europeans had driven away the game animals, it was their responsibility to provide the Aborigines with other food. All attempts to convert the Aborigines failed. They were, he said:

Naturally proud and wise in their own estimation, and express themselves perfectly satisfied with the tradition of their forefathers.

By 1847, it seems that the Kurna had largely deserted Adelaide. An editorial in one of the Adelaide newspapers commented on their absence from the Queen's Birthday distribution the previous month:

Of late years, great hordes of Murray natives have frequented Adelaide, and have robbed the Adelaide natives of their wives and daughters, the most valuable property of these savages- the consequence of which is that the Cowandilla or Adelaide tribe have been driven from their own district, scarcely any of their children attend the school, and it has been remarked that not one of this tribe appeared to receive blankets and rations on the Queen's Birthday. The recipients were Murray natives.

To conclude this facet of the lack of empathy toward the Aborigines, the following example of the 'ethnic cleansing' of this embattled and misunderstood people stands, today, as a positive indictment of the indifference that pervaded colonial society:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra lay beside him.

All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated opossum rug... Were the panacea for the suffering race... to be found in our capital, there would probably be no getting a tithe of them to partake of it.

Events in South Australia – An Overview

The occupation of a vast and magnificent country like Australia by a race superior to the Aborigines was inevitable... [To represent] that the Europeans are interlopers who have spoiled the native races of their natural and inalienable inheritance, and that the act is merely a robbery committed by high-handed force, does not find a response in the conscience even of those who indulge in it; or, if it does, they stand self-convicted of open and flagrant violation of honesty and right.

(Advertiser, 1 December 1883)

From the outset, the official policy was to integrate the Aborigines into the white society but it proved to be a hopeless task for paternalism was rampant; it was inexplicable that they were portrayed as being a 'lovable race but incapable of mixing with the European population and so require guidance and care like grown-up children.'

Indeed, integration meant the 'destruction of Aboriginal culture which was neither known nor recognized during the settlers' single-minded efforts to acquire land.'

The manners and customs of the natives were not known and no attempt at friendly overtures was considered necessary towards them in the early settlement of the northern districts, in fact they were looked upon as equally detrimental with wild dogs on the run.

To many colonists, the designated 'integration' was considered to be the termination of Aboriginal culture; others went further and believed it meant the elimination of the Aborigines themselves - there was no doubt that the general consensus was that they would soon die out - while the Editor of the *Register* on 22 April 1850 suggested that 'we are happy to witness any efforts calculated to diminish the amount of individual suffering during the process of extinction.' Eight-six years later, official policy still held the belief that 'everyday contacts between blacks and outback settlers and prospectors hasten these primitive people towards extinction.'

However, it is pleasing to report that there were a few enlightened colonists who abhorred both the inhumane treatment handed out to the Aborigines and the unjust dispossession of their land; accordingly, public debate on the issue flared occasionally in the newspapers:

1. It will be an everlasting disgrace to us if we allow them to perish and dwindle away in misery, poverty and wretchedness as they have done hitherto. Are they not deserving of kinder and more humane treatment? Are they dogs or mere things that they are neglected so? ... Our prosperity as a people is founded on their calamity, and the foundation of our wealth is laid in their decay and death.
2. They are poor enough, heaven knows, ragged and hungry and houseless... Can we not spare some of the old ewes now rotting on the distant runs, and add these and a few blankets to the stingy once-a-year liberality of the State? ... Blackfellow and whitefellow will together face that tremendous day, when One will proclaim 'Forasmuch as ye did it not to these, ye did it not to me.'
3. We have intruded ourselves amongst them in their lands, which were given to them by God, and in so doing we have completely overturned and embarrassed all their former accustomed modes of living; we have driven them from their own country, deprived them of their means of subsistence; we have placed them in a social position entirely strange to them, where difficulties and perplexities encounter them at every step.

4. Were it not that the natives are fed by settlers they must literally perish, unless, indeed, they lived by plunder. To some extent they do; and who can blame them? They can see no wild animals, but they can see sheep; and the sheep alone stand between them and starvation... It is useless to declaim against the natives when they prefer stolen mutton to starvation; white men would do the same.
5. These poor savages are being degraded and diseased by the vices of - shall we call it civilization? - [they] are left to die in our midst of starvation... within a stone's throw of abundance and luxury...
6. The occupation of a vast and magnificent country like Australia by a race superior to the Aborigines was inevitable... [To represent] that the Europeans are interlopers who have spoiled the native races of their natural and inalienable inheritance, and that the act is merely a robbery committed by high-handed force, does not find a response in the conscience even of those who indulge in it; or, if it does, they stand self-convicted of open and flagrant violation of honesty and right.
7. So they wander, wretched, half-starved, and diseased, over the face of the country - living relics of the most difficult of social and ethnological problems which ever confronted the intelligence of the Anglo-Australian. The extinction of the Aborigines from their decadence is clearly only a matter of a short time. Australia will then have settled the native problem by rubbing it out.
8. We have taken their country and brought amongst them all the vices of civilisation with very little of its virtues. These vices have been carrying them off wholesale and at no distant day the black man will be as much a curiosity as the bunyip. Why should we accelerate the pace? Why should we be recklessly guilty in the matter? We may not be able to avert the extinction of the race, but in common humanity, we should do what little we can to stay the rate of mortality and at least extend to the black the attentions we give even the brute creation...
9. I fear that the white man has much guilt upon his shoulders. We have taken their country, their all. We have removed every vestige of brushwood in the city and, if we catch a native cutting a branch of a tree on the parklands, we hand him over as an offender to the tender mercies of the police magistrate. Though they be savages and cannot plead their own cause, this cannot justify our neglect of their miseries.
10. Would not the claims of justice and humanity be equally satisfied and the majesty of the English law vindicated by emancipating the Aborigines from its direct operation? At present their roving mode of life is a continual violation of one of its inquisitions, which directs that the man who can give no satisfactory account of himself and his means of living be committed as a rogue and vagabond.
11. Everywhere we see ascendant the reign of brute force as opposed to that of justice and natural equity, and everywhere we find the greatest enemy of man is man. In a thousand different ways our arrival amongst them has operated upon them for evil. And can it then be supposed for a moment that we are under no obligation to make some serious and well-studied attempt to balance the account with this unhappy race.

It was argued that, as discussed earlier, although there was considerable evidence that the Aborigines had clearly recognisable territorial rights, the Commissioners, in alliance with land-hungry colonists, frustrated all the attempts by Governors Gawler and Grey and the Protectors to safeguard those rights and to create reserves for Aborigines.

The South Australian Commissioners admitted, as a fact, which it was in vain to disguise, and which could not be deplored too deeply, that the native people of Australia had been exposed to injustice and cruelty in their dealings with Europeans and that squatters,

runaway convicts and deserters from ships had dealt with the Aborigines as if they did not regard them as members of the human race, but as inferior animals created for their use.

Further, they observed that:

These outrages cannot be repressed where no legal authority exists. Therefore... the colonization of South Australia, by industrious and virtuous settlers, so far from being an invasion of the rights of the Aborigines, is a necessary preliminary to the displacement of lawless squatters, the abandoned sailors, the runaway convicts, the pirates, the worse-than-savages, that now infest the coasts and islands along that extensive portion of New Holland, and perpetrate against the defenceless native crimes at which humanity revolts.

For the purpose of securing to the natives their proprietary right to the soil, wherever such right might be found to exist, special instructions were given to the colonial commissioner, in which it was laid down as a principle, that, of the colonial lands placed by Parliament at the disposal of the commissioners, no portion which the natives might possess in occupation or enjoyment, should be offered for sale till ceded by the natives to the colonial commissioner.

That officer was required to furnish the protector with evidence of the faithful fulfilment of the bargains or treaties which he should effect with the Aborigines; and it was made the duty of the latter not only to see that such bargains or treaties were faithfully executed, but also to call upon the executive government of the colony, to protect the natives in the undisturbed enjoyment of those lands of which they should not be disposed to make a voluntary transfer.

It was further ordained that such transfers should be considered as involving a stipulation on the part of the purchasers, that the Aborigines parties thereto, should be permanently supplied with the means of subsistence, and with moral and religious instruction...

Thus conducted, the colonization of South Australia will be an advent of mercy to the native tribes. They are now exposed to every species of outrage and treated like cattle of the field; they will, in future, be placed under the protection of British laws, and invested with the rights of British subjects. They are now standing on the verge of famine; they will obtain a constant and ample supply of subsistence.

They are not attached to the soil as cultivators; they do not occupy the natural pastures, even as wandering shepherds; they are without the implements of the chase which belong to hunting tribes; and, with respect of industry and the possession of property, they do not appear to manifest the instinctive apprehensions of some of the inferior animals. They will now be lifted up from this degradation; they will gradually be reconciled to labour for the sake of its certain reward...

The great opportunities inherent in the above pronouncements were all but completely ignored and the responses over many decades can only be classified as 'grudging and legalistic'. Further, there is little doubt that the courts throughout Australia have studiously rejected the idea that the Crown has a duty of care, in the form of a fiduciary relationship in respect of the Aboriginal population of Australia. This edict was accepted by the United States of America in the 19th century and, later, enacted in both New Zealand and Canada.

Indeed, a summation by Henry Reynolds following the finalisation of the Mabo case in 1992 is worthy of mature consideration by all South Australians today:

It is not that that the Australian judiciary is not unaware of this. They have decided not to walk in that direction. But the idea that the process of colonization itself and the concomitant extinguishment of Aboriginal title created lasting obligations is not a new one in Australia. It was forcefully put by [Lord Grey] ... who in 1850 declared that 'in assuming their territory the Settlers in Australia have incurred a moral obligation of the most sacred kind ...' It is a message that many people still don't want to hear.

Aftermath

White civilisation, white culture means death to the Australian Aborigine; and it is from profound consciousness of this basic fact, which has been established by a century of experience, that anthropologists demand the complete segregation of the remaining tribes in extensive reserves in which they could be able, in the absence of interference by white man, to work out their own destiny...

(Advertiser, 26 April 1934)

Perhaps it is a trite comment, but it would appear that it was impossible for the Aborigines to consent either to the occupation of their land or on their enforced subjection to English law for they were incapable of comprehending the import and results of either one or the other. One might be excused for concluding that, in their estimation of right and wrong, 'the killing of a white invader of their country [would be] rather more virtuous than criminal.'

Great suffering was occasioned, especially among the aged and infirm natives, by the insufficient and ill-timed supplies, both in blankets and provisions. Disease was induced by this partial and irregular clothing - pulmonary complaints prevailed to a fearful extent during the winter of 1859.

By 1860, it was admitted, universally, that they were fast decreasing in number, the cause being attributed to partial assumption of semi-civilised habits - where formerly they clothed themselves in the skins of animals taken in the chase, by this time they were, in great measure, dependent upon the scanty dole of blankets issued by the government, which supplies were most irregular.

There is a danger, however, of overestimating the success that attended the efforts discussed above in respect of the indiscriminate slaughter of the indigenous people by certain classes of colonial society. The history of every State in the Commonwealth is foul with the blood of the unfortunate Aborigines and marked with deeds of callous brutality on the part of the settlers and natives alike. Some historians suggest that, to this record, South Australia was a pleasant exception, an exception, indeed, 'unique in the annals of white colonisation.'

Generally, by the opening of the 20th century it was agreed that blood was spilt here on both sides and that many mistakes had been made in dealing with the Aborigines that led to misunderstanding, but 'as the scene of an honest-to-God attempt to give them a square deal', from the outset it was held by many that South Australia held pride of place among the countries of the earth that had been invaded and settled by Europeans.

However, among modern-day scholars divergent views have been expressed:

Violence by settlers against Aboriginal people often went unreported. On those occasions it was reported, it was typically ascribed to ex-convicts or other unsavoury characters who were said to be drawn to the isolated and lawless boundaries of European settlement.

Explorer and colonial bureaucrat, Captain Charles Sturt, argued that settlers often established their runs with every intention of treating the Aboriginal people fairly, but 'it more frequently happens that the men who are sent to form our stations beyond the boundaries of location, are men of bold and unscrupulous dispositions, used to crime, accustomed to danger, and reckless as to whether they quarrel, or keep on good terms with the natives who visit them...'

The undeclared war of the Australian frontier produced a culture of secrecy, ensuring that much of what happened would be clothed in euphemisms, and the knowledge transmitted with all the accuracy of a Chinese whisper. It is this very pattern of violence that makes it difficult to make definitive statements about the number of Aboriginal people who died in South Australia's frontier wars...

The degradation of the Aborigines of Australia was, from the advent of 'civilisation', remarkably, and regretfully, rapid. In the late 1890s the demise of the last of the Tasmanian people was recorded and the Adelaide and Mount Barker nations of South Australia had long been unknown quantities, although when the colony was founded both were numbered in hundreds. For example, in an area of 2,800 square miles around Adelaide their number sank from 651 in 1841 to 156 in 1856.

In South Australia there was no organised war against the Aborigines yet, within 40 years after the first settlement of the colony, fully 67 per cent of the black population, with all that belonged to them, had disappeared.

Conclusion

The invasion of [their] ancient [land] rights by surveys and land appropriations of any kind, is justifiable only on the ground that they should, at the same time, reserve for the natives an ample sufficiency for their present and future use and comfort, under the new state of things into which they are thrown – a state in which we hope they will be led to live in greater comfort on a small space than they enjoyed before it occurred on their extensive original possessions.

(Register, 23 July 1840)

In 1903, a concerned citizen presented the following indictment of past practices in the local press but it received no positive response from either the general public, the legal profession or legislators; indeed, there is no doubt that a 'blind eye' had been turned on the irrefutable fact that South Australia had been founded upon the belief that all land occupied by the Aborigines would be purchased - alas, within thirty years of settlement this edict had been conveniently forgotten:

The inaction in respect to the strengthening of the existing law for safeguarding the rights of the blacks, who is practically helpless to redress his own wrongs, except by such acts of reprisal as are natural to the savage, and who is often incapable of understanding the extent of injury done to himself and his race, contrasts unpleasantly with the attempts to secure his complete subjugation... The object of authorising whipping in addition to punishment by imprisonment for cattle raiding is not likely to meet with much favour... There is something [about it]... too strongly reminiscent of the middle ages...

Further, in recent years, Henry Reynolds has contended that 'the legal profession as a whole has been remarkably reluctant to admit the role of law in the dispossession of the Aborigines [to which] they have been subjected during the last 200 years' and claimed that English law was consistently blind to racial differences and that the 'Aborigines became subjects of the Crown from the first instance of settlement.' He continued:

But the facts speak for themselves. Despite coming under the protection of the common law, it is my belief that as many as 20,000 Aborigines were killed in the course of Australian settlement. They were not, in a legal sense, foreign enemies struck down in war, although a few were shot down during periods of martial law. Most were murdered – nothing more or less. Yet the law was

powerless to staunch the flow of blood - and neither lawyers nor judges appear to have done much to bring the killing to an end. It is not an honourable record.

Today, in the 18th decade of European settlement, the fate of the Aborigines is subject to the whims and fancies of State and Federal governments and it is fair to say that a profound sense of historical and legal injustice persists within South Australian society - black and white alike.

The Mabo decision of the 1990s presented a humane opportunity but it has obviously been squandered:

It is symptomatic that the Australian courts have quite consciously rejected the idea that the Crown had a duty of care - a fiduciary relationship - towards the indigenous people. That has been accepted in the United States since the nineteenth century and has more recently been incorporated in the law of Canada and New Zealand. It is not that the Australian judiciary is unaware of this. They have decided not to walk in that direction.

In this respect the following opinion, and accompanying indictment of the treatment of Aborigines, was expressed in Adelaide in 1857:

Had they been a race equal to the New Zealander, Government would have spared no means if they could have got possession of the land by supplying them with food and medicine... To visit the encampments of the natives is distressing; exposure at this season of the year, many ill, without food, almost denuded, living at the mercy of their own tribe, is a disgrace... [to those] who have amassed wealth, to the destruction of their common necessaries of life and health.

To conclude this brief excursion into the decimation of the Aboriginal nations of South Australia, and the mercenary conduct that was more than evident in respect of the rapacious 'land grabbing' of early colonial days, it could be considered appropriate to recall Justice Deane's comment from the High Court of Australia when he observed that Australian law 'has still not reached the stage of retreat from injustice'.

Finally, perhaps the indigenous people may, today, find meagre solace in the words imprinted on T-shirts following that celebrated court case:

Sources

Interested readers are referred to the website - www.slsa.sa.gov.au/manning - where many of the quotations in the text are to be found, along with their respective source and further essays on the subjects of Aborigines and land settlement.

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For an essay on Colonel Light that defends his role in the foundation of Adelaide see *Manning's Place Names of South Australia - From Aaron Creek to Zion Hill* (Gould Books-2006), Appendix 9.

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N.B. Tindale, 'Desert Aborigines and the southern coastal people, some comparisons', in A. Keast (ed.), *Ecological Biogeography of Australia*.

C.G. Teichelmann , *Aborigines of South Australia*.

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Postscript: My friend and fellow historian, Peter Rymill, of penola, posed the following question after reading my essay:

Had you been in charge, how would you have handled the colonization of Australia? I suppose one possibility would be to have none at all, but if it hadn't been us, it would have been someone else. So, please assume you were the omnipotent Portuguese or Japanese lawmaker and governor of SA, and do outline for me how you would have protected the rights of the Aborigines.

I responded as follows:

More Humane Laws for Aborigines in Colonial South Australia

In a leading article, the editor of the SA Register said that 'an intelligent blackfellow might well be excused for coming to the conclusion that civilisation is a pious fraud', to which a fair thinking person might have ventured to add that no intelligent being, black or white, could possibly have come to any other conclusion, unless it was that civilisation was a fraud and lacking in piety.

I have been asked to:

Assume yourself to be Governor of SA and outline how you would have protected the rights of the Aborigines - I go a little further and have given myself, also, a place as “Boss cocky” in the Colonial Office from whence came the outpourings of government on colonial affairs together with instructions to governors.

Before heaping further accusations against those latter-day malefactors whom I castigated in my article, and placing myself in the exalted position in the Colonial Office, I proffer a comment or two on the laxity surrounding the formation of South Australia, fire another shot across the bows of joint stock companies of the mid-19th century, present a mild attack on the colonial churches and some of their flock and, finally, suggest that a more humane treatment of the indigenous people should have prevailed in colonial South Australia – I explain the background to my stance on “social matters” a little later and for the moment commend the following to you:

The worst sin towards our fellow man is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that’s the essence of inhumanity.

(George Bernard Shaw – *The Devil’s Disciple*)

A Fact that Raises an Excess of Bile Within My Vitals

The South Australian Constitution Act was drawn up by the SA Company, which promoted the venture, and not by the British government. Ministers “sanctioned” the introduction of the Bill without giving any “undue encouragement”. It was debated and read a second time in an almost empty House of Commons; however, some members were critical of the haste with which the Bill was handled.

I have traversed later events in my essay and I suggest that you may care to refer to Henry Reynold’s *Law of the Land* for a comprehensive examination of the intrigue and skuldugery evident within the hallowed halls of the Colonisation Commissioners and elsewhere.

A Few More Words on Joint Stock Companies, et al

I believe I have expressed, adequately or otherwise, my thoughts on the rape of South Australian landscape by ruthless financiers – too harsh, Peter? - then substitute “pseudo-Christians” - among whom was George Fife Angas. Collectively, under the cloak of professed Christianity, they proceeded, in a united fashion, with their despicable cause. I quote from another work of mine written and published in 1997:

Joint stock companies, however imperfect, became a permanent and influential feature of commerce and finance; indeed, readers of a contemporary novelist, Charles Dickens, will note that the misers portrayed in his works concerning the social life in England were not conventional old men, gloating over disinterred hoards of coins, but ruthless financiers who amassed great wealth at the expense of others.

Aided and abetted by such types of mankind and, thankfully, others of a less menacing disposition, South Australia was planned to be a place free from the convict taint and where religious tolerance would prevail...

Among these indiscretions was the “advanced liberals and physical radicals” who, in respect of the West Australian settlement at Swan River, “unfairly persisted in regarding the project as a device to enrich the relatives of Sir Robert Peel” and proceeded to make great political capital of the careless manner with which land was given away.

This factor, coupled with a shortage of labour, led to the failure of the West Australian colony. In South Australia, land, instead of being given away, was sold at such a price as to prevent a labourer from becoming a land-holder too quickly, while the proceeds from such sales were used to pay the passages of suitable immigrants, thus bolstering the work force of the colony.

On occasions South Australia became a haven for the sons of capitalists who had been “troublesome at home.” – *I then continued with the life story of one such person – Frederick Estcourt Bucknall and his grandiose scheme on the upper reaches of the Port River that led him and his partners close to penury.*

A Christian Thought Coupled with a Modicum of Psychology

I said in my essay that:

[1] For about the first three years of European settlement the indigenous Kurna people, who were shy and intelligent, coupled with an innate curiosity in respect of the whims and fancies of the white invaders, lived in relative harmony...

[2] They became increasingly hostile. The colonists acquired their lands and drove off the game while the settlers’ stock began to destroy plants and shrubs that were a valuable source of food.

I pose you the following for consideration:

You are the chief of the Kurna people and one of your clan sneaks into a colonist’s tent and steals his gold watch. He is apprehended, hauled before the local magistrate, found guilty in accordance with “British” law and sentenced to a public lashing of 75 strokes of the “cat-o’-nine-tails”.

Would this lead you away from “relative harmony” into “hostility” with his tormentors?

If the “culprit” had been admonished only, after explaining what the penalty would have been under white man’s law and, perhaps, chained for 24 hours, would you have been more disposed to continue with your people’s “friendly co-existence”?

If I were the Governor I would have had no hesitation in choosing the “carrot” in preference to the “stick” in my attempt to maintain peace and harmony with the Kurna.

The Uncaring Churches in Colonial South Australia

Those capitalists, with whom I have taken exception, were, like Angas, invariably “holier-than-thou” Christians, but to my mind the majority of them were inclined to practise their faith on the Sabbath day only within the confines of their Church, indeed:

Give us this day our daily bread,
He prayed at early morn;
And then went on the Stock Exchange
To raise the price of corn.

At the risk of excommunication, I repeat a few infernal words from some of my latter-day ramblings concerning the Churches in South Australia during the 19th century – in all the years I researched our local newspapers I never came across a thundering sermon from any pulpit against the indignities heaped upon the Aborigines by the white interloper:

The church that stands still while the world moves on, uttering moral truisms in the abstract, which it takes no pains to enforce, will be left high and dry along with the arid theologies that mankind, aspiring for practical religion, have forsaken long ago.

The unregulated competition of a social state, which apotheosised self-interest as the supreme motive in industrial activities and relations, the exploitation of labour as a mere ‘commodity’, the deceit and tricks, the speculative spirit that ran to the excesses of the gamester - these were evils which a community professing to have Christian principles at heart could not reconcile with its former creed.

It was not necessary for the Church to secularise itself in entering the lists against such abuses as these. The measure of the real influence, on those who sat under its ministrations, could be found in the extent to which the ethical teaching bore fruit in the actual conduct of life.

The Church should have kept in touch with social problems and its action in standing aloof from the economic [and Aboriginal?] questions of the day showed a want of sympathy with the workers in their desire to improve their social conditions.

It seemed to many that the Church would not touch anything that had the slightest relationship to everyday life and, regretfully, professing Christians, as a rule, looked upon their work as

complete in nursing their pastor and their pastor's work in nursing them. One continual round of preaching, hymn singing, bazaars, Sunday school treats, and nicely distributed kid-gloved charity, seemed to be the aim of the orthodox churches.

The Hanging of Thomas Donnelly

You comment that "the execution at least lays to rest any suggestion that Aboriginal genocide was official government policy." I quote another comment on this subject:

It is telling that the only European hanged for killing an Aborigine person in colonial South Australia, was an ex-convict, Thomas Donnelly. Donnelly's hanging in 1847 was held out as an example of the legal system's impartiality, yet it did little to alter the essential realities of frontier violence; indeed, it may merely have ensured that Indigenous deaths at settlers' hands became more covert. (*Fatal Collisions*, p. 7)

It was only Moorhouse's direct intervention in the case that led to the arrest, conviction and execution of Donnelly ... it is clear that both Moorhouses's diligence and the example of Donnelly encouraged those who had killed Aboriginal people to do their best to keep their activities from the attention of the law. See Dewdney's note about another employee on Aroona, Johnny Bose, who "would have, if caught at home, got into trouble for shooting an impudent Black, but then in his wisdom kept out of the way until matters quietened. (*Fatal Collisions*, p. 157) (See also reminiscences of Richard Dewdney - *Register*, 26 March 1924, page 10e)

Further, listen to E.P.S. Sturt in 1846:

It is impossible to get at the truth among the rest of the ruffians who infest the neighbourhood and I believe a wholesale system of murder has been carried on, which is most difficult to obtain any evidence of. (GRG24/6/1906/1846)

A Personal Aside

Please forgive me for interposing some personal reflections into this exposition but with advancing years I find myself, at times, getting a little angry when writing on social matters and, of course, you deserve an explanation. I am a victim of the menial environment that engulfed my formative years and made me what I am today – my widowed Mother was hard pressed to clothe and feed three children and I was the only one to get a secondary education (my sisters went out to domestic service on completion of primary school) and those three years saw me on the "free list" and the memory of taunts that flowed profusely from my more affluent fellow students still beleaguer me today.

However, this torment fermented an insatiable desire within me to better myself and attempt to outdo those juvenile miscreants – I was elected Head Prefect in my final year and captained the school's cricket team - hence, today, for better or worse, I walk in a lane left of centre and I recall, following my discharge from the Navy, hearing Ben Chifley talking at the Norwood Town Hall about the Labor Party's "Light on the Hill" - a few of his words that I adhered to during my working days and revere in my twilight years read as follows:

If I think a thing is worth fighting for, no matter what the penalty is, I will fight for the right and truth and justice will always prevail.

I practised the "carrot" method in my "management" years in the banking profession and, when I left, I was sent into retirement by many co-workers who, I say modestly, heaped kind words upon me in respect of what they perceived within me as common courtesy and decency which I had displayed when directing them in respect of their daily chores. And, to give you some indication as to where I am coming from, I didn't get a Life Membership of the Australian Bank Employees' Union through kow-towing to

management and turning a blind eye to the many inequities in the Act of Parliament that controlled the Savings Bank of SA and the persistent niggardly attitude of a succession of government-appointed Trustees. Note the words of Commissioner Webb in the State Arbitration Court in 1921:

Here are a number of men apparently greatly dissatisfied and they won't meet the trustees because they are frightened ... There are a great many adults in the Savings Bank who are not receiving a living wage... The men don't want bonuses, they want a fair wage.

Such parsimony persisted during my 42 years of service and, for 25 years, I engaged myself in Union affairs and brought about many improvements in working conditions and terms of employment. Never did I resort to frontal assaults but at all times I, courteously employed the "carrot" supported by facts and logic – it worked, and I venture to say if I had been bombastic and dictatorial the road would have been much more difficult to traverse, Indeed, as I have proceeded along my life's path the following adage has been ever present – "Scars have the strange power to remind us that our past is real" - For further reading refer to my published tome – *Worth Fighting For – A History of Bank Unionism in South Australia*.

So, Peter, to paraphrase Brian Dickey in his introduction to Jim Moss's *Sound of Trumpets*, Please do not "fly off in disgust" when you read my "social theories" but "walk with me in an open search for better understanding. It is there to be had."

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

(Henry David Thoreau)

And so, with the "Golden Rule" – DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU - ringing in my ears, and echoes from past industrial encounters gnawing away at my psyche, I attempt to answer your probing and logical question:

Lord Geoffrey Manning – Head of the Colonial Office from 1833 - His Remedies for the Amelioration of Injustices Perpetrated against SA Aborigines

(1) As for the Sale of Land "Occupied" by Indigenous People

The *Colonisation Act* would have stipulated precisely that 20% of monies received from all land sold within the colony were to be held in trust for the Aborigines.

Further, a Colonial Protector of Aborigines, would have been designated in the Letters Patent and I would have consulted with John F. Buxton, MP, as to a likely candidate.

Further, I would have ensured that the laws of Great Britain would not apply to the Aborigines and this man would have been given wide powers to deal with all charges levelled against Aborigines and to attend to their welfare. Capital punishment would have been illegal in respect of Aborigines.

(2) As for the Governor

The Governor would be just that and not have the Resident Commissioner abrogating certain decisions emanating from the said gentleman.

Lord Manning would have bowed to Governor Manning's plea for wider powers than those given to him because of the interminable time taken for instructions to arrive from England and conversely, reports and despatches sent 'Home'. If same was granted I

would have suggested that my tenure as Governor should be judged on the effectiveness of my administration over the “wider powers” entrusted to me. Thus, the “Tyranny of Distance” would have been defeated!

I would have appointed District Protectors of Aborigines as settlement progressed – see example hereunder.

(3) District Protectors

According to Christina Smith there were five “tribes” of Aborigines in the South-East and so, at the time of the introduction of occupation licences I would have sought advice from settlers such as Duncan Stewart as to the location of the main hunting grounds of the respective Aborigines. Let us suppose that the total land ranged over by the Booandik totalled 50,000 acres then, say, 10 %, in one holding and including all or part of their hunting ground, would have been reserved for their absolute use and enjoyment.

At a time considered appropriate by the Governor, a District Protector in the form of a “qualified” person would be appointed – Crown Rangers need not apply! His duties would have been subject to oversight by the “head” Protector in Adelaide.

In due course, I would have envisaged that at least four District Protectors would have been domiciled in the South East – say at Bordertown, Robe, Mount Gambier and Naracoorte.

(4) As for British Law and its Imposition Upon the Aborigines.

In my essay I say:

Perhaps it is a trite comment, but it would appear that it was impossible for the Aborigines to consent either to the occupation of their land or on their enforced subjection to English law for they were incapable of comprehending the import and results of either one or the other. One might be excused for concluding that, in their estimation of right and wrong, ‘the killing of a white invader of their country [would be] rather more virtuous than criminal.’

(Have you any argument against this conclusion?)

As Lord Manning of the Colonial Office I would have fostered a clause of the *SA Colonisation Act* that exempted the Aborigines from the provisions of British Law and put their behaviour, etc., under the control of the Colonial Protector.

(5) As Regards Aboriginal Health

I said this in my essay:

From the closing months of 1836 the Aborigines use of the land, together with customs going back for thousands of years, were to be slowly, but surely, all but exterminated by the intrusion of the British settler and the accompanying laws and diseases of their so-called ‘civilisation’.

Great suffering was occasioned, especially among the aged and infirm natives, by the insufficient and ill-timed supplies, both in blankets and provisions. Disease was induced by this partial and irregular clothing - pulmonary complaints prevailed to a fearful extent during the winter of 1859.

By 1860, it was admitted, universally, that they were fast decreasing in number, the cause being attributed to partial assumption of semi-civilised habits - where formerly they clothed themselves in the skins of animals taken in the chase, by this time they were, in great measure, dependent upon the scanty dole of blankets issued by the government, which supplies were most irregular.

And I gave many examples of the woeful neglect of the Aborigines:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra

lay beside him. All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated opossum rug...

Money from the Aboriginal Land Fund would have been forthcoming to give the Aborigines ongoing medical attention, provision of blankets and food, etc.

(6) Occupiers and Lessees of Land

Any occupier or lessee of Crown land, if found guilty of an unlawful offence against Aborigines, whether by his own hand or that of an employee, would be subjected to such penalty as stipulated by law and, in addition, suffer the cancellation of his leasehold agreement. He would be entitled to reimbursement for any improvements made upon his land; however, any monies received upon transfer of the said lease to another person would be paid into the Protector's Land Fund.

(7) Owners of Freehold Land

Any owner of freehold land, if found guilty of an unlawful offence against Aborigines, whether by his own hand, family member or of a servant, would be subjected to such penalty as stipulated by law and, in addition, incur a fine not exceeding £100 which would be paid into the Protector's Land Fund.

(8) All Other Citizens

Any other citizen, if found guilty of an unlawful offence against Aborigines, would incur a fine not exceeding £200 which would be paid into the Protector's Land Fund.

Explanatory Note

I realise, of course, the inherent difficulties that could arise, because many Aborigines would be unaware of the "new" law and so, in many cases, justice could only be forthcoming if evidence as to the "crime" was evidenced by a third party, presumably a concerned colonist who, like our respective selves, had some of the "milk of human kindness" running through his/her veins!

Valediction

So there you are Peter –You have Lord Manning's/Governor Manning's suggestions that, they believed, would have improved the lot of the Aborigines - I trust, from where you sit, they are not considered Utopian; indeed, through my aged and, hopefully, wise plebeian eyes they redound with Christian ideals, benevolence and common decency – as opposed to yesteryear's tight-fisted order of things *vis a vis* Angas, *et al* – Would they be amiss in today's troubled times?

Finally, I repeat some words of early settlers from which one can only conclude that those within early colonial society who circumvented the intention of the Imperial government in respect of Aboriginal lands, and subjected them to the rigours of "British justice", have, in the wake of their rapacity, much to answer for:

[They] are far superior to the ordinary race of New Hollanders. Their friendly disposition, honesty and inoffensive conduct may fairly set at rest all the fears that might, at first, have been entertained

We have a Humane Society here; despised and insulted as they are by some. I allude to the blacks of the Adelaide tribe. The colonists have had several proofs of the active, humane and persevering conduct of our friendly natives, whenever an occasion presents itself.

(Register, 3 June 1837, Adelaide Chronicle, 31 December 1839.)

So Endeth the Lesson - Let us Pray:

May the Lord have mercy upon those who turn themselves against the modest and benevolent procedures narrated above that were instituted by Lord Manning in the face of intrigue and opposition from forces within the covey of Colonisation Commissioners and the South Australian Company.

Amen

The Aborigines of the Lower South East

Shame Upon Us! We take their land and drive away their food by what we call civilization, and then deny them shelter from a storm... What comes of all the hypocrisy of our wishes to better their condition? The police drive them into the bush to murder shepherds, and then we cry out for more police... What can a maddened black think of our Christianity to deny him the sod on which he was born? You grow hundreds of bushels of corn on his land but deny him the crumbs that fall from the table... They kill a sheep, but you drive his kangaroo away. You now drive him away from his own, his native land - out upon it; how can God's all-seeing eye approve of this?
(Adelaide Times, 24 May 1851)

Introduction

There is a poor blackfellow near [Millicent] who is suffering from paralysis in one side. He is in a state of nudity and for a time lay in the sand and ashes near his fire, but has since been supplied with some old bags. He has only one piece of blanket with which he partially covers himself when he observes company approaching. I hear he has burnt his clothing which was supplied to him by the police... Is there no place to which he can be taken where he will be properly cared for? If not, he is no better off than a horse or bullock which would, in such a case, be shot in order that its pain might cease, but because he is human he must die for want of attention, food and proper shelter and clothing.

(Border Watch, 19 April 1879)

The unhappiest feature of the spread of the white races over the earth was the subsequent disappearance of the natives with whom, inevitably, they came in contact. Early Spanish colonisation in the New World was a chapter of horrors, while British expansion in North America presented, in dealing with the natives, many features from which the modern mind recoils. It is greatly to the credit of the British that they were the first to set their hands resolutely against the horrors that usually attended this process. The fate of the Australian Aborigine is sufficient witness that they were as incapable of arresting that process, but they did attempt to ensure that their relations with the indigenous people should be as decent as possible.

The South Australian Commissioners admitted, as a fact, which it was in vain to disguise, and which could not be deplored too deeply, that the native people of Australia had been exposed to injustice and cruelty in their dealings with Europeans and that squatters, runaway convicts and deserters from ships had dealt with the Aborigines as if they did not regard them as members of the human race, but as inferior animals created for their use. Further, they observed that:

These outrages cannot be repressed where no legal authority exists. Therefore... the colonization of South Australia, by industrious and virtuous settlers, so far from being an invasion of the rights of the Aborigines, is a necessary preliminary to the displacement of lawless squatters, the abandoned sailors, the runaway convicts, the pirates, the worse-than-savages, that now infest the coasts and islands along that extensive portion of New Holland, and perpetrate against the defenceless native crimes at which humanity revolts.

For the purpose of securing to the natives their proprietary right to the soil, wherever such right might be found to exist, special instructions were given to the colonial commissioner, in which it was laid down as a principle, that, of the colonial lands placed by Parliament at the disposal of the commissioners, no portion which the natives might possess in occupation or enjoyment, should be offered for sale till ceded by the natives to the colonial commissioner.

That officer was required to furnish the protector with evidence of the faithful fulfilment of the bargains or treaties which he should effect with the Aborigines; and it was made the duty of the latter not only to see that such bargains or treaties were faithfully executed, but also to call upon the executive government of the colony, to protect the natives in the undisturbed enjoyment of those lands of which they should not be disposed to make a voluntary transfer. It was further ordained that such transfers should be considered as involving a stipulation on the part of the purchasers, that the Aborigines parties thereto, should be permanently supplied with the means of subsistence, and with moral and religious instruction...

Thus conducted, the colonization of South Australia will be an advent of mercy to the native tribes. They are now exposed to every species of outrage and treated like cattle of the field; they will, in future, be placed under the protection of British laws, and invested with the rights of British subjects. They are now standing on the verge of famine; they will obtain a constant and ample supply of subsistence.

They are not attached to the soil as cultivators; they do not occupy the natural pastures, even as wandering shepherds; they are without the implements of the chase which belong to hunting tribes; and, with respect of industry and the possession of property, they do not appear to manifest the instinctive apprehensions of some of the inferior animals. They will now be lifted up from this degradation; they will gradually be reconciled to labour for the sake of its certain reward...

There is a danger, however, of overestimating the success that attended these efforts. The history of every State in the Commonwealth is foul with the blood of the unfortunate Aborigines and is marked with deeds of callous brutality on the part of the settlers and natives alike. Some historians suggest that, to this record, South Australia was a pleasant exception, an exception, indeed, 'unique in the annals of white colonisation.'

Generally, by the opening of the 20th century it was agreed that blood was spilt here on both sides and that many mistakes were made in dealing with the Aborigines that led to misunderstanding, but 'as the scene of an honest-to-God attempt to give them a square deal', from the outset it was held by many that South Australia held pride of place among the countries of the earth that had been invaded and settled by Europeans.

However, among modern-day scholars divergent views have been expressed, for example:

Violence by settlers against Aboriginal people often went unreported. On those occasions it was reported, it was typically ascribed to ex-convicts or other unsavoury characters who were said to be drawn to the isolated and lawless boundaries of European settlement. Explorer and colonial bureaucrat, Captain Charles Sturt, argued that settlers often established their runs with every intention of treating the Aboriginal people fairly, but 'it more frequently happens that the men who are sent to form our stations beyond the boundaries of location, are men of bold and unscrupulous dispositions, used to crime, accustomed to danger, and reckless as to whether they quarrel, or keep on good terms with the natives who visit them...'

The undeclared war of the Australian frontier produced a culture of secrecy, ensuring that much of what happened would be clothed in euphemisms, and the knowledge transmitted with all the accuracy of a Chinese whisper. It is this very pattern of violence that makes it difficult to make definitive statements about the number of Aboriginal people who died in South Australia's frontier wars...

The Coming of the White Man

We have taken their country and brought amongst them all the vices of civilisation with very little of its virtues. These vices have been carrying them off wholesale and at no distant day the black man will be as much a curiosity as the bunyip. Why should we accelerate the pace? Why should we be recklessly guilty in the matter? We may not be able to avert the extinction of the race, but in common humanity, we should do what little we can to stay the rate of mortality and at least extend to the black the attentions we give even the brute creation...

(Border Watch, 29 January 1870)

When the white man arrived they, firstly, took possession of the land, then cut down the forests, destroyed the kangaroos and other native game and gave the natives to understand that, if they encroached in any way against their boundaries, they would take upon themselves the task of clearing them out. In return for their land and their game what was given them? Civilisation was introduced - Yes, but what sort of civilisation? Well, they were taught to lie, cheat, smoke tobacco and drink intoxicating liquors!

The colonists introduced diseases amongst them that had the effect of making them die off like rotten sheep. In a word, they were initiated in all the vices of Europeans, without inculcating or exhibiting towards them any of the counteracting virtues, and the result was that those natives, who had intercourse with the colonists, were more cruel, more treacherous and ten times more to be dreaded than those never brought into contact with the boasted civilisation.

From the closing months of 1836 their use of the land, together with customs going back for thousands of years, were to be slowly, but surely, all but exterminated by the intrusion of the British settler and the accompanying laws and diseases of their so-called 'civilisation'. It has been said that the first contact of this ethos with barbarism, wherever it occurs, was 'accompanied or speedily followed by conflict; and the results of that conflict and attendant circumstances is almost invariably the extinction, not of barbarism merely, but of the barbarians.' Prophetic words, indeed!

Sympathy towards the plight of the Aborigines was anathema to the more ruthless settler who suggested that they should be either mercifully exterminated or left to 'the scarcely less certain but cruel fate of perishing by the loathsome diseases or excesses which [had] never failed to follow their contacts with whites.' The more saintly among the interlopers held the view that they should be placed in a school where 'all the mysteries of science, refinement and religion' could be inculcated within them.

At times, the latter members of colonial society went a little further and pleaded for the Aborigines who were 'daily retreating from the footsteps of a race whose arts and powers [were] so much superior... as to leave no chance of their being able to feed or rear their young in peace amidst their accustomed haunts.' This aroused the displeasure of the self-centred exploiter whose creed was that:

The black brutes know well enough that they can obtain flour or meat by pestering you till you fling it at their heads... They will never rouse themselves from their slothful, dirty and sluggard state... Why do the Government inveigle us to these distant climes without some protection against these wretches? Perhaps it is a trite comment, but it would appear that it was impossible for the Aborigines to consent either to the occupation of their land or on their enforced subjection to English law for they were incapable of comprehending the import and results of either one or the other. One might be excused for concluding that, in their estimation of right and wrong, 'the killing of a white invader of their country [would be] rather more virtuous than criminal.'

By 1860, it was admitted, universally, that they were fast decreasing in number, the cause being attributed to partial assumption of semi-civilised habits - where formerly they clothed themselves in the skins of animals taken in the chase, by this time they were, in great measure, dependent upon the scanty dole of blankets issued by the government, which supplies were most irregular. Great suffering was occasioned, especially among the aged and infirm natives, by the insufficient and ill-timed supplies, both in blankets and provisions. Disease was induced by this partial and irregular clothing - pulmonary complaints prevailed to a fearful extent during the winter of 1859.

A striking example of the 'ethnic cleansing' of this embattled, and now extinct, people is in the following quotation from an Adelaide newspaper which was a positive indictment of the indifference that pervaded colonial society:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra lay beside him. All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated opossum rug... Were the panacea for the suffering race... to be found in our capital, there would probably be no getting a tithe of them to partake of it.

The decadence of the Aborigines of Australia was, from the advent of 'civilisation', remarkably and regretfully rapid. In the late 1890s the demise of the last of the Tasmanian people was recorded. The Adelaide and Mount Barker nations of South Australia have long been unknown quantities, although when the colony was founded both were numbered in hundreds. In South Australia there was no organised war against the Aborigines yet, within 40 years after the first settlement of the colony, fully 67 per cent of the black population, with all that belonged to them, had disappeared.

Relations with the Aborigines

Respecting the case of murder just tried before Mr Sturt I have to remark that altho [sic] I have no doubt the native was shot by Morgan [?], yet I do not think there remains the smallest chance of procuring evidence at any future period but think the mere fact of the man having been apprehended and tried may have a good effect in preventing a system of cold-blooded murder which I have reason to believe has been very common about the border of Port Philip.

Respecting the natives generally in this district I beg to inform you that for the last two or three months they have not been troublesome, at least not near so much as was expected... I have lately had a great deal of

intercourse with them and have found them to be very intelligent; they are beginning to form very just notions of the purposes of the police; a native constable would be of the greatest benefit...

(An 1846 Letter from Corporal McCulloch to Commissioner of Police)

The Aborigines of the South East were once composed of powerful tribes, each occupying its own territory that seemed to be strictly defined and territorial rights guarded jealously. Each had different dialects and the names of the tribes were Booandik, Pinegunga, Mootatunga, Wichitunga and Polingunga, of which the first named was the most powerful. The tract of country occupied by the Booandik extended from the mouth of the River Glenelg to Rivoli Bay North (Beachport) for about 30 miles inland. Irrespective of their territory they were divided into two classes - Kumite and Kroke - and here the curious tribal custom in relation to marriage occurred. A Kroke had to always marry a Kumite woman and a Kumite could only marry a Kroke woman, while any children were placed in the mother's class.

Infants were betrothed to one another by their parents according to a system of exchange called 'wootambou' and Mrs Smith, who wrote a book on their life style, suggested that 'their marriage customs clearly indicate their sense that virtue is honour.' Polygamy was the rule, most of the men having two wives and there was clear evidence that infanticide was once practised and, at times, mothers ate their infants.

George Riddoch, who was closely associated with the Aborigines, and speaking of them as they were in 1865, said, in retrospect, that they were 'fairly civilised, smart, sharp as needles, as docile as whites, ready to do a good day's work for wages. Alas, they are now down and out.'

In 1873, at Lacepede Bay several natives were encamped near the township and their wants were carefully attended to by Police Trooper Morris:

There were a few sick and infirm ones among them, who require daily rations, but the others can obtain fish generally for their support, and some are employed by the settlers. A school for native children is established at Kingston and is supported by private contributions, the inmates receiving the ordinary rations from the government. The average number attending is twelve, and those I examined appeared to be carefully instructed, This is the only depot where I found a place for keeping the stores exposed to the weather, but a trifling outlay on the building will put it in a proper state.

The children were catered for at a school conducted by Miss Armstrong who informed visitors that there was 'comparatively little difficulty in teaching penmanship, but arithmetic was a very formidable task.' It was situated near the mouth of the Maria Creek.

In the early days of settlement, the Aborigines on the Mosquito Plains near Naracoorte constituted a numerous and warlike people who resented the occupation of their hunting grounds. Indeed, this antipathy eventuated in the discovery of one of the greatest curiosities in the form of an Aboriginal mummy - this is discussed hereunder.

'Yallum Jacky' was the last member of the Penola people and, about 1901, his wife died and, bereft of kith and kin, his mind became deranged and he was removed to Adelaide Lunatic Asylum where he died in 1902:

The aboriginal natives of this district are gradually dying out. Last week two of them disappeared from this mundane sphere. One was an aged member of the Booandik tribe, well known in the district as Old Tom, who died at the Up and Down Rocks... [He] was always

an abstainer from the white man's 'firewater' and to this fact he was in a great measure indebted for his length of days. His last request was one to Mrs Smith, the local protectress, to give his blanket, etc., to a young native attendant who was his nurse for a long time...

One survivor from the inherent decimation was an Aborigine with the European name of Charles Runga and an 1888 newspaper report said:

There is working on the Kingston to Naracoorte line... an Aborigine named Charles Runga who has been on the line in the South East from its commencement, I believe. He had a few acres of land given to him where he built a cottage and until lately has been able to go home every evening to his wife and family. A few days ago this hard working industrious black received notice to leave in a fortnight... Now he is a workman equal to any on the line... One time they thought of making him a ganger and he ran the line daily for years... [Editor's note - There is no truth in the above statements but we have learned from another authority that the dismissal was made on economic grounds.]

The Tarpeena Publican versus Father J.E. Tenison Woods

Whether the native is guilty or not of atrocity with which he is charged has, clearly, nothing to do with the principles we have ever maintained should regulate our communication... which are, non-interference with their laws as executed among themselves... Inoffensive natives are not to be shot like wild dogs with impunity...

(SA Gazette & Mining Journal, 1 September 1849)

A most explicit account of the state of the general well being of the South East Aborigines, following two decades of infiltration by squatters and others, is to be found in a series of correspondence in the *Register* in mid-1866 from which a discerning reader might be enabled to deduce the truth. At the outset, in May of that year a report was published which read, in part, as follows:

The second grievance is the state of the aboriginal population which is a disgrace to a Christian community. The Crown Lands Ranger, Mr Egan, is the nominal Protector of the blacks and under him the police at various places dispense the rations. The whole thing, however, is done in a clumsy and perfunctory manner. The police are the worst persons the government could appoint to give out the rations as the poor blacks have a natural dread of these gentlemen.

A case recently occurred here when some of the natives obtained grog and got drunk and because they would not inform the police where they obtained the drink the rations of the whole company were [*sic*] stopped for a fortnight. Father Woods heard of the case and visited the poor old fellow and gave him some medicine, but he was too far gone - the man died of sheer inanition ... The protection of Aborigines in the South East I am assured is a mere farce and the question is asked why Dr Walker does not come down frequently and look after them.

A few weeks later the Father Tenison Woods sought to clarify certain assertions made previously and to plea for a radical change to the methods employed by the government in the treatment of the local Aborigines:

Your correspondent has called attention to the sad state of the natives in this district. Well I say most conscientiously that a more hideous crying evil does not exist among Christians. These poor savages after being degraded and diseased by the vices of - shall we call it civilisation - are but to die, in our midst, of starvation... I have seen them dying within a stone's throw of abundance and luxury. I have seen them so corroded by disease that they might be said to be rotting away even in life, and there was none there to give aid. I have even found one lying in the water where he had been left by his companions whose emaciated condition would not enable them to carry him further through the morass. I have known them to die of cold, starvation and of drunkenness and all these things amongst men who had grown rich on their lands and boasted of the Christian name...

I assert most vehemently that we are bound to do something for them if only to smooth their path to the grave. True, the government does something but a more wretched inefficient system could not be devised. Here is a specimen - The Crown Land Ranger [Mr Egan] lives with his son who keeps a public house. It is a wayside inn far from any police protection - at least 18 miles. Here the rations are kept and there the blacks congregate in numbers, and there also congregate the usual society of a bush public house. Imagine the rest. Alas! I have often wished there were no rations at all.

Here is another instance. Blankets are, or should be, provided for the natives. The other day a poor native dying at my place [and] suffered much from the cold. I applied for blankets for him. Yes, I was told there are blankets but they were at Robe 25 miles away. Another instance. This native friend - a good, poor lad with many fine points in his character, savage though he was, and I wished to have him buried with some respect to his human nature and the thought that Christ had shed His blood for him after all. Oh, yes, he could be buried at government expense but no coffin would be allowed! What, then? A cart, could he have blankets? They were at Robe. Could he have any covering? The government would not pay for it. Poor Tommy! He sleeps in an old cloak of mine; his pillow, I trust, none the harder for the treatment of the more civilised brethren...

Oh, good people of Adelaide who respect your characters as men of humanity and wish your names to go down to posterity with something better than execration for your treatment of this fast-fading race, do something for them in the name of God. If you only saw their state, if you only saw their rations - but I have said enough - for I feel sure better days are in store.

I should like to add the names of those settlers in the district who have distinguished themselves above all others in their care for the blacks and their unfailing kindness to them - Messrs Lawson, Bonney and McLeod in the Tatiara; Henry Jones, James Hunter and Andrew Watson for the rest of the district.

The proprietor of the Tarpeena 'bush inn', being the son of the Crown Lands Ranger, responded in a letter dated 2 July 1866:

How is it possible for the blacks to die of starvation when there are so many depots in the district...? Further, the district is thickly timbered and abounds with game... It is therefore morally and physically impossible for the aborigines to be dying of starvation in our midst... If Mr Woods really witnessed the distress among the blacks which he describes in his spirited letter it is discreditable to him not to have applied to the quarter where he well knew that relief could be obtained...

The vile insinuations about the bush public house, the want of police protection, the blacks congregating in numbers, which is untrue... I fling back with contempt... [In conversation with the Protector] he replied dryly, 'Mr Woods cares very little about the blacks'... His appeal to the good Christian people of Adelaide is a great slur on the good Christian people of this district who, one and all, treat the blacks with great kindness and consideration.

In a letter dated 6 July Father Woods reentered the fray and, ignoring the personal insults emanating from Mr Egan at Tarpeena, informed his fellow colonists that:

Let me state in respect of your special correspondent that there have been complaints and accusations of misstatement in which he wrote about a native here dying of starvation. I believe your correspondent derived his information from me and I willingly take the responsibility of the story, but to satisfy those officers who feel themselves aggrieved by it, I here give the facts which they can comment upon or explain at their leisure - [he then recites a lengthy account of King Tom and the circumstances surrounding his death which are in conflict with Mr Egan's subsequent account] and concluded by saying:

Some temporary relief was obtained for poor Tom and he revived to some extent; but three days after the annual races occurred at Penola and on the same evening, as was usual on such occasions, our streets were traversed by maddened yelling tribes of drunken blacks. In the end they were all locked up and King Tom left, I suppose, without his usual attendance, for when I went there next day to enquire after him he was dead and had died, I conscientiously believe, for want of food.

Now on all this I do not blame the police... But I do blame the system. Why should they be the distributor of rations? Why should they be saddled with a duty for which they are not paid - which has the effect of congregating natives in towns from which it should be our most earnest object to

keep them away?... To my knowledge the majority suffers hunger rather than go to the police for their food. If, however, they do go and one gets locked up for drunkenness, they all decamp in terror and thus the rations are saved....

The 'system' as it is seen at Naracoorte is still more remarkable. No rations are supplied there at all... The camp contains about 30 blacks, three of whom are prostrate from sickness. I went to see them. The same emaciation and the same cry for food met me at the outset. There was hunger and starvation there beyond doubt. On enquiry I found that the only rations obtained were by the written orders to the storekeeper from Mr Eyre, the Ranger - an officer who I believe means well towards the natives and would do more if he could.

The storekeeper told me that for some time past all orders for rations had been refused. And what wonder? The government won't pay for what they have already and there on the books of a storekeeper at Kincaid stands the name of Mr Wildman, Commissioner of Crown Lands, for a small account, significantly small, of tea, sugar and flour supplied to the natives since October 1865. Payment has been asked for and no reply received, so now the blacks live on the precarious earnings which their poor services can obtain... The sick cannot work, the aged cannot work and it is not everyone who can look for such heroism as I have known amongst them, where the son of an old man worked for a day's rations and took them to his father, going without himself....

Here, too, is an instance of an evil of another kind in which I conceal names and places for obvious reasons. In compliance with a request from a charitable person I went to see a young lubra who was dying in a hut on a certain station. She was in the last stage of consumption and by her side sat a really beautiful little half-caste girl, about three years old. She was, however, smothered in dirt and not even decently covered by a few squalid rags. The mother seemed proud to tell me that the father of the child was a 'gentleman' of some little means who lived hard by and in whose service she had been until she had fallen sick... And this "gentleman" had thus consigned his offspring to the wretched squalor of savages, and had abandoned its mother, it might have been for aught he knew, to starvation...

Good and abundant rations should be provided and not left at the townships but at such stations where the natives are known to congregate. The settlers would gladly see to their fair and equal distribution, for many of them have supplied food for years past without any government aid at all. Blankets should be provided at the same places. These alone if left in the hands of settlers would be of great service. Mr Lawson, of Padthaway, has no less than 20 natives at his station for two months waiting for a promised supply of blankets which, as far as he knew, were still at Guichen Bay....

Above all stringent enquiries should be made in the case of half-caste children so that their fathers should be forced to take some of the responsibility of the care and the education of children now bidding fair to become the worst kinds of savages that we have. This is no light evil; nay, I can assure my fellow colonists that it is a very grave one as any one can see who will take an account of the half-caste children in this district...

I could not, in the interests of humanity, keep silence in the sight of so much misery which my voice might probably help to alleviate, but I sadly feel that unless some at least of my suggestions are carried out, what I have urged and what you have so ably advocated, and the present visit of the Chief Inspector will be of no avail.

Support for Father Woods' avowed stance in respect of government neglect was forthcoming from a citizen writing under the pseudonym of 'Veritas' who castigated Mr Egan:

It would appear that Mr Egan was troubled with a violent bilious attack... His charges are so reckless and indiscriminate, and he puts forward his opinions with so much confidence that he reminds me forcibly of an Irishman in a faction fight who strikes out indiscriminately at friend and foe... The thinking public knows that there are few virtues to be learned at any public house... I believe Mr Woods to be substantially correct. I accompanied him on one occasion to the blacks' camp where one Tom King was lying very sick and he, and those who were with him, said they had nothing to eat, at least they had nothing that a sick man, not even a blackfellow could eat. They also said that they had no rations from the police for some time.

Mr Woods made immediate enquiry and I believe he was told that the magistrate advised the police to give them no rations for a fortnight in order, if possible, to make them tell who it was that was serving them with drink, and for my part I quite agree with the magistrate. I think the plan was a good one, though it was hard for the poor fellow who was dying.

Mr Egan does not appear to advantage unless as his own trumpeter - 'my house is as well kept as any in the district' - 'tis well he says. Poor fellow, his feelings must be finely moulded to take exception to such action; so, I think he is quite alone in his opinion. He is also much annoyed because Mr Woods should appear to take more notice of the blacks than other clergymen do! If he but knew the many amiable qualities of the talented gentleman he seeks to abuse, he would know no object was too low for his sympathy and no trouble too much when tending to alleviate pain and misery. With these few remarks, Mr Editor, I will leave him in the hands of a discriminating public.

In August 1866 Mr Egan again disputed many of Father Woods' claims and in a virulent attack against that gentleman said, *inter alia*:

[As regards the blanket episode] I can fearlessly contradict that statement; it is not true. Mr Woods did not apply to the officer in charge of the blacks' stores at Penola for a blanket; had he done so he would have got one. In fact, the Sub-protector did not know that Tommy was ill until after his death. He took ill on the 8th of May, remained at Mr Woods' place until the 21st when he died suddenly. During this time Mr Woods attended to him. Had the Sub-protector been informed of Tommy's illness he would have employed Dr Barlas to attend him. Under proper medical treatment he may have recovered.

During Mr Woods' 10 years painful experience of 'appalling distress' among the blacks he can only fasten upon one doubtful fact to prove his many sweeping assertions... King Tom was very old and emaciated previous to his death; he was a long time ill; he had a chronic disease which was accelerated by a cold which he caught when washing sheep at the Mandara Station in Victoria. When he got a little better he crawled into Mr Robertson's station at Wrattenbully [*sic*]; at all those stations he would have got plenty of food. As the races were approaching he crawled on to Comaum, 12 miles from Penola; here he remained for a week and had plenty of food given to him every day by Charley, a very intelligent black man, who works on the station.

From thence he came to Penola, accompanied by two lubras who remained with him and attended upon him up to his death. Charley, who fed him at Comaum, was also with him when he died (for he likewise came to the races) and he assisted to bury him. Charley says that King Tom had plenty of food but was too ill to eat it; he could only drink and he had an abundance of tea....

The greedy avidity with which a black devours his food is no evidence he died of starvation. There was one sick here for several weeks; she had three pannikins of sago every day, one pound of meat and as much vegetables as she liked, with bread; yet, she was 'woefully emaciated' and half an hour before she died she ate a pint pannikin full of sago with a 'greedy avidity' which would make Mr Woods say that she died from want of food.

[As regards the stoppage of rations] the intelligent blacks with whom I conversed say that the rations were not stopped and the officer in charge says the same. The blacks laugh at Mr Woods writing that they are frightened to go to the police station for their tucker...

The camp [at Naracoorte] contains about 30 blacks, three of whom are prostrated with sickness, etc. Now if there are only three sick the remaining 27 must be healthy and able to work; they need not be hungry. I am afraid that Mr Woods draws largely on his imagination for his facts. What is he driving at? Does he expect the government to feed all the blacks in the district - young and old healthy and unhealthy? If that be his object he could not do them a greater injury, besides the injury he would do the settlers by depriving them of labour. Ranger Egan will encourage none that are able to work around Tarpeena. The same remarks apply to Border Town and Naracoorte...

About 18 months ago a number of natives congregated on a certain station some miles away from any town. There was no 'bush public house', no 'police protection' but plenty of bushmen. There was about £25 to £30 worth of grog drunk amongst them; their drunkenness, debauchery and ruin held high revelry on that occasion.

How does Mr Woods know that the rations are kept at the Tarpeena public house? He has never been there, nor has he ever seen where the rations are kept. He ought to be more cautious when he writes. A clergyman should have a strict regard for the truth... There is little danger I will compromise my father's private or official character by giving the blacks grog, and the very few who are generally around here is perhaps the best proof that they get none.

In giving advice about the management of the aborigines Mr Woods ought to visit Point MacLeay and take a leaf out of Mr Taplin's book; there he would learn the true and only proper way of improving their condition.

In his letter he said that Christ shed His blood for the blacks. Well, what has he done for their immortal souls during his 10 years residence as a missionary priest among them? Has he learned their language, translated any portion of the Holy Scriptures into their vernacular tongue and taught at least some of them to read it, and told them about that blood which he says was shed for them and which cleanses all sin? [Signed - Laurence Mac Egan, junior]

And how did they receive the intoxicating liquors? A report at this period of time, while not referring specifically to the Tarpeena public house, said:

Many of the young Aborigines were employed as shearers by the squatters and, when paid, they would go to a white shepherd and say 'I will take care of the flock, will you go and get me a gallon of grog.' In other cases it was common knowledge that in the South East they were openly supplied with intoxicating drinks.

To conclude this enlightening discussion, the words of the Crown Ranger at Tarpeena, Egan (senior), in an annual report to his superiors in Adelaide in August 1866, discredited much of the untimely and ill-considered outpourings from his son:

November being the season for washing and shearing sheep in the district the aborigines disperse among the different stations in search of employment. When the work is done they are paid off and with few exceptions spend their money on grog. I got information that the blacks, sheep washing on Benara Station, would be paid off... I went there and remained all night to see the result. About 10 pm I heard a great noise in their camp. They had sent to the Mount for grog and were getting drunk. Next morning they were all (males and females) drunk and fighting. Harry, who was driving a flock of sheep for Dr Browne, went up to their camp and was wounded by Jackey. I complained to the police but the sergeant said he had not sufficient men to look after the blacks. I spoke to the Stipendiary Magistrate who got a warrant filed and went after Jackey who got one month with hard labour in Robe Gaol...

During the last quarter there has been a great deal of sickness amongst the blacks throughout the district. They suffer very much from the cold at this season and require warmer blankets than those hitherto supplied and a more liberal allowance of clothing for both men and women. I take this opportunity to direct the attention of Government to the suggestions made in my report of the 9th March, 1863 relative to blankets and beg respectfully for their adoption.

Affrays with the Aborigines

[They] are far superior to the ordinary race of New Hollanders. Their friendly disposition, honesty and inoffensive conduct may fairly set at rest all the fears that might, at first, have been entertained

We have a Humane Society here; despised and insulted as they are by some. I allude to the blacks of the Adelaide tribe. The colonists have had several proofs of the active humane and persevering conduct of our friendly natives, whenever an occasion presents itself.

(Register, 3 June 1837, Adelaide Chronicle, 31 December 1839.)

What was considered to be the cruellest murder of an Aborigine in the South East occurred in the 1840s and an eye witness recounted this sad story:

I was living on a sheep station near one of the bays in the South East and not far from the boundary of the colony. It was a wild country and the settlers were few and far between. Many of the men employed there were old convicts who had found their way over the River Glenelg into the 'saintlike air' of South Australia... In addition it was 300 miles from Adelaide and if reckless treatment of the natives could anywhere escape punishment it would be in this out of the way part of the world. But such escape was not easy in those days of incomplete protection and defective police organisation, as my narrative will soon show.

It was a sultry afternoon in the early part of summer. A heavy brooding stillness peculiar to Australia in close weather covered the country. Scarcely a breath of air moved the thick dark trees in the bush and as I walked down to the seashore, the water, which was far out, was as calm as a lake... Towards evening I turned homeward and was approaching a swamp not far from the station when I heard a pistol shot and soon afterwards the cry of a native., 'White man, come! White man, come!'

I ran up a rise of ground that overlooked the station on the one side and an aboriginal camp of miamias on the other and, turning in the latter direction, I saw a native crawling in apparent pain from one miamia to the swamp, where he evidently wanted a drink. On running to his assistance I saw that he was bleeding profusely from a pistol wound in the side, but he could only indicate by gestures that he had been shot by some one near the wurleys. Soon afterwards he died.

The native who was killed had long been a favourite about the station under the name of Kingberri and sometimes Billy... He was a fellow of infinite jest and a willing worker about the station, now lying ruthlessly shot. Who had perpetrated this barbarous crime - for every settler would consider it, although we were Glenelg sheep farmers and were hundreds of miles away from Courts of Justice.

My first step was to call the men from the station and two of them carried the warm body of Kingberri to the huts and I started off with the others in the direction of the wurleys. Here we met the deceased's two lubras... who knew nothing of the perpetrator, but said that a 'whitefellow, him called Port Phillip Bill' was in the neighbourhood of the wurleys the previous day with a 'picaninny gun' (a pistol). Upon this man, who was a discharged shepherd, our suspicions fell for he was known to have caused much offence to Kingberri by his conduct in reference to the younger lubra, Emily, who had the misfortune to be much better looking than the generality of Australian black women...

Six of us started off towards the river and, after a two day search, we were fortunate enough to find the rascal skulking in a hut, accompanied by a black boy called Jacky. Both were handed over to the police neither admitting nor denying the crime... The pistol as well as the bullets are damning proof of his guilt. There was no Coroner's inquest and poor Kingberri lay sleeping in his grave beneath the dark shea oak trees and the cheerful Emily was by this time the light of some other blackfellow's wurley.

But the law was in motion and the Protector of Aborigines came down for the purpose of disinterring the remains and of formally ascertaining the cause of death. This is done and in the dead body a bullet is found... which shall now recoil and slay the murderer. But how to satisfy the majesty of the law? What is the name of the deceased? How is he to be described? Will not his very existence at the time of the tragedy be questioned? Yes, but the gallows was not to be robbed of its due and therefore 12 jurymen found the following verdict:

Guilty of murder of a certain man, being an Aboriginal native of Australia, whose name is to the jurors unknown to this present time.

I look upon that trial, considering all the circumstances of the case - the distant scene of the murder and the numerous opportunities for escaping punishment - as a complete answer to the false charge that in this colony, in its early days, was indifferent to the treatment of the Aborigines, especially those on the south east border of the province.... The avenging arm of the law struck with unerring aim and the murderer died admitting that he committed the crime, but denying that it was premeditated...

Such then was the punishment inflicted... When according to Mr Kingsley, it was 'social ostracism' for a Protector of Aborigines in this colony to dare to stand between the squatters and the blackfellows and when it was 'easier to find water in the desert than to find mercy for the savages.' So much for English fiction and Australian fact.

The murderer was Thomas Donnelly who was known to Mrs Christina Smith whilst she was domiciled at Rivoli Bay in the early 1840s:

Prior to our arrival a man named Michael Whelan had caused a hut to be built about 300 yards from the corner where we lived. He hoped to get it licensed as a public house - eventually he succeeded and began doing a good trade in the grog line with the bullock drivers and neighbouring shepherds., most of which were 'old hands' and had done time in Van Diemen's Land - I heard many of them relate the cruelty they endured and of the brutalising effect it had on them - one of them named Donnelly showed my husband his lashed-scarred back.

Poor fellow, he was fond of drink and when returning under the effects to his work on Davenport's station, about 16 miles from here, he ruthlessly shot a blackfellow... he fled across the border to Victoria but the police followed him... he was tried and found guilty of murder and hanged.

To this tragedy the Penola historian, Peter Rymill, commented that: 'the execution at least lays to rest any suggestion that Aboriginal genocide was official government policy.'

In the 1840s, the River Glenelg was a favourite camping place and at McPherson's station it was reported that after an attack by the Aborigines:

The overseer lay in a very dangerous state having been speared a few days before while taking his usual ride around the run. He had dismounted at the time of the murderous attack and although speared in eight places he managed to get upon his horse and ride home. Tolmer affirmed that the destruction of property was dreadful particularly on the sheep runs. In many instances whole flocks were driven away and destroyed, while in others from 100 to 200 sheep had been taken.

The cattle owners also suffered and Mr Leake, at Glencoe, described the natives as follows:

They were numerous, small in stature and very active and fierce. About 60 or 70 attacked one of my shepherds and although he was well armed and fired several shots at them, they succeeded in spearing him and stealing about 40 sheep.

Leake and a party went in hot pursuit and surprised the natives while they were busy cooking the sheep. There was about 200 of them drawn up in a half-moon form and gave battle, but on receiving two rounds from the guns they fled leaving their spears, tomahawks, waddies and cooked sheep. They had left 20 fires burning and the ground was strewn with offal, while parts of sheep hung from the branches of trees.

Evelyn P.S. Sturt of the Compton Station recalled that:

The natives were very inimical when we first arrived. Our neighbour, Mr Leake, suffered many losses from them but we escaped any attack which I attribute to the astonishment they evinced at seeing a good rifle aimed by a correct eye, for not a crow would dare to caw on the highest tree near our camp, but a rifle ball reached him... I have always thought that this gained us their respect. They gave me the name of a chief who had fallen in battle and affirmed that I had again come among them as a white fellow.

By July 1844, Mr Robert Leake had about 7,000 sheep and thirty men attached to his establishment and, in a letter to his brother in Adelaide said that:

We are in such a rich country near Mount Gambier on a fresh water lake 3 miles round. We have had about 50 sheep killed by the blacks have succeeded in beating them off; we have not seen them since; we shot one and wounded others. We are not at all afraid of them but a small party will never do here.

A little earlier, on 5 June 1844, he addressed the Commissioner of Police in Adelaide:

I have to report to you that two battles I and my men have had with the savages in this part of South Australia wherein one was shot and I believe two wounded. They have attacked my flocks and men no less than eight different times, wounding one man and spearing fifty sheep and carrying off

twenty..... A police force ought to be stationed in this part of the province to protect life and property.

On this occasion when 'the natives of the Rivoli Bay district and Glenelg [had] been treated in a manner which can only be called atrocious' it was reported that eight natives were shot and, further, that damper had been poisoned with 'corrosive sublimate', while another method of ill treatment was to 'drive the natives from the only watering places in the neighbourhood.' Further, the native women had been 'sought after by the shepherds, whilst the men were driven from the stations with threats.'

A review of these circumstances was made in Adelaide by the Commissioner of Police who advised that he had:

Taken steps to endeavour to obtain evidence from the men now in Adelaide sufficient to justify me bringing a warrant to apprehend Mr McIntyre and others present with Mr Leake, although in the absence of the bodies of the slaughtered natives it may be impossible to mount..... I consider that the secrecy in which these transactions have been cloaked, ... although shortly afterwards a Magistrate, Mr Evelyn Sturt was on the spot and could have investigated the facts had the parties been desirous of relieving themselves of any intimation of guilt, leaves sufficient grounds coupled with certain details which have reached me to justify me in believing that there has been unlawful bloodshed. Should I issue warrants and no magistrate is to be found in the district to investigate the charges, the only course [will then] be to bring the parties before myself.

On 30 April 1846 E. P.S. Sturt, at Compton, reported on police attendance at 'skirmishes' and remarked that with winter approaching the natives were 'mustering in great numbers and we are visited by many of the Glenelg tribe, members of which have left that river owing to the numerous murders and depredations committed by them. This circumstance, I fear, render them seriously troublesome for some time. I have also to report an attack upon Mr Leake's sheep after robbing the shepherd's hut:

At Mr Leake's request I proceeded in quest of the natives accompanied by himself and Corporal McCulloch. We tracked them and the sheep to a scrub where we found about 60 of the unfortunate animals with all four legs broken and otherwise mutilated. After putting them out of their misery, we continued tracking them at Tea Tree Scrub; we also mounted and endeavoured to approach them unheard but they soon noticed us and seized their spears. On rushing towards them they soon took to the scrub and after firing a few useless shots to alarm them we were obliged to give up... We destroyed their spears and burned large quantities of meat and fat....

Mr Sturt attached depositions signed by two policemen Jeremiah Robins and Isaac Dewson, regarding another incident, namely, an attack on 'Mr Sterling's shepherd'. The Commissioner of Police noted 'an apparent conflict between Sturt's report and those of the police' because 'three natives had been shot and probably mortally wounded' and went on to say that 'depositions were not taken from all witnesses and magistrates should be instructed that their investigations should be as complete as possible. The Colonial Secretary concurred! In respect of this affray Mr Leake commented that:

We are attacked on all sides by blacks. If something be not done it will not be safe to go in any part of the country. We have lost 500 sheep; further particulars I will forward by first opportunity.

To this matter the Commissioner of Police concluded that:

Mr Leake may have been justified on this occasion in the steps he took to recover his property, but one thing is clear that where any contact, probably as in this case resulting in the death of some of the parties, has occurred, there should be immediate and legal enquiry for the purpose of ascertaining the facts as far as they can be had, and if necessary of punishing unnecessary acts of bloodshed. It is to be appreciated that at a distance from the control of proper authorities, the effect

of them taking the law into their own hands will be to [legitimise?] the proceedings of settlers and betray them into acts of unjustifiable hostility....

The Treatment of Aborigines in the South-East

A few aborigines were to be seen 'knocking about' the town and the sight of the lubras was ludicrous, fluttering in the finest rags of civilisation... We have never solved the problem why these races die off instead of incorporating with more civilised races; for the few individual instances of aboriginal young persons acquiring English habits and education are but the exception to the general rule.

(*Border Watch*, 20 June 1862)

By September 1862 there was a kind of Aboriginal refuge at Tarpeena where sick natives could be attended to at government expense and to many European interlopers its existence was expected to be of limited duration because 'the blacks are dying out; but we should let them die out decently.' Previously, in May 1862 a poor blackfellow named Jim Crow was lying in the police paddock at Mount Gambier for several days in a pitiable condition from a severe attack of inflammation of the lungs and he had no shelter beyond a piece of bark and no covering except a remnant of a blanket. To this event the Editor of the *Border Watch* opined that 'in the midst of a Christian community it was a pity that he had to lie outside and die like a dog' and had it not been for the kindness of Mrs Wehl he would have remained there.

Taking umbrage at this report Mr Egan, the Crown Ranger at Tarpeena and responsible locally for the Aborigines' general welfare, addressed the *Border Watch*:

The lady deserves much praise who not only saved poor Jim Crow from 'joining his old companions in the land of spirits' but saved the good, pious people of Mount Gambier from the serious charge of allowing one poor blackfellow taken suddenly ill... to die from starvation at their doors....

You forgot to mention there is a depot at Tarpeena, where all sick, infirm and destitute aborigines who choose to go there are daily supplied with rations, and a blanket given to them... Jim Crow is well acquainted with that fact as you are for he has been there with his lubra, Louie, and they have had rations and a blanket given to them. It is therefore his own fault that he is destitute... On the 3rd of this month I visited the blacks in the police paddock there. I offered to remove old King Charley to Tarpeena in a cart. I saw Jim Crow and he appeared to be in good health then...

To this heartless epistle the Editor responded:

Mr Egan truly says that the blackfellow prefers his mia-mia in the bush, and his wandering mode of life, to the most comfortable mansion that can be prepared for him. We have no desire to see mansions erected for the accommodation of these creatures while they are in a state of health, but we certainly think an asylum is the most suitable place for them when they are sick.

No doubt they are very tenderly cared for and nursed at Tarpeena but then they do not happen to be at Tarpeena when they fall sick... Does Mr Egan mean that [Jim Crow] was in a fit state to go there?

Or does he mean us to infer that Jim should have had a few days notice of his approaching illness and should have started off immediately to that happy retreat...

In June 1863 the Editor of the *Border Watch* informed his readers of further evidence of the apparent neglect of Mr Egan:

We print the following for [his] benefit... and to show that our remarks on the condition of the sick blacks were not out of place. In a letter to Mr Egan, Dr Graham said:

I address this note to you hoping you will do something for a poor black woman that has got her hip out of joint. She has lain for a month and cannot walk at all. If you do something for her it will be a great charity. This black woman has been lying for a month within a few miles of Allandale [*sic*] and yet her case has not attracted the attention of the Ranger...

This state of affairs prompted a citizen with a modicum of Christian charity to say:

There are a large number of them continually wandering around Mount Gambier dependent in a great measure for relief upon the beneficence of charitably-disposed persons. In the face of these things, then, the establishment of an asylum for Aborigines at Mount Gambier is the only means by which these miserable and unfortunate creatures can obtain that relief to which they are entitled at the hands of government...

However, this suggestion did not meet with the approval of Dr Clindening, the medical officer in the Mount Gambier district, who was of the opinion that no additional depot should be established because it would entail a great deal of additional labour on the officers and would in no way add to the comfort of the natives, and further:

All the able bodied men found employment in wood cutting, but their habits were so migratory and their movements so uncertain that they cannot be depended upon for any length of time and on this account the greater number of them were unemployed. Great misery was caused among them by the fact that irresponsible settlers provided them with intoxicating drink which caused fighting and quarrelling among them.

By 1863 there were but a few Aborigines remaining in the MacDonnell Bay district and throughout the winter months they suffered a good deal when Dr Byass, with a degree of humanity, administered medicine to them free of charge and the local correspondent again raised the name of their supposed 'Protector', Mr Egan:

I feel satisfied that my bringing their case under the notice of Mr Egan, will at once induce him to order a supply of rations for their use and see that in future they have regular medical attendance now that we have a resident doctor...

A 'well-known blackfellow', Bobby, died at Benaira [sic] station in May 1864 where he had been suffering from a lingering disease for several months:

He was one of the most intelligent of the blacks and had considerable knowledge of the Scriptures and of a future state. Before dying a considerable number of the blacks gathered around him and he warned them very earnestly of the evil of their ways and advised them to give up swearing and drinking. He expressed a firm hope of going to heaven himself and wished them all to be good and get there too.

The year 1865 saw many Aborigines frequenting Mount Gambier where their favourite camp sites were the police paddock and a property owned by Mrs Mitchell at Hedley Park and, in March of that year two, of them died and were buried in Mrs Mitchell's paddock the first being 'Old Polly' who was generally 'well liked here as being very handy and good tempered.' The next was Neddy McRae, belonging to the Casterton district, and he was in the town receiving medical treatment having had the cap of his knee knocked out.

In the same month, at the Licensing Court the magistrate, Mr Lyon, informed the applicants that the government was determined to stop the practice of supplying drink to the blacks and that if any of them transgressed they would have their licence taken away. He referred to an orgy on Benara Station, where 20 or 30 drunken blacks set to and broke one another's skulls and suggested that if it became a weekly occurrence the race would soon be exterminated. He concluded with the comment: 'will not the outrage of the Avenue find many a parallel when drink becomes abundant?' Later, Mr Egan commented on this episode:

As is customary a good many of them were employed about the sheep during the shearing; they earned about £25... All the money was invested in grog [which they] obtained from stores where they could get whisky and rum at £1 per gallon. Many of the shearers and other workmen brought bottles of spirits as a decoy to the lubras and took them into the scrub for an improper purpose... I have recommended in a former letter that the government should give no encouragement to these poor creatures to remain about towns where they have every facility for obtaining grog...

To these sad events a concerned citizen addressed his neighbours with a gentle lecture on Christian ethics and the fate of two further ill-fated Aborigines:

There is something melancholy in the thought that the Aborigines... are rapidly passing away and that the work of extermination seems in great measure to be owing to passive neglect of the people who occupy their lands. It is true that in their semi-civilised state they are rendered more liable to disease, especially rheumatism and consumption, than in their primitive condition when the opossum rug took the place of the blanket, and hunting and fishing supplied their wants liberally; but yet kind and persevering efforts in the localities they resort to could teach them, and teach to the young at least, something that might elevate their social and moral condition...

Two interesting youths of the Rivoli Bay tribe known as Harry and the Duke of Wellington, each aged 19 years, affected with diseases of the lungs lived for some time in a mia-mia near the site of the new jail in the police paddock. Their subsistence was very precarious, being absent from their tribe, and but for the sympathy and kindness of some good neighbours they would probably have perished as they were unable to do much for themselves.

Mrs Smith... supplied them with many comforts and eventually at their request [having referred] to her as 'their Mother', had them brought to her homestead on her dray a few days prior to their removal by death which occurred 12 or 14 hours [later]... Harry, alarmed at his friend's death... before morning called out, 'Come, come, I die.' They did all they could to restore him but he quickly sank and died, first witnessing that 'the great sinner was washed from his sins and forgiven' and his last words were, 'Tell them', (that is the blacks), 'what Jesus did' and died.... Two little mounds besides the late Mr Smith's homestead mark the graves of these young men. They were wrapped in their blankets and thus lowered to the grave as no provision had been made for either a coffin or free burial in the cemetery.

This appeal prompted a suggestion that:

Before the winter sets in could not some money be collected to erect a shed in the police paddock to shelter these poor people from the severity of the weather? Five or six have died since February and in almost every case from disease of the lungs - contracted from their exposure in the wretched hovels they put up - lying on damp ground with wet blankets and wind and rain penetrating their wurlies...

An Aboriginal Legend

The occupation of a vast and magnificent country like Australia by a race superior to the aborigines was inevitable... [To represent] that the Europeans are interlopers who have spoiled the native races of their natural and inalienable inheritance, and that the act is merely a robbery committed by high-handed force, does not find a response in the conscience even of those who indulge in it; or, if it does, they stand self-convicted of open and flagrant violation of honesty and right.

(Advertiser, 1 December 1883)

At one time the land extended southward as far as the eye could carry from the spot on which the township of Port MacDonnell stands. A splendid forest of evergreen trees, including a wattle, out of which oozed a profusion of delicious gum and a rich profusion of beautiful flowers and grass grew upon it. A man of great height, fearful in his anger and a terror to trespassers on this favoured ground, was the owner.

One hot summer's day, whilst taking a walk through his land, he saw at the foot of the wattle tree a basket of gum. His anger rose and in a rage with a voice like thunder, he cried, 'Who is robbing me of my food?' Looking up he saw a woman concealed among the boughs and in a loud voice demanded the thief to come down. Trembling, she obeyed and pleaded for her life. He was relentless and told her he would drown her for robbing him.

Filled with rage he seated himself on the grass, extended his right leg towards Cape Northumberland (Kinneang) and his left towards Green Point, raised his arms above his head and in a giant voice called upon the sea to come and drown the woman. The sea advanced, covering his beautiful land and destroyed the offending woman. It returned no more to its former bed and thus formed the present coast of MacDonnell Bay.

Conclusion

Had they been a race equal to the New Zealander, Government would have spared no means if they could have got possession of the land by supplying them with food and medicine... To visit the encampments of the natives is distressing; exposure at this season of the year, many ill, without food, almost denuded, living at the mercy of their own tribe, is a disgrace... [to those] who have amassed wealth, to the destruction of their common necessities of life and health.

(Register, 11 July 1857)

An example of the degradation of the Boandik people was evident in February 1881 when an Aboriginal corroboree was held on the Exhibition Ground where about thirteen of them, the majority of the survivors of the once numerous tribe, assembled and, having 'dressed' themselves in the original corroboree costume, admitted the intending spectators on payment of sixpence a head. No one, except boys attempted to cheat and as there were about 150 in the enclosures the amount received must have been nearly £4. 'Tiger seemed to act as manager of the event and Old Billy was singer and master of ceremonies. A lubra with a bag of sand acted as drummer. For a time they danced without a fire but afterwards one was lit and they danced around it, beating their sticks vigorously all the while. There is to be another tonight.'

To conclude this brief excursion into the decimation of the Aboriginal nations of South Australia, and in particular the South East, it might be fitting to quote from a report in the *Border Watch* in 1875 and an editorial in the *Advertiser* in 1903:

Gunarmin, better known as Old Kitty Livingston, who was generally regarded as the oldest surviving Aboriginal female member of the once numerous and powerful Boandik tribe, died at Mount Gambier on 5 May 1875. Old Kitty was aunt to Old Caroline, well known in the district, and left two sons - Bobby Livingston and Long Jimmy - who resided near the border. Before her death she was very weak and debilitated and 'seemed to derive no pleasure from anything in life but her dogs.' ['Queen Caroline, the oldest Aboriginal woman died at her wurley in Hedley Park {in 1876}']

The inaction in respect to the strengthening of the existing law for safeguarding the rights of the blacks, who is practically helpless to redress his own wrongs, except by such acts of reprisal as are natural to the savage, and who is often incapable of understanding the extent of injury done to himself and his race, contrasts unpleasantly with the attempts to secure his complete subjugation... The object of authorising whipping in addition to punishment by imprisonment for cattle raiding is not likely to meet with much favour... There is something [about it]... too strongly reminiscent of the middle ages...

Aborigines on the Coastal Plain

The first settlers who arrived at Holdfast Bay in November 1836 described the local Kurna people as 'friendly, harmless and honest to a remarkable degree.' and speaking a

language believed to be of Malay origin - the Malays called water ovey and the sun *tindoo*, while the Kurna called them, respectively, *cowey* and *tindook*.

Much has been written over the years on the indigenous people and at the outset I would quote from two all but unknown sources. The first comment is from by Able Seaman Charles Moon of the *Buffalo* in respect of the 'Proclamation' ceremony:

On our landing for the proclamation the blacks ran away, but soon came back again. They were invited on board, but would not come until we left some men as hostages. The Governor made the chiefs dine with him on board the Buffalo, but the wine took greater effect upon them than was expected. They left the ship well pleased and were friendly ever after.

Writing a few days after the 'proclamation' ceremony in 1836 a settler said:

I fell in with a native, a fine-looking, manly fellow, whose appearance at once gave the lie to all past descriptions of the looks of the New Hollanders. He was a young man about 25 years of age, five feet ten inches in height; strong and well built, though the chest was rather narrow; with a very good-humoured face and a mouthful of the finest teeth I ever saw. Our storekeeper supplied him with slop-trousers and a military jacket, with white metal buttons and bright yellow cuffs of which he was not a little proud.

After an interchange of signs, I succeeded in making him understand that I wished to know the names of certain things in his own language and at last obtained a few dozen words... I pointed to the ship and by signs proposed that he should go with me on board. He understood me at once, but drew his hand back as a sign that he wished to return. I nodded and repeated the motion and his confidence from that moment seemed to be complete.

One of the boats took off and poor Ootinai, for that he told me was his name, created a great sensation among the people on board. He sat down beside me and watched and imitated every move I made. He ate heartily of cold tongue, fried fish, beef pie and plum pudding and after two or three attempts handled his knife and fork with as much dexterity as I could. He was greatly delighted with the piano forte which was played to him, as well as the flute to which he manifested a great wish to dance.

Willing to try his obedience, which had hitherto been implicit, I shook my head, on which he sat down; this manoeuvre was twice repeated; when at last I nodded assent, he jumped up and began kicking and dancing with all his might. The quickness with which he received all the novelties in the ship led to the supposition that he had been on shipboard before; that, however, was not the case... he was much pleased with my hair and took off my hat, observing that it resembled his own. there was a degree of archness and quickness which places this race many degrees above the savage.

It was not long before the Kurna met with so-called British justice. In 1842 the citizens of Thebarton were outraged when Mr Peter Cook, a local butcher, had his watch stolen. In due course Monyitya, a member of the Kurna people, was arraigned before the dispensers of Her Majesty's colonial justice and found guilty of theft.

A public flogging was prescribed at the Adelaide gaol and at the appointed hour several hundred citizens who possessed, no doubt, strong stomachs and a sadistic bent, gathered before the flogging rack among whom, as suggested by the Editor of the morning press, 'we regretted to observe a number of women.'

Having been secured to the triangle he received fifty lashes of a cat-o'-nine-tails, which ' he bore with commendable fortitude. The operator then gave him some water. At the command of the Sheriff, twenty-five more lashes were administered... after which he was conducted away by two of his tribe...'

In a sadistic summation in the local press it was said that:

Our reporter subsequently saw Monyitya's back, and described the apparent effect of the whipping as one which, although it cannot by any means be called cruel, is, nevertheless, likely to produce a lasting impression upon the mind of the culprit, if not upon his native companions who witnessed the infliction.

The population of the Kurna people sank from 650 in 1841 to 150 in 1856 and a striking example of what we call, today, 'ethnic cleansing' of this embattled, and now extinct, people is in the following quotation from an Adelaide newspaper which is a positive indictment of the indifference which pervaded colonial society:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra lay beside him.

All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated opossum rug... Were the panacea for the suffering race... to be found in our capital, there would probably be no getting a tithe of them to partake of it.

In a lighter vein, in his reminiscences upon the Glenelg district David Shepard recalled that:

There were always a lot of blackfellows living in wurleys across the creek and us boys were frequent visitors to them; we would sit in their wurleys and talk with them; we picked up some of their language...

The property across the creek belonged to a Mr Gray. He was well known, especially to us boys. He rode a grey horse and with it he often chased us even

into the river, but he never caught us; we never did him any harm. Why should he chase us? We went over there merely to talk with the blackfellows and kill snakes. We used to kill a good many of different sorts and put them across a long stick and take them on the bridge and tip them into the running stream. We would always show them to the blacks before doing so.... We always got on very well with the blacks. They always advised us to keep clear of 'old Gray' as they always called him.

One day we went over the bridge for the purpose of killing snakes when two of the Lubras came to us and said, 'My wordt boys, look out, Old Gray bin longa wurleys - 'im say he catch you, 'im let wild bullocks loose - so look out boys , 'im bullocks up there now, so don't go boys.'

This site, known as the 'Black's Camp' by the younger brigade of the district, was disbanded in August 1899 following ministrations of Mr and Mrs Matthews and Miss Cartwright, who had evinced a great interest in the welfare of Aborigines. For a considerable time the habitation on the banks of the Patawalonga had provided shelter for about ten Aborigines. The surroundings were anything but pleasant and with only a few bags overhead they had experienced a particularly trying time during the previous cold winter. At first it was thought possible to build a room of some sort, but the owners of the land on which the camp was situated could not be found and therefore the best alternative was to remove them to the mission station at Point McLeay.

On 31 August 1899 willing hands stoked a fire that disposed of the camp and accumulated rubbish, while the Glenelg contingent, together with others, and numbering eighteen in all, were sent away by train on 1 September to Milang, en route to Point McLeay, 'the district to which they belong', while a reporter furnished an illuminating paragraph which gives an interesting insight into the inherent lack of Christian charity within the dominant European population:

The drinking and begging of these people render their presence about Adelaide very undesirable and it is a fruitful source of evil to them. The Commissioner of Police has issued instructions that in future their camps will not be allowed at or near the city.

So, while the Kurna people and others throughout South Australia were flogged, degraded, abused and socially ignored, prior to all but disappearing from the face of the earth, Adelaide, together with villages such as Thebarton and Cowandilla, grew slowly upon the old tribal land.

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The Aborigines of the Adelaide Plains

Shame Upon Us! We take their land and drive away their food by what we call civilization, and then deny them shelter from a storm... What comes of all the hypocrisy of our wishes to better their condition?.. The police drive them into the bush to murder shepherds, and then we cry out for more police... What can a maddened black think of our Christianity to deny him the sod on which he was born?.. You grow hundreds of bushels of corn on his land but deny him the crumbs that fall from the table... They kill a sheep, but you drive his kangaroo away. You now drive him away from his own, his native land - out upon it; how can God's all-seeing eye approve of this? (*Adelaide Times*, 24 May 1851, page 6e.)

Introduction

According to Rev F. W. Taplin, a long-time missionary at Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission (Raukkan), there are grounds for believing that the Australian Aborigines are descendants of two races. In one case we find the representative of a light-skinned active race with lank straight hair and slightly angular features and a sullen, morose disposition. On the other hand a "curly wig", black skin, thick set, hairy frame with bright eyes twinkling humor and good nature.

He goes on to say that peculiarities of language, tradition and system of kinship support this theory and have led to various suppositions regarding the origin of the Australian Aborigines, perhaps the most favoured being the assumption that they are descendants of certain wanderers from southern India who in the course of their migration were subject to admixture with the inhabitants of the Malaysian Peninsula.

However, the work of a modern anthropologist, the late Norman B. Tindale has shown that Rev Taplin's "theory" was no more than guesswork - Tindale's findings were summarised by the late Professor Manning Clark as follows:

The first [arrivals] were the Negrito people - short, dark-skinned, curly-haired and broad-nosed - who were forced to migrate from their hunting grounds in south-east Asia by the movement into those areas of people of a higher materail culture, at a time when Tasmania, Australia and new Guinea formed part of the land mass of Asia.

Later another people arrived - the Murrayians, who were related to the Ainu in Japan and either destroyed the Negritos or drove them into valleys behind Cairns, and south to what is now Tasmania, the islands of Bass Strait and Kangaroo Island. Then, in turn, the Murrayians were challenged and displaced by the Carpentarians - a people probably related to the Vedda of Ceylon, who settled in the northern portion of Australia after driving the Murrayians southwards in their turn...

Tribal Customs and Manners

They seldom remained many weeks in one locality but wandered about in detached groups or separate families; frequently the whole tribe would come together and barter such commodities as each family possessed. In the evenings past occurrences were

related and, by the male adults, future prospects and plans considered. At dawn all implements were sharpened when the young and vigorous males and females would start out in a search for sustenance - the male after animals and the female after plant food; the sick and aged remained at home in the care of one or two healthy "elders".

Occasionally, many tribes assembled for either conviviality or war - if for the latter a battle would ensue at daybreak. These contests were cold-blooded and cruel and took place not to avenge past injuries, but simply to manifest the activity of young men of the different tribes. These battles, viewed by bi-partisan spectators, sometimes lasted three or four hours when scarcely a word was spoken, except an intermittent shrill cry when someone narrowly escaped a spear.

The ceremonial rituals of the tribe were numerous. The males passed through three particular stages, each accompanied by a specific ceremony. At ten years, boys were covered with blood drawn from the arm of an adult in a ceremony called wilya kundarti. Circumcision was done at the age of twelve and from this time a wudna was worn as a pubic covering. At the same time the head was smeared with grease and ochre, an opossum band tied around the forehead and this was worn until he had recovered from the tribal elder's surgery.

Wilgaru was the final ceremony - the body was tattooed and the participant's body drenched with blood drawn from the arm of a burka (or senior of the tribe). A kadlotti (a girdle) of human hair was worn around the waist thus indicating that he was permitted the use of all tribal implements and weapons.

Within the tribes there were "sorcerers" or "wise men" who by charms and magic ceremonies tended to the "spiritual" needs of their communities and their roles in the aspect of death and healing were omnipresent:

Most deaths, apart from those of the very young and very old, were ascribed to sorcery and a variety of rituals, designed to establish the identity of the sorcerer, accompanied the burial ceremony... In most areas there was an individual considered especially gifted in the practice of magic and sorcery. These native doctors, or "clever men" as they are some times called, went through a special process of initiation in which they learnt and developed their magical powers.

In the Western Desert, the native doctor received his power from the Rainbow Serpent, an important supernatural being associated with rain and deep waterholes. In the Murray/South-East the native doctor was "made" by a spirit inserting a magical substance, such as quartz crystal, into the postulant's side. Native doctors were credited with great spiritual powers: to heal the sick, foretell the future, send their totemic spirits out of their bodies and, in the South-East, to ascend to the sky and communicate with the ancestral beings and spirits of the dead.

One local observer has left his impressions of the various palliative measures employed by the tribal "doctors":

Internal pains, inflammatory or otherwise, are attributed to paitya (vermin in general). The remedy consists in applying the mouth to the surface where the pain is seated, and the paitya or blood sucked out, and a bunch of gum leaves waved over the surface. For head-ache, pains in the abdomen and extremities, other modes are sometimes adopted - the sick person lies stretched on the ground, while another presses with his feet or hands the aching part, or cold water is sprinkled over, and the gum leaves used as before.

Blood-letting is occasionally adopted to relieve weight and oppression in the system. The most rational system obtains in the adjusting of fractured bones of the legs and in syphilitic diseases. In the former cases, after the bones have been placed in proper apposition, splints and bandages are applied in the European manner; and, in the latter, wood-ashes, or the astringent bark of the wattle, are applied to the surface of the sores. Superficial wounds are left to cure themselves.

Chest infections seem to have mainly been treated with the steam bath technique, although with several possible plant sources of steam. Muscular and rheumatic pain was mainly relieved through the application of various plants that [drew] blood away from the damaged area.

Some of the medicines listed here, for example Sheoak Apple and Sow Thistle, are important food sources as well as medicines. Both plants were described by the Aboriginal informants as "blood medicine"... Some medicines, such as the "friends" of Aboriginal healers, were used in a fashion that place more emphasis on the ritual than on the organic base of the cure.

The Coming of the White Man

The *South Australian Colonisation Act*, which was passed by the British Parliament in 1834, declared the lands of the new colony to be "unoccupied". The Act's clear denial of the Aborigines' rights to land met with considerable opposition from humanitarian circles in Great Britain, including Lord Glenelg, Sir George Grey and other influential men in the Colonial Office in London. The Colonial Office subsequently enshrined the principal of Aboriginal land rights by inserting in the Letters Patent, the document issued to the Colonization Commissioners early in 1836 to formally establish the colony of South Australia, a clause which recognized the prior rights of the Aborigines to the land and guaranteed that "any lands now actually occupied or enjoyed by [the] Natives' would not be alienated."

After protracted negotiations with the Colonial Office, the Colonization Commissioners agreed to the appointment of a Protector to safeguard the Aborigines' interests. Among his duties, the Protector was required to ensure that any land opened up for public sale had been voluntarily ceded and fairly purchased from the Aborigines. The

Commissioners agreed to set aside 20% of the proceeds from all land sales in the colony to be used for the benefit of the Aborigines and also committed the South Australia Company to protecting "the natives in the unmolested exercise of their rights of property should such a right be found to exist".

In the new colony, these commitments were soon forgotten and all the lands were declared open for public sale. A few of the more enlightened colonists saw the Aborigines' dispossession as unjust and public debate on the issue occasionally flared in the newspapers. Colonial officials, missionaries and others who had close contact with the Kurna soon became aware that they did have a well-defined system of land ownership. In 1839, a year after taking up the position of Protector, Moorhouse wrote:

We find - what the Europeans thought the Aborigines of Australia did not possess - territorial rights, families owning and holding certain districts of land which pass from fathers to sons, never to daughters, with as much regularity as property in our own country.

Similarly, Teichelmann, one of the Lutheran missionaries, observed that:

Each tribe has a certain district of the country as a property received by their forefathers, the boundaries of which are fixed."

From the closing months of 1836 their use of the land, together with customs going back for thousands of years, was to be slowly, but surely, all but exterminated by the intrusion of the British settler and the accompanying laws and diseases of their so-called "civilisation". It has been said that the first contact of this ethos with barbarism, wherever it occurs, "is accompanied or speedily followed by conflict; and the results of that conflict and attendant circumstances is almost invariably the extinction, not of barbarism merely, but of the barbarians". Prophetic words, indeed!

In June 1837, following a proclamation by Governor Hindmarsh in respect of the indigenous Aborigines, Sir John Jeffcott, the first colonial judge, delivered a charge to "The Grand Jury of the Province" and in the course of his address suggested that the colonists should avoid scrupulously giving them offence and to respect their property at all times.

He urged them not to teach them British vices which would render them more debased than when they were found but, by example, "lead them into the paths of civilization and virtue."

The great Father of the human family... has placed us amongst them, and given us to enjoy the land which is their birthright, - no doubt for his own wise purposes, and, it may be hoped with a view to their ultimate conversion to His holy religion.

These sentiments echoed the wishes of the Commissioners for South Australia in London who, being aware of the injustice and cruelty meted out to the Aborigines in New South Wales and Tasmania, were determined that the rights of Aborigines would be protected in the new colony, and it was agreed that the following objectives should be sought:

To guard them against personal outrage and violence.

To protect them in the undisturbed enjoyment of their proprietary right to soil, wherever such right may be found to exist.

To make it an invariable and cardinal condition in all bargains and treaties entered into with the natives for the cession of lands possessed by them in occupation or enjoyment, that permanent subsistence should be supplied to them from some other source.

To promote amongst them the spread of civilisation and the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian religion.

In addition, it was enacted that they were to be treated as British subjects and that all aggression upon them would be strictly punished, while an officer of the Crown would be appointed especially to look over their welfare.

Such inherent platitudes were anathema to the more ruthless settler who suggested that they should be either mercifully exterminated or left to "the scarcely less certain but cruel fate of perishing by the loathsome diseases or excesses which [had] never failed to follow their contacts with whites." The more saintly among the interlopers held the view that they should be placed in a school where "all the mysteries of science, refinement and religion" could be inculcated within them.

At times the latter members of colonial society went a little further and pleaded for the Aboriginals who were "daily retreating from the footsteps of a race whose arts and powers [were] so much superior... as to leave no chance of their being able to feed or rear their young in peace amidst their accustomed haunts." This aroused the displeasure of the self-centred exploiter whose creed was that "the black brutes know well enough that they can obtain flour or meat by pestering you till you fling it at their heads... They will never rouse themselves from their slothful, dirty and sluggard state... Why do the Government inveigle us to these distant climes without some protection against these wretches?"

For about the first three years of European settlement the indigenous Kurna tribe, who were shy and intelligent, coupled with an innate curiosity in respect of the whims and fancies of the white invaders, lived in relative harmony. If trouble did occur the catalyst was invariably the trading of insults or arguments about the abuse on Aboriginal women.

However, this initial euphoria was short-lived. The Commissioners' edict in respect of land acquisition was not implemented and the natives became increasingly hostile. The colonists acquired their lands and drove off the game while the settlers' stock began to destroy plants and shrubs which were a valuable source of food. The Colonial Secretary, Mr Gouger, observed wryly:

No legal provision by way of purchase of land on their behalf, or in any other mode, has yet been made, nor do I think that with proper care it is at all necessary.

Many attempts were made to "Christianise" the Kurna; a "Native Location" conducted by German missionaries was established and by 1840 six cottages had been built and an acre of ground placed under cultivation "and out of 41 children in Adelaide, the average school attendance was eleven daily." The adults were much more inaccessible for religious instruction - "they are naturally proud and express themselves perfectly satisfied with the tradition of their forefathers."

A similar experiment was conducted in 1838 when the Government had a row of pise huts erected on the North Park Lands for the accommodation of the Kurna tribe who, nevertheless, stuck to their "spontaneous pervious mansions of gum-branches and

sheaoak". Although the buildings were always open to would-be occupants the authorities might as well have provided "mackintosh cloaks and umbrellas for Gov Gawler's ducks" for the natives merely used the quarters as a wind break and chose to sleep outside "in their customary umbrageous dormitories".

In 1842, the inhabitants of the village of Thebarton were outraged when Mr Peter Cook, a local butcher, had his watch stolen. In due course Monyitya, a member of the Kurna tribe, was arraigned before the dispensers of Her Majesty's colonial justice and found guilty of theft. A public flogging was prescribed at the Adelaide Gaol and at the appointed hour several hundred citizens who possessed, no doubt, strong stomachs and a sadistic bent, gathered before the flogging rack among whom "we regretted to observe a considerable number of women":

Having been secured to the triangle [he] received fifty lashes of a cat-o'-nine-tails, which he bore with commendable fortitude... The operator then gave him some water... At the command of the Sheriff, twenty-five more lashes were administered... after which he was conducted away by two of his tribe...

Our reporter had subsequently to see Monyitya's back, and described the apparent effect of the whipping as one which, although it cannot by any means be called cruel, is, nevertheless, likely to produce a lasting impression upon the mind of the unfortunate culprit, if not upon his native companions who witnessed the infliction.

Perhaps it is a trite comment, but it would appear that it was impossible for the Kurna to consent either to the occupation of their land or on their enforced subjection to English law for they were incapable of comprehending the import and results of either one or the other. One might be excused for concluding that, in their estimation of right and wrong, "the killing of a white invader of their country [would be] rather more virtuous than criminal".

Conclusion

The Kurna tribe population sank from 650 in 1841 to 150 in 1856 and a striking example of the "ethnic cleansing" of this embattled, and now extinct, people is in the following quotation from an Adelaide newspaper which is a positive indictment of the indifference which pervaded colonial society:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra lay beside him.

All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated

opossum rug... Were the panacea for the suffering race... to be found in our capital, there would probably be no getting a tithe of them to partake of it.

So, while the Kurna tribe and others throughout South Australia were flogged, degraded, abused and socially ignored, prior to all but disappearing from the face of the earth, Adelaide and contiguous villages grew slowly upon the old tribal land.

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The Aborigines of South Australia

(Taken from G.H. Manning, *A Colonial Experience*)

Shame Upon Us! We take their land and drive away their food by what we call civilisation, and then deny them shelter from a storm... What comes of all the hypocrisy of our wishes to better their condition?.. The police drive them into the bush to murder shepherds, and then we cry out for more police... What can a maddened black think of our Christianity to deny him the sod on which he was born... You grow hundreds of bushels of corn on his land but deny him the crumbs that fall from the table... They kill a sheep, but you drive his kangaroo away. You now drive him away from his own, his native land - out upon it; how can God's all-seeing eye approve of this?
(*Adelaide Times*, 24 May 1851, page 6e.)

Introduction

The unhappiest feature of the spread of the white races over the earth is the subsequent disappearance of the natives with whom they inevitably came in contact. Early Spanish colonisation in the New World is a chapter of horrors, while British expansion in North America presents, in dealing with the natives, many features from which the modern mind recoils.

The record of the Dutch in South Africa is stained similarly, and the whole civilised world shuddered at the exploits of the Belgians in the Congo. In the early 20th century Germany has a similarly unenviable record in the Pacific Islands. Indeed, it seems to be the law, of what learned people call socio-politics, that a primitive race, brought in contact with a people of so called 'higher' civilisation, invariably goes to the wall. It is greatly to the credit of the British that they were the first to set their hands resolutely against the horrors which have usually attended this process. The fate of the Australian Aborigine is sufficient witness that they were as incapable of arresting that process, but they did attempt to ensure that their relations with the indigenous people should be as decent as possible.

There is a danger, however, of over-estimating the success that attended these efforts. The history of every State in the Commonwealth is foul with the blood of the unfortunate Aborigines and is marked with deeds of callous brutality on the part of the settlers and natives alike. To this record South Australia is a pleasant exception, an exception, indeed, unique in the annals of white colonisation.

Not, of course, that blood was not spilt here on both sides, or that many mistakes were not made in dealing with the Aborigines which led to misunderstanding, but as the scene of an honest-to-God attempt to give them a square deal, from the outset South Australia holds pride of place among the countries of the earth which have been invaded and settled by Europeans.

Life on the Adelaide Plains

Would not the claims of justice and humanity be equally satisfied and the majesty of the English law vindicated by emancipating the Aborigines from its direct operation? At present their roving mode of life is a continual violation of one of its inquisitions, which directs that the man who can give no satisfactory account of himself and his means of living be committed as a rogue and vagabond.

(*Register*, 1 December 1855, page 2.)

Prior to the arrival of the first European settlers, the area now occupied by the city of Adelaide - called *Tandanya* (red kangaroo place) - was open grassy plains, interspersed with patches of woodland, mainly mallee box, sheoaks and acacias, and scattered red gums and blue gums. The River Torrens was lined with a dense red gum forest. It wound its way from the foothills across the plains to feed its waters into the Reedbeds (*Witungga* - 'reedy place') at Fulham.

The Kurna called the river *Karra Wirra Parri*, 'red gum forest river'. The area that is now Hindmarsh and Thebarton was known to the Kurna as *Karraundongga*, literally 'red gum spear place'. It was a favourite locality for obtaining red gum branches used for making heavy fighting spears known as windas. The other creeks that descend from the foothills were lined also with red gums, as was the Sturt River *Warri Parri* - 'windy river'). A thick forest of native pines, eucalypts and sheoaks stretched from south Adelaide towards Glenelg.

The coastal sandhills were vegetated thickly with acacia, teatree and sedges, while the higher red sand dunes inland supported stands of native pines, eucalypts and sheoaks. Behind these dunes was an extensive low-lying swampy area extending from the upper reaches of the Port River southwards through the Reedbeds at Fulham to the Patawalonga (*Patawilya* - 'gum-scrub place') and reaching as far inland as Richmond and Cowandilla (*Kaundilla* - 'freshwater place').

On the grassy plains and open woodlands, the Aborigines hunted kangaroos, emus and wallabies while bandicoots, bilbies, bettongs and other small marsupials were abundant in the forests and scrub. Among the many plant foods available to the Aborigines were the fruits of the *Carpobrotus* (pigface), *Exocarpus* (wild cherry), *Kunzea pomifera* (muntrie), *Santalum acuminatum* (quandong) and *Nitraria billardierei* (nitre bush) and the roots of *Oxalis*, *Xanthorrhoea* (grass tree) and several species of rushes. The Adelaide plains were criss-crossed with the tracks of the ancestral spirits, but only fragments of the rich mythology have survived. It is known, as mentioned previously, that *Tarnda* (the red kangaroo), which being introduced chest scarification rites, was associated with the area now occupied by the city of Adelaide.

Aboriginal Legends

The Kurna people believed they were the children of Monana who, long ago in the *Alcheringa* (the Dream Time), had climbed up into the sky from his home in *Pindinga* (Kangaroo Island). Here by the river was one of their favourite camping places, *Tambawodli* (the camp on the plain). To the west, *Wongayerlo* (the water where the sun sinks - Saint Vincent Gulf), flowed past *Mudlungga* (the place of the nose - Lefevre Peninsula) which was separated by a sea creek from *Yertabulta* (the place of slumber - now the Port Adelaide district), believed to be where the birds flew each night to sleep.

Wongayerlo yielded an endless supply of shellfish, and during many a long summer evening the Kurna camped on *Mudlungga* to cook the day's catch in their camp fires. *Wongayerlo* had many fish, too, especially in the sea creek and south of *Witungga* near *Patawilya*, where there were plenty of *takaringa* (mullet) and *yerdli* (spotted whiting).

There were many richly beautiful places in *Tandanya* - *Mikawomma* (the plain), where Kilkenny now stands, was the home of the emu and the wild turkey, and in umbrageous gum trees the kookaburras laughed as the parrots annoyed the magpies with incessant chattering. Everywhere were the *Wapara* and other types of native pigeon. In *Witungga*, at the head of the sea creek where the river of *Tandanya* lost itself in the reeds and the lagoons, and in *Kertaweeta*, lived the swamp parrot whose eggs were so good to eat.

Over countless aeons the Kurna people roamed this rich unchanging land. Every year the *dikeri* (grass) grew green and fresh to feed the kangaroo, and every year at *Tinnakgialpa* (the time when the ground burns the feet), the grasses grew yellow. This was the time when fire came to eat the grass and make room for *erlipinna* (the grass seeds) to grow again.

Every night, *Goondooloo* (the emu of the Southern Cross), lit a camp fire in the sky beside *Wadliparri* (the river in the sky with reeds and waterholes in which lived water monsters - the 'Milky Way'), to enable the Kurna to find their way to the home of their spirit ancestors. The Orion belt was *Tinninyarra*, a place where youthful hunters stalked kangaroo and emus across the vast celestial plain known as *Womma*, while the Magellanic clouds were *Ngakallomurro*, representing the ashes of rainbow lorikeets that were trapped and put to death.

But the land was to be changed beyond recognition following the arrival of a second nation of people - the white Europeans. Since their coming, scarcely more in time than a twinkle of an eye of *Goondooloo*, all *Tandanya* has changed. All the Kurna, all their kangaroos, all the trees and birds, most of the fish and the Aboriginal meeting places have disappeared under the European onslaught. No more is the water fresh and clear in the drinking places and even *Wongayerlo* grew so hungry that he has eaten the sands of the beaches.

Mudlungga (the place of the nose) is now known as 'Lefevre Peninsula' although the Kurna name is still the more appropriate. The first people, being true antipodeans, navigated by the Southern Cross. Consequently, unlike the newcomers who navigated by the Pole Star, they were in the habit of viewing their country from the north to the south. When thus viewed on a map, the striking likeness of the peninsula to a hooked and flattened nose is at once the vindication of the name and a tribute to the powers of observation of the Kurna.

The Arrival of the White Settlers

Had they been a race equal to the New Zealander, Government would have spared no means if they could have got possession of the land by supplying them with food and medicine... To visit the encampments of the natives is distressing; exposure at this season of the year, many ill, without food, almost denuded, living at the mercy of their own tribe, is a disgrace... [to those] who have amassed wealth, to the destruction of their common necessities of life and health.

(*Register*, 11 July 1857, page 2h.)

The first settlers on the Adelaide Plains referred to the local people, the Kurna, simply as the 'Adelaide tribe', a term that included the local groups or clans living in the Adelaide area as well as those on the Para and Gawler Rivers and others along the coast southwards towards Rapid Bay. Each of the local groups consisted of several families and numbered between 30 and 40 members.

It is clear from early historical accounts that each local group occupied a clearly defined territory, and each family was closely linked to a particular portion of the group's territory, termed the *pangkara*. Ties of kinship, intermarriage, trade and ceremonial obligations linked the neighbouring groups. The Kurna also had close cultural links with the Ramindjeri people from Encounter Bay and the Ngadjuri of the Mid-North.

The *South Australian Colonisation Act*, which was passed by the British Parliament in 1834, declared the lands of the new colony to be 'waste and unoccupied'. The Act's clear denial of the Aborigines' rights to land met with considerable opposition from humanitarian circles in Great Britain, including Lord Glenelg, Sir George Grey and other influential men in the Colonial Office in London.

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After protracted negotiations with the Colonial Office, the Colonisation Commissioners agreed to the appointment of a Protector to safeguard the Aborigines' interests. Among his duties, the Protector was required to ensure that any land opened up for public sale had been voluntarily ceded and fairly purchased from the Aborigines.

The Commissioners agreed to set aside 20% of the proceeds from all land sales in the colony to be used for the benefit of the Aborigines and also committed the South Australia Company to protecting 'the natives in the unmolested exercise of their rights of property should such a right be found to exist.'

In the new colony, these commitments were soon forgotten and all the lands were declared open for public sale. A few of the more enlightened colonists saw the Aborigines' dispossession as unjust and public debate on the issue flared occasionally in the newspapers:

The English people are partial to collections. They have religious meetings ending in a collection... Orators, stump, table, dining, or parliamentary, plead severally for a collection. Testimonials are plentiful as blackberries to some popular public servant, to a successful speculator, to a theatrical fiddler... All these are well in a way. Why not, for a novelty, this year try a collection for the original owners of 'the land we live in?' They are poor enough, heaven knows, ragged and hungry and houseless... Can we not spare some of the old ewes now rotting on the distant runs, and add these and a few blankets to the stingy once-a-year liberality of the State?... Blackfellow and whitefellow will

together face that tremendous day, when One will proclaim 'Forasmuch as ye did it not to these, ye did it not to me.'

Colonial officials, missionaries and others, who had close contact with the Kurna soon became aware that they did have a well-defined system of land ownership. In 1839, a year after taking up the position of Protector, Moorhouse wrote:

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Similarly, Teichelmann, one of the Lutheran missionaries, observed that:

Each tribe has a certain district of the country as a property received by their forefathers, the boundaries of which are fixed.

It has been argued that despite considerable evidence that the Aborigines had clearly recognisable territorial rights, the Commissioners, in alliance with land-hungry colonists, frustrated all the attempts by Governors Gawler and Grey and the Protectors to safeguard those rights and to create reserves for Aborigines.

No attempts were ever made to negotiate with the Kurna for the voluntary transfer of their lands and the scheme to use a proportion of the land sale funds for the benefit of the Aborigines was never implemented. The *Waste Lands Act* of 1842 finally gave the Governor the power to reserve land for the use or benefit of the Aborigines. Small blocks were subsequently reserved for the Aborigines throughout the settled districts. By then, however, the Kurna had already been dispossessed of the lands that they and their ancestors had occupied for perhaps a thousand generations.

The first settlers who arrived at Holdfast Bay in November 1836 described the local Kurna people as 'friendly, harmless and honest to a remarkable degree.' Within a few months the Kurna were making themselves useful to the new settlers, acting as guides, carrying water and firewood and performing other chores around the settlement, for which they were rewarded with food, tobacco, clothes and other items. Captain Walter Bromley was appointed Protector of Aborigines in May 1837. He set up his tent on the banks of the Torrens [in what is now Bonython Park] and encouraged the Aborigines to visit him there to receive rations of food and blankets.

Perhaps it is a trite comment, but it would appear that it was impossible for the Kurna to consent either to the occupation of their land, or on their enforced subjection to English law, for they were incapable of comprehending the import and results of either one or the other. One might be excused for concluding that, in their estimation of right and wrong, 'the killing of a white invader of their country [would be] rather more virtuous than criminal.'

An horrendous event occurred in 1842 when the inhabitants of the village of Thebarton were outraged when Mr Peter Cook, a local butcher, had his watch

stolen. In due course Monyitya, a member of the Kurna people, was arraigned before the dispensers of Her Majesty's colonial justice and found guilty of theft.

A public flogging was prescribed at the Adelaide gaol and at the appointed hour several hundred citizens who possessed, no doubt, strong stomachs and a sadistic bent, gathered before the flogging rack among whom 'we regretted to observe a number of women.'

Having been secured to the triangle he received fifty lashes of a cat-o'-nine-tails, which 'he bore with commendable fortitude. The operator then gave him some water. At the command of the Sheriff, twenty-five more lashes were administered... after which he was conducted away by two of his tribe...'

In a sadistic summation in the local press it was said that:

Our reporter subsequently saw Monyitya's back, and described the apparent effect of the whipping as one which, although it cannot by any means be called cruel, is, nevertheless, likely to produce a lasting impression upon the mind of the culprit, if not upon his native companions who witnessed the infliction.

The Kurna population sank from about 300 in 1841 to 150 in 1856 and during this period the white settlers intruded upon their lands, which were given to them by God, and, in so doing, completely overturned and embarrassed all their former accustomed modes of living. Driven from their own country and deprived of their means of subsistence, they were placed in a social position entirely strange to them, where difficulties and perplexities encountered them at every step.

A striking example of the decimation of this embattled, and now extinct, people is in the following quotation from an Adelaide newspaper which is a positive indictment of the indifference which pervaded colonial society:

Hoar frost covered the hill all round... [On] the side of [it]... lay huddled together in a fretting mass, two reeking specimens of sable humanity. What a sight - what a picture of uncompensated, unmitigated, hopeless misery. A venerable old patriarch, pillowed on the icy grass, with his grey locks dappled in blood, forced by fierce pulmonic convulsions from his weakened lungs... His blind old lubra lay beside him.

All the covering that this frail pair could muster... was, for him, a coarse rotten remnant of a shirt; for her, a filthy abomination in the shape of a dilapidated opossum rug... Were the panacea for the suffering race... to be found in our capital, there would probably be no getting a tithe of them to partake of it.

So, while the Kurna people and others throughout South Australia were flogged, degraded, abused and socially ignored, prior to all but disappearing from the face of the earth, Adelaide, together with villages such as Kensington and Norwood, grew slowly upon the old tribal land.

Relations With the Aborigines

(Taken from G.H. Manning, *A Colonial Experience*)

From my personal experience with the Aborigines I must say they were friendly and mixed freely with we interlopers. They soon picked up a little 'pidgin' English and made themselves understood by signs and gesticulations. I learned some of the native speech and became fairly proficient and conversed freely with them in their own tongue and my sister and, years later, we used it between ourselves.

The vocabulary was not very extensive; for instance, in counting there were only words to indicate one, two and three, after that it was all done by showing their fingers in fives or tens. A little over a hundred of their words or names would enable one to carry on a fair conversation.

Captain Bromley established a sort of location by having shelter sheds built a little to the west of 'Buffalo Row' on the south bank of a gully near the present cattle sale yards. The Aborigines did not take kindly to the sheds and preferred their own wurleys. His efforts were tragically terminated when, in April 1838, his dead body was found in the river not far from where he lived and the cause of his death remains a mystery.

My sister and I often joined the Aboriginal children in their games of throwing spears and waddies. One of their pastimes was a mock battle, in which small bark shields were used and tea tree shoots about three feet long were thrown to represent spears. They would do no serious injury, though they gave a nasty blow. We also bathed together in the river where I learned to swim. The Aborigines, both young and old, at first swam in their own style, which we called dog-paddling, but some of them soon got into our way of breast-stroke swimming.

I once witnessed a native game that only the men took part in. It was on the occasion of a friendly tribe's visit to Adelaide. The sport took place on the Park Lands between the river and Montefiore Hill where about 30 to 40 men on each side sat in a cluster about 30 yards apart. A great deal of parley went on between them for some time and at length one of them advanced into the middle space, shaking in his hand a bunch of emu feather feathers firmly tied around the stems. This appeared to be a challenge.

Then one from the other side came out and tried to take the feathers from him. A melee ensued and at length others came out in twos and threes to help their respective sides until the whole company got in a heap where a lively struggle took place. It was like the old game of 'more stacks on the mill' very much extended. All the men were quite naked and climbed over each other, yelling and jabbering, for fully ten minutes, until all were too hot and tired to continue.

There was much noise and commotion when the side returned with the feathers to their starting point. The exercise was a real trial of strength and a thorough scramble. They

also had wrestling bouts in which there were no tripping or footwork. It was simply hugging and attempting to force the opponent down on his back to the ground.