

April 2023

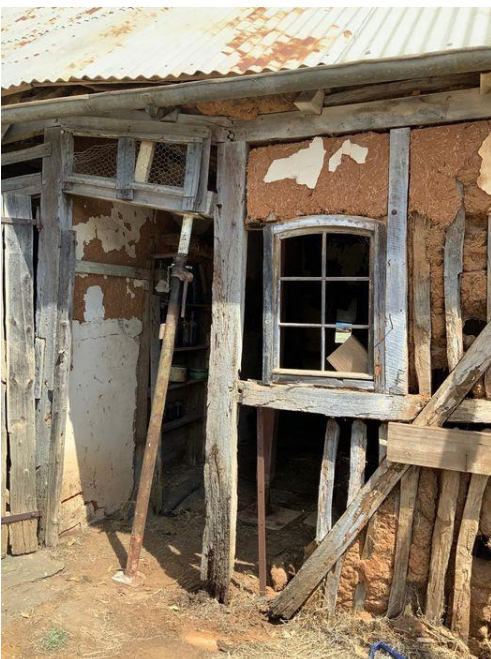
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Conservation update: The roof is on!



In case you missed the good news in our last email, earlier this year the new roof finally went on. It looks very shiny, but will age over time, just as the previous one did. And it will keep the structure and interior of the cottage protected for many, many years.



Next – the footings....

The next stage of the process involves conserving the footings, which is where each of the vertical timber pieces touches the ground. Many of them have deteriorated quite badly. We will soon be meeting on site with the builder (Andrew Steinkopf, skilled in heritage conservation), the heritage architect (Sam Hosking) and a representative from *Heritage SA*, to decide the best way to proceed. Although it has taken quite a while to find a time that they are all able to meet, we know we are fortunate to have such experienced advisors!

Fundraising update

Thank you to all who bought tickets in the 2023 *People's Choice Community Lottery*. We raised almost \$1,000! As always, we really appreciate your support.

Our next fundraising focus will be raising money for the footings – more on that at a later date. In the meantime, wines and cookbooks are still available for purchase, or you can donate securely using the link on the website at [Rechner Cottage Conservation Association - Conserving the Past, Enriching the Future](#). Every dollar counts.



Supporter's Page, and an Honour Roll.

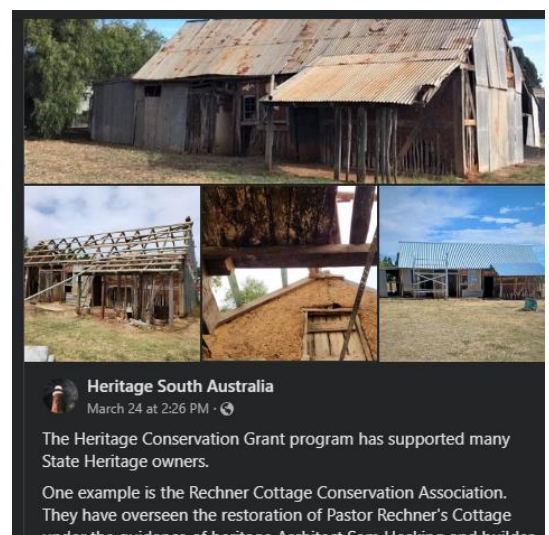
And now we want to celebrate YOU! Although we've put in plenty of hard work ourselves, the conservation of the cottage absolutely could not have happened without your support. We want to publicly acknowledge and thank all those who have donated. We are putting together a "Supporter's Page" on the website, where we will list our financial supporters (with permission, of course – some may prefer to remain anonymous givers, and that's fine too). Have you donated? Bought tickets in the Community Lottery? Or bought fundraising items as a way of supporting the conservation? Whatever the size of your donation, it doesn't matter. We won't be listing the amount. If you have supported us and would be happy to be acknowledged on the page, please send us a quick email [here](#) to let us know.

As always, we thank our major funders – The *Peter Lehmann Arts and Education Trust*, *Heritage SA*, Barossa Council, and Tony & Kate Rechner.

We are also developing an "Honour Roll", to acknowledge those who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and preservation of the buildings and social history of Light Pass and the Cottage. We have people already in mind that we would like to honour. It is the work and passion of individuals that has saved much history that would otherwise be lost, and we think their efforts should be celebrated.

Heritage SA holds us up as an example!

The government body *Heritage SA* provides grants for heritage development projects, and we have been fortunate recipients. In a recent *Facebook* post, they used our project as an example of what can be done, talking about the cottage, the conservation and showing photos of the process so far. They've used our project before as an example when promoting the scheme, and it's a great endorsement of the work that's been done. Whenever we've met with them, they have been so enthusiastic and helpful.



That's all for the cottage news for now. However, if you have a spare moment, I've included some interesting reading below, with two articles on Light Pass history. The first is on the mail service and how in 1905 residents petitioned for their own post office. The second is an account of a trip taken to Central Australia by the pastor of Strait Gate church, JJ Stolz, in 1923. He has some interesting impressions and reflections on what he sees. The fine gentlemen of the Agricultural Bureau certainly thought so! So make a cup of coffee (or tea, if you prefer), settle back, and enjoy 😊

Warm regards to you all

Jo

(on behalf of the *Rechner Cottage Conservation Committee*)

The Light Pass Mail Service.

The recent news from Australia Post that they are considering weekly mail deliveries is a reminder that there have been many changes over the years in the delivery of mail services. In the first days of the colony the collection of mail often resulted in fights, extortion, and other unsavoury behaviour, but by the early days of Light Pass, the



The first post office, in the schoolteacher's residence. Mail was sorted on the kitchen table.

mail service was fortunately much more regulated! The mail for Light Pass was originally delivered to the Post Office at Nuriootpa. However, in 1905 Light Pass residents decided they wanted their own post office. But how to go about getting one?

The Rev. JJ Stolz wrote to the Postmaster General in Adelaide, asking about the procedure. They were sent an application form, which was signed by forty-five Light Pass residents and duly returned. The application said that the Strait Gate Lutheran School teacher, Gustav A. Keller, would be prepared to conduct the post office from his teacher's residence. At that time the Strait Gate Lutheran schoolroom was attached to the residence. The mail (sorted on the kitchen table) would be handed to addressees who called at the post office or taken home by children attending the school.

After a visit by the Postal Inspector in 1906, the facility was approved. It would serve not only 15 or 16 local families, but also Dr Scholz's Willows Hospital and Kruschel's chaff mill. The Truro-Tanunda Mail could be diverted between Stockwell and Nuriootpa, adding about one mile to its route and about 15 minutes travelling time. The new post office was opened on 1st May 1906.

Constant improvements

By 1924, mail was being delivered to residents by bicycle. In 1926 the volume was such that it was decided a car would be used. Additional services added to the original postal service over time included daily delivery of 'The Advertiser', payment of child endowment and age pensions, and the sale of postage stamps and magazines.

Changes – and a new post office...

In 1960, the original post office needed to be demolished to make way for the new Strait Gate Church. A public meeting was held, and it was decided to build the current postal facility, which opened in July 1960. The building is uniquely small, at about 3m x 2m. It holds 90 private mailboxes. A postmaster/mistress is responsible for sorting the mail. As well as providing collection and delivery of mail, the post "office" is an important meeting place for Light Pass residents, and a good place to catch up on all the news.



Bertha Lowke, postmistress from 1967-1977

Note: This is an abbreviated version of an article on the website. Read the full article [here](#).



A painting by the famous Hermannsburg artist, Albert Namatjira,

Take a trip to Central Australia - 1923 style!

Darlene Cooper, of Luhrs Cottage, Light Pass has been researching the *Light Pass Men's Agricultural Bureau*. In the December 1923 minutes, she came across this account by Pastor JJ Stolz of his recent trip to Central Australia, visiting the Mission station at Hermannsburg. He was the grandson of Pastor G.J Rechner. After Rechner died in August 1900, Pastor Stolz became the minister of Strait Gate Lutheran Church. He served the congregation for 30 years, and then took on the position of President of the Lutheran Church. Pastor Stolz was a member of the Ag Bureau from 1923-1929.

From the Minutes (and with thanks to a very comprehensive minutes taker!)

"J.J Stolz addressed the meeting with a very instructive and interesting address on his trip to the Mission Station in The MacDonnell Ranges in Central Australia.

He divided his remarks under three headings:

(1) Parts I traversed.

(2) People I met

(3) Problems

Dealing with the parts traversed first, the speaker gave us a vivid description of the class of country passed on the way and mentioned the possibilities of settlement and expansion. He also paid particular attention to places of marked interest as Leigh's Creek, the only coal mine in South Australia. It is at present closed down and is likely to remain for centuries as it takes one ton of Newcastle coal to burn one ton of Leigh's Creek coal. From Leigh's Creek onwards to Herrgott Springs or Maree it is desert country, and the possibility of cutting a channel from Spencers Gulf to Lake Eyre has been discussed. The lowest below sea level is 30ft and deepest cut to let the water in would be 60ft, the lecturer said that he stayed on a station 90 miles from central Lake Eyre and the highest point there was 3 feet below sea level.

Herrgott Springs is the centre of the desert country and owes its existence to the artesian water obtainable there.

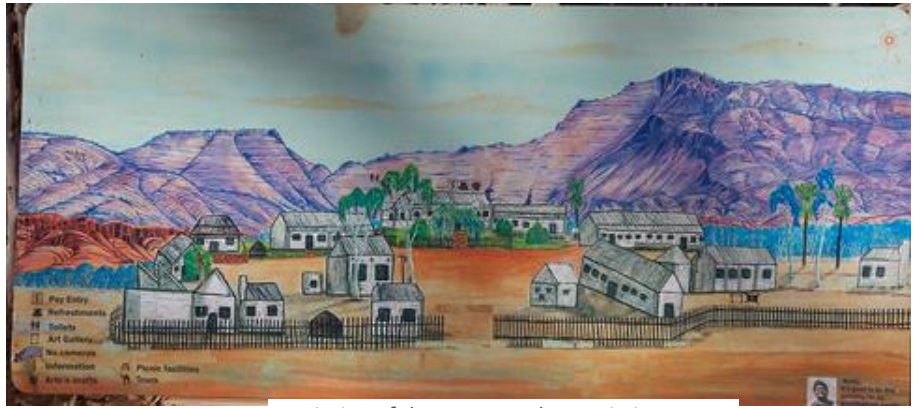
After leaving Maree the route passes through sandhills until it arrives at Oodnadatta, the end of the railway. Oodnadatta is quite a decent little town and like other towns in Central Australia, it owes its life to the artesian water obtainable there. From Oodnadatta the traveller follows the overland telegraph line until arriving at Charlotte Waters, a telegraph station built like a fortress, to ward off attacks by the natives.

One interesting place on this route is Dew Drop Inn at 10 mile bore. It is a hotel without a licence but sometimes runs dry on account of the thirsty nature of the climate. Another place of interest passed is the Old Crown Cattle Station owned by Sir Sydney Kidman.

The next important place of call is Horseshoe Bend on the Finke River and after leaving here the route passes through the most difficult stage of the journey, the sand hills and drift, and until recently the plague of motorists. Mr Murray Aunger invented a tyre which made it possible for a motorist to cross this 25 miles of sand in 6 hours where as a trap or buggy takes 3 days. (Editors note: Mr Aunger was a talented mechanic and motor enthusiast, read more about his epic journeys [here](#)).

Following the Finke River, the traveller comes to the MacDonnell Ranges where the scenery changes and instead of the desert country encountered from Leigh's Creek onwards, he sees abundant vegetation and grasses.

The mulga and desert grow so thickly that in places it is almost impenetrable. The desert oak is a specific hardwood suitable for building purposes. The waving porcupine grass looks very much like a crop of wheat and feed is abundant. Water can be obtained on the Mission Station at a depth from 20 to 30 feet.



A painting of the Hermannsburg Mission



Aunger and Dutton at Burra, 1908 - the first journey by car from Adelaide to Darwin (Photo; State Library SA Collection)

The speaker described the class of country with its gorges, the beauty spots of the MacDonnell Ranges, and the scenery to be witnessed there, among the best being the Glen of Palms where grows a palm that is not encountered in any other part of the world.

Next the speaker dealt with the people met on the way and he paid a fine tribute to the endurance and the work of the real Australian stockmen, describing his life and work and the hardships and dangers that he met with.

Then he mentioned the heroism of the few white women he met in that desert country, among them being the missionary's wife and the hostess of the Horseshoe Bend Inn, also a young lady on her way as governess to the children of a central Australian station.

Next person of note he met was the driver of the Camel Mail on the route and the speaker described his life and work vividly. He earns all of his 6 pound 10 pence per week.

Next came the problems to be faced and here Mr Stolz gave us a description of the work carried on by the Mission people and its effect on the natives. He said that the natives were becoming useful and industrious under the leadership of the missionaries and one of their greatest problems was to find employment for the rapidly increasing numbers. They intend starting work at gardening and the leather



Camaleers, Hergott Springs (Photo: State Library of SA). JJ was impressed by the people of the outback.



Hermannsburg Mission

industry and Mr Stolz gave us an example of the industry of the natives in motor road that they built for tourists to visit and inspect the beauties of the Glen Palms.

He said that the natives are gradually obtaining a high standard of morality and were free from diseases that in many cases are gradually killing out the Australian aborigines.

He touched on the political aspect and was emphatic in his remarks that a north South Railway was urgently needed, and that something must be done to preserve the growing number of natives.

He also explained the possibilities of preserving the waters of the Finke and other rivers of the MacDonnell Ranges and said that it was easy to do, as there were many natural reservoirs and all that was needed was an embankment blocking one of the deep gorges between the Ranges.

This was an address enjoyed and appreciated by everyone present and it was made doubly so by the inclusion of little personal anecdotes and experiences.

A hearty vote of thanks was moved by Mr A Chapman and seconded by Mr L Koop to which Mr Stolz responded saying that he was only too pleased to have been able to entertain the Bureau with a description of life and work in Central Australia“.