

# CAIRN AND PLAQUE UNVEILED TO EXPLORER STURT

## A HUNDRED YEARS SINCE HIS PARTY WENT THROUGH GAWLER

An interesting and historical ceremony was performed in Gawler on Saturday afternoon last when a cairn and plaque were unveiled by the Mayor (Mr. W. Antwis) on Centenary Place (old Market allotment) to commemorate the centenary of Sturt and party in their exploratory journey to discover the conditions of Central Australia.

The Historical Collections Committee of the S.A. Geographical Society were the originators of this recognition of Sturt and his party, similar functions being arranged in the towns following his route. The Gawler Town Council worthily entered into co-operation and covered the expense of cairn and plaque.

On Saturday the Gawler Town Band enlivened proceedings at the site prior to the ceremony, and the school teachers had arranged for a good muster of children. There was also good representation of the general public. The official guests were the State Surveyor-General (Mr. Hambidge), President of the S.A. Geographical Society; the President (Capt. Parker, Clerk of Parliaments, S.A.), and the Secretary (Mr. Somerville) of the Historical Collections Committee; and two Mr. Delands, also associated with the Society and native-born of Gawler. Mr. Hermann Bischoff also appeared among the crowd, and a lady whose father, Daniel John Adcock, in the early days had been an employe of The Bunyip, and had he lived would have reached 100 years last week. The Adcock family were pioneer settlers of Sandy Creek.

Proceedings opened with the National Anthem. The Mayor gave welcome to all visitors and introduced Mr. Hambidge; then followed the address; and afterwards the Mayor unveiled the memorial; Crs. Bray and Goodger returned civic thanks; and the children brought the ceremony to a close by the singing of the Song of Australia.

Among the guests were Hon. R. J. Rudall, M.L.C., Commissioner of Crown Lands; Hon. A. J. Melrose, M.L.C. and Mr. L. S. Duncan, M.P.

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Mr Hambidge gave an interesting and informative address on the travels of Sturt, the following giving a fair resume of his remarks:

Sturt was an inspiring leader, and although he was a strict disciplinarian he was just and considerate to his men. The story of his three exploring expeditions is one of bold decisions, fearlessly carried out in the face of danger, hardship and discouragement.

Sturt arrived in Sydney in 1827 and soon shared in the interest explorers were taking in the unknown country beyond the Blue Mountains. In his first expedition of 1828 he discovered that many of the rivers which flowed west flowed into the Darling, but where did the Darling go? He had a belief that Australia held an inland sea.

A few months later he made his intrepid and hazardous boat journey down the Murrumbidgee into the Murray past the junction of the Darling and so down to Lake Alexandrina and the Murray mouth. This was the most fruitful of Sturt's expeditions, and it was at this point that he came forward as a founder of South Australia. His report revealed the existence of the long splendid Murray close to the region already under consideration by enthusiasts in England as suitable for a new colony. His observations supported those of Captain Collett Barker as to the fitness of the country between Vincent Gulf and the Murray.

In 1838, deciding to make his home in S.A., he came overland as leader of a party with 300 head of cattle.

He was early out in the Gawler district and in September 1838 examined the country northwards along the Gulf St. Vincent and the hills beyond the Para, discovering a beautiful boat harbour afterwards known as Port Gawler.

It is not known how many times Sturt visited Gawler during this period but it is known that during the short time that he occupied the position of Surveyor-General he inspected special surveys in the sur-

pected special surveys in the surrounding districts, and in December 1838 Mr. and Mrs. Reid entertained him and Governor Gawler on their return from the Murray after the disastrous trip during which Henry Bryan was lost.

Now to the last expedition of 1844 to 1846, during which Sturt hoped to place a flag at the centre of the continent and also to prove his theory of an inland sea. Sturt took as his assistant James Poole, who died near the Barrier Ranges; Dr. John Harris Browne, who was closely associated with Gawler; John McDouall Stuart, who subsequently

made several exploring expeditions, as draftsman; and Louis Piesse, Daniel Brock, George Davenport, Joseph Cowley, Robert Flood, Adam Turpin, James Lewis, John Mack, and Richard Sullivan. His equipment included 11 horses, 30 bullocks, provisions for 18 months, and 200 sheep on the hoof. Sturt took these supplies, well knowing that otherwise the party would be exposed to the horrors of scurvy. As it was, he was badly stricken with the dread disease, and Poole died of it. All members of the party were more or less affected.

The party left Adelaide on August 10, 1844. The party reached Gawler on August 13, and were hospitably treated. It is believed they made the crossing at Deadman's Pass. Next morning (14th) Henry Calton entertained the men at breakfast at his hotel, known then and officially until 1848 as Calton's hotel. The name was altered to the Old Spot in 1848. Sturt, Browne, and Poole stayed at Calton's on the night of the 15th, and many of the local people accompanied them to Koonunga on the following day, to the home of Captain Bagot.

The party proceeded to the Murray and followed it up to the confluence with the Darling, and then traversed that stream until about where Menindee now stands; and from there his troubles started. Water supplies were the difficulties and in the search for such Sturt became the discoverer of the Barrier Ranges and Broken Hill.

A creek was found in the Ranges and here he established his first depot. He then pushed forward to Depot Glen, where the party was forced to camp for nearly 6 months; from there he made his most north-

forced to camp for nearly 6 months; from there he made his most northerly point, Fort Grey, situated in the north-west corner of what is now New South Wales. The party remained here till November 1845, and from here Sturt made many and hazardous thrusts to reach his goal Central Australia. He got to as far as the edge of the Simpson desert, but throughout all these wanderings lack of water was his tribulation.

Sturt returned to Adelaide in January 1846 "gaunt indeed. His companions suffered similarly; their faces hidden in unkempt hair, their skin burned to the swarthy hue of natives. The horses were like living skeletons, and many of the cattle were in sorry plight. The most singular thing of attraction was the remainder of the sheep following the drays from habit, as quietly and regularly as a rear-guard of infantry.