

## A Look Back in time

In the following two articles we have combined some background history with that seen through the eyes of Fred Brooks and Frank Hall, two members of the Interim Council of the Friends of the Heysen Trail.

### Fred Brooks



Today I met a man who has jumped over boxes of gold ingots, helped to smuggle the British and Dutch Crown Jewels out of England and Holland, and who was instrumental in forming the Friends of the Heysen Trail.

Fred Brooks is a Scottish Australian who lives in a warm and cosy place in Paradise - an outer Adelaide suburb. Amongst his collection of memorabilia is a small red and yellow plaque that makes Fred's ancestry crystal clear with its message, 'I'm British by birth and Scottish by the grace of God'. There are photos of family and Heysen mates, a black and white photograph of the British battleship *HMS Revenge* above the door, and on the table there are glasses of stout, beer and lemonade while Fred, John Wilson (Trailwalker editor) and I while away the late afternoon, reminiscing about times gone by.

Fred's association with the Heysen Trail began in 1983. When Terry Lavender, the father of the Heysen Trail, advertised for walking clubs to help with its construction Fred with other members of the Common Venturers, a walking group made up of colleagues from the then Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) at Salisbury, joined an enthusiastic bunch of people to throw their ideas in to the melting pot that became the nexus for the Friends.

On 1 July 1986 The Honourable Kym Mayes, Minister for the Department of Recreation and Sport, sponsored a public meeting to discuss the possibility of forming an association that would take an active interest in the preservation and maintenance of South Australian walking and network trails, including rights of way, developing new trails etc. The meeting was attended by 150 people from various walking clubs and groups such as scouts, schools, orienteers, conservationists, heritage and other groups and it was unanimously agreed that such an association be formed. Seventeen of those present, including Fred,

volunteered to form the Steering Committee under the chairmanship of Jim Crinion. Subsequent to this in 1987 Fred became a member of the Interim Council, remaining a member for many years and, in the words of John Wilson, 'applying his own particular blend of common sense and Scottish humour to the task'.

The Heysen Trail concept had been proposed by Warren Bonython in 1969 as a long distance walking trail from Cape Jervis to the Northern Flinders Ranges. The government of the time saw merit in the proposal and after investigation a Long Distance Trails Committee was formed. The name Heysen Trail was chosen in recognition of the highly acclaimed artist, Sir Hans Heysen. Although Sir Hans was not really a walker, he portrayed his fascination with both the Mount Lofty and Flinders Ranges through his paintings.

During 1976 nine kilometers of trail was constructed mainly through the Cleland Conservation Park and the trail was officially opened by the Governor Sir Mark Oliphant. In June 1976 the Department of Recreation and Sport assumed responsibility for the development of the Heysen Trail and the state-wide system of walking trails. More specifically, Terry Lavender was responsible for the development of the Heysen Trail, supported by a team of staff including Martin Foster and Andrew Moylan. At this point around 780 kilometers of the 1200 kilometers of the completed trail had been marked, including the sections Cape Jervis to Greenock, Crystal Brook to Wilmington, and Hawker and Parachilna.

The formation of the Friends as an incorporated body in 1986, with its official committee structure, meant that work on the trail could be managed by a dedicated group of volunteer team leaders with the benefits of government recognition and assistance including materials and insurance.

As with all successful teams, there was the usual progression of forming, storming, norming and performing. First there was the 'forming' - the initial coming together of the different walking groups, and then the 'storming' as their experienced leaders threw their ideas into the pot with a passion that soon had the brew bubbling away. And then out of this came

the 'norming' - the stage when the policies, procedures and guidelines for the building and maintenance of the trail and other Friends endeavours settled and sorted themselves into the basis for the association's constitution. After around a year the structures were set in place and the group moved on to the 'performing' stage. The success of those early discussions and debates has been proven in that the Heysen Trail has gone from strength to strength, to ultimately becoming recognised as a South Australian icon in April 2005

The inaugural committee's first priorities were to establish a name for the association, along with the aims and objectives necessary to enable them to create a constitution and thus to become an incorporated body. The name 'Friends of the Heysen Trail and other South Australian Walking Trails Incorporated' was selected, with the aims and objectives including the rights of walkers, and public awareness and usage of the Heysen and other walking trails. Four sub-committees were formed: Organisation and Management, Promotions and Publicity, Building and Maintenance, and Conservation. Fred's particular focus was with the Building and Maintenance Committee because he believed that designing, building, marking and maintaining walking trails was the main reason that the Friends association was formed.

The maintenance alone on such trails is almost a full time job, with bush fires, erosion, and wear and tear on stiles, bridges etc requiring constant upkeep. Fred took on the responsibility for setting up groups of volunteers and organising them into working parties. Under the direction of Terry Lavender he then organised for the teams to attend workshops conducted by the Department and lead by Terry, Martin Foster and Andrew Moylan. The volunteers were instructed in a range of building and maintenance skills including trail marking, bridge and stile building, and erosion barriers. The first workshop was held in Mylor in 1986 with two more in 1987, with around 34 Friends, including 11 women, attending. Over time different ways of doing things evolved through the ingenuity of Fred and others, as they worked out innovative ways of making the job easier. For example, Fred produced a water pipe with a T bar that greatly simplified the problem of bending reinforced rods of steel into U-shapes to secure erosion barriers.

Another of Fred's early leadership achievements was to ensure that instead of volunteers working in an adhoc manner over the entire length of the trail, that they worked in a more organised way, with specified teams taking responsibility for particular sections.

And it was thus that Fred and the Common Venturers team took on the Cudlee Creek to Bethany section. This was only half marked when they started, up to around the Wirras, and they worked to bridge the gap from Mount Crawford as far north as Tanunda.

With their newly-acquired skills and under Fred's guiding hand, the group blazed a new trail from the Microwave Tower in the Mount Crawford area to Bethany, followed by marking the trail with star-droppers, and then followed by the same group at a later date with the building of 19 stiles along the section. This formed part of the eventual link-up of the Heysen Trail to Crystal Brook. A party of Year 12 Gawler School students lead by one of their teachers (Section Leader Joyce Heinjus) completed the section from Bethany to beyond Greenock.

Another major project in which Fred was involved was building a Dutch Sand Ladder on a section that led down to the beach at Waitpinga. There were 28 people involved and Fred wrote in his report at the time that everyone enjoyed their participation and that the teamwork was a sight to behold. Another project was building an Irish Bog Ladder in the Jupiter Creek area.

Other highlights of Fred's work include opening up the Mount Lofty Trail through the Hale and Warren Conservation Parks including construction of the Giant's Staircase of some 130 steps just north of the South Para River. Fred recalls having to get authority from E&WS Department (now SA Water) because it went partly across their land. A bridge was built across the river at this point by a professional bridge builder and it all worked a treat for around two years - until the day when excessive rain created such a massive surge of water that the bridge including its concrete foundations was lifted out and drifted about 50 meters downstream.



**Barb Jeffrey and the remains of the bridge  
Photo: Graham Jeffrey, 2 Sept, 1992**

Fred was instrumental in many other Heysen Trail projects, one of the most notable of which was the bridge in the Warren CP, for which he did the majority of the organising of plans and the people who provided their labour. Once the plans were agreed on they were given to a draftsman to draw up. The bridge was assembled at Kidman Park and transported to the site where it remains one of the few bridges that hasn't been washed away. Unfortunately ill-health prevented Fred from returning to see the completed structure and he was forced to retire from his work on the trail.

If the Heysen Trail is now a South Australian icon, then it seems to me that Fred Brooks is one of the mini icons among the Heysen Trail family who have made this a collective achievement. Fred has played a key role in the formation of the Friends and been an integral part of developing the ground rules for building and maintenance of the trail. He is also one of the people who have established the Heysen tradition of mate-ship - of developing close bonds with people with common interests and shared goals. Fred's invaluable contribution to the Friends - and thereby to South Australia and to walkers from near and far - was officially recognised with his Commonwealth Bank Volunteer of the Year 1990 award.

And so it is that the boy from Musselburg - five miles east of Edinburgh in the land of lochs and heather - has found his way into the Heysen Trail record books. Oh - and just how *did* he come to jump over those boxes of gold ingots? - and get mixed up with the British and Dutch Crown Jewels? Along the way Fred went to war alongside of another team of mates - around 1200 of them - on the battleship *HMS Revenge*. With a German invasion of England imminent in 1939-40, the ship was commissioned to transport all the British 'margarine' (as the ingots were called by those aboard) and jewels to Halifax in Canada for safe keeping.

As the afternoon drew to a close it was obvious that we had just touched the surface of the swag of stories that Fred has tucked away in his memory, of the people and places and projects of around 30 years of Heysen Trail history, and of many stories from a childhood in Scotland and adventures at sea - but it was time for dinner. Fred wrapped himself up in his warm and woolly scarf and walked us to the car, talking cricket with John along the way - as good mates do.

**Jo Chesher**

## Early Days with the Friends.



I became involved with the interim council at the meeting convened at the Dom Polski Centre by Terry Lavender. At the time I was Walks Secretary of the Adelaide

Bushwalkers and felt that our club should be represented. I was a member of the Interim Council during 1986 – 87.

Over the preceding two years, Terry had asked ABW to help out with various projects along the Trail, including the rebuilding of a section (no longer in use) from Horsnell Gully to Norton Summit burnt during the Ash Wednesday fires.

In 1985 the club embarked on the long and difficult project of marking the Trail from Boat Harbour Beach to Tent Rock Creek. This took

us many weekends (we were all working at the time), but I am pleased to note that this section is still following our original route.

The initial meetings of the Council were not always very exciting. The writing of the Constitution is a long and tedious task, especially as certain members (no names) were rather verbose. After a couple of years, I was happier when I joined the Trails Maintenance sub-committee led by Colin Malcolm (1988 – 92).

In 1988 volunteers from the Friends, ABW and other clubs spent a busy weekend remarking the Trail from Horrocks Pass to Spring Creek and Mount Remarkable summit after the bushfires the previous summer. I particularly enjoyed these activities except for one nasty job. To carry the star droppers along the Trail someone had designed a metal "scabbard" holding about 8-10 droppers and worn as a "backpack". This was not only heavy but extremely noisy, making conversation impossible.



**Balquhider Photo Dorothy Farmer E2E1**

Later that year, Terry asked me to organise a reroute of the Trail near Tent Rock Creek in Deep Creek Conservation Park. A group of six of us carried lengths of heavy chain, star droppers and sledgehammers for 1.5 km (nearest vehicle access point) into the creek in very heavy rain and spent 2-3 hours affixing the droppers

into a steep rock face and attaching the chain to make access up the slope easier. Returning to our packs which we had left by the creek we were horrified to see that the water level had risen over a metre. We had to detour upstream to the park boundary fence and carefully cross the creek by hanging on to the fence wire. A very unnerving experience!

To add insult to injury Terry organised a reroute of the Trail some months later to a safer location.

I have walked nearly all of the Trail over the years but the Deep Creek and Newland Head sections remain my favourites perhaps because I expended so much energy on their construction.

**Frank Hall**