

## Reviews

**Peter Monteath (ed), *Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants in South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2011. Reviewed by Heidi Ing.**

The story of South Australia's German population is too often dominated by the most convenient stereotype; Lutherans living in close-knit rural communities. Comments on their motivations to migrate too frequently fall back on short hand references to religious persecution. From this book's introduction, editor Peter Monteath makes it clear that this compilation on Germans in South Australia will emphasise that 'which we all too readily forget, and that is their sheer variety' (p.ix). This ambition is proficiently accomplished. *Germans: travellers, settlers and their descendants in South Australia* is no dry history; it adds detail and colourful tales to the published body of work in this field. Several conventionally well-known individuals and groups are included, such as the German missionaries and the Heysen family of Hahndorf, but familiar topics are generally shown through new perspectives. The major achievement of this work is the allusion to a multitude of new characters with whom we may be unfamiliar, or who have not received the attention that their contribution warrants.

In past readings on German migration certain personalities have sparked my interest and I hungrily seek out references to their exploits and opinions. When I first encountered this publication I turned immediately to the index to look for the names of my favourites and I wasn't too disappointed. I was pleased to find references to that intriguing geologist, Johannes Menge and the lawyer Ulrich Hübbe. I looked in vain for Heinrich Nootnagel, Mathilda Piper or Adolph Leschen, but there were an enticing number of references to Carl Muecke and the Schomburgk brothers, though disappointingly few to their fellow 'forty-eighter', Friedrich Basedow. The vast array of named individuals listed in the index should pique the interest of any reader with an interest in the German presence in South Australia.

The ‘forty-eighters’, particularly those who embarked on the *Princess Louise*, are given deserved attention in several chapters. Pauline Payne provides a tantalising glimpse of the fascinating Schomburgk brothers; Robert, Richard, Otto and Julius in her biographical chapter on Richard Schomburgk, ‘explorer, natural scientist and Botanic Garden director’ (p.126). Payne outlines the attitudes which led Adelaide’s Botanical Gardens to becoming at once a place of education and science but also of enjoyment and art as a ‘people’s garden’ (p.133). The *Princess Louise* also brought entomologist Marianne Kreuzler and her three teenager children (p.210). Kreuzler is introduced in Philip Jones’ fascinating chapter on German involvement in the study of science in South Australia. An outline of the development of the German education system provides a backdrop to the skilled investigators who turned their attention to South Australia’s fauna and flora. Jones demonstrates the remarkable role German scientists played in the development of museums in both urban and rural areas. Providing brief accounts of Kreuzler, Menge, Wehl, Behr and others, Jones brings to our attention those who should be considered for a more complete biographical treatment. Another chapter to illuminate a *Princess Louise* passenger is that on the artist Alexander Schramm. A German artist ‘steeped in European aesthetic traditions’ (p.146) Janice Lally and Peter Monteath show that Schramm exhibited a sensitivity to the South Australian landscape and an ‘acute observation of Aboriginal life’ (p.154) which enabled him to depict subjects and scenes which were ‘essentially South Australian’ (p.150).

The valuable contribution of German observers of South Australia’s Indigenous population is given attention in several chapters. Mühlhäusler, editor of a previous work; *Hermann Koeler’s Adelaide*, introduces us to the observations of a German medical practitioner visiting our shores between October 1837 and May 1838. Christine Lockwood uses the letters and diaries of missionaries brought from Dresden to depict the impact of European culture on South Australia’s Aboriginal population from a German born perspective (p.17). In a sobering statement, one of these missionaries, Schurmann, wrote to Dresden: ‘the English occupation of foreign countries without consideration for their occupants is humanly and morally unjust’ (p.22). These missionaries unsuccessfully argued against the removal of children from their parents and tribe and for reserved land for indigenous use (p.34) and ‘left unique

linguistic and ethnographic records of the Kaurna, Ramindjeri and Parnkalla people' (p.38). Bill Edwards provides details on the activities of Moravian missionaries in South Australia and Mary-Anne Gale details the work of Eduard Meyer, who recorded the rich linguistic heritage of the Ngarrindjeri language. Meyer's wordlists are now being used to compliment the knowledge of the Ngarrindjeri Elders, to allow language renewal programs to be taught in South Australian schools and kindergartens (p.78).

Lois Zweck depicts a genealogical investigation which began with assumptions but discovered a tapestry rich in detail and drama. As an example of a descendent of rural Germans who had lost knowledge of their background, Zweck's research suggests that political motivations could play a more significant role in South Australia's immigration history and warrants further examination. Michael Bollen's chapter describes Adelaide's urban Germans and their frustrated efforts to establish a German Hospital. Utilising both English and German language newspapers and Parliamentary Papers, Bollen's contribution portrays many elements of early South Australia's health care services; the government-run Adelaide Hospital, the Children's Hospital, the Willows Hospital in the Barossa Valley, a well-drawn cast of doctors, and that notorious German import 'homoeopathy' (p.122). A building was eventually erected in Carrington Street, but competing interests, a gold-rush and an economic downturn caused the German Hospital to join 'the sick list, and it never recovered' (p.121).

Examples of the personalities which this publication brings to life in piteous detail are Ulrich Hübbe and Erhard Eylmann. In both cases it can be argued that their contributions have been underrated and these chapters go some way to rectify this. Volker Stolle gives a biographical account of Karl Mützelfeldt, who had an 'unbounded admiration for the German people' (p.380) yet had to flee Germany to escape the retribution of National Socialism, as did Hermann Sasse, whose story is described by Maurice Schile. Sasse sought religious and political freedom in South Australia; echoes of the Old Lutheran migration from a hundred years before.

As Monteath states in the introduction; the stories of soured British-German relationships and their ramifications in South Australia 'have been recorded

elsewhere’ (p.xvii), but this publication brings new perspectives to the record. We see the internment camps from the point of view of those who sought to be occupants and the world wars through those whose loyalties were torn. The final chapters depict a wide variety of responses to British-German war, from new arrivals, descendants of early immigrants, those who sought to assist people to reach South Australia and those who sought to leave. This compilation succeeds in its endeavour to give voice to ‘other Germans, who made their way to the Antipodes, settlers and travellers from quite different backgrounds and driven by a multitude of reasons’ (p.xi), who arrived here in the infant years of the colony and continue to arrive up to the present day. In this year, the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of South Australia as a place of migration, it is timely to remind ourselves that we have just twenty-five years to gather a multitude of voices in publications such as this, in order to more clearly depict this land and its inhabitants before its bicentennial.

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