



TOP *The City Mill, West Terrace.*
Drawing by F. R. Nixon.

CENTRE *Hagen Arms Hotel, Echunga, 1848.*

ABOVE *Struan, first stage, 1848.*

Gaywood's garden in Currie Street had produced raw cotton. It had also been a good season for the olive 'truncheons' obtained from Marseilles by the South Australia Company and struck in Bailey's garden at Hackney. By that December they were flourishing. A Dr Everard grew mulberries which 'were the largest ever seen'; Duffield was selling Jacob Hagen's wine at 42s a dozen and even tobacco had been grown in some quantity.²¹⁴⁻²¹⁷

The year previously the Agricultural and Horticultural Society decided to merge with the Agricultural Society and to hold a joint show the following September, despite the swarming locusts which had claimed much of the produce of the North Adelaide gardens.^{218, 219}

An Art Show was held in the Council Chamber in conjunction with the Agricultural Show of February 1847. This was so successful that it was decided to establish a Colonial Art Society at the end of the year. In February a Monsieur Boursal had written from Sydney to say that he could advise vinegrowers if his advice would help. The Botanic Gardens was no longer a sponsored institution by then, since from March 1842 it was advertised each year for rent; but possibly J. Bailey continued there as a tenant. Although the Mechanics' Institute had slipped into a coma temporarily, Adelaide's cultural life continued without official sponsorship. In May 1846 Menge announced that he would winter in Adelaide, and while there he would lecture in Chinese, Hebrew, German, French, Latin, Greek, Italian, Arabic, Persian and Turkish. For his lectures a voluntary emolument would be acceptable. These lectures were also announced the following winter.²²⁰⁻²²³

In April 1846, Jacob Pitman, obviously wishing to share in the success of his brother Isaac, the inventor of shorthand, offered to hold classes himself for a fee.²²⁴

During this period men's minds were being forced to recognize the antiquity of their civilization, with the millennia rolled back to before the advent of classical Greece and Rome. It is illuminating to find that the Press of the day was so outward looking, perhaps because its journalists and readers were still Europeans living in Australia. The discoveries at Nineveh, for example, were very fully reported.²²⁵

But not all recreational activity was serious. Herring, who conducted a dancing class, was by 1846 the licensee of the Union Inn. This tavern had an underground room of 40 ft x 14 ft in which a dinner was held. Here, Phillip Lee, who had had a tea room at the Pavilion Cottage and was subsequently landlord of the Southern Cross Hotel, conducted his orchestra for dancing. This underground room was, at other times, a wine store and malt house. Phillip Lee, who many years earlier had been a singer of Italian opera in London, lived in East Terrace at this time, where he indicated he would be pleased to take a few pupils. These were portents of an uplift in public morale.²²⁶⁻²²⁸

In October 1845 a letter from Mortz Mendel advised friends in Mecklenberg 'do not bring goods for resale—everything is plentiful here'. Indeed, as an example, a full-size slate table had been made for the Sturt Hotel, previously Fordhams, in Grenfell Street, now replanned and improved by James and Thomas for Joseph Barnett. This provided the venue for many formal occasions, such as the Shoemakers, who banded together under the protection of St Crispin and held their dinner in October that year. By December funds had been procured for a grandstand which had been erected at the race-course.²²⁹⁻²³¹

A new room for North Adelaide Masons was built at the Albert by December 1846 and in February 1847 Jacobs' first monthly ball was held at the Temple Tavern; in December 1847 J. L. Jacobs opened a dancing class in the Wiltshire Rooms in Rundle Street. To counterbalance this frivolity, G. W. Cole attended the inaugural meeting of the Total Abstinence Society as its Secretary.²³²⁻²³⁵

But amidst all this prosperity the misery in London was remembered. In St Pancras alone, 10,000 out of a population of 130,000 were without work. For them the South Australia British Destitution Relief Fund was established.²³⁶

In July 1847 sufficient money and interest were available to open the Mechanics' Institute at Hindmarsh, in their 'Town Hall'. To own such a building was a real advance.²³⁷

Bierbaum File No 7023-10249
See HB file 10249

STRUAN HOUSE

(Struan House)

Roberston's Homestead near Naracoorte (Classified)

First Homestead 1847

Second Homestead 1861

Third Homestead 1975

Third Homestead Architects : W.T. Gore (Naracoorte) and G. Pannell
(Supervision) Mt. Gambier

Contractors : Henry Smith & Thos. Agar - Naracoorte

Plastering : T. Campbell - Naracoorte

Masonry : Goss & Hosking - Naracoorte

Painting : Mr. Robbie - Penola

Gardening : Robert Brewster



First Mosquito Plains Homestead

When John Robertson first took up the Mosquito Plains Run, he was one of the earliest to make claim to the area about today's Naracoorte—perhaps the earliest, though the records are not clear. His holding allowed him the advantages of the dry dunes running back to the Caves Range, the pleasant Mosquito Creek, one of the very few watercourses to flow through the region and the green, swampy treeless Mosquito Plains themselves. He chose a site for his first home near the creek, with the rising land behind him. It was a small, simple cottage, built of timber with a shingle roof and soon outgrew its usefulness. Perhaps out of sentiment, or maybe sensible frugality, it stood for many years, serving as a wash house, it is said, before it was finally pulled down.

It belonged to the early days of settlement, when a little town was growing up ten or so miles away and the empty land was filling with hopeful settlers who brought in the sheep and cattle which were the beginnings of the industry which has sustained the economy of the area to the present. A feeling of community was growing and the first move to organize social events, competitions and so on, began. The little house opened its doors to travelling missionaries, among whom was almost certainly Father Julian Tenison Wood and saw too, the sad remnants of the aboriginal tribes fade out in apathetic degradation.

It was a symbol of the first farming of the wet, bird-thronged wilderness and of Robertson's claim to a new style of life in this waiting land.

Second Mosquito Plains Homestead

With marriage came a family and the hut was no longer enough. A fine house was built on the slope above the creek, with a magnificent outlook across the plains. Built of stone, still simple and unpretentious in character, it yet took on some of the refinements of a changing society. It is truly colonial Australia, with its surrounding verandah under a subtly pitched roof and its arched doorways with their graceful fan lights. The house was not large, but pleasant and comfortable and must have seemed luxury indeed after the restrictions of the hut. Here was a house for growing children, for neighbours and friends like Dugald McCalman, the Presbyterian minister from Robertson's own Highlands, or Park Laurie, his effervescent, impulsive friend with whom he shared many a card game—and they say, exchanged near as many blows in con-

sequence, for they were both hot-headed over trifles, though the arguments were quickly forgotten.

Life was easier now. The town could supply many of the needs of life, or the services and labour the prospering station required. Stores were still transported by bullock dray from the coast and the records of the property show that many a man, employed to plough or dig or build, took home a large part of his wages in tea and flour and tobacco.

John and Susan Robertson lived most of their married life in this house. In later years it must have become crowded and plans and schemes for the new house must have overshadowed it as their wealth and family both grew.

from Picbaum file 7023-10249. see HB file
10249.



Second Mosquito Plains Homestead



JOHN ROBERTSON.

HERE was a time when John Robertson, of Struan, was as well known as the South East itself. Before the township of Naracoorte was established he was designated an "old settler" in the district. William Mac Intosh, the founder of Naracoorte, discovered him there when he came on the scene in July, 1845, at which time the locality was known as Robertson's Plains, and to this day there is a Hundred of Robertson keeping green the memory of a really notable pastoralist. He was then known as "Poor Man Robertson." For what reason it is difficult to say after this lapse of time, but beyond doubt is the fact that he lived down the sobriquet. By industry, thrift and patience the squire of Struan built up one of the largest estates in the colony, and proved himself one of the most open-handed men ever associated with broad acres and livestock.

John Robertson was born in Invernesshire, Scotland, in 1809. At the age of 29 years he left Oban in the ship Saint George for Sydney.

where anchor was dropped in November, 1838. Ordinary business pursuits were followed for more than a year in different parts of New South Wales, and then a move was made to Melbourne. Shortly afterwards Mr. Robertson took up Struan Station on the Wannon River, Victoria, where a year or two was spent, and then in company with his brother William, late of Wando Vale, he crossed to South Australia in search of good land. He discovered the Mosquito Creek run, which was leased from the Government in 1843, and afterwards bought leases of several other properties, including Warrattenbullie and Elderslie, the latter being on the Victorian side of the border and immediately adjoining the South Australian estate. Woodford Station, on the Glenelg River, and large properties in Portland, were also acquired. John Gall, father of Joseph Gall, of Cantara Station, was manager at Wando Vale, Struan on the Wannon, and Warrattenbullie in turn and retired from the service of the

Robertsons in 1862, to enter the pastoral industry on his own account. At one time the properties extended uninterruptedly for at least 30 miles, and embraced nearly 100,000 acres of freehold country, 20,000 acres of scrub lands leased from the Governments of the two colonies, and 6,000 or 7,000 acres of forest reserves and education leases. In the heyday of their history about 100,000 sheep were shorn annually, besides which there was a considerable holding of cattle and horses. John Robertson took great delight in improving his flocks, and, according to a press writer in 1880, his income from sheep alone was in the region of £20 000 a year. The original Mosquito Creek run was 68 square miles in area, for which £752 16/ a year was paid in rent and assessment. The wool used to be shipped at Portland, necessitating a journey of 120 miles. The famous Naracoorte Caves were discovered on this run while a party were out searching for lost sheep. The whole of the leasehold part of

the station was resumed on March 12, 1868.

Elderslie Station, on the Victorian side, is now a soldier settlement, but it was in the hands of the Robertson Brothers for many years. It included 35,420 acres of freehold land, and carried 33,000 sheep, besides 1,400 cattle and a good many horses. Eventually William Robertson dissolved the partnership and bought Wando Vale Station, in the Casterton district, where he remained until his death. Another brother, Duncan, settled at Gringegalgona, in the Coleraine district. There was another William Robertson at Moy Hall Station. He was a cousin of the Struan people. Many years ago Moy Hall was described as the best station, for its size, north of Mount Gambier. It consisted of 20,000 acres of purchased land and a lot of scrub country, and it carried 20,000 sheep. The owner had seven brothers interested with him in pastoral properties in the Riverina, besides one on the border at Inglefield. The original area of Moy Hall was 68 miles, of which 51 miles was resumed in 1868, and £522 a year was paid in rent and assessment.

In 1875 John Robertson built at a cost of about £25,000 the ornate mansion known as Struan House, which was described as being more like an English nobleman's seat than a squatter's residence. Its doors were always open to travellers, especially in the pre-railway days. Judges going to the south-east on Circuit Court duty frequently used to stay there, and other distinguished guests were two Governors, Sir James Fergusson and Sir William Jervois. "The Advertiser" published the following account of the Struan house warming:—

"One of the largest (if not the largest) private parties ever given in the South-East, was that which assembled by invitation at the hospitable mansion of Mr. John Robertson, of Robertson's Plains, on Thursday evening, January 27, 1876. The occasion of it was the time-honored custom of warming the house, and all who chose to avail themselves of the invitation met with a hearty welcome. Notwithstanding the excessive heat which prevailed a large number of Mr. Robertson's friends and acquaintances availed themselves of the invitation, which embraced residents from all quarters of the South-East and not a few from the neighboring colony of Victoria. Altogether not fewer than 150 persons could have been present. It would be superfluous to say that everything that could be devised to make the visitors comfortable was brought into requisition, and the

energies of the household must have been taxed, so complete were the arrangements. Dancing was commenced a little before 10 o'clock and continued with unabated vigor until the wee sma' hours. One of the large drawing rooms was used for the purpose, and was filled throughout the night with merry revellers. The Naracoorte Brass Band discoursed its sweetest music—and excellent it was—on a raised platform by a half opened window. Supper was served in the spacious dining room upstairs in two sets. When the sumptuous repast had received the marked attentions of the assembly, the Rev. D. McCallman, in a few well chosen words, referred to the interesting character of the event which they were all celebrating, and to the exquisite taste that met the eye at every turn. He trusted that the hospitable proprietor would long live to enjoy the fruits of his industry and perseverance. The house was then duly christened Struan House, Struan being the head of the clan to which Mr. Robertson belongs. The reverend gentleman then proposed the health of Mr. and Mrs. Robertson and long life to them. The toast was enthusiastically drunk in bumpers of champagne and suitably responded to, after which dancing was resumed. On the following day a trip to the caves was organised for the benefit of such of the visitors who desired to remain and see them. The house is by far the largest in the south east, and will bear favorable comparison with anything in the colony. It is not yet completed, but when the contemplated additions and improvements are made to it, Struan House will be replete with every comfort and convenience which modern ingenuity can supply. The cost when finished will be about £25,000."

The opening of Moy Hall House in 1867 was marked by a less elaborate celebration, ending with a general kangaroo hunt. Everybody who had a horse was invited, and the slaughter was great. On that occasion John Robertson had a collarbone broken when his horse was killed under him. His generosity was remarkable, and he obeyed literally the Apostolic injunction, "Use hospitality towards one another without grudging." His house was open to poor and rich alike, and "the blessing of him that was ready to perish" was often upon his head. Until within a few weeks of his death four bullocks a week, besides a number of sheep, were killed at Struan to provide, without charge for those who were travelling or out of employment. That was in the old days when the journey between Adelaide and Melbourne was made by coach.

The construction of the railway changed it all. The authors of "Adam Lindsay Gordon and His Friends" make special reference to this splendid side of the Robertson character, and add: "Naturally this generous, frank-mannered family were extremely popular with everyone, especially with all who were poor or in trouble." The Struan and Moy Hall people were great supporters of horse racing and coursing, and Mr. David Mack says that the first coursing event in Australia was run on the Moy Hall estate, and that some of the most famous greyhounds Australia has seen are buried alongside Struan House, including Rodanthe (which won the Victoria Waterloo Cup twice,) Capri and Highthorn. Governor Fergusson went down to see one Moy Hall Cup run. John Robertson patronised mostly the South Eastern race meetings, and Mr. Mack recently published the following in his reminiscences:—"To show how popular were the Penola meetings, for years many Victorian owners brought their horses along, and I have vivid recollection of seeing Duke Montrose, owned by the late John Robertson, of Struan, being defeated in the Penola Handicap, of two miles, by the late Tom Fergusson's Melisia. Mr. Robertson, who kept many horses at Struan, would not hear of the Duke's defeat, and when the post had been reached, and his horse outpaced, he gave a sarcastic bystander a smack across the shoulders with his riding whip; but the squire of Struan, regretting his impulsive act, sent along a handsome cheque to Charlie Drake a few days later. An imported horse named Frank stood at Struan at the time, and he got a few good winners."

John Robertson died on March 31, 1880, at the age of 71 years, and his tomb is on the hillside near Struan House. The township of Naracoorte was deserted during the hour of his funeral, all business places being closed. The bell of the Presbyterian Church was tolled. He was one of the founders of the church, and he and his cousin William gave £700 to help extinguish its debt. The "Naracoorte Herald" published a beautiful poem about John Robertson when he died, including these lines:—

Glory for that poor pulseless heart
that now lies cold in death,
In life throbbed only with one
impulse—truth and right;
So shall we know he gained with his
last breath
The realms of constant light.

The Hon. W. Shiels, Premier of Victoria in 1892-3, married a daughter of John Robertson. Mrs. May Pender, of Naracoorte, is another daughter, and the "Stock & Station Journal" is indebted to her for the portrait reproduced with this sketch.



FILM 60
NO 4

2ND HOMESTEAD STRUAN HOUSE
(ROBERTSON FARM) FROM WEST

10249

NARACOORTE
23-2-79