

*Generosity of Spirit*

Sculpture Stories

May 2023

Penola Town Square  
South Australia



# Generosity of Spirit Sculpture Stories

May, 2023

As part of the fundraising strategy for the Generosity of Spirit Sculpture, we received donations from donors who wished to pay tribute to a local woman or a group of women. These are named on the base of the Sculpture along with donors who were Major Benefactors.

Many of the donors who wished to pay tribute to a local woman or a group of women also wished to submit stories to share the lives of these local women and women's group. The list of these women and groups of women is followed by their stories.

The stories have been written by family or community members. These stories are a snapshot of women's life in our community from the 1840s through to present day. These stories are a gift to our community and will become part of our written history which celebrates the women who have contributed to making Penola and Coonawarra the community it is today.

## **Donors wish to pay tribute to the following women & contribute stories:**

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## **Donors wish to pay tribute to the following groups of women & contribute stories:**

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# Annie Brice

*Written by Aunty Michelle Jacquelin-Furr*

Annie Brice is our Boandik Ancestor, my great grandmother. She was born about 1849 at an aboriginal campsite at Pina Ngula (Penola), South Australia. Her mother was a full blood Boandik woman, Natunda from Berrin (Mount Gambier) and her father a freed convict from Van Dieman's land who worked at the Cameron sheep station.

Annie was taught to read and write on the Cameron station when Alexander Cameron's niece from Melbourne, Mary MacKillop, came to Penola in 1860 to become the governess to her cousins. Annie was encouraged to join the children and Mary in the classroom.

Annie grew up seeing her traditional way of life being eroded by the introduction of white man's way of life, policies and laws. Colonisation had an enormous impact on Annie's life but she survived – an advocate for aboriginal people.

She lived in the Pina Ngula, Berrin area all her life. She worked as a servant for prominent people and businesses of the district – Dr Wehl in Mount Gambier, Christina Smith, protector of Aborigines, Susan Barratt proprietor of the Temperance Hotel in Mount Gambier. She was a single mother of thirteen children for most of her life and married twice in her lifetime. She was a fighter. A proud aboriginal woman who stood up for her children and their families and the Boandik people.

She is recognised today as one of the Apical Ancestors of the Traditional Owners of Country and First Nations people of the Boandik – Aunty Annie Brice.

The donations have been made by descendants of the Jacquelin and Holmes families. She married Emile Francois Jacquelin in 1879 and in 1894 George David Holmes.

Her biography appears in The Australian Dictionary of Biography under Indigenous Australians

<https://ia.anu.edu.au/biography/brice-annie-29707>



Annie Brice, on far right,  
Christina Smith in  
centre, c.1869

*State Library of South  
Australia, b20313111*

# Annette Balnaves

Annette was born in Adelaide on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1940, the eldest daughter of Bette and David Walker. After the Second World War, the Walker family moved to Penola where her father was in charge of the Soldier Settlement Scheme for the South East of South Australia.

When the scheme was completed the Walker family moved to Kalangadoo, where David Walker had been allotted a property named Heathermere. Annette attended the Kalangadoo Primary School and then the Penola Area School



before completing her Secondary education in Adelaide. She then moved to Melbourne where she was able to fulfil a long-held ambition and enrolled in nursing. As the age for admittance to nursing differed in each state she was too young to enroll in South Australia, hence the move to Melbourne where she qualified as a State Registered Nurse. This qualification was followed by gaining a qualification as a Midwife and Annette became a Double Certificate Nurse. Further studies involved a post graduate study in gynaecology at the Royal Women's Hospital where she worked under Matron Vivian Bullwinkle. Whilst in Melbourne working as a Senior Theatre Nurse in Emergency, Annette worked with the famous Second World War Doctor, Weary Dunlop.

In 1963, at the age of 23 Annette left Australia to travel to South Africa and work in Johannesburg as a Private nurse and as a Midwife. It was here that she encountered her first experience with apartheid. From Johannesburg Annette travelled to what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where she worked in a hospital in the small town of Sonola. This was a very enjoyable time where she met many locals and while staying as a guest with friends, also met another guest Ian Smith, who a year later would become the Prime Minister. From Zimbabwe Annette

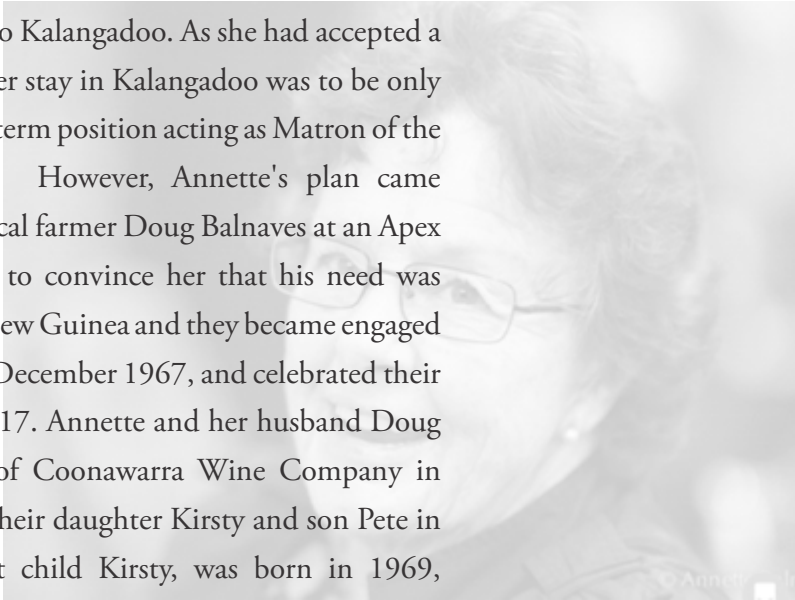
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Generosity of Spirit

travelled by steamer up the coast of East Africa past Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya through the Red Sea and Suez Canal before disembarking at Port Said. From Port Said she went to Cairo and then Jerusalem. After hitchhiking to Kuwait she discovered that she had very little money left and was fortunately able to sell her blood to an American hospital. She took a flight to Athens then onto London, and back to Australia, where she returned home to Kalangadoo. As she had accepted a position in New Guinea her stay in Kalangadoo was to be only brief. She took on a short-term position acting as Matron of the Penola District Hospital. However, Annette's plan came unstuck when she met a local farmer Doug Balnaves at an Apex Cabaret. Doug was able to convince her that his need was greater than the whole of New Guinea and they became engaged six weeks later, married in December 1967, and celebrated their 50 years of marriage in 2017. Annette and her husband Doug established the Balnaves of Coonawarra Wine Company in 1988 and were joined by their daughter Kirsty and son Pete in 1990. The couple's first child Kirsty, was born in 1969, followed by Pete who was born in 1970. Annette acted as Secretary of the kindergarten for several years, and later as Secretary of the Penola Pony Club. She was appointed the first Executive Officer of the Coonawarra Vignerons, and in 1996 became President of the South East Regional Tourism Association. Her enthusiastic efforts for tourism led to her being presented with the Harry Dowling Award for 'An Outstanding Contribution'.

Annette was a member of the South East Regional Development Board for several years and was a member of the Management Committee of Tandara Lodge, and a founding Board member of the Stand Like Stone Foundation, which led to the establishment of the Coonawarra/Penola Fund.

Annette was an enthusiastic and very talented photographer. Her love for the district is captured in many photographs and cards of the district. Although deeply involved in numerous bodies, Annette was a passionate Penolaite, strongly supported Doug in his community activities and played a vital in the establishment and operation of the family company. Annette died after a brief illness on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018.



# Jane Balnaves

Jane Balnaves (born Paisley, Scotland in 1817) and Robert Balnaves (born Paisley in 1815) were married in 1835. They arrived in Port Adelaide in 1855 bringing with them their three children Anne, Allison, and David.

Paisley was the centre of Hand Loom Weaving and at its peak there were 4000 such looms operating in the city. Jane and Robert had been Hand Loom Weavers and had come from families of Weavers. The arrival of the Industrial Revolution brought mechanisation to the weaving industry and brought about the rapid decline of the Hand Loom Weavers trade which consequently led to a great many people being unemployed. The effects of the Industrial



Studio Portrait of Jane Balnaves

Revolution, and the effects of the cruel Highland Clearances, plus the large numbers of Irish migrants desperately escaping horrors of the Irish famine, led to a situation of extreme poverty in Paisley and Glasgow. By 1844 Robert was listed in the Poor Records and although not young, the family was able to take advantage of a system of assisted passages and join 336 other adult emigrants and 92 children to make their trip to Australia aboard the Bucephalus, a ship weighing 1245 tons.

They arrived at Port Adelaide in October 1855 after an arduous four-month journey from Scotland to Australia. Records show that many of these immigrant ships provided quite appalling conditions for the immigrants and numbers of deaths as high as 15% occurred. It appears that the Bucephalus was a comparatively good ship and only four deaths were recorded.

By 1858 Jane had been able to establish a General Store in  
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Penola. This store gained an excellent reputation and as at that time Penola was the largest settlement in the South East of the State, customers travelled long distances to come to the town. Penola was certainly a frontier settlement in the 1850s and 1860s. Criminals escaping the law in the State of nearby Victoria found it very easy to cross into the State of South Australia and this practice led to an element of lawlessness in the district.

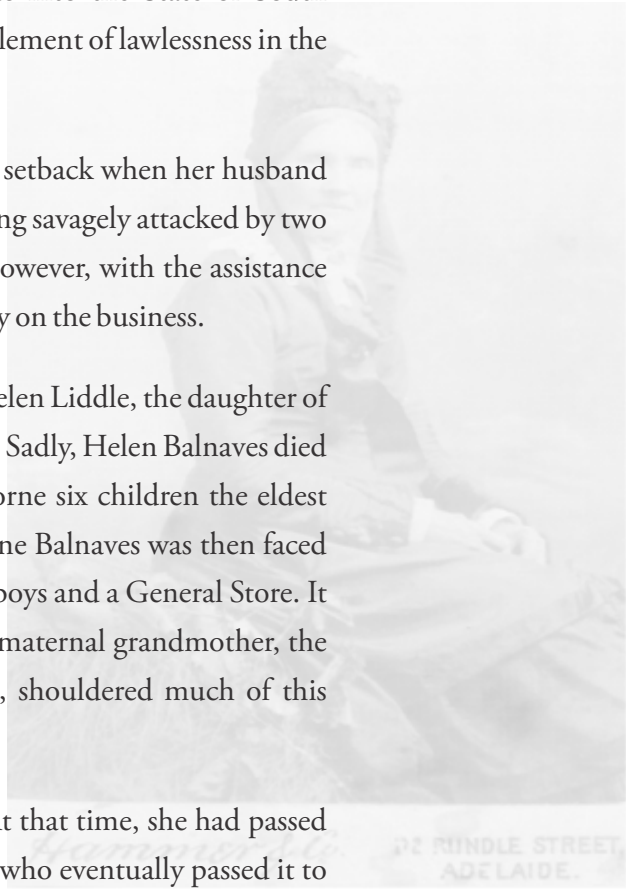
In 1862 Jane's life suffered a serious setback when her husband Robert died at the age of 47 after being savagely attacked by two men who were robbing the store. However, with the assistance of her son David, she was able to carry on the business.

In 1866 Jane's son David married Helen Liddle, the daughter of fellow Scots Helen and Peter Liddell. Sadly, Helen Balnaves died in 1877 at the age of 27, having borne six children the eldest being Robert who was aged nine. Jane Balnaves was then faced with the responsibility of six young boys and a General Store. It was indeed fortunate that the boys' maternal grandmother, the remarkable Helen Liddle (Granny), shouldered much of this responsibility.

Jane Balnaves died in May 1897. At that time, she had passed the General Store to her son David, who eventually passed it to three of his sons. It is interesting to note that in 2023, 165 years after Jane established her store, a direct descendant of Jane still owns a Balnaves store in Penola.

On reaching adulthood, the grandsons of Jane and Robert Balnaves, Robert, Peter, David, William Edward and John, all played significant roles in the Penola community.

As with many of her fellow immigrants from Scotland, Jane was a very strong supporter of the Penola Presbyterian Church and her grandsons continue this support.



# Evelynne Bowden

Born Evelynne Grace Mathison in Millicent on 23rd September 1936, the third of seven children.

Evelynne spent her childhood at 'Murtonga', a farm situated towards Mt Hope and between Rendelsham and Hatherleigh, and spent most Christmas holidays at Southend. She loved being on the farm and enjoyed feeding the calves, helping in the sheep yards, looking after the chickens and catching rabbits with ferrets!



Evelynne in the History Room, 2023

She started school at Rendelsham at the age of six and remembers that the Mathison children were sometimes late for school due to having to ride their bikes four and a half miles there and back each day, and having to deal with varied weather conditions. Her claim to fame at Primary School was when she tied with the Headmaster's son for top in Grade four.

At the age of 13 she attended Millicent High School where playing tennis and basketball was a highlight, however she had an 'intense dislike' at the time for Home Science. Schooling was completed after she passed the Intermediate (third year) exam in English, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Typing and Home Science. She was offered a job as a Telephonist at the Millicent Telephone Exchange where she remained for the next seven years. She moved to Penola following her marriage, the town that she loves.

Evelynne loved dancing which was the main entertainment in those days and didn't miss too many Saturday night dances at the Rendelsham and other local halls. Ballroom dances at Penola were also popular. She also loved and was very good at tennis, playing until she was in her early 80's.



In 1974, while at this time continuing as a Cub/Scout Leader, she was accepted for the position of Laboratory Assistant at the Penola High School, which she held for 9 years. She then became the School Community Library Assistant and undertook the Library Technician Associate Diploma course with the Adelaide College of TAFE. She received her diploma in 1987. Evelynne worked alongside Barbara Smith and Jan Marcus at the Penola School Community Library from 1983 until 1998. In 1988 she decided that she needed another challenge and began and completed the Year 12 SAS English with Marg Muller. Helping to set up the Local History Collection became her next and most satisfying interest, and this is ongoing.

Evelynne received Life Memberships for her involvement with the Penola Tennis Club and the Penola & District Tennis Association. She served as Secretary of the Penola 150th Celebrations and the John Riddoch District Interpretive Centre Task Force. She also received a Certificate of Appreciation for work on commemorating Police Tracker Alf Ryan, prepared a chronology of events from the National Trust Minute books for the 50th anniversary celebration and later, received National Trust SA Distinguished Service Award for 15 years as Secretary, and the Premier's award for outstanding volunteer service. All through her life she has practiced her mother's mantra, "If a job is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well".

She has three children, 9 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren all of whom adore her. She is also equally adored by her brothers, her nieces and nephews and their children, and her friends. She places great importance on family and keeping in touch, and has also put together an extensive family tree. Evelynne is the glue that holds everyone together.

At the age of 86 (in 2023) she is still involved in the National Trust and managing the Local History Collection, and has lately taken up playing croquet. And when she is not working to help the local community, you will find Evelynne in her wonderful garden – a place she created and a place in which she finds great joy.



Generosity of Spirit

# Chris Dunn

Christobel Dunn, (known as Chris), arrived in Penola with her husband, Dr John Dunn, in 1954. Born in 1924, she grew up in the Adelaide Hills. She was a teenager when her father was killed in the 1942 bombing of Darwin, so she soon developed lifelong habits of thriftiness and hard work. After initial work in botany at the Waite Institute, she studied Social Science at Adelaide University and worked as a social worker with the Red Cross in Queensland.

Chris was a woman of indomitable spirit with a no-nonsense attitude. She was always busy. She assisted her hardworking husband, reared six



Chris Dunn, fourth from right at a National Trust working bee at Ulva Cottage.

children, and supported many local organisations. The Hospital Auxiliary was the first. She made curtains and tray cloths for the new hospital, and helped out at the annual Fete. In recognition of her involvement Chris received a badge for 30 years of service.

She supported the South East Medical Association with afternoon teas on the family side lawn and regularly accommodated aspiring General Practitioners over many years, as they did their rural placements. Chris became a Brownie Leader and spent many hours raising money for this important group. She provided leadership over thirteen years and grew the participation rate of local girls to the extent that two meetings were needed each week to accommodate the numbers. She was a leader in the development of the Ranger Group.

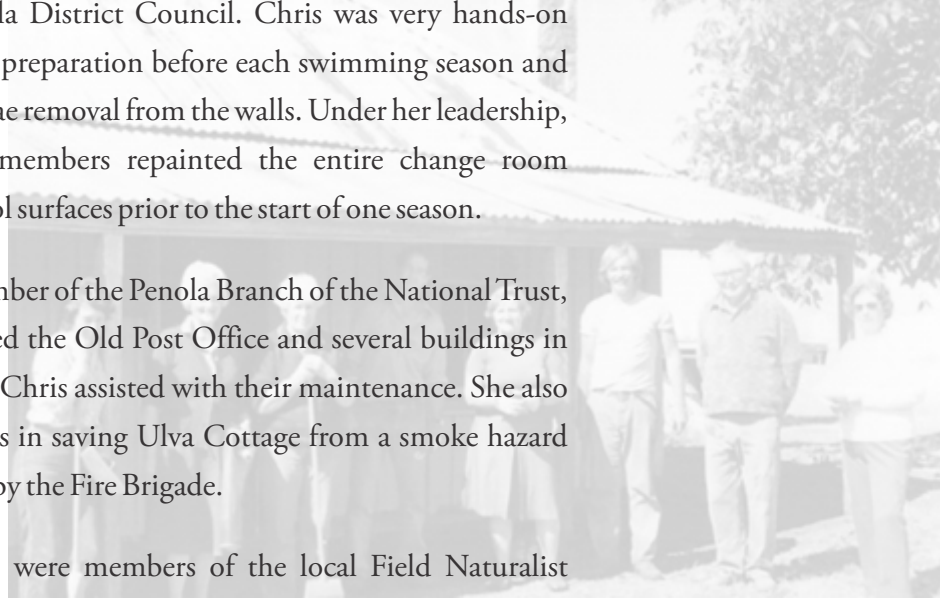
Chris helped with meal delivery for Meals-on-Wheels and she was an early supporter of the local kindergarten, as well as the Anglican Church Mothers Union. A bedroom in the family

home was dedicated to the storage of second-hand clothes. These were sold to raise funds for the local swimming pool and cricket club. The left-overs were stored in the family garage, which never quite housed the family car. These were sorted and on-sold to the local vigneron for machinery cleaning with proceeds to the kindergarten.

Chris was Secretary/Treasurer of the Swimming Pool Committee for several years. Her husband John was Patron of this venture which had an active committee of dedicated local people who built the swimming pool by hand using machinery loaned by Penola District Council. Chris was very hands-on during the pool preparation before each swimming season and assisted with algae removal from the walls. Under her leadership, various family members repainted the entire change room facilities and pool surfaces prior to the start of one season.

As an active member of the Penola Branch of the National Trust, (which purchased the Old Post Office and several buildings in Petticoat Lane), Chris assisted with their maintenance. She also supported others in saving Ulva Cottage from a smoke hazard practice session by the Fire Brigade.

Chris and John were members of the local Field Naturalist group and had a great interest in local flora and fauna. The provision of timely reports of club activities to the Penola Pennant was a regular challenge! Chris once disclosed that she and John had secretly planted two golden elm trees in the hospital grounds, as well as trees on the nature strip leading into town. In 1986 a large devoted and appreciative crowd attended the public farewell for the popular Dunn family in Rymill Hall.



# Kay Drabsch

(nee Collins, formerly Rogers)

Kay was born in Prospect, a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia on the 24th June 1939.

At four years of age, she arrived with her family in Nangwarry. She attended Nangwarry and Penola schools. Her first job was with a fuel company on Portland Street, Penola. She was a keen seamstress, making a new outfit nearly every week to wear to cricket to watch her father play in Adelaide.

Kay married John Rogers, and together they raised five children, David, Michael, Peter, Susan and Stephen. The family moved to Keith and lived on Brecon Station, and from there to the Keith township, where she became involved in supportive roles at the local school. Kay and John returned to Penola where they opened a hardware store in the main street. The shop now houses the bakery.

Kay was a lover of all genres of music and really enjoyed singing in the choir at Christmastime. Along with some other local women, Kay completed a palliative care course and made herself available to anyone in the town requiring assistance and support. Such was her caring nature. Her home was a Safe House for children who may have needed refuge walking to and from school. She also opened her home to a music teacher so that children could learn on her piano.

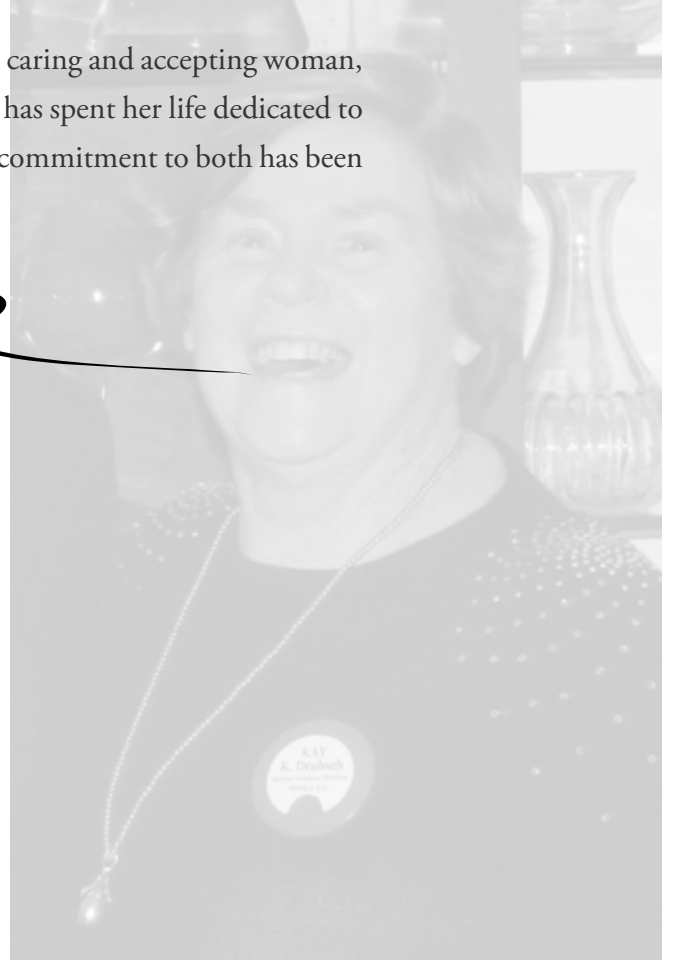
After her husband's death, Kay managed and ran the Penola Lifeline store, which was located on the norther side of the Town Square.



# Generosity of Spirit

Kay, along with her good friend Dorothy Mitchell, were invited by the Penola Lions Club to become their first female members. She was elected President during her long membership, and became the Greeter for the Club, which she held for the rest of her time as a member of Lions. She met Warren Drabsch through Lions and they married in March 2006. Kay was elected President of the Penola Combined Probus Club.

A larger than life, always positive, caring and accepting woman, Kay is loved by all in return. She has spent her life dedicated to her family and community. Her commitment to both has been exemplary.



# Judy Edwards

Judy was born October 3rd, 1935 to a farming family near Bordertown SA. She moved to the Penola district after marrying Jim Edwards where they lived on a sheep grazing property at Glenroy.

They had four children in the 60s, in between which Judy was heavily involved in the Penola Golf Club as Secretary, Captain and local A Grade champion several years running. In fact, she held the position each decade through to the 90s. She also loved tennis and hosted many Ladies' tennis days at her home.

Judy was a member of the school welfare club for many years and later became a volunteer in different capacities for Meals on Wheels, the Girl Guides and Daycare for the elderly at Penola Hospital.

In later years Jim and Judy enjoyed travelling around Australia riding bikes and making new friends where ever they went.

Judy was always known and loved for her quick wit and hilarious poems, her sense of fun and her good nature.

Judy always kept a beautiful garden while Jim grew the veggies. Being a farmer's wife Judy was also on hand to help out when needed; she cooked for hungry shearers, (no mean feat), drove tractors, carted hay and rounded up sheep.

Various Pommie jackaroos and visitors from all walks of life were also warmly welcomed into the family home. Judy's generous spirit and friendly nature made everyone feel right at home, as long as they drank black tea or Scotch!

Judy has had a happy and fulfilling life. Alongside her beloved husband she made many lifelong friends in Penola and embraced several aspects of the community.



# Muriel Bethune

(Mac) Harris (nee McLeod)

7 June 1910 – 9 March 1997

Muriel Bethune McLeod was born at 'Lindsay Park', Angaston, South Australia, the third child of John (Jack) McLeod, the Quiet Stockman of *We of the Never Never*, and Naomi Lewis. After Naomi died in 1920 Muriel lived with her Aunt and Uncle Belling in Balaklava. In 1921 her uncle died and in 1924 her aunt also died, leaving her in the care of Grandmother Lewis.

In 1922 the Caledonian Society of Balaklava was formed and with her strong Scottish heritage Muriel joined, becoming an expert at Highland dancing as noted in the *History of Balaklava Caledonian Society*. Graduating from Balaklava High School as Dux of Leaving Class 1928, History Prize winner and House Captain of Ross House, she entered Adelaide Teachers College, where she asked to be called Mac since she really disliked her given name. Posted to Penola High School in 1932 as the Commercial teacher teaching shorthand, typing, book-keeping and economics, her fondest remembrance of that time was getting a 100% pass rate in her shorthand and typing class one year.

While playing tennis in the community, she met Kent Dunstan (KD) Harris, a Roseworthy Agricultural College graduate, who owned a property 'Boolara', 15 kilometres northeast near Comaum. They married on 25 May 1935 in Adelaide. Their children were Lachlan (Sandy) McLeod (b. 4 January 1937), Judy Dunstan (b. 23 June 1938), John McLeod (b. 14 May 1941) and Roger McLeod (b. 3 February 1947).

Mac Harris retained her enthusiasm for all things Scottish. She became a teacher of Highland Dancing in Penola, presided over the training of local debutantes when they 'came out' into society, and was a South-East dancing judge for many years at annual Highland



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gatherings. She also was the Secretary for the Penola Caledonian Society.

Other involvements in Penola community included:

- joining the Penola Players, performing in plays, at times being the prompt and later producer
- judging in many Shows as an expert in flower arranging
- being a steadfast Anglican, becoming organist at St. Cedd's Church in Coonawarra, and later worshipping at St. Mary's in Penola
- playing in and coaching netball teams
- playing tennis for Coonawarra and Penola into the 1950s
- playing croquet at the Penola Croquet Club
- assisting in many roles at the Area School, including Treasurer of the Welfare Club and returning to relief teaching.

In 1956 large-scale flooding inundated all the useful farming areas on 'Boolara'. KD obtained a consulting job with the SA Lands Department which provided a house in Julian Street, Penola, so he, Mac and Roger moved into town for four years. Mac became the office manager for Gambola, a motor company in Penola.

By 1964 KD had become master of Penola Masonic Lodge so Mac and he spent some years travelling for Lodge commitments and enjoying some holidays. During the mid-1960s KD developed an illness diagnosed as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and died in 1971. Mac stayed on 'Boolara' for 15 months until her house in Penola was built. She became the office manager for Hungerford Hill winery in Coonawarra, and in retirement, travelled often in company with another friend, Millie Chappell.

By 1990 suffering from Parkinson's Disease and arthritis in her hands, she had to give up playing croquet and travelling. Hospitalised in the early '90s, she remained in Penola Hospital until her death on 9 March 1997. Her funeral service was held in St Mary's, and a memorial plaque for her is located behind the church alongside one for her husband.

Mac Harris lived to see all her four children happily married and produce 10 grandchildren. As a child she had lived through the death of her mother and brother at an early age, closely followed by her uncle and aunt with whom she had been sent to live, yet these setbacks did not dampen her enthusiasm and energy for life. She moved on quietly, conscious of her own abilities and ready and willing to use them within the social fabric of Penola district.





# Lois Hodge (nee Miles)

Lois' childhood home was White Park, a property north of Naracoorte, from where she attended Morambro School on ponies with her three brothers.

Lois attended Presbyterian Ladies College, now Seymour College in Adelaide and fell in love with art, and painting became her constant companion. Following school, Lois was keen to go to Art School, but instead was encouraged to do nursing at the Adelaide Children's Hospital.

Returning to Naracoorte, Lois met and married her first husband Chris Hodge, with whom she had three children, two boys and a girl. Lois completed a nursing refresher course, and formalised her nursing studies in Adelaide, going on to work for many years at Mount Gambier and Naracoorte hospitals. Throughout Lois' nursing life, painting was a constant and she took every opportunity to pursue her passion.

In 1984, after a year spent in Western Australia, Lois and Chris separated and she returned to Penola. Once back in Penola, Lois - in her words - 'changed horses' at 50, and stopped nursing to pursue her long-held passion in art.

In 1985 Lois bought Penola's Local Images Gallery and moved into Oswald's Cottage, behind the Gallery. Taking a leap of faith, and with business workshops under her belt, Lois launched the Gallery with an exhibition of paintings she had done whilst living in WA. Lois soon developed a strong following of art supporters, enjoying years of hosting Sunday afternoon exhibition openings to raise the public profile of artists and the Gallery. The Gallery was a magnet for locals, visitors and artists to meet and enjoy art, with Lois often found painting in her beloved speciality of watercolours and pen and ink. Lois' generosity in sharing her knowledge through countless painting workshops over many years, and her passion for encouraging budding artists is



Lois in front of Local Images Gallery, Church Street, Penola 2022



Lois with one of her watercolour paintings 2022

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profound, and continues to this day.

In the early days, with her neighbours being a local real estate agent – and Lois keen to practise her drawing – she began sketching the houses that were for sale, gifting them to their new owners. Lois remains a passionate advocate for small businesses in Penola.

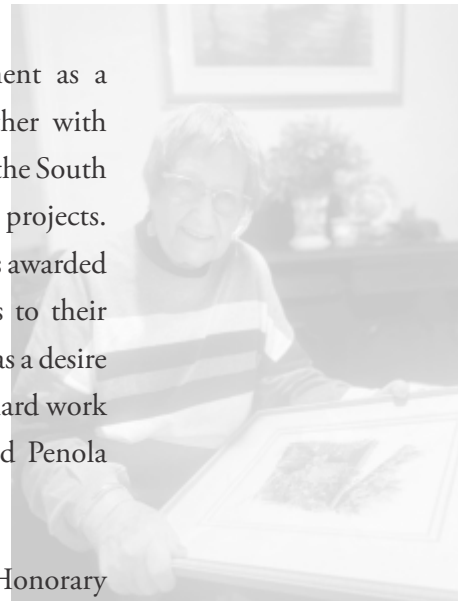
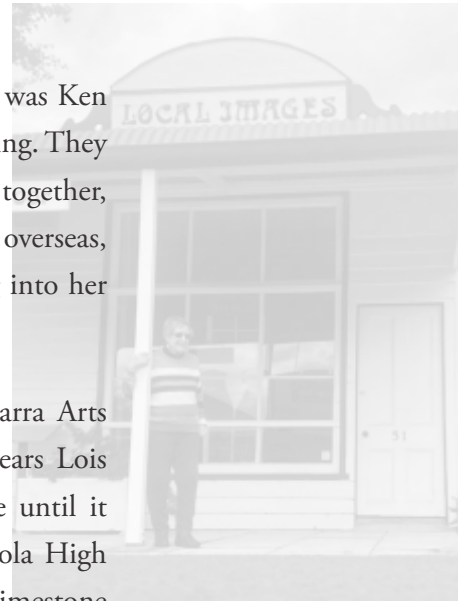
Lois declares the best thing that ever happened to her was Ken Skene walking into Local Images Gallery to buy a painting. They married in 1995 and enjoyed sixteen wonderful years together, until his passing. Together they travelled extensively overseas, visiting galleries, with Lois always integrating painting into her travels.

Lois was a founding member of the Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival which had its beginnings in 1992. For 19 years Lois hosted and curated the John Shaw Neilson Art Prize until it outgrew Local Images Gallery and moved to the Penola High School. Lois continues to be a generous Sponsor of the Limestone Coast Local Art Prize and has been an Arts Festival Committee member for over thirty years.

In the 1990s Lois spent six years in local government as a councillor on the Penola District Council and together with Annette Balnaves, was involved in promoting tourism in the South East, successfully applying for many grants for local projects. Through one of the grants in the 1990's the Council was awarded a facilitator to consult with the Penola community as to their wishes for the future of the town. One of the key ideas was a desire to create a Town Square, which after a lot of volunteer hard work came to fruition in 2021. In 2005 Lois was awarded Penola Citizen of the Year.

Today, Lois is a highly regarded and much-loved Honorary Member of the Arts Festival and regularly attends Committee meetings. Lois's kindness, sincerity and genuine interest in people and their connection to the arts is admired throughout the Limestone Coast.

Lois has made a deep and profound impact on so many lives in Penola. A beautiful soul, Lois is the embodiment of the Generosity of Spirit.



# Esma Johnson

Esma Beatrice Johnson (nee Whitten) was born on the 29th March, 1922 at Fairview Farm, which was part of the small farming community of Gowrie near Tamworth in NSW. Her parents were Beatrice and Percy Whitten. She was one of eight children. Her childhood was spent in a rather idyllic country setting, though it was hard work and times were tough on the land during the depression and later during the Second World War. Esma went to school in a small school house at Gowrie, which was about 7km from the farm. She rode her horse, Bobby, to school each day.

Esma left school at the end of grade seven and went to a 'tech' school to learn dressmaking and drafting, whilst also working on the farm. She was 20 years of age when she met a very handsome army man, named Joseph Johnson, at a dance in Tamworth. Joe was stationed near Tamworth during the war, but was originally from Narrogin in Western Australia. They married on the 16th January, 1943 after a 12-month courtship. As newlyweds they settled in the Tamworth district where they had their two sons, Tony in September 1945 and Steve in April 1947. They moved to Adelaide in mid-1948 and into their newly built house at Flinders Park in June 1949. Much to their surprise a daughter, Anne, arrived in September 1955.

Esma and Joe loved to travel and both had an adventurous spirit. Esma, Joe and Anne moved to Penola in 1964 for two years whilst Joe worked for the E&WS. They lived in an E&WS rental house in Julian Street East. Esma became an active member of the community whilst living in Penola and made



Esma with Joe 1965 in Mt Gambier

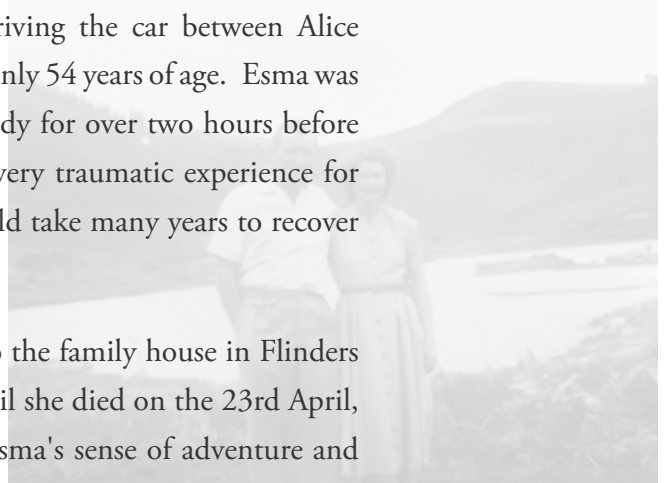


Esma aged 78  
in April, 2000

many lifelong friends. It was a very happy time of the family's life. In late 1966 they moved to Mt Tom Price in northern Western Australia, where Joe had secured a position in the new mine. Joe's health began to suffer in late 1968 and they decided to move back to Adelaide where he could receive better medical attention. Anne flew to Adelaide from Darwin to go to school, and Esma and Joe decided to have an adventure through central Australia on their way back to Adelaide. Unfortunately, Joe died of a heart attack whilst driving the car between Alice Springs and Ayres Rock. He was only 54 years of age. Esma was stranded in the car with Joe's body for over two hours before someone came along. It was a very traumatic experience for Esma and her children, and would take many years to recover from.

Esma and Anne settled back into the family house in Flinders Park, where Esma would live until she died on the 23rd April, 2001 from pancreatic cancer. Esma's sense of adventure and love of travel endured, as did her love of going to the movies, reading, cooking, gardening and tapestry. She was a fabulous jam maker, as well as always experimenting with different recipes. You never quite knew what she would come up with next! Esma was very active within the community and did Meals on Wheels for over 15 years and was a member of the Uniting Church and Fellowship Group at Flinders Park. Most of all she loved being with family and friends and was selfless in her love. She was always calm and gentle and her example instilled in her children the inner strength she had, as well as the ability to be loving, loyal, independent and self-respecting. Many people described Esma as being a 'beautiful woman', a 'real lady', and a 'generous soul'.

Although Esma only lived in Penola for two years, Penola never left Esma's heart. She loved to visit her Penola friends, and often visited with Anne. Esma was like many of the thousands of Penola expatriates who cherished the time they lived there and became the biggest promoters of the town and its people; so much so that Esma's daughter, Anne, moved permanently back to Penola in December 2007. Such was her love of Penola, Esma is now resting in peace in the Penola Cemetery.



# Granny Liddell

Helen Liddell (nee Wallace) was born in Bannockburn Scotland in 1829. She arrived in Portland with her husband Peter Liddell and daughter Helen on the ship Indian Ocean in 1854 after a very difficult four month sailing journey from Scotland. As with many other Scottish families who emigrated to Australia, they had left their homeland due to the very difficult times that then existed in Scotland. The overcrowding and poverty caused by the dreadful Highland Clearances, the Industrial Revolution and the influx of Irish folk fleeing the Irish Famine had made Scotland a very unpleasant country in which to live.

The family travelled to Penola to work for Mr Thomas Wells at what is now Yallum Estate. In 1866 their daughter Helen, born in Paisley Scotland in 1850, married David Balnaves, the son of Jane and Robert Balnaves who then operated the Balnaves General Store. Helen died in 1877 having borne six sons, the eldest Robert, being only nine years old. Their grandmother, Helen Liddell, took on the responsibility of rearing these young children, hence the title Granny. Apart from her active role as maternal grandmother to the six children, Granny Liddle was the midwife for many births in the district. She was presented with a special brooch by John Riddoch of Yallum following the birth of one of his children and was also the midwife at the birth of John Shaw Neilson, who became one of Australia's best known lyric poets.



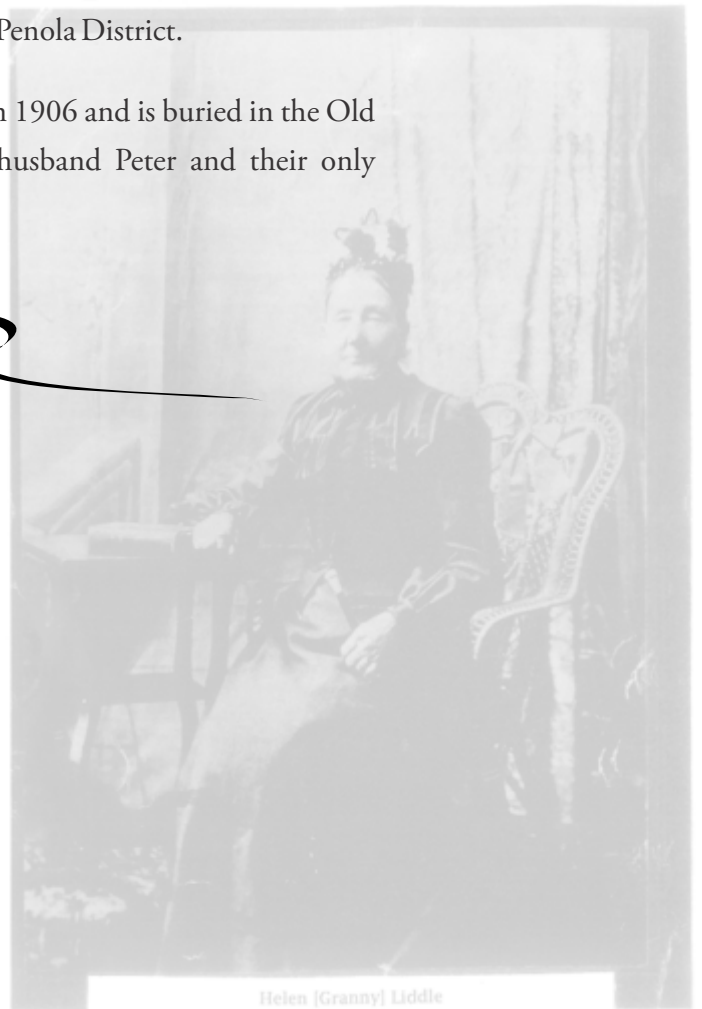
Helen [Granny] Liddle

The task of rearing the six young boys was probably made even more demanding when Robert Balnaves, husband of Jane Balnaves, who operated the Balnaves General Store, died as a result of injuries received when the store was robbed in 1862. This left Jane, the paternal grandmother, to own and run the store and to assist whenever possible with the care of the young boys.

In 1899, two of Granny's grandsons took over the Balnaves General Store. She became very involved in the management of the store and at one time, during some financial difficulties, actually assumed ownership of the business for three years.

She was a strong supporter of the Penola Presbyterian Church. Her grandsons Robert, Peter, David, William, Edward and John all played significant roles in the Penola District.

Granny Liddell died in Penola in 1906 and is buried in the Old Penola Cemetery next to her husband Peter and their only daughter Helen.



Helen (Granny) Liddle

# Amy Lynn (nee Webber)

28 August 1899 – 23 July 1980

Amy was the second of five daughters and was born at Penola on 28 August 1899. Her parents were Charlotte Mary Brodie and Thomas Arthur Webber, a gardener employed at Yallum in the days of John Riddoch.

A strong woman, at the age of seventeen she opened her own shop, 'A Webber Fruiterer and Confectioner', in Church Street Penola. Her little shop was filled with fresh fruit and vegetables gathered from her parents' fruit block at Coonawarra, now the site of Zema winery. The aroma of cakes and pastries filled the morning air, and the shelves were stocked with cool drinks, cordials and all kinds of confectionery.



Amy with the store in the background

Amy gave up her shop prior to her marriage to Roy Roennfeldt Lynn to take on a bigger challenge. Roy was the son of Daniel James Lynn a retired police constable. In 1911 Daniel purchased a store in Penola for his sons Roy and George who together with Amy established D J Lynn and Co, which became a large department store in Arthur Street Penola.

Amy and Roy married in August 1924 at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. She gave birth to two sons Roen Arthur in 1925 and Kenneth Roy in 1928. A dynamic and energetic woman not only bringing up two sons and working in the shop, she was also involved in community matters. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church, a Sunday School teacher and a choir member for many years.

From the age of twelve Amy began entering items in the local show, commencing with her school workbook and needlework

in 1911. She maintained her love of exhibiting for more than forty years with her make ups, cooking and cut flowers in the local Agricultural and Horticultural shows of the South East.

Amy was a foundation member of the CWA in Penola and the Bowling Club associates. She held several executive positions in both. After nine years as President of the Penola Area School welfare club, she was made a life member. For thirty years Amy was treasurer of the Penola Ladies Benevolent Society who supported those in need.

Amy was a keen gardener and her home next to D J Lynn and Co was well-regarded by many customers who stopped to stand and gaze in awe at the seasonal display in the front garden. Two fruit trees in the back garden were huge, prolifically bearing apricots and oranges.

Amy's son Roen worked with his parents in the store when he returned from WWII. Ken, her other son, was a nuclear scientist working in America and Canada.

Amy passed away in July 1980 and is buried in the new Penola Cemetery. Roy passed away in 1983 and is buried with Amy.

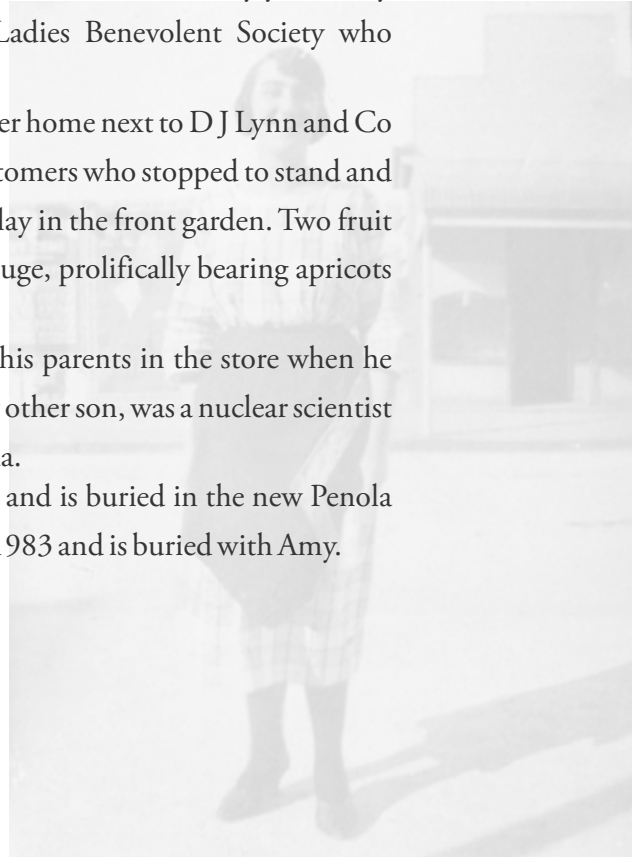
Descendants:

Ken, Roen

Caroline, Quentin, Virginia

4 Great grand children

3 Great grand children





# Margaret McKay

(nee Cameron) of Naaratum

## and her daughters

*Author Jane Whittle*

In common with so many pioneer women, Margaret (Cameron) McKay led a life characterised by hard work. Nine living children and helping her husband Donald develop their farming enterprise to over 3,000 acres by the time he died. Their property Naaratum was known for its hospitality – when Donald McKay raised the possibility of buying Yallum at a time when it sat vacant her response was “No, too much work.” She had enough on her hands with Naaratum.

She was born at Lochaber in 1847 and journeyed to Australia at 10 years old. The ship she travelled on for the Melbourne to Portland leg was involved in a collision with another ship, then there was a long overland journey to Sheoak Range. After her education, which included some tuition from St Mary MacKillop, she governessed at a number of Western District properties before marrying Donald McKay.

The children (2 boys and 7 girls) participated in farm work from an early age. Grace recalled picking up stones and feeding fowls and animals before starting school. Margaret kept order at the dinner table with a buggy whip, never actually used but the threat was effective.

Charles died in his twenties from tuberculosis, leaving a great deal of heavy work to his brother Alec.



Studio Portrait of Margaret McKay



Margaret with five of her daughters & Grace's fiancé, Harold Whittle

Anne, a quiet and retiring person born in 1872 ran the kitchen until her early death in 1928 from Bright's disease.

Marion, born in 1873, worked at governessing for a time, including in Marble Bar, WA, and then undertook household tasks and ran the kitchen after Anne died. She donated the land on which the McKay blacksmith shop had been located for a kindergarten and was a life member of the P.A. & H Society. She suffered from macular degeneration and by the time she died in 1965 was effectively blind.

Daisy (Margaret), born in 1875, became a highly respected and effective nurse. She nursed interstate and eventually returned to Penola to set up a hospital. She died in 1941.

Nellie, born in 1880, ran a small business in Penola with a friend, then took on the role of Postmistress at Blanchetown. She died of pneumonia in 1917 whilst still in this role.

Amy was born in 1884 and was also a highly respected and effective nurse. She also nursed at a number of locations interstate and returned to Penola to run a small hospital with Dr Curtis. She was a successful equestrienne at SE shows and was noted for her kind nature. She worked on Naaratum and died whilst assisting in shearing operations in 1952.

Grace, born in 1885, married Harold Whittle, a police officer. They moved around Northern Australia when he undertook work in Local Government after WW1, but she retained her interest in Naaratum, returning often with their 2 children, Mack and Gwen. She died in Queensland in 1955.

Lottie, born 1891, was well known as an equestrienne and undertook a governessing role at a relative's station (Arckeringa). This whetted her interest in outback Australia and she and friend Mags Nicker drove from Nickers' station to Darwin in 1929. This was quite a feat in those days of poor roads and unreliable cars. Lottie ended her days running Naaratum until her death in 1962.

Brother Alec had died in 1947, leaving the remaining sisters to manage Naaratum on their own.



Amy, Margaret's daughter

# Patricia Merrett

Patricia or Pat as she is more commonly known was born in Casterton on 31/12/1954. Pat was the third child in a large family of four sisters and one brother to Peter and Sydney (Tootie) McCann. Peter worked on the forest commission and Tootie was a cleaner for small business and domestic homes.

Pat attended primary and secondary school until 1970 after which she nursed at Casterton Hospital until she met Snow Merrett in 1970.

Snow and Pat quickly established a young family and moved to Poolajelo in 1975, mainly farming and contracting clearing of native scrub land to pasture for further farming.

Pat and Snow started a business in early 1985 venturing into the Forestry softwood sector in mobile post peeling which Pat administrated. The business slowly rolled along in the early days until 2001 when the first of several contracts were won.

Pat and Snow's business increased from a workforce of 6-10 employees to now in 2023 of over 100 employees directly employed in the surrounding area and districts.

Pat has always shown immense support to her family of three boys through all of their endeavours along the way which focused heavily on sport and speedway racing. Pat herself has a considerable interest in Football and has volunteered in the local Penola Footy club for well over 20 years which also seen her acknowledged with life membership in 2012.

Pat's involvement at business at a high level was recognized in 2018 with a nomination in the women in business awards for the local area.

Pat has always lived in the Penola area after moving here early in her 20s. She is a well- respected community member, loved by all who meet and get to know her.

Pat is the mother of three boys and has eleven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Her three boys are involved in the business along with three of her grandchildren.

# Alma Elisabeth Moore

(nee Case)

1914 - 1971.

Alma was born, raised and died at Penola. She was an amazing mother to seven boys, grandmother to 23 grandchildren, and wife to Harold. She had two sisters and two brothers. They lived on twenty-one acres of land on the Robe Road and very coincidentally, it is now owned by a great granddaughter.

Harold worked away a lot and served as a transport driver during the Second World War. This left Alma at home to keep the family, home, and farm together and a mighty job she did. Harold died in 1959, leaving Alma a widow who managed to keep the farm and her big flower and vegetable garden as well as supporting all her family. The boys were only in their early 20s and late teens when their father died.

'Nan' as she was affectionately known to family and many friends was a very generous lady.

She gave her time and energy to many community organisations as well as being the 'cook' at the Penola Drive-in canteen in her later years.

She was well known as an excellent home cook. The Penola Hospital fete would see Nan's little car very full with ten sponge cakes, which often were all sold before the stall opened, sausage rolls, jelly cakes, cream horns, brandy snaps, fruit and vegetables from her home garden as well as sewing and craft items. Nan sewed and knitted for all her family and also found time for craft projects.



Studio Portrait of  
Alma Moore

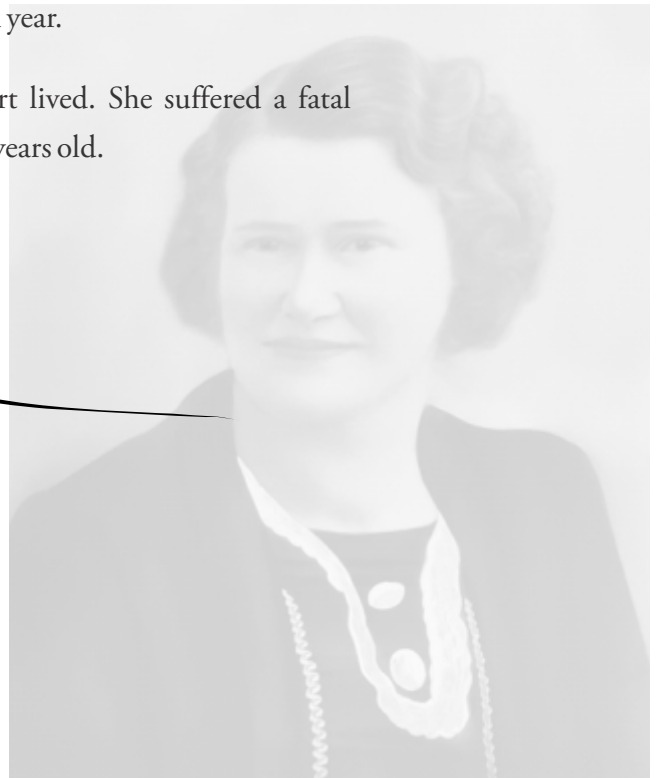
Generosity of Spirit

In earlier years, a horse and cart were the only means of transport. Nan harnessed and drove her horse, Dina, and cart to town for shopping every Friday and back again for church on Sundays. She played indoor bowls and tennis in later years.

Nan was an adventurous lady, travelling to New Zealand and New Guinea in the 1960s. Her fundraising organisations included Monbulla Area School, Penola Area School, Red Cross, the Anglican Church, the Penola Hospital Auxiliary, Monbulla Community and Recreation Centre, Monbulla Tennis Club, and the Penola Bowling Club. Nan purchased and wrapped all the 50 + Father Christmas gifts, and organized games and a Father Christmas each year.

Nan's life unfortunately was short lived. She suffered a fatal heart attack when she was only 57 years old.

Vale Alma Moore.



# Margaret Muller

Margaret was born in Dalby, Qld on the 29th June, 1946 to Eileen and Jim Henderson (both deceased) and is the sister of Chris Henderson (1952-2022).

She was educated in various Catholic schools in Qld, Tasmania and South Australia. She spent three years at Nuriootpa High School before completing her final two years as a boarder at Cabra Dominican College in Adelaide. She loved her boarding time especially her Year 12 group, all 16 of whom went on to university.

Margaret wanted to become a teacher. She enrolled at Adelaide

Teachers College and Adelaide University at the age of 16 and completed her Arts Degree at age 19 having majored in English and Music. She gained her Diploma in Teaching (Sec) at ATC and her A.Mus.A (piano) at the Conservatorium in her fourth year as well as being on the SRC as Societies Secretary.

Her first teaching appointment was in 1967 to Murray Bridge High School, during which time she became engaged to Peter Muller. The following year she transferred to Naracoorte High School and they were married in May 1968.

She loved teaching English and working with adolescents. This she did for three years before the birth of her two children, Mark and Kate, who were both born in Naracoorte.

In 1974, Margaret moved to Germany with her family for 15 months, as Peter had been offered the opportunity to teach at the Gladbeck Gymnasium in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Upon their return to Australia, they settled in Salisbury Park, where Margaret returned to teaching Matric English at Elizabeth TAFE to a "fabulous adult evening class". Her two children began their formal schooling during this time.

In 1982, the family moved to Penola, where Margaret was



Margaret Muller  
at the Mary MacKillop  
Interpretive Centre,  
2023

appointed as the English Senior and Peter as the Principal. Both children attended Penola Primary and Penola High School before completing their schooling at Timbertop and Geelong Grammar. Mark graduated with degrees in Arts and Journalism from Adelaide and Kate graduated with an Arts Degree from the University of New England.

1983 was a difficult school year following the Ash Wednesday Fires and Margaret fostered with all staff the importance of enhancing the caring relationship that should exist between teacher and students.

From her youngest Year 12 student ... "few people we meet help shape our futures...you were one of those people for me, I finished medicine in 1988 and gained my fellowship to The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in 1996...thank you." Carmel Swiggs.

From her oldest Year 12 student... "for me, English became a joyous obsession." Dr Ron Jarvis.

Margaret's skill as a classroom teacher, her expertise in English and with the respect of her peers, allowed her to exercise her skills as a State Moderator for Year 12 English. She enjoyed her school and state roles for the 19 years she taught at Penola High School.

During this time she also engaged in another passion before she retired in 2000, namely, the Mary MacKillop Penola Interpretive Centre. Here she wrote the text for all the exhibitions in the MacKillop Gallery, the Woods Gallery, the Schoolhouse and the Cameron Home.

At the same time, she was a foundation member of the Penola Arts Festival, responsible for the Writers' Workshops and the Max Harris Literary Awards. She was also guest speaker at many venues including the Adelaide Club, editor of numerous publications and author of Father Paul Gardiner's 'A Long Journey'. He was the postulator of Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop.

Margaret was recognised for her contributions by her community when she received Penola's Australia Day Citizen of the Year Award for 2020.

Margaret loves living in Penola, which she describes as a vibrant, multi-faceted, fascinating community in which 'the people are woven from gold.'



Generosity of Spirit



# Gladys Edith Rymill

(nee Hood)

As Australia emerged from the Second World War, reclaiming its hope and optimism for the future, so too emerged the national inclination towards joy, hope and hospitality.

At the heart of the cause in Penola, was Mrs Gladys Edith Rymill.

Dressed in a patterned cotton dress with full skirt and winged glasses, Gladys embodied the quintessential country hostess; entertaining the many and varied frequenters of Penola Station with charm, wit, grace and good humour.

Long before the networking trend, Gladys established the “Penola Younger Set”...a social outlet for the region's next gen, with annual balls, paddock picnics and fetes still lauded and fondly remembered by her contemporaries.

Decades after her passing, Gladys's joie de vivre remains one of her most endearing charms, along with her capacity for “giving her all” to her beloved community of Penola.

The daughter of a mounted policeman and a deputy-matron mother, Gladys was born at Pinnaroo in 1915.

The family, including a younger sister, Joan, moved to Naracoorte to be near family after the passing of her father when she was just four.

She finished her schooling there and worked as a bookkeeper and a clerk at Balnaves General Store in Penola, before completing her nursing training in 1938.



Gladys Rymill with her husband Robert



A year earlier, she wed the pastoralist and Captain 11th Division of the Light Horse, Robert Rymill of Penola Station, but the marriage was kept under wraps until she finished her studies.

The couple built the current Penola Station Homestead after a fire destroyed the original, and set about planting trees and establishing an expansive garden – a lifelong passion for them both.

Two “war babies” and one post-war baby were born to them; Susan and Robert, and Thomas.

Susan lays claim to being the first baby born in the old Penola Hospital, of which Gladys was instrumental in establishing in the town through a determined fundraising campaign. Gladys has six grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren, three of whom live on Penola Station today.

As the children grew, Gladys and Bob continued their passion for working with the growing community of Penola to bring healthcare, services, social outlets and community networks to the region, taking pride as it blossomed with social and economical diversity and prosperity.

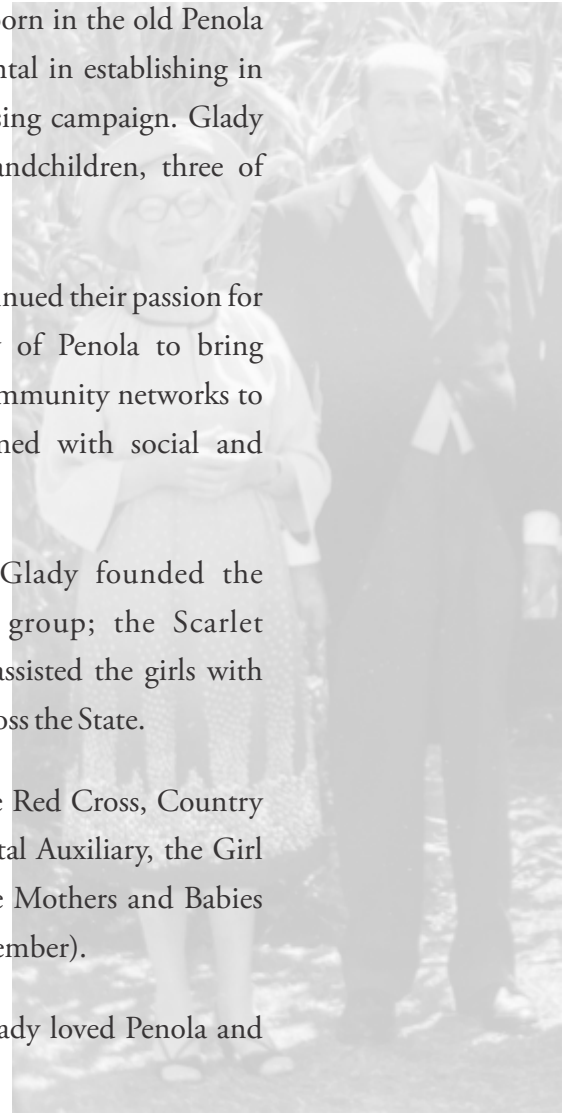
Among her local accomplishments, Gladys founded the competitive Penola Marching Girls group; the Scarlet Leprechauns. She fundraised and even assisted the girls with travel to competitions in Adelaide and across the State.

Gladys was also heavily involved with the Red Cross, Country Women's Association, the Penola Hospital Auxiliary, the Girl Guides (as State Commissioner) and the Mothers and Babies Health Association (President and Life Member).

In reflecting upon her life well lived, Gladys loved Penola and Penola loved her.

The image of a silver haired Mrs Rymill, menthol cigarette and mint cornetto in hand behind the wheel of the old Jaguar, driving just a little expediently, remains fondly with her family.

A gem of the Penola community, an advocate for healthcare and young people, her memory endures.



Generosity of Spirit



# Mairead Tuohy

Mrs Mairead Tuohy, was born Mairead Skehan, on the 20th July 1921 in County Clare, Eire, where she lived for 30 years during which time she married her husband, Thomas 'Kevin' Tuohy and had 2 baby girls. She migrated to Australia with her husband and her two young daughters, Carmel born in County Galway, and 6-month-old Clare born in UK (whilst waiting for travel arrangements). The family disembarked at Port Adelaide, Feb 1950, where they were met by Mairead's older brother, Father Henry Skehan (later to be appointed as Monsignor Skehan) who had migrated several years earlier.

Their first place of residence was at Glenroy Station 12 miles north of Penola. She soon settled in, meeting other local Irish families. She planting a substantial vegetable garden and together with hens, eggs and pigs was able to cater well for her family whilst Kevin worked on the station for the Margary family.

In 1953, the family bought 'Myinga' a lovely older property closer to Penola, thus allowing Mairead more access to community activities and interests. She quickly established a vegetable plot and kept more chickens for meat and eggs. She was a very good cook, her specialities being apple tarts and sponge cakes. She also kept busy sewing frocks and school uniforms on her old treadle sewing machine for her daughters, and knitting the traditional Irish faror and aran isles jumpers. In December 1955 she gave birth to a baby girl who was named Marian, and enjoyed the company of other mothers with newborns. She always looked forward to attending the St Joseph's Convent School's Mothers Club Meetings and loved learning new skills such as leather work, and different needle work at the CWA, where she excelled



Mairead Tuohy in 1952 at Glenroy with two of her daughters

in cake decoration which continued for most of her life, making and decorating many wedding and birthday cakes for friends and relations, especially for her daughters, Carmel and Clare's weddings. She was also a volunteer for the upkeep of St Joseph's Catholic Church and the Priest's house.

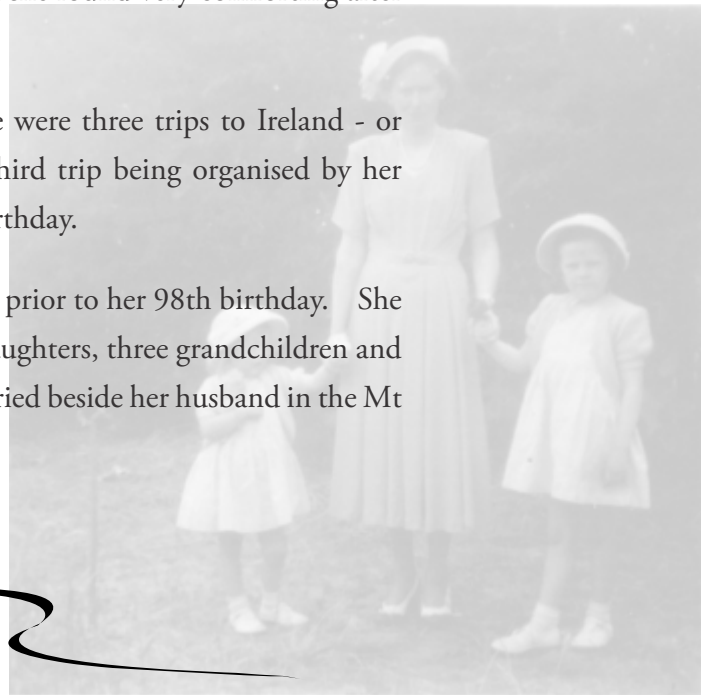
Other interests which kept her busy were Carmel's involvement in the Marching Girls, Clare's interest in horse riding, and Marian's basketball games. Marian was a good all-rounder at ball games, which please Mairead greatly. She enjoyed her flower garden and loved reading.

In 1972, she and her husband moved to Mt Gambier, where she became involved in the local Catholic Church, and was a regular volunteer at St Vinnies which she found very comforting after her husband's death in 1996.

Whilst in Mt Gambier, there were three trips to Ireland - or 'home' as she called it, the third trip being organised by her family to celebrate her 90th birthday.

She passed away in 2019, just prior to her 98th birthday. She was succeeded by her three daughters, three grandchildren and two great grandsons and is buried beside her husband in the Mt Gambier Cemetery.

Vale Mairead Tuohy.



# Willisa Warner

Mrs Willisa Warner (full name Barbara, Willisa, Sarah, Lottie Warner, nee Merwood) was a very prominent member of the Penola community. She arrived in Penola in 1926 to take up her first posting as a schoolteacher at the Penola Higher Primary School. After teaching and being very active in the community for twelve months she then Miss Merwood was transferred to Le Fevere Peninsula, Orroroo, and the Wellington Road School before returning to Penola in 1932. It was here that she met and married a local grazier, Mr John Leslie (Les) Warner. The couple had no children.

Mrs Warner became very active on many of the committees of the Penola community. She was the Foundation Vice President of the Penola Branch of the CWA, later becoming Secretary, and was also Foundation President of the Penola Progress Association. She revived the Penola Branch of the Women's Agricultural Bureau and became a member of its State Executive. After the Second World War, Mrs Warner revived the Penola branch of the Red Cross and was responsible for the introduction of its very popular Baby Competition.

The period following the Second World War saw the arrival of many migrants from war-torn European countries. Mrs Warner was an enthusiastic member of the Good Neighbourhood Council and, in her role as a member of the Penola District Council, regularly gave the welcoming address at naturalisation ceremonies. She was the first female member of the Penola District Council and served in that role for many years.

For 15 years Mrs Warner fought a rather lonely battle to retain and preserve the Penola Mechanics Institute. This building that had served the district for over 100 years had been badly neglected. After much argument and acrimony, the ownership of the Institute building was transferred to the Penola District Council. One of the key stipulations of this transfer, and one insisted on by Mrs Warner, was that the Public Library in the Institute be maintained. However, this was eventually ignored by the Penola District Council and the Library was moved to Penola High School. The retirement complex in Penola,

Tandara Lodge, was established in 1976 with Mrs Warner as foundation Vice-President, and it was she who was responsible for the name chosen.

After the death of her husband Les, Mrs Warner donated a striking stained-glass window to his memory in St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. As was her nature, Mrs Warner did have some firm ideas regarding the design and content of the window. She requested that as Les Warner had been a very well-known breeder of sheep, the theme of the stained-glass window be that of Christ the Good Shepherd, that the male figure have lambs at his feet, that he be wearing elastic-sided boots and moleskin trousers, and that the face of Christ be that of Les Warner. This did require some negotiation and although the face of Christ is not that of Les Warner, St Andrew's Church Penola does have the only figure of Christ in the world wearing elastic-sided boots and moleskin trousers.

Mrs Willisa Warner died in Adelaide in 1991 aged 86. This plaque is a recognition by the people of Penola of the great contribution this remarkable woman made to the Penola and district community.



# Thurloo May Young (nee Kidman)

Thurloo was born 20 March 1923 in Naracoorte Hospital, South Australia.

She was the eldest child of Bessie and Tom Kidman followed by her two brothers Banks and Bray. The name Thurloo came from one of her father's stations he worked on, Thurloo Downs, in South West Queensland.

Thurloo lived at 'Oakwood' Penola, adjacent to the Penola Race Course and went to the Penola Primary School and then onto Presbyterian Girl's College for secondary education.

She came home to the farm in 1939, at the outbreak of war. Thurloo joined the Penola Red Cross branch where she remained a member for over 60 years, and was a life member, due to her outstanding service.

After the war she became very involved in the community which she continued for most of her life.

She met Donald Young after the war. He was a Soldier Settler and worked for the Lands Department, clearing land, fencing etc. He was allocated a block of land at Glenroy, and called the property 'Inverness' after his home at Owen, South Australia.

Thurloo married Donald, 12 November, 1949. They lived with Tom and Bessie at 'Oakwood' while their house was being built at Glenroy. The shearing shed was built first and one end of the shed was made into a temporary home so they could spend time at 'Inverness'.

They eventually moved into a Soldier Settler home and over the years a lot of additions were made to the house.



Thurloo with  
brothers Banks  
and Bray



Thurloo aged 63 years

Tina was born 2 May 1951  
Duncan was born 19 January 1953  
Sally was born 26 March 1955

All three children attended the Penola Primary School. Tina and Sally were borders at Presbyterian Girls College (now Seymour College) and Duncan at Scotch College, Adelaide.

Thurloo's parents died in their early 60's and after Bessie died a block of land was purchased at Maaoupe. This entailed many years of droving sheep back to 'Inverness' for shearing. Land was also leased at Dergholm, Victoria and so for many years there were three shearings and Thurloo prepared all the food for the shearers for every shearing. Thurloo worked tirelessly for the community – Red Cross, Penola hospital, Presbyterian Church (PWA), National Trust, Penola Golf Club. Her great love was Red Cross – receiving 50 and 60 year medals for service. She was a Life Member of Red Cross, and held many positions from secretary, to President at local and regional levels.

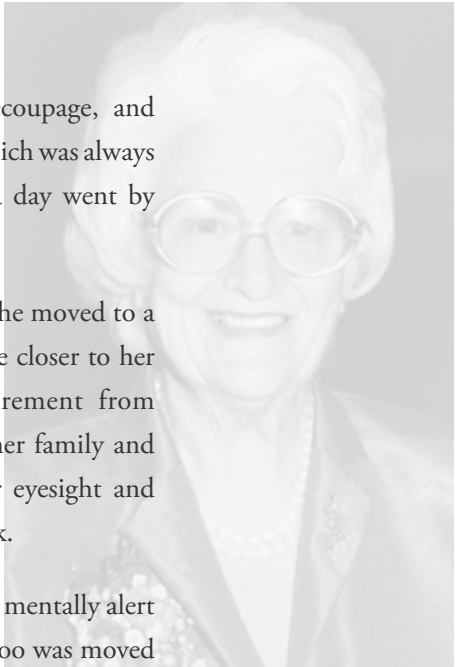
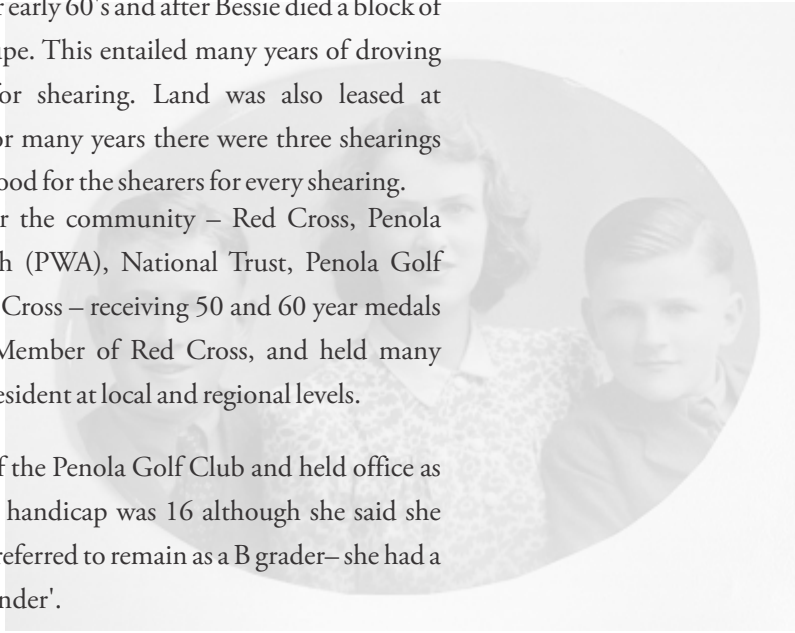
She was also a Life Member of the Penola Golf Club and held office as secretary, President. Her best handicap was 16 although she said she was not on that for long and preferred to remain as a B grader– she had a pretty good swing for a 'left hander'.

Thurloo and Donald retired from the farm, with son Duncan taking over the reins. They moved into Penola in the 1980's and she continued to work tirelessly for the community. Donald died in his beloved garden in 1989, aged 67 years.

Thurloo had a love of embroidery, patch work, decoupage, and dressmaking. Many would remember her craft room, which was always full to overflowing with material and threads. Not a day went by without her doing some type of needlework.

Thurloo continued to live in Penola until 1999 when she moved to a retirement village at Stirling in the Adelaide Hills to be closer to her children. When she left Penola that was her retirement from community work. She maintained a keen interest in her family and friends and continued with her needlework until her eyesight and nibble fingers stopped her from doing such intricate work.

She did miss the life in Penola very much. She remained mentally alert and always knew what was going on around her. Thurloo was moved from the retirement village to Lourdes Valley Nursing Home, Myrtle Bank in Adelaide in 2012, where she passed away, on the 16th October, aged 89 years.



# Susanne Zwar

Sue was born at Renmark, SA, and was educated at the Renmark schools until she went to Concordia College in Adelaide from year nine to Matriculation. She then attended Adelaide Teachers College where she achieved a secondary teacher's certificate and concurrently studied at the Adelaide University from where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (English and History).

In early 1976 Sue and her family (John and two young daughters) took up residence in Penola.

In the following years Sue became involved with Penola primary school and held the position of secretary of the Parents committee and secretary of the Guides and Brownies.

She became involved with the Penola Toastmistress Club and later a local Book Club and contributed to the local Lions Club as partner of husband John who joined the Lions Club in mid-1977.

Although Sue, a qualified High School teacher, did not get a permanent teaching position, she was able to get some short-term contracts at Penola High School from time to time.

After establishing a new home in 1980 on a property the family bought at Coonawarra in 1976, Sue quickly set about establishing a garden which grew and grew over the subsequent years to become a feature of the district, "Camawald Garden", attracting many visitors. Sue also saw the need to establish shelter belts on their farm and after becoming aware of the costs of buying seedlings she began to collect seeds from the local area and then from other parts of Australia. Many locals, when they became aware that Sue was growing seedlings and successfully establishing shelter belts, contacted her to order plants. Sue saw



Sue Zwar putting the finishing touches to one of her magnificent floral designs



there was a need for a Plant Nursery and so Camawald Plant Nursery was established and this she ran successfully for nine years serving the community with shelter belt trees that suited the environment where they were to be planted, as well as garden plants.

As the garden developed and spread over 10 acres, Sue was asked to open it to the public and did so on many occasions with gate fees being donated to local worthy causes e.g. Penola War Memorial Hospital and Penola National Trust as well as others such as Lutheran Community Care. The garden was opened several times as part of the Australian Open Gardens Scheme giving local organizations the opportunity to raise funds with food and other stalls. The garden is frequently visited by bus groups coming from other parts of SA as well as Victoria and has been the venue for many weddings over the years. Sue and Camawald Garden have featured on the national ABC "Gardening Australia" TV program.

Sue developed a love for roses and joined the South Australian Branch of the National Rose Society of Australia and was largely responsible for establishing the South East Branch of the Rose Society of SA where she has held various senior positions. She was awarded Life Membership in recognition of her service. As well, she joined the Heritage Rose Society of Australia. Her enthusiasm and involvement with gardening led her to also join the Naracoorte Garden Club and through these organizations she has organized outings from far & wide to visit not only Camawald Garden but most of the lovely gardens now established in the local area and other parts of the Limestone Coast Region. Sue has contributed many informative articles to the journals of these organizations including many about what this region has to offer visitors.

An example of what she can do to draw visitors to this part of Australia: Sue volunteered to organize the National Conference of Heritage Rose Societies of Australia at The Barn, Mt Gambier, in 2012. With some help from a committee based in the Adelaide area Sue, with the help of husband John, largely organized and ran the event which attracted nearly 300 attendees from all parts of Australia. A feature of the 3-day conference was the visits to four local gardens followed by a dinner in Rymill Hall.



Another example: Sue was invited to tour NZ by the NZ Heritage Rose Society. She was guest speaker at 9 gatherings in towns in both Islands.

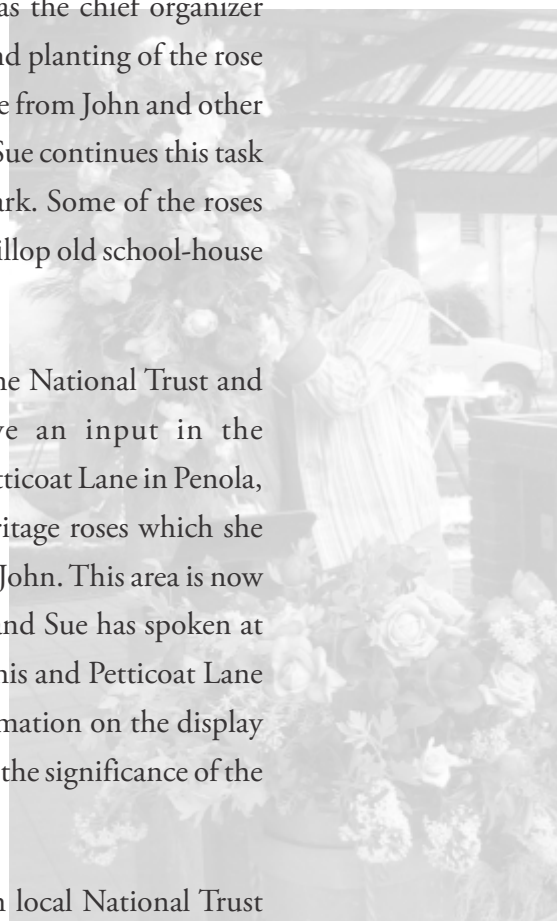
After the tornado damaged parts of the local area, a benefactor offered many rose plants “to be planted in a public area en mass” and others distributed to victims of the storm. The Lions Club of Penola accepted the suggestion by a member that they undertake a project to re-establish a rose garden fronting the Penola War Memorial Park and this was approved by the Wattle Range Council. Sue, with some help, was the chief organizer and undertook to assist with the layout and planting of the rose beds and also offered, with some assistance from John and other Lions Club members, to maintain them. Sue continues this task and the roses are again a feature of the park. Some of the roses were planted by Sue near the Mary MacKillop old school-house which had been unroofed by the storm.

Sue is a member of the local branch of the National Trust and when the opportunity arose to have an input in the development of the “Murrell Block” in Petticoat Lane in Penola, Sue volunteered to establish beds of Heritage roses which she currently maintains with some help from John. This area is now a repository for historical heritage roses and Sue has spoken at conferences and other gatherings about this and Petticoat Lane more generally. Sue has written the information on the display board so that the visitors become aware of the significance of the rose beds in this historic part of Penola.

As part of the ongoing involvement with local National Trust ventures, Sue has seized the opportunity to help clean up and develop the area surrounding Ulva Cottage adjacent to the swimming pool. She has planted roses in keeping with the era in which this old home was built. It is now being used as a B&B.

Sue has planted and maintains roses around the Coonawarra Hall, also known as the Coonawarra Club, and is a member of the Coonawarra Club management committee.

Over the years Sue has been instrumental in organizing rose pruning days and pruning demonstrations and in other ways assisted with the gardens at the Penola War Memorial Hospital including planting and maintaining trees in the grounds to the north of Pinchunga.



As a Lion's project it was decided to plant trees at Greenrise near the Lions BBQ. Sue donated, planted and maintained, with John's help, the shelter belt planted to the north of the BBQ at the western end of the drive and at the "T" junction, and also a group of trees near the windmill to the east. Sue and John also planted and looked after the London Plane tree planted for the millennium as a Lion's project.

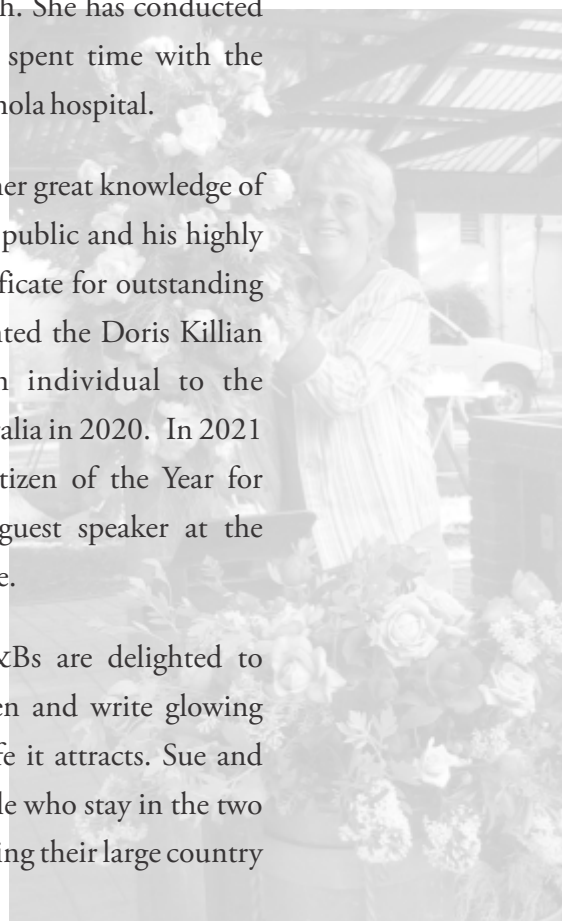
Sue, a valued member of the Penola Lutheran Congregation, has held the position of Women's Fellowship President for many years and is a Lay Assistant in the Church. She has conducted services at Pinchunga for residents and spent time with the elderly there as well as to patients at the Penola hospital.

Sue is generous with her time and shares her great knowledge of plants and gardens with members of the public and his highly regarded. Sue received a premier's Certificate for outstanding community service in 2020. She presented the Doris Killian Award for outstanding service by an individual to the community by the Garden Clubs of Australia in 2020. In 2021 Sue was awarded the Australia Day Citizen of the Year for Riddoch Ward. In 2022 she was a guest speaker at the International Rose Conference in Adelaide.

Guests who stay in the Camawald B&Bs are delighted to discover the extent of Camawald Garden and write glowing reviews about the garden and the birdlife it attracts. Sue and John enjoy meeting and interacting people who stay in the two B&Bs which they run, as well as maintaining their large country garden.

Sue is a remarkable member of the local community. She is willing to assist the community in so many ways ranging from caring for those in need to getting involved with hands-on projects that benefit the whole community. She is a great ambassador for the region.

Sue, with her husband John, has two married daughters and three grandchildren.



# The Black Swans

The Black Swans Beefsteak and Burgundy Club had its inaugural meeting in August 1984. Nine ladies met at Truffles Restaurant in Mount Gambier, and were presented with the Beefsteak and Burgundy Charter by Mr Graeme Townsend.

It was the 203rd Beefsteak and Burgundy Club, and at that time one of a very few clubs organised by women. Most of the founding members had husbands or partners who were in the local wine industry or in one of the two men's BS&B



Clubs in Penola and Coonawarra. The name Black Swans was chosen, as it is one of the two possible meanings for "Coonawarra".

Mr G. Townsend of the Adelaide Beefsteak and Burgundy Club presented the Club charter to officials of the new Black Swans Club, (left to right) President Wendy Wade, Secretary Michelle Stehens and Vice-President Cathy Heyn at the Club's inaugural meeting.

The establishment of the Black Swans came as a result of the appreciation the women had in fine wine and good food, and particularly in trying new and different gastronomical delights. Over the past (nearly) 5 decades, the Club has successfully maintained its 30-member cap, with many on the waiting list. There have been life memberships awarded, and there are still three of the founding members in the Club. The club has seen 90 members over this time. At most meetings, members are encouraged to bring guests, which is how the bank of possible future membership builds.

The meetings are held 5-6 times per year, with a wide variety of themes, eating establishments and, of course, fine wines enjoyed. Over the years the Club has travelled to other regions as well as indulging in our local cuisines. The Club has also co-hosted the National Beefsteak and Burgundy Convention.

We are extremely proud that our little gathering in 1984 has grown to be a strongly supported club for women who enjoy and advocate for wonderful wine and food.

# Women of the Coonawarra wine community

Women have always been a part of the Coonawarra landscape and community although their contribution has often been unrecognised. Where would the men folk have been without someone to support their dreams and give them a family and a home?

Coonawarra was originally good farming country with many permanent swamps to provide water for grazing animals and to water gardens for the family table. Magnificent red gums and other eucalypts provided housing and shelter.

Women assisted their men in producing crops and establishing the stone fruit industry which was a forerunner to the Coonawarra Grape Growing industry which had its beginnings in 1890. Many individuals and families emigrated to Australia in search of better opportunities and these various nationalities have provided a breadth of cultural experiences for the Coonawarra community. Indigenous Australians, English, Irish, Scottish, Greek, Italian, North American, Serbian, Croatian and Czechoslovakian all contribute to the makeup of our district.

Children left school at an early age to assist in the farming business, and many unacknowledged women would have provided labour for the various businesses in an emerging community.

In the very early days of the district, women became cooks, domestic helpers, shopkeepers, vineyard and orchard workers, book keepers, teachers, and nurses in order to help support their families.

In the 21st Century women provide the backbone to the Coonawarra Wine Industry. Their roles as vineyard workers, viticulturists, research and laboratory chemists and technicians, winemakers and cellar staff, marketers, cellar door sales people, tourism operators, food producers, restaurateurs, artists, finance

managers and administrative staff all contribute to the strength of our community.

Within the Wine Industry some of these women have achieved national and international recognition for their contribution to the advancement of the industry.

Women have come to Coonawarra as teachers, nurses and winemakers and have contributed enormously to our region. Some local women have married tradespeople from other areas and encouraged them back to help build our diversity. Names have been lost when women have taken the name of their husband but family connections ensure that the recognition of these relationships continues.

The donation was made by the Hollick family to recognise the commitments of all the women who have contributed to our district.



Generosity of Spirit

# McPherson women

Jenny, Alma, Nancie, Kerry,  
Maddison, Kate, Iris,  
Indianna, Isobel

Over six generations they have shown that they are hardworking, motivated, glamorous, kind, compassionate, strong, independent, stylish, and with the new generations coming through these women will certainly have good values.



# Penola/Coonawarra Book Club Group

In 2022, this strong enduring group of women celebrated over 50 years of 'book clubbing!! A fitting time to contribute to the 'Generosity of Spirit' sculpture project which celebrates the women, past, present and future of Penola and Coonawarra who have, and will continue to shape our community.

It appears in all probability that the Book Club was founded by Audrey Tregenza and Eleanor Rymill sometime prior to 1968. Audrey was the record keeper of the club, and the record books we have cover the years from February 1972 - July 2000.



Some Book Club members celebrating Christmas, 2022

In February 1972 book prices ranged from .65c to \$1.55, while by the end of Audrey's records in 2000 the cost of books was as much as \$17.95. Audrey's record books have now been donated to the Local History Collection which is held by the local National Trust branch, housed at the John Riddoch Centre. Our group's objectives are the pursuit of intellectual stimulation, friendship, good company, good conversations and good times. Currently, we have 16 members with diversity in age, interests and professions, but all from the Penola-Coonawarra region. Our current longest standing member, Sally Scott, joined in 1986. Excitedly arriving at home after her first Book Club meeting, she regaled Scotty with the proceeds of the evening to which he replied – "That's just like going to the pub on a Thursday night."

Books were originally sourced from Community Adult Education in Victoria, but the requested title didn't always arrive – it seemed anything was sent with gay abandonment! Following that, a book 'co-ordinator' then sourced books from Trevor Buck's bookshop in Mt Gambier and Dymocks in



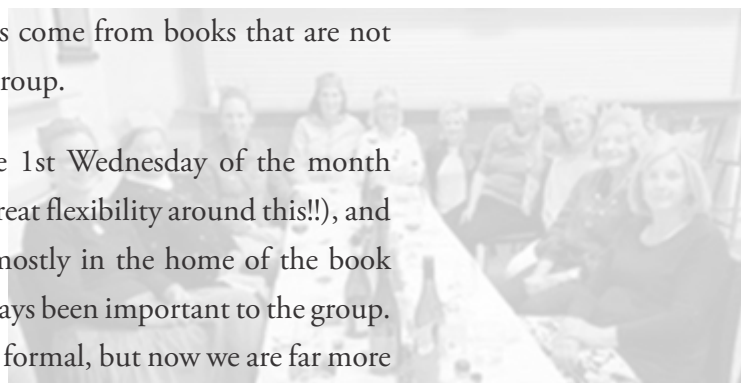
Adelaide. Since the advent of 'online' shopping, members source their own books and now read in many different formats – 'real' books, kindles, iPads and audio books. The year's reading list is compiled at our February meeting which over the years has involved overnight stays in Robe and 'Booker Bus' trips to Poolajelo for brain and walnut sandwiches!! While preferable that book recommendations have been read by the proposer, in reality this doesn't always occur!! While fiction is the most common choice, we aim for a variety of genres, and usually try to include recent major prize winners. Most books we read are current releases but occasionally we do delve into older literature, think Georgette Heyer!! In our book discussions we do find the best discussions come from books that are not enjoyed by the majority of the group.

Our meetings are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month (although we have developed great flexibility around this!!), and we meet 11 times each year, mostly in the home of the book leader. Wine and food have always been important to the group. In the early years, suppers were formal, but now we are far more casual – in fact, cooking isn't a requirement as long as fabulous cheeses and premium Coonawarra wines are on offer!! Our Christmas meeting is now always held at the Coonawarra Community Club and it definitely does involve cooking!!

The Book Club has been involved in organising the Literary Brunch for the Penola-Coonawarra Arts Festival. We have hosted a range of authors at a variety of venues including Upstairs at Hollicks, Royal Oak Hotel, Katnook Stables, Penola Bowling Club and Ottelia.

As a group, we are proud of our long history, proud of our unity, proud of our contribution to our caring community, and proud of our desire to progress and grow ourselves.

Supporting the 'Generosity of Spirit' project which celebrates women in the community through public art was a perfect fit for our group.



# Penola Local History Centre

Penola Mechanics' Institute closed in 1980 and the remaining items were given in 1981 to the newly opened Penola Community Library at the Penola High School. It was suggested that with the establishment of a local history facility these items and others of interest could be made available to the community and school children. In 1989 Teacher Librarian Barb Smith called a meeting of interested parties including the Penola National Trust and the Penola History Society. Miss Maggy Ragless was engaged to train Evelynne Bowden in the management of the collection as a Local History Officer. The District Council of Penola and Penola High School gave support with a yearly budget.



The aims were to collect paper-based materials, preserve local history, foster research, organize secure storage, make resources available to the public and investigate avenues of finance. The area to be covered included the District Council of Penola Hundreds - Penola, Monbulla, Grey (incl. Kalangadoo), Killanoola, Comaum and Nangwarry.

Volunteers at work in the History Room

In 1991 the Collection was officially opened by Minister for Arts & Cultural Heritage Anne Levy as part of the library's 10th anniversary and a microfilming project for the minute books of organisations was conducted.

The collection was moved to the refurbished Local History Room at the Wattle Range Council Visitor Information Centre in 2002, and was officially opened in its new situation by the History Trust of SA Director, Margaret Anderson.

Financial support for this facility is provided by Wattle Range Council.

Information available includes:

On-line access to family history resources; including the District Council of Penola Assessment Records 1869- 1968; Books of local, regional and state interest; Directories; Maps; Primary Sources e.g. Minute Books and other original documents, held in archive boxes; vertical files containing newspaper clippings and copies of various documents, transcribed audio tapes, video tapes now on DVDs; burial records and photographs.

Volunteers manage the records and provide research support.



# SACWA Penola and Penola Terra Rossa Branches

Honour to God  
Loyalty to the throne  
Service to the country  
Through country women  
For country women  
By country women

On April 5th 1938, St Andrew's Presbyterian Hall was the venue for the first CWA meeting convened by Mrs Mary Edith Rymill. Miss Lottie McKay was elected Secretary and Mrs Marion Kidman as Treasurer. Forty-three members were enrolled with an annual fee of 2/6. It was decided to hold meetings on every third Friday at this same venue.

The first craft meetings were held in members' homes. A fee of sixpence helped to buy equipment such as pliers, needles, books etc.

The branch was very active during the war years making pillow cases for the Mount

Gambier and Naracoorte Hospitals and sending parcels to servicemen. Street stalls were held in aid of Red Cross and craft members learnt how to make camouflage nets. Parcels were sent to Britain, including two from Penola containing 314 garments. Penola also donated fat for making soap – a very scarce commodity in Britain at the time.

In 1949, street stalls, catering, Queen Competitions etc. were conducted to raise funds for the Penola Rest Room and the land was purchased from the Old Penola Hospital Board for 7 pounds 11 shillings.



CWA Hall corner of  
Portland and Young  
Streets

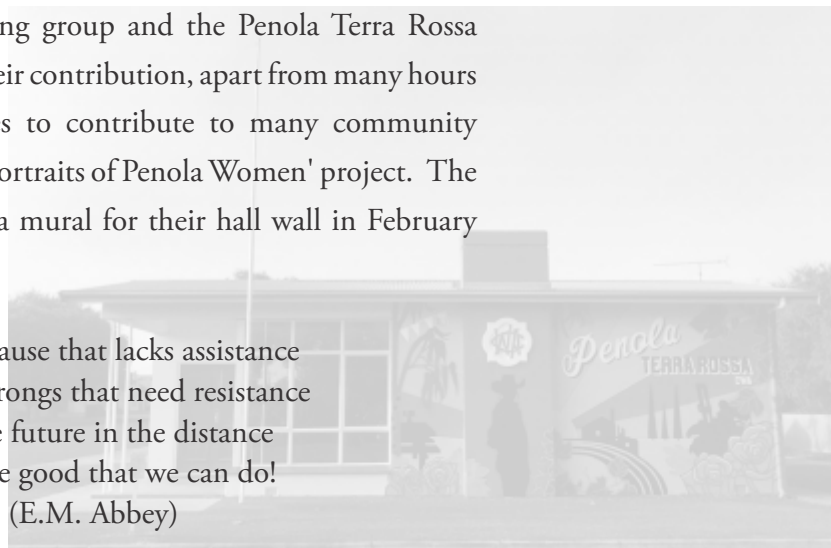
In April 1960, the foundation stone was laid by Miss Flora McDonnell, followed by the official opening by Mrs Alice Reschke. The builders were the Tregenza Building Company with Mr F. Murphy as carpenter. Built as a memorial to the pioneering women of the district this building was opened by Mrs Alice Reschke in August 1960.

The badge hewn out of Mount Gambier stone on the outside wall of the fire place was sculpted by Mrs Nancy Paltridge in 1963.

The Taylor Group's suggestion that all school children should have access to swimming facilities, led to the Learn to Swim Campaign. The Penola Branch was responsible for introducing Australia Day Celebrations in Penola in 1979.

In 2016 the Terra Rossa Branch evening group was established to complement the activities of the day group and to enable women, who prefer to attend meetings at night, to participate in the community as SACWA members. In 2019 the day group merged with the evening group and the Penola Terra Rossa Branch was formed. Their contribution, apart from many hours of fundraising activities to contribute to many community projects, has been the 'Portraits of Penola Women' project. The Branch commissioned a mural for their hall wall in February 2023.

For the cause that lacks assistance  
For the wrongs that need resistance  
For the future in the distance  
And the good that we can do!  
(E.M. Abbey)



# Staff and Volunteers Penola War Memorial Hospital

In 1930 Matron Margaret (Daisy) McKay purchased Allotments 89 and 100 on the corner of Robe (now Riddoch) Street and Portland Streets from the Peake family. It was on this site that Alexander Cameron had a stone cottage built for his wife Margaret's uncle, Donald McDonald, the publican of the Royal Oak Hotel. Margaret established Penola Private Hospital, with Dr. H. M. Bourke as the resident doctor. Due to illness, Matron discontinued nursing in 1937 and Sister Florence Hill of Kalangadoo leased the hospital. Unfortunately, due to lack of support, and despite efforts by Dr H. R. Oaten, it was forced to close until 1940 when there was a serious epidemic of measles and whooping cough. In August 1941, a group of local guarantors purchased the hospital and it became Penola District Hospital. Doctors Bowey, Oldfield and Randall practised at this hospital, also Doctors Jarvis and Dunn, who then transferred to the new hospital. Mr A.W. Donnelly purchased this building following the transfer to the new hospital in 1955.

At the request of Mr H W Davidson, Chairman of the Coonawarra Penola RSL, a public meeting to consider the establishment of a Soldier's Memorial Hospital in order to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice, was held on 12 December, 1945.

The opening of the new hospital culminated in years of strenuous work and planning by Chairman E W Clayfield, the Board of Management, and Secretaries R. R. Rymill, R. A. Lynn and H. Siney. In May 1947 land was acquired from Mr Keith Sharam, Mr Andrew Shanks and the Patterson Estate.



Front Entrance to the  
Penola War Memorial  
Hospital

The district was split into sections – enthusiastic committees arranged money raising functions with many and varied entertainments. A public subscription option was also available. The people of the district contributed one half of the amount required and this was subsidised pound for pound by the State Government.

Mr E W Clayfield, in welcoming a crowd of approx. 2,000, congratulated the people of the district on their grand effort and stated “this is the most important function that has ever taken place in Penola – the opening of a fitting memorial to the fallen.” Sir A. Lyell McEwin, Chief Secretary and Minister for Health, who had given great assistance to the committee, officially opened the building on 14 August, 1955.

Now the venue of Penola Doctors, the Nurse's Home was financed largely by David Skene and completed in 1956. The sunroom extensions on the northern side of the hospital were finished in 1959, alterations to the theatre and casualty areas were completed in 1969, and a seven-bed extension reception area and a new front entrance were opened in 1975. In 1982 the 12 bed Hostel and Daycare Centre, which later became Pinchunga, was completed, and has since been extended to 24 rooms. In 1988 a new administration area was built at the hospital's main entrance.

Penola District Hospital Auxiliary, formed in 1941 and later renamed Penola Hospital Auxiliary, continues to this day to provide equipment and furnishings for the Hospital. The Health Advisory Council was formed in 2008, when SA Health restructured. The Penola War Memorial Hospital is now classed as a Multi-Purpose Service (acute, aged and community care) and is part of the Limestone Coast Local Health Network.

Penola War Memorial Hospital has been the largest single employer of women in our community since its inception, and also a magnet for many dedicated volunteers, who have cared for members of our community in their most vulnerable times. Staff and volunteers have touched the lives of most people living in our community for nearly 100 years. We are forever grateful for the dedication, care and the 'Generosity of Spirit' they have shown our community. We are a stronger and more compassionate community because of them.

