



TOWN OF GAWLER

The Bunyip

OR

GAWLER HUMBUG SOCIETY'S CHRONICLE.

“FLAM ! BAM !! SHAM !!!



The Bunyip Printing Office, ca. 1800s
(Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage
Collection)

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"Best of Town & Country"

E. H. Coombe, in his *History of Gawler 1837-1908*, claims that Gawler was the first provincial town in South Australia to enjoy the publication of its own newspaper.

The Bunyip began its existence in 1863 as a collaboration between William Barnet, manager and printer, and The Humbug Society with Dr George Nott as editor. Loyau describes the first issue as being so full of fun that it sold out as soon as it was published. It was published first as a monthly pamphlet and then from January 1865, as a bi-monthly broadsheet. A year later it became a weekly publication, an indication of its immense popularity.

Why *The Bunyip*?

“Because the Bunyip is the true type of Australian Humbug! Go where you will in Australia, the poor benighted blackfellow, if he wishes to astonish you with unheard marvels, or strike you with supreme terror, raises before you the shadow of the mysterious Bunyip – ever near – ever promising to appear – but ever eluding sight and grasp – true type of Humbug!”
(*The Bunyip*, No. 1, September 5, 1863)



William Barnet, date unknown, (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

Initially *The Bunyip* was solely a vehicle of The Humbug Society and was full of satire and wit. So much so, that the first issue attracted a libel action! Before the second edition appeared, a letter was sent to the owner of *The Bunyip* from The solicitors of Dr William Popham. An action for libel was threatened as a result of the publication of material which it was claimed brought their client into ‘contempt and ridicule’.



One of the advertisements which was claimed to be libellous.
(From *The Bunyip*,
September 5, 1863)

Legal proceedings were commenced for a damages claim of 500 pounds; the verdict was that damages of one shilling to be paid to Dr Popham. The proceedings were ‘vastly entertaining’ and the general opinion was *The Bunyip* had served the town well by exposing humbug. A full account of the ‘Popham V. Barnet’ court hearing can be read in *The Bunyip* of Saturday, April 2, 1864.

With the passage of time *The Bunyip* became less satirical and more of an orthodox newspaper reporting events and opinions.

The Bunyip has operated from various locations, the first being a shop near the Baptist Church in Murray Street. Then for nearly 20 years it operated from a shop near the Prince Albert Hotel. In 1885, after the premises were destroyed by fire, it was moved to the current location.

William Barnet was born at Kinross in Scotland in 1834. He learnt the trade of printing before coming to South Australia in 1854 on board the same ship that brought the first locomotive and rails for the Adelaide and Port Adelaide railway. He arrived in Gawler in 1857 and started *The Bunyip* printing business; he published the first history of Gawler, written by Dr. George Nott in 1861. William Barnet was active in the community - he was a Private, and later a Lieutenant, in the Gawler Rifles; secretary of the Lodge of Fidelity; assessor for South Ward in the first Town Council and was one of the people who took part in the Masonic ceremony of setting the keystone of the arch of St. George's Church in 1861. He died suddenly after attending the funeral of his friend, Leonard Burton, on 25 February, 1895. He is buried at the Willaston Cemetery. A portrait of William Barnet by Andrew MacCormac hangs on the wall of Gawler Public Library Reading Room.

Robert Henry Barnet, third son of William Barnet, began his apprenticeship in *The Bunyip* printing office in 1881 and after his father's death in 1895, was appointed manager. He, like his father before him, was a civic-minded man and was an active member in many local sporting and cultural clubs including the Central Tennis Club and the Athenian Christy Minstrels. Robert Barnet died at the age of 48 in 1917.



Robert Barnet, date unknown (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)



The Bunyip Office, 120 Murray Street, Gawler (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

The Bunyip is unique in Australian newspaper publishing: it remained in the hands of the Barnet family from its first issue in September 1863 until April 2003 when it was sold to the Taylor owned Murray Pioneer Group which also publishes *The Murray Pioneer* (Renmark), *The Loxton News*, *The River News* (Waikerie), *The Border Times* (Pinnaroo) and *The Midnorth Broadcaster* (Burra).



Paul Vincent and John Barnet, 1963 (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)



Bunyip Newsagency, 1963 (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

Editors of *The Bunyip*

1863 – 2007

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| George Nott | 1863 - 1869? | Robert Barnet | 1914 - 1930s? |
| Benjamin Hoare | 1869 - 1871 | L. S. Duncan | 1930s - post- World Two |
| Edward Grundy | 1871 – 1875 | | |
| T. Godfrey | 1875? - 1878? | Ken Barnet | 1940s - ? |
| George Loyau | 1878 - 1879 | Paul Vincent | 1960s - ? |
| L. Wilson | ? - ? | Ken Barnet | ? - ? |
| Alfred Drakard | ? - ? | John Barnet | 1975 - 2003 |
| Harry Congreve | 1885 - 1890 | Terry Williams | 2003 - 2004 |
| E. H. Coombe | 1890 – 1914 | Heidi Helbig | 2004 - date |

George Nott, Editor, 1863-1869

A surgeon and physician, and described by E. H. Coombe as ‘genial, versatile and public spirited’, Dr George Nott came to Gawler in 1852. He was the first editor of *The Bunyip* and his articles were full of ‘fun and facetiae’. His literary talent carried the newspaper for the first four years of its existence. He was a fluent and interesting speaker and his lectures to the Humbug Society were reported to be the life and soul of their meetings. George Nott was not only a



man of literature and writing, he was also a talented artist favouring landscapes and botany. An unpretentious man, he was ‘a hater of shams and hypocrisy’ and although his writings were cutting, he never attacked individuals on a private level. Following Dr Nott’s untimely death on 9 December, 1872, he was buried at Willaston Cemetery and a monument of Aberdeen granite enclosed with ornamental railings was erected over his grave by the people of the town.

Dr George Nott, date unknown
(Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

THE Proprietors of the *Bunyip*, on issuing their first number, beg to inform the Public that it is intended to Publish the *Bunyip* on the First Saturday of every month.

Subscribers wishing copies, must send amount in Postage Stamps to the Editor of the Bunyip, Gawler. No attention will be paid to any order unless accompanied with a remittance.

NO HUMBUG.

Advertisements intended for publication must be sent in not later than the day preceding the publication. Large Discount allowed on repeated advertisements.

Printed and Published for the Proprietors, by
W. BARNET, Printer, Murray-street, Gawler.

THE BUNYIP.

BRAWLER CORPORATION POUND.

THE BRAWLER CORPORATION finding that the Public Pound recently licensed by them is perfectly inaccessible, in consequence of being situated in the centre of a Lagoon, have determined to consult the convenience of the public by closing one of the principal streets in the Town, and licensing it for the above-named purpose. Soft beds for the Cattle are provided, and the entrances will be brilliantly illuminated each night, for the guidance of all stray Cattle desirous of impounding themselves.

By order of the Council,
J. RUBBLE, Town Clerk

WANTED

BY THE

DISTRICTS NORTH OF GAWLER

A NEW CENTRAL ROAD BOARD,

WHO will give some slight attention to the wants of the Districts.

N.B.—The Chairman will be required to give a correct definition of the term “Parallel Lines.”

The Bunyip, September 6, 1863
(Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

Benjamin Hoare, Editor, 1869-1871

Benjamin Hoare was born in England and came to Australia with his family when he was 13 years of age. They were assisted immigrants who settled on a small rented farm near Portland, Victoria. Educated in English parish schools, Benjamin Hoare's education was continued privately after the family's arrival in Australia. From these humble beginnings came a literate and cultured man who spent a lifetime writing poetry, books and articles for newspapers. At 15, Hoare embarked on his career in journalism when he began work at the *Portland Chronicle*. In 1865 he moved to Adelaide and took up the position of printer at *The Advertiser*. During 1869, Benjamin Hoare had two volumes of Poetry published and began his first editorship, at *The Bunyip*. After two years, he moved back to Victoria, where he worked for a number of newspapers including the *Melbourne Age* until his retirement in 1914. Benjamin Hoare was politically active particularly in the Catholic Church and was fiercely pro-British.



Benjamin Hoare, date unknown (National Library of Australia nla.pic-an24216109)

Edward Grundy, Editor, 1871-1875

E. H. Coombe believed that Edward Grundy was 'one of the most cultured of Gawler's citizens'. Before coming to Gawler in 1859, he was employed at various times as a broker, newspaper proprietor and teacher. After moving to Gawler and prior to taking up the position of editor at *The Bunyip* in 1871, he worked in his own business as auctioneer, accountant and commission agent.



Edward Lindley Grundy.
A sketch by S.T. Gill 1849. (State Library of South Australia SLSA: B 62407)

Edward Grundy was one of the founding members of the Humbug Society and occupied the position of Inaugural Arch Flam. During 1860, the members of the Humbug Society devised a daring scheme to send one of its own to Parliament and consequently Edward Grundy was elected by a majority of 60 votes to the House of Assembly for the Barossa electorate. The news was received with great excitement in Gawler - cheering of townsmen, the tolling of James Martin and Co.'s foundry bell and the shrill shrieking of the steam from Harrison's mill caused people to 'start from their Beds and rush in their shirt sleeves and slippers through the streets asking where the fire was'. While still occupying the editor's seat at *The Bunyip*, Edward Grundy died at the age of 80 on 21 January 1875.

George Loyau, Editor, 1878 – 1879

Journalist and author, George Loyau arrived in Australia in 1853 and spent the next seven years in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria working as a gold digger, shepherd, hut-keeper, shearer, overseer, stockman, cattle drover, cook, private tutor and press correspondent. Between 1860 and 1877, Loyau worked as a journalist and reporter on a number of interstate newspapers and published three volumes of poetry. In 1877, he moved to Adelaide and began publication of *The Australian Family Herald: a Weekly Magazine of Interesting Literature*. It was a short-lived endeavour and only three issues were published.



George Loyau, date unknown (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

During the period 1878-79, George Loyau edited *The Bunyip* and in 1880-81 he was editor of the *Illustrated Adelaide News*. He was a prolific writer and in 1880 he published *The Gawler Handbook*, an invaluable source of information about early Gawler. Other publications were *Representative Men of South Australia*; *The Personal Adventures of George E. Loyau* and *Notable South Australians*. He was capable of writing in many styles but despite the large body of work he produced, including poetry, novels, short stories and articles to newspapers, George Loyau lived in poverty for much of his life. He died at Bundaberg, Queensland on 23 April 1898.

TO THE PATRONS OF COLONIAL LITERATURE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

→* GEORGE E. LOYAU, *←

Author of "The Representative Men of South Australia," "Gawler Handbook," "Tales of the Early Days of Settlement in New South Wales," "Notable South Australians," "Diamonds and Paste," "Types of Colonial Life," "The Secret Organizations of Pennsylvania," "Victims of Circumstances," "Jullimont's Legacy," "Ormonde the Reformer," "Leichhardt the Lost Explorer," "Pounds, Shillings, and Pence," "Colonial Press Experiences," "The Bargunyah Records," "Tales in Verse, Poems, and Essays on various subjects, &c., &c."

Herewith announces his intention of

PUBLISHING QUARTERLY

A Volume of Original Tales and Sketches of Life and Character in Australia.

Four Volumes will be issued annually, and bound at the end of the year. Subscribers for the four will ensure the binding of their copies free.

150 Pages. Colored Covers. Price Two Shillings per Copy.



Front cover of George Loyau's autobiography (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)

E.H. Coombe, Editor, 1890 – 1914

The eldest son of a farm-labourer and shopkeeper from Devon, E.H. Coombe was born at Gawler on 26 August 1858. He was educated at St George's Day School and worked as a grocery assistant at Gawler and at his father's general store at Willaston. For two years prior to becoming editor of *The Bunyip* in 1890, E.H. Coombe was local literary correspondent and Hansard reporter for the *South Australian Register*.

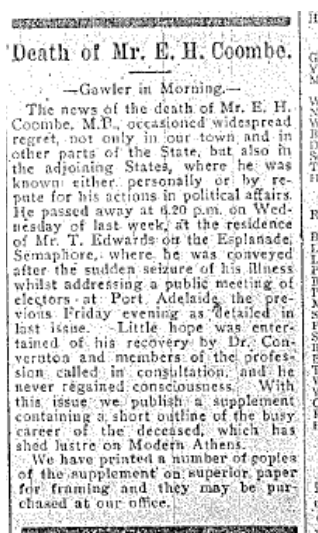
E.H. Coombe was an active member of the Gawler Community and was involved in the temperance movement, the arts and education. He belonged to many cultural, sporting and benevolent societies and represented South Australia in both cricket and chess.

Politically active, E.H. Coombe was president of the Barossa Political Reform League and in 1901 he won in a by-election the seat of Barossa. He held the seat until 1910 and during that period he was Opposition Whip, Government Whip, chairman of a number of committees, Commissioner for Crown Lands and Immigration and Minister for Agriculture.

In 1914, he left *The Bunyip* and moved to Adelaide to edit the Labor publication *Daily Herald*. He joined the United Labor Party and was re-elected to the House of Assembly in 1915. He spoke out strongly against the closure of German schools and led public



E. H. Coombe, MLC, date unknown. (Town of Gawler, Gawler Heritage Collection)



(From *The Bunyip*, 13 April, 1917)

campaigns against conscription and the intimidation of male

voters in the referendum of 1917. He was Prosecuted under the War Precautions Act at Tanunda, fined ten pounds and bound over to keep the peace. E.H. Coombe did not oppose the war (three of his sons were in the forces) and he resented being accused of disloyalty. This 'heavy burden of worry' was thought to have brought about his untimely death from cerebral haemorrhage on 5 April, 1917.

He is best remembered for his comprehensive *History of Gawler 1837 – 1908*.

Terry Williams, Editor, 2003 - 2004

Terry Williams was appointed editor of *The Bunyip* in March 2003 after the Riverland-based publisher, the Taylor Group of newspapers, purchased *The Bunyip* from the Barnet family. During his time at *The Bunyip* Terry brought a new look to the paper, introducing the more modern “modular” style of newspaper layout and developing various sections. A new computer system was introduced allowing greater use of colour in both editorial and advertising and better graphics. Terry served as editor of *The Bunyip* until September 2004 when he became editor of the *Plains Producer*. Terry’s career in newspapers



Terry Williams,
2007

began in 1968, as a copyboy at *The News*. He worked as a reporter and sub-editor, later becoming Sporting Editor, Features Editor, and Assistant Editor. He was acting Editor for a period and was Operations Manager when *The News* closed in March 1992. Terry also worked on *The Sunday Mail* as Chief of Staff and was Sporting Editor of *The Daily Sun*, a daily afternoon newspaper which operated in Brisbane in the 1980s. As a young journalist he worked in Melbourne at *The Herald-Sun*.

Heidi Helbig, Editor, 2004 –

In October 2004, Heidi Helbig became the first female editor of *The Bunyip* at the age of 26. Heidi sees *The Bunyip* providing a snapshot of Gawler life and a mouthpiece for community opinion. In her role she has had the privilege of meeting fascinating and influential people including national political figures, television personalities and elite sportspeople. However, it is the ordinary people achieving extraordinary things who make her job so rewarding; these people are part of the fabric of the community and make a difference through their quiet, unsung achievements. Heidi is constantly amazed by the Gawler community which is rich with people of strength, courage and character who are willing to share their experiences on the public record. During Heidi’s tenure *The Bunyip* has undergone considerable change in presentation and design, but its content and reputation as ‘a paper for the people’ remains the same. Heidi hopes to maintain the high standards set by the founding fathers, editors and custodians of *The Bunyip* and to do justice to this ‘most venerable institution’.



Heidi Helbig, 2007

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