

The Tenison Woods Family Reunion 14-18 November 2008

Our trip to South Australia was a return to our roots. Until now Penola, and other significant names of places and people were just that – names on paper. The invitation to attend the Tenison Woods Family Reunion provided the opportunity to bring the story to life. To mix and mingle with the direct descendants of Julian was a special privilege. It was fascinating to read the name tags and see ‘Julian Tenison Woods’ among other names and to see the family interacting, and to imagine that they have inherited the same family genes and personality traits as Julian probably also had.

On our bustrips, among the story telling, we enjoyed the comments of Margaret Press, Jan Tranter and Anne Player, all of whom have spent years researching and writing about Julian. They along with Ruth Long told us many interesting anecdotes.

We were inspired by Pam Tobin’s efforts to organise such a large event in spite of her recent illness and treatment for cancer. Her courage and determination must certainly have been some of Julian’s special attributes passed down through the generations.

It was lovely to be able to stay with the Central Josephites at Kensington in their beautiful old Convent where Mary had lived for ten years and to visit the Chapel where she had often prayed. We loved the architecture of the old buildings in South Australia – both Churches and the houses constructed out of local rock and the gardens with the Jacarandas and roses in full bloom.

We will always remember the trip to Penola and the vast expanse of countryside which gave a glimpse of the distances and conditions that Julian had to cope with, and that he achieved so much in spite of this.

We were grateful to be able to hear Chris Goudey talk about the large collection of fossils and specimens that he has gifted to the centre in Penola and we were touched by the respect and affection and, at times, the emotion, shown by himself and Professor Elery-Hamilton Smith when talking about Julian. Our Isabel would have loved to hear them speak. I can remember her enthusiasm whenever she spoke about Julian, especially his work as a naturalist and scientist and the reverence she had

for some rock samples she had collected and treasured from the same places where Julian had explored.

Seeing the many samples in the collection in Penola - some minute fossil shells no larger than a coloured pinhead – all named and described in detail by Julian helps us appreciate the magnitude of Julian's work in this field. It was wonderful to see some of the books he had published. One that stood out was 'Geological Observations in South Australia 1862'. Seeing the great distances he had to travel across his parish on horseback, for example to Robe where he would send his writings away and collect a store of library books from the ships, it was not hard to picture him sitting under the stars at night writing notes and letters. All of this fitted in with ministering to the people of his scattered Parish.

There were other special moments – seeing the site of the old stable which is now a reserve; visiting the old school house where Mary taught and lived; standing beneath Fr Wood's Tree; and in Robe the dear little church that Julian built.

We are grateful for this opportunity to have been able to join with Julian's descendants and some of our Josephite family to celebrate and appreciate more the life and achievements of our Founder, Fr Julian Tenison Woods – 'the earnest naturalist; the scientist Priest; the lover of the wild and the beautiful ...' *Mary MacKillop*

Veronica and Lucille