



A.N.D.F.H.G. Inc. News Sheet

Issue 45 - March 2013

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From the Committee

Hello Members,

We seem to be progressing quite nicely through the second half of this year with a couple of new members, which we welcome to the Group.

February saw a good attendance of members at the Legacy Users Group with a variety of questions and discussion. The same can be said about the Family Tree Maker Group, despite the hot day. A good discussion took place about a variety of items. If any of you are considering putting your family into a good family tree program, maybe you should consider coming along to either of these groups, depending on your preference. These meetings are not just learning about family trees, but a social aspect as well. This is your chance to meet other members and possibly exchange information. Don't forget, you can still make a booking for our Thursday research days, or just come along for a chat and a coffee.

As some of you know, our Vice President Ivan Randall has just returned from a Genealogy Cruise with lots of stories and information to

tell us. Our first Saturday afternoon 'speaker day' went well with Ivan showing us how to use basic emails and gave us tips that some of us did not know about computers/emails etc. We hope to see more of you at our next Saturday afternoon 'speaker day'.

The final touches are now being put into place for our Cemetery Tour in conjunction with the Lyndoch & District Historical Society on Saturday 4th May. If you are interested in participating, or would like to know more about it, you can contact any committee member. The cost of this informative tour is \$15.00/head. Bookings can be made by contacting events@andfhg.org. We hope to see quite a few of you attend, as the three cemeteries in Lyndoch have some very interesting and early pioneer graves.

If you are a member of FindMyPast.com, then why not take a look at the British Newspapers through this important site. You may find that little bit of information you have missed.

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter with some interesting articles to read.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>4th Mar</p> 			<p>7th Mar</p> <p>Mid Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm</p>		<p>9th Mar</p> <p>Research and Networking Day 1 pm – 4 pm</p> <p>Committee Meeting 2 pm</p>
				<p>14th Mar</p> <p>Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm</p>		
				<p>21st Mar</p> <p>Mid Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm</p>		<p>23rd Mar</p> <p>Research and Networking Day</p> <p>Guest Speaker Afternoon 1 pm – 4 pm</p>
				<p>28th Mar</p> <p>Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm</p>		

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF MICHAEL WIDGER

(Copied from the Devon Family Historian November 2012 issue and with the kind permission of Pam and Russell Smith)

Little Henry Widger was buried in the South Hill churchyard in southern Cornwall on March 3rd 1839. He was just seven years old. His parents, Sampson and Martha Widger provided a small headstone to mark the grave but today it simply leans against another probably somewhere in the vicinity of where the boy was buried so long ago. Sampson and Martha added a few words of warning to others onto their small son's memorial --- *"Readers stop one moment here and think. I am in eternity and thou art on the brink"*. Henry had been the seventh of a family of eight his younger brother was named Michael. This story is actually about Michael, the troubled life that he led and how he drew on the memory of his dead brother to help him through some awkward times on the other side of the world.

The family were not native to South Hill. Solomon Widger was actually born at St Cleer where his forebears had been living since at least the 1600's. The family name however seems to have always been more prominent in Devon. Michael Widger moved across the county border to Plymouth as he approached adulthood and it was from there, at the age of 20, he emigrated alone to South Australia. The young man left Plymouth for Adelaide on *the "Storm Cloud"* on 13 February 1858 and once in Australia always claimed officially to have been born in Devon.

He had made a complete break from his family and native Cornwall, never to see them again, never to return.

There were possibly many reasons as to why Michael left his family for a new life in South Australia but few could be contributed to any glowing reports coming from that distant colony. Over the previous five years there had been a steady decline in emigration to Adelaide, from almost 12,000 a year down to 3,500 in 1858, from 39 ships to just 10. More than half the immigrants in that year were labourers from Ireland and the bulk of the remainder were miners from Cornwall. From

Devon there were only 136, with mixed occupations. Michael's forebears were mostly farmers but Michael and his older brothers all worked in the building trade as carpenters, masons or bricklayers. Perhaps he had been told of a need for tradesmen in the new country but if so he was to be disappointed as the only position he was able to find was that of a general servant on a farm in a nearly established area on the Gawler Plains, 30 miles north of Adelaide

The young man quickly settled in to his new environment and many new friendships were established on Sundays at the local Ebenezer Bible Christian Chapel, which had been opened only five years earlier. One of the new friends was nineteen year old Eliza Herring. The following year

Eliza became his wife and they married at the Ebenezer Chapel on the 4th July 1859. At this stage of Michael's life there was no hint of any upheaval in the years to come – just rosy days ahead in his new land of promise.

Ten miles to the east lay Gawler, the first South Australian country town. People had settled in this area during the first few years after the colony's proclamation. By the time Michael arrived in South Australia a plan for the township of Gawler had been drawn up and Local Government was already into its second year. The young man calculated there would be money to be made in this "Colonial Athens" as the expanding Gawler was poetically being called by the locals. There would be housing and business establishments to build as well as roads to make, all within young Michael's capabilities and experience. The couple made the move and purchased a house in Calton Street just a few months before their first child Ellen Mary was born.

Within a year Michael was being successful in tendering for the supply of stone for various

construction works in the district and this had led to the establishment of a small quarry on the property of one of his friends out on the Gawler Plains. He purchased, on credit, a couple of draught horses and a wagon and the future looked bright. He used his links with the Bible Christian Church by becoming a lay preacher, not only at the Ebenezer Chapel but at many other churches in the district, sometimes travelling as far as sixty miles and often sharing services with the Reverend Flockhart from Adelaide. The two men became good friends and at one stage Michael was even considering joining the Ministry himself and taking on a post in Fiji, but that could wait, it was more important at this stage of his life to build on the small but promising start he had already made in the vicinity of expanding Gawler. But, did he have the business acumen? Did he have enough experience? He certainly had the capacity to dream and generally believe that whatever he did would be successful.

So, Michael Widger began tendering for much larger jobs with the Central Road Board, no doubt hoping he would be successful with one that would help him on his road to success. Surprisingly, the young man won a contract to provide and deliver metal for repairing the road between the South Para bridge and Gawler's railway station, he had tendered £135 for the work. Prior to this his largest successful tender for a road job had been £9.17.6d. (Nine pound, seventeen shillings and sixpence).

By borrowing money here and there Michael managed to purchase more draught horses and a larger wagon. He also engaged a couple of helpers and came to an arrangement with his Gawler Plains friend to expand the quarry. All went well and Michael grew in confidence. Within a few months he was tendering for jobs in the vicinity of £250 and finally was granted one of these large scale projects, for forming and metalling 21 chains of road between Macaw Creek and Baker's Springs near Riverton and many miles to the north of Gawler. Then came more of these difficult-to-manage large projects including forming and metalling sections of the south Eastern Road near

Nairne further away from Gawler in a southerly direction. The inevitable happened. Michael became so far behind in the work that contracts began to be cancelled. Workmen and suppliers remained unpaid and suddenly his business was gone, along with his reputation.

Litigation followed. Old friends who had lent him money became enemies. That included his brother in law James Mitchell, the husband of the sister of Michael's wife Eliza. A family feud eventuated. Eliza now with two small children, had been living a lonely and frugal life at Gawler during Michael's lengthy periods away on the roads and he was suddenly threatened with losing his family as well as his business.

In February 1864 Michael Widger was declared insolvent and during that same month he was also charged by the manager of the Gawler Branch of the National Bank with forgery. He was subsequently committed for trial on the forgery charge and being unable to raise bail money was remanded to the Adelaide Gaol. During this time the insolvency charge was played out and that ended in a gaol sentence of three months. It would be the following September before Michael returned to his long suffering wife and family in Gawler. By then his ten draught horses plus all his equipment had been auctioned off to part pay the creditors. All his contracts with the Central Road Board had been awarded to others and Michael had been left with nothing of any value. One thing he did have however was a great deal of animosity towards him. A few weeks after being released he was physically assaulted by a creditor who probably was quite happy to pay the subsequent fine of ten shillings for committing the assault.

So what now? His world had turned upside down but he and Eliza were permitted to remain in their small Gawler home where they slowly began to earn enough to live on through small scale mixed farming. However as time went by, tensions grew worse between them and Michael began travelling far and wide in search of work. Their family had quickly grown to five and Eliza was being

left alone for long periods of time and to somehow support the six of them. Occasionally Michael would send small amounts of money to assist but gradually that dried up. Then Eliza began hearing stories that Michael was living in a relationship with another woman way to the north, at Black Springs, on the "Copper Road" to the south of Burra. She could take it no more. A complaint was made to the authorities and a warrant subsequently issued for Michael's arrest on a charge of wife desertion.

The errant husband had actually found regular work on the railway line to Burra and at his subsequent Court appearance it was apparent that he would have had every opportunity to send money to his wife and family. He was found guilty of the charge and ordered to return to his family immediately and meet all costs, or go back into gaol. He elected to do the latter and on the 9th June 1869 ended up in the Adelaide Gaol for a second time. The unfortunate Eliza and her young family moved down to Adelaide as well, where she found work as a dressmaker. She had no further contact with Michael.

The end of this part of Michael Widger's story is surprising. He was released from prison on the 7th September 1869 and promptly disappeared, never to be seen or heard of again – well, perhaps not under the name of Michael Widger.

He had to make a complete new start not just under a new name but also well away from Gawler, from Adelaide and even from South Australia to somewhere where the shame that this religious young man had brought upon himself would not follow. The obvious thing was to travel to neighbouring Victoria and from there work his way up into New South Wales to Sydney, where hopefully, over a thousand miles away, no-one would know him, or for that matter, care.

He would keep the name Widger, but would call himself Henry, the name of the little brother who had died back at South Hill. Perhaps he remembered and saw some significance in that message on Henry's

headstone, "*I am in eternity and thou art on the brink!*"

Nothing was heard of Michael/Henry Widger for 5½ years until the birth was registered in Sydney in February 1875 of Elizabeth Kate Widger, the daughter of Henry Widger and Kate Boland. There was no marriage registration leading up to this, or afterward and the birth registrations kept coming, another four over the next seven years. There were now ten children, five in South Australia and five in New South Wales, evenly split between two mothers.

When the births of each of the five NSW children were registered it had to be stated where and when the parents were married. Henry provided the information but it varied each time. He clearly must have failed to note down what he had previously stated. The place of birth ranged from Adelaide, Gawler, Gawler Plains, or simply South Australia. And the year stated for the South Australian, non-event marriage ranged from 1868 through to 1873. However on each of the five certificates the date for the marriage was always given as 14th June. That was actually a very significant and memorable day in the life of Michael Widger. Not as the day Henry was supposedly married but the day Michael was released from his first term in Adelaide Gaol.

It is interesting that February 1875, the time of the first of the registrations of the five NSW children, was also the same month that advertisements began appearing in the Sydney papers for Henry Widger the builder. His new life was now official and under way. These advertisements began with a search for a bricklayer's labourer but over time progressed in the number of men wanted and the scope of the work involved. A repeat of the Gawler business then seemed to be happening as the business obviously grew and at the same time more and more references appeared in the papers of impending court cases - *Steel v. Widger* - *Griffiths v. Widger* - *Cox v. Widger*. Yet another repeat of his former life, as a Congregational Church lay preacher followed by a period on committees, he was actually at

one time the Secretary of the Young Australian Coursing Club and owned two greyhounds, until there was a court case involving the President of the club. There was an unhappy end to this repetition in the lives of Michael/Henry Widger. It came in 1878 when he once again lost everything, becoming insolvent for the second time. With liabilities of £129, Henry could only manage assets of £22.

The first family in South Australia had completely lost track of him but when his Gawler born daughter Martha was married in Adelaide in 1887 she made an attempt to locate her father. She obviously thought he might have been living in Melbourne as the notice of the marriage in the Adelaide papers, stating that Martha was the daughter of Michael Widger, carried the tag. *Melbourne papers, please copy.* This may have gained the attention of some person who knew his

story because a few weeks after the report of the marriage appeared in the Sydney papers, but the wording had been altered to read 'the daughter of Mr Widger'.

It would be nice if there had been a happy ending but the prophesy on the original Henry's tombstone . *I am in eternity and thou art on the brink* played out to the end for the errant brother. He had actually died in Sydney two years earlier, in 1885, still only in his early 40's.

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The above article was reproduced and copied with the kind permission of the authors
Pam and Russell Smith,
PO Box 1736, Renmark SA 5341.

They have been provided with a copy of this newsletter. Thank you Pam and Russell.

Do you have a connection to the Netherlands in your Family Tree ?

A friend needed a birth certificate from Holland, and found this information, which she kindly passed on to our Group. As you can see Yvette is not cheap, but then we all need that last bit of information from a certificate.

The Enschede birth records are available at Familysearch.org, as are most birth, marriage and death records of the Netherlands. See <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1-11562-43697-80?cc=1831469&wc=10699875> birth records.

If you need help translating records and finding out more about ancestors, I am happy to help. My fee is 80 euros per hour but I prefer to agree on a fee in the currency of the client so your expected expenses won't change if the exchange rate does.

For clients in Australia my rate is \$100 (AUD) per hour including taxes. Research time includes record retrieval, analysis and reporting as well as travel and telephone, Skype or e-mail consultations with the client. Negative findings and unsuccessful searches are charged. Travel expenses within the Netherlands (gas, train tickets, parking) are included in the research rate; costs for photocopies, shipping, international phone calls, microfilm rental, pay-per-view websites and other incidental expenses are not. Payments are through Paypal so you can use any major credit card and some bank accounts as well.

Yvette Hoitink
<http://www.dutchgenealogy.nl>

New to the library.

Your guide to Glenelg – Adelaide's City by the sea
Daughter of the Valley
author - Myrene Teusner
Angaston's First Cemetery 1847-1869
author - Michael P Vort-Ronald

Police Gazette Extracts 1888-1892
author - Michael P Vort-Ronald
Barossa Valley Crime and Punishment 1855-1970
author - Michael P Vort-Ronald

The Great Escape - The Real Thing

Untouched for almost seven decades, the tunnel used in the Great Escape has finally been unearthed. The 111-yard passage nicknamed 'Harry' by Allied prisoners was sealed by the Germans after the audacious break-out from the POW camp Stalag Luft III in western Poland ..

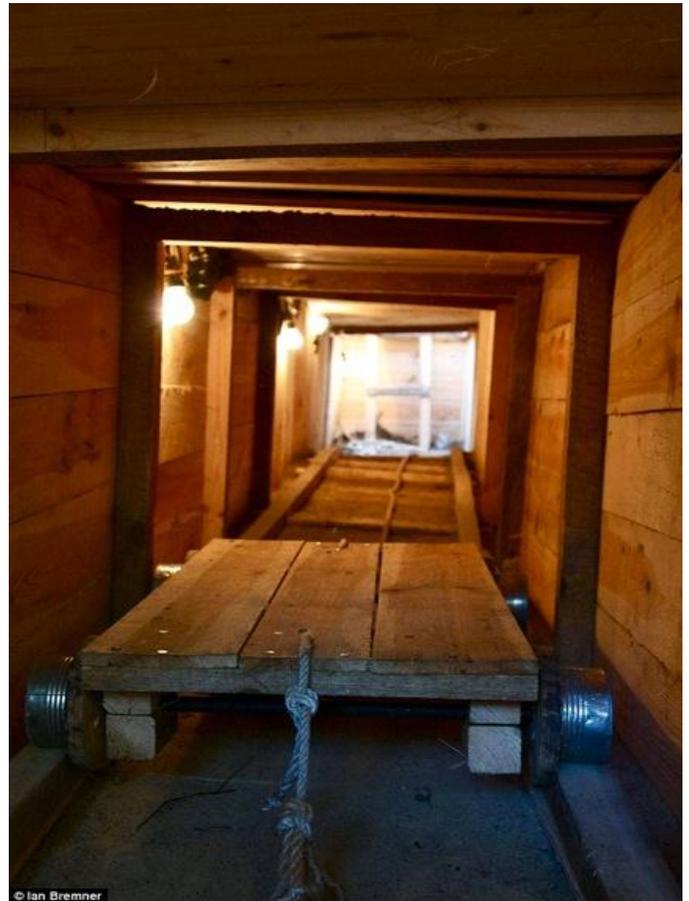
Despite huge interest in the subject, encouraged by the film starring Steve McQueen, the tunnel remained undisturbed over the decades because it was behind the Iron Curtain and the Soviet authorities had no interest in its significance.



But at last British archaeologists have excavated it, and discovered its remarkable secrets. Many of the bed boards which had been joined together to stop it collapsing were still in position. And the ventilation shaft, ingeniously crafted from used powdered milk containers known as Klim Tins, remained in working order.

Scattered throughout the tunnel, which is 30ft below ground, were bits of old metal buckets, hammers and crowbars which were used to hollow out the route. A total of 600 prisoners worked on three tunnels at the same time. They were nicknamed Tom, Dick and Harry and were just 2 ft square for most of their length. It was on the night of March 24 and 25, 1944, that 76 Allied airmen escaped through Harry.

Barely a third of the 200 prisoners - many in fake German uniforms and civilian outfits and carrying false identity papers - who were meant to slip away managed to leave before the alarm was raised when escapee number 77 was spotted.



Tunnel vision: A tunnel reconstruction showing the trolley system.

Only three made it back to Britain an Australian, Canadian and a Brit. Another 50 were executed by firing squad on the orders of Adolf Hitler, who was furious after learning of the breach of security.

In all, 90 boards from bunk beds, 62 tables, 34 chairs and 76 benches, as well as thousands of items including knives, spoons, forks, towels and blankets, were squirreled away by the Allied prisoners to aid the escape plan under the noses of their captors.

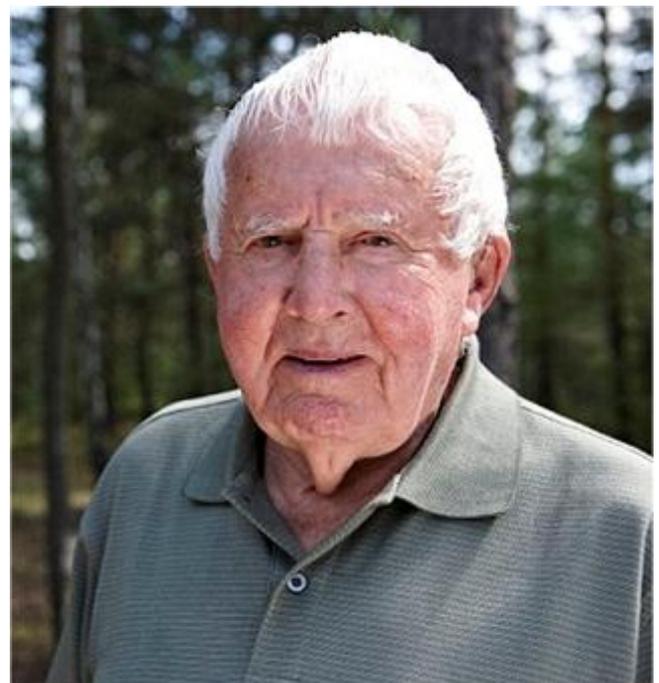


Although the Hollywood movie suggested otherwise, *NO* Americans were involved in the operation. Most were British, and the others were from Canada , (all the tunnellers were Canadian personnel with backgrounds in mining) Poland ,New Zealand , Australia , and South Africa ..

The latest dig, over three weeks in August, located the entrance to Harry, which was originally concealed under a stove in Hut 104.

The team also found another tunnel, called George, whose exact position had not been charted. It was never used as the 2,000 prisoners were forced to march to other camps as the Red Army approached in January 1945.

Watching the excavation was Gordie King, 91, an RAF radio operator, who was 140th in line to use Harry and therefore missed out.



'This brings back such bitter-sweet memories,' he said as he wiped away tears. 'I'm amazed by what they've found.'

Guest Speaker Afternoon

1 pm Saturday 23rd March

Taylor & Forgie Undertakers

Wholly owned and operated by the same local family since 1855.

Mark Forgie

will discuss his Family's Heritage as
Undertakers to Gawler and the
surrounding district.



Adelaide Northern Districts Family History Group Inc.
Committed in Promoting Family History Research.