

Article in 'The South Australian Register'

Wednesday 6 January 1897 - 'The Holidays at Port Victor'

A visitor to Port Victor (Victor Harbor) writes...

'Christmas of 1896 will long be remembered by those whose privilege it was to spend it at Port Victor, which is considered by many to be South Australia's premier watering-place. No township in the colony can boast of more building during the year just closed than Port Victor. Thousands of pounds have been expended in providing extra accommodation for visitors at this holiday resort.

Principal among the new buildings is the Grosvenor Hotel, containing sixty rooms, with a magnificent balcony measuring nearly 200 ft., which has been much appreciated by the boarders and their friends. Then there is Mr. W. Road's commodious lodging-house named Summerlea. Gertymore House and the Coffee Palace have been considerably enlarged, and two others of smaller dimensions - Main's and Halliday's - complete the list of those only recently built. All these, with Warland's well-known hotel (and its auxiliary cottages) and the old Crown Hotel have been crowded. Many of the houses have been unable to meet the numerous applications for rooms.

No fewer than ninety seven persons sat down to dinner in the spacious dining-room of the Grosvenor Hotel on Christmas Day. There was plenty to do in the matter of enjoyment, Granite Island and that white elephant the breakwater of course receiving the lion's share of patronage. From morn until night the rocks were thronged with visitors.

Of other places the River Hindmarsh, the Bluff, and Nettle's Gardens, Hindmarsh Valley, were largely patronised, a well-appointed drag with four horses being available to take passengers to the two latter places. Concerts and entertainments in the Institute were numerous. The social given by a committee of gentlemen on New Year's Eve proved to be most enjoyable. About eighty invitations were issued, and dancing was begun at 9 o'clock. The Institute Hall and supper room were most tastefully decorated by the ladies, and the supper, provided gratuitously by Mrs. Humberstone, the liberal proprietress of the Grosvenor, was without doubt one of the best ever given outside Adelaide. At midnight the guests joined hands and sang 'Auld lang syne,' and the new year was ushered in with cheers within and a bombardment of the hall doors by the larrikins without. Dancing was continued for an hour or two later, and Mrs. Humberstone was afterwards thanked in appropriate terms by Messrs. J. H. Weidenhofer and W. H. Wadey on behalf of the committee and the guests for her splendid hospitality.

On New Year's Day the island was thronged with additional visitors from Strathalbyn, Port Elliot, Goolwa, and Yankalilla to witness the sports provided for their entertainment, and at which the Yankalilla Brass Band assisted. In the evening an impromptu Continental was given. The balconies of the Grosvenor Hotel and Summerlea House were very tastefully decorated by Chinese lanterns, whilst a festoon of lanterns stretched from one balcony to the other over the road added to the charming effect of the scene.

The Yankalilla Band was engaged for the Grosvenor balcony, and there was dancing on both balconies for a couple of hours. Tho crowd assembled on the road evidently enjoyed both the music and the dancing and for the nonce the well-supported Salvationists had to dispense both music and song elsewhere

It is the privilege of Englishmen to growl, and they do it to perfection even at Christmastide. The growlings this year at Port Victor were chiefly levelled at some of the inhabitants for their lethargy and want of enterprise. For instance, the accommodation for sea bathers is almost nil, whereas a few bathing-houses on wheels would make little fortunes for their proprietors during the summer season. There is now only one house, a fixture, some distance from the water's edge, for ladies and children. Other bathers have either to use the barnacled steps from one of the jetties or wallow through soft sand and seaweed, which almost requires a piece of hoopiron to scrape off. The number of boats available for the navigation of the Hindmarsh is totally inadequate. Visitors have either to engage them beforehand or wait their turn.

However, there is much to be appreciated at Port Victor. The sea breezes aid the appetite and sleep. The glorious breakers still roll on, and, thank heaven, the rocks 'gainst which they dash are still untouched by painters' splash to raise the ire of our only Smeaton.'

Historical Note: 'The South Australian Register' was the first South Australian newspaper and was printed on equipment shipped over from London on the *Africaine* in 1836. The first edition printed in South Australia was published on 3 June 1837 as the '*South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*'. At a time when official records were not kept, the newspaper was the source of information relating to shipping schedules, births, deaths, marriages, crime, building development, court proceedings, establishment of towns and businesses, political and social comment.

THE HOLIDAYS AT PORT VICTOR.

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