

# SAOA Historical Series No 46

## Dr William Thomas Angove

(1854-1912)

His is a more famous name in wine than ornithological circles due to the establishment of Angove's Wines in the 1880s at Tea Tree Gully. Dr Angove migrated to South Australia in 1886 as a ship's surgeon, with his wife, Emma (née Carlyon), and several young children. William Thomas Angove was born on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1854 at Camborne in Cornwall. His parents were Thomas Angove, a miner, and Henrietta Effield née Scudamore. William studied medicine at London Hospital and, prior to their emigration, practised medicine in Suffolk at either Mildenhall or perhaps the smaller nearby town of Lakenheath. The five children born in England were Thomas Carlyon (1880), Hester Scudamore (1881), Lucy (1882), Edward Laurence (1884) and Leonard Michael (1885).

On arrival in South Australia William established a medical practice at Tea Tree Gully and was also appointed the medical officer for the poor and destitute of the district in June of that year at a salary of £8/year (Auhl 1993). It was customary at the time to recommend wine for patients and Angove began to experiment with growing and making wine. Growing demand saw him expand production and by 1892 he had 10 acres of vineyards, with a further 20 acres being planted in 1893. By 1903 there were 100 acres under vines at Tea Tree Gully. After renting for a few years, he purchased land and in 1891 bought a second property, called 'Tregrehan' after his wife's family home in Cornwall. Angove leased cellars at the property of 'Brightlands' from his neighbour and friend, Archdeacon George Henry Farr (headmaster of St Peter's College,

1854-79). The bluestone western end of the Angove's cellar door at McLaren Vale is a replica of the original 'Brightlands' cellar.

Angove was particularly proud of his Cabernet wine and the vintage of 1903 produced 2,000 gallons of Cabernet, amongst the 10,000 gallons produced from his 60 acres of vines. By 1897 the Tea Tree Gully vineyards were known as 'St Agnes', after Angove's Cornish home town (also the patron saint of purity) and still the name given to Angove's brandy. By 1920 little wine was bottled at Tea Tree Gully so the wine, mostly sherry, was put into casks and transported to Port Adelaide for shipping to London (Auhl 1993). When Dr Angove died in 1912 two of his sons were involved in the business, which is now in the hands of the fourth and fifth generations of the Angove family.



Source: ([www.angove.com.au](http://www.angove.com.au))

Three more children were born in South Australia: twins Mary and Harold in 1888 and Henrietta Marjory in 1889. Tragedy struck the young family early in their new homeland, with Lucy dying in 1888 and Harold in 1889. William continued his medical practice and wine-making, serving on the wine committee of the Royal Agricultural Society. He was also a keen yachtsman and built several yachts with which he won races. In 1901 he wrote in his account of a cruise around Kangaroo Island that he was joined by Mr Zietz, but we do not know if this was A.H.C. or his son, F.R., Zietz (both ornithologists at the South Australian Museum).

Auhl (1993) has a charming description of the doctor at work:

“At Tea Tree Gully, Dr. Angove had been a familiar figure, visiting his patients on horseback or buggy until he acquired his first ‘horseless carriage’ – an imported American ‘White Steamer’ – a vehicle which could run 100 miles on a tankful of water and which took only a quarter of an hour to get up steam....In 1907 Dr. Angove purchased his second car – a 10 h.p. De Dion – registration No. 77.”

Emma, who died on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1938, is buried in the North Road Cemetery along with her young children, Lucy (1888) and Harold (1889), and her youngest daughter Henrietta (1960). Henrietta was engaged to William Richardson of Eyre Peninsula in 1912, but he broke off the engagement and it seems that Henrietta did not marry. Two bronze plaques are affixed to the gravestone, commemorating Mary Angove and her husband Reginald Kelly.

As suburbia impinged on Tea Tree Gully, agriculture became a thing of the past and most of the vineyards were



### Tea Tree Gully about 1905

From the State Library of South Australia Pictorial Collection, B17417

Emma and William visited England in 1910-11 and after their return to Australia, William went back again to England to undertake research at one of the larger hospitals. He died suddenly on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1912 aged 58, but there is a mystery surrounding his place of death. The Angove gravestone in the North Road Cemetery in Nailsworth recounts that he died at Silverlake in Yorkshire (although Silverlake is actually in Lancashire). All other sources claim that he died in Guys Hospital in London (Whittell 1954, Anon. 1912, obituary in *The Advertiser*), and his obituary in *The Emu* also states that his daughter was with him on his deathbed (she was a nurse at Guys Hospital which adds weight to this claim). Whittell (1954) incorrectly gives his death date as 15<sup>th</sup> March. In 1912 sons Thomas and Edward were running the wine business, Leonard was an engineer on interstate steamers, the eldest daughter, Hester, was head nurse at Guys Hospital in London, and Mrs Angove and two daughters, Mary and Henrietta, were living at Tea Tree Gully. Edward enlisted in 1916 and was killed on the Somme in 1918. Interestingly, Edward's son Roger, three years old at the time, went on to be a keen ornithologist and Adelaide doctor.

replaced by subdivisions. However in 1993, when Angove Pty Ltd wanted to extend land division into an area of native vegetation, the State Government purchased the land (Auhl 1993) and dedicated the Angove Conservation Park. This park protects one of the last remnants of drooping sheoak and southern cypress pine woodland in the Adelaide foothills and contains 142 native plant species.

To turn now to ornithology, Dr Angove joined the South Australian Ornithological Association (SAOA) soon after its formation in 1899 (Anon. 1912) and, in 1907, he proposed his son, Edward, for membership, although Edward was no longer a member in 1916. Clearly a keen and competent ornithologist, we have little documentation of Dr Angove's abilities apart from his egg collection and his eggbook (both in the South Australian Museum (SAM)), a Natural History Notebook and notes on a few bird species relayed by J. Neil McGilp (1922). *The Emu* obituary makes it clear that some of the notes that McGilp relayed relate to the Australian Ornithologists Union's (the old name for the RAOU) Campout at Warunda Creek on Eyre Peninsula following the meeting in Adelaide in 1909. According to this source he recounted around the campfire that he would like to see his birthplace and old

home before he died, which wish was fulfilled shortly after.

This campout was one of the few early field surveys on southern Eyre Peninsula and was written up by various ornithologists, most notably Captain S A White (1910) and Hall (1910). White's account is available on line, although some words and sentences are corrupted and the photographs are absent. The copy that has been used is in the Smithsonian Library.

Angove collected both skins and eggs, mainly from the Tea Tree Gully district and swapped specimens with other collectors, as was then the custom. His skin collection was so badly damaged by insects that it had to be destroyed after his death (Whittell 1954). A few skins that he had presumably swapped with others are extant (at least they are listed in catalogues as being extant in the 1970s). There is one specimen in the SA White Collection (donated to the SAM): a Freckled Duck taken at Warunda Creek on Eyre Peninsula in October 1909. The SAM catalogue contains 16 specimens collected by Angove mainly from 1897-1906 and the Australian Museum catalogue mentions two Angove specimens collected prior to 1908.

McGilp's (1922) article is based on notes found with Dr Angove's Egg Collection when it was donated to the SAOA in 1921. The notes refer to just 17 bird species, 16 bush birds, and one water bird. Some are species that are no longer found in the districts where Angove found them. Most notable is the Spotted Quail-thrush that he describes as "fairly numerous through the Mt. Lofty Hills District. Have taken eggs at Teatree Gully and Chain of Ponds". Another extinct species in the Mt Lofty Ranges is the Azure Kingfisher. Angove "obtained a fine clutch on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1906,...just below Gumeracha Bridge and between the fords". Of the Black Honeyeater, he says "F. Hall obtained the nest and eggs of this bird at Teatree Gully, October, 1909. This is the only record of its nesting here for some years". His egg collection contained three clutches of Black Honeyeater eggs from September and October 1888.

Other species from the near-Adelaide district are the Slender-billed Thornbill, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Varied Sittella and White-naped Honeyeater. In fact Angove's notes refer to the Brown Thornbill but his description is clearly of the Slender-billed: "Found commonly in samphire country on Torrens Island, where they nest low down in samphire bushes a foot or so from the ground, and the nest is rather difficult to find...They are early breeders, nests being found in August". He describes the Sittella as "Not uncommon in the district (Teatree Gully); flies in mobs, is very restless, not remaining long in one tree, has a short jerky flight, twittering whilst flying. Builds a beautiful nest in the fork of a sheoak." On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1888 he found a nest of the White-naped Honeyeater in a eucalypt six feet from the ground and comments that "These birds are numerous all over the district".

Some of the species mentioned in the notes are of birds collected in drier country, both at Cambrai (then called Rhine Villa) and Mannum. He took specimens of the Yellow Thornbill at both localities in 1905 and 1906 respectively. "This bird is very fond of pine trees [i.e. *Callitris* species] and is everywhere found on the pine studded flats near Mannum. Edward Angove took a nest and eggs of this thornbill near Mannum in October 1907: "nest about 12 feet from ground in a mallee, much the same character as *A. lineata* [Striated Thornbill] – four inches long, 2½ x 2½, neatly and compactly made of fine grass, flower heads, wool, spiders' webs, and lined with feathers." Of the White-fronted Honeyeater, Angove writes: "This bird is fairly numerous at Buckleys, near the Stone Wall, Mannum. The bird nests low down on the top of a stump of mallee cut off and just sprouting again, or in a low bush; we took one set of eggs at end of October, 1907". Common about Cambrai were the Chestnut Quail-thrush: "Observed a good many pairs of this species in scrub about Rhine Villa, and obtained two male specimens and what we took to be a half-built nest".

The Golden-headed Fantail-Warbler was found near Mannum, as well as the nest of the bird, "placed in some rushes about nine inches from the ground. It was partly built of spiders' webs and green leaves, domed, with well-defined side entrance. We, unfortunately, shot the bird before finding the nest, and on looking at the nest again a fortnight later it had been deserted. There seemed to be a good few of these birds about". The Pied Honeyeater was seen at Stone Wall near Mannum in December 1909 where it was nesting. Angove comments: "The season has been peculiar in that birds like *Epthianura tricolor* [Crimson Chat], *Halycon pyrophygia* [Red-backed Kingfisher], and this species were found nesting at Mannum, whereas in usual years none of these put in an appearance". This was the same year that Black Honeyeaters were breeding close to Adelaide.

As we have seen Angove spent time on Eyre Peninsula in October 1909 and collected a few specimens there. An adult and immature Fan-tailed Cuckoo were collected at Wandilla Camp. I wonder if this should read 'Wanilla' which is close by the other places that he visited on this trip. Other birds included Rock Parrot, which was found at Kellidie Bay "fairly numerous about the water, and it was nesting on Goat Island...The birds were nesting in the hollows and holes in the cliffs and also on the surface, deep under the scrubby brushes, and in the crevices of some heaps of rock in the centre of the island". The rufous-vented form of the Grey Shrike-thrush, the Rainbow Lorikeet and the Western Yellow Robin were found at Warunda Camp. Of the latter, Angove comments: "We found this species fairly common at foot of the Marble Range. A nest was placed on a horizontal limb of a sugar gum, in a fork about fifteen feet from the ground. Externally it was composed of grasses held together with cobweb and lined with dead leaves of native broom. It was loosely built, and outside of nest are some pendant pieces of bark hung on by cobweb." The Rainbow Lorikeet "was very numerous and was nesting

freely in the spouts of the sugar gums in the Forest Reserve, but were difficult to get at, as they choose mostly end spouts of dead limbs, which were too rotten to take many risks with. The Purple-crowned Lorikeet was also nesting in a small colony in sugar gums near the camp.”

The only water bird listed was the Rufous Night-Heron which on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1910 was found breeding at Teatree Swamps at the back of Loveday Bay near the Coorong. The young were almost ready to fly. “There was quite a big colony of them nesting quite low down in the teatrees in the swamp”. From the use of the plural “we” it seems likely that William’s son, Edward, was with him on some birding trips and we know that Edward collected some eggs in his own right as well.

There are scant reports of Angove’s bird sightings and skin collection as he died before the SAOA began publication of the journal in 1914. A few glimpses come from reports in *The Emu* about doings in South Australia; for example “Dr Angove exhibited a skin of a Bush-lark (*Mirafra*), of an unusually ruddy colour and Grass-Wren (*Amytis striata*), and a number of other oological specimens from the MacDonnell Ra, CA” at a meeting of the SAOA in 1907 (Anon. 1907). There is also a mention of Dr Angove’s obtaining the 3<sup>rd</sup> record for the state of Red-chested Button-Quail, when he collected a female at Tea Tree Gully on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1904 (Anon. 1930).

Most of the SAOA’s Correspondence, which dates back to about 1916, is in the State Library of South Australia. On perusing the box of correspondence from 1916-1922, I found two items regarding Dr Angove’s egg collection. Of course we only have one side of the correspondence – letters to the Association and not those written by the Association. On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1921 Mrs Dorothy C Angove wrote to the SAOA granting their request to have Dr Angove’s Egg Collection, which was left to her husband, Edward, who had collected some clutches as well. She requested that the duplicates be removed by SAOA members and left for her sons. Further to this and no doubt in response to a letter from the SAOA, she wrote again on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1921 agreeing to the SAOA taking possession of the egg collection currently in Mrs Angove’s house at Tea Tree Gully. It is not clear which Mrs Angove she was referring to here – whether herself or Dr Angove’s widow, Emma, who was still alive at this stage. Dorothy also asked that she retain a small deal cabinet that was used to house the duplicate clutches.

The SAOA made a decision in the early 1930s to divest itself of its egg collection. The *South Australian Ornithologist* (1933) relates that, at its September 1932 meeting, members decided to offer the collection to the SAM on condition that the Museum pay them £20 for the cabinet that housed the clutches. By the October meeting, the Museum had accepted their offer and so the SAOA’s collection of 744 clutches went to the Museum. Of these, 278 clutches were from the Dr W T Angove collection. When I investigated collections and registers in the SAM

in the 1970s I found that other collectors represented in the Angove collection were Badenoch, McEwen, Dr Perks and D. Reeves and the only other collection represented was that of O. Smith.

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## Penny Paton

Part 3 of Philippa Horton’s account of John Sutton will continue in a future newsletter as will the remaining parts of Dr Angove’s account.