

Scenes of Early South Australia: the Letters of Joseph Keynes of Keyneton 1839-1843

Edited By Rob Linn

Introduction

In these days of telephone, telex and other communication devices the world is seemingly at our fingertips. No longer do we need to labour over letters seeking to communicate our inner feelings in a scrawl on faded paper. Yet, this dying art was once, not so long ago, the only means of transferring information between individuals across land and sea.

It was with great excitement therefore that in March 1979 I came across a box of documents which contained the papers of Joseph Keynes & Co. from 1839 to 1843. From amongst the confusion of legal documents, Government gazettes, and account books, there emerged a meticulously catalogued bundle of letters which revealed the story of one man's attempt to create a new life for himself in South Australia. What made the find even more remarkable was that the letters had lain dormant in the loft at Lindsay Park, Angaston, for some 130 years until the property was finally sold by the Angas family in the early 1960s and they somehow managed to survive even this major reshuffle. After many readings of the letters, I picked out those sections which I felt would be of most interest in terms of characters described, events that occurred and the general goings on of 'colonial life' and being careful to avoid repetition of content, came up with the selection that appears herein.

I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Henry Angas and Mr Richard Keynes for their kindness in allowing me to use the letters and documents of Joseph Keynes and George Fife Angas.¹

To cross the world to a new colony like South Australia in the late 1830s was no easy decision for any prospective emigrant in Great Britain. The risks and the sacrifices were great, the pain of leaving loved ones forever immense, yet many made the great journey, for they saw the hope of something better ahead. For many life in England was certainly nothing to be overjoyed about, especially if they held dissenting religious beliefs, as the establishment viewed dissenting doctrine as anathema. A young farmer,

for example, seeking to advance his prospects in terms of wealth and social status, was seriously disadvantaged if his religious affiliations differed from the landowning class. When a landed proprietor interviewed a farmer seeking tenancy, the first question asked was often, 'of what persuasion are you?'² If the answer was anything other than the established church, the hopes of gaining tenancy were low. Hence, many young, ambitious persons viewed South Australia as an attractive alternative in their search for material and religious satisfaction.

The promoters of South Australia went to great lengths to convince emigrants that the new colony would offer civil and religious liberty in an atmosphere of social advancement. The South Australian Association's manifesto of 1834³ portrayed the probable lifestyle and the rewards for those of all classes who were prepared to emigrate. Previous attempts to colonise areas of Australia had not met with great satisfaction at home; either because of the taint of a penal settlement, or because of the failure of land distribution, as had been the case with the Swan River Province. Most Britons would have agreed with John Stephens when he wrote that

Land, capital and labour are the three grand elements of wealth, and the art of colonisation consists in transferring capital and labour from countries where they are in excessive proportion to the amount of fertile land, to countries where there is plenty of fertile land, but neither capital nor labour.⁴

To many the Wakefield system of colonisation being used in the settlement of South Australia was the best means of carrying out this transference of capital and labour.⁵

One of the greatest advocates of this system of settlement in South Australia was George Fife Angas. Born in 1789, he entered his family's coach building business at the age of 15 and from that time devoted his life to the pursuit of religion and philanthropy in commercial ventures. In religion a dissenter, in business usually hardheaded and forthright, he strove to change the world by subjecting the principles of colonisation to the precepts of his Christian faith. After his appointment to the South Australian Board of Commissioners in 1834 he wrote

My sole desire is to promote the success of the new colony under God as his agent, rather than that of any government on earth, and I pray that my appointment may not take place if it shall not result in His glory and the amelioration of the condition of the poor and industrious.⁶

Angas's main intent was to get the new colony settled by pious men, whose zeal

and enthusiasm for religion would make their conquest of the wilderness more profitable. For this reason he invested heavily in the colony, helping to establish the South Australian Company on the one hand, and his private interests on the other. His biographer, Edwin Hodder, rather sanctified his ideals when he wrote

There was nothing that Mr Angas would not do to further the interests of South Australia; he had glorious visions of it being a place of rest, a new starting point in life, for myriads of his fellows trodden down by competition, persecuted for conscience's sake, or struggling to be honest.⁷

There could be no doubt, however, about the sincerity of the man. It was his fervent testimony to the possibilities of South Australia, given to those disillusioned with the inflexibility of the English establishment, that fired in many hearts the desire for a new life in the Antipodes. Thus, when in late 1838 he made known his need of an overseer to supervise his farming interests in the colony, a suitable recruit was not hard to find.

Richard Keynes, the Congregational minister at Blandford in Dorset, a man known to his contemporaries for his 'inflexible integrity and uprightness – his noble generosity and abhorrence of all that was mean, sordid and selfish',⁸ wrote to Angas that his two sons, Joseph and William, were looking to South Australia for their future. Born in 1809, Joseph Keynes was the eldest of a family of five brothers and three sisters united by familial love and religious fervour. The closeness of the family was such that ten years or more after Joseph left Blandford his father fondly remembered their walks across the Dorset countryside during which they conversed about the problems and complexities of life. Joseph was

a man, serious minded, [often] keen in business, upheld by first principles, generous on occasion, loyal to his own, a spirit liable to feel resentment when believing it [was] wronged....[He had] a background of religious faith [that] sustain[ed] him through trials, and [was] active when he felt he could help others.⁹

His talents covered a wide area, but his true vocation lay in tending sheep and tilling the soil, and his skill at this was confirmed by Lord Portman, from whom he leased land, as well as numerous Dorset sheep breeders.¹⁰

Angas, delighted with the thought of employing young men who were 'perfectly sober, moral and industrious',¹¹ replied to Richard Keynes's offer of his sons' services immediately, sending him the compendium of a book called 'THE LAND OF PROMISE being an Authentic and Impartial HISTORY

[compiled from exclusive sources] of the RISE and PROGRESS of the NEW BRITISH PROVINCE of SOUTH AUSTRALIA', and an invitation for Joseph and William to embark for South Australia within six weeks.¹² Keynes naturally thought this was rushing things a little, and not until after six months of negotiation on the future of Joseph and William was agreement reached and a partnership formed between George Fife Angas, George Miller and George Fife Angas & Co.,¹³ and Joseph Keynes under the title of Joseph Keynes & Co. This company was to pursue the management of stock and land in South Australia, although Angas saw fit to include a brick making concern in its sphere of activities. Angas and Miller were to provide the capital for the venture (not to exceed £5000), while Joseph, not endowed with great wealth, would give his expertise in the colony to be carried out with the 'whole of his time, talents and skill.'¹⁴

These arrangements were seen by Joseph as God-sent and in his preparations for departure and during the voyage out and his subsequent work after arrival he was always zealous in Angas's interests. Angas pinned more than a little hope on Keynes's ability to succeed and told another of his employees, 'Should he wear as well in the Colony as he has done in England you will find him to be a great blessing abroad'.¹⁵ Keynes's letters to Angas contain something of the excitement and vigour of colonial life, although they are not without a poignant side for South Australia was not all that Keynes expected. Indeed, often the harshness of colonial life transformed the 'Land of Promise' into a place of despair. To cope with this, Keynes had to be an optimist and to have what Douglas Pike termed the ability to see that 'behind a frowning mask nature had a smiling face'.¹⁶ His letters reflect his desire to describe what he saw and felt around him, in the hope that his friends and associates in England might better understand the reality of colonial life.

Parting

J. A. James¹⁷ to Joseph Keynes: Edgbaston, 4 February 1839

... By a letter which I received some weeks since from your father, I learn that you are going to leave your native country and try your fortunes in Australia, and that you are going out under circumstances of a very advantageous nature. I do not wonder that you are disposed to avail yourself of the opportunity thus afforded you of doing better abroad than, on account of the present circumstances of our country, you were ever likely to do at home. I quite commend you for your courage and resolution and

believe that a fair prospect of doing well for this world is opening before you. Of course there are some things of a painful nature connected with this expatriation; the separation from your father and your brothers and sisters is what filial piety and paternal love recoils from but myriads are continually making the same sacrifice, and you and they have the hope of becoming at one time or other the centres of domestic circles of your own ...

I have not the slightest doubt of your success and of your ultimately becoming a respectable and wealthy man, provided you are a good man Do not become a greedy, covetous, hoarding worldling, but a generous supporter of God's interest in the colony. Do not be in haste to marry. Be very cautious on this point, this is a step that will do much to make or unmake you for life.¹⁸

At Sea

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas & Co.: 'Anna Robertson', 6 July 1839

... The pigs are very well with the exception of one which died about 3 weeks after we sailed. I think it must have had a blow or the other pigs laid across it and [hurt] its back – it was very weak across its loins and got worse and worse till at last it was not able to stand and then it died, the others thrive very well and I have no doubt but we shall be able to get them safely to Adelaide. The sheep are all very well. A fortnight ago the two Leicester rams had a bad cold owing to so much wet. I took a pint of blood from each and gave them an ounce of salts and they are now quite well.

I have not found the Captain so civil as I could have wished, but I think it must be owing to his not taking the money, and he knows that I have it in my custody; how he became acquainted with the fact I cannot tell, he did not receive the information from me.¹⁹ There has been great discontent on board especially amongst the intermediate passengers. I do not think Mr Brown did justice as regards the provisions,²⁰ we have more than we can use but the quality of some of the articles is very inferior. The biscuit but very few persons on board use at all, if there had been half the quantity and of a better quality it would have given much more satisfaction; it is the same with the sugar, the tea is very good, the coffee, cocoa²¹ and rice but middling, the pork is very good ... so is the beer and porter, wine middling, raisons good and so is the mustard, pepper and salt, what makes the thing worse is that Mr Stacy²² does not seem very well acquainted with his business and the intermediate cook has too much to do to perform it properly. The Captain blames Mr Brown for he

says that you put the thing in his hands but the passengers say it is your and Mr Angas's fault, they paid [a] higher price to get superior accommodations and have not better if so good as the generality of vessels afford. I am afraid they will be making complaints when they reach Adelaide and will send home a bad report of you and your vessel. I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken but I thought it right that you should be made acquainted with the particulars of the case and be able to meet the complaints if any are made.

Arrival at Holdfast Bay

*William Keynes on behalf of Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 3 October 1839*²³

I have not found it practicable to write or even begin a letter before this evening. The trouble, anxiety and labour of getting the sheep and our own, together with Yates' and Harding's²⁴ goods up from the port to the town had entirely prevented our sending any communication to you. The sheep were landed on Saturday 26th September at Holdfast Bay at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we found it impossible to get lodgings for the night and we slept in the open air by the sheep.²⁵ On Saturday morning finding that there were no rations to be obtained we were obliged to drive the sheep to Adelaide where we arrived at 1 o'clock with them safe and in no ways injured by the journey. Mr Rowlands²⁶ kindly offered us his yard for their convenience where they remain until this day, the shepherd driving them out every day to pasture and in the evening penning them up in the yard. Your farming affairs are in a most deplorable condition.²⁷ Things have not been managed properly and in addition to this I fear they have been most shamefully neglected – to give an instance, there is a fence round a section by the Torrens put up under Mr Lester's²⁸ direction, which I am told cost £1200 and at the present time is not worth anything, a child might push down any part of it, and it is all let, part of it to Fisher²⁹ the other 8 acres to Clarke³⁰ the gardener ... My brother finds it impossible at the present time to purchase sheep, horses or cows in the colony they are enormously dear a good horse being worth £140, sheep at 52s. per head and good cows £20 ... The necessaries of life here are extravagantly high – I may say truly that they are ruinous, bread 3s 8d. the four pound loaf, potatoes 30s. the cwt., flour £60 the ton. The keeping of labourers here comes very expensive and my brother of course feels very great concern respecting it

... We are entirely dependent on Van Diemen's Land for our flour and so also is New South Wales in some degree and when the crops in that country happen to fail as was the case in 1838 the scarcity of provisions in this colony almost amounts to a famine.

Tragedy on the Torrens

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 24 December 1839

It is now with great sorrow I give the account of William Harding who lost his life by drowning in the Torrens just below the jail on Saturday the 23 November. Yates and Harding drove up some cows with me in the morning [from Walkerville] to Adelaide to be sold by auction, it was very cold and wet and we all got wet through by the time we reached the town at eleven o'clock, we put the cows in the pens and observing the men were cold and uncomfortable I gave them 2s 6d. to get a glass of brandy and water each and warm themselves by the fire before the sale began, they attended to their duty during the sale, after it was over a gentleman that bought a cow and a calf asked for the men to help him home with her, and as he lived but a short distance from the place I consented. They had some difficulty in getting her there, and he gave them a glass bottle full of gin and water, part of which they drank and part threw away; the men then came to me I did not perceive them to be in [the] least intoxicated and told them to ride the two stock horses and drive home the cows that were not sold with them. They had hardly been gone 3/4 quarters of an hour before Mr Horswill³¹ came to me in a state of great agitation and said I had a man and horse drowned. I thought it must have taken place at the section³² at first, till he told me it was Harding. Myself and Mr Rowlands went down directly, the horse was dragged out of the water and we used every exertion to get the body of Harding, men went into the water and dived repeatedly after it but all to no purpose, nor was the body found till the Friday morning after, it having laid in the water almost a week ...

We buried Harding in as cheap and decent a manner as possible, his wife bore the loss of her husband better than I could have supposed, she has a daughter born on the passage and intends staying with me still, I told her she would not want whilst I was in the colony.³³ My brother and self have enjoyed our health as well as we could expect for new settlers. There has been two men drowned within this fortnight near the same hole that Harding was. I must now conclude wishing yourself and family every blessing and shall be thankful for your prayers and advice, I feel I need them both

for I am placed in a difficult and responsible situation.

Brickmaking at Walkerville

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 24 December 1839

We are getting on steadily with the brickmaking³⁴ about 15 thousand a week on an average but we find we can make faster than sell. [W]e have now ready for sale 150 thousand and have sold 30 thousand at 3£ thousand. [W]e propose reducing the price to 2£ 15s. and giving Mr Rowlands and Mr Cook[e] of the first of August and Cook[e] a commission of 5£ per cent for selling. The pug mill does its work very well, we have agreed with the brickmakers³⁵ to do everything; the pug mill, tempering the clay, and deliver the bricks burnt and ready for sale [and] count them out from the kiln at 34s. thousand. The wood clearers to have 5s. tree for grubbing, the small trees not to be sectioned, and to cleave and saw up the wood fit for burning the brick at 3s.9d. thousand [feet]. It will cost us 2£ thousand for making and burning but then you will get your land cleared and fit for the plough without any expense.

Land has rose rapidly in Walkerville these last two years, so that your section which lies close to it must be increased in value as well. I have sold the 1/2 acre I bought there keeping a road 22 feet wide for the kiln, which takes off a considerable portion of it, for the rest I got 32£, what I gave for it was 37£ and the conveyancing cost two more, our road at that will stand us in 7£. The outlay of capital on the brick concern has been very great indeed, almost as much again as I expected it would have been. [W]e have paid in labour sometimes 50 and 60£ in a week but I hope in future our weekly expenses will not exceed 30£.³⁶

Klemzig

*William Keynes on behalf of Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 3 October 1839*³⁷

... The sections or acres in the town are yet unoccupied but as there will be great trouble in leasing or letting them my brother thinks it best to act up to your instructions, retaining one for himself and making over the others to Mr Rowlands, who is of course always on the spot and has greater facilities of turning them to good account than we have. The Germans³⁸ are settled for a time on two sections of land in a line with and almost contiguous to those occupied by Fisher and Clarke. They have decidedly the prettiest site for their village of any in the colony and they cultivate their gardens

with as much assiduity and skills as they are capable of but in this respect they are inferior to the English; and taken as men they have that phlethor and inactivity which disqualifies them from active exertion in any line of business – the women I am told, are far more active than the men.³⁹

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Flaxman's Valley, 15 July 1840

... Mr Flaxman has informed you before this that he has let the section at Klemzig to the Germans; I believe for seven years, the first two without rent, but of that I cannot speak confidently. [T]hey have made quite a [v]illage, every house has its garden, many of them have sown wheat this year which is looking very well, so that the land must be greatly increased in value since they first had it.⁴⁰

German Settlers

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 1 February 1841

... I find in this country as well as in England that no man can serve two masters and as you sent me here to attend to your interest I will do it whoever I please or displease. Mr Morphet⁴¹ and I do not intend letting the Germans come to settle in the [Flaxman's] Valley till we hear further from you. [I]f they come they would occupy the best part of the Valley and pay for it in ten years or never perhaps. Besides, I do not see what they could do so far away from Adelaide. [H]ow they live now is by selling the produce of their gardens, with their butter and cheese, in Town; which they could not do if they were up here so that I think they had better remain at Klemzig. I have only two Germans in our employ, both shepherds and very good ones, which is not generally the case. I have tried several times to employ them but they do not like the idea of leaving their villages.

The Seven Special Surveys

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Flaxman's Valley, 28 October 1840

... I am glad for your sake and interests that you have allowed me to aid in the selection of your lands.⁴² Be assured I will do the utmost of my power and use my best judgement in their selection and as there are some good parcels of land contiguous to your surveys, if possible I will get Mr Jacob⁴³ the surveyor, to include and take them into your surveys. I cannot say that the surveys are adapted to extensive

cultivation for though the land is rich, it is more fitted for grazing than agriculture on an extensive scale, as it is encumbered with many rocks and is most truly a land of hills and valleys ... I have seen Mr Morphett, he says he shall be most happy to have my assistance in the selection of the surveys. [He] is a pleasant man and I have no doubt but we shall agree very well. Of course, you expect me to have the priority of choice in the selection of your lands as you have much more at stake than Mr Flaxman in the concern ...⁴⁴

I shall endeavour to choose [the lands] adapted both for cultivation, sheep and cattle. Angas Park,⁴⁵ I think is the best adapted for cultivation and the surveys in Flaxman's Valley and on the R[h]ine,⁴⁶ more suitable for sheep and cattle runs. Stock-keepers generally say that we have the best run for fattening cattle in the colony, and the R[h]ine surveys being bounded by the Murray scrub on the east side and by the other surveys surrounding it, you would have no fear of other people settling near you and would take the use of all the waste land in the vicinity. I have seen Mr. Jacob about the boundary line but that was fixed some time since. [T]here will be 40,000 acres of measured land, but I hope we shall be able to choose the sections so as to make the other 12 thousand not worth the notice of any person.

Flaxman's Valley

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Flaxman's Valley, 27 March 1840

... I believe I gave you a rather different report of it [Flaxman's Valley]⁴⁷ in one of my last letters representing it as ascending with a gentle slope towards the hills on both sides of the water, which was true of the part I first saw, but since I have had the pleasure of examining it more fully I find it to be a succession of hills with here and there a flat fit for cultivation. But this I can confidently assert, it is one of the best sheep runs in South Australia, indeed I should not like to change with any one. A hilly country is more suited to sheep than a flat one, however rich it might be, there is a greater variety of herbage and in the dryest season you have always plenty of food. [F]or whilst all the plains round Adelaide were burnt up and the water dry in many of the streams, yet in Flaxman's Valley there was an abundance of green herbage and plenty of water. [T]he contrast was so great that in my journeys to the town, the land around it looked like a wilderness, whilst our valley resembled the Garden of Eden.⁴⁸

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 1 February 1841

... If half what Mr Menge⁴⁹ says is true, the inside of Flaxman's Valley is worth more than the outside, it being full of iron, gold and precious stones. I believe there is iron, there may be precious stones, but about the gold I have great doubts.⁵⁰

Angas Park and the Rhine Survey

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas, Adelaide, 21 June 1841

An account of the surveys belonging George Fife Angas Esq., by Joseph Keynes, manager, and Thomas Green, stockman.

... Angas Park Survey: this is decidedly one of the best, it comprises within its limits plenty of water⁵¹ plenty of good land, excellent grass, good timber, and at the north of the survey is the best place for a township⁵² as it is close to the Great Northern Road and there would be plenty of water frontage for the first settlers and full two thousand acres of land but slightly covered with timber, fit for agriculture. This survey is more adapted for cattle than sheep on account of its low situation and the back runs being so heavily timbered. The survey would keep a thousand head of cattle with two thousand sheep with the adjoining back runs. The soil is rather sandy but not so much as some of the other surveys. Captain Hall⁵³ has a section at the west of this survey which he bought of Mr Flaxman for £4 an acre ...

Rhine Survey: this consists of very indifferent land almost wholly unfit for the purposes of agriculture. It has tolerable sheep runs, but owing to the scarcity of water would not keep above 3000 sheep.⁵⁴ Its chief asset is in its protecting the back runs on the east of Flaxman's Valley. You cannot say anything about cattle as they must go to Flaxman's Valley to be watered in summer. If water could be obtained it would run twice the number of sheep I stated. I think there must be water below the measured land where the Rhine is lost in the Murray scrub. I must examine it, and if it is the case we must make a station there. We have one sheep station on the Rhine. This survey is the eastern boundary of the rest, there is no water between it and the Murray scrub.

Mount Crawford

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 21 June 1841

... Mount Crawford, this is the Land of Goshen; the thousand acres in particular that was sold by Mr Stephens to Frew and Rankin⁵⁵ is the best in all the surveys, in fact there is no such land with such an abundance of water to be found elsewhere. I think

there is full two miles of water frontage belonging to Frew and Rankin's land, the water holes are very deep, at least thirty or forty feet, and owing to the abundance of springs they contain are never dry, but keep constantly running through the driest weather.⁵⁶ The land not taken by Frew and Rankin is not nearly so good, besides which it contains very little water. [I]t would run about a thousand head of cattle but owing to its being so surrounded on all sides with Settlers, and the land being good, I should think it most advantageous to sell this portion of the Survey especially as it is already cut up by the sale of Frew and Rankin.

Mount Crawford put me most in mind of the scenery of Devonshire than anything I have yet seen in the colony. [I]t was the place I had always looked out in my own mind for you to have built your mansion on.⁵⁷ The distance from Adelaide is only 40 miles which is nothing in this country. The soil of Frew and Rankin's land is a deep, black loam; the soil of the other land is not so deep, and more sandy.

Men and Stock

Joseph Keynes to George Miller: Adelaide, 1 February 1841

... Our flocks have turned out better than we could have expected, we having reared 22 hundred lambs out of 24 hundred ewes. Our sheep likewise averaged 3 lbs. of wool each,⁵⁸ which we intend sending home not being able to get more than 1s lb. in the colony....

Next year I hope the wool will almost pay my expenses. I hope to send you home close upon a thousand pounds worth of wool if it fetches anything like a good price, besides making 6 or 700£ of wethers. We want a herd of breeding [horses] and a few brood mares, they would be scarcely any expense and would make a good return for capital.

My shepherds used to be always running to Adelaide for clothes or shoes till I adopted the plan of keeping them by me ... I do not allow them to go to town which is much better for the men, some of them used to spend all their money in drink and on the bad women and come away without anything for their use, at last. Ardent spirits and bad women are the ruin of the labouring class in this colony. I believe there is as much demand for both as there is in London according to the size of the place. The native dogs are very troublesome to our flocks in this colony, so much so [that] when sheep have been left out through the negligence of shepherds, whole flocks have been so scattered by them that they have been all destroyed before they could be found ...

Yates the shepherd I brought with me is a good shepherd and behaves himself. He is musical and if you could find him out a cunopian,⁵⁹ I think he called it. I will inclose his order and feel obliged if you could execute it. His wife has had another child, she has now two boys and a girl. I hope there is not any more coming; they, are not quite so profitable a stock as lambs, their rations cost more and [they do] not make any return.

Making a Station

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, 1 February 1841

... Making a station cost us about twenty pounds. It consists of a hut 11 feet wide, 12 to 15 feet long; a watch box for the hutkeeper⁶⁰ to sleep in at night by the folds and 120 hurdles, 60 for each flock. The hut is covered in with shingles, the whole is made out of Gum Trees. We put a ewe flock of six hundred and a lamb flock of 8 hundred at a station. If two ewe flocks are put together the lambs are apt to mix and the shepherds to steal each others lambs.⁶¹

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Flaxman's Valley, 18 June 1841

... I am glad you have not given up the idea of coming out to South Australia. I think whenever you come you are likely to find me at work about something or other, perhaps assisting to skin and kill a bullock for that is always the stockman's work and my own. [I]n that case we will give you as good a beef stake as you will ever eat in London, only you must not expect too many domestic comforts, as Mr Forster⁶² calls them, in the bush. Bitterly did he complain of my want of them when he asked for a basin to wash himself in the morning and I showed him a broken pot outside the door. That was the climax, 'Well,' he said, 'you do live rough indeed.' Mr Forster mentioned my want of various things to the stockman and he said, 'he thought master was very well off, and if he bought so many things that was no good he would soon spend all his money and that would not do as he came to get money, not spend it ...'⁶³

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas & Co.: Flaxman's Valley, 6 December 1841

... We have consigned our first clip of wool to your house and should it not manage quite so well as we could wish, allowance must be made for the want of proper conveniences, such as a washing pool and shearing shed which we were unable to obtain last year. We shall be better accommodated this year having put up a large and

commodious wool shed 64 feet long by 16 wide with a verandaw for the men to shear under, and two wings 32 feet long by 16 wide to put the sheep in should it be wet. The whole building is to cost 110£, the man finding all the materials with the exception of the nails and hinges, which will not amount to more than 8£. It is all built and roofed in entirely of Gum.

The Golden Fleece

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas & Co.: Flaxman's Valley, 4 April 1842

... I have not had experience enough in the wool to say much about it, but the size of the merino is much improved by the cross with the Leicester.⁶⁴ The wethers weigh on an average 30 or 40 lbs. heavier and come to hand a year sooner. The Down sheep breed much better than the Leicester but the wool between the Down and merino is not so good as the cross with the Leicester....

We run from 6 to 7 hundred ewes in a flock, lamb once a year about May getting from 90 to 95 per cent of lambs. The wethers and young sheep we run from 1000 to 1200 together. There is usually two flocks at one station, a dry flock and a ewe flock, we allow a hut keeper to each station whose business is to shew the folds, cook for the shepherds and sleep in a watchbox by the sheep at night. We shear in October, if it is delayed after that time the grass seed gets into the wool. We have lost several sheep by grass seeds, they eat through the skin into the inside of the sheep. The principal disease sheep have here is the Scab, which is easily cured by proper attention.⁶⁵ In moist conditions they will get foot rot and I think more giddy here than at home, this I attribute so much to breeding in and in. We lose scarcely any ewes by lambing, last year out of 2000 ewes we did not lose 10. The average weight of fleeces are about 31bs. each, which we calculate at 1s lb. We sent home this year 10 Tons of wool.

Ups and Downs of Colonial Life (1)

Joseph Keynes to George Miller: Flaxman's Valley, 6 December 1841

... with respect to the aspect of the colony, I think it decidedly better than it ever was before. We down all from the highest to the lowest [have been] doing things we ought not to have done and neglecting things which we should have done. A new colony ought to begin with cultivation, combined with the breeding of sheep, cattle and horses, instead of which they all staid in the town dabbling in bricks and mortar, building large houses and Public Buildings ... with no earthly reason that I can see

except as monuments to future generations of the folly and absurdity of the first settlers in South Australia.⁶⁶

The fact was, we all came out here with mistaken ideas. We thought to amass large fortunes in a few years and then to have returned to enjoy it, but we now begin to look on the place as our home, wherein though we get not that fortune we expected, yet we are sure of moving to a far better rank of society than we could at home; of being surrounded in a few years by every comfort and of leaving to our children, those that have any, the benefit of our labours. I can now earnestly recommend any parties to come out, feeling well convinced [that] if they paid attention they must ultimately succeed. I mean to write to my Father strongly urging him to send out my two brothers, if he can only let them have 500£ between them, for that sum is worth more now than 1500£ was at the commencement of the colony.

Ups and Downs of Colonial Life (2)

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas Co.: Flaxman's Valley, 4 April 1842

The prices of wages and provisions are much cheaper now than when I arrived in the colony.⁶⁷ We gave the men then 1£ a week with rations, flour was £60 ton, meat 9d.; meat is now 4d. lb., flour 20£ ton and wages 10s. week. The rations we allow the men are 10lb. flour, 12lb. meat, 2lb. sugar, 1/4 lb. tea a week. The principal sheep farmers buy their own flour. Wheat has been selling from 7s. to 9s. bushel, so it does not pay to grow wheat except it is by men that have about 40 or 80 acres and work themselves. Sugar is about 30s. cwt. and tea 12£ chest weighing 80 lb.

The colony has been in a very bad state these past twelve months.⁶⁸ The merchants have been breaking during that time till there is scarcely one left, property has been sacrificed at auction to a fearful amount, in many instances not fetching cost price. Ewes have sold lately at 7s. a head and ewe lambs at 4s. It is expected that all the merchants will be bankrupted they are so much involved with one another. The cause of all this has been speculation in land and other things ... building to a ruinous extent. Whilst these things were going on people were all stopping in Adelaide, none went into the country to grow food for the colony. Consequently all the ready money went to Van Diemen's Land for flour and to Sydney for stock. The first thing a new colony should do is to raise its own provisions, when it can do that it may build and make improvements, it being able to supply the labourers with food. But till that time the less done the better. I hope when

the present crisis is past things will be better, but it will take some time to bring us to a healthy state.

Joseph Keynes to George Fife Angas: Adelaide, January 1842

... There are no doubts now as to the capabilities of the colony. It is without doubt a fine wheat country and will grow all the necessities and most of the luxuries of life, and I am sure that families who will work hard and put up with a few privations for a year or two will find themselves far more independent and in possession of more comforts than they could have hoped to obtain at home.

¹ These letters are now in the care of the original owners.

² Letter, Richard Keynes to Joseph Keynes, 2 June 1841.

³ *Outline of the Plan for a Proposed Colony* (London, 1834).

⁴ J. Stephens, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the New British Province of South Australia*, (London, 1839), p. 1.

⁵ Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796-1862) formed the principle part of his theory on colonisation whilst an inmate in Newgate Prison for abducting a teenage heiress and deceiving her into marriage. His theory proposed that if settlement in a new colony was concentrated, the wastelands of the Crown sold and the proceeds thereby used to fund the emigration of labourers from Great Britain, preferably young and married, a situation would arise whence both the Mother country and the colony would receive benefits. The former by losing excess population and finding a new market for its goods, and the latter by gaining the fruit of British society and its wealth. The theory stressed that land should be a 'sufficient price' to discourage labourers from purchasing it too soon after arrival and thereby depriving the capitalists of their work force. It appealed to the British government because it relieved them from a great deal of financial involvement, whilst still supplying them with an extension to their Empire.

⁶ E. Hodder, *George Fife Angas: Father and Founder of South Australia*, (London, 1891), p. 105.

⁷ Hodder, p. 138

⁸ W. Densham, and J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, (London, 1899), p. 40.

⁹ G. H. Wright, Introduction to an unpublished MS of *Joseph Keynes's Daily Journal*.

¹⁰ The 18 testimonials to Joseph Keynes are in *Joseph Keynes's Book, South Australia, 1839*.

¹¹ Letter, Richard Keynes to George Fife Angas, 4 September 1838.

¹² Letter, George Fife Angas to Richard Keynes, 22 September 1838.

¹³ George Miller and George Fife Angas carried on a mercantile business together under the name of George Fife Angas & Co. The partnership was dissolved in 1842 and the firm went on to be called Angas, Bevan & Co. upon the addition of a new partner.

¹⁴ Joseph Keynes & Co., Terms of Agreement, clause No. 1., 6 January 1839.

¹⁵ Letter, George Fife Angas to Charles Flaxman, 21 May 1839.

¹⁶ D. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857*, (London, 1957), p. 4.

¹⁷ John Angell James, Joseph Keynes's uncle, had been the minister at Carr's Lane Congregational Church, Birmingham since 1805. He was considered to be one of the most gifted preachers of his time and preached to over 2000 persons every Sunday.

¹⁸ Keynes was first married in 1850 to Ellen Robinson whose family held land in the Clare-Watervale area of South Australia. This marriage was dissolved in 1862 after his wife committed an unfortunate indiscretion and he remarried in 1866.

¹⁹ Keynes was carrying £1500 in specie on his person and the Captain, who would normally have acted as purser on such a voyage, would have been deeply affronted by Keynes's lack of trust.

²⁰ Mr Brown, supposedly a close friend of Angas's, was given the task of outfitting the provisions for the *Anna Robertson* which was chartered by G. F. Angas & Co.

²¹ All spelling variants are, hopefully, in the original.

²² Mr Stacy may well have been the ship's steward in charge of handing out the rations to passengers.

²³ This letter is from the Angas papers in the State Library of South Australia, PRG 174/1/1468-1471.

²⁴ William Yates and William Harding were employees of Joseph Keynes & Co. who also arrived with their wives and families aboard the *Anna Robertson*.

²⁵ Sleeping under the stars at Holdfast Bay was a common first experience for early settlers: see also J. C.

Hawker, *Early Experiences in South Australia*, (Adelaide, 1899), p. 7.

²⁶ Edward Rowlands was a partner in the firm of Flaxman & Rowlands, founded in London on 26 May 1838 under the auspices and direction of George Fife Angas. Angas referred to Rowlands as 'a pious man', but he lacked sufficient business acumen and the firm failed after Charles Flaxman returned to England in 1839.

²⁷ Keynes had expected Angas's farming interests to be well established upon his arrival with farmsteads set out and many other improvements added. This was definitely not the case!

²⁸ Frederick Lester arrived in South Australia in late 1837 aboard the *Lady Emma*. He was supposed to have supervised the erection of improvements on Angas's town sections and generally to put things in order. His conduct was not worthy of Angas's trust and William Keynes referred to him as 'a deplorable character'.

²⁹ James Hurtle Fisher was first Resident Commissioner of South Australia.

³⁰ George Clark was a gardener and nurseryman from Exeter who came out under contract to Angas in 1838.

³¹ Frederick Horswill was a bricklayer in Angas's employ.

³² The section was No. 477 in North Walkerville.

³³ Mrs Harding stayed with Keynes for some 18 months after her husband's death.

³⁴ Brickmaking was conducted along the Torrens from the arrival of the first white settlers. The bricks were made by using a pug-mill which consisted of an upright barrel in which a series of strong iron knives and teeth were caused to revolve so as to mix and temper the clay as it passed from the top of the barrel to an aperture at the bottom. The resultant mixture was then forced into moulds and dried in makeshift kilns.

³⁵ These were Frederick Horswill and John Radford.

³⁶ Joseph Keynes & Co.'s brickmaking concern on sections 477 and 478 at North Walkerville closed towards the end of 1841 with a loss of in excess of £1000.

³⁷ SLSA, PRG 174/1/1468-1471.

³⁸ Angas's aid to Prussian Lutherans is well known and their settlement on his lands in South Australia one of the most fascinating stories of South Australian history.

³⁹ Keynes had hoped to employ German settlers in his company's activities, as part of his advice from Angas was 'to foster and encourage the Germans of Mr Kavel's congregation'. Letter, George Fife Angas to Charles Flaxman, 21 May 1839.

⁴⁰ 'Klemzig is a German village, containing about 160 families, part of a body of German Lutherans ... Each family has a plot of land on lease, on which they cultivate vegetables, wheat, maize and potatoes ... the villagers lead a happy and independent life, and by their sobriety, industry and general exemplary conduct, hold out a good example to all other colonists.' J. F. Bennett, *Historical and Descriptive Account of South Australia*, (London, 1843), p. 133.

⁴¹ John Morphett arrived in South Australia in 1836 aboard the *Cygnat*. He was later appointed to the first Legislative Council in 1843 and became Speaker of the House in 1851 when the constitution was altered.

⁴² Keynes is referring to choosing for use land Angas already owned, rather than acquiring new land. In 1839, supposedly without the knowledge of his employer George Fife Angas, Charles Flaxman, formerly head clerk in Angas's London office, started on a rampage of land speculation which nearly caused Angas's financial ruin. The land he chose in his surveys was around the sources of the Rhine and Gawler Rivers and was some of the best in the colony. Angas certainly was annoyed at Flaxman, not only at the spending of £28,000 of his employer's money without proper consent, but also, in Angas's mind, at the man's audacity in demanding a quarter share of all the lands in return for his speculation. Angas wrote at the time that Flaxman's purchases were 'little short of insanity'. However, in later years they proved to be the foundation of Angas's wealth in the colony.

⁴³ William Jacob was assistant surveyor to William Light until Light resigned in 1838, but it was in his capacity as a surveyor with Light, Finnis & Co. that Jacob surveyed the Seven Special Surveys. In R. Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, vol. 1, p. 138, Jacob relates an interesting story about the selection of one survey and how Charles Flaxman beat some spirited opposition to acquire it. Jacob later married a daughter of Charles Hervey Bagot, one of the owners of the Kapunda mine, and settled at Moorooroo, near the junction of the River Gawler and Jacob's Creek.

⁴⁴ Keynes' insistence over his right to have, on Angas's behalf, the first choice of the surveys was due to Flaxman's astounding behaviour in demanding a quarter of the surveys. Keynes, however, could not carry out his wish as Flaxman retained the deeds of settlement and refused to hand them to Angas, giving him the upper hand in negotiations.

⁴⁵ Angas Park is the beautiful plain on which the town of Nuriootpa is now situated.

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- ⁴⁶ Flaxman's Valley, later known as Salem Valley, runs along the course of the River Gawler.
- ⁴⁷ Flaxman's Valley was where John Howard Angas, George Fife's second son, chose to settle on his arrival in 1843. His first home, Tarrawatta, and his later home, Collingrove, still stand.
- ⁴⁸ Keynes's account of the Adelaide area as dry and dusty is supported by nearly all the reminiscences of early settlers in the colony.
- ⁴⁹ Johannes Menge, a German geologist, was first engaged by the South Australian Company in 1836 as a mine and quarry agent. He was dismissed in 1838 and subsequently gave his assistance to many individuals and mining companies in the selection of lands.
- ⁵⁰ There have been no mineral discoveries of consequence in Flaxman's Valley, although many small operators have tried their luck.
- ⁵¹ Before dams became common the need for year round water supplies was imperative. Settlers went to great lengths to build sufficient water storage for their own needs. However, if their stock did not have water as well, their work was in vain.
- ⁵² The township was built and named Nuriootpa.
- ⁵³ Most probably George Hall, private secretary to Governor Gawler.
- ⁵⁴ Keynes's opinion of the Rhine survey did not prevent his settling there in 1851. His descendants still work the property.
- ⁵⁵ Edward Stephens was the manager of the Bank of the South Australian Company. James Frew and John Rankin were early pastoralists.
- ⁵⁶ A great proportion of the land initially included in this area of Angas's surveys is now part of the Mount Crawford State Forest. The areas left undisturbed still suggest the 'rolling hills' of Devon.
- ⁵⁷ In a letter on 1 February 1841, Keynes had told Angas: 'You could build a capital mansion at Mount Crawford and be the king of the whole district'. It is hard to know whether this would have appealed to Angas.
- ⁵⁸ The average weight of a merino fleece today can be well in excess of 20 lbs, showing advances in breeding since 1841.
- ⁵⁹ Keynes is referring to a cornet.
- ⁶⁰ The hutkeeper's task was to cook for the shepherds and keep their hut in reasonable condition. He also watched the fold at night in the watchbox, a construction which barely protected him from the elements, but at least allowed him to sit down on the job.
- ⁶¹ If shepherds lost stock their pay was docked accordingly. To mix two shepherds' flocks together, therefore, was to risk wholesale stealing to replace lambs which had strayed.
- ⁶² Anthony Forster had arrived in South Australia in early 1841 as Angas's manager and overseer. According to Keynes, his inflexible attitudes lost Angas many hard working employees.
- ⁶³ Bennett, p. 136, painted a more charitable picture of bush life: 'The wild and almost solitary life of a bushman may appear to many to possess few charms, but I have almost invariably found the reverse to be the case. Their independent and in many cases romantic mode of life, the busy and profitable employment ... combined with the delights of a climate almost unrivalled, and in the midst of a country where industry and perseverance are sure to yield an abundance "of the good things of this life", produce a charm to which almost every one ultimately yields.'
- ⁶⁴ Keynes must have been one of the first South Australian sheep breeders to experiment with the Merino/Leicester cross.
- ⁶⁵ Scab is a most unpleasant disease, caused by mites which settle on the wool and eventually work under the skin. This burrowing causes the skin to blister and turn a greenish blue colour, and patches of wool flake off leaving the inflamed skin exposed.
- ⁶⁶ This early urbanization in South Australia was partly because people hoped to make easy money in town through land speculation and partly because rural land was not surveyed fast enough to allow easy access to it by settlers.
- ⁶⁷ See the letter headed 'Arrival at Holdfast Bay' above.
- ⁶⁸ Governor George Gawler ran up large debts with Adelaide merchants and left them payable by the Crown. On Governor George Grey's arrival, however, he declared the merchants' bills null and void as part of his economy drive. Many merchants went bankrupt accordingly.