

THE NINTH SIR JOHN QUICK BENDIGO LECTURE

"Footprints on the Sands of Time" :
Bendigo's Citizens, the 1909
***Bendigonian Annual* and Community History**

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2 OCTOBER 2002

ISSN 1325 - 0787

Booklet available from:

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*Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

These lines, from the 1909 *Bendigonian Annual*, were used to conclude a long article which praised the Bendigo School of Mines, and the richness and variety of its educational offerings. The *Annual* continues to provide for us a picture of the year and the place in which it was published, although the certainty with which its editor delivered recognizable names and events is not as secure today as it would have been at the time. I have a reason for choosing this year. It might be seen as the apogee of Sir John Quick's political career; his most elevated public office. As it happens, and like any year I might have chosen, the material in the *Bendigonian Annual* is both rich and diverse and it provides a contemporary commentary upon national and international Bendigo celebrities. In this galaxy Quick's name is writ large.

A considerable degree of parochial enthusiasm is not, perhaps, unexpected in a publication that flourished its place of origin so prominently and the following words introduced a

long article about one of Bendigo's most celebrated sons. (In 1909 he might have appeared to have been Bendigo's *most* celebrated.) 'Bendigo', the anonymous author of the piece begins:

has reason to be proud of many of her citizens, and foremost among those who are a credit to her is Sir John Quick, L.L.D, M.P. who by steady perseverance has developed his intellectual powers and taken his place as a front-rank statesman and lawyer.

and there was more to follow.

He belongs to that determined class of men who have played such an important part in building the British Empire, and who may be set before the rising generation as examples of the rewards of industry.

At the time of publication of this two page article, Quick was Postmaster-General in the ministry supporting the ailing Alfred Deakin's third stint as Prime Minister. Quick's elevation, like the Deakin 'Fusion' Ministry of which he was a part, was short-lived but their work was legislatively fruitful despite almost constant vituperation. It was a Government that would, unbeknownst to the editor of the *Bendigonian*, collapse on 13 April in the following year, taking with it those who, regardless of their 'steady perseverance' and 'intellectual power', could not adequately counter the growing energy of the Labor movement and the ravages of the likes of Sir William Lyne whose speeches from the time are still considered models of abuse. Much of the laceration of individual and party feeling was caused by differences about private enterprise and state ownership, issues that lingered for almost a century until the heirs of Labor sold off King O'Malley's Commonwealth Bank and the national airline, and the sale of the remainder of Telstra continued to divide the conservative parties. Deakin's Fusion government, a marriage of contraries made in Hell, would be forever associated with searing, acrimonious exchanges across the floor; a parliament so stressed by the curious alignment of enemies within the ruling coalition that the speaker, the unfortunate Sir Frederick Holder, the first Speaker of the House of Representatives, after suffering a heart attack while attempting to control the House, was carried from it, muttering 'Dreadful, dreadful!' achieving the dubious distinction of being the only Speaker to die, in effect, in the Chair.¹

They were turbulent times and we are left to wonder how Quick dealt with them. Robert Garran has left a clue, citing the journalist John McKay, who wrote for the *Mirror*:

¹See, for example, Henry Gyles Turner *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth* (1911) pp. 222 - 250. There have been numerous references to the 'Fusion' Ministry in the general accounts of Federation published during the Centenary of Federation activities.

There was something elemental, physically and in his mental processes, about Dr Quick, whose name was indeed a misnomer. He was like the mills of God grinding slowly and exceeding small.²

Quick was fifteen years older than Garran and very much the senior partner in the enterprise that made and has preserved their names, *The Annotated Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia* (1901). Garran - became, in his own words, 'the junior partner of a steam-roller', describing Quick as a man given to 'excessive thoroughness'.³



This portrait of Sir John Quick was published in the *Bendigonian Annual* of 1909. It catches what his friend Robert Garran called his 'steam-roller' determination.

From *The Bendigonian*, courtesy of the collection of the State Library of Victoria

It is, perhaps, a blessing that the imperturbable Quick does not appear to have featured as prominently in the hurling of abuse across the floor as others in the Chamber; as much a matter of his personality and patience, of age and of Quick's own perception of his place amongst the elder statesmen of the Commonwealth, all of them things that demanded a certain dignity, the loss of which he must have lamented in Leonine Lyne.⁴

Riding high in local public esteem, it is hardly surprising to find his biography lovingly detailed in the *Bendigonian Annual*. On a simple word-count, it is the longest piece devoted to an individual in the publication.

Quick is mentioned only once in the shortest items in the *Annual*, the day by day summaries since January 1, snippets from each edition the regular *Bendigonian* charting the year through the shoals and eddies of circumstance; strikes and riots at Broken Hill from January, terrible floods in Echuca and along the Murray in August, the demise of the first of three federal Fischer Ministries in June all of this interspersed with numerous

²Robert Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth* (1957) p. 137 The reference to the 'mills of God' come from a poem by the popular Victorian poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Retribution (From the *Sinnegedichte of Friedrich Von Logau*)".

³Ibid. p. 137

⁴Turner op. cit. pp. 230 - 231



John Quick, Foundry Boy.

The Bendigonian Annual suggests that this portrait shows John Quick 'foundry boy'. This is, I think, a rather romantic description. My own suspicion is that the portrait is from the time when he was an apprentice journalist.

From *The Bendigonian*, courtesy of the collection of the State Library of Victoria

references to that other sort of ministry, the work of Catholic Bishop of Bendigo, Bishop Reville. In this succinct accounting for the year's highlights, on 19 March, Sir John, who must have figured on more than one day, is reported as having delivered a lecture which he entitled 'Progress, its Gains and Losses'.

Sir John had cut his intellectual teeth in journalism. After working as a child foundry-hand, he graduated to errand boy and printer's devil with *Bendigo Evening News*, moved on to the *Bendigo Independent* in 1869 and later moved to the *Bendigo Advertiser*, all of the time improving his capability and knowledge, learning shorthand and Latin and all the while honing his journalistic skills. By 1873 he was studying at Melbourne University, admitted to the bar in 1878 and being then welcomed to ranks of Doctors of Law in 1882.

Gaining his educational bearings did not entirely extinguish his journalism. After he graduated he became the law and Parliamentary reporter for the *Melbourne Age*.

That early training with Bendigo's newspaper business was crucial. It is easy to trace the connections between the neophyte constitutional commentator and historian and the man who as much as any other would help to bring about the union of the Australian colonies into 'an indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown'⁵.

By 1880, as Quick set about his life's work in the law, Victoria had more than 200 regional newspapers, a voracious reading public keen to put into practice those skills it had learned as a result of the Education Acts which, as early as the 1860s, had provided both the necessary reading skills and the impetus to read.⁶

The *Bendigonian Annual*, drawing upon the energy of a whole year of regular journalism, routinely aimed to fill the quiet time over Christmas with reading matter designed to enlighten and to cheer. And 1909's edition was no exception. Some of its offerings, like those in the potted chronology for the year, were no more than a few words in length, others, such as the biography of Sir John, were substantial and, clearly, diligently researched. As might be expected there were odd, more oblique references to things that had commonly commanded attention in the daily news of 1909, some of which seem a little ambiguous in the annual digest.

'Where are you going to, my pretty maid?'

'I'm going to astonish you, Sir,' she said -

'I'm bent on eclipsing you, Sir,' she said.

⁵See the Preamble to the Australian Constitution, Quick and Garran, *Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* 1901, p. 282

⁶Richard Twopenny, *Town Life in Australia* (1880) re-printed in the Penguin Colonial Classics series.

'What is your policy, my pretty maid?'

'Terrible rhetoric, Sir,' she said -

'Unparalleled orat'ry, Sir, ' she said.

'I presume you wont marry me, my pretty maid?'

'It isn't my province to ask ,' she said -

'Though the 'question' is ripe for reform,' she said.

'Look! There's a mouse! My new pretty maid.'

'Help! For the love of me, help!' she said -

'Succour me! Succour me, Sir!' she said.⁷

Bagatelles such as this one - were a part of a growing body of evidence that women were not only asserting themselves, but that they were insisting upon fundamental political rights. In Bendigo, too, women made significant contributions to an international body of work particularly in the field of music. I will return to this idea.

But more than any other single issue and dominating an Annual that included intelligence about courses at the School of Mines, a very long and instructive article about cyaniding written by Mr Donald Clark Esq., M.M.E., B.C.E., the School's Director, an article about Bendigo's butter factory and numerous potted biographies of Bendigo businessmen, musical women are given considerable prominence.

Like Sir John Quick and Donald Clarke in their respective fields, there were some opportunities for women to create careers. In the last years of the 19th century they might have noted the various achievements and followed in the footsteps of several mid-Victorian females, Australian musical trail-blazers such Madame Carandini, Amy Sherwin (the Tasmanian Nightingale) and, of course, the most conspicuous international Australian of her time, male or female, the celebrated Nellie Melba. Building the foundations of a high-art tradition, as they had, women could follow their example knowing that successes in the courts of Europe, the opera houses and salons of New York and Boston, had stamped approval on singing in particular and music more generally. For women, singing, once an occupation with a reputation not much above ladies of the night, appears to have become more acceptable and genteel as the 19th century drew to a close.

Another report from 1880 offers an astonishing statistic and a possible explanation for the flowering of musical life at the time. Oscar Commetant, having worked Australia for a time at the Melbourne International Exhibition in that year on a French exhibit, published

⁷These are verses 1, 3, 8 and 9 from a poem entitled 'He, She and It' in the *Bendigonian Annual*, Christmas 1909 (published 24 November). There are no page numbers in the publication.

In the Land of Kangaroos and Goldmines in which he suggested that there were 700,000 pianos in Australia by this time.⁸

It is curious how, in the reporting of their lives, men seem to have aspired to positions of straightforward national eminence exemplified by Bendigo's self-made hero, the illustrious Sir John Quick. For women the issue was more about having a gift and rising to whatever height they achieved without seeming to consciously use the same degree of premeditation in their lunge at 'fame'. Besides, singers, whatever their national or international stature, remained singers. They might command that the Post Office clock opposite the Shamrock Hotel be silenced in order that they might be spared its chiming through the night, but the real shapers of nations were men. Melba, who is supposed to have stopped Bendigo's clock, had demonstrated that her art was lucrative. This, as much as anything, was part of music's attraction and the source of a singing career's liberating influence.

That is not to say that women played no role in shaping public opinion and the new nation. There were some, who like Quick achieved a degree of celebrity in their own time, and later they pursued social and political goals. Quick himself was one of the 12 men who, in 1897 at the Constitutional Convention in Adelaide, voted in favour of a motion, moved by the hapless Frederick Holder, intended to open the way for Federal voting rights for women, which was lost in a vote, the likes of Edmund Barton expressing their opposition to the idea at the time.

Quick's South Australian contemporaries Catherine Helen Spence and Elizabeth Nicholls of the Women's Christian Temperance Union compiled lists of claims and collected thousands of signatures on petitions. Also in Adelaide, Mary Lee, an ancient, feisty Irishwoman rallied support for working women, drawing attention to the plight of working-class children and their needs. It was a magnificent effort but Mary was destined to die unnoticed and in poverty in 1911. And few of these women, when invited to stand for public office and to test their support at the ballot box - once such a thing was an option for them - felt confident enough to take that step.⁹ It is a much more complex picture, of course, than this, but there is no biography of the extraordinary Mary Lee whose life and achievements are now largely forgotten.

In other states the situation was much the same, although women had gained the vote in SA in 1894, demonstrating the energy, determination and good sense of both women and men in the colony in the early 1890s. At times they literally waved umbrellas from the balconies and public galleries of the colonial parliaments. Sydney had Rose Scott and

⁸Oscar Comettant, *In the Land of Kangaroos and Goldmines*, (1888) re-published by Rigby in 1980. It is an important piece of information even if it is inflated. Comettant claimed to be working from records of imports, but there is substantial circumstantial evidence that the humblest parlour, even in remote parts housed a piano. The Australian population at the time was about 2.25 million people.

⁹See Susan Margery, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, (1995) pp. 183 -184

Maybanke Anderson. In Melbourne there was Vida Goldstein. I have not discovered Bendigo's suffragists, yet, but if such people were waiting in the wings, ready to be discovered they were almost certainly active in 1909, a bumper year for the international women's movement and seven years after Australian women were given the vote.¹⁰ If they do exist their actions and achievements were not flagged in the *Bendigonian Annual*. There are, however, several women who were noticed at this time and in Bendigo.

Musical skill was one way in which women could achieve a degree of financial independence and celebrity that transcended nominal class, although vocalists, regardless of how high their high-art vocalism might have been, tended to attract the suggestion that they had loose morals and/or were somehow abnormal.

Melba attracted this sort of negative attention all of her life and after. Some of it she brought upon herself, but most was inflicted because she was a woman who raised her voice to make a case for women. She was lauded as a star of exceptional brilliance and unique magnitude but she was also painted as a champagne guzzling, drug taking, foul-mouthed termagant who left her husband and son for the social climbing of a romance with the pretender to the French throne. The enlightened attitude that gave the colony of Victoria its newspapers, provided, in them, a mechanism for close scrutiny or calculated promotion of public figures, for an examination of their actions and for personal critiques that sometimes reflected individual bias and alignments.

The *Bendigo Independent*, for example, played an important part in the initiation of an emerging national enthusiasm that would evolve into Melba-bashing.¹¹

John Quick was, of course, no longer a reporter with the *Independent* and by 1898 was riding the crest of a wave of Federalist energy that he had helped to create - (some would say that he created.) He was, indisputably one of those in a 'determined class of men' who had built the British Empire. It was a circumscribed way of viewing the world and the power relationships within it. The microcosm that was Bendigo was no exception and the rest of the world provided, even dictated, the terms in which pre-eminence might be judged.

But things were changing and 1909 was some sort of cusp. The decade since 1899 had seen important changes, including the creation of the Commonwealth (1901) and votes for most Australian women (1902) and a wave of self-confidence within the comfortable envelope that was - urban Australia encompassed by the British Empire. Amy Castles had

¹⁰Indigenous women, like indigenous men generally had no voting rights until 1967.

¹¹In October 1898 the *Independent* suggested that if Amy cared for her voice a great career in opera seemed her most likely future. On 18 March 1899 the paper made a direct comparison, discovering 'Melba at the same age'. The next step, the sinful woman of the world and the innocent convent girl was made by the Catholic papers.

emerged in 1899, been packed off to Europe with a fortune to buy the training she required and had come back to demonstrate her progress in 1902. She returned to Europe for more training in 1903, and remained there until 1909.

The *Bendigonian Annual* devoted almost as much space to Amy Castles and to the actor (it styles her an 'actress') Alice Crawford as it had to Sir John, two full pages for each woman to Quick's two and a bit. But it is Amy who is presented first in a section entitled 'People We Know'.

The appearance of Amy Castles in Bendigo and in Patience in 1898, brought into the national limelight an apparent prodigy who had a voice of very considerable promise. It was, as yet, largely untrained although a local teacher of singing, Edward Allan Bindley, had started to build a rudimentary technique. But the seed of Amy's claim was planted in the *Independent* by her father Joseph Castles, who played an ambiguous role with the paper, sometimes being styled its editor and at others, the chief compositor. Amy had a voice which 'if properly cared for' would be 'invaluable in opera'.¹²

Bindley was a lay teacher at the Mercy Convent where Amy was a boarder and it was her Catholic connections that next saw to it that Amy's career was energetically promoted. She quickly became the darling of the *Freeman's Journal* and *Sydney's Catholic Press* both of which heard in her the answer to long-standing prayer: Amy seemed to be the Catholic cultural weapon required to dislodge Melba, the reigning Australian queen of song, and achieve international fame for herself and for her Church. In the process the 'Convent girl' would sweep aside the 'Protestant tart', eliminating Melba's supposed diabolical immorality by seizing her dominant position and displacing her in the affection of opera buffs at home and abroad.¹³

Amy generated huge interest and support and, generally speaking, Australian newspapers at first took up her cause with a vengeance. In 1899 her story was probably the most engaging and, over the year, the most prominent event in the 'arts' told in Australia. In a collection of colonies, poised on the edge of becoming a new nation with its own distinctive national identity, stories such as Amy's encouraged Australians to begin to imagine who they were, collectively, what their traditions were and where they were going. As 1899 changed to 1900 all of the hard, federalist work had been done. Australia's will had been expressed clearly enough in conventions and referenda and now a constitution needed to be shepherded through the British Parliament.

¹²*Bendigo Independent* October 1898.

¹³See, for example, Thérèse Radic *Melba: The Voice of Australia* (1986) pp. 53 - 71.



Amy Castles, arranging flowers, from the Bendigonian Annual, 1909. It was a carefully constructed image of purity and youth. She was very much the 'convent girl'.

From *The Bendigonian*, courtesy of the collection of the State Library of Victoria

In the various Federation Conventions of the 1890s Quick had laboured with the idea of defining citizenship and including its definition in the Constitution. Like the word 'commonwealth', 'citizen' appeared loaded with its own peculiar significance. If a 'commonwealth' seemed to invoke Oliver Cromwell's ascendancy, then 'citizenship' evoked other images of the decapitation of a monarch; the French Revolution and, for the majority of Australian's in the 1890s, an unthinkable Australian republic. As it happened the Republican issue was too hard.¹⁴ While Section 44 of the Constitution uses the word citizen in an explanation of who might lawfully vote in elections, an actual definition and its logical extension, some sort of bill of rights, being set aside as inherently dangerous; too big a single step, perhaps, for the Federation Fathers.

Many forces were active and some would coalesce in unexpected ways. In the 1890s Cardinal Moran, head of the Catholic Church in Australia and himself Irish, had riveted together a powerful Catholic sense of grievance, its roots in Irish politics, but in Amy he found the potential for an outstanding international Australian Catholic success, styled on and even, perhaps, eclipsing that of the great Nellie Melba. That was certainly the Church's aim. At about the same time, in another characteristic move, Moran had made one of his largest intellectual gambits, claiming that the Spanish explorer De Quiros had landed somewhere near Mackay in Queensland in 1606, predating other Europeans, particularly the Protestant Englishman Cook, as the rightful claimant to Catholic sovereignty over the east coast of Australia. His 1900 pamphlet on the subject argued a case, rather lamely, settling upon the idea that the first mass said in Australia was conducted by a priest in De Quiros party. But Moran, keen to avoid an Australian replication of 'Irish belligerence', wrote a letter to the Irish College in Rome in support of the miraculously gifted 'convent girl'. She should be assisted in Europe, he suggested, as she had been by the Catholics of Australia.

Once the sectarian cat was out of the bag others joined the affray. The anti-clerical *Bulletin*, which was not especially anti-Catholic, closed on the Catholic papers and the promotional methodology they had used to see Amy elevated to a position of amazing and, in the *Bulletin's* opinion, undeserved precedence. The *Bulletin* growled about superstition, examined the intentional mis-reporting of Amy's age and the careful control of how she was presented, laying claim to a younger age than her birth certificate indicated. Purity, innocence and a God-given gift, all flourished by the Catholic presses, were ridiculed by the *Bulletin* which saw image building and promotional tactics that falsified not only Amy's age but which also exaggerated her gift. For the *Bulletin* Amy's promotion was a matter of shameless propaganda and crass materialism.

¹⁴At the first People's Convention at Corowa in 1893 suggestions that a republican form of government should be considered were howled down. At Bathurst three years later John Norton's promotion of republicanism were also rejected. See eds. D Headon and J Brownrigg, *Papers on Parliament* Number 32 December 1998 "The People's Conventions: Corowa (1893) and Bathurst (1896) passim.

And the *Bulletin* went further, after hearing another Bendigo singer and apparent prodigy, Lili Sharp. Lili was presented to Melbourne in the midst of the noisy 'booming' of Amy in the first half of 1899.

Lili's reception provided a useful contrast for journalists eager to feed the public appetite for prodigies, coming under public notice at the same time as Amy, her singing judged (by the *Bulletin*) to be 'more pleasing' than Amy's. Noting that 'A 'discovery' of Miss Lili Sharp, the Bendigo rival of Miss Amy Castles will be attempted at the Melbourne Town on July 22nd ', the *Bulletin* reviewed the resulting concert suggesting that there would be no 'credulous glorification' of Lili Sharp.

The power of newspapers to create enduring impressions, taste, interest and to encourage and support particular opinions has been recognized for centuries. Jumping to the end of Amy's career, it is worth noting what her promoters learned in the earliest days of the publicity that made her what she was. Public image and partisan alignment were useful categories to exploit. Painful as it might be for Bendigonians who have been raised on the myth of Amy's operatic genius and her international operatic success, the truth is that she



had no international opera career worth speaking of. It is difficult to find this conclusion articulated anywhere even though ample evidence is often mustered to support its antithesis. Amy was a minor player, making her most enduring mark in concert singing and not in opera, but even on the concert platform she finally faded into insignificance.

There are odd photographs from the years when her career, having failed to achieve the heights predicted for her in Bendigo in 1899, drifted out of memory.

A postcard portrait of Amy Castles takes the air, distributed for her 1909 Australian Tour and published in the Bendigonian Annual in that year.



An unsourced newspaper photograph from 1925. Amy and Eileen Castles in their Brighton flat looking a little discomfited by the attention.

Courtesy of Mike Sutcliffe, Sydney

This photograph from an unsourced newspaper clipping, possibly from Sydney, is dated (in pencil) 1925. Amy's lithe, girlish figure has gone and the dumpy Castles sisters, travelling their remaining days on the coat-tails of their respective local reputations, created in newspapers at the turn of the century, appear almost embarrassed at having been caught at the piano; perhaps they were trapped between the need for publicity and their desire to retire, which, if true, raises other questions. There were still a few people who remembered the booming and the beat-up. There were still a few who felt a religious obligation to be supportive, but fewer people actually came to their performances and by 1930 the poor acoustics at the Melbourne Town Hall for Amy's Farewell Concert was put down to the small number of people in the auditorium.¹⁵

¹⁵See, for example, the *Melbourne Argus*, 8 October 1930.

Since the 1980s, Amy has tended to become the most obvious of Bendigo's singing forbears.

The great Frank Cusack mentioned her from time to time in things he wrote and Frank was quite surprised when he encountered the evidence of Amy's near misses at genuine, classy singing, so effective were a century's worth of publicity campaigns on her behalf. In 1988, David Horsfall, appealing to the same parochial enthusiasm that saw Amy's career launched here a little more than a century ago set out a grand myth of success in opera in Vienna and much else that is family mythology rather than indisputable fact. It is a myth that implodes when the hard light of surviving, accessible evidence is brought to bear on it.

What is most interesting in all of this, is perhaps, the advocacy given first by a regional and then a national press that made the concerts of mediocre performers appear greater events than they were. Sorting out the wheat from the chaff, especially at this distance, is made more difficult today because the regional presses, as custodians of local mythology, continue to offer an overly generous benefit of doubt. It is a matter of what we now believe. Of course, the added dimension of sectarian motivation only augments the problem, interestingly as much now as then.

In the case of Amy Castles her impending failure, sensed by her supporters when she appeared in opera for the third and last time in Australia in the 1919/1920 Williamson Season, resulted in a concerted effort on her behalf by a now obscure biographer (hagiographer) Alvin Tracey. In a substantial pamphlet, published by Melbourne's Advocate Press in about 1921, many absurdly inflated claims were made. Subsequently these have been taken at face value by, for example, David Horsfall in the *Bendigo Advertiser* in 1988. The dangers of journalists feeding off earlier skewed, partisan accounts of a distant life ought to be self-evident. Taking a story at face value without testing the veracity of its sources will generally lead towards dangerous conclusions; to mistaken assessments of stature and achievement. Perhaps the most important result in any community singling out of one artist and lavishing attention on her, is that this creates long shadows that obscure the successes of others.

Lili Sharp was not the only Bendigo singer besides Amy, by a long shot. But the careers of others, who have not been favoured by a tenacious family and folk-memory or encouraged by the veritable barrage of surviving, accessible newspaper publicity that seems unimpeachable to the untrained ear and inexperienced eye, rapidly disappear,

regardless of the distinctiveness of their claim in the annals of community history. Their footsteps on the sands of time are usually erased by the cold, powerful winds of change and a natural inability of humans to hold more than a couple of ideas in their minds at one time.

Amy has been retained because she was made to appear more than what she was and because she has enjoyed some continuing advocacy, especially within her family and in Bendigo where she is, quite rightly, a local celebrity. How this celebrity was achieved and has been sustained is of interest.

Take a single claim made in Alvin Tracy's Amy Castles hagiography 'Amy Castles: A Voice of the Century' in about 1921, when Amy's career had all but slipped away; information repeated by David Horsfall in 1988. It is a claim that ought to concern Bendgonians, firstly because it is incorrect and secondly because it diminishes the achievement of another Bendigo singer who had neither the assistance of a church nor support in the national press at the time.

Amy entered her thirty third year in July 1913 while she was contracted to appear in Vienna. She was hardly a girl, although the idea that she was very young and still learning her trade continued to be used as an excuse for the unfinished elements of her vocalism throughout her career, until she was very palpably no longer young. Alvin Tracey wrote:

Here [in Vienna] Miss Castles established another record, being the first Australian-born girl to sing in German on the European operatic stage.

In his eighth 'Page Four Feature' about Amy in 1988-9 (a series of ten long articles) Horsfall repeated:

Here she became the first Australian female to sing in the German tongue on the European operatic stage.

The Vienna newspapers noted, when Amy appeared at the Vienna Hofoper once on 9 October 1912 and 6 more times in 1913, the only opera performances she gave outside Australia, that her voice was too small for 'larger' roles and she would be likely to have difficulty filling the Hofoper with anything more demanding than the 'soubrette' parts. They observed that she clearly suffered from stage-fright (*lampenfieber*), noting that her small stature was also a factor likely to inhibit her ability to project the requisite power in dramatic roles. But most of all she was bad linguist, her German unconvincing and, for the

punctilious Viennese, very poorly produced. Later, safely back in Australia after 1915, Amy admitted the truth was that she had no German and had learned the *Madame Butterfly* and *La Boheme* parts parrot-fashion.

Why, then, is this idea singled out by Alvin Tracey passing into the accepted conquests of an operatic career that had no major achievements in it? Such a judgement appears less harsh when the number of genuine Australian international opera careers is considered. Amy Sherwin, Frances Saville and Lalla Miranda are just three who, even though their names are not familiar today, enjoyed major and important careers in Europe and North America. Frances Saville appeared hundreds of times in places such as the Hofoper in Vienna, Covent Garden in England and the Metropolitan Company in the USA. And Saville seems to have been an accomplished linguist.

It is a small point, unimportant, even insignificant in itself, but it has large consequences for anybody else who might have a genuine claim to the same 'record'. And there is another Bendigo singer who could, I suspect, make a better claim, although the real honour of being the 'first' probably belongs to Amy Sherwin who sang opera in German in Europe under the tutelage and management of her German husband Hugo Gorlitz and with the guidance of the German vocal teacher Julius Stockhausen in Frankfurt during the 1870s.

In his engaging history of the German Community in Bendigo, Frank Cusack sketches the lives of members of the Samuels family. Louis August Samuels was a well-known character in mining in the Diamond Hill area and his musical daughter, Kate (Catherina) took the professional name Madame Benda. Like Amy Castles, Kate was given substantial space in the 1909 *Bendigonian Annual*. Not as much as Amy, of course, just a single page. Kate had neither Catholic advocacy nor a father in journalism and the hub of her career was actual on-stage performances in places where the Australian press was insufficiently curious to seek her out. And she had nothing like the Castles publicity machine working on her behalf.

Madame Benda, her name derived, of course, from Bendigo achieved notable success in German opera houses after vocal training in Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin, and, later, after lessons with Mathilde Marchesi (Melba's and, for a short time, Amy's teacher) in Paris.

It is also possible that either Emily Dyason or Erna (Lovie) Mueller, two other Bendigo singers, both of whom spent time in Vienna as concert artists, might have presented in opera in German there. Both women are given half-page treatments in the 1909 *Bendigonian Annual*. Their careers have also been overshadowed by the tendency to place

all of Bendigo's operatic and concert-singing eggs into one basket. For Lovie Mueller, at least, like Kate Samuels, German is likely to have been the language sometimes, if not routinely, spoken at home with their German parents, in Bendigo. But language skills on their own do not make a singing career, even if a singer is diminished by not having them.

Another of the enduring pieces of foolishness about Amy Castles, again with its roots in Alvin Tracey, was that she was the first soprano to sing in four languages on the operatic stage. It is easy to demonstrate the silliness of such a claim, although it is still used to plump up Amy's credentials. (There were dozens of earlier singers including Mozart's own English prima donna Nancy Storace in the 1780s and the Swedish Nightingale from the mid-19th century, Jenny Lind, who sang in six or more languages in opera.) By 1909, the year before Amy appeared in opera anywhere, Kate Samuels had sung in German (in *Der Freishutz*), Italian (in *Rigoletto*), French (with works by Massenet and Vincent D'Indy in Paris) and English (in *Hiawatha* in Canada). Kate seems to have been a competent linguist and to have drawn excellent critiques of her singing, but an examination of her life is made difficult by the fact that much of her career was conducted in middle Europe and North America. And, of course, it seems that she was not taken up as a cause by a vigorous local Australian press.

But why should the issue of Amy's linguistic adeptness finally matter? The answer is complex, but has to do with the need of her publicity machine to find the right buttons to press in her audiences. If enough people found her bogus credentials credible and impressive they might be swayed towards a belief that Amy was singing as a fine singer sings, regardless of what they heard. They might tolerate wayward pitch or the forcing and straining to reach a note. These things are in evidence still on Amy's records. From the beginning they had been fed the line that Amy was a student in training, her press releases in 1902 stating this directly. In 1920, as her attempt to build an opera career finally foundered, critics were still advising that more training might lead to operatic success for reasons that remain audible. Madame Benda might have experienced the same difficulties but I have not heard any recordings of her voice and cannot be sure that she made any.

Kate stares out from the 1909 *Bendigonian Annual*, as she does in Frank Cusack's book, where her dark, liquid eyes still flash a powerful sense of her vitality.¹⁶ Unfortunately she has been forgotten, except as a footnote to the supposed success of others. There is scope here to improve the little we currently know. An exact contemporary of Amy's, she seems to have travelled to Germany in 1901, her career expanding notably in 1907.

¹⁶Frank Cusack (ed.), *Bendigo - The German Chapter*, German Heritage Society, Bendigo, 1988 p. 125

Early in her career Amy Castles was almost saddled with a stage-name something like Madame Bendigoniana, the shorter version, Madame Benda, having been allocated already.

From the evidence I have been able to gather over a several years Kate Samuels deserves to be better known. It is a job that ought to start here, where her roots are.

And what about Bertha Rossow, or Hamilton Hill, born at 73 Wills Street and whose singing remains accessible on numerous sound recordings from the period before the First World War? Look at the numerous surviving concert programs from the last decade of the 19th century, when Amy and Kate, Bertha and Hamilton first appeared on the stage in Bendigo. Who was Bendigo's Beatrice English and how far did she go? What about the man with the extraordinary name, Anthony Palamountain, a tenor who died young in California in 1911, but who, in 1898, trod the boards at the Masonic Hall with Amy and with Alfred Bottoms who later, sagely, changed his name to A C Bartlemann?



Anthony Palamountain in an unknown role, possibly as Edgar in Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor. He died prematurely in California in 1911. This picture courtesy of his daughter Sister Mary Tarcisia.

Who knows anything about Dorothy Penfold, or her remarkable musical father Dr Penfold whose surgery and residence in View Street, where he composed music, are now the Penfold Gallery? How significant was Pauline Bindley, the daughter of E A Bindley who taught Amy and others? And these are, with the exception, I think, of Dr Penfold, just a handful of Bendigo singers.

In 1909 the *Bendigonian Annual* devoted a few paragraphs to Willie Murdoch, who, as the important pianist William Murdoch, must have been a little uncomfortable about this diminutive Christian name.

Bendigo was unusually blessed. It had a cosmopolitan community that included people with musical experience and musical aspirations. It was wealthy and populous enough to sustain concert events given by visiting artists who stimulated interest and the possibility of emulation. It inherited successful and, more particularly, unsuccessful miners who had former lives in music in Germany or France or Austria and who set about teaching, making a living at what they really knew. And they had children who took up interests that reflected European traditions and the urban ethos that developed as Australia grew and generated the real Australian: as likely to be a musical woman as a taciturn bushman. There were music sellers, including a man who might have been the uncle of the 20th century's illustrious English literary critic F R Leavis. Many households already owned pianos and by 1880 some 700,000 had been imported into Australia. The Sisters of Mercy, a cultural force that is as yet unrecognized, added the strength of their number to the class of music teachers, particularly teaching singing, violin and piano. And finally Bendigo had a substantial, well-off middle class, that insisted on the institutions that flagged the city's sophistication and progress. Some of these indicators of cultural vitality were people. Others were grand public buildings, and statues and fountains and all types of public amenities.

It should come as no surprise that Bendigo parents encouraged their children to develop musical skills and that Bendigo generated a musical competition of its own to rival Ballarat's South Street, while continuing to taking out top prizes at the latter from time to time.

The paradigm that saw John Quick, a farm-boy from Trevesa in Cornwall rise to a ministry in the new Commonwealth and to become the co-author of the authoritative account of Australian Constitution that has endured a century of use, also expressed itself in other areas of human endeavour.

The richness of the musical culture is obvious enough when you begin to make a list of its more conspicuous figures. It is hardly surprising that journalists, tapping into their reader's desire for information by encouraging a continuing interest in the public profile of local heroes, should behave predictably.

On 9 August 1909, the *Bendigonian* and the other Bendigo papers reported that Miss Amy Castles had arrived in Australia from Europe and that she would be giving her first concert venue and date as Melbourne on 21 August. As it happened she did so without her supporting artist Peter Dawson, who was trapped at Murtoa on his journey from Adelaide after floodwater washed away the railway bridge. On 25 September the local papers

reported the Aurora Australis had blazed across the heavens, a 'splendid view obtained by Bendigonians'. Amy, by this time the most luminous and conspicuous Bendigonian, returned to Bendigo for concerts on 30 November and 1 December, more brilliant than the Aurora in her home-town where she was greeted by unprecedented enthusiasm in a city which had always valued its artists and extolled them. Success in other places kept others at their work in distant parts, much as Amy would have been required to spend more time in Cologne had she actually appeared there in 1907 or in London had Covent Garden been genuinely interested in her services. Kate Samuels seems to have pursued her European career with tenacity and grit in places such as Germany where she was largely invisible to gossipy journals such as the *British Australasian* and without the equally tenacious publicity machine, both religious and secular, that kept Amy's name to the fore.

Amy's first appearance in opera, anywhere, was as Cho Cho San in the third Australian performance of *Madame Butterfly* in Sydney on 1 April 1910. Reviewers were kind to her, happily finding that she had progressed in her vocal capability, although she was a little wooden in her acting. It seemed that an operatic career was - in words that Australian critics repeated at her last attempt to be a force in opera in Australia in 1920 - 'yet within her grasp'. As Amy trod the boards of the Princess Theatre in Melbourne, two



*The 1909 Bendigonian Annual published this picture of John Quick's birthplace in Cornwall. From *The Bendigonian*, courtesy of the collection of the State Library of Victoria*

blocks away in the temporary home of the Federal Parliament, the third Deakin Government, which had suffered no-confidence motions as early as June and July 1909, struggled on until its demise a little later, in April of 1910, four days before Quick's 58th birthday and less than a year after its formation.

Sir John picked up the pieces, getting on with the remnants of his life in politics, but he would not be elevated to the same high office again. Amy, probably against her own will, returned to Europe and finally signed a contract with the Hofoper in Vienna where her life was extraordinarily miserable, and where illness, a confrontation with her own limitations and the rigidity of the Austrian court bureaucracy limited her opportunity to make anything of her time there. Later, in the pages of Australian newspapers, she would make rather more of her Vienna experience than she was entitled to do, coming to believe the mythology woven about events there, confidently reporting various fictions as if they had really happened.¹⁷

But Bendigo continued to acknowledge its own, zealously following what Amy did.

It is probably timely to make a thorough examination of the musical life of the city and to ask those bigger questions about achievement. On a national scale just how good were Amy and Kate? Why was Hamilton Hill so popular? Precisely what factors in Bendigo produced the circumstances and conditions that saw musicians thrive?

At the same time it would be useful to discover those cultures that do not sit comfortably with mainstream Anglo-Celtic reporting and where understanding for European Australians has been more difficult. Bendigo's Chinese population is a single example and demonstrates what careful husbandry of information over time within a sector of the community might achieve. Chinese ownership of a shared past has proved tenacious. There are probably dozen of other parts of the community that maintain those things that link them to their distinctive past and which provide some bearings for a way forward. What for example, might we learn from the numerous Chinese opera companies that visited Bendigo? What impression did they make at the time? Is there any residue of their having been here?

There is evidence that some mid-European traditions of bagpipe making and playing might have survived only in Australia. Might Bendigo have inadvertently preserved culture that has been lost in its place of origin?

¹⁷In applying to sing opera on Australian radio in 1935, an offer that the ABC rejected, Amy claimed to have sung roles she had not sung, in places where she had not appeared in opera. See Australian Archives SP 1558, Series 2, Box 57.

These are not questions that in any way threaten an enduring sense of individual local significance for artists whose greatest significance and warmest appreciation is felt here. We can still hear Hamilton Hill's voice, which in one recent public playing of his records was described by an audience member, rather generously, I fear, as a 'pleasing baritone'. We can still hear Amy's discomfort with top notes and her alarming search for the correct pitch in some places. And, of course, we have not progressed so far with the obliteration of all but the good stories to be unable to recover and reinstate the truth. Chinese culture has proved durable. There is much that has been recovered on which an account of its particular contribution to the fabric of Bendigo's society has been built. Perhaps someone reading this paper knows where Kate Samuels' scrapbooks are or just what happened to her in Europe. Stories of other Australian musical women often end in marriage and the abandonment of a career. Was that her destiny?

The richness and interest of local history is surely in the detail about people such as these. Wills Street gave us Hamilton Hill. The Convent of Mercy and Masonic Hall still resonate with their associations with Amy Castles, Fred Bottoms and Anthony Palamountain. Ashman's dry-cleaners was once the offices of the *Bendigo Independent*, a place from which significant careers were launched. Was it here that Sir John Quick came with whatever he had written or was there an earlier site that he knew? He certainly knew Bendigo's Chinese dragon and had seen Sun Loong in the 1901 Melbourne Street parade that marked the inauguration of the Commonwealth.

Knowing what buildings such as Ashman's symbolize might help to create the balance between an appreciation and even affection for ones own place and the continuing demand for utility in the present. If memories and association can assist a community to discover and to value its own past then we need to make sure that the resonances are recognizable and understood. The children of Bendigo, captives as they are to a growing internationalism delivered to them on, for example, the world wide web, in the cinema and radio are subject to forces that have been amplified a thousand-fold beyond the generally innocuous international cables that found their way into the newspapers for which Sir John Quick worked. Today, as the equivalent of the Postmaster General, he would have had to deal with globalization, media ownership and control, the colonization of that peculiar Australian European culture that once inundated the ancient culture of the original Australians, by the massed forces of American and Asian business.

Is an homogenized culture, brewed in the lowest common denominator cultural vats, served up as a whim of good American business and reflecting American aspirations and

values, what we want for our children? Baseball caps backwards and the repartee of Bart Simpson are moving us away from ourselves. What will we become?

How can community history achieve that element of immediacy and relevance that it will need to compete in a global market where hawkers of culture closely study methods of irresistible delivery? How can local information maintain any grip on its members under these circumstances? What imbues local culture with an indelible interest and indisputable heritage value in quantities that offer any resistance to the appeal of other people's culture, packaged to maximize its international appeal? Should we bulldoze the Masonic Hall because it is too expensive to maintain? Are the names of all of the statues in all of Bendigo's public parks and gardens irrelevant and should we describe them simply as bust (bronze) or 19th century man? Are regional news broadcasts on television or the radio the only obvious answers to a call to filter out a distinctive local spirit?

Perhaps the first step is to recognize whatever gifts the community can identify now and suspects it has had in the past. Memory, in the long run, thrives on stories and stories feed upon relevance and the passion with which they are remembered and told. Are the only relevant people the heroic achievers who make it all the way? Should we hide the truth under a light covering of mythology that, in trying to create stature, actually takes the interesting individual down the cul de sac of supposed greatness? This is surely what has happened to Amy Castles. Who knows anything of her outside a small circle of well informed Bendigonians? Very few people. And there is a reason. To imagine that international stardom is the only significance and to edit the life leaving out the failures and shortcomings is, in the long run, unfair to the subject. The same is true of making claims to significance that are demonstrably silly and often drawn from the exaggerations of Amy's own promotional press releases. To continue in the same vein today is tactically flawed, setting up, as it does, a false sense of international stature that is vulnerable and easily damaged. Amy Castles is virtually unknown in Vienna today. The single entry in lists such as the one published by Beetz¹⁸ notes that 'Anny Castles' (sic) was contracted to sing at the Hofoper from September 1912 to August 1913' and nothing more. Truth has a way of getting out. And, of course, in the process of rejecting what is demonstrably false, the baby often goes out with the bath-water.

What, then, counts as evidence of this past richness and where might we find it?

The short answers are 'everything' and 'everywhere'. And immediately, we create a new sort of vulnerability; the danger of being overwhelmed. That is, of course, not what I

¹⁸*Das Wiener Opernhaus*, Zurich, 1955 see lists for 1912/1913.

propose. We all eventually make choices about the matters we pursue and communities are, in this respect, like individuals. Getting the story correct to the best of your ability and making tentative judgements about the life and career you have chosen to explore is a start. And in this examination all potentially interesting people commence with the same standing. This probably says as much about the process of taking an interest in a community's past as it does about the creation or sustenance of heroes.

Some years ago I picked up a copy of Walter Murdoch's 1912 school textbook that is an invitation to become a well-versed participant in the Commonwealth of Australia. It had been designed to instruct senior primary school students in elements of citizenship and to prepare them, before they left school, for be active and informed voters. Sir John Quick would have approved of its intention even though some of its conclusions and exhortations are, by today's standards, cringe-making, even dreadful. But the attempt to build a society where its members understood the construction and working of government, together with the rights and responsibilities of citizens, is laudable.

The copy I have once belonged to Lily Baxter of Perkins Reef, Maldon. (She was almost a Bendigonian.) Odd annotations suggest that she used it at State School 1254 where she seems to have been a pupil during the second decade of the 20th century. She might have been old enough in 1909 to browse the *Bendigonian Annual* after Christmas dinner. But Lily vanished, probably into a marriage and new name and regardless of whatever natural gifts she might have possessed. Her annotations and the prompts to memory she created in class might be the only surviving evidence of that distant childhood.¹⁹

Lily seems to have left no obvious, substantial mark in the society in which she lived. Circumstances have changed very little since then, when any person could aspire to the fame and fortune of the sort most clearly and preeminently evident in a Melba and certainly a characteristic of John Quick. Melba was, of course, the product of the willing complicity of national communities that recognized her value and her skill. Her gift, which she recognized and cosseted, survived the vicissitudes of time as well as the out and out hostility of those who, for reasons of their own, thought her less than what she was.

But what should we think of the would-be-Melbas and the Quicks who strove without reward?

I am reminded of a small, powerful poem of Walter Savage Landor that seems to speak out of the heartland of those who feel that they have not created fireworks of national glory. There is contentment here, too.

¹⁹That is, of course, unless a reader recognizes her name and is able to assist in filling out a picture.

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art.
I warm'd both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

That's all there is. There is no shame in striving to be all that the apparent possession of a gift portends though failing to reach the goal. Melba had a unique gift. It is nobody's fault if, in the final analysis, for most people the pursuit of excellence becomes an end in itself; the struggle to try to reach an optimum performance remains a goal in its own right. It is too easy to wave away the pretenders to the throne of those who were genuinely great, to say that failure was their lot. Amy Castles' acolytes have fought a rearguard action on her behalf against oblivion, with some success, particularly in Bendigo. Ownership and the recognition of a contribution at the local level are crucial for the preservation of such fragile human heritage.

This ownership recognizes degrees of achievement, in the sense that a triumph for one person might have been a lesser attainment than it would have been in somebody else. The Bendigonian Annual tacitly accepts the proposition of some sort of relativity without making an overt judgement. Quick is given his accolade in terms of his personal successes without qualification, without question. But should Sir John Quick have aspired to be the Prime Minister? Did Quick's friend Robert Garran opt out of his true vocation by not even standing for election to any parliament? Or did Garran really find satisfaction in the corridors of bureaucratic power? Few Australians have, I suspect, engaged with and enjoyed the 'fire of life' more than Garran.

We forget the driven, questing knights quickly enough, and those who do not make it to the Grail Chapel fade even quicker. It is not the best analogy, perhaps, but communities need to pause and assess what has made them what they are and in the process reflect upon what they have been. It might be that many 'mute, inglorious Miltons' are there in the annals of Bendigo. Could there be passionate campaigners such as Mary Lee and who is to say that Kate Samuels was not in Melba's class when we know so little of her life and career? Could it be that Lily Baxter became a notable citizen of Bendigo or Castlemaine or the cradle of her childhood, Maldon?

Time might tell.

The real challenge, of course, is in discovering the reasons to continue to be interested in the face of a culture that offers access to a myriad of resources that provide information

and entertainment. Words such as ‘inescapable’ and ‘ineluctable’ suggest themselves. Quick's own steam-roller personality pales besides the international, steam-rolling multimedia juggernauts that are causing changes as profound as the arrival of movable type and the printing press. There is already a dedicated Amy Castles website. These new technologies have immense capability for the storage and indexing of minute pieces of information. Once this paper is published on the web it is a foregone conclusion that I will receive an email from relatives of Lili Baxter. It always happens. One recent piece of research about a lost Australian singer Ada Colley, where only her name was mentioned in a list of my research interests, resulted in contacts with parts of her family in London, Vienna, Sydney and California. There is an awesome capability waiting to be harnessed .

The crucial thing for communities, and a part of an answer to the question of how to find and maintain a space in the minds and, perhaps, the hearts of local people, is to ensure that information survives so that it is ready and accessible when it is needed. The creation of a need is, perhaps, recognition enough of whatever energy has gone into the search and the discovery as well as the fixing of data in readiness for such a call. This is why communities all over Australia must face up to the challenges of global media by first recognizing the value of their own stories; squaring up on behalf of the things that are uniquely their own. Piecing these stories together into a bigger picture is the next step. Only then will we build a national grid in which each piece is a small part of a totality that is the history of human activity in Australia. But it can only be gathered and written at the local level and it must spring from a sense of ownership. Who else will tell your stories? Who else should tell your stories?

And, of course, more than ever before there are millions of people ready to listen.



Professor Jeff Brownrigg

Jeff Brownrigg was a foundation student (BA Hons.) at La Trobe University in Melbourne. His doctoral research (University of York, UK) was jointly supervised in music, language and philosophy and was approached via a B Phil in Medieval Studies and an M. Phil. in English and Related Literature. Until recently he was the Head of Academic Outreach and Research at ScreenSound Australia (the National Screen and Sound Archive) where he has worked since 1986.

He regularly teaches in tertiary institutions particularly in media studies, Australian history, cultural studies and musicology. He is currently the Director of a national Centenary of Federation project, *The People's Voice*, collecting and publishing on the WWF Federation stories from diverse communities (1999-2002).

Early in 2002 he was appointed Professor of Cultural History at the University of Canberra, an adjunct position in the Division of Communication and Education which allows him to continue his work at ScreenSound Australia.

His published papers include, for example, research in the areas of Australians in Austria (circa 1900), Australian vaudeville, Australian opera, sound recording history and technology, Australian film and film-music, Australian folk-music, Henry Havelock Ellis, performances of Mozart and Australia, Robert Burns, the Irish in Australia, Australian sectarianism and Australian Federation. He has written entries for *The Oxford Companion to Australian Music* (including the major article on Australian popular music and numerous biographical entries), *Currency/Cambridge Companion to Australian Theatre*, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *Grove*.

He has also published many CDs with substantial monographs/booklets re-presenting Australian performers from earlier times. A paper concerning challenges of editing early sound recordings was published in *The Editorial Gaze*, New York, Garland Press, 1998. *The People's Conventions: Corowa (1893) and Bathurst (1896)*, which he co-edited with Dr David Headon, was published by the Australian Senate in December 1998. In 2001 a paper concerning border customs and the push for Australian union was published by the University of Ottawa, Canada, in a volume entitled *Shaping Nations*. Recent published papers have included: work on Australian vaudeville in the *American Journal of Popular Culture*, an Australian country newspaper editor in *Australian Journal of Communication* and several articles about the early history of the Australian Constitution (from the 1850s) in recent numbers of the *New Federalist*.



Sir John Quick

John Quick was born in Cornwall, England in 1852. In 1854 his family migrated to Australia; his father died shortly thereafter.

At age 10 he entered the workforce, undertaking various manual jobs in mines then progressed to journalism. His drive for self improvement led him to complete a law degree at the University of Melbourne (1874-77) and in 1882 he was awarded a Doctorate in Law.

At this time, Sir John Quick was in charge of the Age Parliamentary staff. He entered politics himself in 1880, winning the Legislative Assembly seat of Sandhurst (Bendigo), which he held until 1889.

Quick's public support for Australian Federation commenced with an 1882 speech to Parliament. As a delegate from the Bendigo A.N.A., he attended the 1893 Corowa Conference where he presented the famous resolution which took Federation's fate away from Parliaments, and gave it directly to the people via elections for representatives and a referendum on the draft Constitution. He wrote the Enabling Bill needed for these stages to occur and also wrote a booklet, *A Digest of Federal Constitution* (1896), to help educate the public.

Throughout the two referenda campaigns of 1898 and 1899, he addressed numerous public meetings.

Quick's work for Federation was recognised with the award of a knighthood in 1901.

He was elected unopposed as Bendigo's first Federal M.P., holding the seat until 1913.

The Sir John Quick Bendigo Lecture has been established to revive the memory of this self-made man who had the forethought and perseverance to promote Australia's union. Quick himself referred to his long devotion to Federation as a "public duty" he had to perform. Sir John Quick deserves to be recognised as a "Father" of Australian Federation.

Written by Michele Matthews, BA(Hons) Melb, DipEd LaT

THE SIR JOHN QUICK BENDIGO LECTURE SERIES

The Sir John Quick Bendigo Lecture is presented annually by La Trobe University, Bendigo and the Sir John Quick Committee with the support of the City of Greater Bendigo.

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