



Celebrating over 80 years of Community Service

CONTACT!

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF TOC H SOUTH AUSTRALIA AREA

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Hello there

In the evening of 22nd April 2009 I attended a function at the Irish Club in Adelaide to launch a CD entitled *Connecting Spirits* – Songs of Remembrance written and performed by **Rita Lindsay** and **Flo Bourke**. My attendance at this function followed a phone call from Victor Harbor Branch member, **Rae Glover**, two days earlier. She had managed to secure a ticket at very short notice in the belief that someone from Toc H should be there. Her belief was well founded.

I'll tell you the story:

Rita was a student at Meningie Area School located at the northern end of the Coorong, traditional home of the Ngarindjeri people. Flo was a student at Birdwood High School in the Adelaide Hills. In November 2006 these 2 schools organised a combined school trip (senior students and teachers numbering some 30 in all) to visit war graves and significant war memorials of World War I in the Somme and Flanders Fields.

Following local research, both schools set up a list of soldiers 'killed in action' from both areas. In the case of Meningie Area School their list comprised a number of indigenous Australian soldiers. A major aim of the touring party was to visit the war graves and memorials of each soldier, hold a special remembrance service for him and photographically record each such event. These records were used to produce a certificate for presentation to the descendant(s) of each soldier killed. In addition, these visits offered an opportunity for reconciliation – connecting spirits – respectful remembrance and gratitude of the living for the dead and indigenous and non-indigenous Australians for each other.

In 2008 this combined school trip was repeated and Rita and Flo acted as mentors for the students, having both left school at the end of 2007. Both of these girls have a

musical gifting and have been inspired to write and record 17 songs reflecting their own feelings and understanding of Australia at war. Well known singer and songwriter, Eric Bogle, encouraged the girls to produce the CD and wrote one of the songs for them. Another of the songs, written and performed by Flo Bourke, has the title *Talbot House*.

Her notes about this song are as follows:

This song was written about Talbot House, a place in Popperinge, Belgium, where soldiers would go for their leave. It was a recreational hideaway from the war. To me it was one of the most powerful and inspiring places I encountered on the 'Connecting Spirits' journey. This place struck such a fierce emotion in me even though it was not on the fields where the men fought but instead away from that, intended to be a happy place.

I felt this wave of emotion whilst there which was a mixture of sadness yet also contentment and homeliness. I felt happy here because it had a lovely aura but I also felt sad because I missed home; the homeliness created in this place made me long for mine. This got me thinking: did these same contradictory emotions exist for the soldiers who came to Talbot House? And from these thoughts and wonders I created my song.

The inside photograph of the CD cover shows Flo playing the piano in the lounge room at Talbot House. There is also a video showing Flo playing the piano and singing *Talbot House* for the entire combined school group, who are crammed into the lounge room. I am hopeful that a copy of this will become available on a CD, so that it can be enjoyed by Toc H members.

During the evening Rita and Flo performed some of their songs live while other songs were shown on video. There were speeches and presentations. One of the main guests was **Jock Statton**, President of the RSL in South Australia, and guest speaker at our *World Chain of Light* service in December last year.

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