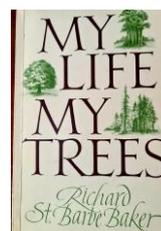


A REAL "TREE HERO"



A while ago, I saw a handout from a local council describing themselves as “tree heroes” following a decision to increase the number of street trees they grow each year - and whilst these days I applaud any tree planting efforts I’m not sure “heroic” is how I’d describe this program – well not compared to the deeds of a real “tree hero”, a man named **Richard St Barbe Baker** (founder of *Men of the Trees*) who is estimated to have been responsible in his lifetime for the planting of trillions of trees (internationally). St Barbe, as he was known to his friends, planted his last tree only days before his death in Saskatchewan,



Canada in 1982, at the age of 93. He was even listed in the 2014 Guinness Book of Records for “the largest simultaneous planting of trees – 104,450 planted in one hour.” During his lifetime, he authored over thirty books, including “My Life My trees” written in 1970 which I can recommend (trees aside) as an interesting read about an amazing life.

Born “on the fringe of a pine wood” in south Hampshire in England, St Barbe felt the call of nature almost as soon as he could walk. At the age of two he was growing flowers in his own little garden. He tells the story of scratching his name in the soil with the help of his nanny, sowing white mustard seed, and a week later seeing his name *RICHARD* spelled out in green letters.

Some of St Barbe’s ancestry might go some way to explaining his amazing energy. His great-grandfather was the Rector of Botley in Hampshire for 52 years. He encouraged sports of all kinds and often rode 70 miles to London for lunch, returning the following day and thinking nothing of it. He was a good boxer, and one evening was attacked by two highwaymen trying to steal his money. The old man (and his dog) got the better of the attackers and “marched them to the Bargate at Southampton. Then he walked home to Botley, arriving at the rectory cool and unperturbed, though his white shirt front was covered in blood(!)” For the move from Norfolk to Botley, he drove 200 miles in the family coach, borrowing horses on the way until they reached the new rectory. The coach was left in a paddock and became “the family mansion for generations of free-ranging chickens”. Great grandfather Baker is buried at Botley Church in the rather ornate family vault, complete with pillars and bearing the family coat of arms. One of the rectors at Botley told St Barbe about a child leaving Sunday School one day, pointing at the vault and asking: “Is that where Jesus is buried?”

Richard’s grandfather, John Baker’s story is no less fascinating. Like his father, he became a parson and when out walking would poke acorns in the hedgerows along the fields of his parish. Seventy years on, many of the resulting oak trees were felled to build “rescue ships for the war”. He walked everywhere, including for all his parish visiting (except on Sundays when he was driven in a coach). A trained athlete, John excelled at both the high and long jumps. St Barbe writes: “Sometimes when my father and grandmother were driving in the chaise, they would meet my grandfather returning from some visit. For fun, he would start running backwards in front of the fast-trotting pony and at every dozen strides or so, jump backwards over his walking stick(!) His sudden death when St Barbe’s father John was only 14 years old was a bitter blow to the family, and John Junior took over responsibility for both his mother’s welfare and for their woodlands, establishing forest nurseries, and in time training and employing workers. John had been brought up to understand that the family wealth, which his aunt had the use of during her lifetime, would come to him after her death. During her last illness he was in southern France spending the winter doing missionary work when he received a telegram, rushed home, and saw her before she died. However, when the will was read, he learned that the family trustees had persuaded his aunt to leave most of the money to them. When St Barbe’s father asked his lawyer cousin’s advice, they both decided “that it was God’s will and therefore little use throwing the matter into chancery.” What happened next was literally something you wouldn’t read about. The trustees (who were brothers and bankers) retired on their inheritances. One bought a country mansion, “furnished and equipped with servants”. On the first morning after his arrival, the butler came in to draw the curtain and found his new master dead in his bed. He immediately telegraphed the man’s brother, who caught the next train from London, asking the guard to stop near his brother’s mansion so he could take a short cut across the fields. When the train stopped and nobody got out, the guard walked along the train and found the younger brother dead in his seat. Although St Barbe’s father and his cousin “agreed that this looked like divine retribution, the misdirected wealth still did not return to him, so he gave up all thought of living as a country gentleman and turned his hobby into his business.”

When John was eighteen, he devoted himself to God’s work. Although only young, he filled the village reading room on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Later he built in his own garden, a Mission Hall which seated 300 people. Folk from surrounding villages came to this centre, as well as missionaries from Africa and India. In time, John proposed to Charlotte Purrott the only daughter of the local Squire, who was also “the Vicar’s warden at West End, kept the best horses in that part of Hampshire and hunted with the Hursley and the New Forest Stag Hounds”. When John asked Charlotte to marry him, she answered that as fond as she was of him, she could not possibly say yes as he would not be able to “provide her with the kind of life she had been accustomed to enjoy.” Some weeks later, Charlotte’s father lost his fortune in a business venture, which cost him his house and property, servants, horses, everything lost. Charlotte wrote to St Barbe’s father “Dear John: My father has lost all his money. Please marry me”. And he did.

St Barbe’s father could not abide religious sectarianism, and his weekly prayer meetings were attended by ministers of many denominations. St Barbe writes: “Among the group were Hindus, Buddhists, Persian Sufis, devout followers of Islam and missionaries on furlough...all acknowledging the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.” Taking regular sojourns into the adjoining forests and woodlands, St Barbe experienced ethereal feelings of well-being, “as if I had been detached from the earth” and felt a powerful connection with the ancient beech trees in the woods”. These happenings excited St Barbe and he entered “with zest into the Sunday services” as well as helping his father with weeknight meetings.

While at Dean Close School in Cheltenham, St Barbe came to know the Elwes family and spent holidays on their 7000 acres estate. The owner of these extensive woodlands wrote a book called *"Trees of Britain and Ireland"* and when St Barbe heard a visitor to the estate talk about Canada, he was determined to go there. He was one of the first 100 students at Saskatchewan University in Canada and became acquainted with Indian horsemen, whose *"social status was governed by the quality of their horsemanship"*. By 1910, while crossing the Canadian prairie, St Barbe recognised for the first time *"a desert in the making"* as wide areas were ploughed to grow wheat and oats to feed horses. *"One could travel miles without seeing a tree"* he wrote. During his three and a half years in Northwest Canada, St Barbe encouraged the planting of trees *"not only around homesteads, but as shelter belts around farms and fields."*

The outbreak of World War I found St Barbe back in England studying Divinity at Ridley College, Cambridge. In the summer of August 2014, he volunteered for overseas service and was sent to France. He was badly wounded and finally invalided out in 1918. After the war, haunted by the thought of having taken lives, St Barbe returned to his forestry work at Cambridge. His father's tutelage and his time in Canada provided the right background for success in his studies, and at the completion of his forestry training St Barbe applied for the post of *Assistant Conservator of Forests* in Kenya. He was very disappointed when he was turned down because of his medical report, and it was not until 1920, with The Great War and Cambridge behind him, that St Barbe was called to go to Kenya under the Colonial Office.



Richard Baker and Chief Josiah Njonjo

In the highlands of Kenya he encountered nomadic farming methods, dating back to Roman times which had devastated *"great tracts of the African continent"*. St Barbe decided that the one hope was to restore indigenous forest, and he enlisted the cooperation of chiefs and elders, through long lecture tours. He found the *morans* or young Masai warriors more interested in dancing than planting trees, which they called *"God's business"*, but when he discovered that they had a dance when beans were planted and another when corn was reaped, he suggested *"why not a dance for tree planting – A Dance of the Trees"*.



Masai warriors dancing

St Barbe offered a prize for the best turned out warrior and a necklace of beads for the most beautiful girl. Three weeks later, 3000 warriors arrived, and through Chief Josiah Njonjo (St Barbe's right hand man) swore to protect the native forest, to plant a certain number of native trees each year, and to take care of trees everywhere.

They were called *"Men of the Trees"*, given badges and followed up with the first ever *"Dance of the Trees"*. An important movement for tree planting in Africa had begun. However, it was not all plain sailing. When St Barbe was away in Tanganyika to help with tree planting there, his warriors came in the evenings to plant out little trees until they had 80,000 young plants at Muguga in the first nursery Kenya had ever seen. On his return, St Barbe was met by a greatly distressed Josiah Njonjo who told him *"the farm of the boxes is broken"*. Galloping to the site where he'd left 80,000 young trees ready for planting, he found a new tennis court. Not a trace of the nursery remained *"destroyed by an unimaginative government official"* as St Barbe describes his superior officer *"a puppet who danced to the tune of a regime which had done virtually nothing to protect the soil, forests or wildlife."* Recovering from the heartbreak, Chief Josiah Njonjo and St Barbe gathered everyone together and the decision was made to establish their own nursery on the Chief's farm at Kibichiku. ***"So again they came evening after evening and raised not just 80,000 but one million little trees. Other chiefs vied with Josiah to have equally good nurseries. So the dark cloud of the new tennis court had a silver lining, for now the people became more eager than ever to stem the oncoming tide of destruction by planting trees."***

Returning to England in 1924 to give a talk at the *"First Congress of Living Religions within the Commonwealth/British Empire"*, Richard was approached by Claudia Stewart Coles, who introduced him to the Bahai Faith - *"because of the way he had approached a living religion among the tribes formulating the Men of the Trees."* St. Barbe studied the Bahai religion, and *"found his ideas of nature and humanity confirmed. A Christian with a deep respect for indigenous religious traditions, St. Barbe recognized the truth in Baha'u'llah's teachings about oneness—the oneness of religion, the oneness of humankind, and the interconnectedness of all life. The Faith's writings also employ imagery from nature to help convey spiritual truths"* – and he remained a lifelong friend to Claudia and committed to the Bahai faith until the end of his days.

St Barbe's next appointment (1925 – 1929) was *"Assistant Conservator of Forests"* in Nigeria, responsible for *"the last best forest in tropical Africa"* – a territory about the same size as the whole of France dominated by magnificent giant mahogany trees. He described many *"safaris"* or *"journeys"* during his years in Africa and learned from forest dwellers how to make a ladder that took him to the dazzling world of the tallest treetops where tiny birds fluttered from flower to flower, and brilliant butterflies flourished in the sunshine. In time he *"established the Mahogany Forests of Nigeria on a sustained yield basis, yielding £300,000 worth of timber a year for all time"*.

In the early 1950's St Barbe launched his concept of an international Green Front to promote worldwide reforestation and reclaim the Sahara Dessert through the strategic planting of trees. In 1952-53 he led a team on a 25,000-mile ecological assessment throughout the Sahara and **Sahel** regions. *(Africa's semi-arid Sahel region is a crucible of climate change, population movement and jihadist attacks. In pure geographic terms the Sahel, or Sahil in Arabic, meaning coast or shore, is a vast region that stretches along the Sahara desert's southern rim from the Atlantic to the Red Sea).* The story of this journey is told in St Barbe's 1966 book *"Sahara Conquest"* - and his reclamation and greening efforts have been an ongoing theme of *The International Tree Foundation's* work ever since.



In 1952 St Barbe led an expedition to help recover land from the Sahara Desert

Few people know that but for the efforts of this remarkable man, the magnificent giant California Redwood trees (which can be traced back some 9,000 years) were destined in 1933 to become “boards to pour cement into in the construction of the new Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco. In the 1930’s large lumber operations in California threatened the groves of enormous redwood trees. Whilst small groves were to be retained, it was St Barbe who pointed out that much larger groves were required to sustain the climate necessary for preserving the species. His “Save the Redwoods” campaign eventually attracted donations of more than ten million dollars, which enabled a natural reserve of some 12,000 acres of redwoods to be handed over to the state of California to be preserved forever. Thirty years later, in the 1960s, St Barbe again intervened to save the redwoods which were being threatened by the construction of a new highway. Providentially, his suggestion of an alternative route was agreed to by the then US Secretary of the Interior, Steward Udal and the trees were preserved (!!)



On 23rd of January 1946, at the age 57, Richard St. Barbe Baker married his secretary Doreen Long in the Church of St Mary’s in the village of Puncknowle in Dorset. Doreen and St. Barbe had two children, Paul (b. 1949) and Angela (b. 1946). They divorced in 1953. Six years later St Barbe moved to New Zealand, and in 1959, at the age of 70, married Catriona Burnett. Although busy working on her family’s high-country farm, Catriona assisted Richard with his correspondence and writing and became very involved with the Dunedin Branch of *Men of the Trees*. Catriona’s home in Mount Cook, right in the middle of the Southern Alps and deep in the heart of the South Island, became the overseas headquarters of *Men of the Trees*, and she wrote two books, the second of which “*The Man of the Trees and Other Dedicated Environmental Guardians*” was a tribute to her late husband Richard St Barbe Baker. The book launch in New Zealand was attended by Paul, Richard’s son from his first marriage, who travelled from the UK with his wife Donna to attend the ceremony. Catriona Baker passed away in November 2014, aged 97 years, having survived Richard by 32 years

The *Men of The Trees* organisation eventually grew to be known as *The International Tree Foundation*, with chapters in over 100 countries. By some estimates, organisations that Richard St Barbe Baker founded or assisted, have been responsible for planting at least 26 trillion trees, internationally. *Trees for Life* (as the South Australian branch of *Men of the Trees* was to become known) was launched on Wednesday 9th of September 1981 at a Public Meeting at the YWCA Hall in Pennington Terrace in North Adelaide by Dr Richard St Barbe Baker, who was in

Richard & Catriona’s wedding day NZ 1959

his 91st year and still travelling the globe encouraging people to grow trees. His impassioned calls for action were answered when over 200 individuals immediately responded and joined the organisation. From its humble beginnings in a shed in Carey Gully, today *Trees for Life* in South Australia has over 10,000 members, and this year celebrates 40 years of helping to restore our state’s natural environment through revegetation.

A member for 35 years, almost from its beginnings, I remain inspired by *Trees for Life’s* commitment to the cause – and am encouraged to see younger people stepping up to join the ranks and fight the good fight for our environment. And a fight it is, make no mistake about that. You only need to go onto the net and look at the “**Green Space per capita**” graph of Australian capital cities to see how poorly Adelaide is doing in this regard. We are seventh out of eight cities, only saved from the bottom spot by Sydney, which is marginally worse than Adelaide when it comes to destruction of our green spaces. How this sobering statistic fits with the current bid by Adelaide “to become the world’s second National Park City, to gain global recognition of its environment” is hard to fathom. Similarly, the comment that “*Green Adelaide is working with local government and the community to increase tree canopy cover and green spaces, creating cooler urban areas that contribute to the economy, improve biodiversity and promote community health and wellbeing*” sounds like just so much jargon if we continue our practice of dividing land with scant requirement for any open space, and to strip it of any trees and vegetation so people have a blank page on which to build their “forever home”(!!) We can and must do better, but it will involve an integrated approach if we are to succeed. SA’s *Trees for Life* CEO, Natasha Davis sees the bid as an opportunity “to take that connection with nature to the next level, to make us all really realise that we need nature for our survival for our wellbeing” but she also adds “Look, it’s great if it really leads to real change.....not just urban greening, it has to be really integrated with planning and development decisions across the board.

So perhaps now is a good time to remember that it was 100 years ago next July (22.07.21 to be precise) that Richard St Barbe Baker founded the *Men of the Trees* organisation in Kenya, which went on to become The *International Tree Foundation* of today - a global, non-political, non-profit conservation organisation devoted to the planting, maintenance, and protection of trees worldwide. What wonders this single individual achieved and inspired in others during his lifetime. Given the resources, manpower, technology, and advantage of hindsight now available to us a century later, following his example will not only preserve our planet, but also honour Richard St Barbe’s legacy in the best possible way.

Chris Bates-Brownsword



**PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR THE PALM SUNDAY SERVICE
ON 28th March 2021**



After all the hard work, the church looked beautiful



Celebrating Palm Sunday, parishioners processing into the church



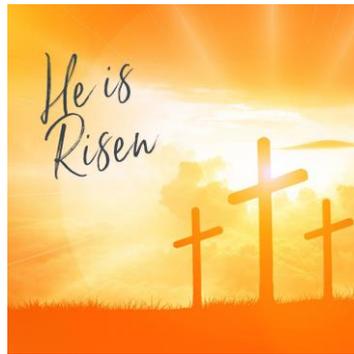
Thanks to Father Michael who made the Palm Crosses for the service, and to Susan Smith for her help in gathering and transporting the greenery.

Easter Sunday 4th April 2021

The day began at dawn with the **6.00 am *Great Easter Vigil – Service of Light*** service in the Spiritual Garden. The small group of people who attended, described the service as a wonderful start to Easter Day, celebrated in a beautiful space and surrounded by birdsong.

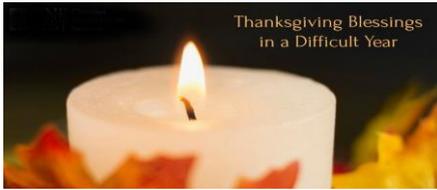


At the **9.00 am *Easter Celebratory Eucharist*** on Easter Sunday, the church was well attended, as *Renewal of Baptismal Promises* took place and excited children gathered around the font.



A little perspective to life in 2021: *Maybe we don't have it that bad(!)*

From August 2021 Edition of Southern Cross Care Newsletter.



It's a mess out there now. Hard to discern between what's a real threat and what is just simple panic and hysteria. Just for this moment, imagine that you were born in **1900**.

On your 14th birthday, **World War I** starts, and ends on your 18th birthday. **22 million people** perished in that war.

Later in the year, a **Spanish Flu** epidemic hits the planet and runs until your 20th birthday. **50 million people die** from the flu in those two years - Yes, that's right - **50 million people**.

On your 29th birthday, **The Great Depression** begins. Unemployment hits 25% and the World GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33 years old. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy.

When you turn 39, **World War II** starts. You aren't even over the hill yet. And don't try to catch your breath. On your 41st birthday, the United States is fully pulled into WW II. Between your 39th and 45th birthdays, **75 million people** perished in the war.

Smallpox was an epidemic until you were in your 40's and killed **100 million** people during your lifetime.

When you are 50 years old, the **Korean War** starts, and **5 million** people perish in that conflict.

From your birth in 1900, until you are 55 years old, you dealt with the fear of polio epidemics **every** summer and experienced watching friends and family contracting polio and being paralysed and/or die.

At 55 years old, the **Vietnam War** begins and doesn't end for twenty years. **4 million** people die.

During the **Cold War** you lived each day with the fear of nuclear annihilation. On your 62nd birthday you have the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet, as we know it, almost ended. When you turn 75 years old, the Vietnam War finally ends.

Think of everyone on the planet born in 1900. How did they endure all that? When you were a kid in 1985 and didn't think your 85-year-old grandparent understood how hard school was - and how mean that kid in your class was. Yet they survived through everything listed above. **Perspective** is an amazing art - refined and enlightening as time goes on.

Let's try to keep things in perspective. Your parents and/or grandparents were called to endure all of the above - all you may be called to do is to stay home and sit on your couch.

FOODBANK SA



If you drive along Cross Road, near the Edwardstown rail crossing any evening, you will see a fleet of purple vans lined up outside a warehouse next door to the BWS outlet. This is the home of **Foodbank SA**, the pantry to the charity sector in Australia – and what a fascinating place it is to see in action. Every day, tons of fresh food and other produce is trucked in for packaging and distribution to people in need. The most interesting feature of this food coming in, is that until a few years ago most of it found its way to the tip(!)



Foodbank was not the first charity to save food from the waste bin. In the 1990s, *Anglicare* had a food redistribution centre at *Holy Cross Elizabeth*. They had an arrangement to obtain overstocked and almost out of date packaged food from local supermarkets and the service was run by *Holy Cross* volunteers. Today, **Foodbank** has taken the *Holy Cross* model to a supersized level, with agreements with most of the supermarket groups, as well as the *South Australian Produce Market [SAPM]*. Fruit and vegetable growers across South Australia are members of *SAPM* and they regularly truck produce into the *South Australian Produce Market* at Pooraka which is the premier fresh produce wholesale market for the state. Every year, over 250,000 tonnes of fresh produce is traded between wholesalers, growers and retail operators.

For those with very long memories, the *Adelaide Fruit and Produce Exchange* on East Terrace in Adelaide was the long-term wholesale market until it outgrew itself. In the 1990's a huge complex was built at Pooraka and the site is open 24 hours per day, although most of the business is conducted in the wee small hours. When I was a teenaged barrow boy at the *Fruit and Produce Exchange Market* I started work at 4.00 am before going to my other job at 8.30 am. In those days, all unsold goods went into big bins which pig farmers collected as food for their animals. Today, in stark contrast, all the saleable leftovers go to **Foodbank** to provide food for those in need.

Today, **Foodbank** is a not-for profit, non-denominational organisation operating in every state and territory. They believe that food insecurity is a big problem, requiring a strong co-ordinated response for which they rely on countless partners to do what they do. One of those partners is *The Church of the Good Shepherd*. Coordinated by Rosemary Miller, our church pays for vouchers so school chaplains can provide emergency supplies to children and families in need.

The very first “*food bank*” was established in the USA city of Phoenix, Arizona in 1967 by John van Hengel, a volunteer at a busy St Vincent de Paul Soup kitchen. One day he noticed a woman going through a trash bin behind a supermarket, and discovered that supermarkets and restaurants were throwing away enormous amounts of perfectly edible food every day. John began meeting with store managers in the area and persuaded them to donate the unsaleable food to his charity. Soon he was receiving more food than he could use, and with the help of a local church, established a centrally located warehouse from which any charity could receive donations. So the first food bank was born.

Foodbank SA now has hubs in Berri, Mt Gambier and Whyalla, as well as centrally located sites in Edwardstown, Bowden, Christies Beach and Elizabeth, and is currently helping to feed more than 100,000 people every month.

Harold Bates-Brownsword



Inside the produce market at Pooraka