

Joseph Crabtree the Intrepid Explorer: A Tale of Ubiquity
Gwenda Thomas
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I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place, the land of the Wurundjeri, and pay respects to their Elders and families.

I want to start by acknowledging the Office Bearers present here this evening - the President (Richard Travers), Chairman (Martin Comte), Honorary Secretary (Phil A'Vard), Elders (previous Orators) and Scholars in attendance this evening.

Thank you for the warm welcome and introduction by the President and 2022 Orator – Richard Travers and my appreciation to the greetings received from the President of the Italian Chapter, Claudio Benodetto, who is also a professional colleague. Librarianship is a tightly connected global professional and collegial community, evidenced by the kind message received from the President, of The Crabtree Foundation, Sezione italiana, who has had a distinguished career in librarianship as the former Head Librarian of the National Central Library of Florence and now works for 'Restorers without Borders' – a Rome-based NPO founded in 2013 committed to conservation, promotion and enhancement of cultural heritage in Italy, and abroad.

My involvement with Crabtree's Australian Chapter began on 24 August 2019 when, politely holding open elevator doors at the apartment block where I lived at the time, I encountered Martin Comte, well known in Melbourne cultural and scholarly circles, and beyond. Between the basement parking and Level 2, Martin regaled me with his adventurous life story and convincingly prosecuted the case that I give a toast at the next Crabtree dinner which, by default, includes an oration. It is both daunting and an honour to be trusted with this esteemed role that comes with the responsibility to present an enjoyable oration able to withstand scholastic scrutiny, can demonstrate an appropriate level of humour and provides evidence of some facts consistent with the theme and chronology of past Crabtree orations.

Given that until a few years ago there was a Crabtree Chapter in South Africa, the question has been posed to me, as citizen of that state, as to whether the Chapter still exists. No intelligence was forthcoming until 10 days before this oration when, thanks to the sleuth work of the Honorary Secretary, we can reveal successful communication with both the Past-President of the SA Chapter, Professor Don Cowan at the University of Pretoria and Honorary Secretary, Monty Friendship Esquire, whose name alone lends itself to a tale of intrigue. Friendship, I'm told, is a former Rhodesian Army officer, hunting and photographic guide. In more recent times, he is renowned as a wine industry guru, still with connections in Zimbabwe, and living in the Western Cape with regular contributions to 'Platter's South African Wine Guide', likely established by Joseph Crabtree during his time at the Cape of Good Hope whilst perfecting fermentation and brewing skills. I'll return to Professor Cowan's thesis along the journey with the intrepid Joseph Crabtree.

For new Scholars in attendance this evening, the Orator is expected to show solemn observance of 5 guidelines (The Joseph Crabtree Foundation, 2023) while demonstrating, with evidence, (meaning 'seeing is believing'), that the Orator offers his / her best attempt at stretching cognitive muscle in various ways. The Guidelines provide some comfort as to what is expected as well as

some latitude to add my own embellishments that surely would impress both the audience and Committee based on the following key observations:

- First up is ‘Ignorance is Bliss’
Guideline 1 states categorically that the Orator is expected to contribute to an acknowledged tradition, entertain an intelligent and literate audience and, advance scholarship (with the caveat that it is a parody of an academic lecture). Since I haven’t a clue whether ‘parody’ is a verb or noun, it gives me latitude to embrace academic freedom or, ‘choose your own adventure’. This can be informed by an over-reliance on misleading and curious concepts drawn from previous Australian orations and supplemented by my own rigorous research in Wikipedia, Dan Murphy’s website and Google Maps. It’s been an awesome adventure unearthing Crabtree facts, ably assisted with a couple of fingers at the elbow of McClaren Vale 2018 Shiraz ‘The Age of Enlightenment’! More about this later!
- Secondly, Guideline 3 allows for differences between the British and Australians orations. This was particularly helpful in preparing for tonight’s Oration. As typically expected, British Crabtree orations provide careful and consistent chronology of Crabtree’s life – no room for latitude. On good authority, the guideline advises Australian Orators seem to have Crabtree in several different places at the same time pointing to the timely revelation of Crabtree’s extraordinary ubiquitous powers. Immediately I warmed to this notion and hence tonight’s key focus on ubiquity.
- Thirdly, there is latitude to disagree on points of difference
An Orator may legitimately disagree with the work of a previous orator or spot gaps in research findings – this has proved most helpful in my research which has revealed some curiosities in the substantial body of knowledge, particularly that of the Australian Chapter, that probably requires closer scrutiny and / or embellishment.
- Finally, Guideline 4 warns orators to avoid delivering a ‘dryasdust’ Crabtree oration - this includes:
 - Being dull
 - Failing to place Crabtree in his time connecting him to people and events of his day.

On this point, I couldn’t agree more! Hence my focus on chronology as the link pin in prosecuting my thesis. In summary – my plan is, ‘add confusion’ to the consistent chronology so carefully stewarded by the Brits at University College of London.

With Guideline 3 under the belt, I set about to build on illustrious research of previous orators. After reading a selective sampling of orations, drawn from the tomes at UCL and the scholarly collection in the Australian Chapter digital library, it became evident from the confused chronology that Joseph Crabtree was indeed an explorer with extraordinary ubiquitous powers.

First, let me acknowledge last year’s oration delivered by Elder Richard Travers (2022). It is an excellent treatise, wittily crafted and prosecuted to reveal

insights about the ordinary and extraordinary life of Joseph Crabtree which left me, as the next orator, pondering whereto from here? As luck would have it, South African Orator Don Cowan filled in an important gap in the chronology to include Crabtree's rich and varied life in southern Africa, at the Cape of Good Hope (fondly referred to as 'down south'), revealing and lending support to the curious thesis prosecuted by Elder Paul Rodan (2002) that Crabtree was 'indeed ubiquitous'. Clearly, this called for deeper and probing scholastic inquiry.

Both Elders Cowan (2012) and Comte (2016) have traced the remarkable 'effect' of Crabtree in polite society. The South African Chapter, established by Don Cowan circa 2002 and prematurely closed in 2014 during the Presidency of Mr Robert Jones, Esquire, had an annual attendance of 15-20 Crabtree enthusiasts meeting in an elegant Private Dining Room with superb cuisine and excellent Cape red wine. It's said, on good authority, Orations were met with few interjections and occasional snores! The South African orations (now lost in the fumes of wine) place Crabtree in the Cape of Good Hope Colony at three critical junctures - the time of Cook's exploration to the Antipode, Governor Arthur Phillip's voyage to settle Australia for the Crown, culminating in circumnavigation adventures around Tasmania and Australia by Bass and Flinders.

Significantly, these events reveal a glaring gap in not only chronology but overlooking the valuable time the intrepid Crabtree (likely between voyages) invested in acquainting himself with Cape wine-making, fermentation and brewing practices as well as the wives of local winemakers. Cowan prosecuted the thesis (referencing the principle of 'seeing is believing') that 'The Crabtree Effect', a recognised biochemical principle, is linked to the remarkable effect yeast has evolving alcoholic fermentation, both in wine and brewing processes. Cowan attributes its invention to Joseph Crabtree and not the scientific endeavours of English Biochemist Herbert Grace Crabtree in 1929, as Wikipedia would have us believe.

Similarly, Elder Martin Comte (2016) articulated an elegant musical hypothesis and explanation about how it came about through the musical genius of one Norbert Schultze, that he unwittingly expunged the phenomenon known as, 'The Curse of the Crab' effect. Apparently, so the Elder's extensive research and curious musical recitals demonstrated, when Norbert composed Lili Marlene, he was saving future aspiring composers from falling victim to its effect of irritating sound clips that float around in the head.

Tim Smith (2015) whose revealing results of his extensive research into the life and adventures of Joseph Crabtree 'down under' adequately demonstrate Joseph Crabtree elected to retire in Melbourne and is buried here as suggested in the convincing statement, 'Yes - look around you, above and behind you'. These startling revelations are proof beyond doubt (again I refer to the principle of 'seeing is believing') that Crabtree was very active in colonial Australia. More of this later in tonight's tale.

But I digress... without further ado, let's get to it.

The substantial and growing scholarship about Joseph Crabtree's activity in Melbourne reveals a body of knowledge that very much offers up substantiated evidence together with some curious concepts that call for further (sober) investigation. Upfront, these opportunities are a lifeline for orators desperately

seeking a theme that lines up with aforesaid guidelines and Committee approval.

It's worth noting that South Africa was first out of the starting blocks in southern hemisphere viticulture when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a supply station in 1652 at the tip of the African continent known as the Cape of Storms. For good reason, it was changed to the Cape of Good Hope to entice tourists and, not surprisingly, caught the attention of Joseph Crabtree. The Australian Chapter Biographical Sketch (2023) provides an authoritative account of Joseph Crabtree's early forays into exploration together with honing his impersonation skills to create the illusion of multiple sightings at the same time.

A teenager in 1770, Crabtree we are told accompanied Captain James Cook on his first voyage in the 'Endeavour' as a flute boy, as Cook set off to chart the east coast of Australia and claim it for the Crown. The race for colonies was on and Crabtree was everywhere – it was literally a 'Cook's Tour'! Orator Rodan's (2022) exhaustive research reveals Crabtree's ambitions then took him to the American colonies where, as an aspiring polymath prodigy, he deliberately avoided the frontline of the American War of Independence (1775-1779), electing rather to service military needs by marketing his latest idea, a brothel franchise – the first of its kind! Due to some unfortunate administrative glitches involving Constitutional amendments, Crabtree wisely "disappeared from the radar screen of American public life for over a decade" (Rodan, 2002). Furthermore, Elder Rodan notes with some distress that, "almost nothing is known of Crabtree's activities in the years between 1800 and 1806" (Rodan;p6).

Elders and Scholars, do not indulge Orator Rodan's anguish, for in fact it can be proven that all was well with Crabtree who, by 1787 had slipped back into in London City, and was signing up as the Navigation Officer on HMS Sirius as part of the First Fleet led by Governor Arthur Phillip, tasked to begin the British colonisation in the name of the Crown. Unaware the Cape of Good Hope supply station was Crabtree's old stamping ground, the First Fleet pulled into Cape Town to refuel. This might explain why historical records reveal Governor Phillip arrived in Sydney Cove on 3 January 1788 whilst HMS Sirius showed up 3 weeks later due to glitches with navigation aids. What is not clear is why, on 28 September 1788, Governor Phillip would choose to send HMS Sirius to Cape Town for urgently needed food supplies – no wine on the shopping list! Wikipedia historical records mention that the last cow in NSW was killed on the same day – so what is the historical link with Crabtree – at this late hour I am fresh out of ideas!

Not surprisingly, the good HMS Sirius returned to NSW in December 1788, with a new cow but sans Joseph Crabtree who, disgruntled with limited career opportunities in navigation, fell overboard and proceeded to spend a pleasant decade at the Cape of Good Hope working on his polymath skillset to become renowned 'Jack of all Trades and Master of None' while perfecting the 'Crabtree Effect' ready to export it to unsuspecting Australians at the first opportunity.

What happened next, will comfort Elder Rodan. In fact, we can locate intrepid explorer Crabtree at the turn of the 19th century. We are told, George Bass and Matthews Flinders sailed from the UK, stopping in at the Cape of Good Hope supply station. Over an elegant dinner and drunken poker game, the duo was persuaded to sign up Crabtree as Chief Navigation Officer which is why, in 1798,

Bass and Flinders sailing from Sydney successfully circumnavigated Tasmania, with little or no help from the Chief Navigation Officer who was still under the influence of the 'Crabtree Effect'!

Between 1800-1803, with the Dutch back in charge at the Cape of Good Hope, Crabtree threw his lot in once again with Finders offering his highly tuned navigation skills for the next adventure to complete the first circumnavigation of mainland Australia.

Still keenly tracking developments at the Cape of Good Hope, Crabtree was delighted to learn that the Dutch East India Company was declared bankrupt in 1803 and then fell into a deep depression on learning the Netherlands Government declared the Batavian Republic which lasted until 1806 at which point the Brits did a land-grab at the Cape of Good Hope. As Crabtree's polymath skills did not extend to proficiency in High Dutch, he kept his head down in the Antipodes and, so we are told on good authority, established himself as the first Australian vigneron perfecting fermentation and brewing skills (Rodan 2022). This claim has been the topic of some debate among the academy particularly in local Paramatta student pubs – more about 'spat 'n slap' rumbles later.

We know from past Orations that Crabtree, not surprisingly, soon fell out with the NSW Governor of the Colony, one William Bligh in 1806. Sufficiently savvy to know when the chips are down, Crabtree opted to return to South Africa (affectionately abbreviated to SA) to once again perfect fermentation and brewing skills. Still under the influence of the 'Crabtree Effect', he set sail from Sydney to SA in late 1806. Due to a misunderstanding about luggage labels marked 'Destination SA', Crabtree was off-loaded in Port Adelaide, much to his navigational surprise. Being an entrepreneurial polymath, he put down vine roots and staked his claim as the first vigneron entrepreneur in South Australia.

The next decade (1806-1815) was celebrated as the 'Crabtree polymath era' as our hero hung out in and around the Adelaide hills as both gentleman and farmer devoting time to inflating his reputation. So impressed was the British Secretary of War, he appointed Crabtree as a consultant on a 10-year Fixed Term contract to advise about the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). Significant deliveries in this time included successful annexation of St Helena (desolate island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean) to secure disgraced heads of state but, more shamefully as a British concentration camp for Afrikaner prisoners-of-war during the South African War 1899-1902.

It wasn't long before Crabtree heard rumours that Britain was picking up troubles on its eastern frontier of the Cape of Good Hope Colony and, over a few drinks with the British Secretary of War, they devised a plan. As it turned out, following the Napoleonic Wars, Britain experienced a serious unemployment problem and Crabtree's plan was to persuade these destitute souls to settle on the eastern frontier to fortify it against the Indigenous Xhosa peoples. And so it came to pass, Elders and Scholars, Crabtree was one of the 1820 settlers who, with a new farm as a reward for his genius 1820 plan, used best practice fermentation and brewing processes to grow the finest vineyards in the district whilst simultaneously living the fine life of gentleman in fashionable Port Elizabeth – a lifestyle bank-rolled through a lucrative chain of Dan Murphy's to flog his finest 1822 Shiraz, suitably called 'The Age of Enlightenment'. Noting that in the same year, rave reviews were posted by one Monty Friendship on the Dan Murphy website ([Age of Enlightenment-shiraz-2018](#))

waxing lyrical about this extraordinary wine as, “our incantation of the revered relationship of harmony”. Does anyone here tonight actually understand that statement?

Having reached the pinnacle of success on the eastern frontier, and this amazing news reaching distant shores, we learn that Crabtree was called to the Scots Bar in 1831 (Smith, 2015) spending the next decade dedicating time and energy to his new vocation, local affairs (likely temporary romantic interludes) and London Clubs where he squandered his South African fortune. By 1841, and needing quick money, he opted for giving it another go in the fledgling Colony of Port Phillip where he was warmly embraced by Judge Willis for his final legal mind, powers of reasoning and generosity in sharing around the ‘Crabtree Effect’. I digress...back to the quick money and a lightbulb moment for our hero. Not inclined to make ‘conflict of interest’ disclosures to anyone, especially his employer, Crabtree set about using his extraordinary navigational skills to design a series of ‘aids’ or lighthouses for willing buyers, particularly Governors under pressure from insurance companies over suspicious number of shipwrecks along colonies bounded by the treacherous Indian and Southern Ocean coastlines. Being a polymath, these state-of-the-art lighthouses came with a price, but paid handsomely with Cape Otway first out of the blocks followed by the ‘magnificent seven’ along the coastlines.

With a tidy sum of cash in the back pocket, Crabtree turned his mind to retirement but not before one last nostalgic trip, in 1844, to the Cape of Good Hope eastern frontier. Noting it was by invitation, this prestigious event was to join Port Elizabeth residents in a cricket match – marketed as ‘married vs single’ men. With an inclination towards temporary romantic interludes, Crabtree was unable to declare reliably his domestic status and promptly got slapped with a ban and barred from participating. Now talking of cricket, romantic indiscretions and slaps, there are some striking similarities between the 1844 game and a recent ‘spat ‘n slap’ rumble that played out in polite Noosa society where it is reliably reported by the ‘Herald Sun’ that one casanova overstepped the boundary with one local socialite and got ‘hit for sex and six’ in that order! Forthwith, this is known as the ‘Noosa Slap Effect’ and serves as a warning to would-be philanderers!

In a surprise political move, Victoria separated from NSW in 1851 and immediately the Gold Rush was on at Summerhill Creek and Ballarat. On the back of lucrative proceeds from the ‘Lighthouse Rush’, Crabtree retired to Hawthorn in Melbourne (noting the error arising from the Geordie dialect pronouncing Hawthorn as Haworth!), but this was not before he established two courts (let me hasten, not legal entities) in honour of his astonishing lifetime achievements. Check them out on Google Maps – you’ll find them in Reservoir and Bundoora – a lasting testimony that Crabtree was active in Melbourne to the last inspired sip of ‘The Age of Enlightenment’ as he took final breath in 1854!

Indeed, it is correct that Crabtree retired to Melbourne and was likely buried on the morning of 3 July 1854 under the foundation stone of the Old Quadrangle at the University of Melbourne – a ceremony officiated by the first Chancellor, Sir Redmond Barry who later on the same day, also laid the foundation stone for the State Library, Victoria. Evidence (still to be discovered in the Archives) suggests correspondence from Crabtree to the Chancellor in which an eloquent case is prosecuted for naming the new Law Library at the south end of the Old Quad in honour of his illustrious legal career. It appears the Chancellor was having none of it and elected rather to bury Crabtree under the foundation stone and put

closure to any further correspondence. Not deterred, one mysterious bequest of an assortment of books turned up on the steps of the Law library revealing the Honours theses reported missing from the University of Sydney (Paul Rodan); another 'copy of the mysterious handsome leather-bound volume of melodies' so desperately sought by Elder Comte (noting that if he contacted the University Librarian at Melbourne, it would have resulted in joyous success) and; last but not least, a pile of valuable tomes removed circa 1773 during a limited career in the bindery at Cambridge University.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite some interjections and occasional snores, there are some conclusions we can draw from Joseph Crabtree's international explorations and worldly influence or, as scholars might reflect, 'it was an age of significant 'effects'. Here's why:

- First up and worth noting is a key theme of 'a life both ordinary and extraordinary' – an intriguing tale made even less understandable by confusing chronology;
- Beyond doubt, Crabtree is appropriately placed as having a pivotal position in the history of the Age of Enlightenment. As a free-thinking polymath, he didn't allow himself to be held back by narrow views of the day regarding Deism, Republicanism and Liberalism, and all that stuff. Indeed no, the Crabtree 'Age of Enlightenment effect' was less about the great 'Age of Reason' but rather about 'seeing the light' (again 'seeing is believing') and making a quick buck from navigational aids (aka lighthouses) to light up South African and Australian coastlines like Myers shop front on Christmas Eve;

More significantly, the 'Crabtree Age of Enlightenment effect' or phenomenon is more about harmony and kindred spirit between fermentation and those who imbibe! I can reveal that Dan Murphy's website ([Age of Enlightenment-shiraz-2018](#)) so impressed with Crabtree's bottled 1822 Shiraz 'The Age of Enlightenment' convinces its reader of its '*In Vino Veritas*' mellowing effect which, "... *is when an individual becomes comfortable, self-assured and fully expressed in their own self. This awakening can occur at any time in life, but in that moment, one transcends to another level of expressive power, self-confidence, balance and harmony.*" Such profound thoughts will keep future orators looking deep in the bottle to savour the last drops of wisdom proffered by 'The Age of Enlightenment'.

- Worth noting, the 'Noosa Slap Effect' should be duly recognised as both a reminder to philanderers and a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on which generations of Crabtree scholars will accord sober reflection;
- Crabtree's explorations reveal a life that can be described as powerful, informative, awesome and ubiquitous that is now more complete with a confused chronology. This, without a doubt, verifies Australian Orators' findings that Crabtree was very likely in several different places at the same time.

Elders and Scholars, this concludes the details of what I have been able to establish about Crabtree's exploratory expeditions between the Antipodes and the Cape of Good Hope. By means of confusing chronology, applying scholastic

rigour 'seeing is believing' and the mellowing effect of 'The Age of Enlightenment', it has been possible to achieve the impossible in convincing you that Crabtree was likely in the several different places at the same time largely due to carefully researched and documented 'effects'. I am confident that future orators will have your commitment and vigorous support to advance the worthy task of building on and verifying the ordinary and extraordinary achievements of this man.

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