

South Australian Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1858 - 1889), Thursday 3 November 1881, page 1

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article34272044>

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Synopsis: Todd's paper on transit of mercury and state of meteorology in Australia

Summary: This is a seminal paper in Australian meteorological history

ROYAL SOCIETY'S MEETING.

A meeting of the Royal Society was held at the institute on Tuesday evening. November 1. There were about twenty fellows and visitors present, including Professor Custance, and the president of the society, His Honor the Chief Justice, occupied the chair. <clip>

<clip> Mr. Todd. C.M.G., then read the following paper on "The Transit of Mercury" —" I wish to call the attention of the society to the transit of Mercury on Tuesday next, the 8th inst. <clip> (detailed description follows)

(Ed. See full article for detailed view of state of meteorology in Australia)

<clip> Mr. Todd also read an interesting paper on the recent storms on the east coast, in the course of which he said:—"In the absence of any more important paper I have thought that a few remarks on the recent storms which have passed over the eastern and south-eastern portions of Australia would not be without interest to the society. Unfortunately the storms to which I refer have been attended by the sad loss of several vessels, and still worse, the loss of many valuable lives. As the society is aware, we have had in active work for some time past an extensive system of daily weather reports, which include the greater part of Australia, from the west coast at Perth to the east coast, the whole length of the south coast, inland the valley of the Murray and the Darling, the interior along the telegraph line, and the north coast at Port Darwin. Recently, or since the last Meteorological Conference held in Melbourne in May this year, we have had reports from Low Head in Tasmania, and also from New Zealand. We still require the co-operation of Queensland and more stations in Western Australia. You will thus see that we have now brought as it were daily under our eye the meteorological condition of a large area of the earth's surface and possess therefore an immense advantage over the observer who in the past knew only what was going on immediately around him. Until comparatively recent times the latter position was common to all observers, and meteorology with its complications made but slow progress. All this is now changed by the agency of the telegraph, which brings us to information almost of the birthplace, but certainly of the approach and course of storms traversing considerable distances, and often enables us to give timely warnings to others situated in the direction of their march, but whom they have not yet reached. Now one of the most important facts taught us is that nearly all atmospheric disturbances travel in a general direction from west to east, recurring, however, and pursuing «.j opposite direction in some places where they abut against the coast-line of a continent running north and south. I have traced many storms from the east coast of Africa to Australia and New Zealand, or, at all events, have had good reasons for believing a storm first reported in the neighborhood of the Mauritius and Madagascar to be identical with one subsequently experienced here. <clip>

<clip> In conclusion, I would draw attention to the value of isobaric maps in studying the changes of weather and forecasting what is likely to follow. At the Observatory we now lay down the isobars and direction of the wind every morning on receipt of the reports, and it is intended shortly to exhibit them at the Central Telegraph Office, and probably at Port Adelaide also. Mr. Ellery publishes a map in the Argus, and Mr. Russell does the same in the Sydney Morning Herald. On the whole I think we may congratulate ourselves on having made some progress in the study of Australian meteorology, and admit that the conferences held in Melbourne and Sydney have produced good fruit." He expressed his willingness to furnish the newspapers with every information relative to meteorological conditions if they would publish a map, as was done by the Argus in Melbourne and the Sydney Morning Herald. Mr. Todd concluded by giving a description of the new transit Instrument provided for the Adelaide Observatory, by means of which he would be placed in a much more favorable position for taking observations than he had been formerly. In a short time the meteorological department of the observatory would be very much enlarged, and the whole institution would be placed on a footing of equality with the great European observatories so far as the instruments were concerned.

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<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47099749>>.

(same article, but with this added at end.)

<clip> Mr. Todd also showed two photographs showing the new instrument for observing transits. It had entirely superseded the old instruments used for the purpose. The telescope was provided with two circles 30 inches in diameter, both of which were read off by four micrometer microscopes. A room was now being built for its reception, where it was intended to be placed on granite foundations. The meeting then adjourned.