



Ann-Marie Anderson-Mayes

I love coincidence and connections – things that come together unexpectedly and reveal something greater than just the sum of the parts. So, I am very grateful to Greg Street who told me on the last afternoon of the ASEG Conference in Brisbane that I must visit the nearby Queensland Art Gallery to view the exhibition, 'Eugene von Guérard: Nature Revealed'.

Von Guérard was an Austrian born artist who came to Australia in 1852, aged 41 and already an established artist. His art was inspired by a close observation of nature and thus his work provides a wonderful visual record of the Australian landscape in the period 1852 to 1881 (when he returned to Europe). Von Guérard is of interest to geophysicists

because he was friends with Georg von Neumayer.

Von Neumayer is considered Australia's first exploration geophysicist. The story of his geophysical career, written by Doug Morrison, can be found in a 5-part series in *Preview* (Issues 121–125, Apr–Dec 2006). In the spring of 1862, von Neumayer invited von Guérard to join his team in a magnetic survey of north-east Victoria and Mount Kosciuszko, involving some 1400 kilometres of travel. Von Guérard recorded the journey in his sketchbook and later created some beautiful paintings from the expedition. In particular, one sketchbook shows Neumayer's wagon, which was used to transport all his measuring equipment.

And this is where the 'connection' comes in. Here was I, looking at the original sketch of a wagon used to carry geophysical equipment 150 years ago. And I had just spent three days learning about all the latest and greatest things happening in the world of geophysics. Von Guérard recorded images of the expedition with the simplest of technology, pen and paper – not for him the digital camera I had just used to record images of presenters and

exhibitors. In exactly the same way, von Neumayer recorded all his scientific observations and data in notebooks. The computer power of modern geophysics seems a world away from these laboriously hand-written measurements. And yet, this team was recording the very best scientific observations they could with the technology available, just as scientists have done throughout history.

Geophysics has come a very long way in 150 years, but in some ways this expedition was no different to a modern geophysical survey. Travel to remote locations, looking after equipment, recording the best data possible, working as a team, dealing with the impact of adverse weather conditions, meeting the locals – these were all part of von Neumayer's magnetic survey of Victoria, just as they are of many geophysical surveys today.

The 22nd ASEG Conference and Exhibition was another excellent ASEG event, made just a little more special for me because on the last day I felt like I had almost reached out and touched a part of the early history of our profession in Australia. One of those connections that makes the world we live and work in just that much more interesting.

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