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of their wine, influenced by their European counterparts. Happily, the wine and food business can't be beaten for spreading the word. Advertising is not something John has ever sought to do.

Against all odds, Bennetts Magill Pottery remains a living treasure, its pottery wheel still turning, tucked away in the backstreets of Adelaide, as humble as its owner.

FRANK J SIEBERT FUNERALS

Joseph (Joe) Bartholomew Siebert migrated to Australia from Germany and settled in Adelaide in 1867. He set up business as a builder in Gouger St, responsible for some of Adelaide's landmark buildings such as the Supreme Court Hotel, now Jeffcott Chambers in Gouger St and the original building at Christian Brothers College in Wakefield St.

When the building trade slowed, he turned to making coffins for undertakers. Eventually, he found that was all he was doing and Joe himself became an undertaker.

In 1911, one of Joe's sons, Frank (Francis Joseph), opened a second funeral parlour in Wakefield St after the closure of the original one. It became Frank J Siebert, Funeral Directors.

Frank J Siebert was well-loved. The company's ledgers reveal his compassion for others with the note "No account - charity" a common entry.

He was also capable of flamboyance. Legend has it that he was standing graveside about to deliver a service when the wet ground beneath him gave way, and he slipped into the newly-dug grave. Horror turned to humour when out popped Frank, announcing "I am the resurrection!"

Natasha Siebert, Frank's great-grand-

daughter, is now at the helm of the 150-year-old funeral parlour. She likes to say that she and her team put the "fun" into "funeral" although, as a self-confessed control freak, Frank's big moment was not the sort of fun she was thinking of. She and her small close-knit team simply enjoy their work.

The Frank J Siebert team consists of seven staff, with five of them working together on each funeral. They each know every part of the business including transferring people into their care, arranging and conducting funerals, cleaning cars and trimming coffins (adding things like handles and the inside lining). The only staff that don't do everything are the specialists who work in the mortuary.

Death and grieving is not a fun business for those doing it, so how can it be enjoyable working in it?

"One of the reasons I love my job is to be able to help people work out what experience

they are wanting," Natasha says. "Some families find it difficult to articulate that."

Natasha was understandably proud to be the first female Siebert at the helm after a long history of apparent father-son succession until she discovered recently that she wasn't! Her great-great-grandmother Elizabeth Siebert ran the show in the 1890s, after the death of her husband, at a time when women didn't work, let alone run their own businesses.

Life has changed. Modern medicine has led to fewer premature deaths. Improved refrigeration gives people more flexibility, allowing for mourners to travel from far-flung parts of the world to attend a funeral. By far the biggest change, however, is technology with live-streaming and recording services altering the way a funeral is conducted.

Recently Natasha prepared a service for a young woman who had lived overseas in

Natasha Siebert from Frank J Seibert Funerals, left, and Greg and Gary Slack, right, from Bonnetts Saddleryworld, which will celebrate its 175th birthday this year

different parts of the world. The service was live-streamed so her friends across the globe could take their lunch-break, close their office doors and attend her funeral, virtually.

Natasha is expecting a major growth period in the industry over the next five to 10 years, with the baby-boomers coming out the other end. A move to simpler farewells is likely, with less emphasis on the formal service. Mourners no longer feel they have to attend burials and cremations. The challenge for the industry will be to maintain its relevance.

Natasha is up for the challenge to tailor services to people's individual needs. She has been struck by how beautiful some requests can be.

"A client once asked for netting to cover the lid of his mother's coffin and he wove flowers through it, turning it into a garden."

Everyone's grief is different and so is the way they say their farewells. Honouring their wishes is so important because as Natasha's father Bernard once said to her: "To be invited into a family circle at such a time is a privilege and a trust without equal."

BONNETTS SADDLEWORLD

Edward Albert Bonnett opened his saddlery in Adelaide in 1843, just seven years after state settlement, catering for a population using the only mode of transport available at the time, the horse and carriage. Another main competitor in South Australia at the time was a business called Holden's, which later transformed itself from manufacturer of the carriage to the car. Rather than follow suit, Bonnetts was able to take a larger slice of the market in equestrian products. It is now Australia's oldest saddlery, celebrating its 175th anniversary this year.

Identical twin great-great-grandsons of Edward, Gary and Greg Slack (their mother was a Bonnett) have owned and managed the company for the past 36 years.

Over that time, they have had to adapt to vast changes in the equestrian retail industry, the latest being the internet, and trading websites Gumtree and eBay. The key to Bonnetts' survival is reacting quickly to market needs and offering something different to their customers. That difference is personal service, customising products for their clients, both rider and horse.

"It is a way that we can combat the internet. When you buy something off the rack, that's how it comes and how it will stay. It's not like one saddle fits all. It's like wearing someone else's shoes!" Gary says.

Gary visits up to 30 different clients and their horses each week. It's a big part of their

business and one that fortunately Gary is passionate about.

Although they are identical twins, Greg and Gary have two very distinct personalities, which suit the different roles they play in their family business. Sitting in an office all day is not, Gary says, in his DNA so he loves to do the meet and greet but Greg is happiest ordering the stock and dealing with the financial side. The brothers have a close working relationship which has helped them adapt quickly to change.

Bonnetts once had a regular front-page slot in *The Advertiser* promoting the sale of Australian-made products from RM Williams, Akubra and Driza-Bone in its stores. But with online shopping, these products once only available from a saddlery store, are now available from anywhere. Having had retail outlets around the state, Bonnetts is now run entirely from one concept store by a team of six, the only advertising via their website. Greg is pragmatic though. "Sometimes you have to shrink your business to grow your business," he explains.

The equestrian products they sell include saddles, bridles, halters, saddlecloths, rugs, equestrian sunglasses, horse boots and riding boots. Saddles are no longer manufactured by Bonnetts. They are imported from around the world, but always with the ability to have them tailor-made to fit the horse.

Their customers include both professional and recreational riders, and some famous riders, too, including former Olympians Gillian Rolton and Megan Jones. Pony clubs are also a big part of the business.

Not all of their customers have been of the equestrian kind though. It did seem more than just coincidence that when the risqué novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* came out, the business experienced a peak in demand for stock whips!

You would think with a long history of involvement in the equestrian industry that the two brothers would have bred lots of pony riders but, with six children between them, there is not a rider among them, despite being a sporting family.

Again Gary and Greg are realistic. If none of the children shows any interest in taking over the business, that's fine by them. The key to the longevity of the business and their years of continued family ownership has been this pragmatic approach.

As Gary sums it up: "You have to take the emotion out of it and consider what's best for the person, the family and the business."

One hundred and seventy-five years is testament to the fact that they're on the right track. ●



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