

No.2/2021

MITCHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

INCORPORATING *MITCHAM MEMORIES*

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature article:

Adelaide Town Hall & Electra House

ALSO

- MHS Programme for 2021
- Colonel Light Gardens Centenary Lecture
- Heavy Transport Vehicles and Cross Road
- Waite Gatehouse campaign update

and more

[THE MITCHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC](#)

Publication Notes

Editorial

The *MHS Newsletter* is a collaborative effort and its purpose is the reporting of activities, publicising the Society's calendar of events, providing stories of historical interest about people, places and events related to the City of Mitcham, and other matters of current interest including updates from the Brownhill Creek Association.

Letters to the Editor are welcome and can be sent by [email](#).

The *Newsletter* is managed and edited by Geoff Sauer.

Disclaimer

Views and opinions expressed in the Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mitcham Historical Society Inc. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the content, but responsibility is not accepted for any errors or omissions that are beyond the Society's control.

Privacy

In accordance with the requirements of its Constitution the Society maintains a Register of its members (name, address, telephone number, email address). The information contained in the Register is only used for interactions between the Society and its members. The information is not shared, sold or provided to any third party. Information provided to the Society by email is provided at the sender's risk and the Society will not be held responsible for any unintended use or disclosure.

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*The Mitcham Historical Society Newsletter incorporating Mitcham
Memories*

Change of Name

The name of the newsletter was changed in 2020 to more accurately reflect the newsletter's purpose: reporting of activities, publicising the Society's calendar of events, stories of historical interest about people, places and events related to the City of Mitcham, and other matters of current interest. Suggestions for stories or events and activities are always welcome and can be emailed to mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Welcome to you all.

Thank you for the support given to the MHS by our patron, Dr. John Newton, Principal of Scotch College, Adelaide and his staff.

As coronavirus restrictions eased, we were able to plan with more confidence. It was a wonderful end of year celebration at The Ed with what I thought was the largest member attendance ever. Thank you, Sandy Matz, for putting your organisational skills to work to make this occasion such a success.

To begin this year's events we were treated to a tour of the Adelaide Town Hall with the ever informative Glen Woodward and reminded of the many familiar names who had passed through the Council chamber. Thank you to Ian Strout who organised the occasion with the addition of a friendly lunch.

We embarked on a bus trip Sunday 11 April visiting Meadows, Ashbourne and Prospect Hill. Thank you Peter Basedow and Ian Strout for a great day out. We hope you will continue to join us in other events through the year.

After a year of action and protest led by Joanna Wells and Professor Warren Jones AO we were able to celebrate the achievement of a Government agreement to deconstruct and reconstruct The Waite Gatehouse in a location more suitable for the University's purpose.

Apart from Joanna and Warren and the many volunteers and supporters that must be thanked specific mention must be made of Ron Bellchambers and local member for Waite Sam Duluk and his team.

It has been both enlightening and inspirational to be a small part of a massive effort to draw the community's attention to an issue of heritage that is under threat such as the Gatehouse. We often take for granted and assume that matters of importance to us as a group concerned about heritage are in good hands and are well understood by our elected government members. Our recent experience was that this assumption must be challenged many times over.

The need to establish and continue an extensive dialogue with like minded people and government members has become increasingly apparent. It is hoped that with the leadership skills of members such as Joanna Wells and Ron Bellchambers that we can continue to play a role in our community in progressing matters of concern into the hands of government decision makers.

Whilst campaigning for the retention of the Gatehouse and surrounding trees we asked why such a substantial upgrade to the intersection of Fullarton and Cross Road may have been proposed.

We were told that this was an important part of our economic recovery necessary for the creation of jobs. It has become increasingly our realisation that as the North South corridor becomes completed more heavy vehicles will be encouraged to come down Cross Road with the consequential increases in noise, deadly fume emission, loss of life and ultimately the loss the heritage that is Cross Road with the inevitable road widening and further destruction of beautiful buildings and trees.

John Wood
Chairperson

MITCHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc

The Mitcham Historical Society (MHS) was formed on 9 November 1977 as a sub-group within the Mitcham Village Art & Crafts Association Incorporated, with aims and objectives including to foster an awareness, preserve and maintain the character of Mitcham Village, to promote the study of local and South Australian history and to promote the collection, and preservation of material relating to local and state history.

The committee also formed the nucleus of a consultative group available to advise on local heritage matters. After years of lobbying, the Mitcham Urban Conservation Area of some 29 hectares was placed on the Register of the National Trust in Canberra.

The Mitcham Village Conservation Zone, an area originally established in 1840 still retains much of its original colonial architecture and is one of the oldest European settlements in the State.

(The District Council of Mitcham formed in 1853, and was the first local government body to have been proclaimed outside of the City of Adelaide).

The Society helped in the formation of the Council funded Mitcham Heritage Research Centre -this group of volunteers is committed to historical research and maintains, enlarges and promotes the Local History Collection begun by the Mitcham Historical Society.

The MHS became an independent organisation on 25 September 2007. The MHS is not only an interactive social group promoting the education of historical matters, but also involved in raising public awareness required to preserve the heritage in the local area.

It is only through the efforts of concerned individuals and groups such as the MHS, that the City of Mitcham's heritage can be protected for the benefit and appreciation of future generations.

MHS ACHIEVEMENTS

In addition to the history of the MHS on the previous page, together with the Brownhill Creek Association, the MHS contributed financially and in other ways –

- to the successful No Dam in Brownhill Creek campaign,
- provided funding for the Birthing Tree project and the
- Tom Price Memorial in Brownhill Creek Reserve

and has also

- provided financial support for the restoration of the heritage listed stables now the Scout Hall in Maitland Street, Mitcham,
- together with the Heritage Alliance and the Member for Waite led the campaign to save the Waite Gatehouse,
- and is playing a major role in the campaign to stop Cross Road becoming a major heavy vehicle freight route.

The MHS is hosting a Lecture to mark the Centenary of Colonel Light Gardens - see p11.

For four and half decades and only with the assistance of dedicated volunteers and the support of the community, the MHS has achieved much in preserving Mitcham's history and ensuring that its heritage is an enduring legacy.

NEW MEMBERS

New members of the MHS are always welcome – if you have friends or acquaintances who are interested in preserving and protecting the history and heritage of the City of Mitcham, please encourage them to contact Joanna Wells: 0403 335 862. Joining before 30 June 2021 and the membership carries through to 30 June 2022.

**Mitcham Historical Society Inc
Officer Bearers 2020—2021**

Patron: Dr John Newton Principal, Scotch College

Chairperson: John Wood M 0402 781 601

Deputy Chairperson/Secretary/Newsletter Editor: Geoff Sauer
M 0412 125 010

Treasurer: Sandra Matz M 0414 747 657

Committee Members

Peter Basedow: M 0417 809 227

Ian Strout: (Events) M 0400 027 117

Joanna Wells: (Membership/Campaigns) M 0403 335 862

Peter Reeve: (Webmaster)

Contact Details

Post: Mitcham Historical Society PO Box 903, Mitcham Shopping
Centre SA 5062

Email: mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Web: www.mitchamhistoricalsociety.org.au

MHS Committee meetings 2021

Tuesday 27 April, Monday 25 May, Monday 29 June, Tuesday 27
July, Tuesday, 31 August, Tuesday 28 September (and AGM –
venue/time TBA), Tuesday 26 October,
Tuesday 30 November.

If there is an issue you would like to see the Committee consider,
please contact the Secretary. The agenda for meetings is finalised
on the Friday immediately prior to a meeting.

MHS Events Calendar 2021

History Festival – Brownhill Creek Walks

- Sunday 2 May and Sunday 16 May Brownhill Creek Recreation Park – with Ron Bellchambers
- Sunday 9 May and Sunday 23 May Brownhill Creek and Ellison's Gully – with Andrew Tilley
- Tuesday 4 May: Colonel Light Gardens Centenary Lecture
see page 11
- Wednesday 4 June 2021: Mid-Year function at Scotch College
– Guest Speaker: Thomas Hardy, Winemaker
- Wednesday 4 August - Speaker Event at Scotch College
Speaker: Mr Tony Kanellos, Director, Carrick Hill
- Tuesday 28 September: Annual General Meeting – time and venue TBA
- Tuesday 12 October Tour: Waite Campus and Urrbrae House
- November 2021 Bus Trip – date and itinerary TBA
- Tuesday 7 December Christmas Function at The Ed

Bookings: Ian Strout (Event Coordinator) M 0400 027 117
except for Colonel Light Gardens Centenary Lecture

MHS April Bus Trip

With a full bus, we left at 9.00am and headed on the South Eastern Freeway *via* Hahndorf and Echunga for morning tea at [Pik-a-Pie](#) bakery in Meadows where everyone enjoyed tea/coffee together with delicious cakes, all baked on the premises.

We then continued a short distance to [Perrini Estate Wine](#), a small winery which began in 1997 with husband and wife team, Tony and Connie, who were wonderful hosts and were very generous letting everyone taste their lovely wine. Several cases of wine were purchased. As we were running well ahead of schedule, a bonus was a delightful drive to the beautiful historic town of Strathalbyn then to Ashbourne for lunch.

Lunch was taken at the historic [Greenman Inn](#) built in 1865. The Inn lost its licence in 1868 as a result of the objections from the local Methodists, and in 1896 it became the local general store and post office. In 1998 after extensive renovations, it reopened as a hotel/restaurant with a wonderful ambience and warmth.

After a delicious meal and a glass of wine, we headed for our last location, the historic [Prospect Hill township and Museum](#). We explored the very extensive museum with its wonderful exhibits of yesteryear, many of which reminded us of our childhood, and especially the recreated school classroom.

A special building was dedicated to the [1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires](#), and it was a sombre reminder to all just how devastating those fires were. We returned to where we began our journey, slightly delayed because of a traffic jam resulting from the major road works on the South Eastern Freeway. Everyone had an enjoyable day, and we look forward to the November bus trip. A very special thank you to our wonderful bus driver, Peter Williams, who volunteers his time and gets everybody around safely.

Ian Strout

A Lecture to mark the Centenary of Colonel Light Gardens

“A Life in Planning: Charles Reade (1880-1933), Garden City Campaigner and Global Planner” - Speaker: Dr Christine Garnaut

Tuesday 4 May 2021, 6.00pm for 6.30pm, Fisher Chapel, Scotch College,

4 May 2021 is the 141st anniversary of Charles Reade’s birth and the 21st anniversary of Colonel Light Gardens listing as a State Heritage Area.

Tickets must be purchased in advance through [Eventbrite](#). There is also an attendance limit of 195 people because of COVID restrictions.

Charles Compton Reade (1880-1933) was born in Invercargill, New Zealand, and into a family with long-established connections to England. On completion of his education in New Zealand he turned to a career in journalism which took him to Britain as a young adult. Before long, through his work as a reporter, he was introduced to the emerging and mutually supportive concepts of town planning and the Garden City idea. Consequently, he shifted his career direction and became a self-taught town planner as well as a Garden City champion internationally. This presentation provides an overview of Reade’s early life and of his career and contributions as a town planner – in South Australia, the Federated Malay States, Northern Rhodesia and South Africa – before focussing on his contributions in metropolitan Adelaide and country South Australia. Particular emphasis is given to Reade’s application of the Garden City approach, and its outcome, in the planning and design of Colonel Light Gardens.

Speaker bio:

Dr Christine Garnaut is Adjunct Associate Research Professor in Planning and Architectural History at (UniSA) and President, International Planning History Society. Her PhD was on the planning and architectural history of the model garden suburb of Colonel Light Gardens.

The MHS is publishing a monograph which will be provided to all attendees and acknowledges the City of Mitcham’s Mayoral Grant Programme, without which this would not have been possible.

Adelaide Town Hall Tour

MHS Life Member, Glen Woodward, who is a volunteer guide at the Town Hall in Adelaide led a tour of the Town Hall for members on 17 March.

The centrepiece of the building is the regal clock tower that characterises its Victorian era heritage. Former Mayor of the City and architect, Edmund Wright, built the Town Hall in 1866. Local materials including Tea Tree Gully freestone and Dry Creek bluestone feature prominently throughout. The staircase leading to the auditorium and balcony is constructed from Macclesfield marble, which has been compared favourably to the best Italian Carrara marble.

Surveyor-General, Colonel William Light, earmarked the one-acre site for use by Council in his original plan for the City of Adelaide. The Council purchased the land from the State in 1840 for 12 shillings (or \$1.20 today). Initially used as a produce market selling hay, corn, butter, poultry, eggs, fish and vegetables, the Council saw that a structure was needed to act as a meeting place of the local government and to represent the importance of the Council in the city.

The foundation stone for the Adelaide Town Hall was laid on 4 May, 1863 and was later covered by the construction of the Albert Tower – named after Queen Victoria’s late husband Prince Albert – which stands at 44m tall. The Adelaide Town Hall was officially opened on 20 June, 1866 and was considered the “largest municipal building south of the Equator” at the time. The Albert Tower was also significant as the only civic building outside of England to house a full peal of eight bells. Today it also holds a three-faced clock, donated by Sir J. Lavington Bonython in 1935.

The Adelaide Town Hall incorporated four other buildings on the same site: the Prince Alfred Hotel, the Queens Chambers, the Eagle Chambers and the Gladstone Chambers.

Town Hall Organ

The Adelaide Town Hall holds a celebrity in its own right – the \$1.3 million Walker & Sons Organ.

Cont’d p.13

Organists from around the world relish the opportunity to play the organ, which at the time of installation in 1990 was the largest mechanical action instrument built in the UK in a century – 4500 pewter lined pipes. During the tour we were fortunate that a young organist was rehearsing and demonstrated for us the sheer power of the organ by playing it at its almost ear shattering maximum volume!

After the Town Hall was officially opened the city's amateur musicians launched a campaign to obtain a pipe organ for the Main Auditorium. Through two concerts they raised £120, which was instead funnelled into the outstanding account for the bells in the Albert Tower.

In 1869 the Adelaide Philharmonic society was formed and took over the charge to raise money for the organ. In six years the choir staged 25 concerts raising more than £500 for the organ, to be matched with £600 from the Council to nearly meet the total cost of £1200.

The Council ordered an organ from London manufacturers William Hill & Son, which arrived in April 1877 and was used for the first time on 2 October that year.

In 1989 the original organ it was removed from the Town Hall and placed in storage, its fate uncertain. The [Organ Historical Trust of Australia \(OHTA\)](#) expressed interest in the organ and was given possession by the Adelaide City Council on the condition that it be restored and located in South Australia. A home for the organ was negotiated with the then Tanunda Council, later to become the Barossa Council, in the Tanunda Soldiers Memorial Hall.

The project represented the most extensive and accurate restoration of a late 19th century English concert organ yet attempted.

Cont'd p.14

Adelaide Town Hall continued

Famous visitors

Famous visitors to the Town Hall have included the Beatles, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, the Dalai Lama and former Polish President and Nobel Peace Laureate, Lech Walesa.

Something to ponder: what might Adelaide have been called had King George IV's only legitimate child, Charlotte, not died in childbirth. William may still have married Adelaide, but he would not have been King (therefore no King William Street and no Victoria Square!!) and Adelaide might have been Charlotte (or the name of hers and Leopold's child who became heir to the throne). Did you know that Edward Gibbon Wakefield wanted the new city to be called Wellington, but William IV preferred it be named after his wife, Queen Adelaide.?

Electra House

Following the tour members repaired to another historic building, Electra House, opposite the Town Hall for lunch. Electra House was built in 1901 for the *Citizens' Life Assurance Company*. Architects [John Quinton Bruce](#), William Cumming and Ernest Bayer were responsible for the design of the building. John Quinton Bruce was the architect behind [Carclew](#) in North Adelaide and the [Freemasons Hall](#) on North Terrace.

The new three-storey building with its ornate external pillars was described in the local press at the time as "one of the finest suites of offices that Adelaide would possess". It also boasted the city's first electric lift, installed in 1905, complete with hemp ropes.

The building was also once an important communication hub, connecting Australia to the rest of the world through telegraphic communication.

During the early colonial period, letters sent between the Australian colonies could take weeks to reach their intended destination by mail coach, and letters for overseas travelled for several months one-way by ship.

Electra House continued

The development of the Morse telegraph in the 1840s dramatically changed the speed and ease of communication between colonies, countries and continents. South Australia successfully established the overland telegraph line that connected Australia to the rest of the world.

The Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Co. Ltd., the company that controlled the overseas telegraph cables, moved into the King William Street office building in 1921. In 1940, it became known as 'Electra House', named after the Greek mythological figure Electra, 'the bright one'.

In 1949, the government acquired Electra House, ending its time as a cable station. From there it changed hands several times, serving as the Post-Master General's technicians' school and the home of a telecommunications museum. In its recent history, the once busy city building has sat empty and neglected, other than briefly serving as an art space and also the Fringe Festival's *Tuxedo Cat* venue in 2011.

After a \$10 million renovation, historic building was given a new life in 2015. Original features of the heritage-listed building were sensitively retained during the renovations, including the electric lift, pillars and high internal ceilings. The interior designer, Daniella Elia told [*The Advertiser*](#) that Electra House had "so much character...When you walk into a new building you don't get the same soul as this."

Waite Gatehouse Campaign.

The petition with close to 9000 signatures has been presented to Parliament.

Legislation is being drafted which would require both houses of Parliament to approve demolition of a State-heritage listed building, if the legislation goes through.



This was Member for Waite, Sam Duluk's brainchild and in theory gives them a level of protection, although worth noting that this is what State heritage listing was meant to do in the first place!

There is still ongoing work behind the scenes to ensure the integrity of the Gatehouse. Detail about the how and when of the move and so on still needs to be fleshed out.

The concern is that they will simply demolish and not rebuild exactly as is – Minister Wingard has consistently spoken of demolition and salvage, which is concerning.

Waite Gatehouse campaign cont'd

The time frame goes against a piece-by-piece demolition and rebuild too, with everything due to be completed by March 2022 year, as the government wants it done before the State election.



A special thank you to MHS members who helped gather signatures on the petition - we could not possibly have done it without you.

The longer the government lets things like this run, the longer they give us to catalyse community attitudes, and that is certainly something that has occurred in the fight for the Waite Gatehouse. We've won a lot more than simply the battle for the gatehouse, and you've all played a really important role in that. Today, more than ever, citizens need to make sure that they are heard and listened to.

Joanna Wells

Photos: Ron Bellchambers

Adelaide Town Hall—the Beatles 1964



The Town Hall's Grand Macclesfield Marble Staircase



Adelaide Town Hall -Walker and Sons organ



City of Adelaide coat of arms and decorated wall detail





UPPER STURT OLD POST OFFICE

The Old Post Office is one of very few remaining wooden buildings in Upper Sturt and the Adelaide Hills. It is an integral part of the settlement story of Upper Sturt. It has been a post office, a shop, a home and we hope it will 'live again' as a place for people to use and enjoy.

A community consultation will be held on Tuesday 27 April from 7pm-9pm in the Upper Sturt Soldiers' Memorial Hall, 173 Upper Sturt Road.

All COVID-19 requirements for the event will be followed. The Hall has a COVID Management Plan and 4 COVID Marshalls.

Contact: Dr John Halsey, Secretary, Upper Sturt Soldier's Memorial Hall, 0417 886 896

<https://www.facebook.com/UpperSturtSoldiersMemorialHall>

Campaign – Get heavy vehicles off Cross Road

The MHS has been meeting with politicians and relevant stakeholders as part of a community campaign to find an alternative to heavy freight vehicles using Cross Road. An MHS delegation has met with the Members for Unley (David Pisoni), Waite (Sam Duluk), Elder (Carolyn Power), Badcoe (Jayne Stinson), West Torrens (Tom Koutsantonis—in his role as Shadow Transport Minister), Transport Minister (Corey Wingard), the RAA (Charles Mountain), SARTA (Steve Shearer), SA Freight Council (Evan Knapp) and the Civil Construction Federation (Melissa Ekberg). The campaign to save the Waite Gatehouse and trees in the Waite Arboretum brought to light the state government's intention to make Cross Road the preferred freight corridor for B-doubles and other heavy transport vehicles between the South Eastern Freeway, and join the North-South Corridor at South Road.

KPMG's study that killed off the government's pre-election Globelink proposal has Cross Road as the best option for heavy freight vehicles – our conversations have revealed that not all the stakeholders agree with this. Our aim is to work collaboratively with all interested parties to find a mutually acceptable solution to get heavy vehicles (as far as is possible) out of the metropolitan area.

Our opposition to the proposal is based on its likely effects on heritage and amenity as well as its effects on the community and its health and well-being, both mental and physical. The health statistics from middle-age onwards for people who live within only a few hundred metres of a main road such as Cross Road are alarming. The majority of trucks run on diesel which contains 3-nitrobenzathrone, the most carcinogenic compound known to humans, meaning an increased risk of cancer. In Australia, diesel exhaust is second only to UV exposure as the most common carcinogen workers are exposed to. Continued next page /

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there is an increased risk of developing dementia as well as an increased risk of developing asthma in middle-age.

Another important factor is safety – already 200,000 heavy vehicles use Cross Road each year. Increasing that number without massive changes to Cross Road's infrastructure (grade separations, widening etc) will significantly increase the risk of heavy vehicle/car collisions with resulting serious injuries to motorists and their passengers.

We will continue to consult and work with MPs (both State and Federal), industry representatives and community groups to find a viable alternative that has the support of all stakeholders, as well as of all political parties. To this end, Nicolle Flint has not only undertaken to work with us on the issue, but has also sent a letter and survey to some 23,000 constituents who live near Cross Road.

How can you help the cause? Phone Nicolle Flint's office on 8374 0511 and let her know that you are not happy about Cross Road being turned into an extension of the South Eastern Freeway.

Phone your local State MP (Unley 8373 4846, Waite 8278 5844, Elder 8374 1939, Badcoe 8371 5600) and let them know too!

Email the Minister: And finally, spread the word!

Joanna Wells

MITCHAM LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The [Mitcham Local History Collection](#) collects, collates, catalogues and stores information concerning the City of Mitcham to archival standards. The collection consists of historical information about the City of Mitcham, and includes:

- Publications (biographies, histories, etc)
- Directories and electoral rolls
- Historical research files
- Local newspapers
- Maps and plans
- Local Cemetery records and indexes
- Old council minutes, correspondence, reports and indexes
- Over 4000 photographs including special collections
- Rate assessments, Council surveys and building applications
- Local school and organisations' records and histories
- Family histories including letters and diaries
- Oral histories

It is open to the public and can be accessed at the Mitcham Heritage Research Centre, Mitcham Cultural Village, 103 - 105 Princes Road, Mitcham SA 5062, Telephone: 8372 8261, Tuesday—Thursday 9.30am to 4.00pm.

MITCHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC CORPORATE MEMBERS

MHS gratefully acknowledges the support of its Corporate Members

[The Edinburgh Hotel and Cellars](#)

a famous beer garden, premium wine cellars, and innovative cuisine
1 -7 High Street, Mitcham, H p. 8373 2700 C p. 8373 2753

[Scotch College](#)

“ . . . a culture of wellbeing and educational attainment which is zealously focused, creating a stimulating and relevant learning experience in preparation for the 21st Century.” Carruth Road, Torrens Park
p. 8274 4333

[Nicolle Flint MP](#)

Federal Member for Boothby
Shop 2/670 Anzac Highway, Glenelg East 5045 p. 8374 0511

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Studio: by appointment only: 21 Albert Street, Mitcham,

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Cafe, gallery and gift shop, contemporary works by local artists; including original jewellery, children's gifts and retro ornaments. 13 Welbourne St, Mitcham m. 0413 293 542