



# NEWSLETTER

INCORPORATING *MITCHAM MEMORIES*

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**In this issue:**

**Chairperson's Message**

**Mid-Year High Tea**

**Carrick Hill Guided Tour**

**November Bus Trip**

**Historic Sturtbrae House**

**and more**

**No. 3/2022**

## 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 from time to time 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 used only 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.

## Contents

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 2     | Publication Notes                                     |
| 3     | Contents  |
| 4 &5  | Chairperson's Message                                 |
| 6&7   | Mid-Year High Tea Report                              |
| 8 &9  | Carrick Hill Guided Tour—coming event                 |
| 10&11 | Office Bearers & Events Calendar                      |
| 12&13 | November Bus trip — National Mid-Year High Tea photos |
| 15    | MHS Achievements/ New Members information             |
| 16&17 | Speaker Event Report—Sturtbrae House                  |
| 18    | Corporate Members                                     |

Suggestions for stories or events and activities are always welcome and can be emailed to [mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

### The City of Mitcham

The City of Mitcham is Adelaide's second oldest Council area with the District Council of Mitcham proclaimed on 11 May 1853. In 1891 the first National Park in South Australia, and the second in Australia was proclaimed at Belair.

### Remittances to the Society

When making payments to the Society by EFT or by cheque please ensure that you indicate what the payment is for e.g. membership, bus trip, etc. This avoids any confusion or misunderstanding as to the purpose of the funds when they are received.

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E&OE

## Chairperson's Message

I trust that this Newsletter finds you well and coping with what has been a cold and wet winter. COVID is still abroad and despite my best efforts (4 vaccinations, wearing a mask in public situations), I managed to acquire the virus, but thankfully my symptoms were mild and my GP recommended a course of antivirals.

The Society has hosted two events since the last Newsletter – our Mid-Year Event in the Drawing Room at Torrens Park House, Scotch College with guest speaker David Saies who is Honorary Archivist at the College, and our Speaker Event in early August with a presentation about historic Sturtbrae House in Bellevue Heights by Flinders University research Master's student, Ryan Buhagiar. Reports about both events are in this Newsletter.

We have four events remaining for 2022 – the AGM on 27 September with guest speaker Scotch College Principal and MHS Patron, Dr John Newton on the subject "1812", a guided tour of Carrick Hill (and optional lunch) on 12 October, the November bus trip visiting the National Motor Museum in Birdwood, lunch at the historic Mt Torrens Hotel and a visit to Chocolate Factory in Woodside, and finally the MHS Christmas Function at The Ed in December. Details about the first three of these events are in the Newsletter.

Many of you who grew up in Mitcham, Lower Mitcham and Hawthorn may remember that until 1964 there was a pottery on the corner of Grange and Abbotshall Roads (adjacent to the railway crossing). The site is now a Vinnies store. Originally the Bosley Pottery and then Mitcham Potteries, I hope to include a story about the pottery in the next Newsletter. Does anyone have one of the Bosley green MacRobertson Freddo Frogs? (see opposite page)

Cont'd next page

### Chairperson's message cont'd/

A sincere thank you too to all the members who have renewed their memberships.

In the meantime, I hope to see you at one or more of our forthcoming events.

Stay safe – and warm.

Geoff Sauer  
Chairperson



## MID-YEAR EVENT – HIGH TEA

60 members and friends gathered for high tea in the Drawing Room at historic Torrens Park House at Scotch College on Sunday 5 June. A range of sandwiches, hot pastries and cakes were accompanied by sparkling and still wine and tea and coffee. The ambience of the afternoon was added to by pianist Trevor Hirth.

A highlight of the afternoon was a short presentation by David Saies, the College's Honorary Archivist. David spoke of the history of Torrens Park House.: the house was originally built by Robert Richard Torrens, the founder of the Torrens Title system of registering the ownership of land, a method which was subsequently adopted internationally, was later owned by Walter Watson Hughes, one of the original benefactors (with Thomas Elder) in 1872 of what was to become in 1874, the University of Adelaide, and then the Barr Smith family, prominent pastoralists and merchants. Hughes was proprietor of the Moonta Mining Company which had been financed by a loan from Elder Smith & Co of £80,000 and in 1876 was the first company in Australia to pay out a dividend of over €1,000,000. As they say, money makes money.

The Barr Smith family and the Elder family became indelibly linked in 1855 when Robert Barr Smith married Joanna Elder. In 1875 Robert and Joanna purchased Torrens Park House and immediately set about doubling its size – the theatre was added during the 1880s. The house and grounds were often used for lavish entertainment. The house was extensively furnished courtesy of William Morris – the Barr Smiths were Morris's biggest international customer – their summer house, Auchendarroch House at Mt Barker was also extensively furnished with Morris wallpaper and fabrics. You can read more about the Barr Smith's homes in Adelaide [here](#).

Cont'd next page

## MID-YEAR EVENT—cont'd:



After his presentation, David Saies led small groups through adjacent parts of the house and into the theatre. Our sincere thanks to Peter Basedow and Joy, John Wood, Ian Strout and Joanna Wells for ensuring that the high tea was an outstanding success.



*See also p.14*

**CARRICK HILL**  
**GUIDED TOUR AND OPTIONAL LUNCH**  
**Wednesday 12 October: 11.30am**

Carrick Hill's magnificent garden is as individual as its art collection. A breathtaking highlight is the view across the gardens to Adelaide and the sea beyond. Carrick Hill with its Australian, British and French art in intimate domestic settings gives a unique glimpse into the glamour and lifestyle of decades past. House guests of the Haywards included actors Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, Katherine Hepburn, Barry Humphries, artists Jeffrey Smart, William Dobell, and art historian Kenneth Clark, amongst others.

The house also boasts a significant collection of porcelain, both functional and decorative.





## **CARRICK HILL cont'd:**

In terms of the history of Mitcham this property is very significant as when Robert Barr Smith's granddaughter, Ursula married Edward (Bill) Hayward in 1935, the 100 acres of land on which Carrick Hill sits was a wedding gift from Ursula's father, Tom Elder Barr Smith.

We have a organised a special tour by Carrick Hill guides with a maximum of 20 people divided into two groups of 10.

Cost: \$12.80 (this includes admission to the House and tour and booking fee)

**Bookings via [Eventbrite](#)**

**Those who wish to stay for lunch afterwards in the café please advise Ian Strout (0400 027 114) who will organise a table booking**



## **Mitcham Historical Society Inc**

### **Officer Bearers 2021—2022**

**Patron:** Dr John Newton, Principal, Scotch College

**Chairperson:** Geoff Sauer M 0412 125 010

**Deputy Chairperson:** Joanna Wells M 0403 335 862

**Treasurer:** Sandra Matz M 0414 747 657

**Minutes Secretary (& Webmaster):** Peter Reeve

### **Committee Members**

John Wood M 0402 781 601

Peter Basedow: M 0417 809 227

Ian Strout: (Events/Membership) M 0400 027 117

### **Contact Details**

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Email: [mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:mitchamhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

Web: [www.mitchamhistoricalsociety.org.au](http://www.mitchamhistoricalsociety.org.au)

ABN: 52338135115

### **MHS Committee meetings 2022**

29 August, 26 September, 31 October, 28 November

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

## MHS Events Calendar 2022

### **Annual General Meeting:**

Speaker: Dr John Newton—"1812"

Tuesday 27 September

### **House Tour: Carrick Hill & Lunch**

Wednesday 12 October

Bookings: [Eventbrite](#)

### **Bus Trip**

Sunday 6 November: National Motor Museum, Mt Torrens,  
Woodside

**\*\*Please book with Ian Strout for the bus trip**

### **Christmas Function at The Ed**

Tuesday 6 December

**Bookings:** Ian Strout (Event Coordinator) M 0400 027 117

### **Suggest an event**

Are there events, activities, lectures, visits, liaison with other historical societies you would like to see the Society host or organise? Comments about the timing of activities e.g. morning, afternoon, evening welcome also. All suggestions welcome by [email](#) or in writing to PO Box 903, Mitcham Shopping Centre SA 5062.

## NOVEMBER BUS TRIP

### Sunday 6 November

**Highlights: National Motor Museum (Birdwood), historic Mt Torrens, Melba's Chocolate Factory (Woodside)**

After morning tea, we will visit the National Motor Museum in Birdwood which tells the stories of the people and vehicles that have shaped Australia's motoring history. From the stately to the absurd, from the hand-built to the mass-produced – see the vehicles people have loved, loathed, thrashed and pampered. Home of Australia's biggest motoring collection, for many this will be a trip down memory lane.

Lunch will be at the family-owned Mt Torrens Hotel (*ca* 1850s) in historic Mt Torrens – the hotel’s current owner will speak about the history of the hotel. The town was developed by the Dunn family in the early 1840s. Then known as Barton Springs, it incorporated a farmhouse, smithy, stables and the Cornish Arms Inn. The town proper was laid out in 1853, serving the Murray River trade at Mannum.



## Bus Trip cont'd



### **Holden Prototype Car No. 1, made in 1946 – hand built in Detroit**

Last stop will be Melba's Chocolate Factory in Woodside housed in the heritage-listed former Southern Farmers Union Cheese factory building where visitors can watch a traditional range of sweets and chocolates being made using heritage equipment – tastings too!

- Departs: 9.00am Mitcham Council Car Park - Returns: 4.30pm
- Cost: \$90.00pp (includes morning tea, National Motor Museum admission, and lunch (choice of 3 mains + glass of wine))
- Bookings: Ian Strout on 0400 027 117
- Seat(s) on the bus confirmed upon payment either by cheque (payable to Mitcham Historical Society), PO Box 903, Mitcham Shopping Centre SA 5062 or by EFT BSB: 105084 Account No: 045933840 (include your surname as a reference)

**Photo opposite: Graeber's Bus Service—Lobethal. Diamond T chassis 1942. Premier Thomas Playford used this service.**

## MID-YEAR High Tea: Photos (see also pp.6&7





## 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 Shelter 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,
- hosted a Lecture to mark the Centenary of Colonel Light Gardens in 2021.

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 Ian Strout on 0400 027 117.

**Membership fees:** individual \$30, family \$40, concession/pensioner \$20 (individual) \$30 (family), corporate \$150. Note: Pension/Concession rates apply only for holders of Commonwealth income tested cards: Age Pension, Commonwealth Seniors Health and Veteran's Gold Card and to full-time students at university, school or TAFE.

## **AUGUST SPEAKER EVENT**

“Sticks, stones and Sturtbrae – Mudlarking as archaeological method”

On 3 August more than 30 members of the MHS heard a very interesting presentation from Flinders University research Master’s student, Ryan Buhagiar about historic Sturtbrae House in Bellevue Heights as well the archaeological artifacts he unearthed whilst “mudlarking” in the adjacent creek.

Sturtbrae was built on part of Section 34 which was granted to Thomas Maslin in 1839. Maslin then settled at Aldinga and in 1848 William Shephard, a farmer, bought the Section from Maslin. The earliest part of the house was built by Shephard for his wife Anne and son William Thomas. This was a one roomed stone structure with an underground dairy, semi-excavated into the side of the slope which rises away from the creek, a small tributary of the Sturt River. This original room was added to, and grew to be a house of five rooms by 1864.

William Shephard died on 29 June 1848 from tuberculosis and his wife and son continued to expand the property. In 1860 they acquired the adjacent Section 33. William Thomas Shepard became an established figure in Mitcham and was a councillor on the Mitcham District Council in 1877. In 1878 he added Section 35 to extend the farm area northward.

In 1886 the house was bought by George Perrin who extended it even further and then presented it to his daughter Mary Ann Walker as a wedding present in 1887. The Walkers lived in the house until it was bought by William GJ Mills in January 1923. Mills had just left his family property Millbrae near Naime in the control of his son and moved to Adelaide. He was elected a member of the Legislative Council in 1918 and found he needed to be closer to the city.



## **AUGUST SPEAKER EVENT Cont'd:**

Mills was also the Chairman of the Country Party in 1921. Sturtbrae was developed as a fine wool Merino stud and an orchard and vineyard were cultivated on the slopes of the hill above the house.

He died in 1933 with the property remaining in the family and in 1954 was purchased by two of his daughters, May and Margaret, in partnership. The land was subdivided in 1965-66 to create Bellevue Heights created. At one point the property was owned by Flinders University and intended for use as a childcare centre – perhaps and wisely so, that never eventuated. Sturtbrae is significant for being a reminder of early architectural development in Mitcham and for its association with historically significant families at both local and state levels. The building is a reminder of the once predominant rural landscape of the area and typifies the houses of early settlers in the area. In 1854 Shephards Hill Road opened; the new Mitcham Council's first achievement. The road later formed part of the southern boundary of Eden Hills.



## **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 ph. 8373 2700 C ph. 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Carruth Road, Torrens Park  
ph. 8274 4333

#### **Nicolle Flint**

Nicolle was the Federal Member for Boothby until 21 May 2022 and her Corporate Membership remains extant until 30 June 2022

#### **Colindale Design**

Bespoke interior design specialising in end-to-end design resolutions for residential and small-scale commercial projects.  
p. 8271 1483 m. 0418 816 403,  
Studio: by appointment only: 21 Albert Street, Mitcham

#### **This Fine Day Café**

Café, 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