

Rectors of St Michael's Mitcham

The present Rector, the Reverend David Andrew Covington-Groth was installed as the fifteenth Incumbent of the Parish of Mitcham in January 2014. Since 1893 they have been referred to as the Rectors of the Parish.



EDWARD HAYDON BURNETT (1852 – 1855)

The church opened in 1852 with Burnett as its first incumbent. At his request a Church of England Cemetery was established in 1853 on 2 acres of land granted by the government. He resigned in September 1855 and died of consumption at sea on his way to England on 26th June 1856. This marble tablet was erected “by his sorrowing parishioners”.

RICHARD WILLIAM NEEDHAM (1858 – 1863)

During Needham's incumbency it was found necessary to increase the seating capacity of the church. Plans submitted in 1861 by the original architect, William Weir, for an enlargement incorporating the addition of choir, transepts, chancel and vestry were rejected. Two years later new plans by Edmund Wright were adopted, but Needham resigned before tenders were called leaving the supervision to a Committee.



WILLIAM BUCKTON ANDREWS (1864 – 1868)

By the time Andrews arrived in February 1864 the enlarged church was ready to be consecrated. Under Wright's supervision the area had been doubled by rebuilding the southern wall 7m further south, thus creating a square building – a decision regretted by subsequent generations! Ensuing financial problems dominated much of Andrew's incumbency and he resigned in October 1868.

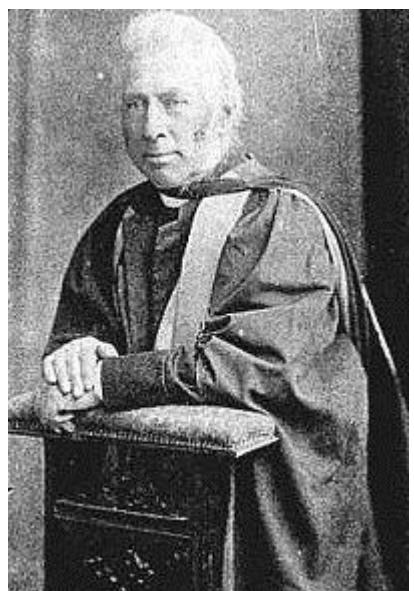
HENRY READ (1869 – 1878)

As well as his parish work in Mitcham, Read - a former missionary and Inspector of Schools in the West Indies - was also a tutor at The Union College. This was a non-conformist organisation providing education and training for young men entering the ministry. When W.W. Hughes offered the College a donation of 20,000 pounds, the decision was made to use the money instead to found The University of Adelaide. Hughes appointed Read as the first Professor of Classics. In June 1878 he was forced to resign his professorial chair and the Cure of Mitcham for "Conduct unbecoming a clergyman".



JOHN FRANCIS HOCTER (1878 – 1883)

Financial problems, due to over-commitment on repairs to the church and Parsonage, plagued much of Hocter's incumbency and resulted in his salary being less than promised. In July 1882 he requested 9 months leave of absence (on a reduced salary) to travel to England "on family business". Apparently, while there he was also receiving a salary as the incumbent of a parish in Liverpool. His resignation did not reach Mitcham until April 1883.



GEORGE HENRY FARR (1/7/1883 – 31/12/1883)

For nearly 25 years Farr was Headmaster of St Peter's College. He also served as a Canon of Adelaide, was on the Board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery, and was Warden of the Senate of the University of Adelaide. Upon his return from a visit to England he accepted the position as Incumbent of Mitcham but resigned six months later. His wife, Julia, established the Orphan Home for Girls and Home for Incurables.

ALFRED SELLS (1884 – 1888)

Sells was a widower and ‘man of mature years’ when he came to South Australia with his family in 1872. Sadly three of his children died here from TB, including his son the Rev’d Alfred Sells Jr who was incumbent of St Jude’s, Brighton. Heartbroken, he returned to England in 1888. Sells was also a competent artist and several of his watercolours are held in the Art Gallery of SA. He also carved a reredos for St Michael’s which was used until 1904.



FREDERICK WILLIAM SAMWELL (1888 – 1893)

Samwell, an energetic and dynamic young man was described as being “innovative and progressive”. He introduced house-to-house visiting, a monthly parish magazine and a range of parish clubs and organisations for young people. He started the St Michael’s Day school in a rented cottage in the Village, before moving it into a large purpose-built hall on the corner of Princes Rd and East Parade in 1890. It also served as the Parish Hall until 1980.

ALBERT WYNDHAM CLAMPETT (1893 – 1939)

Clampett’s long tenure lasted longer than the combined years of the previous eight priests. It encompassed Australia becoming a nation, WW1 (when he served as an Army Chaplain), and the desperate years of the Great Depression. With the aid of various curates he established two daughter churches: St Columba’s at Hawthorn in 1898 (which became a separate parish in 1920) and St Wilfrid’s at Torrens Park in 1934.

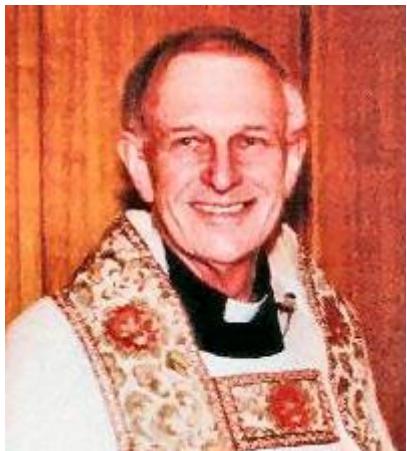


REGINALD HENRY PEARMAN (1939 – 1962)

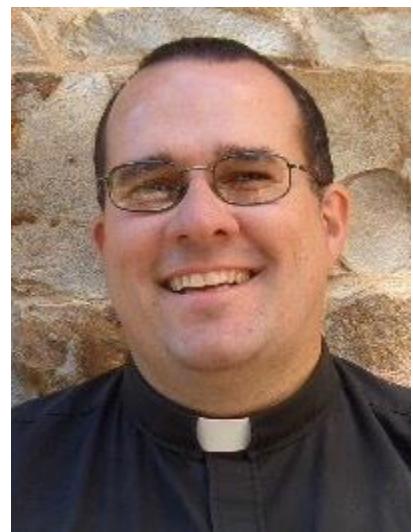
Like Clampett, Pearman served as an Army Chaplain during WW2. In 1942, after decades of lobbying, the Government allowed Religious Education to be taught in public schools, resulting in priests being expected to teach 4 or 5 days a week, at the expense of parish home visiting. During Pearman’s last years ‘concentrated resentment and bitterness’ developed between the two ends of the parish, and had staff been available St Wilfrid’s may well have formed a separate parish.

JAMES YOUNGER MacDONALD 1962 – 1976)

Before taking Holy Orders MacDonald had worked as an accountant, and this training was soon put to good use. In June 1963, nearly 10 years after St Michael's was almost demolished in an earthquake, work began on the restoration. At the same time the daughter church of St Wilfrid was being enlarged. It was a challenging time, particularly as tension still existed between the two parish councils.

**ANDREW WALFORD CHEESMAN (1976 – 2001)**

Cheesman, a powerful orator, was passionate about the natural environment and the heritage of Mitcham. He succeeded in melding the two congregations into one Parish Family, and oversaw the building of a new Parish Hall in the grounds of St Michael's. He trained 11 curates. Changes during the Cheesman era included the renaming of the 'C. of E.' as 'The Anglican Church of Australia'; the introduction of *An Australian Prayer Book* and the ordination of women.

**NIGEL BENTLEY MITCHELL (2002 – 2007)**

Mitchell, an Ancient History scholar, served as a school chaplain and university lecturer in Perth before moving to Mitcham. Plans already underway for an enlarged Priest's Vestry were cancelled soon after his arrival. In October 2003 the last service was held in St Wilfrid's and the church was secularised in February 2004 before being sold. Mitchell resigned very suddenly later that year.

**KEITH PATRICK BRICE (2008 – 2013)**

Brice, who originally trained for the priesthood at St Michael's House, returned to S.A. to take up the Parish of Mitcham in 2008. He had formerly served as the Archdeacon in the Diocese of Albury and Wodonga, where he was very active as the chaplain for the various Emergency Services organisations. He is presently Rector of Christ Church, North Adelaide.