

Chapter 10

THE CHURCH ACRE & CEMETERY

THE extent of the Parish of Mitcham includes all, or portions of, the suburbs of Mitcham, Springfield, Netherby, Kingswood, Hawthorn, Lower Mitcham, Clapham and Torrens Park. The northern boundary follows Claremont Avenue, Kitchener Street and Tutt Avenue to Belair Road and then along Angas Road to Jeffrey Street. The western boundary follows Jeffrey Street, Belmont Street, Mitcham Avenue and Maud Street, then along Windermere Avenue to the railway line. The southern and eastern boundaries around the Hills Face Zone are defined by the suburban boundaries of Torrens Park, Mitcham and Springfield.

THE CHURCH ACRE

The familiar term ‘Church Acre’ is really a misnomer in the case of St Michael’s as the area in question is nearly twice that.

Mitcham Village was laid out in 1840 by the South Australian Company (see Fig. 1-1) and St Michael’s stands on Lots 39 and 40 which were originally granted to Richard Harrison on 16th February 1848. Six days later he conveyed them to Robert Thornber who also owned the adjoining land to the north: Lots 15, 16, 17 and 103. These were all one-acre (0.4 ha) allotments. A private roadway was put through the northern portions of Lots 39 and 40 resulting in the block being only 1.82 acres (0.74 hectares). It has a frontage of 108.6 m (358 feet) to Church Road and 68 m (224 feet) to both Fullarton Road and St Michael’s Road.¹

On the 25th April Thornber mortgaged Lots 39 and 40 to Frederick Mitchell, and on 10th October Mitchell (as mortgagee) and Thornber (as mortgager) conveyed the property to the Lord Bishop of Adelaide:

Upon Trust for the erection maintenance and repair of a Church for the Public Worship of Almighty God according to the rights and ceremonies of the United Church of England and Ireland and for the provision of the revenue belonging to or arising... And Also Upon Trust... as the site of a dwelling house garden and other appurtenances for the clergyman duly appointed and officiating in the said Church so to be erected as aforesaid. And Also Upon Trust... as a place for the interment of the dead according to the usages of the said United Church of England and Ireland...

The Bishop surrendered his Trusteeship of the land in a conveyance dated 11th April 1860 to the appointed Trustees of St Michael’s – Hon. Arthur Blyth, Alfred Hardy, Richard Hicks, James Lewis and Henry Taylor – under The Model Trust Deed bearing the date 6th July 1858. With the passing

of time these men were replaced by other Trustees until 1972 when the 1971 Church of England Trust Property Act and the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969 were adopted.² The balance of Thornber’s land – Lots 15, 16, 17, 103 and the private roadway created from portions of 39 and 40 – was later conveyed to Simon Fairley who leased it to William Bartley and Charles Newenham (the ‘founding fathers’ of St Michael’s) before selling it to Leonard William Thrupp on 16th October 1856. Thrupp, who served as Priest’s Warden during 1870–71, built a fine home called ‘Bloomfield’ on the property (see Fig. 2-13). In October 1873 he offered to sell it to St Michael’s for a parsonage, but the offer was declined (see page 26).³

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GROUNDS

Early illustrations of the Church show it set in a large paddock partly enclosed by post-and-rail fencing and with most of the natural bush removed (Fig. 10-1). Further clearing of the land occurred in 1863 when the south nave was added.

In 1869 there were complaints about “the present neglected and poverty-stricken appearance of the Church enclosure”. It should be “dug or trenched around the boundary lines, planted with trees and shrubs, and the footpaths properly defined and cleaned...” It was further suggested “that each member of the congregation should plant one tree or shrub with their own hands”. Some of these improvements can be seen in Figure 10-2.

Also during 1869 a carriage shed was built near the northern boundary. At a cost of £50 15s 0d it must have been quite substantial. Reporting on its construction the Wardens noted that not only had it answered its desired purpose, “but its being filled each Sunday shows that its accommodation is appreciated, and must shortly be extended”. Mrs Mollie Bowen remembered it as an old shingle-roofed shed that eventually collapsed in the 1930s or 1940s: “It was filled every Sunday. Many famous carriages had been parked in it ... the gentry from the surrounding estates used to drive up on Sunday mornings and the coachmen would take the horses in there, and then they would come into Church.”⁴

By 1875 the original rough-hewn post-and-rail fence had seen better days and it was resolved “to erect a new fence around the Church property similar to that lately put up at the Cemetery”. This new fence of sawn timber, painted white, remained a feature of St Michael’s for many years (Fig. 10-3). One of the old posts (found in the NE extremity of the property) now forms a seat near the path leading from the lychgate (see Fig. 10-11). The post is 300 mm square with a rounded top and still bears the

diamond-shaped holes where the 1875 sawn-timber rails once fitted.

The olive hedges that surround much of the Church Acre were probably planted about 1875 when the new fence was installed. Unless kept trimmed these hedges soon become straggly and untidy. In August 1957 it was noted “the old fence posts and rails which were falling down, or had fallen, have also been removed entirely and it will now be an easy matter to keep the hedge low enough to trim from the footpath”. There did not appear to be any attempt to keep the hedge along the northern boundary trimmed, and by the late 1990s the olives in that region had become a jungle of unwieldy, sprawling trees. A major trim was begun in April 1998.

Describing the Church in 1902, Archdeacon Clampett wrote: “High on an eminence stands St Michael’s Church, picturesque and commanding in its situation.” It dominated the skyline and could be seen from miles away. Today it is almost invisible behind a forest of towering gums and pines. A venerable old River Red Gum overshadowing the car park has a circumference of nearly six metres. Others adjacent to the main entrance and along the western and southern boundaries measure in excess of three metres. It is surprising that so few of them appear in early photographs, suggesting that some of them may have been planted within the past one hundred years.

The largest of the remaining Aleppo Pines (situated near the northern boundary opposite the Garden of Remembrance) has a circumference of over three metres and its branches reach well beyond the height of the Church tower. Below its canopy are the remnants of a plantation of English Elms that once formed a shady avenue leading from the small eastern gate on Fullarton Road to the tower (Fig. 10-4). They were planted in June 1910 after Miss Rymill (from ‘Springfield House’) sought Vestry’s permission “to remove some of the trees on both

Fig. 10-4 The NE aspect of St Michael’s c.1944. The two trees on the right are part of an avenue of English Elms planted in 1910. Note the natural contours of the land before it was cleared to build the Centenary Memorial Terrace and car park. (Colin Coote)

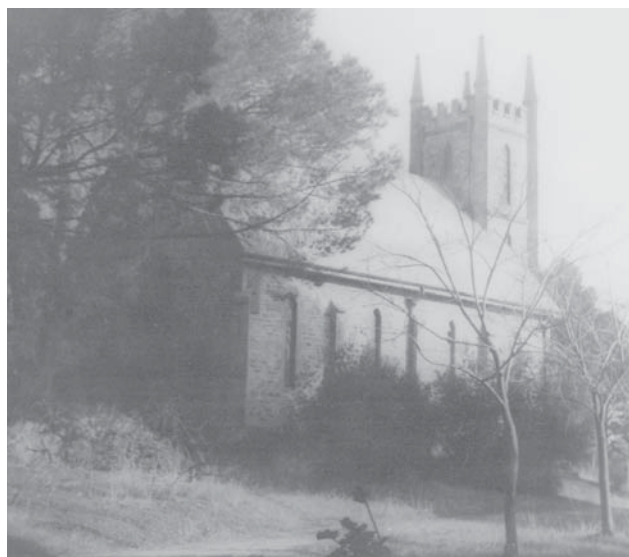


Fig. 10-5 The approach to St Michael’s in the 1930s. The driveway between the gate and Church was lined with large pine trees which had been removed by the mid-1940s. Parking for a few cars (which were still a luxury) was available in the undeveloped grassed area to the left. (Courtesy Warhurst family)

sides of the approach to the Church from the East side, that they might plant instead an avenue of English Elms”. Many of these were removed when a new driveway was put through to Fullarton Road in 1956.

When the Parish Hall was built in 1980 at least one huge pine and a large group of olives were grubbed out. Ted Smith recalled:

I remember in my boyhood as a choir boy, and later, there was a great plantation of enormous pine trees extending from the west gate almost up to the Church. There were other huge shrubs on the south side of the Church. It was almost a wilderness, a great playground for the choir boys who used to frighten each other at night pretending to be ghosts.⁵

This plantation of pines (Fig. 10-5) was replaced by the present avenue of graceful Lemon Scented Gums seen in Figure 10-12.

Recent Landscaping Schemes

Over the years there have been many schemes to beautify and improve the grounds. One was begun in 1979 in expectation of the Parish Hall being built the following year. Following the removal of several large pine trees from the SW corner of the Church Acre there had been complaints from nearby residents about the perceived denuding of the area. In an effort to appease them, a tree and shrub planting programme was developed in consultation with an officer of the Botanic Gardens. His technical advice was presented in diagrammatical form to the City of Mitcham when its committee heard the objections raised by residents. The replanting project was headed by Sir Allan Callaghan, a parishioner and former Director of Agriculture in South Australia. On 2nd September 1979 a ‘Planting Party’ was held at which thirty-five Australian trees and shrubs donated by parishioners were planted. The new Parish Hall was completed in November 1980, and at another working-bee held in May 1981 a further one

hundred trees, shrubs and groundcovers were planted and the path between the lychgate and Terrace formed. A year later, still working under the direction of Sir Allan, a field drain was buried in the car park rockery bed. In 1996 a selection of groundcovers was planted on the slopes to the north and west of the Hall.

To complement the work begun by Sir Allan a master plan for the long-term development of the whole of the grounds was presented to the Parish Council on 18th April 1995 by Geoff Sanderson, a professional landscape architect.

THE CENTENARY MEMORIAL TERRACE

In 1951 a Centenary Appeal was launched to raise £2,000 for “certain schemes” to commemorate the opening of St Michael’s in 1852. One of these was to beautify and improve the grounds. A new drive on the north side of the Church was planned, also the building-up and levelling of an area “for some distance out from the tower door” (Fig. 10-6). Some new trees and shrubs had already been planted and it was proposed “to plant others according to a plan which has been prepared”. Other suggestions included “special entrance gates, called lychgates, such as adorn and beautify so many old churches in England”. It was stressed that any such further schemes “will depend entirely upon the response which we receive to the Centenary Appeal”. In July 1952 it was announced that:

“... we have been informed that a legacy of £200 from estate of late Miss J. A. T. Love will be paid to St Michael’s Church, and together with a special donation for the purpose from Miss R. Love, has been set aside by the Centenary Celebrations Committee for one special project, namely the building of a terrace out from the Tower door to do away with the present narrow, steep steps. For this purpose a stone wall will be built some distance out from the Tower door and the intervening area filled in and levelled off and paved. The present drive will be used as a pedestrian entrance and a new drive will be constructed from the NW corner of the Churchyard, in St Michael’s Road, and sweep in a graceful curve to the Church and thence out to the Fullarton Road. The terrace will be a memorial to the various members of the family of Mr and Mrs John Love who were connected with St Michael’s for so many years and who have always been generous benefactors to St Michael’s.

Plans for a Terrace were drawn up in July 1952 by the architectural firm of Caradoc Ashton, Fisher, Woodhead & Beaumont Smith.⁶ Rather than a lychgate, the presentation drawings depicted the entrance flanked by handsome masonry piers surmounted by delicate wrought-iron crosses. They were not built.

In the 1952 Christmas edition of the *Parish Messenger* it was noted that: “Each Saturday morning, for the past 7 or 8 weeks, a team of men, mostly young men, have been moving stone to the churchyard in preparation for building the Memorial Terrace.” According to Bob Evans, one of the men who worked on the project, this stone came from

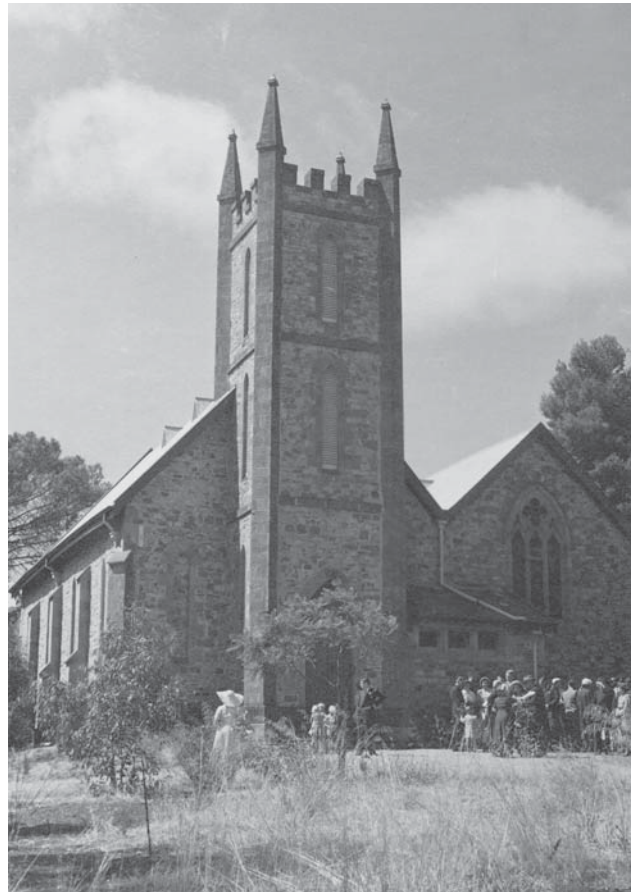


Fig. 10-6 St Michael’s Church c.1950. Until 1956 the main entrance to the grounds, for both vehicles and pedestrians, was through a pair of iron gates that stood where the lychgate is today. The driveway swept up to the front steps of the Church before turning northwards into a grassed area where the present car park is situated. (Courtesy John Pearman)

the demolition of an old house in Evans Avenue that had formerly been the home of his aunt, Mrs Cousins. If this is so, it may well have been from one of the oldest buildings in the Village – the former Black Swan Hotel built in the early 1840s.⁷

A team of over thirty men commenced at 7 a.m. and continued until about 10 a.m., the stone being transported to the building site “with the willing help of Mr Fairbanks with his truck”. The names of all those who had subscribed to the Centenary Memorial Fund, or had contributed materials or labour, were to have been entered in a *Book of Remembrance* compiled as part of the Centenary Celebrations (see page 95). Unfortunately this was never completed, but a list of those involved was kept in a log book (see Appendix 4). The financial statement presented to the Annual Vestry in 1954 records: “Terrace expenditure: wages £336 2s 0d, materials £357 9s 2d, architect’s fee (less donation) £35.”

The dedication of the Centenary Memorial Terrace (see Fig. 10-8) by the Lord Bishop took place on Sunday, 18th October 1953 – the 101st anniversary of the opening of the Church of St Michael. A tablet fastened to the wall on the north side of the Terrace near the steps bears the following inscription:

The Church of St. Michael
Centenary Memorial Terrace
1852 – 1952
To the Glory of God and in Memory of
JOHN and JESSIE AITKEN LOVE
The erection of this terrace was made possible
by the generous
gifts of their descendants
whose names are recorded
in the Book of Remembrance inside this Church
together with the names of all Subscribers to the
Centenary Memorial Fund.

John Love, a wealthy pastoralist, and his wife Jessie Aitken Love (née Tennant) were generous benefactors of St Michael's during Archdeacon Clampett's time. They lived at 'Mitcham Lawn', a stately home in Barratts Road, with their large family which included ten daughters. Miss Jessie died in May 1952 aged eighty-six, and a few weeks after the dedication service in 1953 Miss Roberta also died. She was seventy-four. Writing in the *Parish Messenger*, the Rector, Reverend Reginald Pearman, said: "The late Roberta R. Love was the last surviving sister of the three who lived at 'Mitcham Lawn', Clapham, when I first came to this parish in 1939 ... [she] personally contributed over £300 to the Centenary Memorial Terrace."

THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

When the Church Acre was conveyed "Upon Trust" to the Lord Bishop of Adelaide in 1848 it made provision for the erection of a church, a dwelling house and a garden. It could also be used "as a place for the interment of the dead according to the usages of the said United Church of England and Ireland". Instead of a graveyard surrounding the Church, a cemetery was established in 1853 on two acres (0.81 ha) of 'Waste Lands of the Crown' on the outskirts of the Village (see page 162). It was another 140

Fig. 10-7 *The Church Acre prior to construction of the Centenary Memorial Terrace. Note the natural levels of the land along the northern side of the Church.*
(Courtesy John Pearman)



years before the matter of interments within the churchyard was revived.

In 1956 the land in the SE corner of the Church Acre was cleared and graded ready for the construction of the new Rectory (which was not built for another two years). Whilst the earthmoving equipment was on the property the present entrance at the NW corner from St Michael's Road was made and the "waste ground below the Terrace" levelled for a car park. It was noted that the old entrance from St Michael's Road would be for pedestrians only, "making for greater safety as people enter or leave the grounds".

During construction of both the Centenary Memorial Terrace and the car park considerable quantities of soil together with a number of trees and shrubs were removed from the northern side of the Church (Figs 10-7 and 10-8). As part of the Terrace works a stone retaining wall incorporating a planter box (for roses) was constructed along the length of the Church to hold the embankment in place. Unfortunately it was not strong enough resulting in constant movement and cracking, not only of the pavement above it, but also of the Church wall. Over the years various schemes for its stabilisation were proposed, and in 1985 the wise decision was made to restore the original gradient of the ground as a buttress against further movement.

The architect involved in the project, Earle Scott (who was Priest's Warden at the time) recalls seeing large earth-filled trucks passing the Church. He stopped one and asked where the filling was coming from, and on learning that it was from the site where a new house was to be constructed in Springfield, went there to speak to the builder. As is so often the case in a small city like Adelaide, it was someone known to him. The builder readily agreed for the filling to be taken to St Michael's. Frank Holyoake, an earthmoving contractor and parishioner, then came with his large D8 bulldozer and carefully graded the extra filling against the retaining wall to the original natural contours.⁸

Fig. 10-8 *St Michael's as it appeared following removal of soil and shrubs for the construction of the Centenary Memorial Terrace in 1953 and the car park in 1956.*
(MPA, photograph dated 1963)



Once the earthmoving was complete the new garden bed, which encroached considerably into the car park, was planted with a selection of groundcovers. The planter box was replanted with Australian native shrubs which now form a high hedge of greenery along the northern side of the Church. The project was carried out during February 1986.

In October 1987 it was announced that Parish Council had resolved to seek the permission of the Archbishop to establish a memorial garden in this filled area for the interment of ashes at St Michael's. Such a plot would be "primarily for the use of parishioners and would conform to the Archbishop's guidelines". No burial places would be marked, but a Memorial Register would be kept inside the Church.

The consecration of the Garden of Remembrance was performed by the Dean of Adelaide, Bishop Lionel Renfrey, at the conclusion of the Eucharist on Sunday morning, 24th January 1988. Writing in the March edition of the *Herald*, Fr Andrew Cheesman noted that:

From early times Christians have been careful about laying to rest the mortal remains of those whom they love. In times of persecution under successive Roman emperors Christians buried their dead in the places where they gathered for worship. Thus the catacombs of Rome became crowded with the sarcophagi of the faithful...

Churchyards in mediaeval times fulfilled the same function. Crosses and headstones were a tangible sign of the communion of saints and a reminder of the Christian hope of resurrection.

In our day of cluttered secular burial grounds and expensive plots it is good to be able to return to a long-hallowed tradition of burying the mortal remains of faithful souls near the walls of the church where formerly they worshipped. The custom of cremation makes this a relatively simple procedure. The Bishop having consecrated the whole ground, ashes are reverently interred, but not at set intervals, nor is any particular spot marked. The whole garden is kept as a quiet and beautiful place for reflection and thanksgiving. By the Bishop's decree any offerings

received are used for the upkeep of the land so set apart. The names of the dead are recorded in a book kept for the purpose and they are remembered at worship as their anniversary of death comes round each year..."

The Garden of Remembrance (Fig. 10-9) is identified by a cross of Huon Pine fashioned by Jim Gunn and by a plaque attached to a boulder of Callington sandstone. Smaller stones from a nearby quarry outline the area and stop cars driving over the plants. A wall-mounted stand in the porch was designed by Earle Scott to accommodate a copy of the Memorial Register containing the names of all those whose ashes are interred in the Garden. The first name inscribed was that of David Piers John Bradley, aged twenty-one years, who was accidentally killed in 1987.

Other Special Trees & Memorials

The landscaping around the Parish Hall will always remain as a memorial to Sir Allan Callaghan (Fig. 10-10). In February 1990, when he resigned from his position as 'overseer' of Church grounds, Fr Andrew Cheesman wrote: "For ten years Sir Allan has laboured unstintingly with the planting, layout and tending of the grounds surrounding the Hall and Church. The improvements are evident for all to see". He died in July 1993, and the Ironbark tree near the Terrace is his special memorial.

In 1984 Sir Allan planted two palm trees in the car park at St Michael's. They match a similar pair at St Wilfrid's which were lovingly nurtured by Don and Joan Horner. On Palm Sunday 1997 both Churches were decorated for the first time with palm fronds grown in their own churchyards.

In August 1994 a yellow rose was planted outside the Hall kitchen as a memorial to Clarice Chinner (see page 136). It was given by *Beta Sigma Phi*, a society to which Clarice belonged for thirty years. In the same garden bed are two other roses: one is the Mothers' Union rose, 'Mary Sumner', named after the founder of the MU; the other is a memorial to Daniel Dalby, the six-year-old son of a former curate Reverend Keith Dalby and his wife Alice.



Fig. 10-9
The Garden of Remembrance, consecrated on 24 January 1988, is identified by a plaque and Huon Pine cross. (Pamela Oborn, 2002)

Fig. 10-10
Sir Allan
Callaghan
working in the
Church grounds
in 1983
(Olga Hardy).



Fig. 10-11
An original
corner post
dating from 1875
was found in the
NE corner of the
Church Acre.
It now forms a
seat adjacent to
the path near the
lychgate.
(Pamela Oborn,
2002)



In the planter box on the edge of the cloisters is a Crepe Myrtle. This was planted on 2nd October 1996 as a thanksgiving for 100 years of service to the Parish by members of the Mothers' Union. Mrs Tommy Lyon, who received her fifty-year badge that day, was given the honour of planting the tree.

In accordance with the Sanderson plan to create a feeling of warmth and welcome near the entrance, two feature trees with golden leaves were planted adjacent to the lychgate. One is a Golden Elm and the other a special 'Millennium Tree' (*Geditschia triacanthos* 'Sunburst') with bright gold, fern-like leaves. It was planted on Trinity Sunday 2000 during the Family Service. A plaque commemorating the event was mounted on an old fence post laid upon the ground which also doubles as a seat (Fig. 10-11).

THE LYCHGATE

Traditionally a lychgate was the place where pallbearers could rest a coffin before entering a churchyard for burial. Whilst the finishing touches were being made to the new Parish Hall in 1980, it was found that sufficient matching



Fig. 10-12 The lychgate constructed in 1980 and the avenue of Lemon Scented Gums which replaced the pines seen in Figure 10-5. (Pamela Oborn, 2002)

sandstone could be made available to build a lychgate (Fig. 10-12). Plans were drawn up in August by the Parish Hall's architect, Graham Hardy from Tugwell Tetley Hardy, and a contract awarded to Packer Bros.⁹

The lychgate, which was a gift from the Clampett family, was dedicated by Bishop Lionel Renfrey on 21st December 1980. It bears a plaque reading:

A.M.D.G.
IN MEMORY OF
ALBERT WYNDHAM CLAMPETT, M.A.
AND ALICE HIS WIFE.

THE MITCHAM ANGLICAN CEMETERY

When Colonel Light laid out the City of Adelaide an area on the western outskirts of the town was set aside as a cemetery. Known as the West Terrace Cemetery, it soon became notorious for its chaotic and unhygienic condition. Within its borders was a section of fourteen acres (5.67 ha) that had been consecrated for use as the Church of England Burial Ground. Following in the English tradition, some parish churches also established their own cemeteries.¹⁰

On 24th June 1853 the residents of Mitcham petitioned the government for a grant of land for burial purposes. Their spokesman was Reverend Edward Burnett, the first incumbent of St Michael's, who explained that his parishioners and others considered it "a serious inconvenience and source of expense" that West Terrace was the closest public cemetery. In his letter he also raised concerns that the dead were not being treated "with suitable dignity":

*I am bound to add from my own knowledge of the unseemly practices in reference to the burial of the dead which are now resorted to, my conviction of the great urgency of the want which the petition seeks to have supplied.*¹¹

As a result of this petition the residents of Mitcham were granted a total of four acres (1.6 ha) for burial purposes. On 22nd of April 1854 the Governor of the Province of South Australia, Sir Henry Edward Fox Young, granted “the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Adelaide and his successors” two acres of Waste Lands of the Crown for use as a cemetery. It was marked ‘A’ on the plan of the lands laid out or intended to be laid out “as and for a Cemetery or place of Interment of the dead being Members of the Established United Church of England and Ireland according to the Rites and Ceremonies of such Church”. Adjoining it were the other two acres, marked ‘B’ on the plan, granted to Thomas Playford, George Prince and William Finlayson as Trustees to be laid out as a burial ground for those persons who were not members of the Church of England.

The land granted to the Bishop was described as being:

*... bounded on the North by a Road dividing it from the Township of Mitcham on the East and South by other land of Her said Majesty and on the West by land of Her Majesty granted or intended as to be as also for a Burial Ground for Persons not Members of the said Established Church and is marked B and being of like size and extent as the land hereby granted namely on the North and South sides severally four hundred and fifty six links and on the East and West sides severally four hundred and fifty links each containing two acres in admeasurement. To hold the said land hereby granted unto the said Lord Bishop of Adelaide and his successors and assigns for ever **Upon trust** for the appropriation thereof as a place of interment for the Dead being deceased Members of the Established United Church of England and Ireland and for no other purpose...*

These two areas were designated as Sections 884A and 884B, and the road dividing them from “the Township of Mitcham” became known as Blythewood Road.

Three Mitcham Cemeteries

Section 884A became known as the Mitcham Church of England Cemetery (now the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery), and Section 884B as the Mitcham General Cemetery (now referred to as the Old Section). The rest of Section 884 and other Waste Lands of the Crown stretching up the hill almost to Belair were auctioned in 1858. They were acquired by R. R. Torrens and added to his ‘Torrens Park Estate’.

In 1881 a later owner of ‘Torrens Park’, Robert Barr Smith, sold just under half-an-acre (0.2 ha) of land adjoining the western boundary of Section 884B to Mother Mary MacKillop for the nominal fee of five shillings (50 cents). With financial backing from the Barr Smith family, the Sisters of St Joseph built a convent on the site (see Fig. 3-4). In later years a new convent was built at Kingswood and the old one demolished c.1926. By then a number of the nuns had been buried behind the convent and the decision was made to retain the land as a burial ground for the Josephite Sisters. Today it is a neatly-kept grassed area with rows of small plaques identifying burial sites. The earliest graves, in the top SE corner, date back to the 1880s.

Subsequent subdivisions of the huge ‘Torrens Park Estate’ resulted in the land surrounding the three small cemeteries passing through a number of hands. In the 1930s some of it was purchased for cemetery extensions by the South Australian Baptist Union, which was at that time Trustee of the General Cemetery. Mitcham Council, the present Trustee, acquired the Mitcham General Cemetery in 1957 and it now extends up the hill far beyond its original boundaries.

In 1983 Sections 884A and 884B were redesignated as Lots 83 and 84 (Fig. 10-13). The Josephite Cemetery is now Lot 85 and the extensions to the Mitcham General Cemetery are grouped under Lots 86 and 95.¹²

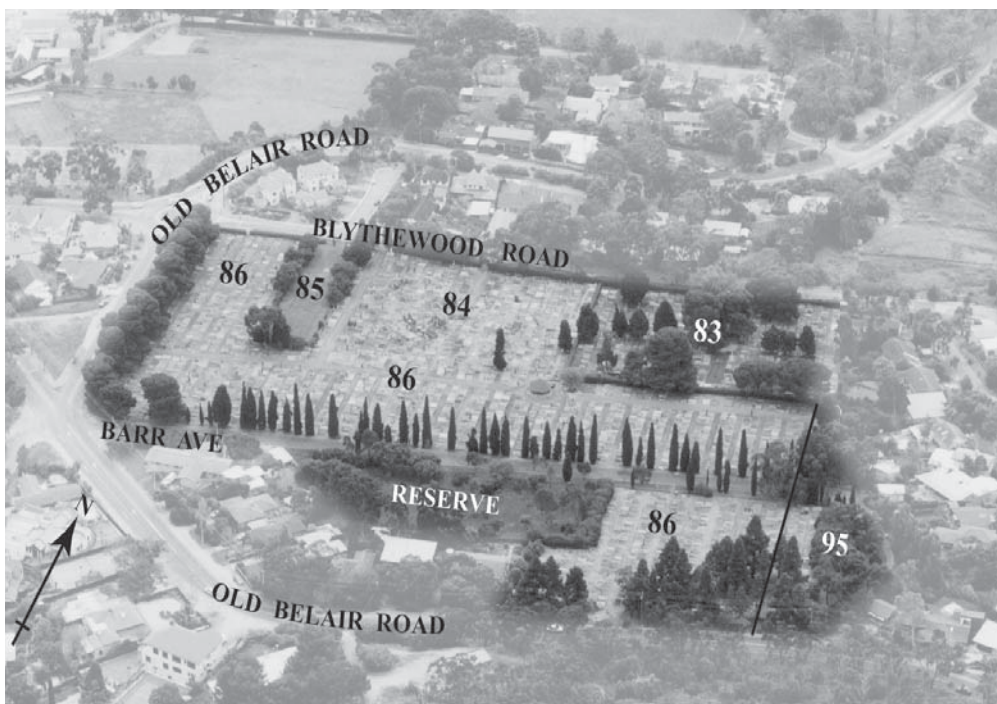


Fig. 10-13
Aerial view over the three Mitcham cemeteries, October 2000. The Anglican Cemetery (Lot 83) is easily identified by the number of large trees within its borders.
(Courtesy Philip Knight)

Fig. 10-14

The entrance to the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery is off Blythewood Road through these wrought-iron gates. The old metal notice-board, found in a shed, has been updated and re-installed.
(Pamela Oborn, 2002)



Development of the Church of England Cemetery

The cemetery had already been in use for seven months before the Land Grant was officially signed by the Governor in April 1854. Mary Oldham, the thirty-two-year-old wife of Nathaniel Oldham, was buried in Plot No.1 on 20th September 1853, and the next day Harriet Davis, aged forty-six, in Plot No.2. These graves can be found near the hedge in the top SE corner of the cemetery.

The cemetery was first mentioned in the minutes of the Easter Vestry on 17th April 1854 when it was resolved:

...that the fence round the Ch. of England portion of the Mitcham Cemetery remain entire & that whenever the debt to the general Church Fund on account of the fence shall be paid off, the Cemetery receipts be expended on the improvements of the ground by planting etc.

The verger, James Bragg (see Fig. 10-16) received an extra seven shillings “for carrying round a petition for the Cemetery Fund”, and by 1861 the “sum in hand [was to be] expended in defining the paths as originally planned”. More work was done during 1869 when the land was cleared of unwanted timber which was sold as firewood, and in 1875 new post-and-rail fences were erected. The olive hedges were probably planted around this period. Remnants of the fencing can still be found embedded in the hedges. The original wooden gates have long-since disappeared, being replaced (date unknown) by a pair of handsome wrought-iron gates which form the formal entry to the cemetery (Fig. 10-14).

Layout of the Cemetery

The earliest plan found is dated 26th July 1870.¹³ It was drawn by T. G. Richardson, Licensed Surveyor, and shows the two acres set out on a simple grid pattern with the four main roads (each 15 feet or 4.57 m wide) radiating out north, south, east and west from a central turning circle. The minor roads (10 feet or 3.05 m wide) and paths form a series of concentric squares.

An area approximately 12 feet wide (3.66 m) around the perimeter of the cemetery was set aside as ‘common ground’ or ‘free ground’ for the burial of infants and paupers in unmarked graves. One of the conditions of being buried in ‘common ground’ was that the site could not be identified by any monument or surround. Notes in the Burial Register in the mid-1880s, often refer to babies being buried along the south fence “nearly opposite central north/south path” or “centre south strip north of tree”.

The trees, now well over a hundred years old, are a feature of the cemetery. They include huge Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*) and Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*) and a number of smaller Cypress trees (*Cupressus spp.*). Most were planted around the boundaries, along the east/west internal roadway and adjacent to the turning circle. This central garden bed around which horse-drawn hearses could turn is the focal point of the cemetery. The original plan also denotes three-feet (915 mm) wide areas flanking the main roadways that, presumably, were intended to be set aside for garden beds.

Additional Plots

Unlike most cemeteries this one has neither row numbers nor numbers marked on plots. This makes it very difficult to find a particular grave – even if you have the number and a map! In very broad terms, the numbering starts near the top SE corner then zig-zags north and south down and up the hill ending near the top SW corner of the cemetery. However, there are a number of anomalies due to the creation of extra plots.

In September 1929 a narrow strip of land (Lot 113) measuring 300 feet by 16 feet (91.5 m by 4.88 m) running along the east side of the Church of England section was acquired from the Trustees of the General Cemetery (the South Australian Baptist Union Inc.) for £50.¹⁴ This provided space for an extra 114 plots, which all bear the prefix ‘A’ (e.g. A27). They occupy the two eastern-most rows of graves adjoining the backs of houses in Lisburne Avenue. Extra plots were also created by in-filling minor

roadways and paths. These bear the suffix 'A' (e.g. 203A) and are easily identified as they run north/south, whereas all the original plots run east/west. Others with the suffix 'A' may also be found around the perimeters of the cemetery where infants were once buried in 'common ground'.

Very few old cemeteries are financially viable. In recent years, in an effort to create new plots for sale, not even the main internal roadways have remained intact. Apart from the main entrance road, the others have become mere paths. Regrettably, this has resulted in problems of access for digging and lifting equipment, and for maintenance. Not even the central turning circle is sacrosanct: some of the new plots crowding its edges run the danger of being damaged by cars and trucks trying to negotiate the ever-diminishing turning area.

Administration

Today a Committee appointed by Synod has overall responsibility for all Anglican cemeteries in the Diocese and reports to the Annual Synod on matters regarding their administration. It also appoints curators. This was not always so: for one hundred years the Mitcham Church of England Cemetery was a parish cemetery. Not only did the incumbent conduct the burial services, he was also the official curator responsible for keeping the records, collecting fees and overseeing maintenance and repair work.

An 'incident' occurred in 1914 which is worth recording, as it illustrates the seriousness with which the rules governing burials were adhered to. On 18th February Archdeacon Clappett wrote to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide, referring to a "blunder" and saying:

I regret to say that during my absence from home one of your clergy conducted a burial service in the Mitcham Church of England Cemetery of which I am the curator. My regret rests on the fact that the regulations of this cemetery state that the Church of England Office for the Burial of the Dead must be used, and that only clergy of the Church of England must officiate. My curate was present to carry out his duty, but being only a recent arrival from Home, was not fully aware of the cemetery regulations ... acquaint such of your clergy, as are likely to be concerned with them, so that no such irregularity as that of which I complain, may again occur. I am quite willing to acknowledge that the priest concerned did not know of our regulations.

Unfortunately part of Clappett's original letter is missing, but it refers to the burial on 29th January of Frederick Stanley Caterer "who had just prior to his death been received as a member of the Roman Catholic faith". The unfortunate curate, Reverend Charles Williams, had arrived a year before from the north of Ireland – still 'Home' to many Australians. Archbishop John O'Reilly replied:

I regret that one of our clergy should have appeared to you to have interfered with your rights by officiating in the Mitcham cemetery, which, you say, is purely Anglican and

reserved for purely Anglican services. The occurrence, I assure you, will not happen again. I have issued the necessary instructions.

Blunders have an unhappy knack of frequently happening. We cannot foresee blunders, in all cases, and therefore, cannot prevent them. I pledge my word that the blunder of which you complain will not be repeated through any fault of our clergy.

I apologise for the apparent discourtesy. The discourtesy was certainly not in the slightest way intended.

Whereas the curator has always been liable for the upkeep of the roads and paths, it is the leaseholders who are responsible for the maintenance of their individual family plots. Lessees unable, or unwilling, to do the work themselves, and who desired "to arrange for the upkeep of their allotments for all time" could contribute to a special fund. The capital sum was invested in Synod, as Trustee, and the interest made available "for payment of the gardener through the curator". By April 1904 this was becoming a burden for Archdeacon Clappett who wrote in the parish magazine:

The Rector wishes to intimate that at the expiration of the year (June 30, 1904) he cannot undertake the supervision of the graves in the cemetery. He finds it impossible owing to the small number of subscribers to have the work done with any satisfaction. Will lease-holders please accept this notice, and feel free to make other arrangements for the care of their allotments?

Administering and maintaining the cemetery continued to be a problem, particularly for Reverend Reginald Pearman (1939 to 1962) who worked alone, unable to obtain the services of a catechist or curate for most of his twenty-three years in the Parish. In the 1953-54 edition of the *Year Book of the Church of England in the Dioceses of Adelaide and Willochra*, the following report appeared on page 177:

Mitcham Church of England Cemetery. Since the last report this Cemetery has been placed under the care of staff of North Road Cemetery. The cemetery has been given a general clean-up and at the present time the pathways and the appearance of the cemetery as a whole have been much improved. There were 28 interments and six leases issued during the year.

The North Road Cemetery at Nailsworth had been established in 1853 as the parish cemetery associated with Christ Church, North Adelaide. Following the passing in 1862 of the *Regulation of Cemeteries Act*, Bishop Short surrendered the fourteen-acre section granted to the Church of England in the West Terrace Cemetery and set about making North Road the principal Anglican burial ground.¹⁵

Mitcham is the only former parish cemetery administered from North Road. The granting of licences, digging of graves, recording of interments in Burial Registers and Lease Books, and the collection of fees is the responsibility of the curator who is based at North Road.

He is also responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of both sites, including the roads, paths, perimeter fencing, trees, gardens, signage and any buildings on the properties – but not the individual plots which remain the responsibility of lessees. Permits are required for all monuments erected. Details have to be lodged with the curator in the form prescribed by the Master Monumental Masons and Sculptors Association of S.A. Inc. They may not subsequently be removed for repair or inscription without prior approval from the curator.

The Friends of the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery

Over the years, with fewer and fewer burials at Mitcham and all staff based at North Road, problems arose in maintaining the cemetery. As a result it became neglected and overgrown: a classic case of “out of sight, out of mind”! In 1989 a report from the Synodal Cemeteries Board recommended to the Diocesan Council that the land be handed over to the Corporation of the City of Mitcham, the owners of the adjoining Mitcham General Cemetery.

Writing in the *Pew Bulletin* on 22 April 1990, Fr Andrew Cheesman said:

You may have read in the ‘Messenger’ of the proposed handover by the Diocese of the Anglican Cemetery on Blythewood Road to the Mitcham Council. Some parishioners believe that the cemetery should revert to the Parish rather than be given to the secular authority. To this end consideration will be given at the Easter Vestry (6 May) to a proposal that the cemetery once more come under Parish care.

After a lengthy debate at the Easter Vestry a resolution was passed to the effect that the Parish “would once more take over its care only if a fundraiser and administrator of a sufficiently large sustentation fund could be found”. By July it was reported that:

The Parish Council has decided against resuming care of the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery. However, Judge Legoe has been granted authority by the Diocesan Council to work with the Curator, Stuart Mockridge, in the cleaning up of the cemetery and in contacting families to effect the tidying of individual plots and in the hope of generating a greater sustentation fund.

Unhappy at the thought of it becoming a mere extension of the General Cemetery – an unattractive area of concrete and gravel – a small group of concerned people whose ancestors and relatives were buried in the Anglican section met to consider ways and means of retaining control of it within the Church. This led to the formation of a group known as The Friends of the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery. A Certificate of Registration of Incorporation was granted on 14th March 1991, and at the inaugural meeting held on 23rd April the Constitution and Rules of the Association were adopted. Mr Justice Legoe was elected as the first chairman, with Mrs Mollie Bowen (then in her mid-nineties) as vice-chairman and Stuart Mockridge as Public Officer.

For the past decade, under the leadership of Christopher Legoe, and aided by the forceful oratory of Fr Andrew Cheesman, the group has successfully fought to achieve a better outcome for all concerned. Mitcham Council, already struggling to maintain the General Cemetery, was not really interested in adding the Anglican problems to its own.

The curator of North Road now has a dedicated group of people ‘on site’ in Mitcham advising and assisting him. Together they have negotiated a programme of slashing and/or spraying weeds. Several times a year a group of offenders, doing community service through the Department of Correctional Services, mow the paths and clean up rubbish. They are accompanied by a supervisor, whose salary is paid jointly by North Road and The Friends. Those areas that are inaccessible, particularly between graves, are sprayed on a regular basis by a contractor. Arrangements have also been made for Mitcham Council to trim the hedges at no cost, which is much appreciated.¹⁶

During 2000 a comprehensive five-year Maintenance and Works Programme, prepared by Peter Oswald on behalf of The Friends, was presented to the Synodal Cemeteries Committee. It seeks to implement an on-going maintenance programme, reviewed annually, which will also include the necessary funding and budgeting arrangements required to undertake the scheduled works.

The only funds available to The Friends come from annual subscriptions (\$10) and donations. Over the years these have been used to make a number of improvements including a new fence along the entire eastern boundary (jointly with adjoining property owners) and the replacement of a dilapidated small shed used to store gardening equipment. Amongst the rubbish in the shed were found the original notice-boards which have since been restored, updated and re-installed (Figs 10-14 and 10-15). Several seats for the benefit of visitors have been purchased and a watering system placed in the replanted central garden bed.

Fig. 10-15 During restoration of the metal notice-board shown in Fig. 10-14, this wooden one was found underneath it. Nearby is a seat installed by The Friends Group and a plaque donated by the Heritage Rose Society. (Pamela Oborn, 2002)



The Friends have also had an arborist prepare a report on the health of the old trees, which have been crown-lifted and dead-wooded. They have also done a survey of plants growing within the cemetery. Following the discovery of several old rose varieties, these are now being nurtured and propagated by members of the Heritage Rose Society.

Problems Identifying Graves

One of the major projects undertaken by The Friends during 2000 was a photographic survey of every grave in the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery. These images have been incorporated into a computer database prepared by the Honorary Historian, Pamela Oborn. This was a mammoth job taking several years of painstaking detective work to find out who had been buried where. Since 1853 there have been about 2,500 interments. For each of these the officiating minister or curator would have made two entries: one in the Burial Register and one in the Lease Book. Unfortunately the first Lease Book, recording the details of all leases taken out prior to 1887, was lost in a fire. In a few cases the numbers of the plots were also recorded in the Burial Register; but for 321 of those early burials there was no cross-reference, hence no record of where the bodies were buried. To add to the confusion, for 851 burials there is either no tombstone on the grave, or the names of later interments have never been added to an existing monument.

There were many other anomalies. When the research work began in 1991 it was found that 595 plot numbers – nearly a quarter of the total number of interments – had not been listed in the official records! By 1999 that number had shrunk to 138, of which half were infants (who had probably been buried in ‘common ground’), leaving some seventy still unaccounted for in 2002.

Part of our Heritage

In 1996 a *Proposed Conservation and Management Plan* was drawn up by The Friends. This was updated in 2000 to form part of a submission to the State Heritage Department to have the historic Mitcham Anglican Cemetery included on the State Heritage Register.

A National Trust Policy Paper on cemeteries states that they are “an important part of the Australian Heritage. The monuments of our ancestors form an important record of the nation’s growth and a valuable insight into its history”. Details inscribed in stone often form the only remaining record of past events and are a vital source of biographical and genealogical information.¹⁷

The Mitcham Anglican Cemetery, as one of the oldest in South Australia, is of great historical and cultural significance. The 19th-century character and aesthetic charm are still very much in evidence with the grassed pathways, enfolding hedges and the wind sighing through huge pines and cypresses – the traditional trees of mourning. The formal layout and lack of flamboyant monuments seem to reflect the social values of the colonists buried there: practical, hardworking people who prospered through their own efforts and in return gave unstintingly to their Church and community. They include many of the colonists who opened up the vast pastoral lands and gave generously to found some of our

greatest institutions: Sir Thomas Elder, whose many gifts led to the establishment of the University of Adelaide and the Elder Conservatorium; Peter and Matilda Waite, whose bequest established the Waite Agricultural Research Institute; Robert Barr Smith, one of Australia’s greatest philanthropists who gave the money to build the towers and spires of St Peter’s Cathedral, and his son Tom, who built the Barr Smith Library at the University to house the great collection of books begun by his father.

Of all the incumbents of St Michael’s, Archdeacon Albert Wyndham Clappett is the only one buried in the Mitcham Anglican Cemetery. However, several other Anglican priests have been interred there, including Reverend King William Pobjoy who, as a retired priest living in the district, acted as locum tenens when Clappett was absent and also served as his assistant for a number of years.

Inspector Tolmer, the early Commissioner of Police who lived on the other side of Blythewood Road is buried there, together with many of the colonial gentry who built fine homes in and around the Village of Mitcham and were generous benefactors of St Michael’s. Familiar names found on gravestones include members of the Blyth, Cudmore, Dean, Florey, Gosse, Hardy, Hawker, Hayward, Heath, Legoe, Love, Maslin, Mitchell, Morgan, O’Halloran-Giles, Page, Price, Rymill, Scammell, Tennant, Wilcox and Wilkinson families.

Their funerals were impressive affairs. One such occasion was the burial in July 1895 of Lt-Col J. L. R. Fiveash, a former Warden of St Michael’s. He was “an esteemed officer and universal favourite, and was buried with full military honours”. The Rector conducted the service in St Michael’s, “after which the body was conveyed to the grave on a guncarriage led by the Military Band. Hundreds of people assembled along the route to pay their respects as the procession passed”.¹⁸

Annual Children’s Flower Service & Procession to the Cemetery

For at least seventy years a Children’s Flower Service was held at 3 p.m. on the afternoon of St Michael’s Patronal Festival. Afterwards they processed up to the cemetery, with the Rector and choir leading a hundred or more children down Church Road, across the footbridge over Brownhill Creek at the end of Neweys Road, then up a very steep unmade path (now Blythewood Road) to the cemetery where the posies of flowers were reverently placed on graves. One of the most poignant was that held on 29th September 1899, as recorded by Archdeacon Clappett in the *Parochial Magazine*:

Some of the flowers were taken after the service by the elder girls and placed on the grave of former Sunday School scholar, Ethel Thorpe, and some were brought by the boys to the Cottage Homes... Ethel, who died on September 16th, aged 18 years, was at the time of her mother’s death [on April 16th] to all appearance well, when suddenly the presence of that dread disease, tuberculosis, made itself felt. The disease brought intense suffering with it, and after eighteen weeks of more or less pain, God took the soul of the young sufferer to himself.

These processions were held throughout the forty-six years of the Clampett era and beyond. Towards the end of the Second World War the emphasis changed, and it became a Flower and Gift Service. The flowers were taken to hospitals, but the gifts (mainly tins of food and dried fruit) were for food parcels which were sent to Britain as part of the 'Food for Britain Scheme' (see page 91). The last Children's Flower Service was held on 29th September 1963.

* * *

For a century this was the local parish cemetery. The interred and their descendants are part of our history and many of their stories are recorded elsewhere in this book. They were all part of the rich tapestry of Parish life in the Village of Mitcham and whether rich and famous, or poor and unacknowledged, they lie side by side united in death on this stony hillside (Figs 10-16 and 10-17).



Fig. 10-16 A simple metal cross made by one of James Bragg's descendants marks his grave. He was verger of St Michael's for 28 years, from its opening in 1853 until 1881. (Pamela Oborn, 2002)



Fig. 10-17 The large Celtic cross surmounting Sir Thomas Elder's grave dominates the SE quadrant of the cemetery. Many of the monuments and grave surrounds were made by Alf Gregory, a local monumental mason whose workshop still stands at the rear of the house at 39 Albert Street, Mitcham. (Pamela Oborn, 2002)