

Letters from Mitcham

St Michael's Anglican Church
150 Years of Parish Life
1852 – 2002

Letters from Mitcham

St Michael's Anglican Church

150 Years of Parish Life

1852 – 2002

Pamela Oborn

The Anglican Parish of Mitcham
South Australia

Notes

Imperial/Metric Conversions

During most of the period covered by this book the Imperial system of measurements was in use, so where applicable dimensions have been given in the form in use for that period. The following approximate conversions are suggested:

1 inch	25.4 mm
1 foot (12 inches)	305 mm
1 yard (3 feet)	0.91 m
1 mile	1.6 km
1 acre	0.405 ha

Currency Conversions

When decimal currency was introduced on 14 February 1966 one pound (£1) equalled two dollars (\$2).

In the old currency there were 20 shillings (s) in a pound (£) and 12 pence (d) in a shilling. A guinea was £1 1s 0d.

As currency value must be realistically related to its purchasing power it is difficult to give an accurate conversion rate except as at 14 February 1966. As a rough guide Appendix 9 gives information calculated from Retail Price Indexes published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in *Year Book of Australia 2001*.

Illustrations

The following abbreviations have been used to identify sources of illustrations:

MLHC City of Mitcham Local History Collection

MPA Mitcham Parish Archives

First published in 2002 by the Anglican Parish of Mitcham
18 Church Road, Mitcham, South Australia 5062.

Copyright © 2002 Pamela Oborn
No reproduction without permission.

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Oborn, Pamela, 1935–

Letters from Mitcham: St Michael's Anglican Church, 150 Years of Parish Life 1852–2002

Bibliography

Includes Index

ISBN 1 86459 082 3

1. St Michael's Church (Mitcham, S. Aust.) - History.
2. Church of England - South Australia - Mitcham - History.
3. Mitcham (S. Aust.) - Church history.
- I. Title.

283.9423

Wholly produced and set up in Adelaide, South Australia.

Designed and typeset by Pamela and Ben Oborn.

Printed by Openbook Print, 205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000.

This publication was supported by the South Australian Government
through the History Trust of South Australia.

Contents

Author's Preface & Acknowledgements	vi
Foreword	vii
PART ONE	Chapters Arranged in Chronological Order
1. A Village Called Mitcham	1
2. The Colonial Incumbents: 1852–1878	13
3. The Colonial Incumbents: 1878–1893	30
4. The Clampett Era: 1893–1914 Into the Twentieth Century	46
5. The Clampett Era: 1914–1939 Years of War & Depression	66
6. The Pearman Era: 1939–1962	86
7. The MacDonald Era: 1962–1976	107
8. The Cheesman Era: 1976–2001	118
9. A New Millennium & New Challenges	149
PART TWO	Chapters Arranged by Subject Matter
10. The Church Acre & Cemetery	156
11. The Church Building	169
12. Inside God's House: The Furnishings, Fittings & Memorials	182
13. The Daughter Church of St Wilfrid Torrens Park	204
14. Parsonages, Rectories & Halls	220
15. The Parish Family (Part 1): A Biography of the Congregation	236
16. The Parish Family (Part 2): Our Children are Our Future	261
17. Music at St Michael's	281
18. <i>Modus Operandi</i> : The Legal & Financial Affairs of the Parish	297
Appendices	307
Bibliography	314
Endnotes	315
Index	320

Author's Preface & Acknowledgements

WRITERS of historical books are often faced with a quandary: whether to arrange the chapters chronologically, or by subject matter. I have attempted to do both, which is why the book is in two distinct parts.

The first part deals with events in chronological order as recorded in the Parish Minute Books. With all too few exceptions these records are the epitome of brevity: who was present at meetings, who was elected to what position, and who proposed and seconded various motions. Not a lot on which to base a history of the 'life' of the Parish! Given the fact that for the first forty years there is no mention of any of the clergy having wives or children, one could be forgiven for thinking that all the colonial incumbents were celibate bachelors. A lot more information was found in the various Parish magazines published from 1899 onwards. Unfortunately not all of these have survived and there are many gaps, particularly during the 1970s.

Having spent thirty years researching, recording and promoting the history and heritage of the Mitcham district, I wanted a means by which I could incorporate some of that accumulated information into this book. I have done this by embellishing and amplifying the 'official' chronological history with a series of 'letters' written by a lady living in Mitcham (Adelaide) to her cousin in the English village of Mitcham in Surrey (after which ours is named). It is an ageless relationship which lasts over 150 years, with only the styles of writing and of speech modified to reflect the changing eras. This approach has given me a lot of flexibility in introducing cameos of the actual people and places mentioned without sacrificing the authenticity of the official Parish Records.

The second part of the book, which is arranged by subject matter, is in the traditional format. This is where you will find all those myriad of details that often 'spoil a good story': the saga of ongoing problems with architects and builders, and the costs of repairing and enlarging the fabric of the buildings; also lists of furnishings, fittings and memorials. Then there is the Parish Family, the parishioners: how and when Parish groups came into being and who ran them; the history of the organ and the musical life of the Parish, and financial matters. Finally, the inevitable, but necessary, appendices with extracted lists of office bearers, et cetera.

This is a record of 'Parish Life' in Mitcham during the past 150 years. It is about people, not just a record of who built the church, who the priests were, and who gave the memorials. Rather, it is an attempt to portray everyday life, not only within the Parish borders, but also in the surrounding district, and then to put this in the context of events within the wider Anglican community and in the state of South Australia.

Every author hopes that people will read their book from cover to cover. However, being a realist, I hope that the contents have been set out in such a way that you will be able to go straight to the information you require.

ST MICHAEL'S has been my parish church for nearly forty years. The clergy and parishioners have been my second family and the lovely sandstone building with its memorials and furnishings has been my spiritual home.

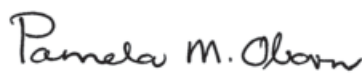
For the past five years I have been researching and recording its history – trying to bring the past to life and put some 'flesh' on the people and events mentioned in the dry-as-dust formal minutes. I have not been alone in this. My mentor, Fr Andrew Cheesman (Rector from 1976 to 2001), is himself an historian of some repute, and without his guidance and encouragement this book may not have been written. Not only did he make a point of keeping all the records within the Parish archives until such time as the history of St Michael's was completed, but he has willingly checked all the manuscript for correct theological terminology, proffered valuable comments and contributed some portions of the text.

Our task was made that much easier – and richer – by having a living link with the past in the person of Mrs Mollie Bowen, daughter of Archdeacon Albert Clampett who was Rector from 1893 to 1939. Mollie was born in the old Rectory in 1896, spent her married life in a neighbouring parish, then returned as a widow to live a stone's throw from St Michael's. As a girl and young woman 'Miss Mollie' accompanied her father on his rounds of the Parish, and was loved by all sections of society – from the poorest labouring families to the gentry in their grand mansions. Her recall of personalities and details, her infectious laugh and wicked sense of fun have been the source of much of the information used in this book. Mollie Bowen died on 28th February 2002 at the grand old age of 105 years.

Peter Geytenbeek kindly agreed to research and write the chapter on the history of our daughter church, St Wilfrid's at Torrens Park, for which I am eternally grateful! Many others have made significant contributions, in particular John Dibben (financial details); Jennifer Henshall and Gordon Hervey (Sunday School and youth groups), Cynthia Kennedy (Mothers' Union) and David Lowe (music). Representatives of all the Parish groups were invited to verify existing records and to contribute to the two chapters on the 'Parish Family'.

My thanks must go to Helen Scarborough and Pru Mitchell who proof-read the manuscript, also to Philip Knight who gave advice on the scanning of the illustrations.

Lastly, I must pay tribute to my husband, Ben, who did the scanning and mastered the complexities of laying-out and typesetting the text using Adobe *In Design*. Indeed, a labour of love!



Pamela Oborn
Mitcham Parish Historian, 2002

Foreword

THE FIRST ENTRY in the minute book of St Michael's Church describes the church as "still unfinished..." It could be said that every entry since that day in October 1852 is prefaced by those significant words. A church always remains unfinished, because it is a living and growing thing. This is true whether we speak of the church in the narrowest sense of the building in which we meet for worship, or in the wider sense of the people who make up the congregations. It is also true in the spiritual sense of the community of all believers which encompasses time and space, and will always be partial and incomplete until the return of the Lord. In the church there will never be a time when we can sit and look with satisfaction upon our work and say "It is finished – there is nothing more I need to do".

The occasion of writing this book is the 150th anniversary of the first service in St Michael's Church. Pamela Oborn has recorded the events which led to that service and the subsequent history of the use and adaptation of the building over the past 150 years. But she has done much more than that – Pamela has recorded here the history of a community which surrounds the parish church, and put a human face on the musty records of colonial days. She has brought to life the debates and disappointments, as well as the joys and achievements, of the residents of the 'big houses' and the workers in their cottages. In doing this she has given a tremendous gift to the parish and the wider community. I express my thanks and admiration, and those of the Parish, for the work that Pamela has done. I must also extend that thanks to Ben Oborn who has supported and assisted Pamela throughout this mammoth task, and to the many other members of the Parish who have also contributed to the project in various ways.

At this time of our third Jubilee it is appropriate to remember with thanksgiving the faithful clergy, the generous benefactors, and the countless men and women

who have worshipped in our church. We are reminded of teachers and catechists who brought the faith to our young people, and of pastoral visitors who brought comfort to the elderly and the sick. We think of the wardens and parish councillors who have cared for the physical fabric of the church and the financial management of the parish. We are reminded of the women's groups, the men's groups, the children's groups, the sporting groups and the countless other ways that community was built around the worshipping life of the church. We recall the great deeds, the important decisions, and even a scandal or two. But most of all we think of the faithful women and men who found in St Michael's Church a spiritual home, a place of refreshment, and an altar at which they could receive and give thanks for the good things of our gracious God.

As well as looking back, we look forward. The church faces challenges and opportunities today which were undreamed of 150 or even 50 years ago. In our multicultural and increasingly secular society the church must present the Gospel afresh, and find new ways of celebrating and proclaiming timeless truth to this and future generations. The changing nature of work means that people move into and out of community much more quickly than ever before. New modes of transport, sport, entertainment and social activity continue to emerge, as they have done over the past 150 years. It is not yet completely clear what the future role of the church will be, but there is little doubt that people will still need community, and have a desire to turn towards God. St Michael's Church – the building and the congregation – still has a vital role to play in the community which surrounds it. In this book we are reminded of what those who have gone before us have achieved, and their story can inspire us to take up our part in a history which is 150 years old, but has only just begun.

The church is still unfinished. There is plenty more to do.



Nigel Mitchell
Rector of Mitcham

*No fairer church than St. Michael's, Mitcham,
Through Australia shall you find,
As it stands with the clustering village below,
And the sunlit hills behind;
And the grey stone tower that tops the trees,
You may see as you homeward plod,
Like a landmark lifting its head to point
To the path that leads to GOD.*

H. Morgan Hawkes, 1888

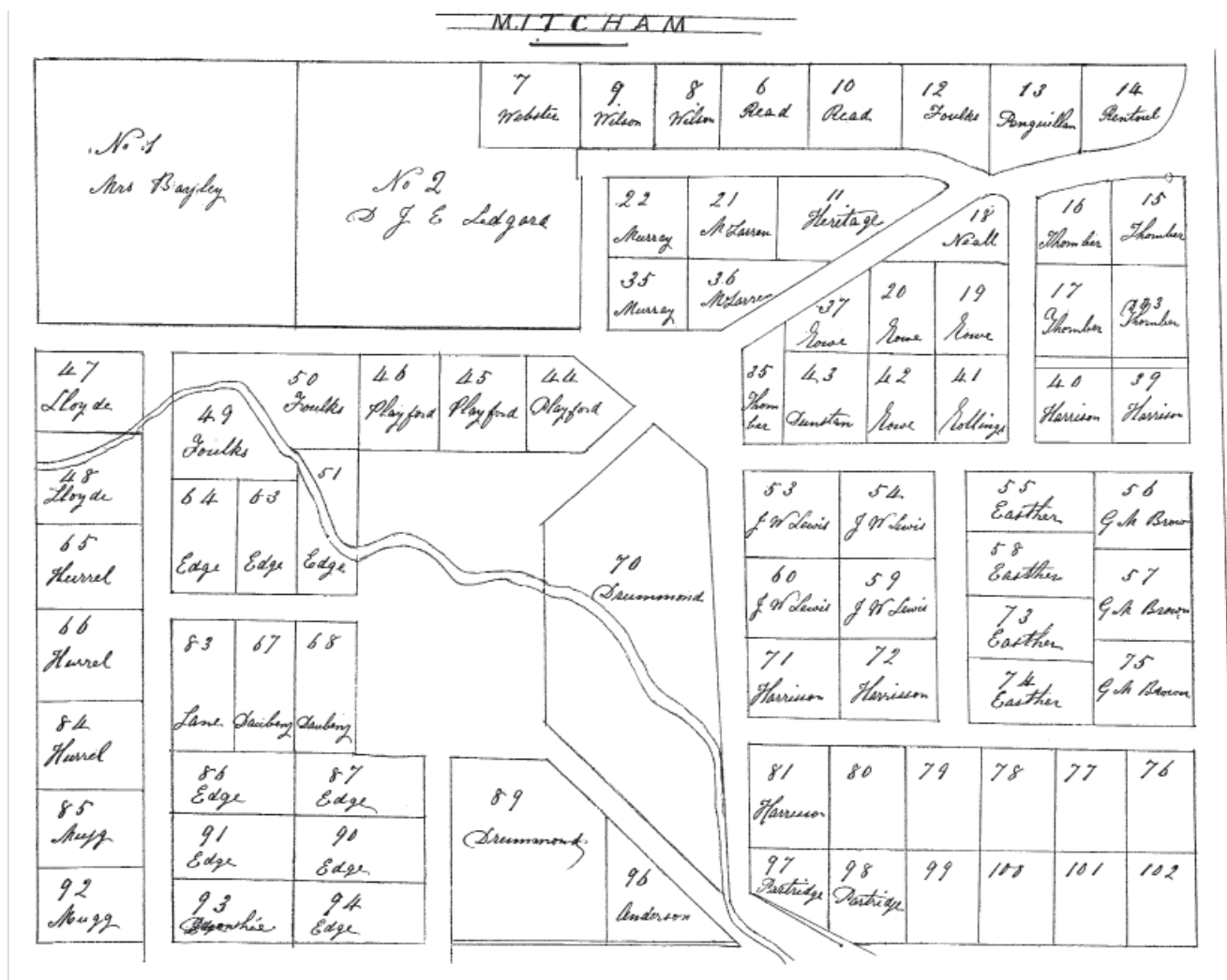


Fig. 1-1 The Village of Mitcham as laid out on Section 248 by the South Australian Company in 1840. Most allotments were of one acre. Carrick Hill Drive (formerly the Mitcham-road, then Fullarton Road) is on the right and Blythewood Road at the bottom of the plan. Backs of the allotments west of Muggs Hill Road (left) formed the boundary with Section 246 which later became the 'Torrens Park Estate'. Welbourne Street was put through later between Block No.1 and Block No.2.

St Michael's occupies parts of Lots 39 and 40 on the eastern boundary. Other occupants mentioned in the text include Robert Thornber (Lots 15, 16, 17, 103 & 35), Elizabeth Bayley (Block No.1, portion of which contained the first Parsonage), Arthur Blyth at 'The Hall' (Lots 53, 54, 59, 60, 71 & 72), William Easther (Lots 55, 58, 73 & 74), John Grainger at 'Gable Ends' (Lots 56, 57, 75 also a quarry on Lot 99), Thomas Mugg (Lots 85 & 92), Ralph Drummond (Lots 70 & 89), Thomas Playford at 'Jerusalem' (Lots 44, 45 & 46). The Village Green occupied the large space west of Lot 70.

(Detail based on Plan 117 of 1855, LTO, Adelaide)