BURNSIDE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

The Monthly BHS Bulletin

October 2026

NEXT MEETING: Monday 19 October at 7.30pm

The speaker at our next meeting will be BHS member Dr Roger Harris who will speak about the life of his great grandfather ***Charles Hope Harris: Surveyor, Astronomer and Toponymist.*** Roger's story of his ancestor, who arrived with his family in Adelaide as a five year-old in 1851 and then made a significant contribution to the colony of South Australia, will be of interest to us all. In an obituary published at the time of his death in 1915, Charles Hope Harris was described as "One of the best-known scientists and public men of the State".

Further details of Roger's talk can be found in the meeting flyer to be found on page 4 of this Bulletin

NOVEMBER MEETING: A Night of Celebration

All members and friends are invited to attend our final meeting for the year on **Monday 16 November at 7.30pm.** This will be an enjoyable night as we celebrate with our fellow members what has been a successful year for the BHS. The meeting will include a fun Quiz, reflections on 2026, and supper with wine. A detailed flyer was emailed to members just prior to our recent September meeting. There will be spare copies at the October meeting.

What do you need to know?

- **You must book if you are planning to attend.** You can phone 0422 705 916 or better still by booking at the October meeting. This is needed to facilitate the quiz and catering arrangements for the night. When you book you will choose a table to be part of for the Quiz; individuals, couples and groups are all welcome. Maximum for each table is 8 (we already have 5 tables of 8, fully booked)
- **The meeting is FREE!** No need to bring drinks, snacks, or food for supper as it will **ALL** be provided. Just a few gold coins to participate in some of the fun games between the Quiz rounds.
- **Prizes** will be awarded during the Quiz.

This should be a night for all to enjoy ..... but remember that you MUST BOOK

Extra help is needed on the night.

The Programme Committee needs extra help, particularly at 6.30pm to setup the Hall prior to the meeting. If you can help in anyway, please see Dianne Wilson at the October meeting.

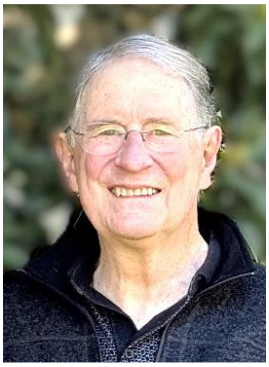
Thank you to those members who donated bottles of wine at the September meeting for Quiz prizes. Your generosity means we now have sufficient prizes for the Quiz.

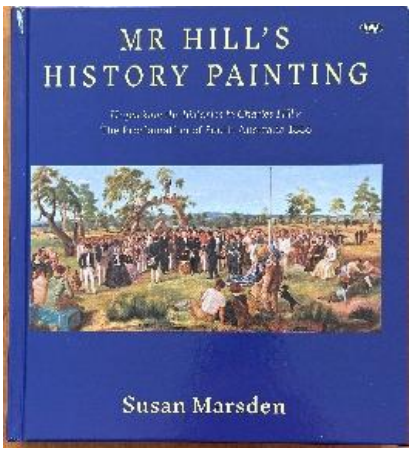
REPORTS ON MEETINGS AND OUTINGS

A detailed report of our recent visit to Urrbrae House and Environs commences on page 5 of this Bulletin. A report on the September meeting, which included Colin Harris' presentation on ***The Mound Springs of inland Australia,*** will appear in the November Bulletin.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN WITH ROGER BILLS

Recent Authors Among Us





Last month I was privileged to attend the launch, by Her Excellency, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, of a fascinating history book, *Mr Hill's History Painting,* by Dr Susan Marsden.

The painting, known as T*he Proclamation of South Australia 1836*, depicts the Proclamation ceremony with the many notable founding figures of our history; some of whom were not necessarily present. These people, the circumstances and reasons for their inclusion, and their importance in our history are the subject of the book

As the painting is very long and large, for many years it was kept in storage at the Art Gallery of South Australia. However, since January 2024 it now hangs in the eastern entrance of Government House, where it is "popular with our visitors". A transcript of the Governor's launch speech can be seen on the link:

https://www.governor.sa.gov.au/vice-regal/speeches/proclamation-book-official-laun

[Editor's Note: the Governor's speech in the above link (Ctrl+Click) is an **EXCELLENT i**ntroduction to the book]

Dr Susan Marsden by a copy of Charles Hill's Painting,
T*he Proclamation of South Australia1836*

Susan is a BHS member and has also served on the Burnside Council Heritage Reference Group. While the Society certainly makes no claim to any credit for Susan's work, we are nevertheless fortunate to have such a distinguished and worthy historian as a member of our community.

On behalf of the BHS, I offer congratulations to Susan on producing such a valuable addition to South Australian history.

Recent Authors Among Our Members

As a segue from Susan's book, it is worth noting that several other BHS members are also recently published authors.

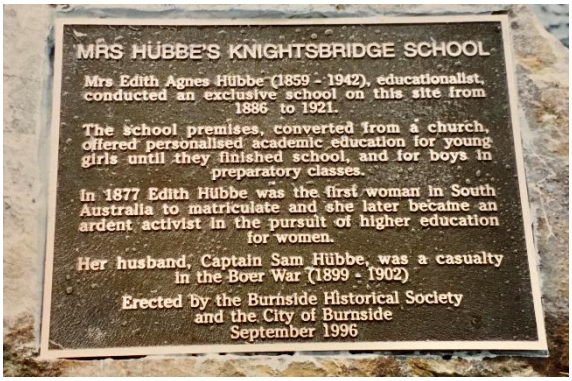
Annie Martin wrote her historical novel, *Warblers of Lockwood*, set around the magpies near the Lockwood General Store.

Soon, Polly Dundon's third book, *Secrets and Connections of Inspiring South Australians*, will be going to the printer. Polly's book will bring to light stories and names of people who have not received the recognition we might expect, particularly those with connections to the City of Burnside.

It is pleasing to see members researching, recording, and sharing stories of South Australia's past. In their different ways, they are helping to ensure that people, places, and stories that might otherwise be forgotten, remain alive.

KEEPER OF THE KEY by Judy Fander

Marjorie Caw is justifiably proud of her ancestors, Edith Agnes Hübbe and Harriet Marjorie Caw (nee Hübbe). She is the great granddaughter of Edith and the granddaughter of Harriet.



Edith Agnes Hübbe (née Cook) was a pioneering South Australian educator who succeeded Jane Stanes as Principal of the Advanced School for Girls at the end of 1880. From her home at 28 Statenborough Street, Knightsbridge (now Leabrook) Edith and her sister, Harriet Cook, ran a well-known co-educational school while she raised her family. A brass heritage plaque was placed there in 1996 by BHS, which celebrates her life and work.

Harriet Marjorie Caw, Edith's fourth child, was also a prominent educator. She was involved in setting up a CWA branch in WA and when she returned to Adelaide, she became involved in the Adelaide Lyceum Club.

Marjorie Caw inherited the front door key to the Hübbe family home in Statenborough Street, which she recently gave to the Burnside Library Local History Room for display in the Burnside Treasures cabinet.

Marjorie is currently visiting Adelaide from her home in Bristol in the UK. This is the first time since 2014, when she was an invited guest at retrospective exhibition for Dorrit Black held at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Marjorie also inherited from her grandmother, Harriet Marjorie Caw, a collection of paintings, among them paintings by Dorrit Black.

Marjorie is currently visiting Adelaide to see relatives who live on Undelcarra Drive, and to rediscover Adelaide, which she has not seen since childhood.

Michelle Toft (Historical and Cultural Officer) and I arranged for her to see the Local History Room and to visit the Mayor's Parlour during her trip.

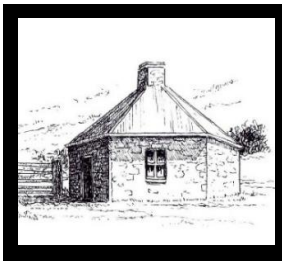
She was particularly interested in the magnificent 1865 James Shaw painting 'Undelcarra'.

Marjorie recalled as a child, the enormous tadpoles in the old water tank built on the property which supplied water to Undelcarra. It has now been converted into the Burnside Arts and Craft Centre.

She also remembered with awe, the grandeur of the house on the one occasion she visited as a child with her parents. Her great-aunt Janet Doris Hübbe had married Alfred Allan Simpson.

My thanks go to our Mayor, Anne Monceaux for generously showing some of the Burnside Treasures, and to the Local History Room staff and volunteers

Bulletin Editor: Bob Stace, Editorial Support: Helen Bills, Email Distribution: Roger Bills



Burnside Historical Society

Active in the Burnside Community for 46 years

OCTOBER 2026 Meeting

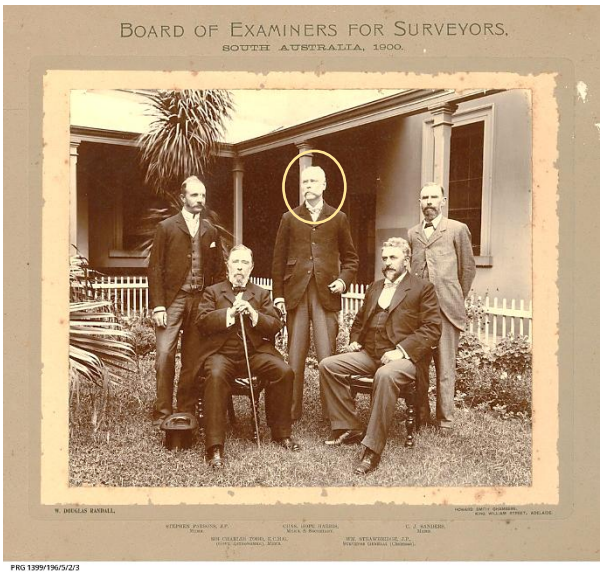
Charles Hope Harris:

Surveyor, Astronomer and Toponymist

Monday 17 October @ 7.30pm

Burnside Community Centre Hall, (adjacent to Burnside Library)
401 Greenhill Road, Tusmore, enter off Fisher Street

TOPIC 'One of the best-known scientists and public men of the State', published the *Daily Herald* in its obituary on Charles Harris (1846-1915). Born in Clare, Suffolk, England, he emigrated with his family to SA at the age of five in the 'Asia', arriving in 1851. He was an all-rounder, making contributions to the colony of SA in many different ways, which included surveying and exploration, astronomy, Aboriginal nomenclature and placenames, researching, presenting and publishing scientific papers, Editor of *The Public Service Review,* and lecturer and Chief Examiner at the School of Mines and Roseworthy. Charles was my paternal great-grandfather.



OUR SPEAKER **Dr Roger Harris** is retired Professor in Adult and Vocational Education, University of South Australia. He has had extensive experience since 1975 in vocational teacher education and research, publishing and presenting widely on adult and vocational education. In retirement, he has now returned to his original discipline of history and is thoroughly enjoying researching and writing in various fields, including family history. Roger is a BHS member and a member of the City of Burnside's Heritage Reference Group.

VISITORS - a $2 cash donation is appreciated

Further information

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BHS OUTING TO URRBRAE HOUSE & ENVIRONS

Thursday 17 September 2026

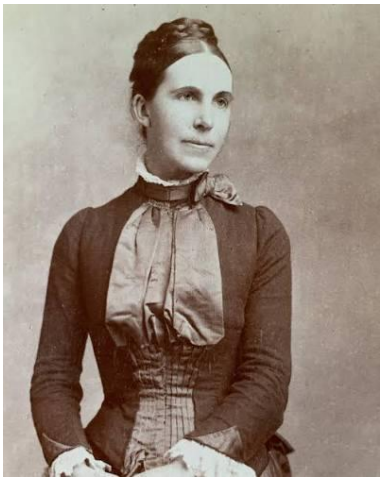
Report by Bob Stace

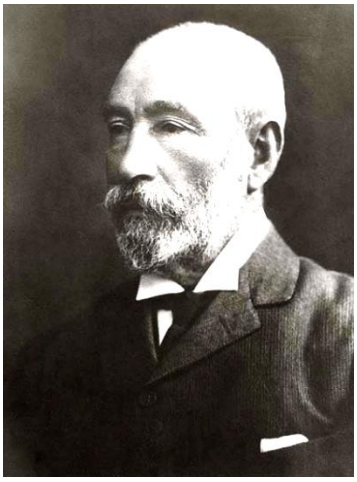
It was a fine spring morning when 28 BHS members and friends assembled at the relocated Waite Gatehouse on Claremont Ave, Urrbrae, to commence their visit to Urrbrae House and its Environs. The Gatehouse had originally stood on the corner of Cross and Fullarton Roads for nearly 140 years as the formal entrance to Urrbrae House and its Estate. Faced with almost certain demolition in 2020 as part of a major $61m upgrade of the corner, this state heritage building was saved by a concerted community campaign. This resulted in the gatehouse being meticulously deconstructed, labelled, cleaned, and relocated to a new site adjacent to Urrbrae House with work concluding in 2023. The gatehouse is now part of the Waite Campus of the Adelaide University, and its remodelled interior and modern extensions are used by the University as offices and meeting places. We admired the fine workmanship of the restoration, particularly the brickwork.

[Editor's Note: Daniel Raschella was to have spoken on this project at our August meeting, which would have been prior to our visit, but had to cancel at the last minute. He has now been rebooked as the speaker for our February 2027 meeting]

We next moved to the nearby Urrbrae House for our guided tour where we were met on the lawn outside by one of our guides Tess, dressed as Mrs Matilda Waite, who explained that she and her husband Peter Waite and their family came to live on this Estate in the original single story house in 1877 This was demolished in the late 1880's and a new 2 story home was then built and completed in 1891. "Mrs Waite" then kindly invited us into her home and into the spacious upstairs Drawing Room where we met one of her "housemaids " Joy, who was to be our second guide.

Before we commenced our tours the two guides introduced us to the extraordinary life of Peter Waite and we learnt much more about this during our tour of the House which followed. His story is well worth telling.





Peter Waite (1834-1922) was born in Kirkaldy, Scotland and at the age of 25 emigrated to South Australia in 1859 to join his brothers there. The Waites had good connections in South Australia in the Elder and Barr Smith families and by 1864 Peter was managing, on their behalf, two pastoral stations near Terowie, *Pandappa* and *Paratoo*. (see photo below left) Peter then summoned his very patient fiancé of 6 years from Scottland and he and Matilda married in Adelaide on her arrival. The newlyweds immediately left in horse drawn vehicles to travel the hot and dusty roads north to make their home at *Paratoo*. By 1874, through judicious and innovative management, Peter Waite was overseeing a large, prosperous, and highly successful pastoral property carrying 260.000 sheep. It was around this time that the Waites took a liking to a property at Urrbrae in Adelaide, and with support from Thomas Elder, purchased it in 1875. They and their children moved into Urrbrae House in 1877. (see image below right)

As our guides took us through the many rooms of the House, we learnt that after the major reconstruction and enlargement of Urrbrae House was completed in 1891 it was recognised as one of Adelaide's significant mansions. Matilda ensured that the new House was designed to suit the Adelaide climate with the building cut into the slope of the property thus ensuring the lower downstairs level to be much cooler in the heat of the summer. There was evidence in several rooms by way of the wall papering, décor, and furnishings, of the consultancy work of John Aldam Heaton of London. Urrbrae House was the first home in Adelaide to have electrical light (1891) and also a refrigeration system (1895).

We carefully climbed up and down the central ornate cedar and blackwood stairs which linked the upper and lower levels of the House, which gave us access to its many rooms of, each with its own story to tell. Some of the rooms were deployed in a similar fashion to their use in the Waite period, like the Billiard Room, a children's bedroom and the formal dining room where I was given the task of summoning the maid by using the electronic bell hidden under the magnificent table and much to my amazement, she appeared! Other rooms were furnished to represent different features of the House today like the late Victorian era school room, the Arboretum Exhibition Room and the Peter Waite Exhibition Room. The School Room on the lower level which is adjacent to the Ballroom was once the lounge/supper room. This room is used today as part of the weekly primary school interactive visiting programme. Some of our group tried out the copperplate handwriting with ink, inkwells, pen and nib and were surprisingly successful. (see next page for room photos)

A visit to the Servery and Pantry concluded our visit to the House but not the conclusion to our story of Peter and Matilda's philanthropy and the enormous legacy they have left to South Australia and particularly the Adelaide University.

In 1913, following the tragic death of their son David, who was to have taken over the estate and the family's pastoral businesses, Peter and Matilda signalled their intention to handover the Urrbrae Estate to the University of Adelaide to be used for scientific studies related to agriculture. They donated additional land to the South Australian Government for the purpose of establishing an agricultural high school. (now Urrbrae Agricultural High School) These arrangements were formalised on the death of the Waites in 1922 and have significantly served agricultural science and education for over 100 years. A wonderful ongoing legacy!

Following our tour, we lunched at the nearby Beltana Café which serves as the refectory for the students, staff and research scientists of Waite Campus of the Adelaide University and the Waite Agricultural Research Institute. The lunch was a casual, relaxing, and enjoyable time which befits a university refectory. Much of our conversation reflected on the great tour we had just experienced and our appreciation of our two guides, Tess and Joy, whose highly informative and personalised commentary had brought the House and the Waites to life. Urrbrae House and its story is one of our State's lesser-known gems!

Urrbrae House on the day of our visit

Images and photos: Adelaide University, Roger Bills, and Bob Stace