BURNSIDE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

The Monthly BHS Bulletin

November 2026

NEXT MEETING: Monday 16 November at 7.30pm

Our final meeting for 2026 will be a **Night of Celebration** which will include a quiz and a celebratory supper. Many of you have already booked, but there is still time and room for you to join us by ringing 0422 705 916 prior to the night. Even if you just arrive on the night we will be able to fit you in on one of the Quiz tables. There is no cost for the meeting and all food and drink will be provided. Just bring some $2 coins to participate in some of the fun games during the quiz.

A big THANKS to those of you who have volunteered to help set up the Hall for the meeting. Please arrive around 6.30pmm

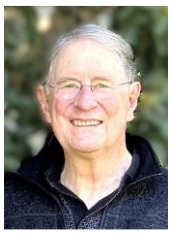
JANUARY LUNCH AT THE REPUBLIC HOTEL

What has become our traditional opening outing of the year, the January Lunch, will be held at the Republic Hotel, 120 Magill Rd, Norwood, on **Wednesday 20 January 2027**, commencing at 12 noon. We will have access to a private room and a special seniors lunch deal at $20 or choices from the main menu. Bookings for this event commenced at the October meeting and can be made at the upcoming November meeting or by phone (0422 705 916) until Monday 11 January. Book now for what has become an enjoyable social get together to start the BHS year.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE OPEN DAY, SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER

If you are at a loose end next Sunday, why not attend the Open Day at Government House which will be open to the public from 10am until 2pm. You will be able to tour the public rooms and learn about the history of the House and its role today and see Charles Hills' painting, T*he Proclamation of South Australia 1836*. You can also join a free garden tour and explore the roses, orchids and chrysanthemums in the picturesque grounds.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN?



Our President, Roger Bills, is on holiday and having a well-deserved break from his president's role. Roger will give us a special report at the November meeting.

REPORTS ON THE SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER MEETINGS

Thanks to Colin Harris and Liz Silz for their reports on the speakers at our recent meetings. These detailed reports appear on the following pages and will form a part of the record of our year's activities.

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

BHS MEETING REPORT: Monday 21 September 2026

Speaker: Colin Harris

Topic: Oases in the Desert: the Mound Springs of Inland Australia

Report compiled by Colin Harris. Photos Colin Harris

Former President and Life Member of the BHS, Colin Harris, was the speaker at our September General Meeting on the topic of the mound springs of inland Australia.

Mound springs are natural outlets for the pressurised waters of Australia's Great Artesian Basin and there are many thousands of them in northern South Australia, inland Queensland and Northwestern New South Wales. Most of the springs are found where geological faults or other lines of weakness allow the waters to escape to the surface, bringing with them a variety of dissolved minerals which can evaporate over time and build-up the characteristic cones, or mounds. Those in northern South Australia are the best developed and were the focus of Colin's talk.

Main spring, Dalhousie, from the air

Colin's interest in the springs stemmed from reading about them in a Grade V Social Studies text at Burnside Primary School in the early 1950s. Fascinated by the idea of relatively fresh water welling up from underground in Australia's harshest desert country, he determined – even at that young age – to visit them one day. The opportunity came in 1971 when he acquired a 4WD Land Rover as part of his postgraduate work at Adelaide University. It was a rugged little vehicle, lacking most of the creature comforts that are to be seen in present-day off-road vehicles, but it was more than capable of getting him to his first springs in 1971.

The springs did not disappoint, and after recruitment to the newly formed SA Environment Department in 1973 he became involved in a number of programmes aimed at better conserving and managing the springs. As the only sources of permanent, potable water in an otherwise desert environment, the springs had been of immense importance to Indigenous people, featuring prominently in their mythology and Dreaming stories. The springs were also of real scientific importance; their long isolation having allowed a high degree of species endemism to develop among the small creatures that live in them. Out of that early Departmental work came *Witjira National Park* – protecting the magnificent Dalhousie Springs on the western edge of the Simpson Desert – and *Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park* near Coward Springs on the Oodnadatta Track – protecting the well-known and frequently visited Blanche Cup and Bubbler Springs. Ten important springs on pastoral country north of the SA Dog Fence were also fenced against cattle intrusion and damage at that time.

Early morning, Dalhousie

On retiring from the Department, Colin and a group of like-minded friends and colleagues set up the volunteer community group *Friends of Mound Springs* (FOMS) under the umbrella of the State-wide parent-group Friends of Parks and Nature Inc. Over the past 20 years the group has been actively involved in establishing self-guided walking trails and providing brochures and interpretative signage at significant sites such as the Strangways and Peake Overland Telegraph Stations, both of which were sited in 1872 on the permanent waters of mound springs. Only a decade before these stations were established, the line of mound springs across northern South Australia had been crucial in allowing John McDouall Stuart to cross the Australian Continent from south to north and return, thus paving the way for the Overland Telegraph that connected Australia to the rest of the World – one of the great (some say **the greatest**) engineering achievement of 19th century Australia.

Friends Of Mount Springs volunteers after completing fencing of Levi Springs

In turn, the narrow-gauge Central Australian Railway followed the line of the mound springs, as did the earliest motorised route from Southern to Central Australian and beyond. Whether it be as a life support (and trading route) for Indigenous people or a transport and communication corridor for Europeans, the mound springs of northern South Australia have been of crucial importance to humankind for millennia.

Having this year marked two decades of sustained work, FOMS has been negotiating a succession plan which will see the Pt Augusta-based South Australian Arid Lands Board (SAAL) take over the science and policy work FOMS has been conducting and the Indigenous Arabana Aboriginal Corporation's Ranger team will assume responsibility for the field component of the work. The latter is seen as particularly important as the Arabana people having been granted Native Title to this land in 2012. Colin concluded with the hope that these new arrangements will see the management of these precious natural and cultural assets continue well into the future.

Above:
Interpretative brochures in weatherproof steel box at the Peake

Above Left:
Replacing interpretative signage at Strangways Springs

Left:
Rock Spring at Strangways

BHS MEETING REPORT: Monday 19 October 2026

Speaker: Roger Harris

Topic: Charles Hope Harris: Surveyor, Astronomer and Toponymist

Report compiled by Liz Silz. Images Roger Harris

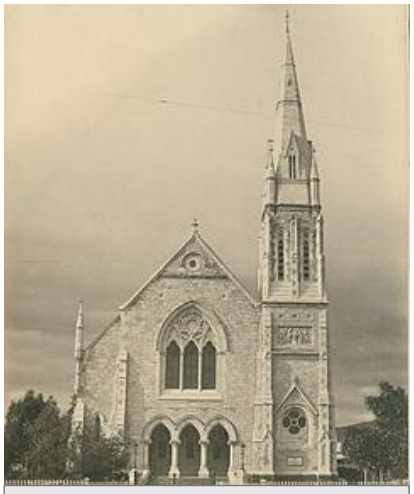
At our October meeting we were privileged to hear a presentation by fellow BHS member Dr. Roger Harris entitled *Charles Hope Harris: Surveyor, Astronomer and Toponymist*.
Roger was understandably proud of his great-grandfather who was the subject of his presentation. Charles Hope Harris (1846-1915) was a well-respected and admired contributor to South Australia and Australia in general during his lifetime.
Interestingly, Roger used a compass as an analogy to depict the many and varied contributions made by his forebear. These included surveying, astronomy, toponymy (the study of place names) and scientific research.

Charles Hope Harris was born in Clare, Suffolk in 1846 and moved to S.A with his family in 1851 when his father, a Congregational minister, was encouraged to come here due to his poor health.

Charles entered the Public Service in 1863 and by 1865 was a third-class surveyor working in Gawler, Virginia and Kadina. A man of strong faith, Charles volunteered for the South Seas Mission and when that door didn't open applied to train for the ministry. On arrival in Melbourne, he discovered that he was unable to afford the quite expensive fee required for the ministry course and instead qualified as a mine surveyor and shire engineer. On his return to S.A., he went into private practice with his brother and by 1871-72 had returned to the Public Service surveying Port Pirie, Laura, Maitland and Ardrossan. The following year he surveyed Greytown, Beachport and the 60-mile Kingston to Bordertown road.

In 1874 he surveyed two unexplored lakes northwest of Port Augusta, one of which bears his name. There is also a mountain, Mount Harris, named after him, in what is now the Northern Territory.

Due to a difficult life in the outback, he suffered from ill health, and he returned to Adelaide where he married Margaret Howie in 1876. They had 7 children and lived in Norwood, Beulah Park and finally in Blackwood. They served the Clayton Congregational Church for many years.

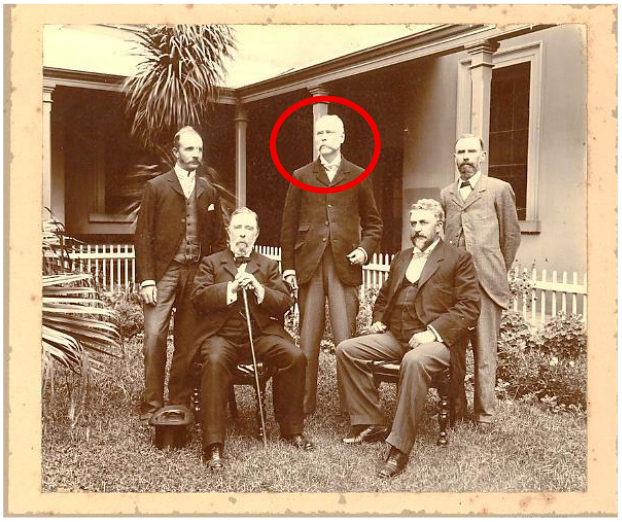


Clayton Congregational Church c. 1897

In the 1880s Charles became a lecturer and examiner of licenced Surveyors, became a foundation member of the Surveyors Institute and later wrote a well-respected handbook for surveyors.

In 1892 Charles became a foundation member of the Astronomical Society of S.A. (the first in Australia). He was well known as an astronomer recording information for 30 years. His large nine-and-a-half-foot telescope sat in the yard of his Beulah Park home for 15 years. Amongst other writings he wrote an astronomical textbook and submitted a paper describing the probable position of the Magnetic South

Pole to the Royal Geographical Society which was used by Scott for the British Antarctic expedition. He was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Astronomical Society of London in 1910.



At left:

Secretary, Board of Examiners for Surveyors 1900

At right:

Charles Hope's backyard telescope at Beulah Park

As a toponymist, Charles was a pioneer, producing a systematic record of Aboriginal place names. He had a great respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage. In a paper he wrote in 1893 he acknowledged the destruction of Aboriginal place names, particularly in S.A.

In addition to these important achievements, Charles wrote poetry, wrote about history, contributed to journals and was Vice President of the Coromandel Cricket Club.

All of this was accomplished despite losing his eyesight by the age of 56.
Charles Hope Harris was certainly someone who left an enormous legacy at the end of his 69 years.
We thank Dr. Roger Harris for sharing the wonderful life of his great grandfather with our Society.

C. H. Harris Family 1896
Russell (7), Margaret, Dora (11), Howie (19), Charles,
Rosalie (13), Mabel (15), Irvine (3) and Ethel (17)
[SLSA, B52571]