



Newsletter March 2021

The Friends of Urrbrae House

Urrbrae House, The University of Adelaide, Waite Campus

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President's report

We can rejoice in South Australia that Covid has had only a minor impact on life, compared to most countries. Important in this has been the care people have taken with social distancing. Thus I trust it is understandable that due to limits on numbers in Urrbrae House it was not feasible to have concerts or other large functions after February last year. We did plan an outdoor concert for 23rd November with the Vivente Group to perform on the Balcony of Urrbrae House. A large number of Friends booked for the event, with Sally and Barbara from Urrbrae House recording contact details in advance. At short notice the event had to be cancelled due to the shut-down of South Australia for several days at this time following an outbreak of Covid.

We resumed our committee meetings from August although sitting at 1.5m from each other made discussion difficult.

We are pleased that the curtain cleaning and conservation of the curtains in the Drawing Room has been completed as described by Lynette later in the Newsletter. This was a major project with the Friends making an overall contribution of \$11,500.

We are looking forward to two other major projects being completed this year. In June we are planning a small function to install a Clara Serena Display in the Ballroom. This will feature a portrait of Clara and a summary of her distinguished career in Australia and Europe as an operatic singer. Below is reminder of the significance of Urrbrae House and the Waite family to the career of Clara.

We have been supporting the effort to save the Gate Lodge of Urrbrae House which is proposed to be demolished in the redeployment of the Cross Road and Fullarton Road intersection as described further below.

A combined AGM for this year and last year will be held on Tuesday evening 27th April at which we will also celebrate 30 years since the foundation of the Friends of Urrbrae House. We are delighted that our guest speaker will be Professor Martin Cole who was recently appointed as the Head of the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine. An invitation accompanies this Newsletter and for this function an RSVP will be required.

We trust that you will continue to support the Friends of Urrbrae House by renewing your membership for 2021.

Bill Wallace, President

New member

We welcome Carolyn Wiltshire and thank you for your support.

Saving the Gatehouse/Lodge and Waite Arboretum trees: upgrade of Fullarton Road-Cross Road intersection

Jointly funded by the Federal and State governments, a \$61m redevelopment of the Cross Road and Fullarton Road intersection is reaching the final stages of planning. The University of Adelaide was officially advised by the State Government in December 2020 that it intends to compulsorily acquire a section of the Waite Arboretum which includes the SA Heritage listed Gatehouse (originally known as the Lodge) for the intersection upgrade.



While it is acknowledged that there could be some improvement in the intersection, the extent of the proposed changes do not appear to be warranted. Cross Road is two lanes in both directions up until the intersection and then three through lanes are proposed in either direction at the intersection with additional dedicated right turn lanes to Fullarton Road. In particular, it is hard to see the justification for two left filter lanes from Cross Road to Fullarton Road (heading south) that then narrows to one lane at the junction with the Old Belair Road near Mercedes College.

The planned upgrade will result in the demolition of the Gatehouse/Lodge, the destruction of significant and historic trees in the Waite Arboretum adjacent the intersection, and loss of land gifted by Peter Waite. The Lodge (built c. 1883-1884) is a very significant part of Peter Waite's estate, a pointer to the location of Urrbrae House. The building is greatly admired by passersby. It was the intention of Peter Waite to give all of his estate to the people of South Australia and thus the University of Adelaide, as trustee, has opposed the proposed action of the Government to acquire part of it. You can see the University's December 2020 statement of opposition to the proposal at: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/newsroom/news/list/2020/12/04/statement-from-the-university-of-adelaide-waite-campus>

The University has also been concerned about the Government's subsequent proposal to give the University the responsibility of physically moving the Gatehouse to save the building from demolition.

It has been very heartening to see the community's efforts to preserve Peter Waite's legacy. A community protest rally organized on 31 January 2021 attracted 1,000 protesters. In addition to the online petition organised by Joanna Wells, a hard copy petition opposing the destruction of the Gatehouse has been circulating through the community for Sam Duluk MP as the Member for Waite to present to Parliament.



Dr Jennifer Gardner reads a statement from the Interim Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, Professor Mike Brooks opposing the compulsory acquisition of Waite campus land

The University has objected to the compulsory acquisition through formal legal channels. While the State Government has formally acknowledged the University's concerns, it has rejected the representations and is committed to its compulsory acquisition of the land.

However, on 15 March 2021 the State Government announced it will take responsibility for relocating the Gatehouse. The University has recommended a preferred relocation along Claremont Avenue near Urrbrae House that will enhance the building's integration into activities on campus. The Gatehouse was once the home of the Head Gardeners of

the Urrbrae estate. In its new location, it will become home to the many volunteers who are the backbone of support for the Urrbrae House gardens and Waite Arboretum. We expect this to be a positive outcome for our community. It is our understanding that the Government will reconstruct the

original section of the building (which has a non-original addition in poor condition) using the original materials as much as possible. It will be designed to reproduce the current building. The University has also agreed to refurbish the interior of the building which currently requires restoration.

The University's preference has always been and remains for the Waite campus land and the Gatehouse to left untouched and intact. However, as the State Government intends to go ahead with the compulsory acquisition of the land, the University is pleased that the Gatehouse will continue to have a place on the campus, and that it will become a useful space for generations to come. The University's latest statement about the Waite campus land and the Gatehouse can be found at:

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/newsroom/news/list/2021/03/15/statement-from-the-university-of-adelaide-waite-campus-and-gatehouse>

Bill Wallace and Lynette Zeitz

Clara (Kleinschmidt) Serena

In 1904, while Peter and David Waite were walking through Oakbank for the Annual Easter Steeplechase, they overheard a young girl singing. They were so impressed that they stopped at the home and discovered that the voice belonged to Clara Kleinschmidt. Clara was born in Lobethal, South Australia on 9 June 1890.

Peter Waite subsequently arranged for Clara to live at Urrbrae House while she studied at the Elder Conservatorium of Music.

Clara proved to be an ideal student, talented and hard working, and in 1908, at the age of 18, she won the prestigious Elder Scholarship, which entitled her to three years at the Royal College of Music, London. Clara not only gained a Diploma from the Royal College, but also was granted a further year's study there.



Photo courtesy of Mary McLeod

Taking on the professional name of Clara Serena she embarked on a performance career in Europe but when war threatened in 1914, she returned to Adelaide. She resumed life at Urrbrae House with the Waites, enjoying the social life and delighting audiences in the major capital cities where she performed for the Australian Red Cross Society. At one of these concerts, the young contralto was heard by Dame Nellie Melba, whom she so impressed that Melba invited Clara to her home at Coombe Cottage where Clara spent six weeks.

In 1917, Clara married her accompanist, Roy Mellish and they returned to London in 1922 where Clara achieved instant success. Important engagements came her way and she appeared with orchestras under Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Hamilton Harty, and Sir Malcolm Sargent singing operatic excerpts and lieder from the German repertoire as well as modern works by English, French and American composers. She possessed a most unusual voice, having the range of three octaves, reaching to top B flat and was fluent in four languages.

Serena gave recitals in Paris, Vienna and Berlin as well as in principal cities of the British Isles, and after a Command Performance by the Royal Philharmonic Society in Queen's Hall, London, she was presented to King George V and Queen Mary.

War again interrupted Clara's career in 1939, forcing her to abandon plans for a tour of the United States. The couple eventually returned to Adelaide. Clara died in 1972 aged 82 and Roy two years later. Their ashes and a commemorative plaque are in the Rose Garden at Urrbrae House.

Bill Wallace



Vale Richard Bayford Wells (1952-2020)

It was with much sadness that I share the news that Richard Wells, eldest son of Cedric and Marion Wells, died on Boxing Day 2020 after a long illness. A long time supporter of Urrbrae House, Richard was the eldest of Peter and Matilda Waite's great great grandchildren. Lily and Eva Waite knew the young Richard, the grandchild of their brother James Waite.

Richard had a long association with the University through with the Adelaide University Rugby Union Football Club (AURUFC). He began as a player with the Club in 1971 and was appointed a Life Member of the AURUFC in 2005. His restoration work on the Club's archives secured an asset that otherwise would have degraded; the visual results of his work are displayed in the Club house. Richard was an organiser and vibrant member of rugby

administration. A tribute to Richard and his broad fellowship with people in rugby can be found in the January 2021 Rugby Club newsletter.

See <https://adelaideunisport.com.au/Clubs/Rugby>

Urrbrae House also benefitted from Richard's strong organisational skills and abiding interest in history. From 1998-2014 Richard organised a competitive Snooker Pairs Tournament in the Billiard Room of Urrbrae House. Players competed on the "Squatter's Favourite" Billiard Table originally owned by Peter Waite. Donations from tournament competitors were then used for restoration projects such as the conservation of one of the Squatter's Chairs found in the Billiard Room.

A man of many practical skills, Richard also framed the Honor Roll of the 18th Battery, 6th Field Artillery Brigade (1916) presented to Peter Waite so the Roll could be displayed in Urrbrae House. Richard also repaired the frame of the firescreen tapestry completed by Lily and Eva Waite which is displayed in the Drawing Room. I also appreciated Richard sharing his knowledge of the Waite family history with me.

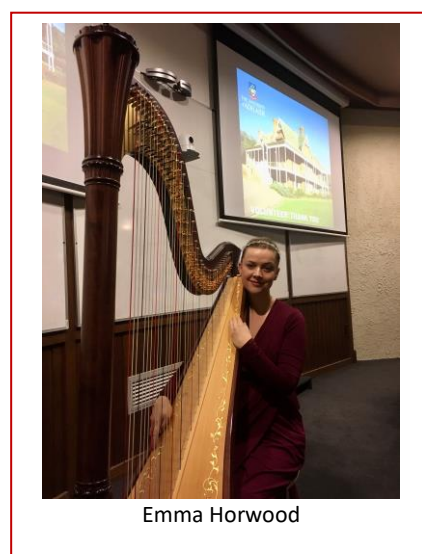
We extend our sympathies to Richard's wife Sue, daughters Vanessa and Beck, brothers Peter and Henry, and their families. Richard will be very much missed.

Lynette Zeitz

Manager's Musings

Volunteer Thank you event

"Doing things differently" has certainly been the theme for us all over the last year and our annual Volunteer Thank you event on 4 November 2020 was no exception. I arranged for acclaimed harpist-singer and graduate of the Elder Conservatorium, Emma Horwood to give a beautiful special concert for our Urrbrae House volunteers in the Charles Hawker Conference building and instead of morning tea, Sally organized goodie bags for each of our volunteers including South Australian produce and University of Adelaide wine.



Emma Horwood



Barbara Wills, Graham Prout and Sally Carr

The concert was our way of saying “thank you” to our volunteers whose continued support and patience during this challenging year has been greatly appreciated. The event also enabled us to all say a proper farewell to our long-serving museum cleaner, Graham Prout.

Ambassador of Italy to Australia visit

On 6 November 2020 Urrbrae House welcomed Her Excellency Ms Francesca Tardioli, the Italian Ambassador to Australia, and Consul Adriano Stendardo, Consul of Italy in South Australia, during their visit to the Waite campus. I was delighted that the Ambassador graciously accepted a copy of my history, *The Waite*.

Smith Family Christmas Appeal and Giving Tree

Despite the early suspension of our annual toys and books collection due to the late November lockdown in South Australia, we were still able to make a contribution to the Smith Family’s Christmas Appeal in December 2020. Thank you to everyone who went out of their way (while maintaining social distancing) to get their donations of toys and books to us.



Waite researcher Dr Roberta De Bei, Her Excellency Ms Francesca Tardioli and Consul Adriano Stendardo

Cancellation of end of 2020 events

Like many people, our plans for late November and December 2020 were changed due to the South Australian lockdown and changed Covid Safe restrictions. In addition to having to cancel FOUH concert, cancelled events at Urrbrae House included an end of year concert and Christmas gathering for Netherby Kindergarten.

Tours

We have recommenced our small group (up to 10 people) tours of Urrbrae House on weekdays during autumn. My thanks to the Urrbrae House volunteer guides without whom we could not offer so many tours. Without our casual staff team to facilitate our first Sunday of the month tours and with the hope of keeping my workload manageable, I have had to delay the start of these tours. However, I am pleased to say that Sunday small group tours will recommence from June 2021 and I look forward to meeting visitors. Bookings for all of our tours via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/urrbrae-house-11204435850>

Museum re-accreditation

While Urrbrae House Historic Precinct is part of the University of Adelaide, it is also an accredited museum with the History Trust of South Australia under the Museums and Collections (MaC) standards and funding program for community museums and historical groups. The MaC program recognises and supports the development, sustainability and community impact of South Australian community history organisations and promotes best practice within the broad framework of the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries (NSAMG)*. Of the 70 member organisations of the History Trust’s MAC program in South Australia, only eight meet the extensive standards required to be an accredited museum. After some months of work, I am pleased to advise that I was successful in having the museum reaccredited in February 2021.

SA History Festival 2021

As part of the South Australian History Festival during May 2021, we are hosting an art inspired by history exhibition entitled "Echoes: Six visual artists respond to the rich history of Urrbrae House." The visual artists contributing to the exhibition are Michelle Driver, Yasmin Grass, Bruce Nuske, Abram Phillips, Maureen Prichard and Julie Strawinski. The exhibition is inspired by the patterns and textures of the house and gardens, family traditions and personal stories of the Waite family in colonial South Australia. The artists' practices include painting, drawing, tapestry weaving and ceramics. A passionate regard for the many reverberations of history in our contemporary world has provided fertile ground for the artists' individualised research and responses. The exhibition will be officially launched at Urrbrae House by Greg Mackie, OAM, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the History Trust of South Australia and a City of Adelaide Councillor, on Sunday, 2 May 2021. The launch will be by invitation only as our numbers are limited due to Covid Safe requirements. The exhibition will then be open free to the public from Sunday-Thursday, 3-30 May (except closed on 9 May) from 11am-3pm.

Drawing Room Curtains – Conservation and Reproductions

Unfortunately, the seven original 1890s Drawing Room curtains gifted to the Urrbrae House by Waite descendants, Marion Wells and Peter Morgan had reached the end of their practical life. Light damage, age, and general wear and tear meant that by 2019 the curtains were literally falling apart. I made the decision that the only way to save the curtains (which are the only known examples of curtains by the designer J. Aldam Heaton in Australia) would be to remove them from the windows and have them conserved for long-term storage.

Aldam Heaton was an English artist and designer of furniture, stained glass, wallpaper and textiles. He was a member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and an associate of William Morris. His company produced furniture and interior designs for ships built by the White Star Line. After Heaton's death in 1897 the Aldam Heaton Company was incorporated into White Star and designed the interiors for the RMS *Olympic*, *Titanic* and *Britannic*.



Aldam Heaton designs in the *Titanic*

Source: <http://allisonkraft.blogspot.com/2011/10/titanic-tuesdays-second-class.html>



Original Drawing Room curtains conserved, ready for long-term storage

The conservation of our Drawing Room curtains was undertaken by Mary Jose from Fabric of Life. Material conservation is labour-intensive work and hence preserving the Waite family heirlooms was a costly process. I am very grateful to the Friends of Urrbrae House for their generous funding for the conservation of all of the curtains. To give you an idea of the work involved below is an outline of the work done on just one of the curtains:

1. The curtain was taken down and surface cleaned on the back and front using gentle vacuum suction.
2. The existing lining was removed from the curtain and washed.
3. A polyester lining fabric was prepared with an acid free adhesive film and this was applied to the underside of the right half of the curtain where the majority of the light damage has occurred.

4. The fabric and fragments were aligned, and heat set to the lining.
5. Because the curtain will be moving due to the nature of its hanging display, nylon net was stitched over the most damaged areas to provide additional support
6. A light blocking interlining was inserted, and hand stitched to the curtain to add an extra layer of protection to the fabric.
7. The original lining was then hand stitched back in place.
8. The Velcro hanging system attached to curtain tape was re-stitched to the top of the curtain. This was left flat for storage. The curtain tape was marked with black permanent marker to indicate the position the curtains should be gathered up to when they are next put on display.
9. The curtain was made stronger with the additional support provided by this conservation treatment. The light damage on the right-hand side of the curtain was considerable and the fabric is very brittle. The curtain has now had many repairs by different people over the years and the repairs are becoming more noticeable. The new interlining will help to protect the curtain in the future.
10. The curtain was then packed in an Albox acid free costume box for long term storage.

Now that the curtains have been preserved for the future, it is my plan to bring the curtains out for periodic display to the general public during special events.

I am also grateful for the generosity of the general public and the University of Adelaide. Donations and funding from the University of nearly \$9,900 were used to have a set of reproduction curtains made by Mary Jose for the Drawing Room. A section of the original fabric that provided the largest undamaged section was photographed to provide a high-resolution image to produce a digital reproduction of the curtain fabric. A number of samples were reproduced until the colour and size of the repeat were as close to the original as possible. The curtains were constructed with a lining and interlining of blackout fabric to help protect from future light damage with Velcro to attach them to the existing fittings at Urrbrae House. Hand-made wool pom and fringe braid was sourced from the United Kingdom to provide a similar effect to the wool braids used on the original curtains. A pom pom and fringe braid were hand stitched to the largest curtain, and pom pom braid only was hand stitched to the other six curtains.

I want to thank Mary Jose for her work on this project. Mary's expertise, attention to detail and helpfulness have been invaluable.

First Urrbrae House and the Stirling Family

As mentioned in the last newsletter, due to the fundraising efforts of the Friends, I was also able to get an antique photo of the first Urrbrae House and the Stirling family in 1864 reframed and protected with museum quality glass. The photograph shows the original house built for Robert Forsyth Macgeorge which was leased to the Hon. Edward Stirling from 1855-1865. The historic photograph is now hanging in the Main Hall for all visitors to see.

Waite Indigenous Plant and Knowledge Garden near the Battery House

Dr Kate Delaporte, Curator of the Waite Arboretum, has received funding from the Yitpi Foundation for the development of a new Indigenous Plant and Knowledge Garden in the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct near the Battery House. Earthworks for the garden are expected to commence in autumn 2021. The Friends of Urrbrae House had agreed to make a financial contribution to interpretative panels for the garden which will include input from Kaurna people and others.

Music in Urrbrae House

While we are currently unable to host our regular 100-guests concerts due to Covid Safe limitations, we are still endeavouring to keep music alive in Urrbrae House in other ways. On 21 January 2021 we welcomed the Amicus Strings quartet to the Drawing Room for a recording session. We currently have a Masters student from the Elder Conservatorium utilizing the Yamaha grand piano in the Ballroom and are making the piano available to another senior high school student to record their competition pieces.

University of Adelaide's New Vice-Chancellor and President

On 8 February 2021 Professor Peter Høj AC became the University's new Vice-Chancellor and President. Danish-born Professor Høj is a Fellow of Academies in Australia, the USA and Denmark, and has been awarded honorary doctorates from institutions including the University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, and University of Copenhagen. Professor Høj has more than 20 years' senior leadership experience in higher education and research – as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Queensland (2012-2020), Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Australia (2007-2012) and the CEO of the Australian Research Council (ARC) (2004-2007).). He is also no stranger to the Waite campus as he was the Managing Director and CEO of the Australian Wine Research Institute Pty Ltd (1997-2004), and Foundation Professor of Viticultural Science (1995-1997) and Professor of Oenology (1997-2004) at the University of Adelaide.

With Professor Høj's appointment, Interim Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Mike Brooks retired from the University of Adelaide. We would like to thank Mike for his support of Urrbrae House and the Waite Arboretum, and we wish him well in his retirement.

University of Adelaide's Response to ICAC Recommendations

Unfortunately, when I wrote my Manager's Musings on 14 August 2020 the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC) findings concerning the misconduct of the former Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Peter Rathjen had not been released and University staff members including myself were not told anything in advance of ICAC's public announcements. ICAC's findings were made public on 26 August and the public learnt that the former Vice-Chancellor had committed serious misconduct by sexually harassing two women. On a personal note, I am both a graduate and long-time employee of the University, and feel appalled that such misconduct happened at the place where I have spent so much of my life. I would like to acknowledge the courage of the victims in coming forward to tell their stories. My sincere hope is their courage leads to a genuine and enduring commitment by the University to building a renewed culture of openness, integrity, dignity and respect thereby ensuring a safe environment for all. The University's latest response to the ICAC's findings can be found at:

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/alumni/news/list/2021/02/26/icac-response-update>

Staff losses at the University of Adelaide

Due to the financial impact of Covid-19 on the University, more than 150 staff left the University of Adelaide in February 2021 under the University's Voluntary Separation Scheme.

University Compulsory Shutdowns

As part of recent cost-saving measures, the University made a number of changes to the University of Adelaide Enterprise Agreement 2017-2021 including compulsory closures between 18 December 2020 and 8 January 2021. A further closure is scheduled from Monday, 19 April 2021 to Friday, 23 April 2021. During these periods University staff including those at Urrbrae House unless given exemption for essential work (such as Security) have been required to take "purchased" (ie unpaid) leave and University buildings are expected to be closed.

*Lynette Zeitz,
Manager, Urrbrae House Historic Precinct
16 March 2021*

To access previous Friends of Urrbrae House newsletters please use the link below:
<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/waite-historic/friends/urrbraehouse/newsletters>