

Newsletter August 2020



The Friends of Urrbrae House

Urrbrae House, The University of Adelaide, Waite Campus,

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President's report

It was good to have a meeting of our Committee on August 11 and it seemed a long time since our last meeting in February. We met in the Drawing Room so that we could meet social distancing requirements. Regrettably it is unlikely that we will have any further concerts or other social events in the House this year. Later in the Newsletter, The Manager in her Musings will outline the limited options for visits to the House.

Thank you everyone who has renewed their membership this year and in particular those who made an additional donation. Our expenditure on items on restoration and conservation are ongoing while currently there is no income from functions.

For everyone Covid-19 made 2020 a year that was very different. It is somewhat surprising, that with all the great strides that have made in science and medical support, that a small virus, one fortieth the size of our red blood cells could have such an impact on modern life.

I have been thinking about what life would have been like for Peter Waite and family at the time of the Spanish Flu in 1919. Peter would have been 85 and Matilda 83. (As you will see below on some notes I have provided on the Spanish Flu, it was young adults rather than older people that were most susceptible.) Living with Peter and Matilda were their daughters Lily (46) and Eva (39). Elizabeth had married in 1915 and was residing in Melbourne. James had settled in England and tragically David, the younger son, died at sea in 1913.

Peter would have been attending meetings at Elder Smith & Co. Ltd, which he did until his death in 1922, having occupied the position of Chairman of that company for thirty-three years.

There were continuing media items on Peter Waite's benefaction to the University of Adelaide such as that reproduced below. In late 1919, Peter was following with interest the historic England–Australia flight of Ross and Keith Smith, their father Andrew being his Station Manager.

The 'Spanish' Influenza Pandemic 1918-1919

The Spanish 'flu is thought to have begun in cramped and crowded army training camps on the Western Front during World War 1. The unsanitary conditions in the trenches helped it incubate and then spread. The war ended in November 1918, but as the soldiers returned home, bringing the virus with them, an even greater loss of life was ahead; between 50 million and 100 million people dying. Australia remained free of infection for much of that time, but by the end of 1919, all Australian States shared a death toll of 12,000.

The Spanish 'flu did not originate in Spain, though news coverage of it did. During World War I, Spain was a neutral country with a free media that covered the outbreak and progress of the war. Meanwhile, Allied countries and the Central Powers had wartime censors who covered up news of the 'flu to keep morale high.

By contrast with Covid-19, there was an unusually high mortality among children and young adults during the Spanish 'flu. This is considered to be due to older people having gained immunity from early life exposure to previous outbreaks of influenza such as the 'Russian' influenza pandemic of 1889 – 1890.

Mail (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1954), Saturday 31 August 1918, page 2

MR. PETER WAITE'S GIFT.

The cause of education has received another princely gift from Mr. Peter Waite. Five years ago Mr. Waite handed over to the University his Urrbrae House and grounds, half the land to be available for agricultural and kindred studies in connection with the University, and the balance be converted into a public park under the control of the University. At the same time Mr. Waite offered to the Government part section 250, containing 114 acres, for the purposes of an Agricultural High School. This land adjoins Urrbrae. The offers were accepted, the only conditions attached by Mr. Waite being that the transfer of the property to the University should be subject to a life tenancy of his wife and himself, and that the institution should not be liable to succession duty when the property passed into its hands. These conditions were readily agreed to. In order to further assist the University the donor has transferred the equivalent of 5,880 shares in Elder, Smith, & Co., Ltd., to the University, to be held in trust. During his life the income will be paid to Mr. Peter Waite, and upon his death it will be handed over to the University in connection with the Urrbrae scheme. The value of the latter benefaction is approximately £60,000, and the total value of his endowments will exceed £100,000. The gifts are far greater, however, than their purely monetary worth. By means of these endowments Mr. Waite has performed a service to the community the ultimate value of which is beyond calculation. The scientific study of agriculture, which as the result of his gifts will be one of the features of the Adelaide University, must have a marked effect on rural production with a corresponding influence on the wealth and stability of the State. His benevolence is therefore as statesmanlike and farseeing as it is patriotic.

Vale Marion Waite (nee Morgan) Wells

1.4.1926 ~ 13.6.2020

Marion Waite Morgan was the oldest great-grandchild of Peter and Matilda Waite. She had two younger brothers, the late Peter Ranembe Morgan and James Waite Morgan. Marion married Cedric Wells at St Peter's College Chapel on 30 June 1951. Theirs was a long and happy marriage until Cedric's death in July 2017.

Throughout her life, Marion combined her care of family and home with connections into the wider community. For example, on a visit to Scotland to visit relatives in 1948 she spent several months as a secretary-driver for a children's home outside Edinburgh where she drove children with physical disabilities to hospital for treatment.

Marion played a key role in the foundation of the Friends of Urrbrae House in 1991 and was its first President from 1991-1995. She continued to be an enthusiastic supporter of all the activities at Urrbrae House. Marion loved classical music and was a regular attendee of the Friends' Twilight concert series. One of our warmest memories of Marion at Urrbrae House was when she attended our Teddy Bears' Picnic in 2014 carrying a nearly one hundred year old bear that belonged to Cedric.



Marion and Cedric were foundation members of the National Trust in South Australia and active supporters of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the State Library of South Australia and other community projects. Recognising the importance of education, Marion was a donor to the SAGIT-University of Adelaide Peter Waite Centenary Scholarship for Excellence in Agriculture and the Inaugural patron of the Urrbrae Agricultural High School Old Scholars' Association.

Marion was very proud of her Waite and Morgan family heritage. On her wedding day in 1951, she wore old family lace that had belonged to her late grandmother, Jean, the wife of pastoralist Edward Ranembe Morgan.

Marion had an important involvement in securing the return of the historic sailing ship 'City of Adelaide' to South Australia in 2014. The 'City of Adelaide' is one of the last two surviving clipper ships in the world. In the nineteenth century the ship carried thousands of migrants from London to Adelaide. Today, a quarter of a million Australians can trace their origins to passengers who sailed on the 'City of Adelaide.'

When Peter Waite sailed to Australia in 1859, he left behind his fiancée Matilda Methuen wearing an engagement ring with tiny cabochon stones. Matilda waited in Scotland for five years before sailing on the maiden voyage of the 'City of Adelaide' in 1864 to rejoin Peter in South Australia. Over one hundred and fifty years later, at the arrival ceremony for the return of the 'City of Adelaide' clipper ship to South Australia in February 2014, Marion Wells wore the engagement ring that Peter had given Matilda, her great-grandmother.

Marion will be very much missed. She is survived by her sons Richard, Peter and Henry, 10 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren

Vale Gladys Hogg

3.10.1925 ~ 29.6.2020

Gladys attended Unley High School and was a good student but her father, like many at the time, didn't think education worthwhile for a girl and insisted she leave school at fourteen and do a short hand and typing course instead.

Typically Gladys excelled at these skills and soon gained employment as a Secretary.



During World War Two, Gladys joined the Australian Women's Army Corps and was stationed at the Repatriation Hospital at Daw Park. She was about to be promoted to the rank of a sergeant when the war ended.

Gladys married George Hogg in 1947 and while her three children were being educated she had a typing business from home.

As time passed Gladys felt she wanted to complete her education and attended night classes in order to matriculate. She then took advantage of a scheme at the time to encourage mature age students to undertake university degrees. She loved English literature and also learned to speak fluent German. She gained a Bachelor of Arts degree with Honours in English literature.

In 1977, Gladys gained a position as Secretary in the Department of Agricultural Biochemistry and Soil Science at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute. She proved a great asset to the Head Of The Department Professor DJD Nicholas and very helpful to other members of staff. She took a particular interest in the welfare of the many international graduate students that was much appreciated. She continued in the later Department of Agricultural Biochemistry until 1990 when there was a major rearrangement of the Departments of the Waite Campus.

Gladys loved tennis, swimming and golf and enjoyed nights at the theatre.

When Gladys retired in 1990 she now turned her attention to volunteering at Urrbrae House, being a foundation Member of the Friends of Urrbrae House in 1991 and a member of the Committee from 1994 -2001 and serving as President from 1998-2001.

Most notably and using her skills in English Literature she wrote a very informative and very readable text on "Peter Waite 1834 -1922. The story of his life and times". It is still available to visitors to Urrbrae House with all proceeds from its sale going to projects of the Friends of Urrbrae House.

After the death of her husband, Gladys moved to Victor Harbor where she lived independently until the age of 90 before her last five years at Estia Health, Encounter Bay. She continued with a wide range of activities including keeping up contacts with family and friends using email. Her goal throughout her life was to make the most of the moment.

Obituary Dr Brian Richards OAM

Dr Brian Richards OAM died on 15 June 2020 in his 86th year. Working in CSIRO on the Waite Campus, Brian was renowned for his research and development of the measurement and understanding soil suction and its effect on soil strength. Brian and his partner Beth Johnstone were great supporters of the Friends of Urrbrae House and regular attendees at the Twilight Concerts and at the annual AGM. We extend our sympathy to Beth and their family circles.

Bill Wallace

President

Friends of Urrbrae House (0403 745 404 for any enquiries)

New members

*We welcome Margaret Black, Marylou Davenport, Moira Eley,
Merry and Doug Ewing*

Manager's Musings

Not the year we planned but we move forward

I sincerely hope that all of our supporters and their loved ones have been able to remain safe and healthy this year. It will not surprise any of our Friends that all of our usual activities at Urrbrae House have been heavily impacted by the advent of Covid-19 and the need to prioritise everyone's safety in the current environment.

Back in February (which seems an eon ago) hundreds of people attending the "Tracks Through Weaving" exhibition by Basketry SA supported by the Friends of the Waite Arboretum. Then in early March all of the Adelaide Fringe booked out concerts by Emma Horwood, Victoria Traeger's five piece band and Tim Barton were able to go ahead successfully just before Covid-19 developments impacted on all of our activities.

On 17 March we made the difficult (but ultimately wise) decision to close the house to the public, and suspend our primary schools' education programs and on-site community engagement activities. This was in line with a number of other museums and galleries. A week later the Federal Government required the closure of all galleries, museums, national institutions, historic sites and libraries.

By the beginning of April the University of Adelaide had encouraged staff to work from home where possible and many University buildings on all three campuses were locked down over the next three months. Urrbrae House was in partial lockdown with only myself as Manager occasionally working on-site to be able to monitor the heritage fabric of the building and ensure urgent preventative maintenance was undertaken if needed.

In late June through to late July, Barbara, Sally and I transitioned back to working on-campus in anticipation of being able to re-open to visitors (in a limited way) at the beginning of Semester 2 on 27 July. As a museum, we were required to lodge a Covid-19 Safe plan with the South Australian Government as well as adhering to University health and safety requirements. We are adhering to the government's physical or social distancing principles: that "every person should attempt to stay at least 1.5 metres from other members of the public."

Social distancing has had a major impact on our room capacities: for example, only 14 people can fit in the Drawing Room, the Main Hall can accommodate 12 people and seating around the Dining Room tables is limited to 6 people. These limitations along with other government requirements around food and beverage service mean many activities such as the “drinks and nibbles” events of the past are not possible at the current time in Urrbrae House.

Small group tours

As we welcome the public back to our historic house museum, we are doing things differently. Public admission to the museum is at set times only via small group tours and visitors must book online using Eventbrite.

See <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/visit-urrbrae-house-with-a-free-tour-limited-numbers-tickets-112404741608>

Staff and volunteer guides are taking visitors through the house in small groups (with a maximum of 6 persons per session). Visitors are asked to:

- a) maintain a social distance of 1.5 metres or more from other parties
- b) use hand sanitizer on admission to the building and before using the heritage-listed Main Hall stairs as it is difficult to disinfect the railing without damaging the woodwork
- c) refrain from touching heritage furniture and display items as these precious objects are not easy to clean and disinfect
- d) not attend a tour if unwell or required to self-isolate / self-quarantine for 14 days according to South Australian Government health advice.
- e) record their contact tracing details on admission to the building (this is a government requirement).

While we miss the bustle of our larger group tours and being able to have people wander through the building at their leisure, through the small tours we are able to offer visitors a very intimate experience of our site and history.

Free first Sunday of the month tours

These tours are currently suspended due to room space constraints, Covid-19 Safe plans and our lack of casual staff available to work on weekends. I hope to be able to offer some special Sunday small group tours in late spring – my workload permitting.

Covid-19, University funding and staffing

As many would be aware, the loss of international onshore student revenue has had a massive impact on all Australian universities including the University of Adelaide. Due to major financial constraints, the University has frozen the renewal of all casual and contract positions unless the position meets some exceptional criteria. This has meant that we are currently unable to hire any of our casual staff team who are so important to the running of after-hours activities. I want to thank Lyn Mackay, Allan Woodman, Lynn Hennessy, Judith Bampton, Maddy Zweck and Bianca Haines for their commitment to Urrbrae House and hope that when circumstances change we may again be able to rebuild up our wonderful team.

The changed circumstances within the University has also meant that we were unable to renew the contract of our dedicated museum cleaner, Graham Prout. While most of our Friends may never have met Graham, he has worked quietly and diligently behind the scenes for over two decades at Urrbrae House. Graham has not only kept things clean and tidy but has been an invaluable source of long-term knowledge about the building.

With his attention to detail, he also kept a keen eye alert for any emerging maintenance issues that often helped me to avert major problems.

In more recent years, Graham has also been a great supporter of the work of our volunteer flower arrangers. We will miss Graham's quiet, good cheer. In normal times we would have thrown Graham a large farewell morning tea as he heads into retirement but instead today, I can simply say an enormous public thank you to him for all he has done.

Amidst this sad news, I am delighted to report that we were however able to make a successful exemption case for the renewal of Barbara's contract as the Urrbrae House Co-ordinator for another year until August 2021. I want to thank the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, and the Faculty of Sciences for their support in bringing about this outcome.

Changes within the University

Since the beginning of the year, there have been a number of changes in the senior levels of the University. Last month the University Council announced the appointment of former Federal Court Judge and Crown Solicitor of South Australia, The Honourable Catherine Branson AC QC, as its 17th Chancellor. Ms Branson, as Chancellor, succeeds Rear Admiral the Honourable Kevin Scarce AC CSC RAN (Rtd), who retired from the position in May this year.

Professor Mike Brooks is now the University's Acting Vice-Chancellor after Professor Peter Rathjen took leave from the University in early May and then resigned last month due to ill health. Mike is no stranger to Urrbrae House and has been known to play a beautiful tune or two on our Steinway piano in the past.

After 28 years of service with the University as an academic, administrator and leader, Professor Pascale Quester has this month taken up the position of Vice-Chancellor of Swinburne University of Technology. Pascale has been the University of Adelaide's Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Academic) since 2011 and Professor Jennie Shaw has now taken on the role of Interim DVC & VP (A).

Professor Laura Parry, currently the Head of the School of Biological Sciences, has been appointed the Interim Executive Dean of the Faculty of Sciences. Professor Keith Jones will conclude his term with the University in early September to take up the position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Research and Enterprise at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom where his family is based.

Finally and most importantly for Urrbrae House, internationally recognized food scientist Professor Martin Cole took on the position of Head of the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine in February this year. Prior to taking up this position Martin held leadership positions with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industry Research Organisation (CSIRO) for the past decade and was the Deputy Director of CSIRO Agriculture and Food. In recent days I have been delighted to be able to share our stories with Martin who has a keen interest in the history of the house and the Waite campus. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Associate Professor Chris Ford for his kindness and support while he has been Interim Head of School since December 2017.

While we were closed...

During the closure of the house, Barbara, Sally and I spent time developing new policies and procedures to ensure everyone's safety at Urrbrae House in the days ahead. But we also spent time looking at different ways to keep connected with our communities. Sally and I updated our website to include more materials for teachers and families to use with primary school aged children. If you are looking for a rainy day historical activity to do with young ones check out our "Teachers and Families - Resources" page:

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/waite-historic/urrbraehouse/primary-schools/resource/>

With our media and marketing budget of \$0, we focused some of our attention on connecting with the public via our social media accounts. In addition to our Facebook page and Instagram account, Urrbrae House now also has its own YouTube Channel where we can put any videos that we have created for Urrbrae House in one location.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi4BNKXNwVIOEg7M766vu0A>

The last few months have certainly been a time for learning new skills (I'm sure most of us had never heard, let alone used Zoom before this year.) I learnt how to record and edit video on my antiquated iPhone so that I was able to share some small walk-throughs of Urrbrae House or "Minutes in the Museum" on social media while the house was closed to the public.

If you are interested in learning a little about the roses in our Twentieth Century Rose Garden, I now regularly choose a rose from the garden and provide some interesting facts about its history and characteristics. The posts can be found on our Instagram account.

<https://www.instagram.com/urrbraehouse>



Gorgas House Museum

In April I was asked by Brandon Thompson, Director of the Gorgas House Museum at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, USA to join in their video series, History from Home on Instagram. In the series Brandon posed questions to historians, preservationists and museums around the globe to share our love of history and historical places while our museums were closed. It was a great opportunity to learn about another historic house museum based on a university campus, and share our experiences of historic interpretation, volunteering and events. You can check out the Gorgas House (built 1829) Museum online at <https://gorgashouse.museums.ua.edu/>



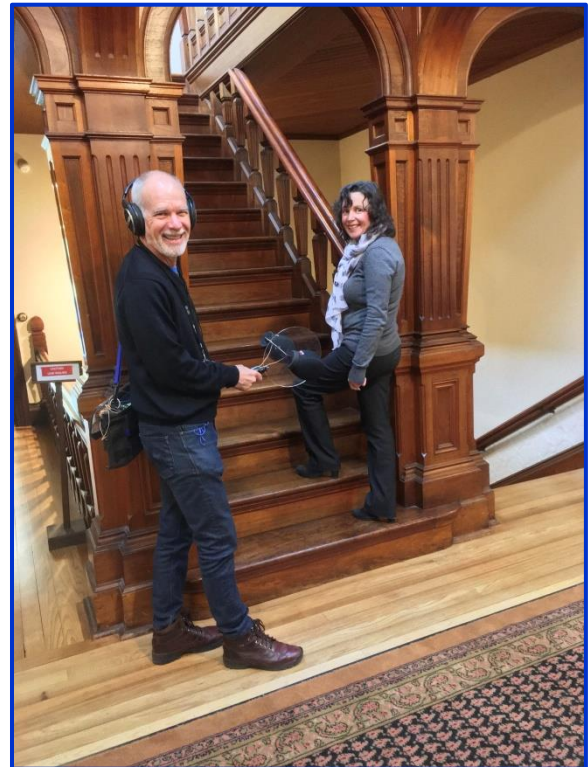
Filming and recording in Urrbrae House

During July and August we were delighted to help a number of people with projects that involved filming and recording inside Urrbrae House. On 3 July we welcomed students from the Flinders University Drama Centre into the house. The Dining Room became an elegant backdrop for a drama set in the 1940s as a small group of final year students filmed their assessment show piece.

Three days later, cameras were set up again as members of the University of Adelaide's Marketing and Recruitment team filmed part of a new Waite campus promotional video inside the house. We made sure that a roaring fire was going in the Main Hall to welcome the team.

Then on 22 July, pianist and songwriter Emma Knights returned to Urrbrae House to record a video of one of her new works. We look forward to seeing the end result of her session in the near future.

Finally in early August, when Mike Ladd from ABC Radio National's "The History Listen" program needed to record the sound of footsteps on wooden floors, Urrbrae House was the perfect location. Wearing some solid heels, Barbara happily helped with the sound recording by climbing the stairs to the Minstrels' Gallery. Mike is very familiar with the Waite campus as his father Dr Jeff Ladd was an internationally renowned soil scientist who worked with the CSIRO Division of Soils from 1954-1995. It was fascinating to hear some of Mike's recollections of games of tennis on the old court that is now the site of the Labyrinth.



Within the house

This year it has been heartening to be able to develop the following projects to enhance some of the aesthetics and interpretation inside the house.

Clara Serena artefacts

Performance headdresses belonging to contralto Clara Serena (1890-1972), donated to Urrbrae House last year, have been conserved by Mary Jose from Fabric of Life and are being framed by Stacey George from SmartArt for display in Urrbrae House. Clara Serena's early singing career was sponsored by Peter Waite and she was a life-long friend of Elizabeth Waite. This conservation work and framing has been funded by the Friends.

New Schoolroom chairs

On 11 March we were excited to receive wooden Thonet Bresso chairs (this style of bentwood chair was originally designed in the 1890s) for our Schoolroom. The purchase of these chairs was made possible due to donations from the public: so many thanks to our supporters and visitors for your generosity. Thanks also to Nicole at 1K Chairs at Norwood for her help with our order and delivery of these reproduction chairs.

New artworks

Some new to Urrbrae House nineteenth century artworks from the University of Adelaide's art collection are now on display in the Dining Room and Ballroom. In the Ballroom you will now be able to see "Untitled [Lakes District]" (1891) by William Joseph Wadham while the Dining Room walls are graced by two works, "A Welsh Millstream" (1892) by James Burrell Smith and Reaping scene (1863) by W. Balmer. Many thanks to our colleagues in Special Collections, Archives & Recordkeeping (SpARK) at the University Library for their help with organising and hanging the artworks.

Due to the fundraising efforts of the Friends, I was also able to get an antique photo of the first Urrbrae House (c.1860) reframed. The photograph shows the original house built for Robert Foryth Macgeorge which was leased to the Hon. Edward Stirling from 1855-1865.

In addition the Friends have funded the framing of a reproduction world map from 1881 for our Schoolroom.



Other News

Coach House Garden launch

On 5 December 2019 the Coach House Garden in the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct was officially opened by Mrs Jeanette "Nettie" Davidson at a special morning tea. The Davidson family has been connected with the Waite campus since 1928 when Nettie's father-in-law, James Davidson, was appointed Head of Entomology at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute. Nettie is a regular volunteer in the gardens.

The garden was redeveloped by two volunteers, Tomei and Laurel, who have dedicated their time and passion over the past nine years to enhance the original site. The garden surrounds Peter Waite's Coach House which was built in the early 1880s and the plants featured in this garden were fashionable in South Australia at that time.

Elder Conservatorium lunchtime concert series

With the advent of Covid-19, the Elder Conservatorium has moved its popular lunch-time concert series online for 2020. Michael Ierace, whom many of you will recognize from the Urrbrae House Twilight concerts, is performing in a number of the concerts. You can view the concerts for free via their website <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/music/engage/concert-series#lunchtime-series-season-two> or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pg/ElderConservatorium/videos/>

Honours

Our congratulations to Silvio Apponyi who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June for his services to the visual arts as a sculptor. We are very fortunate to have some beautiful examples of Silvio's work in the gardens and Waite Arboretum including a beautiful bronze sculpture of Peter Waite's dog, Shrimp.

Upgrade of Fullarton Road-Cross Road intersection

You may have seen in the news late last year that the SA Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) are planning an upgrade of the Fullarton Road and Cross Road Intersection. This upgrade will most likely impact on trees in the Waite Arboretum and on the heritage listed Lodge (or Gatehouse) that was constructed in 1883 for Peter Waite's Urrbrae estate. DPTI undertook community and stakeholder consultation until the end of January 2020 about the proposed redevelopment. Both Dr Kate Delaporte as Curator of the Waite Arboretum and I met with representatives of DPTI stakeholder consultation team voicing our concerns about the impact on the Arboretum and Gatehouse. Mark Branson from the University of Adelaide's Infrastructure Branch is the University's official liaison person with DPTI about this project. To date, we have not had official advice on DPTI's final plan for the upgrade but understand that there is a proposal to relocate rather than demolish the Gatehouse should the removal of the building be necessary.

Heritage photography

Have you taken a great photo of Urrbrae House or the Waite Arboretum? Why not enter your work in the Heritage SnAps Photo Competition 2020? Heritage South Australia and the South Australian Heritage Council have created this competition to help celebrate our State Heritage Places. Entry details can be found at:

https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/heritage-photo-competitions/snaps-competition-2020?fbclid=IwAR132kMbyYyo_P4D3wGb-9eHpDxm0jz-0T3GNzUbN3plxQqPbUxGMEQJ4iI

If you haven't got that perfect capture yet, there is still plenty of time to get your camera out (entries close on 30 October 2020) and plenty of potential subjects on the Waite campus. The following buildings/sites are all listed on the South Australian Heritage Register:

Urrbrae House & Outbuildings which includes the Battery House, Coach House and Peter Waite's Garage; Waite Arboretum; Main Building of the Waite campus; Gatehouse; Claremont/Hartley Bank building and remnants; and former Caretakers House (now the Security Office on Waite Road).

Carrick Hill

The Curator of the Botanic Gardens' Museum of Economic Botany, Tony Kanellos was appointed as the new Director of Carrick Hill heritage house museum and garden on 1 July. We extend our congratulations to Tony and looking forward to being neighbours in the days ahead.

Lynette Zeitz
Manager, Urrbrae House Historic Precinct
14 August 2020

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