



The West Torrens Historian

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THEBARTON AIR RAID SHELTER.

Early in the second world war metropolitan Adelaide was divided into eight defensive districts known as sub-control areas. The areas were labelled from A to H, the Adelaide CBD being the central sub-control area with seven others spread around the suburbs. Each of these areas had as a focal point a sub-control centre (sometimes called a sub-control station). It was initially intended that the Thebarton sub-control centre – serving defensive district G – would be built on Taylor's Road (today South Road) adjacent to the old Thebarton Town Hall. However, early in January 1942 the Commissioner of Civil Defence in South Australia Lt-Col. G.D.

Shaw decided that a more appropriate site for the centre would be at the northern corner of Ashley Street and Taylor's Road (today 92 South Road, Torrensville) near the Thebarton Oval. Six of the metropolitan sub-control stations were built near football ovals – the Glenelg, Port Adelaide, Prospect, Unley and Woodville Ovals. The ovals were well-known local landmarks, contained plenty of space, were considered to be unlikely bombing targets and were close to main roads. There was also a sub-control station at the rear of the Norwood Town Hall. The main purpose of the Thebarton sub-control centre, which came to be known colloquially as the Thebarton Air Raid (or Bomb) shelter or the South Road Bunker, was as a communication and dispatch point. The centre



Thebarton air raid shelter South Rd.



Air raid shelter under construction.

contained sixteen telephone lines, six incoming and ten outgoing, and in the event of an enemy attack would be used to coordinate evacuation and rescue efforts with both public utilities and with the Central Air Raid Communication Centre located in the basement of the Savings Bank of South Australia building in King William Street, city. (The City of Adelaide's sub-control centre was nearby). The telephone number of the Thebarton sub-control centre was L6201. The Thebarton facility contained a backup battery to provide power in case of a blackout.

The centre was also the base for local Air Raid Precaution (A.R.P.) wardens and contained stockpiles of emergency food and other necessary supplies such as blankets and medicines. In the event of attack the general public would be encouraged to gather at the centre and then be bussed to safer territory away from Adelaide. The Thebarton shelter and the other sub-control centres were thus never intended as refuges for the general public. Slit trenches and pipe shelters were most commonly used for the protection of the civilian population. Construction of the Thebarton facility began in early January 1942 and took almost four months and approximately £2000 to complete. The facility was paid for by the commonwealth government and built by the Engineering and Water Supply (E.W.S.) Department and council workers.

Early progress was slow because of a shortage of timber but after a few weeks – and an order by the state premier that all necessary overtime be worked to complete the facility as soon as possible – construction proceeded swiftly. Thebarton council later proudly reported that although the Thebarton shelter was the last of the seven metropolitan sub-control centres to begin construction it was the fourth to be completed. The Thebarton centre is mostly below ground, though its two separate ‘blast-proof’ entrances/exits and flat concrete roof are above ground level. (The entrances are above roof level). The roof is about 30-centimetres (c. one foot) thick and weighs almost seventy tons. Two steep stairways (no lift) lead down into the shelter. The interior design of the metropolitan Adelaide sub-control centres was similar. Built of reinforced concrete, the external walls are 30-centimetres thick and the internal walls approximately 23 centimetres (nine inches) thick. The interior of the shelter measures approximately thirty metres by twenty metres at its widest point and is the size of a small two-room flat. The shelter consists of six compact whitewashed rooms of varying sizes; the central main room is approximately ten metres by six metres. During the war one room was used by telephonists from the Post-Master General’s Department and another for A.R.P. activities (which included paying local youngsters on bicycles threepence to ensure that all lights in the district were out). A third room was used as the battery room. The centre also had sanitary and ventilation facilities. For safety reasons there were no doors in the shelter; curtains were used. Since its occupation from 1969 by the Australian Society of Magicians (see later) three of the shelter’s rooms have been used as storage and/or display areas; there is also a small performance space with a portable stage. During the war a six-foot (c. 1.83 metres) brick wall was built in front of the facility, which is also surrounded by a three-foot (c. 0.91 metres) wide protective concrete apron. The peak period of activity for the centre was in 1942-43. In May 1942 Thebarton council reported that a mock air raid to test the facility was ‘not a success due to the sub-control centre being unable to cope with the volume of work, which included progress reports from various post wardens’ (the centre served over seventy wardens). The efficiency of the centre later improved. As war danger subsided the shelter was progressively less used. By order of the commonwealth government there were no new air raid facilities built in southern Australia after August 1942.



Display room inside the bunker.



Headquarters of Aust. Society of Magicians.

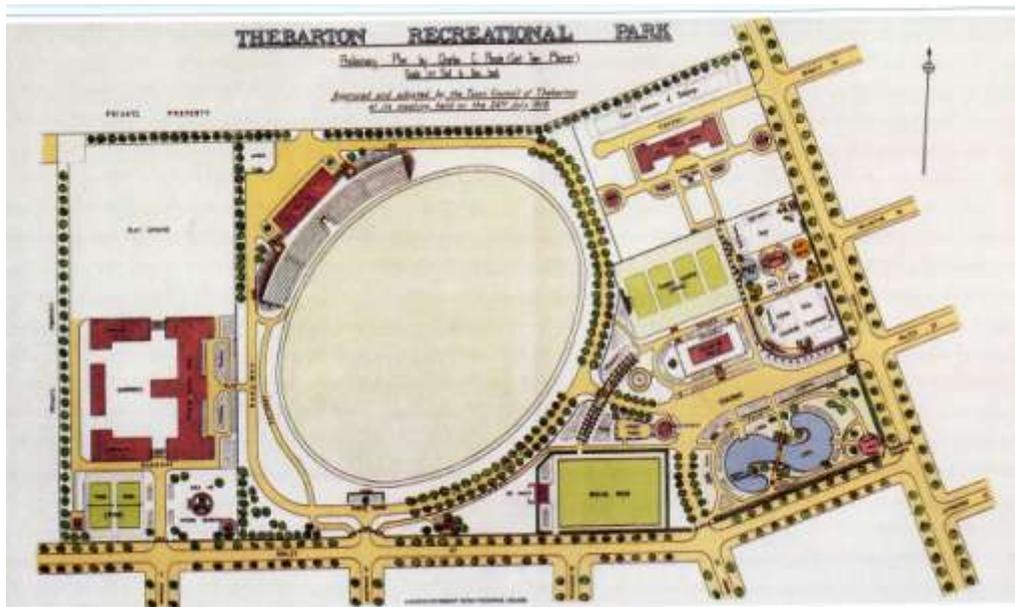
Indeed by September 1944 the Thebarton shelter was so seldom utilized that council decided to stop cleaning the facility. After the war the shelter was for several years used as a base by the nursing division of the St Johns Ambulance Brigade, while in the 1960s it was occupied by the Girl Guides’ Association. Since 1969 it has housed the clubrooms, gallery and museum of the Australian Society of Magicians (Assembly No. 2) and the International Brotherhood of Magicians (Ring 148). Under their lease agreement with the West Torrens council these groups pay no rent for the site but in return for its use agree to maintain it and to conduct occasional public performances and lectures. The magicians note that the stairways leading into the shelter each have

thirteen steps – to them a ‘magic’ number. The shelter has been on the South Australian Heritage Register since March 1993. Although the site was subject to flooding at some stage, the Australian Heritage Places Inventory describes the shelter as one of the few civil defence sub-control centres in South Australia – along with the Glenelg and Prospect shelters – that is still in good condition. The future of the shelter may be bleak however as the proposed widening of South Road may lead to the destruction of the facility.

Geoffrey Grainger.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT.

Several groups from within our district have been preparing for special events and celebrations recently and have called on the resources of the Historical Society for photographs and historical information. As an example, the Thebarton Senior College, formerly the Thebarton Boys Technical School is planning to honour 90 years of its existence. In searching our files we came across several photographs and early school magazines as well as a plan for the area on which the school is situated prepared in mid 1917 by South Australia's (and Australia's) first government appointed town planner Charles C Reade. He proposed that 'people's lives could be improved by providing them with pleasant surroundings and well planned streets, homes and community facilities'. Some of the elements of the plan were never fully implemented but the provision for a school was adopted. As can be seen in the illustration below.



Amongst the photographs found were several sporting teams of the 1940s and some of the names attached show that many of these boys went on to become prominent sportsmen.



Thebarton Boys Technical School Second Football 1940.

Back row: S Williams, C G Prettejohn, H K Menhennett, A E Tilbrook, R D Lawrie, I G Cox, M Clark, C R Thomas.

Middle row: R B Ewers, V Henshaw, E J Coverlid, J A Gray, I Scott, J K Seery, N J Parr, J Llewellyn, Mr J M Chapman.

Front row: J K Anderson, R K Hancock, A Moffatt, R Hank, A K Richardson.

We welcome organisations to avail themselves of our facilities and would encourage them to lodge any historical works published with our Society.

John Andrewartha.

THE CINEMAS OF WEST TORRENS - Part 1.

Moving pictures were first shown in Adelaide from the late 1890s. From about 1907 purpose-built picture houses, both covered and open-air, began to appear. By the end of 1913 there were over 25,000 permanent cinema seats in Adelaide and the suburbs – and this excluded the numerous local halls that regularly screened films. Motion pictures had arrived. After a lull during the first world war, from the 1920s both cinema attendances and the construction of new theatres proceeded swiftly. Cinema was now part of the standard entertainment of South Australian families, including those in essentially working class areas like Thebarton and West Torrens. From the 1920s two major cinema chains dominated the Adelaide market: the Waterman brothers' Ozone Amusements Ltd and the Star group of theatres run by Dan Clifford. At its peak in the early 1940s Clifford Theatres owned or leased one Adelaide city and more than twenty suburban cinemas, including theatres at Goodwood, Parkside, Kingswood, North Adelaide and Norwood, and in country towns including Kadina, Mt Gambier and Murray Bridge. Clifford's early advertising slogan was that "'Star' Stands for the Best in Photo Plays". By the late 1930s West Torrens/Thebarton had six purpose-built or semi-permanent cinemas. (On occasion picture shows were also run at a few other West Torrens venues. The Druid's Hall at Jervis Street, Torrensville, for example ran films from December 1922, while later the Camden Hall also exhibited weekly films for a time. Neither of these venues advertised extensively in the press however, nor were they as long-lasting as the cinemas featured in this article). It should be noted too that in the 1920s West Torrens had, in common with several other suburban areas, at least two open-air cinemas. The Thebarton Open-Air Picture Show (later known as Thebarton Oval Pictures) operated at the Thebarton Oval from the time of the reserve's opening in October 1921. The Hilton Open-Air Picture Show was based at a venue at the corner of Rowland Road and Talbot Street, Hilton from December 1923. From the 1930s open-air theatres virtually disappeared, replaced by the more comfortable and all-weather closed cinemas. Also, as well as the cinemas within its boundaries West Torrens was also served by a number of nearby theatres that were just beyond its borders. The 1000-seat Roxy Theatre – called the Roxy Odeon from May 1952 – on Anzac Highway



The former Roxy theatre Anzac Highway.



The former Star (Plaza) theatre Torrensville.

Everard Park, for example, was a popular venue for much of its lifetime (October 1937 to November 1961). The former theatre is now a 'Blockbuster' video-dvd store, though remnants of its original design remain. South Australia's first drive-in theatre, the Blueline at West Beach was, although marginally outside the boundaries of West Torrens, also well-attended by local residents. The first of the West Torrens cinemas was the Torrensville Star. The Star was built in 1915-16 at 107 Henley Beach Road, Mile End (southern side) on land owned by John T. Socke of Campbelltown. The building of a cinema on the 0.21 acre site was commissioned by local theatre entrepreneurs Messrs. F.J. Coffey and L.J. Powell. The Star was designed by architect R.R.G Assheton of Malvern as "a combination of Edwardian Classicism and the more fluid decorative lines of Art Nouveau". Featuring an especially detailed and impressive symmetrical façade and a highly decorative foyer section leading to the large auditorium, the £4000 building was one of the first in Adelaide specifically designed as a cinema theatre.

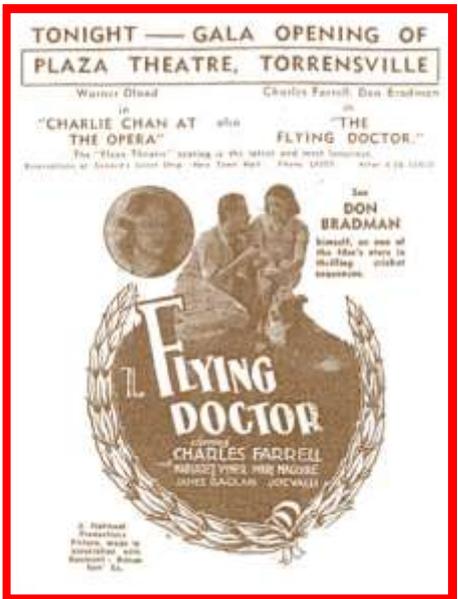
The cinema's grand opening as the Torrenville Star, by Chief Secretary A.W. Styles MLC, was before an audience of 1300 on Thursday evening 2 March 1916. All of the £20 profits of the night were donated to the 'Sandbags for Soldiers' fund. In June 1917 Dan



Daniel Clifford.

Clifford acquired a nine-year lease on the cinema – the first with which he had had any association; Clifford bought the theatre in October 1919. Louis Powell (formerly of Coffey and Powell) was manager of the Star in its early days under Clifford. Projectionists in the Star's first years were Wally Wallman and his assistant Bob Morgan. During the 1920s the Star came to have a slightly unsavoury reputation for attracting larrikins. From 1928 business also suffered from the opening of the nearby Thebarton

Town Hall cinema. For eight years from October 1929 Clifford leased the Star as a dance hall. After substantial refurbishment the cinema reopened on Saturday 24 April 1937 as the 1028-seat Torrenville Plaza Theatre. The theatre then enjoyed a run of successful years, opening most nights of the week. Clifford died in December 1942. In March 1947 his family sold his suburban cinema circuit, including the Torrenville Plaza, to Greater Union Theatres Pty Ltd of Sydney for £179,000. The Plaza, which by now seated 890, sustained substantial structural damage in the Adelaide earthquake of 1 March 1954 and closed soon after. The last films shown at the Plaza, on Saturday evening 1 May 1954, were The White



Re-opening night of Plaza Theatre April 1937.



Projectionists at Star Theatre in 1916.



Aerial view – now Mile End Office Furniture.

Tower starring Glenn Ford and Flame of Calcutta with Denise Darcel. After remaining vacant for several years the Plaza building was sold by Greater Union to Barrett and Barrett Ltd of Adelaide in August 1959 for £6000. Barrett and Barrett used the building as a furniture sales showroom and auction mart until the mid-1980s. Since then the building, which remains privately owned, has been the home of Mile End Office Furniture. Despite doubts about its future when road widening was being considered in the mid-1990s, the building remains one of the few surviving examples of the first period of purpose-built cinema design in Adelaide (1910-1929). Though substantially altered internally and no longer including the foyer section, the building's street frontage above verandah level retains a large amount of its original elaboration and detail.

Geoffrey Grainger.

From Our Photo Album



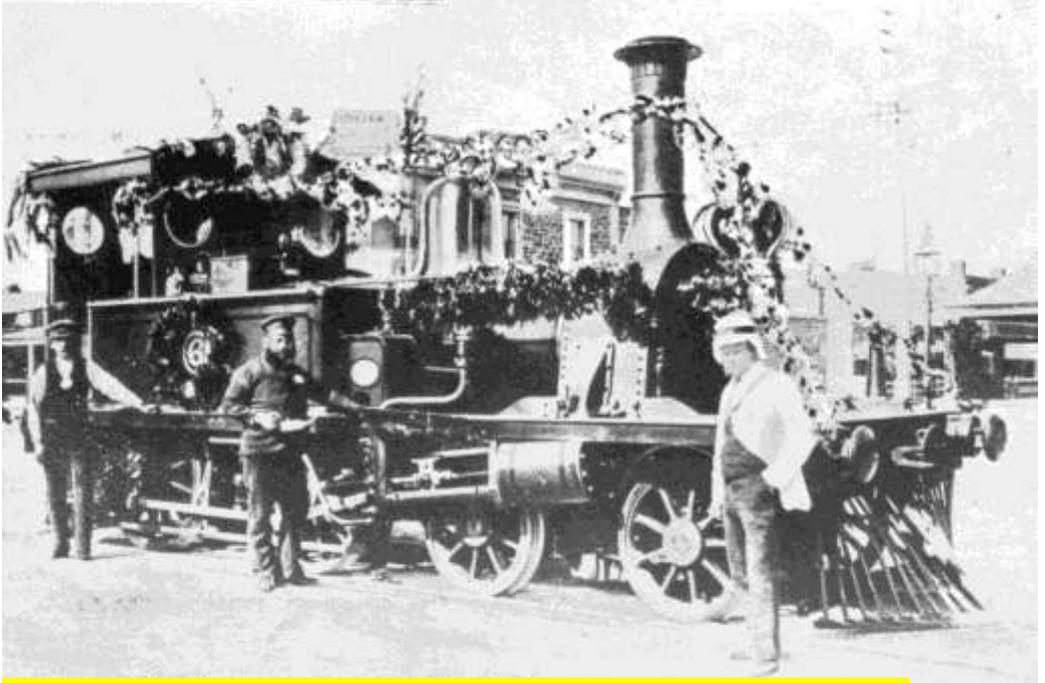
First Underdale Scout Group march past at Mellor Park Lockleys December 1941.



Christmas concert by Underdale St Gabriel's kindergarten in Torrensville Methodist hall 1973.



Christmas party with Father Christmas for underprivileged children at Brooklyn Park Uniting Church 1960s.



North Tce to Glenelg train 'G.C.' class "Dirty Gert" decorated for Commemoration Day December 28 (late 1800s).

Flashbacks

Extracts from the
files of the
West Torrens Historical
Society

MEMORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS AT COWANDILLA.

As a child I lived at 3 Poynton St Cowandilla. How that street has changed since those days. The house (shown below), built in 1928, still stands although over the years there have been alterations and additions. Long since gone is the unique cement paving which my father, a stone mason, did in colours of red, yellow, black and green. I remember sleeping out on the green front lawn on hot summer nights as there were no air conditioners or electric fans.

Amazingly we felt quite safe outside then, but I would certainly not feel that way now. Opposite our home our neighbours had a cow yard and dairy and we loved looking at those big beautiful beasts and enjoying the rich milk and cream they produced. Regular sights along the street were the horse drawn carts of our baker with his lovely fresh buns, the greengrocer with his cart full of fruit and vegetables and the ice man who delivered ice for our ice chest. Many people nearby only had a cool-safe. I must mention our favourite playing area over the back fence along the Keswick Creek, not lined by cement as it is now, but just a muddy creek with a gentle flow of water at most times and lined with box-thorn bushes and other growth along each bank. Several children lived in our street and how dirty we all got playing in the creek, but it was great fun although rather scary in flood times when the water rose and rushed by. Out of school time was spent outdoors because there was no television or electronic games, but the road was regularly lined with chalk patterns for hop-scotch and noughts and crosses. We loved skippy, hide and seek and often sat on the footpath playing knuckle bones quite safe from traffic save for the occasional



bicycle. To us, Cowandilla school seemed such a long way from home involving a long walk through paddocks to get there. We climbed over a stile, avoided a few cows and saw the occasional cotton-tail rabbit running about. Today the play and sports area of the school extends to the end of Poynton St and some of the old school buildings that we used have been replaced by up to date facilities and some of the vacant land is given over to housing.

Joan Modra.



Cowandilla Primary School in the late 1930s with Joan Modra (nee Tilbrook) second to top row 7th. from left.

CHRISTMAS TREE PARTY AT HILTON.

Our files contain many records of different ways that we have celebrated Christmas over the years. One such occasion was 'an enjoyable Christmas tree party which was given in the (newly built) Hilton Recreation Hall by the welfare and social committees of Adelaide Electric Supply Company Limited, to about 200 children of the employees connected with the Hilton Depot'. A December 1927 article in 'The Advertiser' goes on to describe the event in great detail. 'The committee included Messrs. S Tremethick (chairman), F B Owen, W T Cheesman, R Holt, H Rogers, J Ulstrup, G Edwards, F Dermott, H Johnston, H Warren, J Tonkin, L J Gill and A W Moore (secretary). Items were contributed by Jack Trembath, Ian and Ralph Tremethick, Esma Wadey, Joe Barton and Keith Margitich.' The Christmas tree had been appropriately decorated with electric lights, as well as balloons and toys and Mr F B Owen impersonated Father Christmas presenting each child with a balloon, a stocking and a fancy paper hat. Two large suitably decorated Christmas cakes were cut by Mrs S Newberry and Miss Hankin who went on to present a slice to each child. Ice cream and cool drinks were handed around by the committee and the party ended with the national anthem.



The new (1927) Hilton Recreation Hall on Rowland Rd (now Sir Donald Bradman Drive). This became the Hilton Soldier's Memorial Institute Hall in 1928. Note the tram clock at the tram stop in the foreground.



We wish you all a very
Merry Christmas
and a happy and healthy
New Year!

55 YEARS OF THE LOCKLEYS LADIES CHOIR.

The genesis of the Lockleys Ladies Choir occurred in 1953 when Mrs. Dulcie Goldsmith, a member of the Lockleys Primary School Mothers Welfare Club, coached several of the mothers and put on some items for the Welfare Club birthday on August 6th of that year. So successful was this event that the mothers decided to stay together and so the first (and only) Lockleys Primary School Welfare Club Choir was born. When Mrs. Goldsmith's two children left the school the choir changed its name to the Lockleys Ladies Choir. Later that year the choir again performed at a birthday party for the Rev. Eric Ingamells and then for the Lockleys Primary School Welfare Club Christmas party, the Woodville Kindergarten and the Lockleys Carols by Candlelight. Members met for practice every fortnight and paid 1/- which went towards purchasing music and, in 1954, these subscriptions totalled £10-17-10. The expenses for that year involving music purchase, phone calls and the "Hire of Masks 16/6 !" amounted to £9-15-11 giving the choir a small balance to take forward into 1955. From these humble beginnings the choir grew in number as more and more members enjoyed singing together. Gradually the repertoire grew from singing a few brackets of songs to concerts involving singing, elocution, banjo and saxophone items. The choir performed in schools, halls, institutes, churches and even out of doors in both suburban and country venues. For almost 20 years, the first concert was nearly always at the Gawler Baptist Church. Other country areas visited included such places as Victor Harbor, Yilki, Yankalilla, Meadows, Clarendon, Mallala, Hamley Bridge, Macclesfield and Riverton amongst others. Some of the busiest years were 2004 - 2006 when some 25 concerts were given (although the record was 30 concerts in 1997!) - all this from a choir that, deliberately, gave itself only 40 weeks of the year in which it would take bookings. The choir always wore a uniform of a long brick red skirt with a cream long-sleeved over-blouse in winter and a short-sleeved cream muslin blouse, randomly printed with small pink roses in summer. Dulcie was always particular about the neatness of the uniform. Three weeks before the 40th anniversary of the formation of the choir, Dulcie sadly passed away. Mrs. Audrey Sweet took over the leadership to fulfil all the booked events for the rest of 1993. In November of that same year, invitations were sent out to all present and past choir members to celebrate the anniversary. This was held on December 13th in the Brooklyn Park Uniting Church Hall. The choir decided to continue its operation beyond 1993 - in fact, it continued for another 15 years!. Over time, Glenys Edwards became the new conductor with Wendy Barrett in a part-time role. The choir received donations at many of their concerts and these in turn were given to various worthy charities - in the two years from 2007-2008 an amount of \$2180 was distributed. In 2008 it was decided it was time, after 55 years, to end the activities of the choir as an entertainment group. The final concert was given at Wesley House Nursing Home on November 25th. The final composition of the choir was 7 singers, consisting of Beryl Dunstall, Cynthia Cook, Pam Stanley, Elaine Storr, Marj Maidment, Thelma Holmes and Rita Smith with Alison Lines as elocutionist and Glenys Edwards as pianist and leader. On November 28th, 2008 past and present members, along with other pianists, conductors and elocutionists who filled in when the usual person was unavailable, were invited to a luncheon held at the Adelaide West Uniting Church. This marked the finale of the Lockleys Ladies Choir!



The Choir with Dulcie Goldsmith conducting.



The choir at Western Link carols Findon.

Adapted from "The Lockleys Ladies Choir" booklet compiled by Glenys Edwards.

COMING EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

WEST TORRENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETINGS

held at "Kandahar" 327 Marion Road, North Plympton.

Commencing at 7:45pm

***Tuesday January 27th. Special meeting.** Speaker Ron White, Heritage Experiences.
Note change of date due to Australia Day.

Monday February 23rd. General meeting. Please bring reports etc.

Monday March 23rd. Annual General Meeting. 'Show & Tell'.
Please bring supper.

Monday April 27th. Anzac meeting.
Special Anzac theme 'World War I Soldiers of West Torrens'

Working Bees will be held at 'Kandahar' from 10.00am to Noon
on Tuesdays 17th February, 17th March & 21st April.

(This is a time for members to help with sorting, cataloguing and filing).

Website access to Local History through the West Torrens Library.

The West Torrens Historical Society web-site is users.chariot.net.au/~wths/

THE West Torrens Historical Society is currently digitalising all its files in partnership with the West Torrens Hamra Centre Library. This is an ongoing project. Hundreds of WTHS files – photographs, images, documents, transcribed interviews and newspaper articles are already accessible via the City of West Torrens website.

To help you access these files, follow these new instructions:

Go to the City of West Torrens website <http://www.wtcc.sa.gov.au>. At the top of the Home Page click on "Council" and then in the drop-down box "Local History" then "Local history collection". This will take you to the Local History page. Scroll down to "Access the collection through the Library Catalogue" - this will open the West Torrens Library service page. In the first search box scroll to "West Torrens Library Service". Then "All fields" in the second box. Type in the key search word/s in the third box. For photographs, click on the webcat reference and for text or books click on 'view text'.

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SUBMISSIONS TO NEWSLETTER

Submissions to the newsletter are welcome but their publication is at the discretion of the Newsletter Committee and can be given to Members or sent to PO Box 43 Marlestone SA. 5033.

Friends of the
West Torrens Historical Society Inc.
Application for Membership



Please post to:

The Secretary
West Torrens Historical Society Inc.
PO Box 43
Marleston SA 5033

MEMBERSHIP FEE: \$20

I/we wish to become a (member/renew membership) of the Friends of the West Torrens Historical Society Inc. I enclose my membership for 2015.

Name(s):.....

Address:.....

..... Postcode:.....

Contact Details: My own interests are:.....

Phone:..... Signature(s):.....

Mobile:.....

Email:.....

Please make cheques payable to "West Torrens Historical Society Inc."

Membership is renewable in March each year.

West Torrens Historical Society Contacts: Website users.chariot.net.au/~wths/

Secretary: (08) 8356 9768

President: (08) 8443 3380

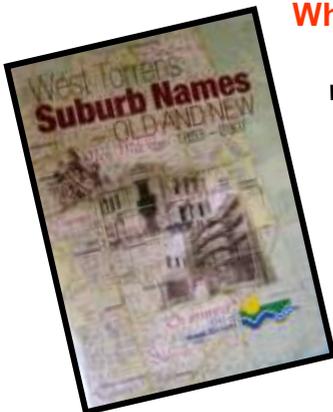
emails: grays67@bigpond.com

arthur.john.andrewartha@gmail.com

Correct as at December 2014

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A Pictorial History of West Torrens \$10.

(postage extra)

