

9. Cultural Heritage: Brownhill Creek Recreation Park –Entrance

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Explore and discover the remarkable Kurna and European history in one of Australia's oldest parks. Explore your 'backyard'!

Kurna Cultural Heritage

For tens of thousands of years the aboriginal people of the Adelaide Plains and Hills Face, the Kurna (pronounced Gar-na), visited this area for their winter hunting, shelter and ceremonies. They called this country Wirraparinga: 'Wirra' means forest and 'paringa' means place by the river, so Wirraparinga means forest place by the river or place of forest and water.

Brownhill Creek Recreation Park is the gateway to The Greater Mount Lofty Parklands (Yurrebilla) and the 54km walking trail that passes through this park to the Mount Lofty Ranges is called the Yurrebilla Trail. Sections of the Yurrebilla Trail are likely to have been used as a trade route between the Kurna of the Adelaide Plains and the Peramangk who inhabited the Adelaide Hills.

Yurrebilla is the Kurna name which identifies Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython as the two ears of Nganno (pronounced Nar-na). Nganno is a Kurna ancestral being who journeyed across Kurna land, lying down to die following a battle. Nganno's body formed the Mount Lofty Ranges. This dreamtime story forms part of a living Kurna culture, for they believe that their ancestral spirits live on in this country. Country is an integral part of Kurna past, present and future.

Reverend William Finlayson settled in the Mitcham Village area in 1838, two years after the official European settlement of the South Australia Colony in 1836. He wrote in his memoirs: "The banks of the creek (Brownhill Creek) at the place where it issued from the hills was a favourite camping and gathering ground with the natives, as many as one hundred and fifty being there".

There is a Kurna Shelter Tree at the entrance to the park (photographs A&B).



A



B

Photograph A was taken around 1890 and can be viewed at the Mitcham Heritage Research Centre (Therese Willis: 83728264). Photograph B was taken in 2015 with from left, Professor Wayne Meyer (Chairperson of Brownhill Creek Association), Lynette Crocker (Vice-chair of the Kurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association) and Jeffrey Newchurch (Chairperson of the KNCHA).

European Cultural Heritage

Settlement:

This end of the valley was taken up by the South Australian Company in 1837 and used as Sheep Station No.1 for 2 years, holding sheep overlanded to feed the new colony. Brownhill Creek Recreation Park was first set aside for public purposes in 1841, was marked as a reserve in 1858, dedicated as a reserve in 1889, became a National Pleasure Resort in 1915 (see the South Australian Tourist Bureau bronze plaque on the stone monument) and was proclaimed a Recreation Park in 1974. In 1954 the South Australian Tourist Bureau built the Stone Monument and established the Brownhill Creek Caravan Park.



Tom Price:

The beautiful avenue of English Plane Trees was planted in 1907 to honour a practical, hardworking and honest man whose life was remarkable! Tom Price was here in the valley to plant the first tree, just opposite the stone monument. Tom Price's great granddaughter, Stephanie McCarthy, wrote his biography: *Tom Price-from Stonecutter to Premier*, Wakefield Press, 2015.

"How is it possible that an impoverished Welsh stonecutter could rise to the position of the first Labor Premier of South Australia? Born to an alcoholic father and an illiterate mother, Tom Price would overcome the daunting obstacles of the slums of Liverpool, become an apprentice at the age of nine, discover the value of education and against the odds marry the woman he loved. Immigrating to South Australia in 1883 to seek a remedy for stonecutter's lung disease, Tom and his family possessed nothing but a chest of belongings and determination to somehow make the world a happier place for working men and women. Within three decades Tom as master mason would carve the columns of Parliament House before entering its chambers as a politician and premier, feared by the conservatives and loved by the people. The Tom Price story reveals how an ordinary man, born without wealth, title or opportunity became extraordinary in a life span of only 57 years. Truth can indeed be stranger than fiction".

Tom Price became the Premier of South Australia and Minister of Education in 1905, achieving many reforms and basic liberties that we now take for granted. 'Honest Tom' as he was known by the people was an inspirational leader and among his many achievements were the following: the universal right to vote for all people, regardless of wealth, status or gender; free secondary school education; improved conditions for workers; a minimum wage; fair trade for farmers; the Municipal Tramways Trust; the South Australian Tourist Bureau;

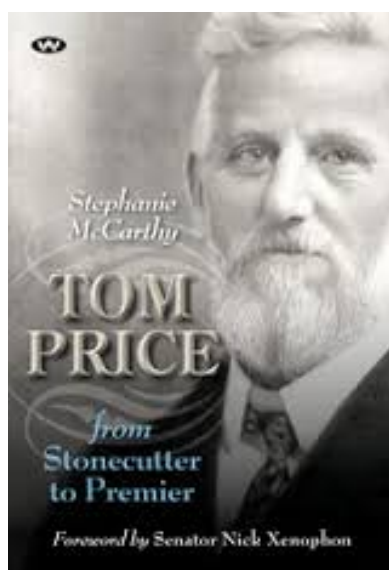
honest government and social justice. Despite ill health, Tom pushed himself to have his reforms passed and coughed up blood during his passionate speeches in parliament. Tom died of stonecutter's disease (Phthisis) in 1909 and his state funeral was the largest South Australia had ever seen. The streets were lined six deep as he was transported to Mitcham Cemetery.



Funeral procession for the late Tom Price, Premier of South Australia (PRG 280/1/13/434) – Photograph – State Library of South Australia.

In an Advertiser article, 'Death of Mr. Price' (Trove, The Advertiser, Tuesday 1 June 1909, page 7) it states: "Under the influence of favourable seasons and the prudent progressive legislation of the Price Peake Government, South Australia has enjoyed a period of remarkable prosperity, and the late honoured Premier came to the end of his life's labour with the knowledge that he had placed the seal of his handiwork on the most important questions of popular interest...As a stonecutter it was his proud boast that he was a master craftsman, and as Premier and statesman it might also be said with equal truthfulness that he showed the highest skill in this important office...The late Premier accomplished this by industry, faithfulness of principle, and honesty of purpose, and many thousands of people today will mourn his death as the loss of a personal friend".

It is such a shame that very few people in South Australia today have heard of Tom Price and a bronze plaque is being made to honour Tom's life. It is fitting that the plaque will be placed on the stone monument, as the monument was constructed by the South Australian Tourist Bureau that he established and he was a master stonemason.



Swimming Hole and Pool:

According to research carried out by members of the Mitcham Council Heritage Research Centre, a clay lined stone wall built across the creek (see photograph A) in the early 1890's formed a swimming hole until 1902. When Thomas Newey complained to council that the swimming hole was interfering with his market garden, Mitcham Council resolved that "all dams on the creek in the Reserve be destroyed and no further bathing be allowed". However in 1929 the council built a weir across the creek and constructed a swimming pool, 90metres long with a diving board and change rooms. The operation of the swimming pool became a contentious issue between Mitcham Council and the State Government and the pool fell into disrepair. It is now filled in and vegetated.



Resources:

- Contact Therese Willis, Local History Coordinator at the Mitcham Heritage Research Centre: Phone: 83728264 or Email: twillis@mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au
- Mitcham Council Website: <http://www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1358>
- Google: Tom Price Premier of SA
- Images of Tom Price's funeral: <http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/PRG+280/1/7/403>
- Photograph of Tom Price: <http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/PRG+280/1/4/313>
- Obituaries for Tom Price: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/5727741>
- *Tom Price-from Stonecutter to Premier*, Stephanie McCarthy, Wakefield Press 2015.
- Contact the great-granddaughter of Tom Price, Stephanie McCarthy: Phone: 82789279 or Email: spmc@adam.com.au (Stephanie is available to visit schools and give talks).
- *Valleys of Stone-the Archaeology and History of Adelaide's Hills Face*, Edited by Pam Smith, F.Donald Pate and Robert Martin, Kopi Books 2006: <https://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/archaeology/research-profile/current-projects/adelaide-hills-face-zone/valleys-of-stone.cfm>
- Brownhill Creek and the Tilley Family (Market Gardening history): https://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/fms/archaeology_files/research/HFZC/HP/PDF/VOS%20Ch%2019%20Tilleys.pdf
- Living Kurna Cultural Heritage Centre-Warriparinga: <https://www.marion.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/2016-2017-Warriparinga-Cultural-Education-Program.pdf>