



Friends of Sturt Gorge

"Volunteers working for conservation"

Newsletter

Number 58, December 2022

Visit our web site www.fosg.org.au

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the October meeting Bob was pleased to note he had completed the annual tool audit and written-off a number of items that are no longer used or required replacement. The November meeting was cancelled due to storm damage at the school, so we have no more meetings until the AGM on 21st February 2023.

If you are interested in helping out with any roles, please let a committee member know and we can answer any of your questions. I will forward the role descriptions soon so you can familiarize yourself with what is involved.

On 26th November, leader Alisha and a group of cubs and their parents from Flagstaff Hill Scouts joined Albert, Larry, and me to hunt out boneseed in Management Unit 15 south of Magpie Creek, followed by a visit to the top of the dam wall and an exciting climb down to the river junction to see it at high flow. We continued their work at the December north side working bee with our newest member, Tony.

We had some sad news with the passing of Ron Reid in mid-November and Michael Weaver in early December. They became members in 2004 and 2003 respectively and joined us for working bees, walks and social events for more than 10 years.



Ron Reid far right



Michael Weaver second from right

In late December, we were informed that our Friends of Parks Small Grant application was successful - well done Les for writing up the submission! The project, *Woody Weed Control in Sturt Gorge Recreation Park*, was awarded \$3937 in funding for the purchase of more reciprocating saws, blades, loppers, and poison, and we will contribute 750 hours of in-kind support through our working bees. The project will run for 12 months from February 2023.

Finally, it would be appreciated if you renewed your annual membership for 2023 ASAP. The membership renewal form is attached to this newsletter.

I hope you've had an enjoyable time with friends and family over the last few weeks and look forward to a new year of achievements in the Gorge with you all.



Amy Blaylock
President, Friends of Sturt Gorge

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

I will endeavour to produce a newsletter on a quarterly basis; ie. around the end of each March, June, September and December, and look forward to receiving articles, reports and images relating to our activities that you think will be of interest to our members.

Check out past issues as a guide for content. Good sharp images to accompany articles are also welcome.

Please provide your text as files attached to emails, not as emails themselves, likewise your photos as separate files. List the captions for each image below the article in the email.

Email your articles to lesgray2020@gmail.com

Les Gray
Newsletter editor

THE RUIN ON MAGPIE CREEK

Have you ever wondered about the history of the ruin on Magpie Creek? The following information on the actual construction of the cottage I sourced primarily from the publication, **Historic Sites and Landscapes: The Mitcham Hills 2005, Hills Face Zone Cultural Heritage Project Reports, Department of Archaeology, Flinders University. Volume II (Kopi Books, Adelaide), editors; Smith, P.A., Piddock, S. and Pate, F.D.**

Robert Stone, an Honours student at the time, contributed Chapter 7, *Magpie Creek Ruin, Sturt Gorge Recreation Park*, in which he describes the construction of the house that eventually became the ruin, and who he believed lived in it. Some of the information relating to ownership and use of particular Country Sections came from Chapter 6, *Magpie Creek Catchment*, by Virginia Manson.

The ruin is a single-story stone building that had at least two rooms and three chimneys; an unusual design for a colonial cottage of that era. The actual builder of the cottage is unknown despite extensive research.

It is located in Section 19, Hundred of Adelaide, Bellevue Heights, in the City of Mitcham on Magpie Creek (sometimes referred to as Blackwood Gully), a tributary of Sturt River. Lands title records show that Section 19 was transferred from the Crown to William Waters in 1849 via a memorandum of Title which was subsequently sold to Charles Trott in 1857.

Charles Trott owned the land from 1857 until his death in 1880. Section 19 and the adjacent land was used predominantly for grazing. There is no evidence of cropping or horticulture in Blackwood Gully. Following Trott's death, there was a succession of owners of Section 19 until Jane Manson purchased it in August 1920.

Several other Manson family members administered the land until it was eventually acquired by the SA Government in 1965, and later included within the boundary of the Sturt Gorge Recreation Park following its declaration on 4 October 1973.

After establishing the original ownership of the land, researcher Robert Stone then investigated the design and construction technique of the ruin to compare it with similar cottages constructed at that time. The remains of the outer walls enabled the researchers to draw up a reasonably accurate floor plan of the house.

If you visit the site, you will see that there are two distinct rooms, the larger has two chimneys and possibly two external doorways. There is no evidence that there was a dividing wall in the larger room between the two chimneys to make two rooms, and it is not possible to determine how many windows there were or their position because the upper parts of all walls are missing. The second smaller room also has a chimney and an external doorway. There is no connecting doorway between the two rooms.

There is evidence that the building was erected in two stages. The first stage was the large room with the two chimneys and a low wall (possibly a retaining wall) protruding from the northern wall. The evidence for this is threefold. Firstly, the lower section of the wall is tied into the main section of the building and is built of what appears to be sandstone.

Secondly, the upper section of the wall is built out of quartzite and there is a clear division between the two sections. This is the only example of a straight mortar line in the building which is generally constructed of random rubble.

Thirdly, there is no adjoining doorway between the two rooms. Examples of other two-roomed cottages of that time all have an adjoining door.

While this may be a feature peculiar to the use of this building, construction and stone type suggests that there was a second construction phase.

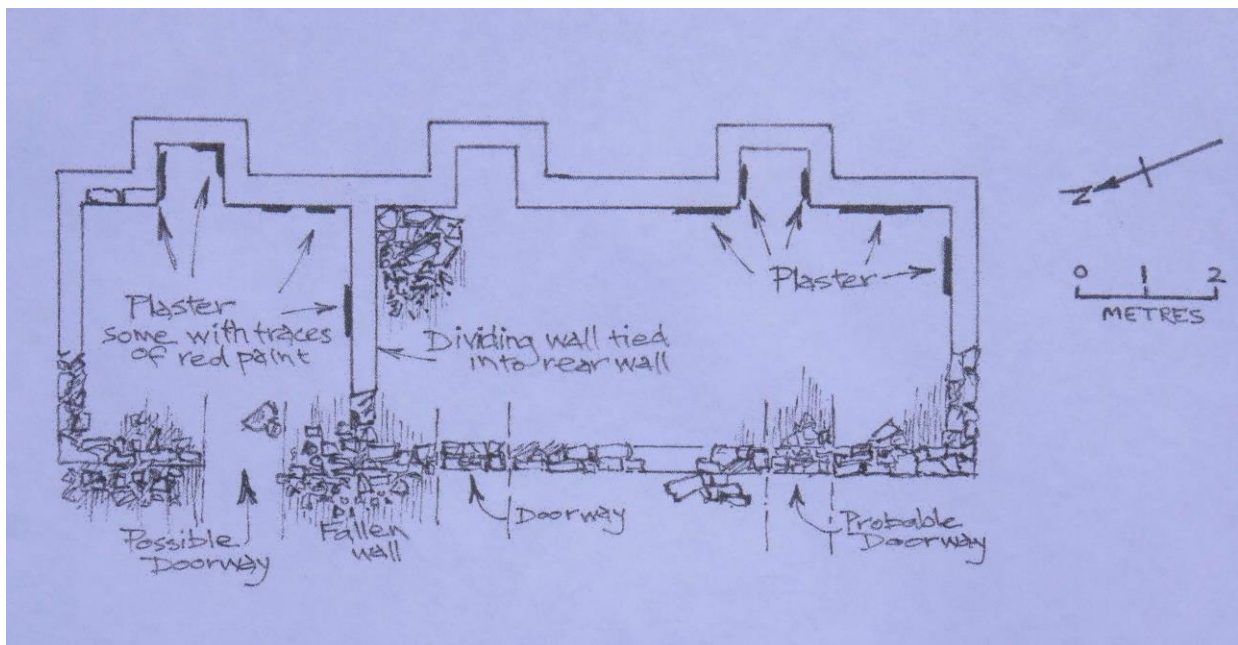
The walls of the ruin are of a regular thickness with evidence of the interior plastered walls being painted a red/brown colour. The insides of the chimneys are also plastered, but there is no evidence of charcoal on their surfaces.

There is no evidence of the ruin ever having a veranda, but as they were usually made of timber it can be assumed that it had one and it eventually rotted away. There is evidence that there may have been more than one extension to the cottage.

The team from Flinders University concluded that unique design of the ruin does not follow the usual layout for a shepherd or labourer's hut. Nor does it fit the standard design characteristics of any nineteenth century two-room cottages found elsewhere in South Australia, which suggests that it was purpose built for a particular person or function.

HERITAGE SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

- Before Section 19 was transferred to the SA Government, the longest periods of ownership were by Charles Trott, 1859 – 1880, and the Manson family, 1920 – 1965.
- After the team from the Flinders University studied all available documentation in the Land Titles Office, they concluded that the Magpie Creek ruin was almost certainly the first home of Charles Trott following his purchase of Section 19.
- Prior to their research, it had been occasionally suggested that the ruin on Magpie Creek may have been the Manson family house. However, since their survey, the site of the Manson home has been positively identified much further to the west of the ruin, adjacent to University Way.



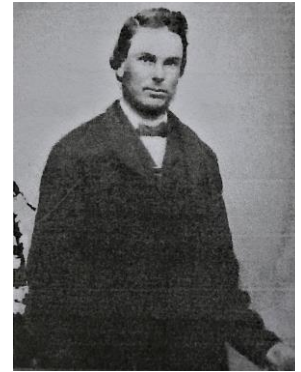
Plan of the ruin adapted from a drawing by Robert Stone

- The ruin was not shown on a 1926 Reconnaissance Survey Map which could indicate that it was just that at the time. Hence it was not occupied by Jane Manson and therefore was probably abandoned prior to her acquisition.
- Following his death, Charles Trott's will suggested that he had a reasonably large family. He mentions bequests to three of his children, and the remainder of the estate (which included Section 19) to be sold and divided amongst his sons and daughters, so it can be assumed that at the time of his death, the ruin was no longer occupied.
- It was concluded that the ruin was almost certainly the first home of Charles Trott after he purchased Section 19.

Unfortunately, the chapters in this 2005 publication had no footnotes or references to identify the sources of their information.

THE TROTT FAMILY – my findings

The Flinders University archaeology project dealt primarily with the actual design and construction of the cottage ruin. In an effort to discover more about Charles Trott, the owner of section 19 during the time that the cottage was constructed, I accessed various resources particularly those provided by the Mitcham Heritage Research Centre.



As a result, I found a number of discrepancies relating to Charles Trott and his family's history when comparing the Flinders Uni report with other available information.



The *Biographical Index of South Australia 1836 - 1885* lists Charles Trott as arriving in South Australia in 1839, and his occupation as “shoemaker,” and later, “farmer,” and initially living in Adelaide. Charles later purchased land at Eden Hills and eventually became a successful businessman in the district.

The first European landowner in what is now Eden Hills was William Detmar Cook in 1838, his house still stands at 19 Kinedana Street. Then much later in 1883, a syndicate of seven laid out an 800-acre subdivision that became Eden Hills.

In December 1979, the State Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment and Planning conducted the City of Mitcham Heritage Survey to locate and assess buildings, structures, and parts of the natural environment which contribute to the cultural heritage of the council area.

During that survey, one of the many houses they identified as worthy of preservation was at 3 Wade Street, Eden Hills. This house is described as being, “*built in several sections the first was begun in the late 1840s occupied by the Wade family who operated the Wade and Trott “Seaview Brickworks” (established in early 1880s) on 30 acre property.*”

Then 10 years later, in *More About Mitcham*, by Annelly Aeuckens (published by the Mitcham Council 1989), the chapter, “*Brickmaking in the Mitcham Hills*,” describes the location of the two brickyards situated in Eden Hills that began operation in the 1880s.

One of those was a small brickyard which was originally known as “Wade’s and Trott’s”, and later became “Seaview Brickworks”. The site of Wade and Trott’s Brickyard was discovered and excavated by a team from the Department of Environment and Planning. The following information comes from a report prepared by that team.

“Charles Trott and his wife arrived in South Australia from England on 22 January, 1839. The first part of their home near the future Shepherds Hill Road was built in 1849. After Mr and Mrs Trott died, the house and property of 34 acres used as an orchard, went to their daughter, Mary. She married Robert Henry Wade on 28 June, 1883 and it was her husband who established the brickworks in conjunction with a relation by marriage”.

I also have a copy of a map drawn in 1920 of Eden Hills, which has “*Trott House*” 1849, marked on it at 3 Wade Street (Wade Street abuts Shepherds Hill Road opposite the Blackwood High School). Following the marriage of the Trott’s daughter, Mary, to Robert Wade, the couple moved into “*Trott House*” and renamed it “*Seaview*”. The house is still standing after 172 years.

At the end of Wade Street, there is a large depression. This was once the claypit that provided the material for the brickworks, which was located a short distance to the east of the pit near Parham Road. “Parham” was Charles Trott’s wife’s maiden name.

Who Lived in “The Ruin”?

Lands Department records show that in 1857, Charles Trott purchased Section 19 on Magpie Creek. Charles and wife Hannah already had eight children when he purchased the Section 19, and another two during the years that he owned it. The two eldest children at the time of purchase were girls, 15 and 17 years of age.

When looking at the ruin today, it seems almost inconceivable to me that a family of 12, with furniture and belongings, could have all lived together at one time in such a small cottage, if that was in fact true.

Trott still owned Section 19 when he died, 23 years after he purchase it. I have not been able to find out what was his intended use for the block, perhaps he had diversified from fruit trees and stocked it with sheep or cattle.

I also wonder if the Flinders University archaeology team ever considered that perhaps the cottage had never been completed, and thus no one had ever lived in it? It's an option that would provide answers to many of their questions.

The ruin is described as “*random rubble construction*”. If we accept as suggested, that the stones used in the construction of the cottage are, “*the stones that are in close proximity to their probable original position*”, then to me, it doesn't look as if there are anywhere near enough to build a complete cottage with three chimneys.

The Flinders Uni report mentions that, “*the insides of the chimneys are also plastered, but there is no evidence of charcoal on their surfaces*”. If the cottage wasn't completed this would provide some evidence of it having never been occupied. I've often wondered why aren't any of the three chimneys still remaining at full height. The chimney is usually the soundest part of a cottage, and often the only thing left standing long after it has been abandoned and fallen into disrepair. Perhaps they weren't completed and built to full height.

The survey found that, “*there is no evidence of the ruin ever having a veranda, but as they were usually made of timber it can be assumed that it had one and it eventually rotted away.*” I can accept that any timber used in construction of a veranda, rafters, doors, and window frames would have rotted and disappeared during the past 150 years, but some shallow excavation or metal detecting would have uncovered numerous nails, hinges and metal fittings used in their construction if the cottage had been completed.

Any personal effects uncovered would have also provided proof that the cottage had been occupied at some time.

The Flinders University survey concluded that, “*the ruin was almost certainly the first home of Charles Trott after he purchased Section 19.*” Available evidence suggests otherwise.

In Chapter 6 of the publication, “*Magpie Creek Catchment,*” by Virginia Manson, she states from personal communication with Milton Trott, a descendant of the Trott family, that the “*house was flooded soon after it was built and Charles Trott moved to a new house in Wade Street, Eden Hill.*”

This comment is relevant to, and should have been included and discussed in Chapter 7, “*Magpie Creek Ruin.*” However, anybody familiar with the site of the ruin can tell you that it's not possible for it to flood as it sits well above the flood level of Magpie Creek, and Trott did not “*move to a new house in Wade Street*” as he had been living there well before the cottage was built.

The 1982 Department of Environment and Planning report states that in 1849, the Trott family had lived for eight years in Eden Hills in an established home at the time of purchasing Section 19, and continued to do so until Charles Trott died in 1880. Why would he have moved with such a large family, to live in a small primitive cottage in a barely accessible steeply sided valley? Who would have maintained his Eden Hills orchard?

To summarise, from available information we know that the cottage was constructed during the time of Charles Trott's ownership of Section 19. He probably employed someone skilled in cottage construction to build it for him to a particular design, purpose unknown, possibly to house a farm-hand and his family. Who built the cottage, lived in it, or in fact if anybody ever did, may remain a mystery.

As an aside, the Trott name lives on in the district. One of the Trott's sons, James Trott (1847 - 1932), is also recorded in the *Biographical Index of South Australia* as, "farmer residing Happy Valley."

In 1890, James is known to have taken up a large section of farmland on top of O'Halloran Hill which has now been converted to housing and is the suburb of Trott Park.

Les Gray



RETIRE ACTIVE SA BUSHWALKERS

**Each month we organise more than 20 day walks in and around
Adelaide catering for all levels of fitness**

Visit our website www.retireactivesabushwalkers.org.au

DONATION FROM THE TRAIL RUNNERS

There are many activity groups that utilise the trail network in the Sturt Gorge RP, like bushwalkers, bird watchers, bike riders, just to name a few. Members of one activity group that you may encounter on your next walk in the Park are the trail runners. Their lead association, Trail Running SA, recently donated \$500 to the Friends of Sturt Gorge to show their appreciation for the fine job our volunteers do in maintaining the trails.

Trail Running SA are a local organisation established in 2014 to bring together runners of all ages and abilities to create a trail running community. They are volunteer organised and conduct a range of free social events along the trails in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

“We made the \$500 donation to the Friends of Sturt Gorge Recreation Park on behalf of our community as a show of thanks and appreciation for the work your group does to protect and maintain the parks and reserves that we enjoy running in,” said Claire Simms, Trail Running SA chairperson.

“We are immensely lucky to have an extensive network of varied trails across the Mount Lofty Ranges and far beyond, which are fantastic for running and introducing people to the natural world. Thank you again for all the work you do and we trust our donation will help you to continue your good work.”

The donation is very much appreciated, and we thank the trail runners for their support. The FoSG will use the donation to purchase new equipment to keep our trails up to the standard expected by the trail runners and the other users of the Park.



HAVE YOU SEEN BENTHAM'S FESCUE?

The Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium have asked our members to keep a look out for a particularly rare native grass, Bentham's Fescue, *Fescue benthamiana*, occurrences in the Sturt Gorge RP. It is endemic to South Australia and is the State's only native species of Festuca (Fescues).

The only known occurrences of this rare native grass are in the mid-north and southern Flinders Ranges, where there are only eight small scattered populations.

However, an outlying record was discovered in the Sturt Gorge RP in 2011 after a prescribed burn, but during recent surveys, researchers have been unable to relocate it. The SA Seed Conservation Centre have conducted several searches since it was first recorded, but all to no avail, so are now asking our members to keep an eye out when weeding or walking in the Park.

It's a slender stemmed, erect tussock grass with flowering stems to 45 cm tall. Flowering heads have a maroon colour and slightly weeping habit. This palatable species rarely grows to maturity without being grazed, and due to its superficial resemblance to several introduced grasses, it has probably been mistaken at times for an introduced weed.

If you would like to see this grass up close, it is growing in the recently opened Threatened Plant Seed Orchard at the Adelaide Botanical Gardens.

If you should find the missing patch or any occurrences of the fescue in the Sturt Gorge RP, please contact Michael Stead, senior project officer, at the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium on 08 82229411 or mobile 0427 344, he will be very pleased to hear from you.



Friends of Sturt Gorge

Annual Membership Renewal – 2023

Dear Member

Your annual membership renewal is due as at 1st January and remains at \$10.00 per member or family living at the same address.

The preferred method of payment is by direct or electronic credit to our bank account as detailed below. Ensure your name is quoted in the reference panel so that it will appear on our bank statement, and also request your bank to advise us by email of the transaction (if this service is available).

BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS:

NAME: FRIENDS OF STURT GORGE

BSB No: 105-078

ACCOUNT No. 054419440

You may also pay in person at any meeting or working bee.

If remitting by the postal service please do not send cash. Have your cheque made payable to Friends of Sturt Gorge and post to “The Treasurer c/o 14 Gorge Road, Bellevue Heights 5050”

If remitting by the postal service OR if you have changed any of your details it would be helpful if you could complete the attached renewal notice and e-mail it to bobgrant@adam.com.au or hand it to the treasurer or send it to the above address with your remittance. A receipt will be issued and an acknowledgement sent by e-mail where appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Bob Grant

Membership Officer

Phone: 7329 8296

e-mail: bobgrant@adam.com.au

**Friends of Sturt Gorge
Membership Renewal for Year 2023**

Name 1:

Name 2 :

Address:.....

..... **Postcode**.....

Email:

Telephone:

(day)

(evening)

Membership Fees:

Single & Family **\$10.00**

Donation **\$.....**

Total Enclosed **\$.....**

Date:.....

Send to:

**The Treasurer
Friends of Sturt Gorge
c/o 14 Gorge Road, Bellevue Heights SA 5050**