

MT HORROCKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Winter Newsletter 2025

THE CEDARS: THE EVOLUTION OF A FAMILY HOME

The Cedars near Handorf in the Adelaide Hills is the family home of acclaimed artist Sir Hans Heysen and his wife Dame Selma Heysen (nee Bartels).



The Cedars

Sir Hans Heysen, who was knighted in 1959 and awarded the OBE, was an influential Australian artist renowned for his landscape paintings and drawings. His watercolours, oil paintings and sketches of the Australian bush earned him widespread recognition during his lifetime.

Wilhelm Ernst Hans Franz Heysen was born in Hamburg, Germany, and migrated to Adelaide in South Australia with his family in 1884 at the age of seven. Selma (Sallie) Bartels, his wife, was born in Adelaide and they had eight children.



By 1912, Heysen had acquired sufficient funds from his artwork to purchase a property known as

"The Cedars" near Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills, which remained his home until his passing in 1968 at the age of 90. Named for its imposing Himalayan cedars, "The Cedars" has preserved much of its character since the 1920s. It remains under the ownership of the Heysen family, and with SA Government support, most areas, including the studios of Hans and Nora, are accessible to the public.

Eugenie Booth, a member of the Mt Horrocks Historical Society and spouse of the late Andrew Booth, son of Feya Heysen and grandson of Sir Hans Heysen, recently delivered an insightful presentation about the family and their residence at the society's AGM. She elaborated on the property's history, describing it as



Sir Hans with grandchildren.
Andrew 'Drew' is the middle child

a 'working farm' where self-sufficiency was essential, necessitating the cultivation of vegetables and planting of trees due to initially sparse vegetation. More recently, numerous flowers were added, notably roses cultivated by Walter Duncan, a renowned expert and Drew's cousin.

The house underwent expansions over time, including a stone studio constructed with assistance from family and neighbours, completed within six months. Hans preferred this location for the pleasant view and its distance from household noise.

Eugenie described the house as bright and welcoming, furnished comfortably with numerous books and paintings, providing a stimulating atmosphere. A raised stage facilitated performances by the children during Christmas and once hosted Dame Nellie Melba.

Exhibitions often involved contributions from family members who held many of Heysen's artworks. Despite being reserved, family members understood that mentioning their association with Heysen could carry social expectations of artistic ability. Hans and his wife Sallie, originally his student and a talented artist herself, had eight children. Sallie not only

encouraged and supported Hans but also adeptly navigated social and marketing networks.

During World War II, the house accommodated soldiers despite minimal domestic help, exacerbated by wartime absences. Eugenie noted a scarcity of photographs featuring Hans and his younger children, possibly due to wartime restrictions on film availability and potential suspicions due to Hans's German heritage.

Nora Heysen, one of their children, was notably the first woman to receive an Archibald prize. Many paintings remain within the family's possession.

The Heysen Foundation, despite initial resistance from some family members, was established to support the preservation of The Cedars and the lasting legacy of Hans and Nora Heysen. Contributions sustain the historic home, studios, and surrounding landscapes, ensuring future generations can appreciate the artistic inspiration that defined the Heysens work. Donations and SA Government funding supports educational programs, exhibitions, and conservation efforts, vital for maintaining and further developing this cultural treasure and preserving its significance.



Eugenie Booth

DR SOKOLOWSKY ...A DARKER SIDE TO HIS STORY

In a quiet corner of the St Marks cemetery is the grave of Dr Anton Sokolowsky. His tomb is engraved with grapes, sunflowers and bears the following inscription "Long will he live in the memory of those he relieved, and the tears of his mourning widow and of the suffering poor for whom he spent his life will long yet witness his truly Christian charity"

Dr Sokolowsky was born in 1818. He studied medicine in Vienna and graduated in 1847. He arrived in South Australia in 1848 aboard the 'Alfred' and was the ship's surgeon according to RJ Noye's "Clare A District History"

He was a popular doctor who also practised farming and made and drank his own wine. All of his calls were made on horseback, and he had several good riding horses. His work took him all over the district and he covered many miles. Often after tending to a sick or injured patient there would be a messenger waiting to summon him to yet another case. Frequently it would be days before he was able to return home. It was said that he often 'fell asleep in the saddle' whilst riding. He was knocked from his horse and killed in 1862; he was only 44 years old.



The grave of Dr Sokolowsky

A darker side to the story of Dr Sokolowsky is told in Paul Tuckers book *"Murder in the Colony" South Australian Homicides 1836-1886*

In July 1859, Ann Gillen delivered a stillborn baby. Dr. Sokolowsky was the attending physician. In the days following the birth, Ann reported experiencing pain and stated that the doctor had caused her discomfort. She subsequently died.

An inquest was conducted following reports that Sokolowsky may have provided improper treatment to Ann during the birth of her stillborn child.

Local Drs Kay and Webb conducted a postmortem examination of the body and found that the interior of the womb was in a state of mortification, the mouth of the uterus lacerated extensively, and the peritoneum was inflamed. Dr Webb advised that the injuries were as a result of extreme violence. Adding to these findings was the fact that Dr Sokolowsky had left quinine powders for Ann to take. Dr Webb concluded that the cause of death was due to the rupture of the womb, subsequent mortification and improper administration of medicine.

The coroner reviewed the evidence and noted that Dr Sokolowski did not consult another doctor. After three hours, the jury found Dr Sokolowski guilty of manslaughter, stating the death was due to his neglect for not using proper instruments or seeking further medical help. He was released on bail.

Dr Sokolowsky later surrendered to his bail on a charge of manslaughter and appeared before Mr E.B. Gleeson SM at the Clare Court. After hearing from several witnesses His Worship believed that the evidence was not enough to warrant

committing the prisoner for trial and so discharged him from custody.

ROOF RESTORATION OF HORROCKS COTTAGE

The time has come to replace the roof of the Horrocks Cottage. The present corrugated iron roof is over 100 years old.

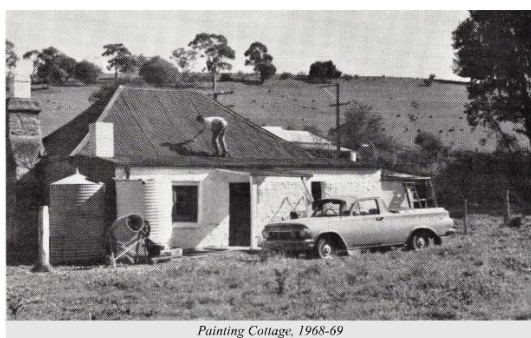
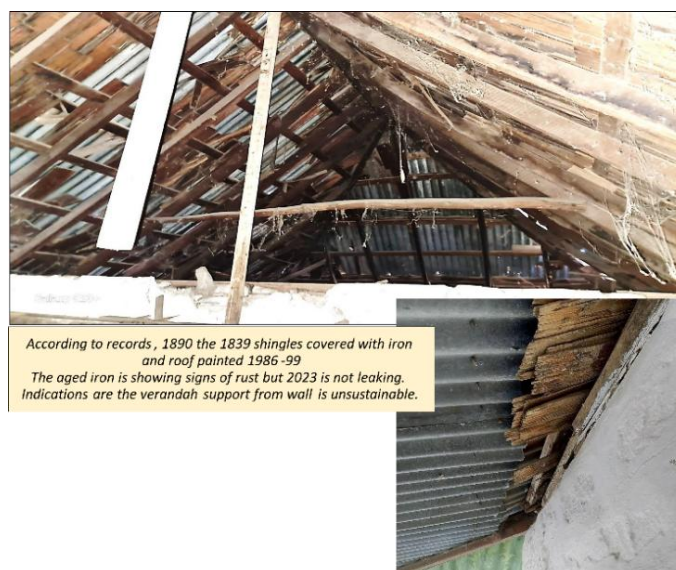
The Society has been successful in winning a Heritage grant but has to make up a shortfall of around \$10,000. Fundraising is in progress and a Go Fund Me Page has been set up as one of the activities.

The Society appreciates any donations towards this project.

If you care to donate please click on the link below

[Roof Restoration](#)

Or alternatively deposit into our account
BSB 105030
Acc 140232440



MHHS PRESIDENT'S REPORT AT AGM 2024/25

Our History Festival event last May was held at the beautiful Quelltaler Winery, taking in their museum collection. It was attended by approximately 40 people including quite a few locals who once worked there or had a previous connection to the winery. Tea/coffee, scones, biscuits, and cake were served in the old cellar door.

Filming of the War Memorial was done in the Institute Garden one cold June morning, when nothing was flowering!! It is now part of "Places of Pride" film commissioned by the Australian War Memorial to record the location and photos of every war memorial across the country and is a wonderful production.

A new story board about St Mark's Church was installed on the Riesling Trail and in September, a history service was held at St Marks, with a presentation by David. After the service, a small group enjoyed a picnic lunch under the trees in the church yard.

Pam Datson has been instrumental in highlighting **OH&S issues** at the cottage and has completed a comprehensive audit report. Corrective action has been taken with signage installed and safety and first aid equipment purchased. Thank you Pam and Meredith for assisting her with undertaking this project.

Woodwork on the shed and Interpretive Centre has been painted by volunteer John Dickeson, who has also installed a Yale type lock on the back door of the cottage.

Our Web site continues to attract good numbers – thank you Jon for keeping an eye on this.

Watervale Institute. In December I signed a Hire Permit for the Institute from 1 Jan 2025 to 31 December 2025. Members continue to digitise our records, and we have not found any alternate building to house our collection. Following a meeting with the Mayor and Director of Corporate Services last week we need to vote on our options as Council want to rescind their April decision, then lease or sell Institute!! Listed in General Business.

Cottage Roof. As you have heard through the Newsletter, the Cottage roof needs replacing and as it is heritage listed, the old shingles must be retained. A heritage architect has drawn up plans and a quote from an approved heritage roofer obtained.

At this stage we have applied for some Grants as the \$46,000 quote is out of our budget. We will keep you updated via the Newsletter.
A big thank you to our members for your continued support through membership and your very generous donations.
Also thank you to all committee members for your support and assistance throughout the year and to Janet and Jim for continuing to travel from Goolwa and participate in our activities whenever possible.



MHHS President Wendy Spackman with her husband David Spackman Treasurer

FRIENDS OF ST MARKS CEMETERY

The Friends of St Mark's Cemetery held their AGM on June 1st at the Church in Penwortham. Items of discussion were:
Signage to direct visitors to different areas of the cemetery.
The church is progressing with a map and thermal imaging may be used to identify empty plots.
Signs are also needed to ask people to refrain from putting plastic flowers on the graves and also where to make donations.

There are plenty of plots available. There was a rumour going around that there weren't any available.

\$3000 for a double plot \$1500 for a single.

Church is considering a cremation/memorial wall as well.

Group hope to hold a Trash and Treasure Boot Sale on the October Long Weekend.

Subscriptions are due \$25.00 pp

It was reported that the cemetery was quite tidy at the moment.

Brenton Ernst conducts regular graveyard work.

Marg Morrison reported that some people have contacted her as her number was on the notice

on the door of the church. She was able to let them have a look inside the church.

THANK YOU

A few years ago, Snowtown historian Jon Ruwolt designed, set up and then continued to manage our website. Unfortunately, Jon has had to relinquish this role due to personal reasons. The Society would like to thank Jon for all his hard work and contributions and wish him all the best for the future.

CORRECTION

A correction from the previous newsletter

- Re Laurie Duke
- Obituary - Laurie's ancestor who arrived in 1837 was Thomas Clay Duke, father of Alfred Thomas

Committee Members

President	Wendy Spackman
Newsletter	Janet Morran & Meredith McInnis
Vice-President	Meredith McInnis
Minute Secretary	Malcolm Paterson
Secretary	Malcolm Paterson
Publicity Officer	Meredith McInnis
Treasurer	David Spackman
Public Officer	David Spackman
Committee	Janet & Jim Morran, Pam Datson, Eugenie Booth, Shirley Jenner, Pamela Schwarz
Patron	Adrienne Pearse

Contacts

Secretary: Malcolm Paterson

Phone: 88434123

Correspondence to:
Secretary MHHS



PO Box 38, WATERVALE SA 5452
Email: mhhsinc@gmail.com

Research Officer: Janet Morran

Mob: 0493255357

Details of charges for research undertaken by the Society are available on request.

Website: <https://www.mthorrock.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MHHSInc/>

