

THE MOUNT COMPASS ARCHIVES

CHRONICLE

A FORUM TO PROMOTE THE HISTORY & ARCHIVES OF MOUNT COMPASS

No 30 SEPT 2025



Moon Mountain

Have you ever wondered why our town's name is Mount Compass rather than Mount Moon?

The late Arch Peters wrote in 1969 that when the local postal service first began here, the name Mount Compass was selected to replace the Square Waterhole name for this district. That first post office was conducted by William Wright from his home on what is now Peters Terrace, from about 1896 until 1907.

In 1867, Mr T O'Callaghan was appointed as the first stationman (aka roadman) for the stretch of road described as from the "top of Willunga Hill to Mount Compass" (ie the mountain). When he subsequently built a hut on the edge of what is now our township, the address of 'near Mount Compass' was used to describe where it was located, although he still used 'Square Waterhole' as his address.

During the 1890s, the name Square Waterhole could still be found in some newspaper reports for this district, but as there was nothing remaining of the old inn at this site, 'near Mt Compass' was becoming the commonly used term.

The name Mt Moon was also in use at this same time, with the earliest located use of it in print being in a *South Australian Register* article from November 1887. It was not used in most newspaper reports of that period however.

Interestingly, in a March 1915 article in the *Adelaide Register*, the author claimed to have asked 'an old inhabitant' of this district, what the name of the hill overlooking David Wright's block was called, and was told that it was known to that (unidentified) person as **Moon Mountain**. Attempting to verify this, the author claimed to have looked high and low but could not find whether this was the officially assigned name.

The photograph of Mount Moon (above) was taken from the front yard of David Wright's house in 1915.

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Editorial

Well, we've made it to the 30th and final Chronicle. Thank you to everyone who has supported this project. It has been a wonderful journey and every edition will be permanently available online thanks to the National Library's Pandora project. This captures many interesting websites and it is reassuring that the history of this district was deemed worthy of inclusion.

Highlighting this need for our own local online history, I recently asked one of the free AI programs that are now available, a question about when Mount Moon had been named - and it quoted my own words back to me from an earlier Chronicle. No other information source was apparently available online.

Inside this edition are explorations into the lives of three of our most important pioneers. Each had a long lasting impact on the development of this district and I couldn't allow this newsletter to end without including a little information on each of them. They are: **David Wright, Melphord Jacobs** and **Archibald Peters**. Most of you will already know something about them from our district's history books.

After putting away my keyboard, other Archive activities such as talks, walks and brochures will now become the key focus for myself. Hopefully most of the accumulated information from this newsletter that has not yet been published, will see the light of day through these projects. **At this stage, there may still be an irregular "From the Archives" pdf, detailing the latest updates from our Archives, sent to everyone on this list.**

Topics that have not been fully touched upon in the seven and a half years that the Chronicle has been produced include: the Roadman's Reserve history, numerous family and property histories, Chinese market gardeners, history of the *Entre Nous*, our dairying history, Enterprise Colony, plus various sport & social club histories etc.

The list is almost endless, especially with new information becoming increasingly accessible from the ever expanding resources on the internet. The future for our history is looking bright.

Thank you everyone for your support over the years,

Steve Kettle

85568444

News reports from the past

From the *Evening Journal* of
3rd October 1892

The Wright Brothers would be assigned land they were already leasing from Henry McConville (his name was spelt incorrectly in the article).

Note the reporter was still using the name Square Waterhole at this time to describe the area.

Refer to page 17 for more information.

LAND FOR WORKING MEN'S BLOCKS.—The Parliamentary party, consisting of the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Hon. P. P. Gillen) and Messrs. J. Cock, L. O'Loughlin, A. McDonald, and W. Blacker, M.P.'s, who left Adelaide early on Friday morning, returning late the same evening, inspected all the land under offer for working men's blocks in the neighbourhood of Noarlunga, Willunga, and Maclaren Vale. They visited Messrs. Wright Brothers' garden, near the Square Waterhole, on a portion of a miscellaneous lease held by Mr. Conville. Notice of resumption had been given for the whole of the lease with the exception of the blocks which the Messrs. Wright are working, but they wrote in asking that they should be included, and the consequence is that the whole of the land is to be resumed. It is considered that the Board is almost sure to grant to these gentlemen the land they now occupy. The party were very much pleased with the results of the Messrs. Wright's work.

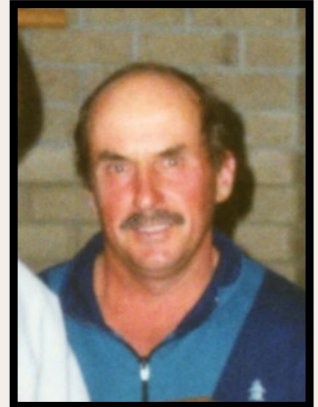
William Frederick (Bill) Wylie (1947-2025) Bill recently passed away at Sandpiper Lodge in Goolwa aged 78. After a life in orphanages and a foster home, Bill arrived in Mount Compass in the early 1970s, to work in the powdered milk section and grounds maintenance at Dairy Vale, until the factory closed down in 1996.

Following a vehicle accident and three months in a coma, it was feared he would never walk again, but he proved the doctors wrong. Most of his life Bill lived in the house he built mainly by himself, on the corner of Tay and Arthur Roads. As a keen gardener he won the local 'Garden of the Year' award three times.

Some may recall him from his later years when he drove his gopher with a small terrier dog perched on the front basket, traversing the local footpaths on the way to the post office.

Bill was married twice, his first was to Fe, when he adopted her son, Butch, and had his only daughter, Sheira-lee. His second marriage was to Amy.

He was buried at the Mount Compass Cemetery.



Anthony (Tony) O'Halloran of Bahloo Glen Road recently passed away unexpectedly, while in Sydney. He and his partner Reece Farmillo were the previous owners of the popular café Clyde & Co, which they opened in 2020.

Left: Reece and Tony in front of their café soon after it opened.

Adrienne Clark OAM, AFSM: Adrienne passed away in August after a battle with cancer. Along with Chris Williams she had co-founded Ambersun Alpacas at Mt Compass in 1992.

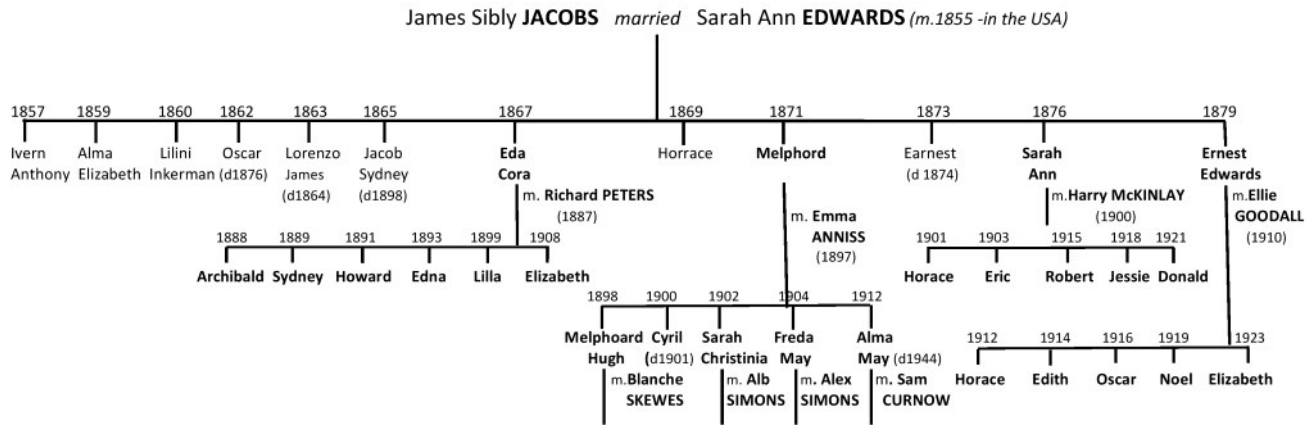
In 1987 Adrienne made her mark by becoming the first full-time female fire fighter in the Metropolitan Fire Service and was later promoted to become their first female Commander.

Right: Adrienne photographed by the Victor Harbor Times in 1994



Some of you may recall **Trena and Arthur Austen**, who lived here through the 1990s and early 2000s. Sadly their eldest son **Michael** recently passed away unexpectedly in his sleep, aged 44. Trena was a very popular hairdresser here while Arthur likely carried out repairs on your car. Part of Michael's schooling was here at the local school and he played for Mt Compass Soccer Club in the southern district's school-age soccer competition, also helping coach some of the younger ones himself.

The Life and Times of Melphord Jacobs (1871-1953)



NOTE:

Other families married into the Jacobs clan but have been left off this tree, as have the grandchildren of this generation of Jacobs, to not overcomplicate Melphord's details. The individuals who lived in Mt Compass for at least part of their lives are printed in **bold**.

*Horrace (bn1869) married Katie Galbraith, a sister of Samuel Arthur's wife Maude Galbraith.

*Jacob Sydney (bn1865) married Mary ANNISS, a sister of Melphord's wife, Emma. Jacob's daughter Cora was raised by Mel & Emma Jacobs, and married George SLATER of Mt Compass.

*The spelling for various names such as *Ernest* or *Earnest* and *Melphord* or *Melphoard* have been listed here with the same spelling most commonly used in official records.

*Refer to Chronicle No 21 for details on the **McKinlay family** and Chronicle No 23 for details on **Richard Peters**. Chronicle No 14 has information on the **Simons family**.

“The father of the Mount Compass district and one of its earliest settlers” (Chronicle newspaper 3rd January 1946)

Melphord's parents James and Sarah knew each other in Cornwall, England and were possibly engaged when, during a time of economic depression, James migrated to the United States. Sarah then also travelled to America where they married in 1855. In 1861 the American Civil War broke out, resulting in the young couple deciding to return to England that year and then onto South Australia in 1863.

James' uncles on his mother's side (Sibly) had settled in Willunga, which likely enticed this young family to join them there. It was recalled by Dorothy Jacobs in her later life, that her father-in-law, Melphord, spoke with a slight American accent, the result of his parents spending their early married life there.

Mel (as he became known) was one of 12 children, nine of whom would marry and have families of their own, with two of his sisters (Eda Cora & Sarah Ann aka Annie) and a brother (Ernest) also moving to Mount Compass to live. In her later years, his widowed mother, Sarah, would move in with her daughter Cora Peters, on Nangkita Road, until she passed away in 1923 at the age of 88.

Following news of successful vegetable growing on the swamps by the Waye family and the Wright Brothers, Mel (right) arrived from Willunga in 1894 along with his 'best mate', Samuel Arthur. As partners, the two young men took out a shared perpetual lease over section 321, This was land along what is now Bahloo Glen Road which, in Mel's own words, **“wouldn't run one cow”**.

According to a newspaper article from 1946, **“When Mel Jacobs arrived in Mt Compass there were only six houses in the district and the country was regarded as some of the most uninviting in the state.”**

In a time of recession, Mel had been retrenched from the Willunga slate quarry. To make matters worse, galvanised iron was now gaining in popularity as a roofing material. The work reference given to Mel, stated **“he is leaving now in consequence of general slackness in the trade, owing to depression, and for no other cause.”** Mel Jacobs was also suffering from a spot on his lung, likely due to the slate mine's dust, and which could possibly have turned into tuberculosis. This condition did improve following his move to Mount Compass and finding work out in the clean open air.



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On their lease contract for the new property, both the young men's occupation was noted as a quarryman. The first year's rent for the two friends was 11/6, (\$1.15) with the condition that they must reside on the property.

Initially, all the clearing was carried out manually on the boy's property, from digging the drains to cutting down the ti-trees, which were then burnt, with potatoes planted in the resultant ash. The following year the ground would be hoed and planted with other vegetables.

The underground drains were formed by placing large logs in the bottom of drains and covering them with leaves before filling in the drain. These would last for five to ten years before having to be re-built.

After giving more thought to their futures, they each took half the block to work individually, and selected it on the toss of a coin. The property, which included about ten acres of good swamp land, which was eventually divided legally in 1908, to become sections 321W and 321E. At the time of their arrival, they batched in a tent, and then possibly a single room made of wood and iron, until they each built a home on their own half.

The two friends would marry within a year of each other, Mel married the twenty two year old Willunga woman, Emma Anniss in 1897, with his brother Ernest as best man and his sister Annie as bridesmaid. In 1898 Samuel Arthur also walked down the aisle, marrying Miss Maude Galbraith.

The first house in Mel's married life was a two-roomed building with a thatched roof that was partly built into the side of a hill. Later they would have a four roomed home with lean-tos on the back, in which the whole family would be raised. With Mel having worked in a slate mine and knowing the material, most of the floors in this new home were slate.

Mel Jacobs successfully worked his five acres of good swamp ground for the next 30 years. He estimated that by the end of this time he had put in eight miles of underground drains to drain the springs in the swamp. He also had about four acres of fruit trees growing on the property.

His grandson, Linton Jacobs, recalled many years later that unlike the Wright brothers, who used spades (and many men) to dig over their land, Mel Jacobs used a horse with bags tied around its feet. This helped prevent the horse from sinking in the boggy land, allowing the land to be ploughed with a single furrow plough.

Just how early all this was in the development of the district can be judged through the unfortunate death of Mel and Emma Jacobs' second child (Cyril) due to bronchitis, in July 1901, which was noted at the time as **"the first death in the community"**.

Mel was a devout man, who attended church meetings in the roadman's cottage when he first arrived. These services were then transferred across to the new hall in 1903. He was secretary of the Church of Christ when, in 1916, after meeting in the hall for eleven years, they decided to erect a chapel in Mt Compass. Mel donated the slate tiles for the roof and became one of the church's Trustees, as well as an Elder, a Deacon, Lay Preacher, Sunday School Superintendent and also serving as treasurer.

In a 1984 cassette recording, the town's baker, Snow Beaumont, praised Mel Jacobs for encouraging the new shop owner to level the area in front of his shops. The original Victor Harbor Road passed through a cutting which obscured the shop from passing traffic. As the local councillor, Mel Jacobs managed to obtain council funding towards the project, ensuring the ground was levelled and moving all the material behind the shops.

Mel was given the honour of writing the foreword for the district's first history book, the 1946 "History and Development of Mount Compass". He also contributed the first article in that publication.

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Right: Melphord & Emma Jacobs with daughter Alma, at their Bahloo Glen Road home.



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By 1946 Mel Jacobs had developed a jersey dairy and pastures, and had 30 acres now producing vegetables. Like many others in this district during the war years, he grew vegetables under contract to the army.

He also arranged for the survey that resulted in Nangkita Road passing through what was the Hailstone's and Connor's land, (aka Connor's Corner) to avoid the necessity of travelling across the swamp and back again. It is said that 42 miles of roads were constructed or upgraded in this district under his time on the council, utilising many grants from the state government.

In about 1910 Mel and his brother Ern bought and drained what was called the Lagoon (Berry Road/strawberry farm) by digging a 15 foot deep drain through a rise that was holding the water back. This then travelled through pipes under the Victor Harbor Road before heading down the swamp towards Nangkita Road.

Mel Jacobs was one of the group of seven landholders who helped 'boost' the electoral role numbers in this district, enabling the Willunga Railway vote in 1911 to succeed. His brother Lilini Jacobs, who owned a store in Willunga, had sought Mel's help in ensuring this rail line extended all the way to Willunga. The scheme's success came after 403 acres of land owned by Mel Jacobs and Sam Arthur was subdivided into four acre blocks and 'sold' to 101 individuals enabling them to vote, and who subsequently provided the winning votes in that railway poll.

In support of family, Mel and Emma took over the care of their teenage niece, Cora Jacobs, in about 1910 after both her parents had died. Cora married local man George Slator in 1914, when she was aged nineteen.

Mel had been one of the foundation members of the Mt Compass branch of the Agricultural Bureau in 1896. During the Second World War, he was also a member of the War Agricultural Committee and the War Emergency Transport Committee

He served on the Port Elliot District Council from 1933 until he died in office in 1953. He was chairman from 1940 to 1953. During his time on the council, the Mt Compass Cemetery was created, the system of council roads being constructed and upgraded by contractors was introduced. He had also been largely responsible for many miles of new roads formed at that time which resulted in opening up thousands of acres of valuable country in the Mount Compass district. This extensive road network was noted as having more than doubled the value of some properties.

The district undertook a major redevelopment of the recreation grounds in 1937 at a cost of £300. Donations and a 'Queen' competition raised the bulk of the money, but in the surviving finance book for that year, is a record of Mel Jacobs lending the extra £120 needed to see the project through. The minute books from 1947 show note that approximately £85 was still owing to Mel Jacobs at that time with this generous loan not repaid in full until 1949.

Amongst Mel's many other community involvements, he was the first treasurer for the Literary Society in 1898 and was one of the local Fire Control Officers in the EFS (later becoming the CFS). He chaired the EFS meetings from at least 1937 to 1939 and was elected the inaugural chairman of the Institute Library in 1944/5.

To commemorate Mel Jacobs centenary of taking up land here in 1894, Jacobs Road at Compass Heights was named in his honour (in 1994). (His partner Sam Arthur was later recognised by the naming of Sam Court). The rest room at the Mount Compass Cemetery was constructed in Mel's honour in 1954.

After Mel passed away in 1953, his grandson Don Jacobs inherited the property and in lived in the family home.

Emma passed away in 1959 at the age of 88 and the couple are buried together in the Mount Compass Cemetery.

Four of the Willunga Jacobs children settled in, and contributed to, the Mount Compass district: Cora Peters, Melphord Jacobs, Annie McKinlay and Ernest Jacobs.

References: *"Where the Compass Leads You"* by Linton Jacobs (Mel's grandson), Linton Jacobs 1999 Oral History transcript, *"Chasing Rainbows in the Rain"* by Ann Riddle, trove.nla.gov.au, Mount Compass Archives, familysearch.org



Right: **Mel and Emma Jacobs**

Unidentified Class Photo - Can You Help?



The photograph shown above is believed to be from the early 1960s. The only student we have identified so far, is Timothy Jacobs in the back row, far right. If you know the year, or can identify any other students, please let us know. A few people have had guesses but none are really sure. Can you help?

Class photos not in our Archives -from the 1950s and 1960s

We have a growing collection of school class photographs but there are still many gaps from the mid 1900s. If you have any of the missing photos listed below please get in touch (the school doesn't have them either).

- 1951 & 1952 - need all**
- 1953 - need grades 1, 2, 6 & 7**
- 1954 - need all**
- 1955 - need grades 1, 6 & 7**
- 1956 to 1961 - need all**
- 1962 - combined secondary school photo (known to exist) and Years 1 & 2 secondary**
- 1963 - need grade 7 and any secondary classes**
- 1964 & 1965 - need all**
- 1966 - need Years 1 & 2 secondary**
- 1967 - need grades 1, 2 & 5, + Years 2 & 3 secondary**
- 1968 - need grades 1 to 4, + Years 2 & 3 secondary**
- 1969 - need all**

*The time is running out to locate these photographs before they are thrown away during clean-outs
Photos may not have been taken in all of these years but it is worth a try....*





Two photographs that have recently come to light thanks to June Niejalke (refer page 16).

Above: Mount Compass School children c1918 (possible names) – Back: Florence, Jean & James McKinlay, Grace Hutton, unknown, George Arthur, Front: Laura McKinlay, Laurel Waye, Eva Goodall, Miss Crowley (teacher), Bessie Peters, Ada Goodall, Alma Jacobs.

Below: A rare photograph of the Mount Compass shopping centre from around 1940 (Giles' butcher shop on the left and Beaumont's Bakery on the right)



Archibald James Peters (1888-1982)

*"A young Mount Compass farmer, fighting beside his mates in France during World War 1 and seeing many of them die, vowed that if he was spared, he would never again complain."
From the Stock Journal 11th Oct 1979*

Archibald James Peters was born in Stirling East on the 21st of April 1888, the eldest child to Cora (nee Jacobs) and Richard Peters. He had five siblings, two brothers, Sydney (Sid) and Howard, and three sisters, Edna, Lilla and Elizabeth (Bessie). When Arch was nine years of age his family moved onto a 98 acre block at Mt Compass (section 330), living in a solid stone home built by their stonemason father, Richard Peters, which is still standing today.

As a young boy, Arch attended the Nangkita Village Settlement School, a walk of more than six kilometres. When the Mount Compass school opened in mid 1899 (in what had been the Roadman's cottage) Arch, his brothers, and a sister, Edna, began attending there.

As was common in those days, he left school at 14 to work on the family farm, helping to drain and clear the swamp in order to grow vegetables.

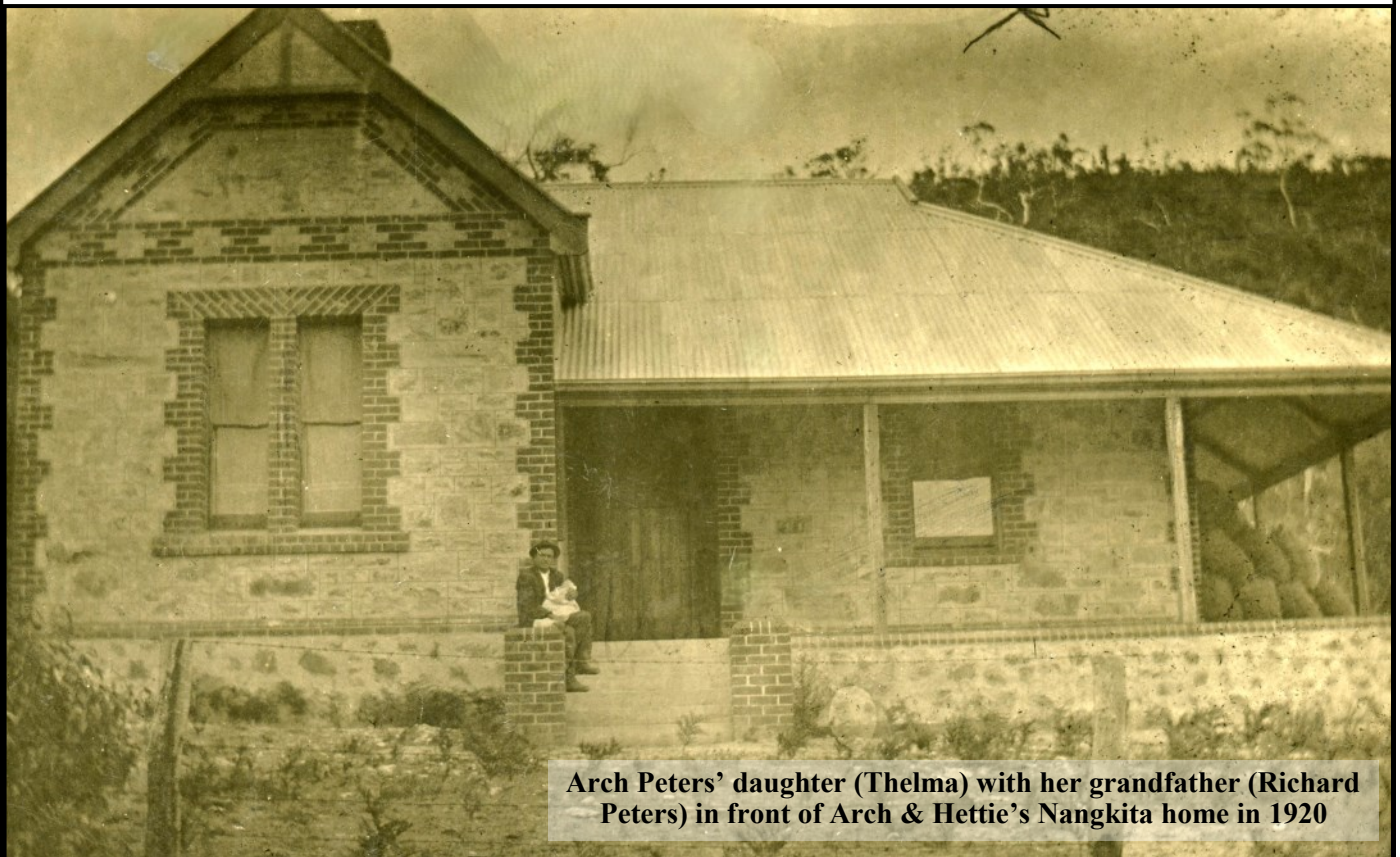
As a young man he attended the local Literary Society meetings, honing his talent for public speaking, poetry, reciting and debating. For some months prior to the First World War, he worked as a jackaroo on a cattle station south of Broken Hill. It was here that he picked up the life-long skill of plaiting leather into belts and stock whips.

In 1915, with the first World War well underway, Arch's brother Howard joined the forces and headed to France. Arch found working without his brother hard to take, their having always worked together. He now wrote a poem entitled "*Howard's Old Hoe*" explaining how much he missed his brother's company. Consequently in 1916, at the age of 28, Arch also enlisted.

On May the 26th 1916, just days before his enlistment, Arch married his local sweetheart, Hedwig Elizabeth Keisewetter, at the Unley Church of Christ. Her brother Alfred, had also enlisted just the month prior.

According to his service records, sometime after Arch enlisted, it would appear that his new wife Hettie (as she was known) moved to a house on King William Road in Hyde Park, but whether this was with a relative is not known but may help explain why they were married in the neighbouring suburb of Unley. When Hettie later enquired through the Red Cross about her husband's war injury, they replied to a Miss Peters c/o Mr W Marston, Victoria Avenue, Unley Park, with the relationship listed as 'sister'. (*This relationship is still to be clarified*).

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Arch Peters' daughter (Thelma) with her grandfather (Richard Peters) in front of Arch & Hettie's Nangkita home in 1920

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Arch and Hettie spent their honeymoon in the South East of South Australia, where they encountered Adam Lindsay Gordon's cottage, "Dingley Dell". The couple decided that this would also be the perfect name for their new home that Arch's father was building for them at the time.

Just two months after his enlistment on the 8th of June 1916, Arch sailed for England aboard the troop ship "Ballarat". As would be expected, he wrote a twenty-six verse poem about this journey while aboard the steamship. Mention was made of one man passing away on the voyage and his burial at sea, with the last post playing and the firing of a gun. Shore leave was granted at Durban (South Africa) while they loaded coal, before sailing on to Cape Town for another brief rest (ie. march) and the loading of a naval gun in preparation for enemy submarines. Sports and concerts were organised aboard the ship and a celebration held as they passed the equator.

Once they reached the war zone, many on board either wore, or carried, their life jackets, with the ship's life boats swung out in readiness for a quick evacuation.

The Ballarat managed to arrive safely at Plymouth on 30th September, after which Arch received further training with the 3rd training battalion at Durrington. He then travelled to Northern France and the Western Front, arriving at Etaples on 5th December 1916.

This coastal port was a key location for troops preparing to enter the war, and for those undergoing training as well as injured soldiers. It included sixteen general hospitals and a convalescent centre, and had the capacity to house up to 100,000 soldiers.

It was not an ideal situation however, with Lady Baden-Powell describing the place thus: "***Etaples was a dirty, loathsome, smelly little town***". The officers and NCOs in charge of training had a reputation for not having served at the front, which created some tension amongst those undergoing training there. Intensive training in gas warfare and bayonet drill plus long sessions of marching at the double, across the dunes for two weeks, helped to make the camp particularly notorious.

One Australian serving with the New Zealand Forces was executed at Etaples for mutiny just prior to Arch's arrival. Three others had their sentences commuted, while the following year, a full blown mutiny occurred that took a few days to suppress and resulted in another death sentence (by firing squad) and numerous sentences of imprisonment after a thousand plus soldiers rebelled. This camp was clearly not an ideal training situation in which to prepare troops to obey orders at the front without question.

Arch served as a private in the South Australian 10th infantry battalion, Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

According to the Australian War Memorial website, this battalion "***took part in bitter trench warfare***" for two and a half years, until the end of the war. During 1917 the battalion fought in Flanders (Belgium) in the major British offensive of that year, the '*Third Battle of Ypres*' (also known as the *Battle of Passchendaele*, but which included six other major battles).

In a cassette recording held in our Archives, Arch spoke, if somewhat cagily, about his experiences of this battle. He spoke of attacking and counter attacking where the same land was captured by one side then the other, with the fresh bodies left where they had fallen and not buried.

Arch specifically mentioned two of the Ypres battles he took part in; Polygon Wood and Glencorse Wood, but he was rested for the Passchendaele battle because, as he said:

"...after you'd been in the line five or six times, they kept so many out, in turn, so that if a battalion got wiped out, they'd have a nucleus on which to build up another battalion. Well, I was out amongst those on that one."



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Right: a photograph from the Australian War Memorial website.

This photo was taken on the 20th September 1917 and is described by the War Memorial site as:

“Soldiers running to take shelter from a heavy shellburst at Glencorse Wood in the Ypres salient”

Arch Peters had been involved in this battle.



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Arch recalled that the men would be in the front line for between four to eight days before being rested, without ever taking their boots off or having a wash.

In the eight weeks of fighting here, the Australian forces incurred 38,000 casualties and no breakthrough was achieved.

(Note: In October this year, in what has been described as the worst year of the war, the South Australian State Government passed a bill to change sixty nine South Australian place names of German origin, to other more agreeable ones, such as Blumberg becoming Birdwood).*

Arch also spoke of carrying ‘duckboards’ up to the front line (along with food and ammunition) during the periods when he was rested. These were similar to ladders, about six to eight feet long, with slats about four inches apart. They would be laid on the ground end to end to walk along through the muddy battlegrounds, avoiding the shell holes. They would also be used in the trenches to help keep the men above the muddy ground.

Having managed to obtain leave for Christmas and the New Year, (22/12/17 to 19/1/1918), Arch took the opportunity to nip over to England, visiting his father's brothers and sisters who lived in Camborne, Cornwall. Arch wrote several poems about his cousins in England and their kind hospitality.

In March and April 1918, the 10th Battalion helped counter the long-expected German spring offensive and was then involved in the operations leading up to the Allied counter-strike. On the 22nd of June 1918 Arch Peters was promoted ‘in field’ (while deployed in combat) to lance corporal.

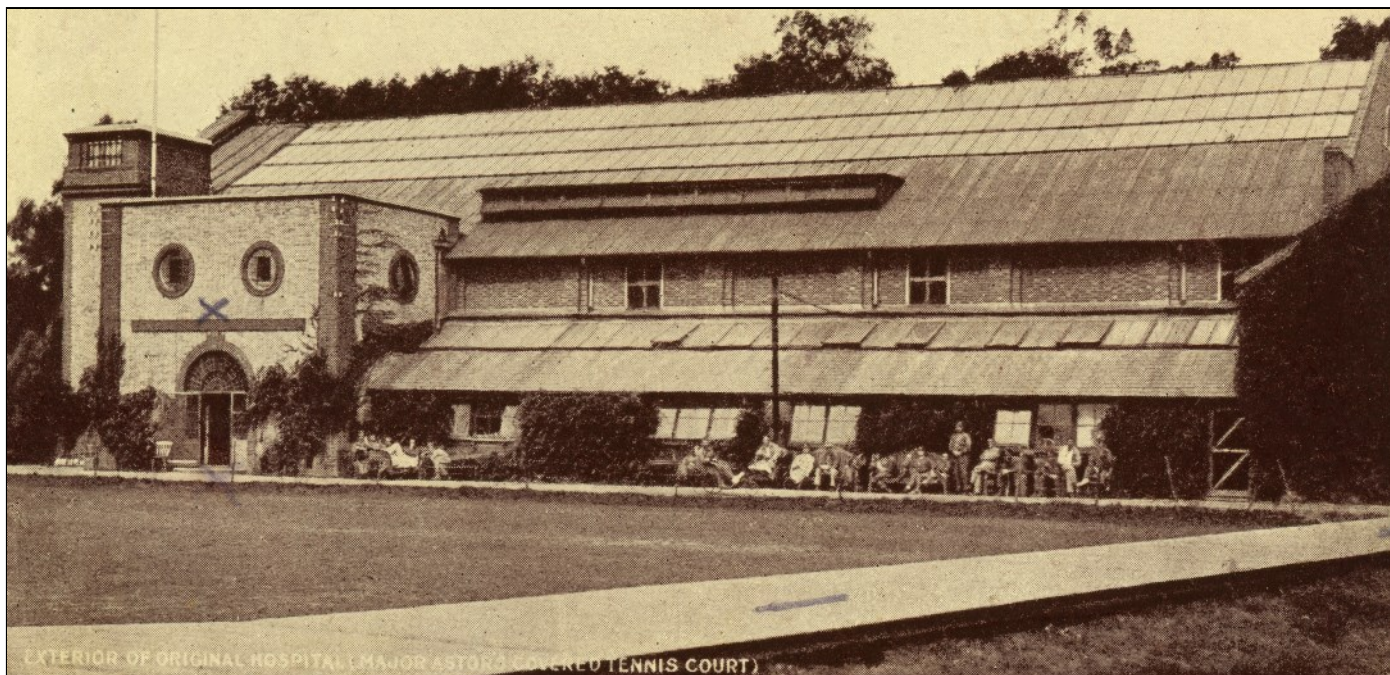
The 10th Battalion participated in the great allied offensive of that year, fighting near Amiens on 8th August 1918. This advance by British and empire troops proved to be the greatest success in a single day on the Western Front.

However three days later, on the final day of this particular battle (11th August) and just three months before the end of the war, Arch received a shrapnel wound to the head. This wound resulted in the removal of a piece of bone from just above his forehead.

It is reported that of the more than 9,000 men who served in the 10th Battalion’s ranks during this war, (including the twenty five drafts of new recruits), 1,015 were killed and 2,136 wounded.

Following two weeks treatment with the 10th General Hospital at Rouen in France, Arch was transported to England aboard the “Gloucester Castle” hospital ship. He would then spend a month at the “Duchess of Connaught’s Red Cross Hospital” near Taplow, Berkshire.

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Arch sent this postcard to his sister Lilla, showing the section of the hospital where he was nursed. The cross marked above the door on the left showed where he was carried in on a stretcher. In another postcard Arch wrote "*I spent a few pleasant hours at these billiard tables (this may be where he developed a love for the game) I was at the Canadian Hospital. I was there a little over a month.*" **Copies of four of his WWI postcards have been scanned into our Archive collection.**

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This hospital had been provided by the wealthy American Astor family, and equipped by the Canadian Red Cross. It was staffed by the Canadian Medical Corps, primarily for Canadian soldiers but somehow this is where Arch Peters was sent. He would then spend two weeks at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford before being discharged to No. 2 Command Depot in Weymouth for his discharge and return to Australia.

A letter had been sent to his wife Hettie on the 30th August advising that her husband had been reported as "*wounded*", with no other information supplied. On the 13th September, a second note was sent advising that Arch was in the hospital at Taplow after suffering a gunshot wound to the head. Her thoughts on receiving these letters are not known but her early reactions can be guessed at.

His medical records note his wound as a '*Gunshot Wound- Head (frac. Skull)*'.

Arch Peters served for a total of 2 years and 236 days, receiving three medals for his service: the 1914-15 'Star', the 'British War Medal' and the 'Victory Medal'.

By the time he arrived back in Australia (29th December 1918), peace had been declared and his brother Howard, who had also survived, was also soon to come home.

Arch now helped his father to complete the half-built house that he and Hettie, would live in on Nangkita Road. Here they built up a successful hand-milked dairy herd before acquiring another nearby block of land and expanding into sheep and beef cattle.

Once a week the couple had a weekly outing, delivering their hand-made butter to guest houses in Victor Harbor. As this was a time with no refrigeration, the butter was made at night, ready to deliver the next day.

The couple's first child, Thelma, passed away at 18 months of age. The following year another daughter, Ronda, was born and who is now a sprightly 102 year-old resident at Bay Village in Victor Harbor.

During the Second World War, Arch was placed in charge of the local Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC - aka Home Guard). This force consisted of men who were either working in vital occupations (farming) or too old for normal enlistment. Training under Arch's watchful eye was carried out on Sundays at the town oval where trenches had been dug for this purpose (refer Chronicle No 3).

Arch contributed greatly to life in this district, contributing to many facets of life here. After door-knocking every local house he collected enough money to purchase the town's first football and went on to become captain (and club president) of the first official team in 1924. In a postcard to his sister Bessie while convalescing during World

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War 1, he wrote an honest comment about collecting this money:

“I never much cared for the job. I had a bunged eye at the time however managed to get enough money to buy the first football the Mt Compass schoolboys had.”

He was awarded the club's first life membership in 1958 and was particularly honoured to give the 'pep' talk to the A-Grade team prior to their 1980 Premiership Grand Final. In this, he reminded the players of their club song which has the theme “play the ball and not the man”. Arch had himself played his final game of football at the grand age of 50, although he would serve as president of the club for another twenty years.

He was also a Trustee of the old Hall Committee from 1931 (and chairman from 1946), which transferred across to become the current War Memorial Community Centre Inc in 1953, Arch, of course, became the first president of this new body for the following three years.

Arch Peters was a Justice of the Peace from 1946, president of the RSL when their Clubroom (hall) was built in 1956 (and made a Life Member in 1963), and a Life Member of the Agricultural Bureau, of which he had also been president and secretary. It was fitting that the last function he attended at Mt Compass was the Annual RSL Dinner, when, completely unrehearsed, he stood and repeated the speech he made at the opening of the RSL Hall, twenty six years earlier.

Somewhere in his life, he acquired the habit of performing a hand stand on the roof of new buildings. In the Archives we have a photograph of him performing such a feat on the roof of the RSL building -when he would have been aged sixty eight! (see photo on back page).

One of his proudest moments was when he introduced the then state Premier, Thomas Playford, during the opening of the new War Memorial Hall in 1958. Arch was called upon to also make a speech that day, as he was on many local occasions, such as for both the RSL Hall and Pioneer Pavilion openings.

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Hettie & Arch Peters

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In about 1950 Arch and Hettie moved from their Nangkita Road property into a new house in Mt Compass (built by their new son-in-law I K Arthur and where the Bleakleys now live). His recently married daughter Ronda then moved to her parent's farm with her husband. When Hettie passed away in 1978, Arch moved into a self-contained unit behind his old farmhouse, where he saw out the remainder of his life.

Pride of place in this unit was Arch's billiard table, which was a greatly valued possession, so much so, that for his 90th birthday, the RSL members presented him with a ticket to see the great Eddie Charlton play billiards at Port Elliot.

In around 1969, Arch thought it was time to prepare a record of the district's early history, which included details on each of the first landowners, listed by section number. This invaluable contribution to the town's history was perhaps the result of a death that he thought worth mentioning in his writing:

"The original owners (settlers) have all passed on, the last, (Mr Spence Herring), dying in the Victor Harbor Hospital on September 10th 1966."

Included in his hand-written notes were articles on how football first began in this district, details on the Mt Compass and Nangkita schools, and how gold mining started at Blackfellows Creek. Some of his memorable speeches were also included in this collection, which has formed the basis for many historical articles and books subsequently written.



Arch in typical pose, on the chimney of his Nangkita Road home.

As an example of the information included in his collection, the following was written about one of the early landowners, something which probably has not been published anywhere else:

"Another settler not mentioned was the original owner of Sections 376 & 377. He was James Lee, a single man about 40 years of age who had spent most of his early life at sea. After giving up life as a sailor, he took on painting and decorating, and would spend part of his time on the property and part at his occupation earning money with which to develop his property, which was situated on the right side of the main road between the Mt Compass township and the (Dairy Vale) factory. He was a strange character, and the writer thinks sometimes very lonely as he had no relations in Australia. There came a time when his mail had not been collected, a search was made, and his body was found in thick scrub some distance from the house. He was buried on a little sand hill close by, nothing marks the spot."

In 2011 five copies of the collection of Arch's work (below) were printed thanks to Linton & Dorothy Jacobs, Jan Skewes, Frodo Krochmal and the Goolwa Library. One went to his daughter Ronda, who provided the originals, and the other four to local libraries, including one to our own Mount Compass Archives. This collection is possibly the least known of his many valuable contributions to our district.

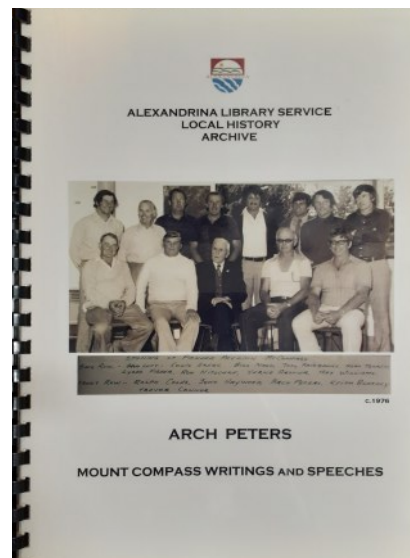
Archibald Peters died on 31st March 1982 at the age of 93. He had just finished reciting one of his lengthy poems completely from memory, while on holiday in Queensland, when he suffered a stroke. He is buried in the Mount Compass Cemetery alongside his wife, Hettie.

Further information available in:

- **Chronicle No. 23 for Richard Peters**
- **Chronicle No 3 for WW2 Voluntary Defence Corps**

References: Ronda Arthur, obituary article, Entre Nous articles, school assignment by Rain Langford, WWI Service Records NLA, Wikipedia, Arch Peters' poems. Mt Compass Archives, Australian War Memorial.

**historian Joan Beaumont <https://southaustraliaswar.history.sa.gov.au/monthly-posts/191712-december-1917/>*



Second History Talk a Popular Event

The Archives Group recently held their second “**Know Your Town**” history talk. This focused on the more than one hundred years of retail history in this district, with guest contributions from **Marlene Connor** and **Melita Hicks**.

As a young girl, Marlene worked in the local grocery stores, and recalled those times with interesting anecdotes from a period that not many people now have a memory of. Melita, as everyone knows, has been the backbone of our retail area for many years and has only recently retired. Her recollections from periods such as the children’s party room (Dingly Dell) up to the Covid years proved to be a hit with the fifty plus people who braved the winter evening to attend. Some attendees travelled from the southern suburbs, others from as far as Victor Harbor for the evening.

The 3rd talk will cover the history of the magnificent ovals and facilities that our town is justifiably proud of. This will be held on Tuesday 2nd September at 7.00pm, in the comfortable Foyer of the Hall.

Tea and coffee will be provided afterwards.

Next:

*An **historic walk from Roadman’s Reserve to the Hall** will be held on Sunday 2nd November at 10.am. (Free event)



Left: Ross Simons recently donated this 1935 Mount Compass and Nangkita Agricultural Society ribbon to the Archives. It had been won by his parents, Albert (Alb) & Chrissie Simons.

As it happens, we have a collection of this society’s record books in the Archives, dating back to 1905, and so could shed further light on this award.

In the book recording the prizes for that year, were the following items (under the name of Mrs Alb Simons):

- Collection of Ferns** - 2nd place
- Pot Plants** - 1st & 2nd place
- Best Foliage Pot Plant** - 1st place
- Pot Plant in Bloom** - 1st place
- Tuberous Begonia** - 1st place
- Bush Begonia** - 1st place
- Cow over 3 years (class B)** - 2nd place

The ribbon was most likely awarded for this final category, with Howard Peters taking out first place for a three year old cow in milk..



Above: Members of the Peters family who attended a recent reunion lunch at Mount Compass which was followed by a visit to the Archives. Left to Right are: Phil & Di Peters, Lynette Harvey (nee Peters), Jenny Osmond (nee Peters), Leonie & Roger Simons, June Niejalke, Malcolm Langford, Chris Yates, Kylie Francis, Barry Philps, Rain & Richard Langford, Geoff & Heather Simons.

Below: One of the wonderfully rare photographs that June Niejalke (above) kindly allowed us to copy during her visit to the Archives. It is **the only known photo** of the shop operated by the Dowell family and built alongside their Peters Terrace home. This property was later bought by the Mt Compass Co-op who used the shop as their store, while their manager lived in the original house (which still stands today). *Refer to Chronicle no. 7 for more information on the Co-op.*



The David Wright Story

“Mr David Wright can justly be termed the Grand Old Man of Mt Compass, for there was scarcely a person in the district but who at some time or other received assistance from this most humble and unassuming man.” -Arch Peters, 1969

The eldest of 12 children born to David and Ann Wright of Meadows, David (jnr) and his younger brother William first leased land in this district (at the foot of Mt Moon) in 1890.

In an 1892 article for the *Adelaide Observer*, a reporter identifies the Wright Brothers' market garden as being ***“on the Willunga side of the Square Waterhole”***. (There was no township here at that time.)

David and William Wright had sub-leased their 20 acres (with the consent of the Commissioner of Crown Lands) from a miscellaneous lease held by Henry McConville (*refer Chronicle No 8*). The newspaper report mentioned above notes that the work carried out ***“on the property by only two men is astonishing ... The ti-tree, reeds, rushes, and undergrowth which two years ago covered this portion of the swamp have all been cleared by hand labour, and the summer crop of vegetables of all kinds is remarkable for the yields.”***

Describing the land, the author wrote: ***“Open drains run the whole length of the enclosure, and cross drains filled with ti-tree roots, through which the water percolates, intersect them.”*** The method of watering the vegetables was rudimentary, a kerosine tin cut diagonally to form a scoop, was attached to a wooden handle and ***“was dipped in the open drains and thrown broadcast for a distance of 20 to 30 feet.”***

The Wright Brothers paid five shillings per acre (£5 for 20 acres) to Mr McConville in that first year, while he was reportedly leasing the land for 1¾d per acre (3cents). Mr McConville would have received the financial benefit of the Wright Brothers improvements to his land, if the government resumed it for sub-dividing into working men's blocks (which it soon did). It had been the Wright Brothers' success that persuaded local MP (and long-term secretary of Willunga's Agricultural & Horticultural Society), Mr W J Blacker, to convince the government that the land should be resumed and subdivided into smaller, single family acreages. This consequently led to the later development of a Mount Compass township. The Wright Brothers' new block (section 319) now covered 53 acres.

Supporting the sub-dividing of leases into smaller acreages, one reporter from the period stated that the land in this area could be improved if sub-divided and wrote of the ***“excellent proof of what sixteen hours a day blockers could do on many other tracts of land in its near vicinity.”*** He did note that the Wright Brothers however, were not themselves, blockers (yet).

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David Wright on his peat flats possibly with Laurie & Len Leane

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A parliamentary party consisting of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and four Members of Parliament visited the Wright Brothers in September that year to see for themselves the land that they were being asked to divide into 'working men's blocks'. They also congratulated the Wright Brothers ***"on the results of their pioneer work"***.

In 1893, it was noted in a report from that year's 38th annual Willunga Show, that the majority of vegetables entered ***"were cultivated at Square Waterhole"*** (ie the Wright Brothers' land). The 1895 Willunga Show report then noted that the Wright Brothers could grow peas almost all year round, planting a fresh crop every fortnight, as the climate at Square Waterhole was ***"so favourable"***.

David Wright took the brother's produce to Adelaide and also carted for others (see photo page 20). This journey took three days with a horse and van at a cost of £1 per ton. He was acknowledged as the type of man that while waiting in Adelaide would willingly purchase items sought by other settlers, to be carted back on his return journey.

In August 1896, David Wright married Marianne Frances (aka Fanny) Leslie at Hindmarsh in Adelaide. A newspaper report from 1895 mentions that ***"Messrs Wright Brothers have erected on their block a neat villa."*** This was likely David's house as it would be another five years before William would marry.

The Agricultural Bureau was formed the same year David and Fanny married, with the first meeting held in their home. Both Wright brothers were amongst the twelve foundation members, which was almost the entire adult male population at the time.

William Wright married Beatrice May Greenfield in 1900. After giving birth to a daughter, Hilda Emily Mavis, in 1901, Beatrice would sadly pass away in 1903 at the age of just 25.



Helping to increase the number of Wrights in this district was William & David's sister from Meadows, Emma, who married the roadman, George Waye's son, William Waye, in 1895, and would live in a house on the corner of what is now Sandmine Road. From their front room, they operated the first store in Mt Compass (on section 322) and owned the first car in the area.

David Wright's generosity towards others is on show in the old hall committee books. Between the years 1908 and 1912 there are at least four occasions when David Wright, one of the committee members, was thanked in the Minute books for lending the committee money to either meet arrears owing to the State Bank, or donating items

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Above: David & Fanny Wright's house in 2014 **Top:** Fanny Wright photographed outside their home

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for the hall, such as a rain water tank. (*The State Bank had loaned the money required to build the original hall.*)

In an act of particular generosity, David Wright saved the Mount Compass Hall from falling into the bank's hands (or perhaps eventually the council's?) by bailing out the Hall Committee in 1912. During the years leading up to this, the committee had been attempting everything in their power to make their payments to the bank to cover the original £120 loan taken out in early 1904.

At first they managed to raise sufficient money through hire fees and the school's rent but would later need to hold more fundraising events and pass the hat around amongst local supporters, to repay the growing bank arrears.

An attempt was made to increase the rent paid by the government for use of the hall as a school building, but to no avail. The bank also flatly refused to re-finance the loan for a longer period. The committee (and their wives) now undertook tasks such as cleaning (including emptying the bucket toilets) rather than paying a caretaker to carry out these duties. In the end David stepped up and paid out the remaining loan amount (about £71) from his own funds.

In paying off the outstanding bank loan, the debt they now owed to David was registered by the new Hall Trustees as a mortgage (and noted on the Hall's land title). His brother, William Wright, would become one of the three newly appointed Trustees for the hall (along with Frank Slater and Ern Jacobs). The Committee then paid off this debt to him over the following years, with the mortgage discharged in 1931.

The hard physical farm work carried out by David Wright appears to have paid dividends for him financially.

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Right: Fanny & David Wright

In 1914, a newspaper report detailed a harrowing injury David Wright received while helping a neighbour. It also highlights how isolated this district was from medical care:

"A painful accident happened to Mr D Wright, a well-known and respected resident of this district...

A neighbour (Mr Gowling, the mail contractor) came to ask him to assist in getting a horse out of a drain into which it had fallen. It appears they had the animal partly out when Mr Wright put one leg into the drain to give a lift. The horse struggled and brought its head back and striking him just below the knee. The result was a fractured leg. Dr Haines of Willunga was summoned and found he could do nothing without assistance, as the bone had overlapped. Next morning he and Dr Newland arrived and had to give the patient ether before setting the limb."

(Mr W Gowling was later killed when his horse bolted, capsizing his cart.)





Brothers David and Will Wright with their loaded van (four wheeled cart) ready for a trip to Adelaide. David would leave home early on Tuesday mornings and arrive back at midday on Thursday.

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In a 1909 verbal submission to the Willunga railway enquiry, held in the Mt Compass Hall and chaired by the State Premier, Archibald Peake, David Wright is quoted as telling the gathered politicians:

“I have been here about 20 years. I am on the swamp land and I go in for vegetables, potatoes, and onions, and we have done well. The onions and potatoes go to Adelaide and we sell the vegetables locally at Willunga and McLaren Vale and send some to Port Victor (Victor Harbor).”

David Wright was speaking here in support of the proposed rail line to Willunga, as an efficient way that he could send more produce to Adelaide for a reasonable price.

The Adelaide Register of 11th March 1915, had a full page story that was headlined ***“The Black Soil Country – Mt Compass and the Peat Flats”***. In this article the Wright’s property was noted as: ***“a perfectly ordered vegetable garden – a garden full of the fruits of the earth. Here and there were beautiful patches of flower beds and everywhere a sense of fertility, full and plenty.”*** One of the reasons this author was full of praise, is that his article was written during what was described as the driest summer on record, but Mount Compass did not seem to be unduly affected.

The article listed many of the vegetables being grown by the brothers, including cabbages, (huge) turnips, carrots, parsnips, celery, tomatoes, potatoes, marrows, peas, beans, maize, millet and lucerne, plus flowers.

By this time a windmill was being used to pump the drain (creek) water into a tank for their irrigation purposes.

David Wright explained his early history to this particular article’s author:

“I have been here for nearly 20 years , and my garden was the first to spring up in this district. At the time I camped where the post office now is. It was an old woolshed then (Gardner’s woolshed, later Jane Waye’s post office).

I managed to make enough money to build a little place for myself and start gardening in earnest. Things

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Went along decently enough for me to buy the lease out, and it is now my property. My brother has his own down yonder.

I am satisfied that I never want to leave the property. It's good enough for me. I have worked it year in and year out for 21 years, and it improves every season. The more you work this peat the better it gets. No mistake, it is a fine foundation for gardening."

Mr Wright also informed them that he was obtaining up to twenty tons of onions per acre and that this ***"was the best onion country in the state, and that's saying something."***

Earning between £600-700 a year from his block, David concluded that: ***"any man who wants more than 10 acres of this land is mad."***

After a period of employing the twin brothers Len and Laurie Leane as workers on their properties, in 1923 both David and Will leased their block to the brothers for seven years. It was not until 1928 that the Wright brothers formerly subdivided their land. Split roughly in half, David took the northern side with 28 acres, while William took the southern, with 25 acres.

After retiring to Victor Harbor, David passed away in 1934. His wife had pre-deceased him in 1920 (aged 53) and they had no children. The late Linton Jacobs recalled in a June 2011 *Entre Nous* article, that as a school student he, along with the rest of the school, watched as David's coffin passed through Mt Compass on its journey from Victor Harbor to a final resting place in Willunga. The students and teachers:

"lined up below the World War I memorial pine trees in front of what is now the Supper Room... We didn't have long to wait and we suitably paid tribute to the 'Grand Old Man of Mount Compass' on his way to a Willunga cemetery."



David & Fanny Wright's Willunga headstone in 2020

In the 1946 book 'History and Development of Mt Compass', Arch Peters contributed an article which stated in part: ***"...Mr D Wright came to the rescue and loaned the money to pay off the (hall) debt. It will never be known just how much this grand old man has done for the residents of Mt Compass, both privately and in public affairs."***

Arch Peters later summed up David Wright:

"Mr W. Wright and his brother David Wright came from Meadows and took up a small holding of this peat swamp land, and made such a success of blocks, each with some swamp and some higher land, for a mile along the road in 1892. These blocks were soon taken up and then the scheme extended and the swamp land from Mt Compass to Nangkita (5 or 6 miles) was occupied. For the next 20 years, the growing of vegetables was the chief source of income."...

Mr Dave Wright had a van and 3 horses, and used to make one trip a week to Adelaide for about eight months a year, and besides getting rid of his own produce also carted a lot for the other settlers. He used to leave early on Tuesday mornings, and get as far as Reynella the first day on to Adelaide, dispose of his load, get whatever back-loading there was to be had, back to Reynella on Wednesday and home by Thursday midday. His charge was one pound per ton for bulk. This man was one of nature's gentlemen and I feel I am safe in saying there was not one of the early settlers who did not receive help in some way or another from this grand old man.

References: Arch Peters history records and audio recordings, Mt Compass Archives, trove.nla.gov.au, "Where the Compass Leads You" Book 2, by Linton Jacobs. "History and Development of Mt Compass" compiled by residents of Mount Compass district.

Excerpt from a speech made at the opening of the local RSL Hall by Arch Peters in 1956

“This is no ordinary building, just four walls, a roof, a sheltered place wherein we can hold our meetings. No, it stands for something more than that. It could be likened to a sacred temple or shrine, dedicated to the memory of those good fellows who never came back, and to those who have since passed on.

It was not built with any cliquish or selfish motives, but in order that we, as returned men, might have a little place of our own, wherein we could meet and strive to keep alive the Digger Spirit, the spirit of comradeship, a comradeship that has been cemented by experiences that can be gained in no other way, and every Digger that enters that door can be assured of a welcome, for herein there should be no distinction but all for each, and each for all; and as we gather here from time to time, we hope to receive inspiration, inspirations that will help to make us better citizens more fitted to take our part in all those social activities which are a benefit to the district in which we live.”

This building was erected using voluntary labour with no outside help, and opened free of debt, an accomplishment of which the small band of returned servicemen were very proud.



The photograph above shows a 68 year old Arch Peters performing his trademark handstand on the structurally completed RSL Clubrooms. (Do not try this trick at home.) The home-made scaffolding and hand-made concrete bricks have been captured in this historic photo. In 1999, the RSL handed ownership over to the Mount Compass War Memorial Community Centre, with their membership no longer sufficient to continue regular meetings.

The views & opinions reflected in this Journal do not represent the views of the Mt Compass War Memorial Community Centre Inc.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of articles printed here. If you wish to advise of any corrections required or can add further information regarding any item, please contact me using the address below.

Most importantly: if you have any information, documents or photographs that that could be of interest to the Archives please give me a call or send an email.

Steve Kettle (mtcompassarchives@gmail.com)