

The Principal
Netley Demonstration School Marion
Road
Netley 5037

Dear Sir;

Mrs. Bowering told me that you had telephoned for some historical information concerning Netley. There is very little readily available material on the area because until the early years after World War II it was urban farm, or, undeveloped land, and the liability to floods made it unattractive to governments and private individuals for closer settlement, I will tell you what little I know about it.

Netley takes its name from Netley Abbey in Hampshire, England, from whence came Thomas Hudson Bear in 1838, and who purchased the area. (There is also a run called Netley near the Yunta railway station.) It is possible that Bear may have spelled his name "Beare", and be the ancestor of several families of that name who survive: however, no one has ever bothered to reply to my queries. I like to think that Beare Avenue is named after the original settler, even though it is a comparatively recent road.

Netley comprises sections 101, 106, 155, 156, 157 of Colonel Light's original survey of the Hundred of Adelaide. Section 2032 was a much later survey. Netley was bounded on the east by Marion Road. This originally was called the Plympton Road (and is part of the Light survey) and underwent various renaming over the years, one stretch being called Martin Avenue after the family who lived at "The Pines", 336 Marion Road. This was the Martin who founded the firm of that name. To the north Netley was bounded by what is now West Beach Road, but when was called Richmond Road: the suburb to the north of West Beach Road was known as Twickenham (now West Richmond.). To the south Netley adjoined Plympton, one of the oldest settled parts of Adelaide, and which appears from very scanty records to have been originally laid out on Section 108. The boundary between Netley and Plympton (now North Plympton) is ill defined, but runs in the vicinity of Pembroke Avenue. At some stage, before 1905, sections 101, 106 and 2032 became known as "Netley Estate".

In the 1850's the whole of Netley, except sections 101 and 106 was purchased by William Henry Gray (1808-96), a remarkable pioneer colonist and some-time member of the West Torrens Council. Gray was a very astute and wealthy businessman and a colourful character who enlivened local government with his arguments. Some idea of the extent of Gray's land ownership can be gathered from the realisation that his holdings virtually filled the area between Marion Road, Burbridge Road, the foreshore from West Beach to Glenelg, and the Anzac Highway. It now includes the suburbs of Brooklyn Park (name from

the American counterpart) West Beach, North Glenelg, Novar Gardens (name after viscount Novar of Raith), North Plympton, Netley, and airport and West Beach Trust reserves.

Gray lived at "Frogmore" which was roughly on the west of the Tapleys Hill Road/West Beach Road intersection. I cannot from memory give details of Gray's disposal of his land, because the transactions were long and complex and occupied trustee for eighty years after his death (he owned holdings all over Adelaide, and in other States). However, the area took on a very rural aspect with orchards, dairies, piggeries, market gardens and so on. In 1872 "Duff's Netley Farm", near Richmond, comprised 242 acres and all the appurtenances of a prosperous primary producing establishment. The part of Netley not developed comprised swamp, sandhills and scrub. Aborigines were photographed in the sandhills behind Marion Road up to 1838, and there were burial grounds about where the council tip now is. Some of the older residents have poignant recollections of the pathetic and the aboriginal survivors came to.

You will know the drain which crosses Marion Road south of Harvey Avenue. This is the path of the Brownhill and Keswick Creeks. At the time of Light's survey and for many years thereafter they drained into the area between Dingera and Watson Avenue: there was no defined creek bed. These creeks and the Torrens and its varbus flood streams meandered periodically through airport area and its surrounds. The airport and the adjacent land was/is part of the Adelaide lower deltaic plain bounded to the west by outer sand dune belts. Until the major Torrens flood water control projects in the 1920's and later the airport drainage works, the regular flooding made the whole area unsuitable for development. On the other hand, because of the rich alluvial deposits, that land which was amenable to agriculture was very fertile.

Up to 1939 I would estimate that there were no more than 30 or 40 houses/families in the whole Netley area, and up to 1950 only the barest urban development had taken place – the aerial photographs show this plainly. The area of the school seems to have been arable land. Where now stands the Government Printer, was Lewis' celery farm, still remembered with affection for the quality of its produce.

Watson Avenue takes its name from Harry Watson, once chairman of the District Council of West Torrens. His son, Stanley Holm Watson CBE DSQ MC ED is the Watson of Watson's Pier, Gallipoli, fame. The latter is alive and well at over 90 years of age. Harry Watson lived at "Khandahar", next to Quarry Industries on Marion Road. Quarry Industries; know once, as "Bucklands" was the home of 'Captain' Morish. He built Khandahar as a gift for his daughter when she married Arthur Hill about 1900.

The Netley area, being a 'sump' for the Adelaide Plains artesian basin is well endowed with underground water supplies. (Incidentally, the whole of the western suburbs were once under the Pliocene sea: when the airport was being

prepared many quite recent marine shells were found.) In 1950, between the Anzac Highway and Henley Beach Road there were about 40 bores, a few artesian, supplying water to the primary producers, Most of them remain and turn up in odd places” Just after the last War the main Netley landowners were Amber, Bishop, Pearson, Marles and Weymouth.

I enclose (1) Photostats of some brief historical articles I wrote once. I regret I cannot find the whole set: (2) photocopy of the Gray holdings, showing the Netley Section numbers: (3) photocopy of a 1937 ordnance survey showing just how sparsely populated Netley was. I have some original surveys, a section map, and a few miscellaneous items, which could be made available if you were going to have a display.

Yours faithfully,

Reece Jennings

From information supplied by the West Torrens Historical Society.