More articles by Dave Walsh

Glenthorne Farm

A place with a controversial past

The 1850's Coach House at Glenthorne Farm

large image

The State heritage listed Glenthorne Farm is a huge open space south of Adelaide between Main South Road and the Southern Expressway. Although seldom heard about, Glenthorne has played significant parts in the history of South Australia.

A Tree Possibly Used for Canoe Making

large image

The farm was home to South Australia's first police commissioner, then later used by the Australian Army as a training camp for its mounted forces, before becoming an experimental food research facility run by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO).

Sheep on the Farm

large image

Since 2001 Glenthorne Farm has been owned by the University of Adelaide and mostly used as a sheep farm, while being cared for by volunteers from the Friends of Glenthorne Farm. While the Friends concentrate mainly on returning the land to its natural state using local native plants, they are also keen to ensure that the cultural and built heritage of Glenthorne Farm is sensitively restored.

Volunteers Hold Working Bees at Glenthorne Farm

large image

Glenthorne Farm has been off limits to the public for much of its history, although the university recently planned an open day, then postponed it. The only other way to see Glenthorne Farm currently is to join the Friends of Glenthorne Farm at one of the regular working bees.

A comprehensive history of the Glenthorne property is included in the Hills Face Zone Cultural Review Project.

Lizard Lodge and the Police Commissioner

A Building From Lizard Lodge - Possibly a Smokehouse

large image

Major Thomas Shuldham O'Halloran emigrated to South Australia with his family in 1838, and started a farm the following year which he named Lizard Lodge - not because of the number of lizards, but because he had sailed from Lizard in the north of Ireland. The house was largely constructed from prefabricated materials brought out on the Buffalo.

1850's Underground Tank or Cistern

large image

The major had formerly been a soldier in the British Army (mostly in India) for 30 years, and in 1840 was gazetted as the state's first Police Commissioner. After O'Halloran's death in 1870, the farm was sold to Thomas Porter who built a far grander three storey residence and renamed the property to Glenthorne. The farm continued to be predominantly used to grow crops and graze sheep, much as still happens today.

Neither Lizard Lodge nor Glenthorne House survive today, all that remains is an elevated portion of land and some rubble. However an 1850's coach house with *loopholes* in the walls, an underground tank or cistern, and the ruins of a possible smokehouse remain.

The Coach House from the North East

large image

There has been much discussion about the reason for the loopholes in the walls of the coach house, and it is quite possible that O'Halloran had them included in case defence against the indigenous people was necessary. It is known that he was not sympathetic to their plight, and undertook punitive expeditions against them in his police role.

Glenthorne as a Military Camp

Brick Munitions Magazines Remain in These Sheds

large image

In 1913 Glenthorne Farm was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth of Australia as the No. 9 depot for the Remount Branch - the unit in the Australian Army that was the responsible for purchasing and training of horses and mules.

A Kangaroo Visits

large image

Little information is available about Glenthorne's role during the First World War due to wartime censorship, but there is plenty of evidence of Citizens Military Forces camps there during the 1920's.

Ruins From Lizard Lodge Period Destroyed in 1932

large image

In 1932 Glenthorne House and Lizard Lodge were destroyed by fire while the property was being used for an Army training course, and the remains were razed by army engineers.

The only visible remains of the Army period at Glenthorne are two large corrugated iron sheds enclosing brick structures south west of coach house, which were once used as munitions magazines. They were originally built in 1913, but were modernised in the 1950's by the CSIRO for use as storage sheds.

CSIRO Experimental Research Station

Original CSIRO Sign

large image

From 1947 until 1996 the CSIRO operated an experimental research facility at Glenthorne Farm to study animal and human nutrition. A colony of marmosets were used until 1996 to facilitate the experiments, but they have since been transferred to Monash University.

Buidings from the CSIRO Era

large image

The CSIRO built quite extensively on the site - mostly with corrugated iron for stables, sheds, laboratories, and the animal house, but also some brick offices.

Former CSIRO Buildings

large image

A large amount of scientific research was published from the Glenthorne Field Station, and is easily found using Google.

The Future of Glenthorne

One of the Dams at Glenthorne Farm

large image

When Glenthorne Farm was transferred to the University of Adelaide in 2001, the government made very clear in a Deed that the land was never to be used for urban development. Despite that, the University of Adelaide sought to sell off land to fund a woodland recovery initiative. Fortunately strong opposition from local residents was sufficient to prevent this from happening, and the property remains intact for future generations.

A Plough Made in Adelaide

large image

Although a University report published prior to 2004 recommended that a conservation plan be prepared for the heritage listed buildings at Glenthorne, it is understood that this has still not been prepared, and some damage is now clearly evident to the oldest built structures.

The careful re-vegetation work by the Friends of Glenthorne Farm has seen a return of native fauna including kangaroos and barn owls which I saw on my visit. Perhaps in time the historic buildings will also receive some attention, and Glenthorne Farm can once again play a useful part for the community.

Friends of Glenthorne Farm on a Working Bee

large image

Why? See a hidden piece of history
When: *See Friends of Glenthorne Farm website*
Phone: *(08) 8340 5509*
Website: **www.friendsofglenthorne.org.au**
Where: *Glenthorne Farm, Majors Road, O'Halloran Hill*
Cost: *Free*
Categories