



CITY OF
MITCHAM

Belair

Belair Historical Walk





Mounted Police passing the Holy Innocents Church, Sheoak Road 1890s.
(Now St John's Grammar School). SLA B56433

WALK ONE: Belair East – Sheoak Road

A heritage walk along the ridge that starts and finishes at the Belair Railway station on Sheoak Road. Allow approximately 2 hours

WALK TWO: Belair West

Starts at the Belair Community Centre, 1 Burnell Drive, Belair. Allow approximately 1 hour.

NB: Both walks include an extended more distant section which can easily be achieved by vehicle if preferred.

For more information on the history of Belair visit:
www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au

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Additional text by Blackwood Action Group.

A fold out map is provided inside the back cover. The numbers on the map refer to the features described in the following pages.

Introduction

The indigenous Kaurna people knew this area as *piraldi* from *pira* (meaning moon, or shaven or bald) and *ldi* (meaning beyond). Parts of the present-day suburb were previously known as Alta Cresta, Alta Mira, Belair Park, Blackwood Park, Crest Alta, Monalta Park, Nunyara, and Sleeps Hill.

By 1841 'The Government Cut Road', an early gateway from the plains to the south and east of the state, had been constructed. Hacked out by hand, it climbed steeply from Muggs Hill Road in Mitcham to the Government Farm (now Belair National Park) and connected with Crafers and Meadows.

The Government Farm was used for growing hay and resting tired horses and bullocks, which were vital transport means for the Police and Survey teams. In 1860 the Vice-Regal Government House was built as a summer residence within the park.

Between 1855 and 1858 Gustav Adolph Ludewigs leased and bought various parcels of land along Main Road and Gloucester Avenue, naming the area 'Belair'. This was likely to have been after the scenic lookout called Bel Air on the Caribbean island of Martinique where Gustav's wife Maria was born. Alternatively, it is possible the name originates from 1849, after Eugene Bellairs, a government surveyor who lived in the area.

With the coming of the railway in 1883, building of summer retreats along the ridge became the fashion and with the proclamation of Belair National Park in 1891, only the second to be so declared in Australia, many visitors travelled to this beautiful region. Today the park remains one of the few relatively undisturbed areas of native vegetation in the Adelaide Hills region.

Farmland was gradually sub-divided, and Belair developed with residential households numbering 48 by 1898 and churches and schools followed. The significance of this ridge top precinct has been recognised in the State Government Planning and Design Code by an 'Historic Area Overlay' to guide/control developments.



Belair Railway Station c1910

WALK ONE: Belair East – Sheoak Road

This walk starts at the Belair Railway Station.

1 Belair Railway Station and Signal Box

Belair Station was originally situated within Government Farm. It was a Class Two station, with fewer facilities than the Class One Stations like Mitcham and Blackwood. The Belair railway station is significant because of its association with the construction of the Adelaide to Nairne railway from 1879 to 1883. The line was an ambitious engineering feat undertaken to link Adelaide with Melbourne and the eastern states. The station buildings are a good, intact example of 19th century timber, iron and steel design construction.

View the station history board and picnic table (at the western end) for more information.

Exiting station turn west and walk along the southern side of Sheoak Road.

2 50 Sheoak Road – Railway Cottages

The Station Master's House and many cottages were built above the train track in the 1880s to accommodate railway workers and their families. With steam trains being phased out in the 1950s less maintenance crew were required and many cottages were demolished.



Sheoak Deli c1920s

3 42-44 Sheoak Road – St John's Grammar Junior School

Belair Primary School opened here in 1912 with the first classroom, a red brick building and the adjacent Headmaster's residence (although extended). Having outgrown the property, in 1957 the school was relocated to its current site on Main Road. St John's Coromandel Anglican Parish bought this property in 1958.

Cross with pedestrian lights over Upper Sturt Road.

4 38 Sheoak Road – Shop, Sheoak Deli

Shopkeeper, J Dunstan built this shop in 1914. Prior to this, there was a village store at 43 Sheoak Road. Mr Dunstan sold groceries and other goods and later added a postal service. It was a typical country store in the 1930s and 1940s with groceries, a petrol bowser and pigeon holes for letters. It is now a very popular café.

5 28 Sheoak Road – House

This house contributes to the historic character of Belair Village. It is thought to have been built between about 1915 and 1925.

6 26 Sheoak Road – House

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Belair Water Towers 1970s

7 20 Sheoak Road – House

This lovely villa, which is a contributory heritage place, was built in the early 1900s. It is somewhat unusual as it features two sets of French doors on the front façade instead of a typical central front door. The tall red brick chimneys and substantial timber veranda posts are typical features of Federation era houses.

8 18 Sheoak Road – Belair Uniting Church

This simple unembellished red brick church built in 1928 characterises the modest approach of the Methodist Church at the time. A kindergarden was added in the 1940s.

9 Water Tower

For years two reinforced concrete water towers stood on this site, built by the E&WS (now SA Water), one in 1927 and one in 1943 to supply water to Belair, Blackwood and Eden Hills. The tower on the right was demolished in the 1980s. Artist Seb Humphreys completed the mural 'water in all its forms' in 2021 on the remaining water tower – a collaboration between SA Water and City of Mitcham.



Travellers Rest Stables 1970s

10 10 Sheoak Road – Alta Mira

Alta Mira was originally on a large allotment with an expansive orchard owned by lawyer Alexander George Downer. It was separated from the main farmland when the railway was built.

11 6 Sheoak Road – Green Mount

This was the home of Gottfried Koll from c1847. Here he built the Traveller's Rest Inn and Stables in 1948, being the licensee from 1856 to 1862 when the inn closed. It was replaced by Hollard House, built for Koll's daughter and husband, Caleb Hollard, c1897. The House (now Green Mount) was sold in 1927 to S & G Martin. This land contained orchards and tennis courts c1932, for the Belair Tennis Club. The rear Travellers Rest Stables were demolished in the 1980s.

Walk back east to bus stop 23A and cross to the northern side of Sheoak Road and continue east.

12 19 Sheoak Road – House

Although having some changes over time, the late Victorian era origins of this villa are still noticeable: the symmetrical front, rendered quoins (corners), with alternating smooth and vermiculated faces and the prominent corbelled brick chimney. The walls were rendered later.



St John's Parish Hall, Belair 1924. SLSA B2409

13 21 Sheoak Road – Nunkerri

Nobel laureate Howard Florey spent some time of his boyhood years here. It was his family's country retreat built in about 1903. Howard's father Joseph was a wealthy bootmaker who employed more than one hundred people.

14 25 Sheoak Road – BARRYNE/Helping Hand Retirement Units

The house 'Barryne' is significant as a fine example of a Federation house that was once owned by a notable wealthy local, Hastings Greenslade who lived there from 1897 to 1911. The house and land were then sold many times over the years until 1966 when it was purchased by the Congregational Union of SA, Homes for the Aged. The house still stands today with retirement units surrounding it. The house is better viewed from the neighbouring Serpentine Road.

15 29 Sheoak Road – Belair Parish Hall

This simple timber building, built as a Parish Hall in 1924 was associated with the Anglican Holy Innocents Church opposite the school. The adjacent church and glazed entry foyer were built in 1990 after the school bought the old church. The Parish Hall was used as a Montessori early learning centre for many years.



The Anglican Church of Holy Innocents c1910

16 31 Sheoak Road
– Day Care Centre, Former House

Little is known about this circa 1880s dwelling which contributes to the heritage character of the Belair Village Historic Conservation Zone. The stone would have been quarried from one of the many quarries operating in the foothills at that time.

Cross Sheoak Road at the school crossing next to you and walk back to the lights crossing at Sheoak Deli then cross and head east along the northern side of Sheoak Road.

17 35A Sheoak Road – School Chapel,
Former Anglican Church

St John's Grammar School Chapel was Belair's first official church. Built as the Holy Innocents Anglican Church by Daniel Hewett, the foundation stone was laid in 1898. The Gothic Revival style features a bell tower at the front although a planned turreted tower was never built.

Note the small wooden bell tower in the yard west next to the church and also look through the trees for magnificent views of the City of Adelaide. Also notice how the young trees in the image above have grown.



Old Willa Willa Stables before converted into current house c1920

18 43 Sheoak Road – House

This house and shop front was built in 1897 and was the local village store run by Mr J Dunstan until he built the Sheoak Deli across the Road in 1914.

19 45 Sheoak Road – Willa Willa

Owned originally by Dr Thomas Kinley Hamilton, the estate on which this home named Willa Willa stands today was once vast, extending down to Brown Hill Creek and west to James Road and Old Belair Road.

On his death in 1917, the Willa Willa estate was vacant for some time until bought by architect Gil Culley, who divided the land, converting the coach house and stables to an asymmetric Tudor bungalow home between 1921 and 1923 and attaching the name Willa Willa to that house.

The infills for the coach stall doors can still be seen. It was used as a guest house in the late 1920s. In 1936 two nurses, Edna and Ellie Stremmel, bought it and may have used it as a convalescent home.

In the 1950s it was known as Brierley Lodge and used by Scotch College for a period.



Birralee (formerly 'Willa Willa') c1900. SLSA B-36722

20 49-51 Sheoak Road – Birralee (formerly Willa Willa)

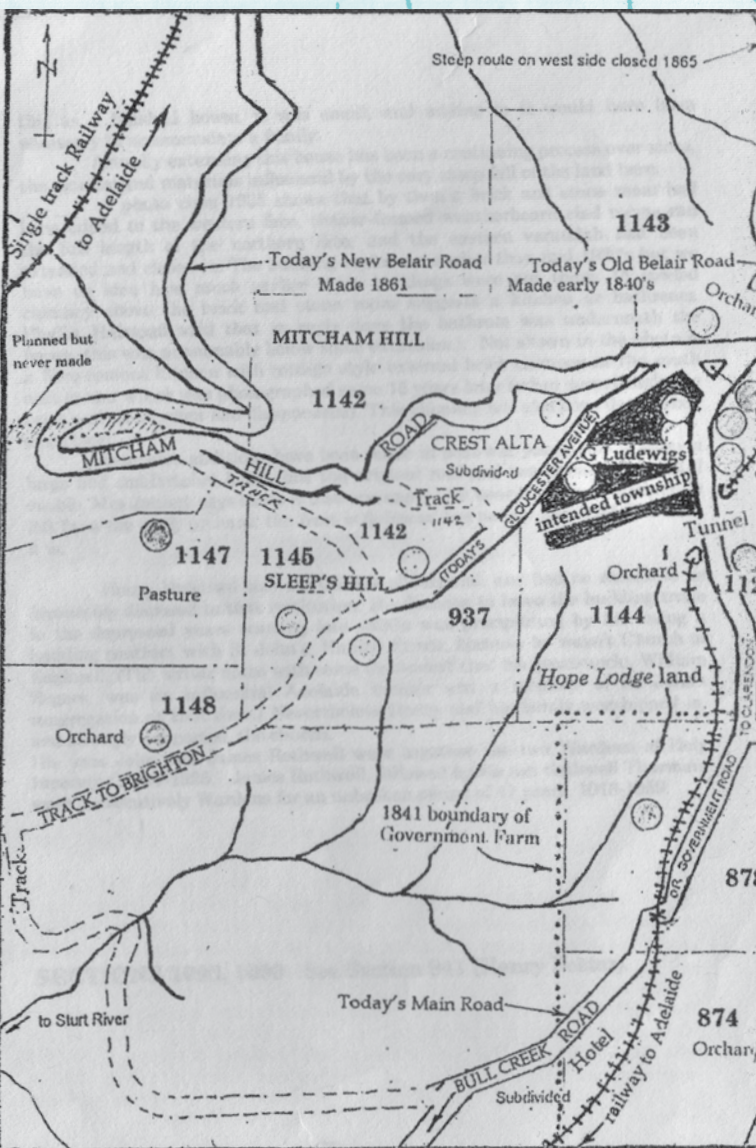
This grand 20/22-roomed Federation style home with its two-storey tower was first named Willa Willa by Dr TK Hamilton who built it in 1897 on the large estate mentioned in Point 19 on page 8. Originally from Ireland, Dr Hamilton was an ENT surgeon and also Commissioner of the Belair National Park.

On his death the estate was subdivided, and the portion containing the grand house was bought in 1919 by William Burford, a prominent industrialist, and soap and candle manufacturer who renamed it Birralee and used it as a summer house.

During WW2 it was used as the Scotch College campus when the school in Torrens Park was requisitioned by the US army as a hospital and then by the RAAF. Within a few weeks of the move to Belair, the tide of war in the Pacific turned and the American military hospital never eventuated.

The Birralee property was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth Government in 1944 to become The Repatriation TB Sanatorium, then from 1952 to 1976, the Repatriation Hospital Birralee. In the 1980s it was used as a drug and alcohol treatment centre known as St Anthony's Hospital and is now a private residence.

Steep route on west side closed 1865



Today's Main Road

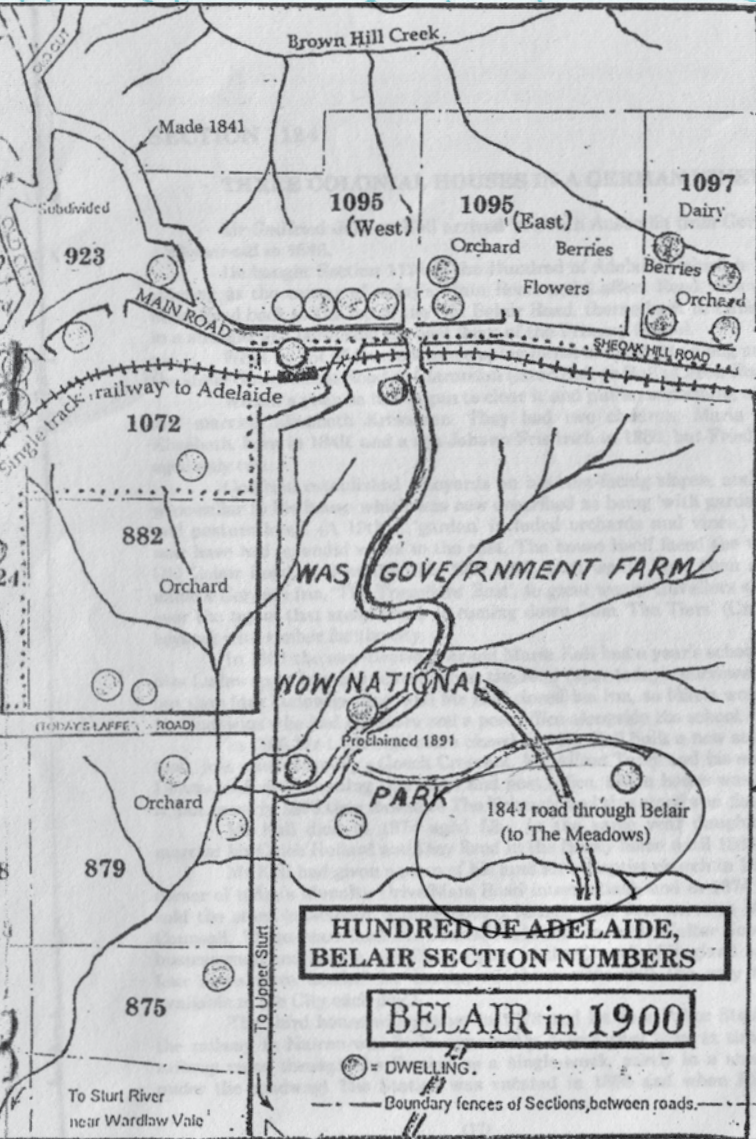
BULL CREEK ROAD
Subdivided

Hotel

railway to Adelaide

874

Orchard





Ardkeen c1900s

21 53 Sheoak Road – Ardkeen

This house was built in 1877 for sea captain and adventurer James Henry Gibbon, the first of two houses built at Belair for him. (see listing 16) Dr T K Hamilton bought the property in 1896 and called it Ardkeen. From here he was able to watch the building of a new 22-roomed house on his adjoining property which he named 'Willa Willa', the Indigenous name for part of Brownhill Creek.

In the 1950s Ardkeen was sold to the Repatriation Commission which indicates it was also used for treatment of WW2 patients with TB. In the 1980s it was sold to private ownership.

Cross Sheoak Road to the corner house 70 Sheoak Road.

22 70 Sheoak Road – House

The history of this house is yet to be discovered. Many of the houses in the vicinity were built by Henry and Matilda Halstead who owned 76 acres between 83 and 107 Sheoak Road in 1893. Henry was a carpenter/builder and built the bridge over the rail line, and the National Park's Upper Lodge and the western entrance lodge off Upper Sturt Road.



National Park Northern Entrance Gates 1933

23

Sheoak Road – National Park Entrance Gates

This park was originally established as the first government farm in 1839 to grow fodder for livestock and spell government owned horses and bullocks. Of particular note, in the 1850s, police guards and their horses that escorted the gold bullion being brought from Victorian goldfields back to families of SA gold prospectors, were rested here. The police gold escort service was a measure taken to rescue an ailing SA economy.

The Governor's summer residence was built here between 1856 and 1860 and used by the Governors McDonnell and Daly between 1860 and 1868. Old Government House is now a museum open to the public at particular times.

In the 1880s the government was under pressure from developers to sell the farm for housing. This subdivision proposal was met with considerable opposition. Recently arrived Belair resident Walter Gooch was particularly notable in his efforts both to prevent the sale and to have the land declared a national park. It was SA's first national park and Australia's second.

For further information read the plaque by the gate before entering the National Park Entrance Gate Number 3.



Top Lodge (date unknown)

Cross the bridge into the park and view the Belair Station to the west as you cross.

24 Overway Bridge

Originally there was a level crossing from Sheoak Road across the tracks at the Mount Lofty end of the platforms, going behind the station and down the hill to Upper Sturt Road. This was the route for most transportation means heading to southern townships and towards Murray Bridge and beyond. Visitors to the adjacent National Park also entered the park from this road. By 1893 so many people were visiting National Park that Overway Bridge, which entered directly into National Park, was built across the Mount Lofty end of the yard. (See 1900 map)

Both road and bridge remained in use until 1914. A fatal accident in 1914 caused the level crossing to be closed and a second bridge at the Adelaide end of the yard to be built, as part of a re-aligned Upper Sturt Road. (Near Sheoak Cafe)

25 Top Lodge

Just inside the park is the Top Lodge (now known as Belair Lodge) where David Campbell and his wife lived from 1915. He was a caretaker and carpenter and built a number of the arbours within the park including the Long Gully Pavilion.

A plaque at the gate to the bridge provides more information about earlier inhabitants.

This completes the Belair East Tour.



141 Sheoak Road late 1960s

To visit other properties of interest in this area, travel approximately 1.5 kilometres heading east along the northern side of Sheoak Road opposite the National Park Entrance Gates.

NB This may well be too far for some to walk.

26 141 Sheoak Road – Sheoak Riding School

This house was built in the late 1870s for Henry Foster a prominent farmer and market gardener of this area. It was once part of a 265 acre market gardening property including several houses known as 'Fosterville'. Two generations of the Foster family lived here until it was sold in 1929. The corner of Sheoak Road and Pony Ridge Road is known colloquially as Foster's Corner. During the 1980s and 1990s a horse-riding school operated here.

27 143 Sheoak Road – Cottage

This small four room stone cottage was built for Henry Foster's son Edwin in the mid 1880s on a quarter acre block of land that was once part of the Foster's property next door.



Nunyara 1909

WALK TWO – Belair West

Start this walk at the car park of the Belair Community Centre, 1 Burnell Drive.

While here, look north through the car park trees and take in the magnificent views of the city of Adelaide.

1 Belair Community Centre

Opened in 1958, designed by notable architect Gordon Brown, the Belair Community Centre was funded significantly by the efforts of the community who were keen to provide opportunities for the youth, with gymnastics being a strong focus.

Now walk north down Burnell Drive to the rear of the Community Centre to the Nunyara Conference Centre.

2 Nunyara Sanatorium

Nunyara means 'restored to health' in the language of the Whyalla 'Barngala' people. This retreat, the third retreat house for Belair, was built in 1902 by Dr Arthur Henry Gault, one of the first doctors to arrive in Mitcham in 1888. Nunyara was built and designed as a hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis. The site for Nunyara met the criteria of fresh mountain air, as found on the hill tops of Belair. During WW2 the buildings were used by the RAAF as a convalescent home. It is now a conference centre owned by the Uniting Church.



Ludewigs' Memorial Plaque

Walk back and cross Sheoak Road to the Belair Triangle gardens next to the Petrol Station to view the Ludewigs' Stone Memorial Plaque.

3 Ludewigs' Memorial Plaque

Ludewigs' house, store, post office and a schoolhouse, a one room 'stone and pug' building, were located where the current shops and the Telstra tower stand. All buildings fronted Main Road, known then as the Clarendon Road.

4 Belair Triangle

The new road from Mitcham, commenced in 1861 coming via Observation Point (now known as Windy Point), cut through Ludewigs' land thus forming what later became known as the Belair Triangle. (Refer to 1900 map on pages 10 and 11.) From 1873 to 1875 Alfred Terry and his sister Miss Terry ran a store built on the triangle. The store closed in 1884 and a farm was established on the Belair Triangle.

At the corner of Burnell Drive and Sheoak Road look east past the triangle to a large property at the top of Old Belair Road (1841 Government Cut Road). This was the location of the Travellers Rest Inn, opened in 1856 by Gottfried Koll to serve those struggling over the brow of the hill and to support the tiersmen bringing timber down from Crafers. Earlier in the 1840s Gottfried Koll established a vineyard with his house and wine cellar. (For further information, refer to WALK ONE: Point 11, 6 Sheoak Road – Green Mount).



Retreat House c1883

The next two sites are along Gloucester Avenue, west of your current location. Taking the pedestrian crossing lights on Main Road to the shops, it is a 45 minute return walk. Driving to these locations may be preferred.

5 29 Gloucester Avenue – St John's Grammar School, Secondary Campus

This imposing two storey stone building, with its twin gables and decorative iron and brick work, was built in 1881 by Daniel Hewett. It was called the Home for Inebriates. It was further extended in 1898. Between 1893 and 1907 it became Hope Lodge where men were trained for Presbyterian missionary work.

Non-paying alcoholic patients were also taken in and work provided for them – dams were built, orchards worked, pig breeding, farming and wood cutting. The inebriates retreat closed in about 1906 and the building was more or less vacant until purchased by the Anglican Church in 1941.

Renamed Retreat House, it was used for church camps and as a conference centre until the bishop established St Barnabas Theological College there in 1965.

St John's Grammar secondary school campus opened in 1999.



Kalyra – Sanatorium 1899

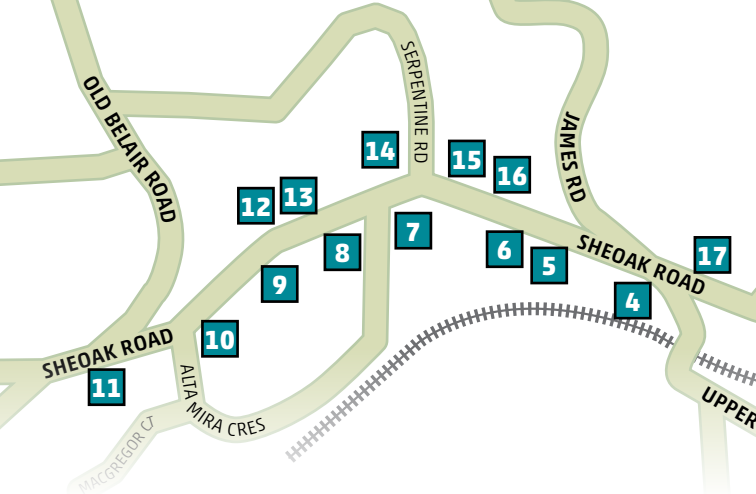
Continue west along Gloucester Avenue to Kalyra Belair Aged Care on your right.

6 Kalyra Belair Aged Care – Corner Gloucester Avenue and Kalyra Road

Well situated to provide the clean air needed, the Kalyra Sanatorium opened in 1894 as a Home for adults and children suffering from tuberculosis. The Belair station 1.5 kilometres away enabled families to visit. Kalyra was the name of a sheep station in the southeast owned by James Brown whose bequest paid for the establishment of the home. In its later years the sanatorium became known as Kalyra Hospital. Kalyra closed in 1988 and, after refurbishment, re-opened as an aged care facility in 1989. The site continues to operate and now includes a retirement village.

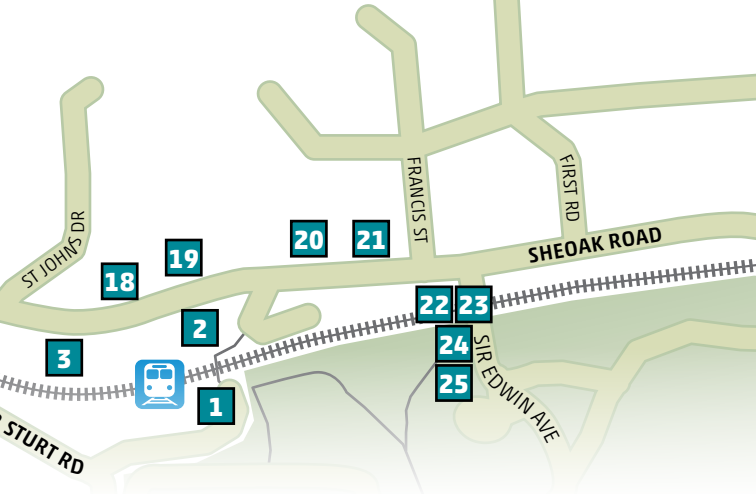
This completes the Belair West Tour

You may wish to travel down Belair Road to Windy Point Lookout for magnificent views over Adelaide and locate key Adelaide sites, with reference to north and west facing panoramic boards. From a dedicated history board, learn about Windy Point's significance to Adelaide's social cultural heritage.



WALK ONE: BELAIR EAST SHEOAK ROAD

- 1** Belair Railway Station and Signal Box
- 2** 50 Sheoak Road – Railway Cottages
- 3** 42 Sheoak Road – St John's Grammar Junior School
- 4** 38 Sheoak Road – Shop, Sheoak Deli
- 5** 28 Sheoak Road – House
- 6** 26 Sheoak Road – House
- 7** 20 Sheoak Road – House
- 8** 18 Sheoak Road – Belair Uniting Church
- 9** Water Tower
- 10** 10 Sheoak Road – Alta Mira
- 11** 6 Sheoak Road – Green Mount
- 12** 19 Sheoak Road – House
- 13** 21 Sheoak Road – Nunkerri
- 14** 25 Sheoak Road – BARRYNE/Helping Hand Retirement Units
- 15** 29 Sheoak Road – Belair Parish Hall
- 16** 31 Sheoak Road – Day Care Centre, Former House
- 17** 35A Sheoak Road – School Chapel, Former Anglican Church
- 18** 43 Sheoak Road – House
- 19** 45 Sheoak Road – Willa Willa
- 20** 49-51 Sheoak Road – Birralelee (formerly Willa Willa)
- 21** 53 Sheoak Road – Ardkeen
- 22** 70 Sheoak Road – House
- 23** Sheoak Road – National Park Entrance Gates
- 24** Overway Bridge
- 25** Top Lodge
- 26** 141 Sheoak Road – Sheoak Riding School
- 27** 143 Sheoak Road – Cottage



WALK TWO: BELAIR WEST

- 1** Belair Community Centre
- 2** Nunyara Sanatorium
- 3** Ludewigs' Memorial Plaque
- 4** Belair Triangle
- 5** 29 Gloucester Avenue
– St John's Grammar School,
Secondary Campus
- 6** Kalyra Belair Aged Care
– Corner Gloucester Avenue
and Kalyra Road



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