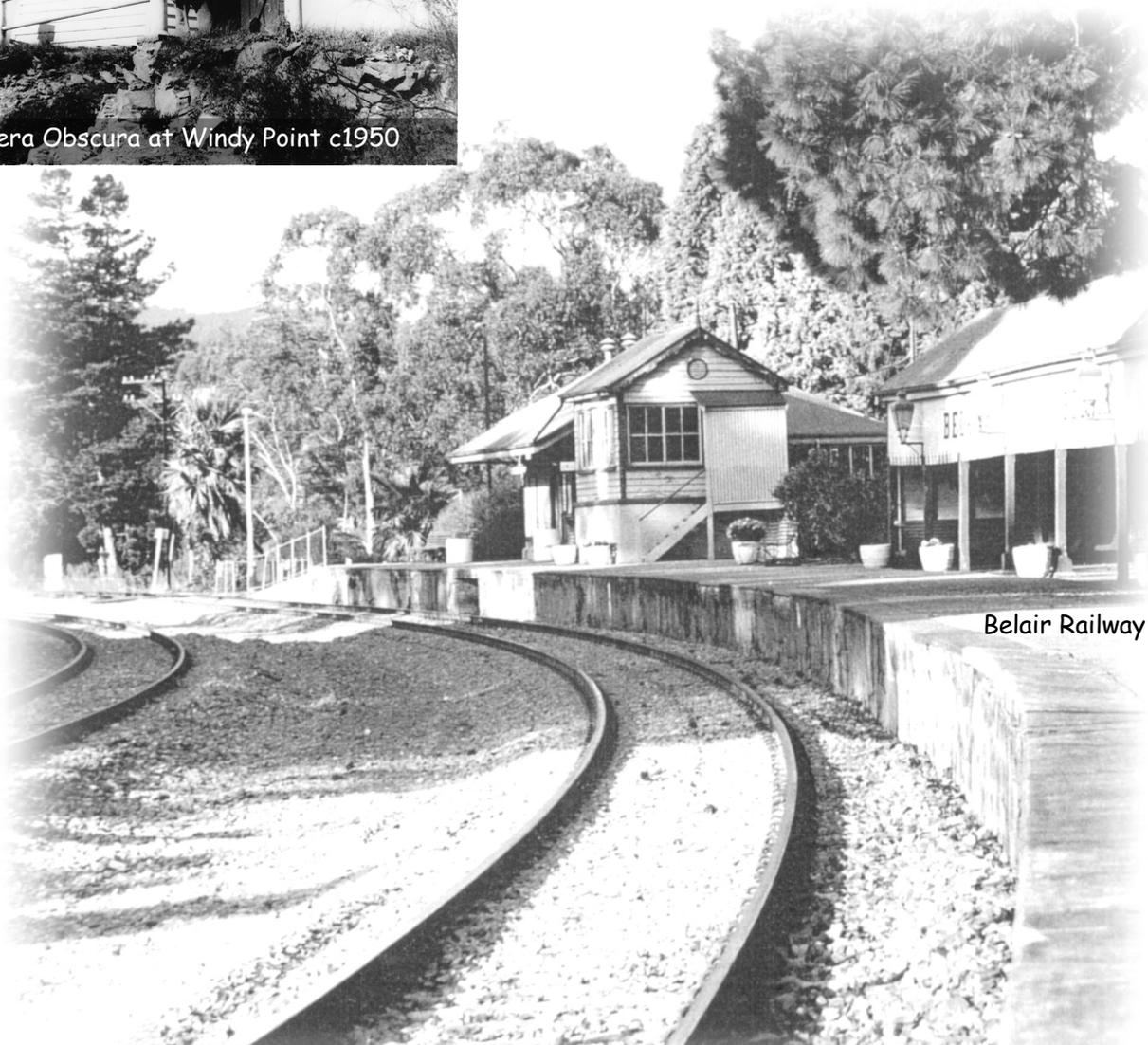


The Park Ward



Camera Obscura at Windy Point c1950



Belair Railway Station



Forest Avenue Bitser Club - Hawthorndene 1955



Glenalta, early 20th century

The Park Ward



Belair National Park Gate c1930

Named, of course, after Belair National Park, second park established in Australia and first in South Australia, proclaimed in 1891 after a decade of lobbying.

The National Park was set aside by the South Australian Government in 1840 as 'Government Farm', a place where government horses could be rested. Hay was grown there for police horses. It was unsuccessfully proposed to sell the Farm during the depressed times of the early 1840s. Six gardeners living on small parcels of un-surveyed Crown Land near the park were motivated to petition the Chief Secretary to be allowed to stay. At least they could support their families by living on what they could grow. Governor MacDonnell had a summer residence built there in 1858.

When the Hills railway route was finalised in 1883, it was decided to sell Government Farm, as the allotments along Sheoak Road owned by the Hills Land and Investment Company were selling well. One of the new residents, Walter Gooch began successfully to lobby the Government and arouse community interest over the next eight years or so in having the area dedicated as a Park.

The railway is a major corridor through Mitcham Hills and was influential in opening up the area for settlement as it transported commuters and visitors, produce and stock to and from the district.

Interestingly, the Belair Hotel is in Blackwood and began its life as the Blackwood Inn. The first publican, Robert Burfield of 'Blackwood Vale Farm' lived in present-day Glenalta. The Blackwood and District Community Hospital is now defined as being in Belair and the Blackwood Public Schools are in Eden Hills! This occurred because of the scattered, rural village-style settlements of Coromandel Valley, Belair, Blackwood and Eden Hills, and the influence of the railway on subdivisions from the 1880s. Suburban boundaries were not defined until postcodes were introduced in 1967.

BELAIR

In 1858 Gustav Ludewigs began to lease 12 and 15 acre portions of his Section 1144, part of Belair Village, to Robert Dall an Adelaide woodcarter and to Samuel Chapman a farmer, each for seven years. They were to lay out the land "as a garden ground and plant with vines and fruit trees".

Meanwhile nearby, 'Kalyra Consumptive Sanatorium' had been established in 1892 under the James Brown Memorial Fund. James Brown had been a pastoralist at many places including 'Keilira Station' near Avenue Ranges in the South East.

Built in 1902 and perched on the north side of the Belair Hills is 'Nunyara' which captures the warmth of the winter sun. This helped the consumptive patients of Mitcham's Dr Arthur Gault, who was also the Council's health inspector for a time. Between 1947 and 1957 the Cooperative Building Society with A.R. Burnell and later V.L. Cornish as company secretaries, subdivided the area around 'Nunyara'.

COROMANDEL VALLEY

Coromandel Valley originally was defined from the south side of Belair Railway Station, running down the valley where Minno Creek flows to the Sturt 'River'. This feature provided fertile creek flats for a vineyard which by 1862 was producing enough grapes to warrant the construction of a wine cellar which still stands on Hannaford Reserve, Belair. Apple and pear orchards were established through present day Glenalta along with grazing land for dairy cows and sheep. The reserves through Hawthorndene were originally used as hay paddocks for Hewett's horses which carted the building materials to their various building sites. The Blackwood Experimental Orchard (Hawthorndene) experimented with various fruit trees and management of orchards between 1908 and 1972-3. One of the last pear orchards in the district is 'Swinton' which straddles the Sturt Creek, Mitcham/Onkaparinga Council boundary. This is one of the oldest properties in the district still owned by descendants of the original Turner pioneers.



Magarey's orchard - Coromandel Valley, 1920



Blackwood Railway Station c1910

BLACKWOOD

Blackwood Railway Station was the first built on the Hills Railway by 1883. Adjoining it was the Sturt Producers Co-operative Cold Store, originally built in 1914, to enable fruit to be transported easily by rail to far flung places. In recent years it has been used for other warehouse storage and was burnt out in mid-October, 2003.

Another local heritage building is Gamble Cottage, donated to the community through Council in the early 1980s. A group of people care for the cottage garden on the corner of Dorham and Keith Roads and the Coromandel Valley and Districts Branch of the National Trust

look after the interior of the cottage which is available for hire and exhibitions. It was built in 1902 for William Gamble and his family.

Mrs Eleanor Davies Thomas was also a benefactor to this part of Blackwood, being a great supporter of the Anglican Church, All Hallows. She donated land for the Blackwood Scout Troop. In accepting another gift of land, between Edgecombe and Main Road, Mitcham Council of the day expressed "most grateful thanks for this very generous and public spirited gift". In their acknowledgement they stated "this land to be held for all time by this Council and not to be built upon". This has become the Davies Thomas Reserve where many indigenous plants survive today.

HAWTHORNDENE

Hawthorndene was subdivided for walking with its streets going around the ridges and hills rather than up and over, and when this was necessary, they are linked by walking paths. The Town Planning Act was still very new in the mid 1920s, and the required provision for open-space and parks was well provided for along Minno Creek flood flats. These had been used for growing hay for Hewett's horses which drew their trolleys loaded with building materials around the district. The Hewett family owned most of Hawthorndene and by 1914 reputedly had built over half of the houses in the Blackwood area.

GLENALTA

Glenalta has the reputation of being the greenest suburb in the metropolitan area when viewed by satellite. Pome fruit was grown in the orchards at the head of Minno Creek, known in the early days as Coromandel Valley. Later, the area was used by Legh Winser and Timothy Quinlan-Watson to graze their horses and sheep.



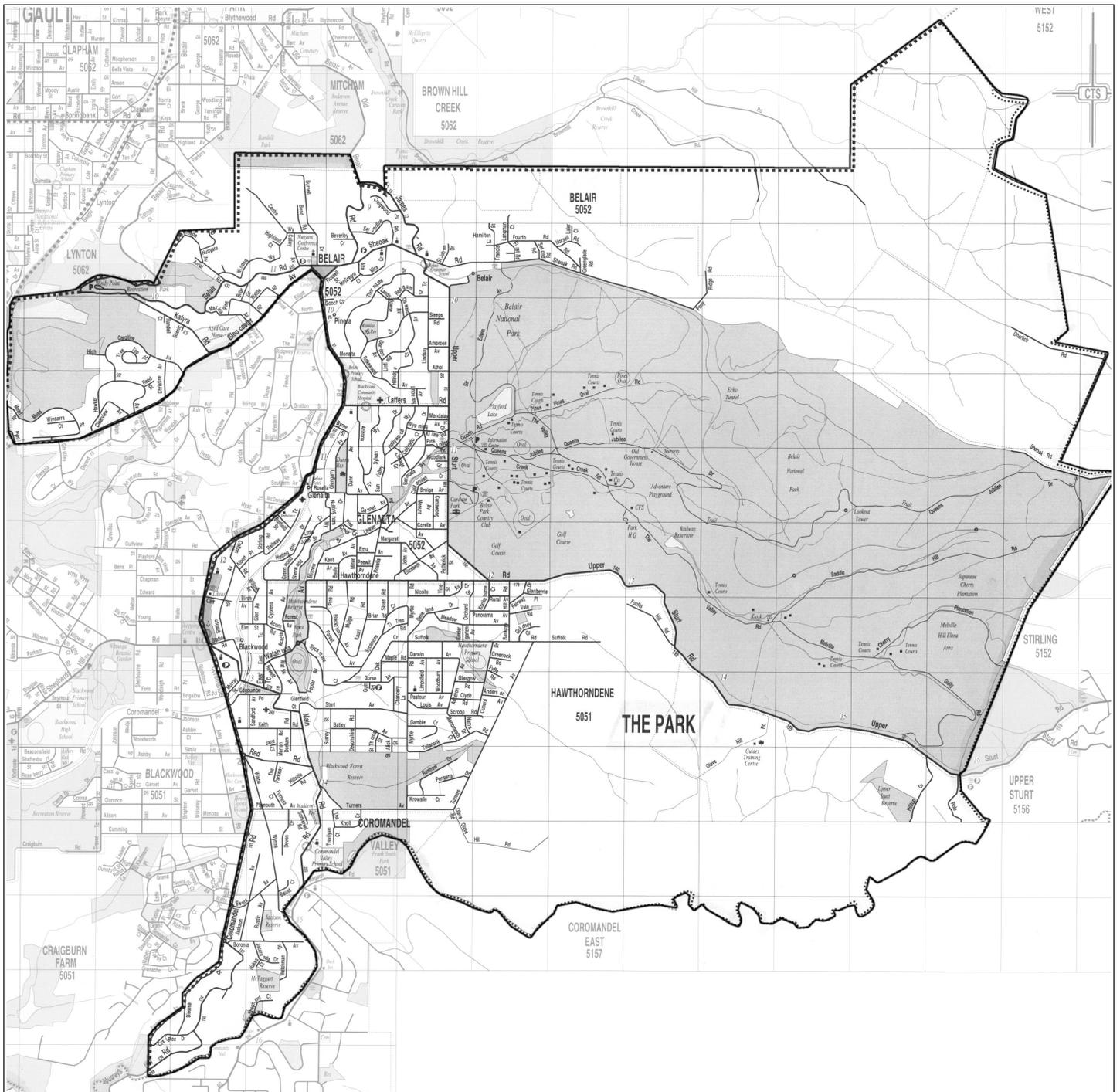
Above right: Clara & Fred Wescombe, Hawthorndene c1930

John Wescombe arrived in South Australia in 1838 and established himself at Upper Sturt. Some of his descendants established an orchard at Hawthorndene in the early 20th century.

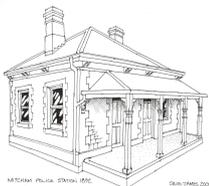
Left: Gamble Cottage c1910



The Park Ward Map



The Park Ward includes the suburbs, Hawthorndene and Glenalta and parts of Blackwood, Belair, Coromandel Valley and Crafers West.



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