

Butchering in Mitcham



At a council meeting in 1856 a letter was read by the Town Clerk, stating that it was the intention of some of the butchers of the city to erect slaughtering-places adjacent to the city. It was resolved, that the Clerk acknowledge the receipt of the letter, and state that the District Council was not as yet aware of the erection of any slaughtering-places. However it was only a matter of months before Mr. Crossman of 'Trenboth Farm', asked for a licence to erect a slaughterhouse on the sections 253 and 254, Glen Osmond Road, once part of the District Council of Mitcham. A memorial was read from ratepayers, nine for and one against, and the licence was granted provided the place was a mile beyond the city boundary.



Butchers Bob and Arthur Thorpe - Mitcham



Thorpe butcher shop Mitcham c1890

By the 1890s regular inspections were being made of butcher shops and the adjoining slaughter yards. Early in 1891 Mr RW Thorpe was directed to pave and drain his pig sty in Taylor's Road, Mitcham Village and within a few weeks the premises were reported to be 'very clean and tidy and in every way a contrast to the other butchers.' Later in the following year butchers approved by the Council were allowed to run sheep on unmade roads and reserves to keep down star thistles. The stock were required to 'be shepherded and kept out of mischief'.

The Health Inspector considered George Conquest's butcher's premises at the corner of Princes Road and Waverley Street, Mitcham, 'Very unsatisfactory...the blood pit was un-emptied, no lime was used (to absorb moisture and smells) and offal etc was put with ordinary refuse and only removed once a fortnight!'

By 1893 there were the following butchers around the district: George Conquest, H Dower and E Penley & Co. Henry Daw on South Road and R Wakeham Hawthorn and possibly others like Winn and Scroop in Coromandel Valley.

The turn of the century brought the following report on butcher's establishments Mr Thorpe now needed to make some more changes the pig yard was to be removed from the slaughter house and the slaughter house needed to be paved and drained into an impervious vessel with close fitting cover to take blood.

The privy in the slaughterhouse was to be removed and the manure to be kept by itself and not have bones etc mixed with it. In fact all garbage was to have non porous vessels with close fitting covers and the premises generally to be cleaned up and kept in better order. Similar was required of Mr Raggett and Mr Daw's cattle slaughter house was to have impervious walls six feet from floor and above that to have proper ventilators fixed and an impervious vessel for the reception of blood was to be provided. The sheep slaughter house needed to have the walls replaced where they are crumbling away also the floor raised to ground level, properly laid and an old rat-trap to be removed. The premises where meal was kept was old and required to be thoroughly overhauled and reconstructed in parts. The inspector reported that,... the following improvements were necessary to bring the Slaughter Houses and mode of conducting same up to standard required by the Health Act and Regulations and Council resolved that the owners have notice to effect the following alterations etc within 21 days from date of notice.

Henry Daw's slaughtering licence was withheld for most of the following year while the renovations were carried out and although finally granted at the end of the year, but his premises were 'condemned as unfit to carry on the slaughtering of cattle for sale for human consumption' in 1906.

In 1913, A Mason of Blackwood wrote to the Local Board of Health making application to be granted a licence to slaughter sheep at the back of his shop premises at Blackwood.



The Conquest family in front of their butcher's shop in Princes Road Mitcham - 1893



Butchers Jim Kennedy (Centre) and Cyril Grove (Right)
c1922

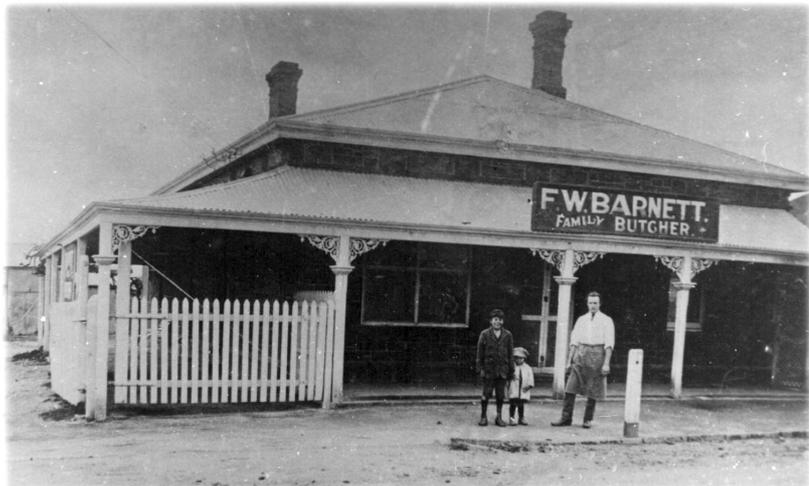
Many butchers delivered their meat early in the morning for freshness and before the flies became too thick. In the days before refrigeration, meat was left hanging in a meat safe down in the cellar or cooked as soon as possible to provide an endless supply of cold meat or potted meat during the summer months and stews during the winter.

Mrs Nan Bruse of Belair, 1941-1994 remembered:
'Jimmy Scroop use to deliver for the butchers, he did a round say, like, it might have been Monday, Wednesday, Friday in Belair. He would come every other day, kind of thing, and he would collect your order. I would leave a meatsafe outside, by the back door in the shade and so if he delivered he would always put it in there. He took your order and brought it back next time. And night time when he visited his friend down there, I use [to] put a lamp there and he would bring it over. And when I saw the lamp out I would know the meat was there in the meat-safe.'
(Mrs Nan Bruse of Belair 1941 – 1994 driven along Sheoak Road and interviewed 8 January 1993)



134-138 Victoria Tce (now Belair Road) Hawthorn showing Kennedy's butcher shop - late 1930s

By now there were many small retail butchers dotted throughout the suburbs and wholesale butchers like Mases Meat which operated on the corner of Grange and Belair Roads, Lower Mitcham (where there is a chicken take-away today). In Mitcham Hills in 1953 there was much discussion on the supply of meat either from the Metropolitan Abattoirs at Dry Creek or from nearby butchers, Jackson, Jones or Scroop. Jackson and Jones bought their stock from Dry Creek anyway and drove them through the streets of Blackwood from the railway station to their stockyards in Coromandel Valley or Blackwood Hill Reserve respectively.



F.W. Barnett in front of his Princes Road shop

There is the story of a young mother abandoning the pusher containing her young child on sight of a mob of approaching cattle. To save the child, Mr Jones rode ahead of the mob on his horse and dismounting, grabbed the pusher and pleaded with the frightened mother to come and retrieve it. Meanwhile the cattle were wandering all over the place up or down driveways and into people's gardens.

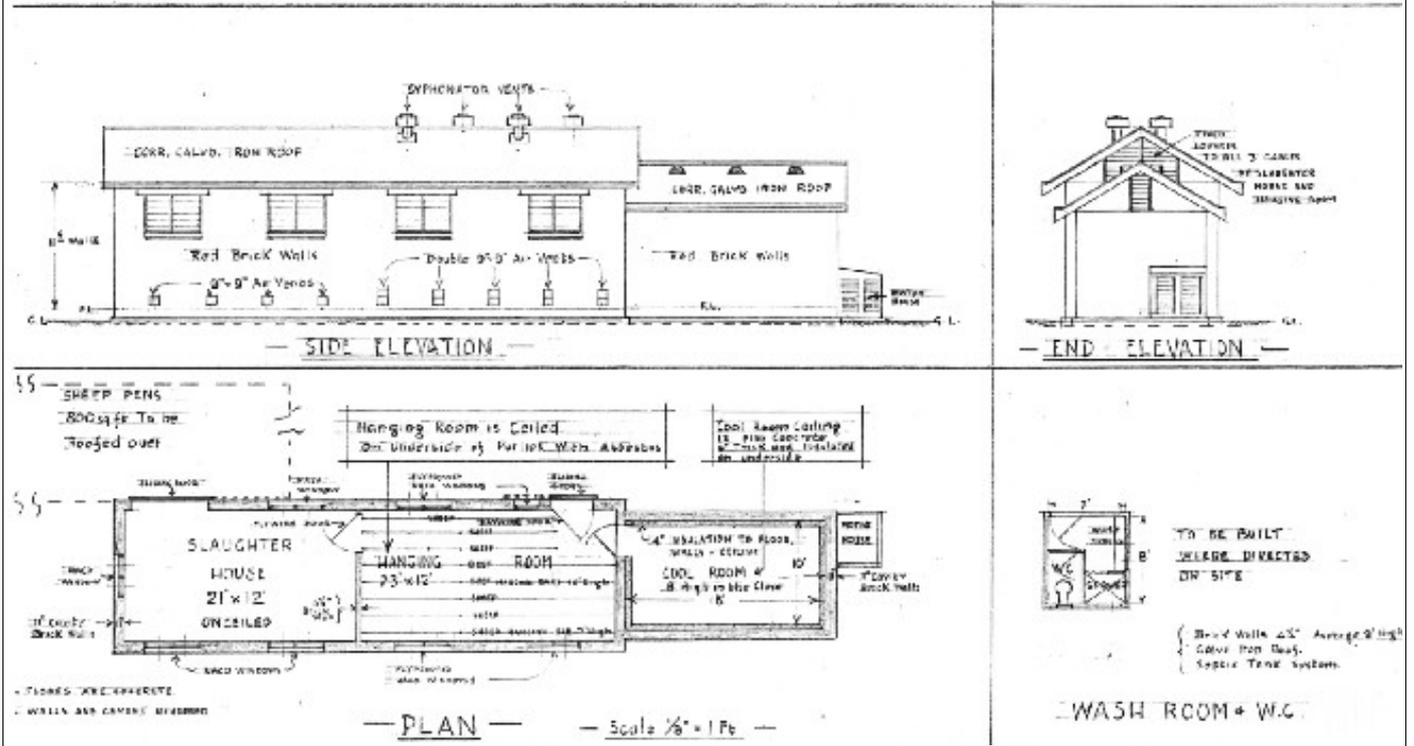
Mr Scroop proposed to be a wholesale butcher and submitted plans to council to build a new slaughterhouse at Hawthorndene, just outside the Metropolitan Abattoirs inspection area, to serve the retail butchers, at that stage

Jackson and Jones. However, over 60 people of Hawthorndene protested as 'at the present time the district has no efficient means of disposal of rubbish and garbage...Add to this a slaughter yard in the district and the danger is increased manifold...'

Finally the matter was resolved when Council wrote to the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board... 'Further consideration has been given to the matter of the extension of the abattoirs to the whole of the City of Mitcham, and my council would appreciate it if the whole of the area could be served as from the 1st July 1956.'

— PROPOSED SLAUGHTERHOUSE AT WARDLAWVALE —

— FOR —



Obviously there is more to be told about this subject but spare a thought about the traditional butchers when next you choose a cut of meat on a polystyrene tray or notice that emptied, tile fronted corner store that may once have been a butcher's shop.



Butcher G. F. Conquest on his delivery buggy c1900



Passfield Meat Store Murray St Clapham June 1990



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