

Babbage Ward



CITY OF
MITCHAM



Benjamin Babbage

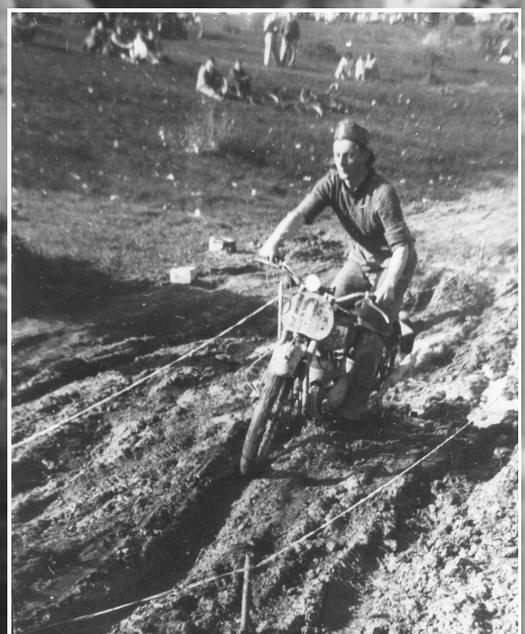
Benjamin Herschel Babbage, son of Charles Babbage the inventor of the mechanical calculating machine the forerunner of the computer had already had a significant career as a railway engineer in Europe before he came to SA in 1851 as Gold Assayer. He bought the property of JW Daw at St Marys and in 1857 led an expedition to the north of SA where he named St Marys Peak - the highest in the Flinders Ranges.

He was the Engineer of the Port Railway, the first line constructed in South Australia (opened 1856) and the first government owned railway in the British Empire.

BH Babbage was one of the five original members appointed by proclamation of 10th May, 1853 to form the first District Council in colonial South Australia, that of Mitcham. He was its first Chairman serving until 1855.



Early settlers of the St Mary's area, John & Ellen Oriana Daw with child.

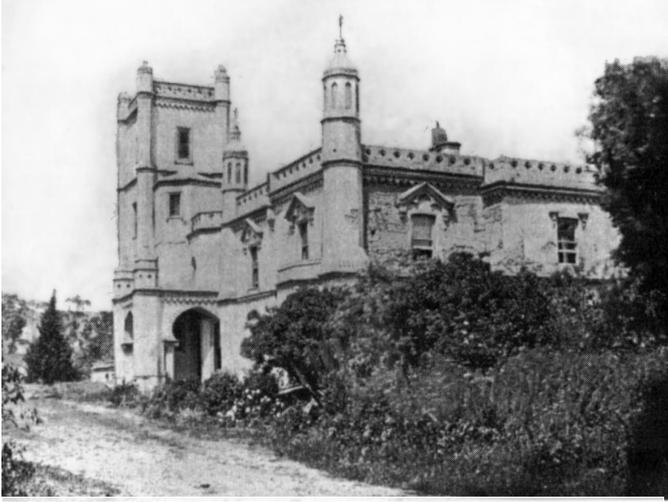


Motorcycle Scramble Track at Sleeps Hill, Panorama c1951

The ruins of BH Babbage's 'The Rosary' also known as 'Babbage's Castle' 1920s.

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John Wickham Daw bought 1000 acres of land at the first South Australian land sale in London. He and his wife Ellen left for South Australia on the 'Winchester' arriving in 1838. After the first generation of the Daw family moved away from home, JW Daw (senior) subdivided the South Road frontage of his property as St Marys Village and built a smaller house on the corner of what was to become Daws Road and South Road. The large homestead and remaining several hundred acres was sold to Benjamin H. Babbage who established a vineyard making his own wine and a 'rosary' collecting cuttings from a wide circle of friends.



Ben Babbage's 'Castle' (The Rosary) as originally built in the 1870s. The ruins provided refuge for homeless families during the Depression of the 1930s.

The 1870s were not happy years for the Babbage family as they suffered various misfortunes; Ben continued with only periodic government employment and their house was burnt. With systematic and disciplined calculations, Ben proceeded to build another house which he called 'The Rosary', in a grand style inspired by Italian memories. The building soon became locally known as the 'Castle'. Built of local lime concrete mixed with brackish water it soon developed a massive salt damp problem.



The 15 room 'Castle' soon began to crumble as did Ben's health. He died in October 1878 and The Rosary was never completed, although his married daughter continued to live there for a number of years, moving from room to room as each collapsed.

By the time the land was subdivided in the 1930s as Castle Estate and St Marys Park, only a few low walls remained. Today, an old olive tree in a Donald Street garden and a door-knocker in another suburb are the only physical remnants of the building and its gardens.

Bedford Park Sanatorium 'Chalet' 1 c1950

The sanatorium opened in 1917 to serve returned soldiers with consumption (TB). Civilians were admitted after 1926 and the institution continued in operation until 1961. Bedford Park was also a working farm throughout much of this period and the patients helped out in the fields and orchards as well as learning crafts and later opening a radio station.

Heritage Opportunity

Perhaps both sides of a street of Housing Trust houses could be preserved with their original 1950s exteriors - being symbolic of post World War II era highlighting housing material shortages and a time of progress and profit without consideration for the environment and the consequences of social isolation.

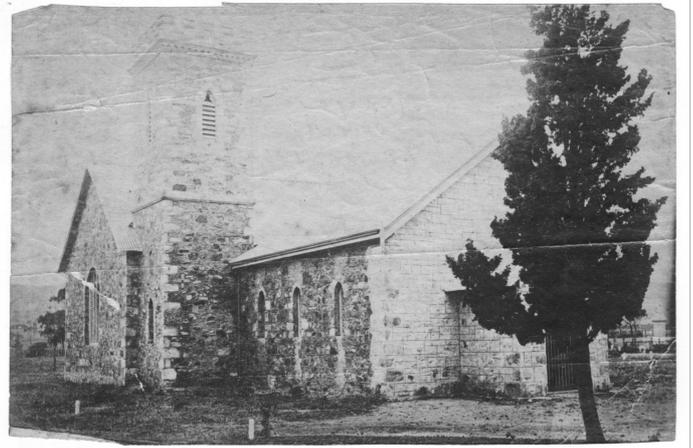


Left: Helen E Lewin, probably at St Marys c1880 - Helen Lewin taught at St Marys School from 1878 to 1888 and later ran the Brownhill Creek School from 1902 until its closure in 1924.

Features

Some of the earliest quarries in the City of Mitcham were between Eyre and Port Lincoln Boulevard, Pasadena. These were excavated by the Ayliffe family as early as 1844 to build South Road between Watt's Bridge (Mitsubishi) and St Marys Cross Roads (Daws Road). However, Thomas Ayliffe built his house from mustard and brown coloured blue-stone around 1838 and supplied the harder quartzite to build present day St Marys Church in 1846.

St Marys Church, the second oldest Anglican Church in the 'country' is surrounded by a cemetery filled with the community's pioneers. A congregation was established here in 1841 and later Ben Babbage served as a Lay-reader.



St Marys Anglican Church built, 1847. Ben Babbage was buried here in 1878

Shephards Hill Reserve is the only reserve that links the natural environment of the hills and plains. Named after Mrs Ann Shephard and her family who owned the hill over which Council built its first road after its formation in 1853.

Centennial Park Cemetery serves the wider community and was set aside to commemorate SA's centenary of settlement in 1936.

In 1958 the SA Housing Trust built its first cottages for the aged on The Crescent at St Marys.



Ann Shephard



Flinders University from the air in 1979

Flinders University was opened in 1966 by the Queen Mother at Bedford Park and completes the full range of educational levels available across the City of Mitcham.

Historic Extract

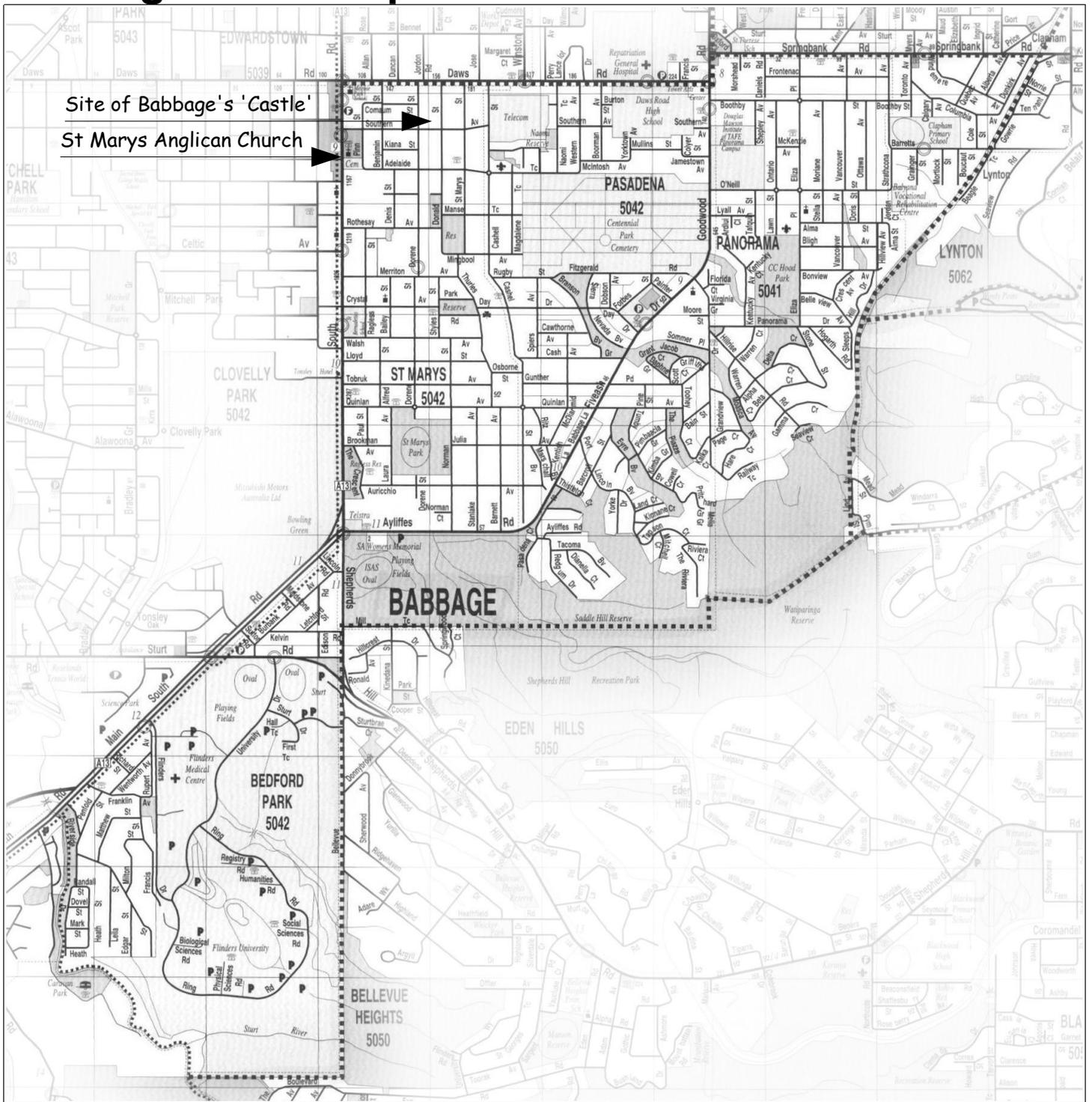
Council Minutes for May 1898 state that rubbish deposited on sections 10-11 ('Sarnia') by Mr R Mitchell, the official rubbish contractor for Unley & Mitcham Councils, had been burning for days and the smoke was offensive to nearby residents. Mr Mitchell then bought pigs which were permitted to rummage amongst the tipplings and eat any vegetable matter. Hard rubbish was simply dumped in the creeks that ran through the paddocks. By 1902 the Council Health Officer reported that these arrangements were unsatisfactory and a furnace was eventually built which burnt rubbish day and night. Part of this area is today Centennial Park Cemetery and it is an interesting thought that some of the people might have been buried with their own rubbish.

From captured conversations on a 'Slow Bus Trip' around the district this story was shared:- 'There was also an old fellow over by the Centennial Park Cemetery and it took him a couple of years to move along one creek there and melt all the metal out of the tins. And what he used for heating was the cow pats. They were quite solid and they burnt well.'



Dick Ragless rolling his crop on what was later to become South Road Estate (St Marys) 1909

Babbage Ward Map



Babbage Ward includes the suburbs: Bedford Park, Panorama, Pasadena, St Marys and the southern part of Clapham.

Until the introduction of postcodes in the 1960s parts of the area had many different names.

Bedford Park:— Burbank

St Marys:— Castle Estate, South Road Estate

Clapham:— Haddington Estate, St James Park

Pasadena:— Quinton Hill, Springbank Gardens, Goodwood Road Estate Extension, Centennial Park

Panorama:— Springbank



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