

McElligott's Quarry Reserve



Origin of the Name

The area now known as McElligott's Quarry has had other names during its existence. It was known as one of the Brownhill Creek Quarries in its early years because of its close proximity to the Brownhill Creek Recreation Park. For a period after 1957, it was known as the Fullarton Dump. In the 1980s, its name was changed to McElligott's Quarry Reserve.

The McElligotts were a family living in Mitcham in the late 1800s and into the 1900s. The family at that time included John McElligott Sr, his wife Elizabeth, and their sons John Jr, Michael and Mortimer. The four men were part of a contracting business and operated the quarry from 1899 to around 1934, when quarrying operations ceased. Their operation peaked around World War One.

As part of their contracting business, the McElligotts also supplied metal for the construction and repair of roads (ie Hoggs Road). This came from the Brownhill Creek Metal Quarry, occupied by John McElligott Sr from 1906 to 1911. Michael had two sons (John and Michael Jr) and they also worked in the quarry for a short time.

Other Owners

The McElligotts were not the only family to own and use the quarry. One notable owner was Scotsman Charles Anderson who, by 1858, had taken up part of the area (of Section 1094) for his quarrying industry. His business was one of the biggest in the district. Consequently, Anderson was prominent in the early development of the quarry. Incidentally, quarrying was itself one of Mitcham's biggest industries at that time. Developers held the quarry between 1948-1955. The Mitcham Council purchased it in the 1980s and began to consider options for its redesign.



Special Features

Quartzite was a major feature of McElligott's Quarry during its years as a source of stone. These days, being a reserve, there is a lot less visible quartzite than before because a large area of the quarry has since been filled in, as well as the fact that the area was used as a rubbish dump. Despite this, there are still a number of thick quartzite units separated by slate. This has been identified as Precambrian-around 750 million years old. Geological groups and universities have found it a source of interest because of the faulting and folding of rock that has taken place over millions of years. It is of such significance that the South Australian Division of the Geological Society of Australia classified the quarry as a geological monument.

Activity on the Park

McElligott's Quarry has been used since the early years of South Australia. It was one of the earliest and biggest quarries in Mitcham, opening in 1858. Obviously, the most notable activity involved quarrying. This continued until the early-to-mid 1930s and employed up to twenty people at a time. The stone that was quarried was used to build a number of buildings and other structures, such as St Michael's Church (1848) and Scotch College (1854). Stone from the quarry was also used for a bridge over Brownhill Creek (1866) and the Outer Harbour Breakwater (early 1900s).

There were few mechanical arrangements available for transporting stone from McElligott's Quarry in the early years. Therefore, large blocks had to be loaded, by hand, onto five horse trolleys and then into railway trucks at Mitcham Station for transport. Rock unsuitable as building stone was crushed for construction purposes. Although this was not a frequent activity, pistol shooting took place in McElligott's Quarry. There was, during World War One, a rifle range adjacent to the quarry. During the 1930s, on occasion, bank clerks were taught pistol shooting in the quarry itself. The quarry was also used as a rubbish dump during the years 1957-1985. It was open to the public until 1982 and the Corporation of the City of Mitcham until 1985. It was transformed into a public reserve and re-opened in 1990.



Current Description

McElligott's Quarry is currently owned by the Mitcham Council. It still has many of its geological formations. Some parts of the quarry, such as its western part, were filled in during its years as a rubbish dump. Today, there is a car park where quarries one and two were once linked. One side of the reserve looks out over Brownhill Creek Recreation Park and another side is where much of the remaining rock is visible. There are a number of signs explaining some of the history of the quarry and its geological significance. In the middle is a large green area with swings and barbecue facilities.

Aside from this is the view. On a clear day, a number of recognisable Adelaide sights can be seen. These include the Adelaide CBD, Outer Harbour, Adelaide Airport, the Morphettville Racecourse and Glenelg.

Resources

Fullarton Dump/McElligott's Quarry Rehabilitation and Development Concept Plan, 1986.

The City of Mitcham Quarries, 1999.

City of Mitcham Open Space Survey, 1982.

The Torrens Park Estate, Priess and Oborn, 1991.

Bulletin of the Field Geology Club of SA, vol 27, no.9.

Mitcham Local History Collection MIT1 QA00001 & BHC1 LT00001.



