

Chapter 1

A VILLAGE CALLED MITCHAM

THE Village of Mitcham was one of the first settlements south of Adelaide. It was laid out in 1840 by the South Australian Company on Section 248 at the point where the Brownhill Creek issues from the surrounding hills (Fig.1-1). With the first white settlers came many of their English traditions: a High Street, a Village Green (now the Mitcham Memorial Reserve) and cricket matches. However, one of the traditions that was not imported was the established union between Church and State. In matters of religion, members of the Church of England in the Village were in unfamiliar territory having to fend for themselves without government support.

Ecclesiastical arguments raging in Britain during the early 1830s had a marked influence on the founding of South Australia. The 'Dissenters' – Protestant groups such as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists – wanted religious liberty and equality and the dis-establishment of the entrenched union between Church and State. For example, Dissenters and Roman Catholics had, until 1829, been barred from taking political office, and had to pay tithes to Church of England clergy and contribute towards the upkeep and repair of parish churches. They were not permitted to conduct marriages in their own chapels, nor to bury their dead in parish churchyards.

Until this time the British Government had made provision for the establishment and financial support of the Church of England in all its new colonies. But many of those involved in the foundation of South Australia were Dissenters. They insisted that there should be no preferential treatment for the Church of England in the new Province; no discrimination between religious denominations; and no financial support from the government for religious purposes. Each group would have to be self-supporting and use voluntary contributions from their own flocks to build churches and pay the stipends of ministers. Much to the Dissenters' disgust, the original Bill introduced into the parliament was amended by the House of Lords to include a clause authorising the Crown to appoint a Colonial Chaplain with a stipend of £250. His duties were to include conducting marriages, burying the dead and visiting the inmates of gaols. And so it was that a Church of England clergyman, the Reverend Charles Beaumont Howard, arrived with Governor Hindmarsh on the *Buffalo* in December 1836.

A flimsy wooden-framed church, shipped from England, was erected on North Terrace on a Town Acre donated by Pascoe St Ledger Grenfell (after whom Grenfell Street is named) and a year later the foundation stone of Trinity Church was laid by the Governor. Howard was joined in 1840 by Reverend James Farrell, and during 1841 three churches were built: St John's in Halifax Street, St Mary's on the South Road and St Paul's at Port Adelaide. Much

of the finance for these ventures was donated by generous benefactors, or raised in Britain by groups such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.). In 1839 a group within the new Province, supported by a new governor, George Gawler, formed the South Australian Church Building Society.

Howard died in July 1843 (at the age of thirty-six) and Farrell struggled on alone until 1846 when four clergymen arrived in South Australia: W.H. Coombs, who went north to Gawler; J. Pollitt to Blakiston in the Mount Barker district; W.J. Woodcock took over St John's in Halifax Street; and G.C. Newenham went to St Paul's at Port Adelaide. The first three had had their stipends and passages from England financed by the S.P.G., whereas George Newenham – whose father was to become the first Minister's Warden of St Michael's – had been ordained by the Bishop of Tasmania. For eleven years until the first bishop, Augustus Short, arrived on 28th December 1847, Adelaide was part of the Diocese of Australia administered from Sydney. Short's appointment only came about through the generosity of Miss (later Baroness) Burdett-Coutts who gave an initial gift of £17,500 to endow the Bishopric of Adelaide and to provide for the Bishop's stipend and residence.

New legislation providing some aid to religious groups was introduced by Governor Robe in 1846. Between then and 1851 seventeen Church of England congregations received grants totalling £7,287 to assist in the building of churches or parsonages. One of those was St Michael's at Mitcham.¹

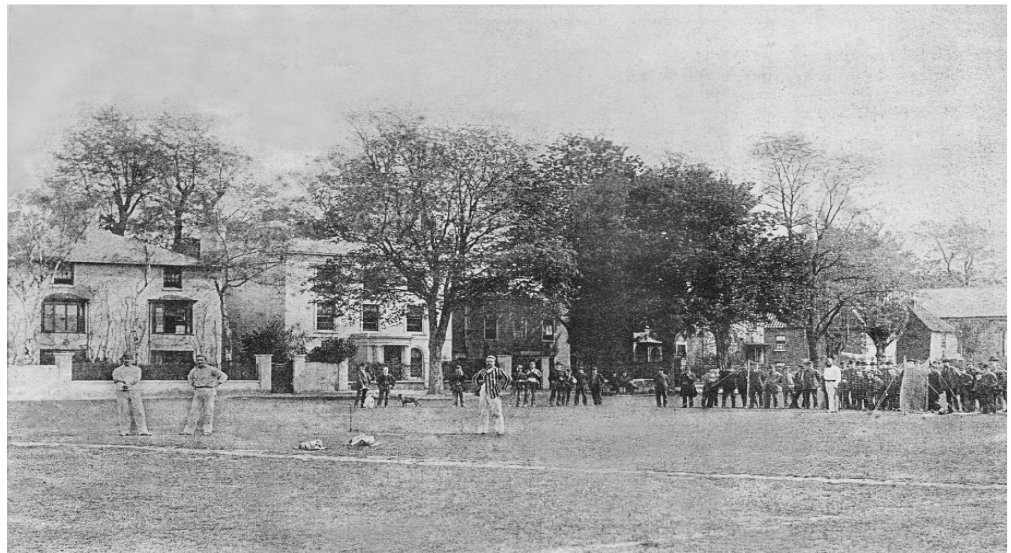
This is the story of a group of people who lived in Mitcham Village and how they came to build a church in which to worship according to their Anglican traditions. It is told in a series of extracts from 'letters' written by a 'resident', to her 'English cousin in Mitcham, Surrey'. Whilst the scribes are fictitious, all other persons mentioned did reside in the district at the 'time of writing'. Many local streets bear the names of those early parishioners or of their houses, some of which still stand after 150 years.

* * *

But first, a thumb-nail sketch of that other Mitcham, in Surrey, after which ours was named. Today it is a highly developed residential and light industrial area on the southern outskirts of Greater London. The famous Wimbledon Tennis Centre is within two or three miles of Mitcham, as is Merton Abbey where many of Morris & Company's glorious fabrics, carpets, tapestries, wallpapers and embroideries were produced along the banks of the Wandle River. These three districts – Wimbledon, Merton and Mitcham – now form the Borough of Merton.

Fig. 1-2

*Cricket on the Village
Green, Mitcham, Surrey.
The Australian Eleven
practising in the nets
c.1881.
(Merton Library Service)*



The name Mitcham is Anglo-Saxon in origin, meaning ‘the big home’ or ‘big place’. The most authoritative record is in the Domesday Book, which was a survey of England drawn up in 1086 by Order of William the Conqueror to provide him with a full account of the income to which he was entitled from the country he had conquered. Mitcham was then known as Michelham, which name has been corrupted at various times to Micheham, Mycham, Micham and finally to its present spelling. There were two hamlets, which later became known as Whitford or Lower Mitcham (around the famous Cricket Green) and Upper Mitcham (around Fair Green).

Like our Mitcham Village, the one in Surrey was surrounded by large estates: the Manor of Mitcham (or Canons) held in the Middle Ages by the Augustinian Canons of Bayeux and later owned by the Cranmer family; the Manor of Biggin and Tamworth belonging to the Priory of Merton; Vauxhall and the Manor House of Ravensbury. This latter became the home of Lord Clive (of India fame). Many other famous people have been associated with Mitcham: Sir Walter Raleigh lived there, as did the poet John Donne and Admiral Lord Nelson who used to watch the cricket on its famous Cricket Green (Fig.1-2).

No one knows exactly when cricket was first played in Mitcham, however, in 1707 it was recorded that it had ‘a strong side’. In those days the players all played in a top hat, blue swallow-tailed coat, nankeen ‘smalls’, white silk stockings and pumps. In 1890 when Surrey played England at Lords its side included five Mitcham players.

The present-day Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul was built between 1819 and 1832 on a site which has been occupied by a church since 1259. In 1637 the old church was struck by lightning so severely that ten of its bells were melted (thirteen other churches in Surrey alone were said to have been damaged by the same storm). It continued to serve as the parish church until 1819 by which time it had become unsafe and was rebuilt (Fig. 1-3).

In the early nineteenth century James Moore developed the growing of medicinal herbs on his vast estate, the Manor of Biggin and Tamworth. The business had been started by his relatives, the Potters, in about 1750. Potter & Moore’s ‘Physic Garden’ was famous for the scents



Fig. 1-3 *Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Mitcham, Surrey,
c.1895. (Merton Library Service)*

and colours of roses, camomile, white poppies, liquorice, peppermint, angelica and, in particular, the wonderful Mitcham Lavender which clothed the hillsides in a sea of purple. The Company used all these in their business of distilling essential oils and the manufacture of drugs.

From early times life in Mitcham Village had been diversified by industrial development. Master bleachers and calico printers set up factories on the banks of the Wandle River, and water was used in the milling of flour, for drugs, colours and the all-important snuff and shag tobacco industries; cress was harvested along the river flats; and paint, varnish and chemicals became important local manufactures. This concentration of industries encouraged the construction of the Surrey Iron Railway between 1801 and 1803, the first in the world for the public carriage of goods. This was well before the invention of the steam engine, and the wagons were drawn by either horses or donkeys. In 1830 the first matches ever made were manufactured in Mitcham (they were about 140 mm long); the first Atlantic cable was made there, also rubber tyres and rubber ground sheets used in the Crimean War.

Just as our Mitcham Village is now part of suburban Adelaide, the small village of Mitcham in Surrey has developed over the past 900 years to become almost a suburb of London.²

Mitcham Village
Brownhill Creek
South Australia
21st June 1848

My very dear Cousin Elizabeth,

As you will see from the above address we – like your dear selves – now reside in a village called Mitcham. I have so many happy memories of holidays spent with you in Surrey, that I wish you to have some idea of the appearance of its namesake on the other side of the world.

To the south of Adelaide is a long range of lofty hills, which forms a beautiful view from Town, the road to them is across a plain studded with Wattle trees and here and there belted with Peppermint Gums. These hills are lightly wooded to the tops, which command an extensive view of the country around, the sea, Gulf of St Vincent and Yorke's Peninsula. One of these hills is named the Brown Hill, and gives its name to a little brook which runs from the mountains between it and Flagstaff Hill.³

Near the foot of Brown Hill lies the Village of Mitcham. The name was chosen by Mr William Giles whom, as you know, was born in Mitcham and is now the Manager of the South Australian Company. This most influential group of businessmen gave great financial assistance in the establishment of the Colony and today are the owners of large tracts of land. They are the undisputed leaders in the fields of banking, commerce, shipping and all types of entrepreneurial enterprises.

The Company's lands included much of the Plains between the Town and Brown Hill, which they used as a huge sheep run. By late 1839 conditions in the Town had become so unbearably overcrowded and the streets so congested, that the Company decided to form a new village five miles to the south on what is known here as Country Section No. 248. This area was chosen because of its proximity to the Town; the Brownhill Creek, at all seasons a running stream, passing through it; the superiority of the quality of the soil; its beautiful locality; its abundance of good stone for building and timber close at hand; its commanding view over Holdfast Bay and the probability of a main road to the southern region of Encounter Bay passing through it.⁴

I am enclosing a plan of the Village so that you may understand better its geography [see Fig. 1-1]. There are 103 allotments spread over a total of 134 acres, with most blocks being about one acre in area. Soon after entering the Village, the creek passes through a large rectangular area which is devoid of any allotment number. This is our Village Green, about which I will tell you more later. The course of our creek, like most others on the Adelaide Plains, is easily identified by the abundance of tall majestic trees (known as River Red Gums) which line its banks.

Although many colonists had expressed an early interest in buying land in this area, when the S.A. Company did eventually offer it for sale in November 1840 the allotments were very slow to sell. This was hardly surprising, with the Colony on the verge of bankruptcy and nobody knowing whether finance would be available. Of course those problems are all in the past now and, since the discovery of high yields of copper in

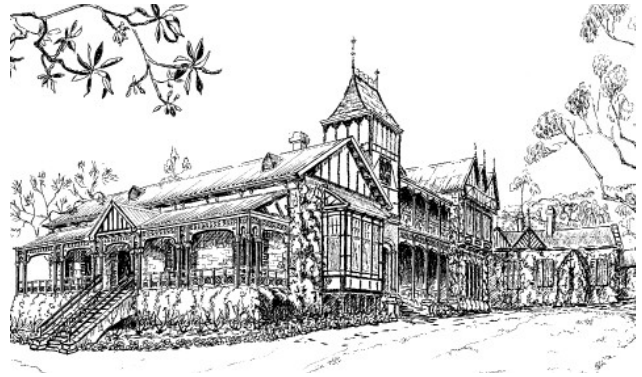


Fig. 1-4 'Springfield House'. C.B. Newenham built the single-storey portion on the left c.1842. Upper floor added by the Rymill family c.1897. (Pamela Oborn, 1973)

several areas in the north of the Colony, it is progressing from strength to strength. There is a sense of great optimism in the future.

Most of the land has now been taken up and we are getting new neighbours every week. Many of the colonial gentry are beginning to appreciate the fine views and clean air available in the foothills and many large villas are under construction at present – both within the Village and on the higher slopes beyond its boundaries. The latter, often referred to as 'The Grandstand of Adelaide', contains many estates of upwards of 100 acres with fine dwellings to match. Although the little 'society' we meet here is inferior to that to which we were accustomed at Home, we are indeed fortunate to number amongst our acquaintances several families who live in these larger houses. They include the Sheriff of the Supreme Court in Adelaide, Mr Charles Burton Newenham and his wife, Mary Louisa, who have built a fine seven-roomed house called 'Springfield' [Fig.1-4]. You may be interested to know that their son, the Reverend George Newenham, was one of the four clergy who arrived here in 1846, and now has the care of the rather diverse group of parishioners at St Paul's Church in our busy township of Port Adelaide.

Another couple we now number amongst our dearest friends are Mr William Bartley [Fig. 1-5] and his wife Sarah, whose property 'Delamere' [Fig. 1-6] adjoins 'Springfield'. Mr Bartley was for a time Registrar-General, but now heads the firm of Bartley and Bakewell

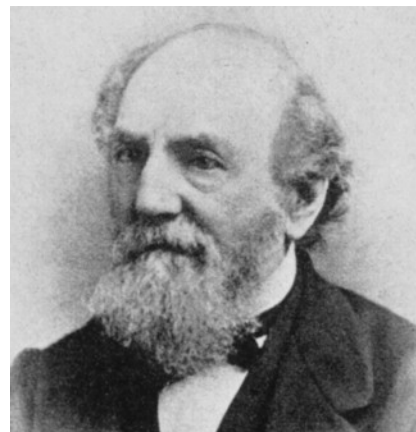


Fig. 1-5
 William Bartley
 (MLHC)

Fig. 1-6

*'Delamere', built by
William Bartley c.1847.
Other parishioners who
lived at 'Delamere' included
Dr Wm Browne and
Henry Strong Price.
Painting by
James Shaw, 1861.
(Small & Whitfield's
catalogue dated 17/10/1988.
Copy held in MLHC)*



which is regarded as the leading firm of solicitors in Adelaide. Their practice includes legal work for the S.A. Company and S.A. Bank, and Mr Bartley also deals in legal matters on behalf of the Church of England.⁵

Within the Village itself there is much building activity. Looking across the road from our own cottage we can see the recently-constructed home of Mr Arthur Blyth, a wealthy merchant. He is calling this ten-roomed mansion 'The Hall' after the family home in England, and rather regards himself as the squire of Mitcham. Immediately to the east of 'The Hall' is the six-roomed home of our friends William and Sarah Easter, and above them Mr John Grainger at 'Gable Ends'. Mr Easter is a delightful fellow, a tailor by trade, but a person who seems to have boundless energy and is a most zealous worker in everything. He is also a prominent member of the theatrical profession and frequently plays in the Adelaide theatres. In fact, I understand that he sang in some of the very first operatic productions held in the Colony back in March 1840.⁶

Mr Grainger we do not see very often. He seems to travel a lot and is, I believe, a valuer of pastoral leases for the government. For some years he has been involved in the search for minerals and has purchased or leased large tracts of land in the valleys behind Brown Hill. He also has interests in a copper mine in the northern parts of South Australia. Someone mentioned that his older brother, Henry, was one of the founders of the S.A. Company but that he has never set foot in the Colony.⁷

Just because I have written at length about our affluent friends and acquaintances does not mean that all the residents of Mitcham enjoy such a high standard of living. Far from it. Many are labourers in the quarries or agricultural workers on local farms, and their meagre two-roomed dwellings are little more than hovels. Many are poor Irish emigrants whose abodes are clustered along the northern perimeter of the Village along a street we refer to as Irish Hill Road. Their wives, surrounded by hordes of children, sit in the gutter and smoke horrid-smelling pipes.⁸ Unfortunately this is often the first scene that greets travellers en route to the Tiers and the Government Farm. The track from Town – euphemistically called The

Mitcham-road – passes along this street before winding through the Village to negotiate a ford over the Brownhill Creek.⁹

Although we still have to go to Town for most of our shopping (there being nothing of a good quality available here), our basic everyday requisites are supplied by two grocers, Mr Gardiner and Mr Henry Taylor, and the butcher, Mr Winter. As yet we have no baker, so making our own bread is a new experience for me! Whereas you have eleven coaching inns, we have just the one public house, The Black Swan. It opened last year and is in a street near the SW corner of the Village Green, quite close to the ford over the creek.¹⁰

Mr Henry Taylor is a highly respected citizen of Mitcham, and he and his dear wife, Lucretia, have become our very good friends [see Fig.1-12]. He does not approve of the way The Black Swan is conducted, nor the types of rough characters who congregate there en route to and from the Tiers. In fact he is seriously considering applying for a licence to open an hotel himself on land near his store. We are sorely in want of a respectable establishment with clean accommodation for travellers, a good larder and a pleasant environment in which to entertain guests at large functions, such as formal dinners and wedding parties. At present the only building in which groups can meet is the Schoolroom.

Which brings me to the subject of the Green. 'Green' is hardly the word to describe it: rather a dusty paddock in summer and weed patch in winter! It is a far cry from your beautiful Mitcham Cricket Green which, after Hambledon, is the most famous village cricket green in the world. However, not to be outdone, our menfolk have already formed several cricket teams so that they may carry on that noble Mitcham tradition here in the Antipodes. Although our Mitcham Village Green is quite expansive, the actual area upon which to play cricket is greatly reduced by the fact that part of it is occupied by a building. This is our new schoolroom! I suppose I should be correct and call ours by its proper name, that is, 'The Union Chapel and Schoolroom'. It is used five days a week as a school, and one night a week and on Sundays as a meeting hall for various groups of Dissenters and



Fig. 1-7 Union Chapel and Schoolroom built in 1847 on the Village Green (now Mitcham Reserve). (Pamela Oborn, 1973)

their visiting preachers. As you will see from the sketch I have made [Fig.1-7], it is little more than a room with a porch at the front and a fireplace at the far end. The walls are of bare stone and there is no ceiling below the slate roof. Desks that lift up are fastened to the walls for school purposes, and there is a small platform on which stands one chair and a tiny table that serves as a pulpit and as the schoolmaster's desk. The room is only about thirty feet long, and seating for worshippers and pupils alike consists of most uncomfortable deal forms. In spite of its inadequacies, it is at least providing a much sought-after meeting place for our little community.¹¹

Until quite recently, when our Legislative Council passed an Act to provide subsidies for licensed schools, the Colonial Government took no part whatsoever in the education of children. This was left to the parents to cope with as best they could. However, as many of the labouring class are themselves illiterate, there was little prospect of their offspring learning even the basic skills of reading and writing. Those who can afford it still prefer to send their children to the small private schools held in the homes of some of the gentlewomen of the area. For those who live near the Town and have sons, there is the option of sending them to a small school at Trinity Church on The North-terrace. Known as the Church of England Collegiate School of South Australia, it opened with eleven pupils on 15th July 1847.¹²

Unfortunately, our school master Mr Thomas Mugg – a rather strict disciplinarian – is not a qualified teacher [Fig.1-8]. He is, in fact, a carpenter and joiner by trade, having worked as a cabinet maker in London. Although he was employed to teach “English, reading, grammar, geography, writing, arithmetic and book-keeping”, there are only three branches he can teach at all – reading, writing and arithmetic! Writing is his strong point – a meticulous copperplate hand. Geography and grammar he knows nothing about and will not attempt to teach. When he reads it is with a slight Cockney twang: the “v’s” and “w’s” being reversed, and the silent “h” being not heard where it should, and loudly heard where it should not. He has thirty-nine pupils at the school and Mrs Mugg assists him with some of the lessons.¹³

There is so much more I wish to tell you about our new home, but will end now as I hear a boat is sailing for London tomorrow...

I remain

Your affectionate ‘Colonial Cousin’

**Mitcham Village
Brownhill Creek
1st August 1848**

My very dear Cousin,

I had to finish my last letter rather abruptly in order to catch the mail, and realise that the subject dearest to your heart was barely spoken of. You will be quite right to reprimand me – most strongly – for not telling you more about the Lord's work in this place!

“Where”, I can hear you ask, “is the Village Church?” Well, I am afraid to say that it is five miles hence, being the same edifice we have attended since our arrival in the Colony – that is to say Trinity Church on The North-terrace. There is another a little closer, called St Mary's-on-the-Sturt, about half way between Mitcham and Holdfast Bay, but we make the supreme effort to attend the monthly Communion Sunday at Trinity. Sometimes the Reverend William Woodcock comes out here from St John's in Halifax-street to conduct a service in someone's home, or we invite some friends to join us in reciting the office of Morning or Evening Prayer as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. However, many of the faith, who are unable to travel into the Town, join the Dissenters in the Union Chapel on the Sabbath. Some of their preachers are very good and we have, at times, joined them ourselves.

As I think I mentioned in my previous letter this small building, combining the functions of schoolhouse and place of worship, stands on the Village Green. The S.A. Company not only made provision for a chapel in this area, but also gave some financial assistance, as did a group called the S.A. League which is promoting the building of these ‘Union Chapels’. Sadly, our own Church members – although numerically superior – are being left far behind in these matters. The Dissenters show great enthusiasm for the ‘voluntary system’, in particular the Wesleyans who have a network in excess of thirty laymen acting as local preachers throughout the Colony.¹⁴

Most of the money to build the Chapel was raised through public subscriptions collected by a group of gentlemen under the leadership of the Reverend Ralph Drummond [Fig.1-9]. He is a Presbyterian Minister and, I am told, is the grandson of a Scottish Peer! An excellent preacher, he established the Scotch Kirk in South Australia soon after his arrival in 1839, and in



Fig. 1-8
Thomas Mugg
(MLHC)

1842 opened their Gouger-street Church. Although he lives here in Mitcham, his home is officially ‘the manse connected with Gouger-street Church’. He and his wife Elizabeth have ten children and were amongst the first settlers in the Village. Mr Drummond is also a competent teacher, and before moving to Mitcham in 1840 he operated a private school in his own house in the Town. He was the person who advertised for a schoolmaster for our little Mitcham school. I fear Mr Thomas Mugg does not possess all the qualifications that Mr Drummond would have desired but, alas, he was the best available!¹⁵

We have several other preachers living in the area, notably Pastor Thomas Playford and Pastor William Finlayson [Fig.1-9]. The latter, a Scottish missionary (who had hoped to convert the natives to Christianity) was the first white man to live at Brownhill Creek where he was employed as a shepherd by the S.A. Company. He now farms some sixty-seven acres of land on the adjoining Country Section to the north of the Village.

Mr Finlayson usually arranges for a supply of preachers from the ranks of the Independents, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians, who take turns in holding their services on Sunday afternoons in the Union Chapel. I have heard preach here Mr William Giles, manager of the S.A. Company, and Mr Anthony Forster, Editor of the *Register*. Mr Playford and Mr Drummond preach on one evening mid-week – not on Sundays – as they both have their own churches in Adelaide to attend to on the Sabbath.

In the mornings Mr Finlayson personally takes a Sunday School class which is attended by most of the children of the neighbourhood – as many as forty being present. He is a first class teacher.¹⁶ Mr Mugg, the schoolmaster, although a member of the Church of England, assists at both the afternoon services and morning classes. He leads the singing, being armed with

a tuning fork which he strikes before starting the tune and holds it up to his ear with an air of gravity that is quite amusing. His voice is not melodious, but rasping, and his idea of time awfully defective. He has a trick of dwelling on some notes for such a time as to be exasperating, and the slow time in which he sings takes all life out of the music. Still, he is a good Christian man!¹⁷

Mr Playford is highly thought of and is an excellent preacher. Before the Chapel was built he held services in his home and many came to hear him preach. He owns three acres of land adjoining the northern side of the Green where he has a fine eight-roomed house which he calls ‘Jerusalem’ [see Fig.1-11]. The Pastor is an impressive figure, being 6 foot 2 inches tall and weighing some 20 stone. In his youth he joined the Life Guards and was at the Battle of Waterloo. Later he was commissioned by the Adjutant-General to write the history of British regiments, receiving a salary of some £300 per year. This, together with his military pension, set him up financially to the extent that he will not accept one penny from his congregation. He is imbued with the true missionary spirit and holds the view that no minister should be paid. He spends the first part of each week travelling through the Adelaide Hills preaching, before returning home ready to preach on Wednesday night in Town or at a nearby village. On Friday he preaches at Mitcham, then spends all day Saturday writing his sermons – often to 3 a.m! As a result he seldom rises before 11 o’clock in the forenoon. Eight sermons a week with a lot of travelling thrown in – all for the love of God and his fellow men! I believe he also speaks Spanish and French, and taught himself Greek so that he could read the New Testament in its original tongue.¹⁸

So, as you can see from all that I have written, in spite of the fact that we have no Church of England building as yet in Mitcham, we do live in a Christian neighbourhood!

Fig. 1-9 Mitcham preachers (L. to R.) Reverend Ralph Drummond, Pastor Thomas Playford and Pastor William Finlayson. (MLHC)



Mitcham Village
Brownhill Creek
Saturday, 16th September 1848

My dear Cousin,

At last, the news we have all been waiting for: we are to have our own parish church here in Mitcham! The following advertisement appeared in the *Register* on Wednesday, 30th August:

CHURCH AT MITCHAM.

*A meeting of the inhabitants – favourable to the erection of a Church, will be held at the residence of Mr William Easther, in Mitcham, on Thursday next, the 31st instant, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, to make the necessary arrangements for commencing the building of such Church. The Lord Bishop of Adelaide has been invited and consented to attend.*¹⁹

Bishop Short was in the chair and, in spite of the inclement weather, numerous persons were present and it was resolved to make arrangements for building a church in the Village immediately. In fact the Bishop and his wife have spent several days recently at 'Delamere' with Mr and Mrs Bartley.²⁰ Of course the young Reverend George Newenham was present, his father, the Sheriff, being one of the chief instigators of the plan. No doubt he would like the Living of Mitcham for himself!

At the meeting a petition was signed by the thirty-two heads of households, representing 101 persons, who are "favourable to the erection of a Church of England in this place". The first two to sign were Sheriff Newenham and Mr William Bartley, so we are in good 'legal' hands here! Mr Bartley's firm deals in matters of law for the Church of England and he acts as the Bishop's Registrar. Enclosed is a list of those who signed together with the number of people in each of their households [Appendix 1].

This document had to be signed to comply with a requirement under something called 'Ordinance No.10 of 1847'. I am sure, dear cousin, that you, like me, will have no wish to go into the politics of all this! Suffice to say that it was Governor Robe's way of rewarding local communities for the effort they put into raising money to build their own churches or ministers' dwellings. A subsidy of £150 is granted by the government, providing the group can also raise a minimum of £150 in contributions, and that there will be a congregation of at least fifty persons who will guarantee to rent pews and raise £50 per annum towards a stipend. Once it is built, the property is then held by elected trustees who are legally responsible for the financing and maintenance of their buildings, and the payment of a stipend to the minister.

Apparently this scheme replaced one Governor Robe introduced in 1846 when he gave grants to all denominations, the amount being based on the number of followers each group had as recorded in the first census taken in 1844. Some of the more radical Dissenters are furious over both these 'hand-outs', considering them to be reversals of the concept on which the Colony was founded, but most people are extremely grateful to the dear man. Did I tell you that his term of office finished on 2nd August? Our new Governor is Sir Henry Fox Young,

whose wife is, I understand, Bishop Short's niece, so we should get good support from that quarter also.²¹

I can see that you are thoroughly perplexed by the need for all this! Clergymen at Home do not realise how lucky they are, and how different conditions are here in South Australia. I have heard it said that members of the Church of England "generally assume that whenever two or three of them are gathered together, they have a right to find a well-appointed church with a vicar and two assistant-curates, complete with Oxford hoods..."²² Oh, that it were so here! Had it not been for support given by the S.P.G. and several British benefactors, I doubt whether the seeds of Anglicanism could have survived in the face of the overwhelming influence exerted by Dissenting groups under our 'Voluntary Principle'. Your incumbents have everything provided for them: an assured position in society, a parsonage to live in and a stipend provided by tithes and endowments. For centuries there have been well-defined boundaries between parishes, with a bishop close at hand overseeing a small diocese.

Try now to imagine, if you can, one diocese far, far larger than the whole of Great Britain: for not only does Bishop Short have the oversight of our large Colony, but also of the huge Colony of Western Australia! It is largely unexplored wild country and there are only a handful of clergy to attend to the needs of the faithful scattered over these vast distances. The inducements to migrate are few – a cottage and a curacy is the invitation – for which they should be "fit for missionary work among miners and bullock drivers, able to preach well extempore to such sort of people, undaunted also in spirit, and steady churchmen".²³ Why, until Bishop Short arrived less than a year ago, our handful of clergy knew not whether they should look to the Bishop of Sydney or to London for episcopal advice!²⁴

But I digress: back to Village matters. Last night – just two weeks after that first gathering at the Easthers' home – another meeting was held to complete the next step in the process towards obtaining a grant from the government, i.e. drawing up the Trust Deed and electing Trustees. Initially, as I understand it, the Lord Bishop will be our Trustee.

A lot happened in the intervening weeks between those two meetings. The most important decision, of course, was to choose a site for the church. At the meeting on 31st August, the Reverend W.J. Woodcock, incumbent of St John's in Halifax-street, said that he had been negotiating to purchase some two acres of land in the western portion of the Village from a Mrs Elizabeth Bayley.²⁵ However, since then, we have received a most generous offer of a gift of land from a Mr Robert Thornber, who hails from Harpurhey near Manchester. He arrived in the Colony in 1840, and has built a fine house in Upper Mitcham where he also owns several other blocks of land. I understand that the land is valued at £20, and that once Mr Thornber has discharged a mortgage over this and some other property he holds, he will convey it to the Bishop as Trustee. The land is situated in a much more suitable area at Upper Mitcham, and is bounded on three sides by roads, one of which is on the eastern boundary of the Village (Lots 39 & 40). This

will indeed be a most glorious position for the House of God – high on an eminence overlooking the whole Village and across the Adelaide Plains to the sea.²⁶

Now that a site for the building has been secured, a Trustee elected and enough contributions of money promised to fulfil all the requirements laid down under this ‘Ordinance No.10’, there is no reason why we should not proceed immediately. Consequently, at the meeting last night all the arrangements were made for the laying of the foundation-stone in two weeks time...

Mitcham Village

Brownhill Creek

Monday, 2nd October 1848

My Dear Cousin,

I can now give you a ‘formal’ account of the ceremony as reported in today’s paper! This comes – not from the usual sources of the *Register* or the *South Australian* – but from a brand-new weekly paper called the *Adelaide Times*. So here is an extract from Edition No.1 of Volume 1 which featured prominently, on the second page, a beautifully-written description of the whole event:

ST. MICHAEL’S CHURCH, MITCHAM

On Saturday last the foundation-stone of this church was laid by Lady Young. His Excellency the Governor, his Honour the Judge, the Colonial Secretary, and several other of the Government officials, with their ladies, were present, and the assemblage numbered altogether about one hundred and fifty. His Lordship the Bishop of Adelaide read the service for the occasion, which included several appropriate exhortations, and affecting supplications for the blessings of the Almighty on the work – undertaken in His name. The deep pathos and solemnity which characterized the singing of the 117th Psalm struck our attention as peculiarly affecting. After the first part of the service was finished, William Bartley, Esq., read, and hermetically sealed in a bottle, the following inscription, written on parchment:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Foundation-stone of the Church, to be dedicated to the worship of the Triune Jehovah, in connection with the Church Established in Great Britain and Ireland, to be called “The Church of Saint Michael” was laid by Dame AUGUSTA, wife of Sir HENRY EDWARD FOX YOUNG, Governor of South Australia, being in the First Year of his administration, and in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-eight, and in the Second Year of the Consecration of AUGUSTUS by Divine permission first Lord Bishop of Adelaide.

The bottle being deposited in the cavity prepared for the purpose, several coins were thrown in with it; and Lady Young, obviously impressed with the solemnity of the work in which she was engaged, took the trowel and spread some mortar over the deposited memorials.

After the service was over, his Excellency stepped forward on the stone just laid, and stated that he felt

unwilling to let the assembly part without expressing his sincere pleasure in seeing Lady Young take so active a part in such an undertaking. For his own part, he would not only urge his fellow-colonists to encourage such proceedings, but he should be always anxious to lend, individually, every assistance in his power. His Lordship made a few brief observations on the singular manner in which the Almighty had blessed this country with plenty. He hoped that their present undertaking would prove a centre of union, and an agreement of associations, that would lead to the realms of eternal bliss. His Lordship concluded with the following impressive supplication:- “May the Lord bless this work to us and our children.” All present, a large number of whom were ladies, seemed highly interested with the ceremony.

So there you are, my dearest Cousin, the stone is well and truly laid! Now we look forward to the speedy completion of our Church.

But to return to Saturday’s activities. A large tent was erected for the occasion – beautifully decorated with ferns and flowers – and at the conclusion of the ceremony the guests partook of a picnic luncheon seated on planks which had been hastily cobbled together by the menfolk. Each family brought a hamper, the food carefully wrapped in vine leaves to keep it fresh, and laid the contents on long trestle tables for all to share. Lady Young was heard to comment that she could hardly believe she was in the Antipodes, it being “more like an English country town celebrating a local festival”.

But back to the subject in hand. Some of the people mentioned in the newspaper account of the ceremony I have not written of before. They included the ‘Colonial Secretary’, Mr Alfred Mundy, whose wife, Jane, is the daughter of Captain John Hindmarsh, our first Governor. ‘His Honour the Judge’ is Charles Cooper, and we understand that there is a romantic attachment between him and Miss Emily Newenham. Her parents are, of course, our esteemed Sheriff and Mrs Mary Louisa Newenham of ‘Springfield House’. Also present were their other daughters Louisa and Annie. Louisa and her husband Alfred Hardy (he came to the Colony with Colonel Light) live nearby at ‘Hartley Bank’; and Annie (who also married one of Colonel Light’s staff, a Colonel James Henderson) lives at ‘Netherby’ which is very close to the parents’ house. As you will see, we are a very ‘inbred’ society – socially speaking – and Bishop Short has described us as being “thoroughly English in notions and habits”.²⁷

It was a busy weekend for our Bishop also. On Sunday he preached an inspiring sermon at the 11 a.m. service at St John’s in Halifax-street on the important occasion of the consecration of their fine church building. He is about to depart from the Colony on a long and arduous visit to the far reaches of his diocese in Western Australia. This will be his first visit to that Colony, and one of his first duties will be to consecrate a church under construction at the port of Albany. When he returns after Christmas, Bishop Short says he hopes to find five more churches ready for consecration including Mitcham.²⁸

You may be interested to know that one of our intrepid explorers, Captain Charles Sturt (who is also our Surveyor-General) undertook an exhaustive investigation of the vast interior of the Province during 1844 and 1845. He has named a river he discovered there 'The Cooper's Creek' after our esteemed Judge, Charles Cooper. One of the survey party was a man named Hugh Foulkes who has been in the employment of the Government for several years. He came to Mitcham in 1843 and built a house in Maitland-street and was only recently back from his exploration of the interior when, in March 1846, he suffered an irretrievable loss when his house was completely destroyed by fire. He is an honest and industrious workman, and a subscription was raised amongst the Village folk to help rebuild his home.²⁹

So, my dear Cousin, as you can see, we do endeavour to maintain the best of our British traditions here in our village called Mitcham ...

16th June 1849

... We are all in mourning here having just heard that our dear friend Mrs Sarah Bartley died yesterday at 'Delamere' after a lingering illness. It seems ironic that it was William who originally came to the Colony because of ill health, and now it is his dear wife who has predeceased him at the tender age of forty-five. It would have been his dearest wish that he could have buried her from our own parish church, but I am afraid that was not to be.

Work on the church building has virtually ground to a halt. Eight or nine months ago, when the foundation-stone was laid, everybody was full of enthusiasm and there were promises of substantial subscriptions to the Building Fund. Enough was in hand for a builder named Jacob Pitman to begin work on the foundations, but I now hear that the estimate was a long way below cost and that these monies have already been exhausted! And the walls are barely begun!³⁰

I sometimes wonder, dear Cousin, whether we are not being just a little overly ambitious with our building programme, considering that the Village is still in its infancy? It is hard to realise that only ten years ago this whole region was virgin bushland...

Mitcham Village

11th January 1850

Dear Cousin Elizabeth,

At last our church is starting to take on the appearance of a building! The local village mason and stonecutter, Mr John Heritage who came originally from Cheltenham, is dressing all the stones for the church, and yesterday the architect, Mr Weir, placed an advertisement in the *Register* for "carpenters willing to contract for the roof and windows of the Brownhill Creek Church".³¹

I don't believe that I have told you before of Mr William Weir. He came from the Eastern Colonies in mid-1847 and now has the largest architectural practice in South Australia. He seems to be the acknowledged principal architect for most Church of England buildings, and recently designed parish churches for the villages of Willunga and Kensington, and the very

splendid Christ Church at North Adelaide. I understand he is also in the business of offering properties for sale.³² Perhaps if he were less busy St Michael's would get a greater priority!

I am enclosing a sketch of how our Church of St Michael, Mitcham, may, God willing, look when it is finished [Fig.1-10]. It will indeed be a handsome building with its tower and pinnacles. The stone comes from a quarry in the Brownhill Creek Valley just near the Village boundary. This quarry site, like most of the land in the hills behind the Village, is owned by John Grainger!

We are fortunate indeed in having ample quantities of very good building stone right on our doorstep. There are a number of quarries operating around these foothills, the first having been opened by the government in 1841. In fact, a newspaper report at that time described it as being "of most excellent quality, easily worked, and equal in appearance to the well-known Portland stone". There was even talk of using it to erect a monument to the memory of our late surveyor, Colonel William Light.³³ One big drawback, however, of having all these quarries in such close proximity to the Village is the appalling conditions of our roads, which are continually being churned up by the loaded bullock drays carrying their hard-won cargoes of stone.

I do so look forward to the arrival of your letters: the last came to me via our Mitcham Post Office which opened last October.³⁴ Now that we are 'official' you need only address mail to 'Mitcham Village' without the added qualification of 'Brownhill Creek'...

30th August 1851

... We are all in a state of shock here following the results of the Colony's first election held last month. During its first week in office our newly-elected Legislative Council has voted to abolish State Aid for religious purposes! South Australia now holds the dubious (dis)honour of being the first British colony to dissolve entirely the connection between Church and State. Thanks be to God we qualified for a grant before the 'voluntaryists' forced the abandonment of that essential scheme. Without the grant of £150 I doubt whether we should have progressed any further than

Fig. 1-10 St Michael's as it appeared when built in 1852.

Artist unknown. (MPA)



laying a foundation-stone of our long-awaited parish church at Mitcham!

I know you have little interest in politics, but feel a brief description of our new form of government will better help you to understand our present distress. As you may recall, South Australia initially had a unique form of 'double government' with the powers of the Colonial Office and of the Board of Commissioners in London being rather blurred. This was not helped by the continual disputes between their representatives in the new Province – namely Governor Hindmarsh on the one hand and Mr James Hurtle Fisher on the other. After the financial crisis of 1842 the Board was abolished and we were administered in much the same fashion as any other crown colony. A Legislative Council consisting of Governor Grey and his seven hand-picked advisers (three of whom were officials and the other four being unpaid non-official members) first met in October 1843. The Governor's interference in every department was notorious, and his successor Major Robe did not fare much better – particularly with those opposed to his granting of State Aid to religious groups!

Problems had also arisen in the other parts of Australia to the extent that the British Parliament passed a new Australian Colonies Government Act which provided for the majority of members to be elected by the population. Whereas the original Council had been composed of only the Governor and seven members (all nominated by him) under our new constitution the Legislative Council now has twenty-four members, sixteen of whom are elected – one from each of sixteen districts. The other eight members are nominated by the Governor – four being government officials and four non-officials. I tell you all this because John Grainger in one of those four non-official nominees!

The first election was held on 2nd July, and from the start it became obvious that the main issue would be the one of State Aid for religious purposes. There has

been much dissent in the Colony over this provision, particularly from the Congregationalists and Baptists who totally rejected the grants. Other religious groups such as the Church of Scotland, some congregations of the Wesleyan and Lutheran faiths, and of course the Roman Catholics have been most appreciative of this assistance.

For weeks leading up to the election there has been much acrimonious debate and even street brawls between those in favour of retaining State Aid and those against, i.e. the 'voluntaryists'. The matter has been seriously and strenuously debated even in our small community, with many fiery meetings held in a room at Mr Henry Taylor's new Inn. The first candidate to address the electors was Major O'Halloran, a tall military man in favour of Aid. Unfortunately he was a very poor speaker, ponderous and dull. A week later his opponent, Mr Thomas Reynolds (nicknamed 'Teapot Tommy') easily out-classed him. He is a teetotaler, and being a local preacher had good training in public speaking. The colours of O'Halloran's party were blue, and those of Reynolds's blue and white. Many of the local homes were garlanded with steamers in the colours of one or the other candidate. Early on polling day we were quite amazed to see rows of blue and white flags fixed to Pastor Playford's house and stable, for although it was well-known that he was against State Aid, he did not consider it right for a Minister of Religion to take an active part in a political contest. We found out later that it was his young son Tom, a youth of about fifteen years of age, who had enthusiastically decorated his father's house [Fig.1-11]. When the Pastor awoke and realised, he at once ordered them to be pulled down.³⁵

Mr Reynolds won in our district. The matter of State Aid was settled once-and-for-all when our newly-constituted Legislative Council met and voted 13 to 10 against further Aid to churches. Amongst the thirteen, I am sad to say, were four members of the Church of England! But Mr John Grainger, God bless him, was not one of them.³⁶

Fig. 1-11
'Jerusalem'

*Thomas Playford's house
which was built in the 1840s.
It faced Old Belair Road on
what is now Sutton Gardens.
(MLHC)*



Mr Henry Taylor's Brownhill Creek Inn, which he opened last year, is proving to be a most convenient and convivial meeting place for Village folk. Because Henry also runs an excellent store in a two-storey building just east of the hotel, the road passing his two establishments is now being referred to as 'Taylor's-road'. I noted that his advertisement read: "Wines, spirits, ales, etc., of the best quality. For summer visits, residence, or wedding parties, the above locality cannot be surpassed in the Colony".³⁷

With so many more people coming to live in the Village, finding any building suitable for large groups to worship in (apart from the Union Chapel) is becoming a problem. Fortunately for us, Henry and Lucretia Taylor are staunch members of the Church of England and often make their large room at the Inn available when a Lay Reader is to visit. Don't frown, dear Cousin, we have to make do with what ever we can! Indeed, I remember hearing Mr Woodcock say that he was "obliged to be satisfied with a cow house" on one occasion, and the "loan of a mill at Gawler" on another.³⁸

The large room at Taylor's Inn is not what you think! It is quite apart from the bar, and is very much the accepted meeting place for the local intelligentsia and literary people. Henry had been a member of a debating society in London and proposed that one should be formed here [Fig.1-12]. It is very popular with the young men, who meet once a week to read essays and debate them. Henry acts as chairman and keeps excellent order, calling on the speakers as they do in Parliament. He also organises draughts and chess tournaments. The large room is also used by a dancing teacher who comes out from Town once a week to instruct those who want to learn, and by the Reverend Ralph Drummond who teaches singing. Last Christmas a group of these young men went from house to house singing carols accompanied by a little harmonium, violin and concertina. The money collected was spent in paying for supper at Taylor's Inn, at which they recited, sang more songs and made short speeches.³⁹

So, as you can see, we are a civilised community. Perhaps, one day, we shall have an Institute building – but until that time we are indeed fortunate to have Henry's establishment in which to gather...

8th March 1852

... No doubt news has reached England by now of the great gold rush in our neighbouring Colony of Victoria. It seemed that half the population of South Australia had departed for the goldfields of Ballarat last year; and now we hear there has been another discovery of alluvial gold at the Bendigo diggings. Gold fever has reached such proportions here that there is hardly a tradesman left in Adelaide!

After many stops and starts through lack of finance, the St Michael's Building Committee now finds itself without the required labourers and tradesmen to complete the church. Who would have imagined three-and-a-half years ago it would take so long to build a parish church – a cathedral, yes – but not a small village church! During the intervening years other communities in South Australia have laid foundation-stones, built their

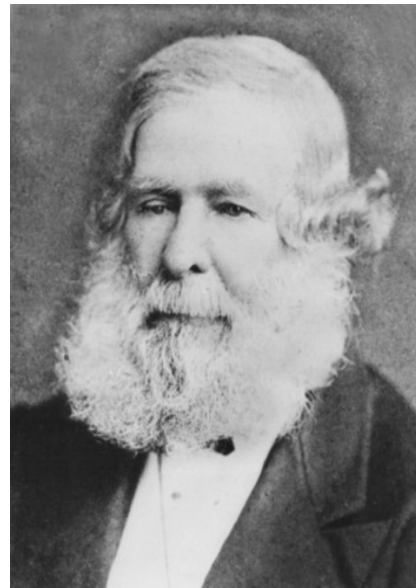


Fig. 1-12

Henry Taylor, landlord of the Brownhill Creek Inn, and first Warden of St Michael's. Taylors Road was named after him. Parts of the Inn still stand at the corner of Albert Street and Taylors Road. The upper floor was added c.1879. (MLHC)

churches, and had them consecrated – but not Mitcham. It is so frustrating! Meanwhile we continue to travel into Trinity Church for the monthly Communion service, and occasionally have a Lay Reader visit the Village for a service of Matins in someone's home or in Henry Taylor's big room. Many of our little flock still attend worship in the Union Chapel.

You may remember my commenting at the time we were choosing a site for the church that the Reverend William Woodcock was intending to purchase two acres of land? Well, he did so and has since built a cottage on it which is directly opposite the road leading to the ford over Brownhill Creek.⁴⁰ This is a busy road – one of the few places where traffic travelling up into the Tiers and the Government Farm can safely cross the creek – and because it goes past the schoolmaster's cottage, we usually refer to it as 'Mugg's Hill-road'. At present Mr Woodcock has a tenant in the cottage, but I gather the idea is that it may one day be used as a parsonage. He is Honorary Secretary of the Church Society and the Pastoral Aid Fund.⁴¹

Although there is no word yet as to who will be the incumbent of Mitcham Parish, I heard that the Reverend George Newenham (our Sheriff's son) had called on Mrs Elizabeth Bayley some months ago with a requisition for signature for his nomination to the Living of Mitcham – which she declined signing! If he does get it – and uses Mr Woodcock's cottage as the parsonage – they will be neighbours. That could be awkward!⁴² George Newenham spent the first three years of his ministry in the parish of Port Adelaide, where the church is a dilapidated wooden structure upon piles. I gather that access to it is not infrequently buried by some higher tide than usual. He is now incumbent of St James's Church at Blakiston in the Mount Barker district.⁴³

The other rumour I have heard is that the Reverend Arthur Burnett's older brother, Reverend Edward Burnett, arrived in the Colony on 13th January and may well be a contender for the Mitcham Living. Reverend Arthur Burnett, one of the four clergy who came to South Australia with Bishop Short in December 1847, is the

incumbent of the Parish of Willunga where he began services in the Court House soon after his arrival.⁴⁴

God willing, when next I write, I hope to be able to tell you that I have actually set foot inside our parish church ...

I remain

your devoted 'Colonial Cousin'

* * *

Another seven months were to elapse before that longed-for day arrived, and when it did, the building was by no means finished and the consecration had to be deferred. Looking back over the four years it took to build St Michael's, one wonders why it took so long compared with the progress made by other parishes. With the exception of Christ Church, at North Adelaide (then a very wealthy area) the other churches under construction during 1848-49 were considerably more modest in design and aspiration. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the builders of St Michael's were over ambitious in their desire to create such a handsome edifice with its magnificent tower and pinnacles reaching heavenward.

Apart from the small amount of cash and land made available between 1846 and 1851 during the Colony's brief flirtation with State Aid, and small endowments from the Leigh Trust (income derived from two acres of Town land donated by William Leigh in 1840) the only finance for buildings had to come from the colonists themselves through individual Building Funds. Many of the early clergy received some financial support from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) in London towards their passage to Australia, their stipends and/or their equipment.⁴⁵ In a letter to the Secretary dated 3rd August 1848 (seven months after his arrival in the Colony) Bishop Short reported that:

With regard to the progress of Religion generally & the affairs of four Churches in particular, I'm most thankful to

*make a good report. The spirit shewn in Churchbuilding is cheering. Walkerville is on the eve of being opened. Kensington has its walls up. North Adelaide as high as the window. O'Halloran Hill nearly ready. A new Church is subscribed for at Mitcham 4 miles off... Only let the Society continue its present support to Messrs Woodcock & Pollitt & leave the Leigh Fund free, & this Diocese, I believe, will be able to provide for itself.*⁴⁶

When the foundation stone of St Michael's had been laid on 30th September 1848, Bishop Short was about to embark for King George Sound on his first visit to the western extremities of his huge diocese in the neighbouring Colony of Western Australia. Before leaving he wrote to the Secretary of the S.P.G. saying:

*On Saturday I had the satisfaction of witnessing the laying of the first stone of a Church at the beautiful Village of Mitcham 4 miles from Adelaide... The site is most beautiful commanding a view of the sea from which the towers of the Church will be visible by vessels sailing up the Gulph [sic].*⁴⁷

He expressed the hope that upon his return after Christmas he would find "...five more Churches ready for consecration: Kensington, Mitcham, Willunga, O'Halloran Hill and North Adelaide".⁴⁸ Indeed, during 1849 all the above Churches – with the exception of Mitcham – were consecrated: Christ Church at O'Halloran Hill and St Matthew's at Kensington in March; St Stephen's at Willunga in April and Christ Church, North Adelaide, in December.⁴⁹

When Bishop Short was enthroned on 30th December 1847 there were only five clergymen and six churches in South Australia. By the time he retired at the end of 1881 there were eighty-eight churches and he had licensed 120 Lay Readers and fifty clergymen – five of whom were to serve as the colonial incumbents of the Parish of Mitcham.