

## Information on History of St Peters River Park

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### 1.0 Introduction St Peters River Park, St Peters

St Peters River Park is the largest reserve in the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters covering an area of 92,643 square metres and is part of the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri riverine system. Entrance to the park is via Goss Court, Eighth Avenue and River Street in St Peters. It is flanked by clay cliffs and the River Torrens Linear Park.

The St Peters River Park is classified as Regional Open Space in the Council's *Open Space Strategic Plan* and is managed under the Council's Community Land Management Plan (2021) pursuant to Section 196 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act).

The purpose of the St Peters River Park Reserve as stated within the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters Community Land Management Plan (2021) is to:

- provide public open space for the use, enjoyment and benefit of the community
- provide opportunities for recreational, community and sporting activities
- provide opportunities for social interaction and connection, relaxation and physical activity
- protect and enhance the lifestyle, amenity and sense of place in the city
- protect and enhance the natural environment, including areas of remnant vegetation, biodiversity and waterways and riparian zones including the St Peters Billabong
- provide regional open space as part of the River Torrens Linear Park for the use, enjoyment and benefit of the community as a recreational and educational resource, and as a tourism asset.

The reserve exists to provide the community with a place for passive recreation and includes the L G Perriam Memorial Oval, which is used by local sporting groups and the River Torrens Linear Park Trail which is available for use by pedestrians and cyclists.

The urban wetlands habitat of the St Peters Billabong is situated within the St Peters River Park and is home to a wide variety of native birdlife and plant species which have encouraged the return of native wildlife to the park. The area includes reserve land purchased by the Council over many years at the rear of properties on River Street, Eighth Avenue, Harrow Road and Goss Court along what is known as the horseshoe bend in the River Torrens (prior to straightening).

The St Peters River Park was officially opened on 9 of March 1980 and was referred to by the Corporate Town of St Peters as the 'River Torrens Recreation Ground' (RTRG). The name the St Peters River Park was adopted and gazetted by the Corporate Town of St Peters in April 1980.

The following history of the St Peters River Park briefly outlines the pattern of European settlement and land use and refers to the area as an Aboriginal cultural landscape.

The Kaurna Nation are the Traditional Owners of the Adelaide Plains and 'Karrawirra Parri' is the Kaurna name for the River Torrens which has its source in the Mt Lofty Ranges and winds its way through the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters.

In 2001, the cultural protocol of dual naming of the River Torrens was adopted by the South Australian Government in recognition of the Kaurna as the traditional owners and custodians of the Karrawirra Parri:

*“NOTICE is hereby given [that the] Minister of the Crown to whom the administration of the Geographical Names Act 1991, is committed do hereby 1. Assign the name Karrawirra Parri as an alternative name to that feature also known as River Torrens. Both names, separately and together, would have equal validity as the name of the subject.”*

*Notice to Assign Dual Names to Places, South Australian Government Gazette. Government of South Australia. 15 November 2001.*

Rivers, creeks and springs connect Aboriginal people to Country through culture and ecology. There is a high correlation between Aboriginal cultural sites and major water courses such as the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri

This is the case in the local government area of the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters and the St Peters River Park, where there are several specific sites of ‘known’ high cultural heritage value and sensitivity for the Kurna.

While not formally listed on the existing Central Archive Register of Aboriginal sites and Objects (South Australia) there is compelling evidence based on historical research for the presence of archaeological sites, including camping, ceremonial and burial sites within the St Peters River Park.

It is important to understand that under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (AHA) any Aboriginal site means an area of land:

- (a) That is of significance according to Aboriginal tradition; or
- (b) That is of significance according to Aboriginal archaeology, anthropology or history.

It is an offence under Section 23 of the AHA to damage, disturb or interfere with an Aboriginal site, object or remains unless written authorisation from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation has been obtained.

It should also be noted that it is an offence under Section 35 of the AHA to divulge information relating to an Aboriginal site, object, remains or Aboriginal tradition without authorisation from the relevant Aboriginal group or groups.

The application of the AHA is relevant given the potential to encounter Aboriginal sites in the St Peters River Park which has not been subject to detailed survey or cultural mapping.

The AHA argues that there is no legal requirement to have undertaken an Aboriginal heritage survey as a precursor to implementing the regulations of the Act.

Under the AHA, due diligence is a necessary strategy in mitigating risk when it comes to understanding Aboriginal landscapes and should be part of any approval or development process particularly with respect to the St Peters River Park and adjoining areas where ground disturbance is required.

The St Peters River Park lies within what is referred to as the ‘ox bow bend’ or the ‘horseshoe bend’ of the Karrawirra Parri/River Torrens. This physical feature of the river is associated with important aspects of Kurna cultural practices and is ethnographically and anthropologically significant.

This area is now part of what is designated ‘The Billabong’ and is an artificial construction that was brought about by diverting the River Torrens away from its natural course in 1976.

The history of the St Peters River Park is inextricably linked to the complex system of European colonisation in South Australia from 1836.

## 2.0 Location St Peters River Park

St Peters River Park is located east of the existing course of the River Torrens with entrances off Goss Court and River Street, St Peters.

The reserve includes the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri on the west and the area that is shared as the Linear Park in Gilberton; the OBahn and part of River Street to the north; part of Eighth Avenue on the east and to the south Goss Court. The total area is 92,643 square metres of designated reserve.

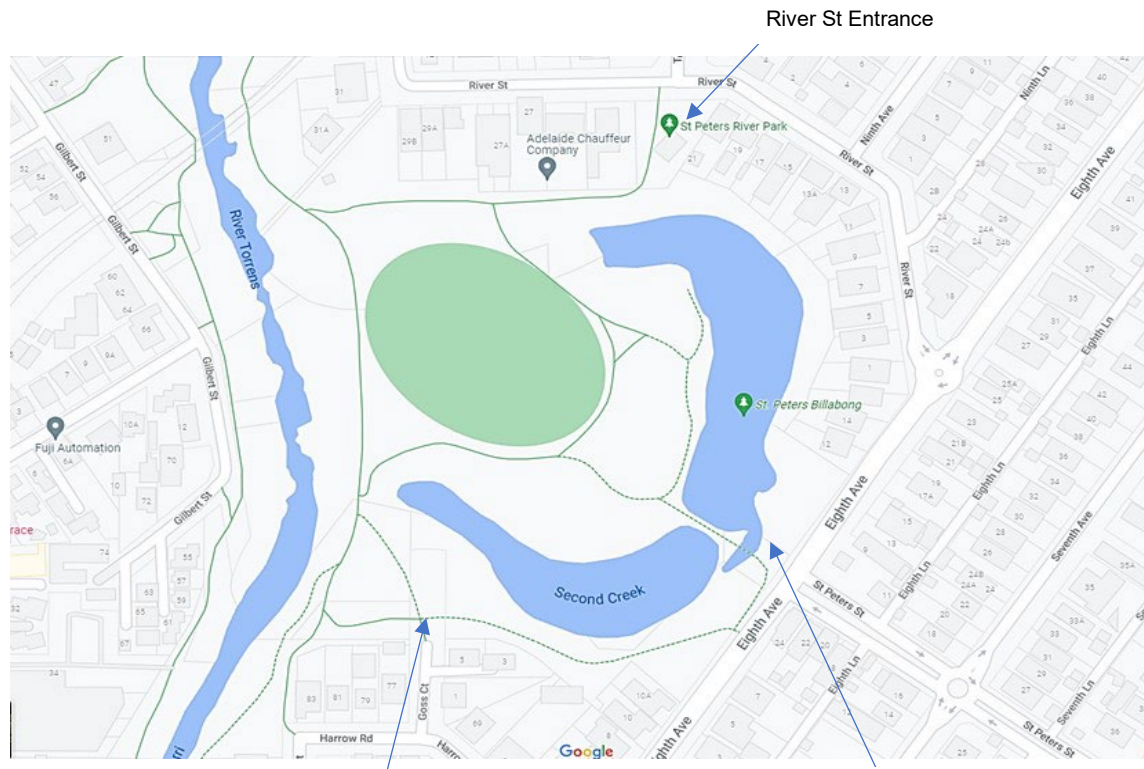


Fig 1 Goss Court Entrance

Cliff Goodwin Reserve

There are several agencies including the Department of Environment & Water, SA Water, the Environment Protection Authority, Department of Transport & Infrastructure and local governments such as the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters and the City of Walkerville which have been responsible for aspects of the River Torrens/ Karrawirra Parri development.

Some of these agencies have also been involved in the St Peters River Park development.

Recent changes in South Australia through the application of the South Australian Government's *Landscape South Australia Act in 2019* have clarified water rights in relation to the ability of a person to access, take or use water from any source and the ownership of waterways.

This means that riparian or common law rights to take water (that is water rights based on land ownership or possession) that existed historically over the River Torrens have been changed.

The idea of riparian rites influenced land titles with respect to private ownership over rivers, creeks, and springs and impacted on land titles in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This issue of ownership of the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri and its tributaries are relevant to understanding the history of the St Peters River Park and its past development and management.

### 3.0 Land Division & Classification

St Peters River Park is in the Hundred of Adelaide and the Hundred of Yatala in the County of Adelaide. This includes Section 258, Section 257 and Section 475.

In the early days of European settlement in South Australia, the purchase of land was released in the province in an orderly manner by the British Government and was considered the property of the Crown.

Unlike other colonies, in the Province of South Australia land was not to be given away but was to be surveyed and sold systematically at a minimum price intended to encourage people with capital to make South Australia their new home. This was part of the Wakefield Plan.

Initial land sales were made as a prerequisite to the founding of the Province of South Australia by the issuing of preliminary land orders in Britain prior to 1837. The holders of these preliminary orders could take first choice of land when it had been surveyed and present their orders to the Resident Commissioner in the Land Office, to receive their title deeds or "land grants".

The initial town survey of Adelaide was completed in March 1837 by Colonel Light, and by February 1839 the surrounding country to the east had been surveyed into what were called Country Sections.

The colonial surveyors made sure that wherever possible boundaries of these Sections abutted, crossed or centred upon a stretch of river or creek ensuring that it raised the monetary value of the land. This was clearly the case with the River Torrens and its five creeks.

According to Dr Rob Amery, University of Adelaide (2009), the Hundred of Yatala was derived from the name for the River Torrens as it was called 'Yartala' by the Kaurna people while in flood.

Colonel Light's survey map of 1839 clearly shows that the River Torrens and the oxbow bend (now part of the St Peters River Park) was an important topographical consideration influencing the surveyors' delineation of Sections 257, 258 and 475.

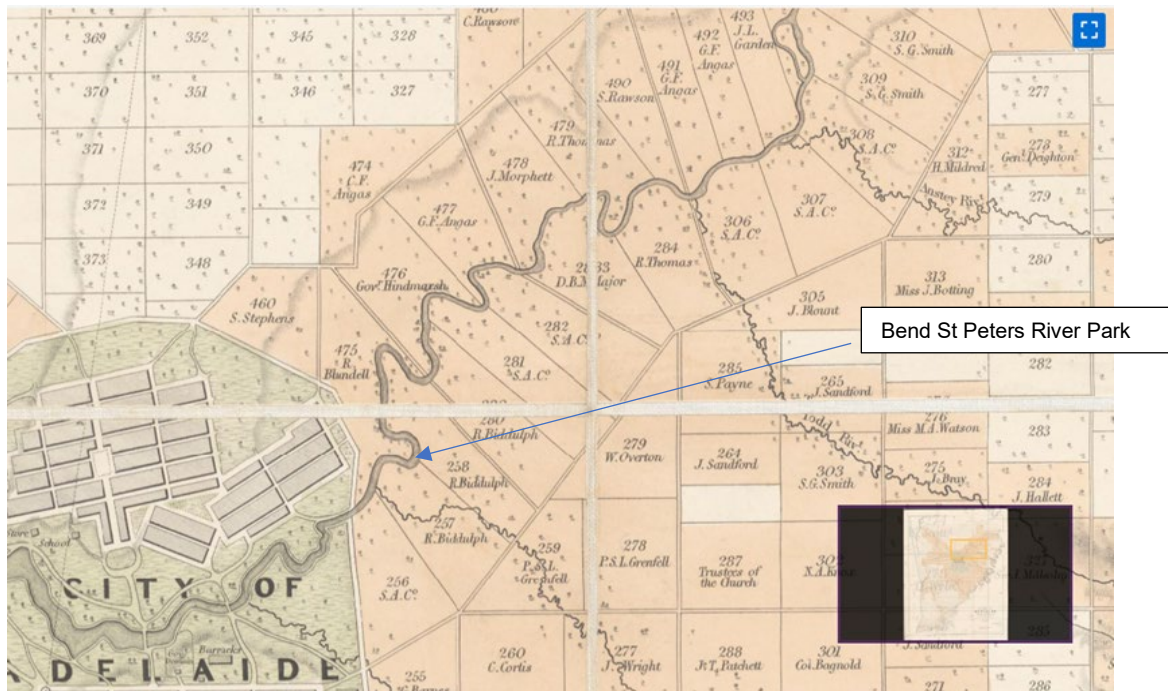


Fig2 The District of Adelaide, South Australia, as divided into Country Sections from the trigonometrical surveys of Colonel Light, Surveyor General, published by John Arrowsmith, 35 Essex St., London, 1839.



#### 4.0 Certificates of Title Numbers St Peters River Park

The River Torrens is an integral part of the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters landscape and its management has been influenced by many factors including the Torrens Title Land System.

A certificate of title (CT) is a 'Land Title' which shows details of land registered under the Torrens Title system including the location, encumbrances and owners.

The historical issue of land title deeds and rights to the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri (and its creeks) have meant that it was a highly prized financial asset in colonial South Australia and was part of the process of what constituted the legal definition of a boundary.

In Colonel Light's survey map of 1839, the River Torrens was used as a *boundary* between two Sections of land. This boundary *ad medium filum aquae* was a Latin term in British common law meaning the centre thread of the water.

This meant that if a river or stream ran between two properties, the centre of the river was the *boundary*.

A land title or deed could also with respect to a river or creek where intersecting boundaries occurred could use the survey principal of the 'top of the bank' (not centre line) and this was recorded in the drawing up of the title and amendments to *boundaries*.

Both principles are reflected in the case regarding the St Peters River Park. In 1927 properties bordering the St Peters River Park at the rear of Eighth and River Street, St Peters, in CT 1032/104 where the original boundary of Allotments 725 to 733 was subdivided from the original title boundary of 'the centre of the river' to the 'top of the bank' of river and deposited as Plan 882 and a new titled issued as 1505/185.

The area at the rear of these properties was purchased in 1938 by the Corporate Town of St Peters and declared 'Reserve Land'.

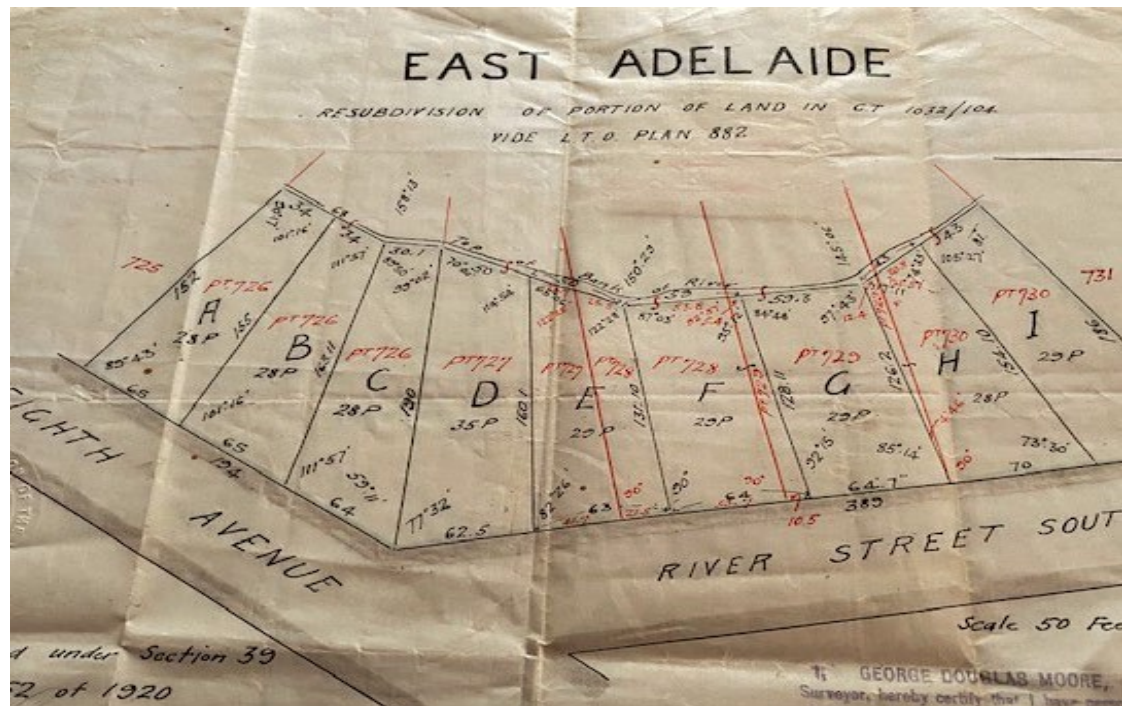


Fig 3 LTO Plan 882 showing change in 'boundary' of Allotments 725 to 733, Section 258 & 280 from 'Centre of River' to 'Top of Riverbank' 1927

The following is a reference list of current and 'Old titles' documenting the ownership, transfer of titles, compulsory acquisition, subdivision, cancelled titles and creation of new titles as part of the St Peters River Park development. (Note it is not a list of all titles just an indicative list).

The City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters Community Land Management Plan (2021)  
lists the following current titles as part of the St Peters River Park:

10 River Street, St Peters CT 5875/802  
Lot 31 Eighth Avenue, St Peters CT 5853/87  
CT 5750/168; CT 5262/161; CT 5261/579  
Lot 46 Eighth Avenue, College Park CT 339/70  
Lot 46 Eighth Avenue, College Park CT 329/181,182  
23 River Street, St Peters CT 5547/589  
Lot 10 River Street, St Peters CT 5329/205  
Lot 36 Gilbert Street, Gilberton Pt 5832/927; Pt 5875/665.

A number of the current certificates of titles pertain to earlier titles which were held by the former Corporation of St Peters which amalgamated in 1997 to become the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters.

Amendments to boundaries have also impacted on titles with the Town of Walkerville.

Over a period from 1938 until 1980 land was purchased by the former Corporation of St Peters Council and became the St Peters River Park in 1980.

Part of the reserve land designated as the St Peters River Park, and owned by the former Corporation of St Peters Council, was compulsorily acquired by the State Government in 1983, 1984 and 1988 under the Land Acquisition Act 1962-1972 for the construction of the North-East Busway and the Linear Park.

To understand this complex history of land acquisition, subdivision and of the transfer and sale of sundry parcels of land the following is a list of earlier certificates of land titles which are relevant to the development of the St Peters River Park precinct.

Certificates of Land Titles St Peters River Park and adjoining land in Sections 257, 258 and Section 475 land acquired St Peters Council from 1938

CT 1298/119 SP River Park, LT 725, St Peters Cr, July 1938, Reserve  
CT 1505/185 SP River Park, PT 726-730, St Peters Cr, July 1938, Reserve  
CT 1804/150 River St, PT 739, St Peters Cr, Nov 1942, Drain  
CT 1357/43 LT 475 & 476, Pt 477, 478 St Peters Cr, April 1966, Recreational  
CT 3470/197 SP River Park, Lots 475 & 476, Pt 469,470,477, 481, PT A, St Peters Cr, Feb 1967, Reserve  
CT 3470/199 SP River Park, PT A, St Peters Cr, Feb 1967, Easement  
CT 3492/180 SP River Park, Pt 34 Section 475, St Peters Cr, July 1967, Reserve  
CT 3499/141 SP River Park, Pt 731-739, St Peters Cr, Jul 1967, Reserve  
CT 3512/87 SP River Park, PT 5, St Peters Cr, Sept 1967, Reserve  
CT 3544/197 SP River Park, PT 734, St Peters Cr, Feb 1968, Reserve  
CT 1371/101 SP River Park, Pt 479-480, St Peters Cr, Feb 1969, Reserve  
CT 1533/10 SP River Park, LT 828, St Peters Cr, Mar 1971, Reserve  
CT 1533/11 SP River Park, LT 827, St Peters Cr, Mar 1971, Reserve  
CT 528/147 SP River Park, Gilberton PT 32 & 33, St Peters Cr, Mar 1971, Reserve  
CT 537/64 SP River Park, Goss Court LT 473-474, LT A, St Peters Cr, July 1971, Reserve  
CT 3464/68 SP River Park, PT 32 & 33, St Peters Cr, Jul 1971, Reserve  
CT 1505/180 River Street No 1, PT 727-728, St Peters Cr, Mar 1972, Sundry  
(Sold as 3 River St in August 1980)  
CT 3877/37 SP River Park, Lots 475 & 476, Pt 469,470,477, 481, PT A, St Peters Cr, Sep 1972, Reserve

Fig 4  
CT3464/68 title to what is now St Peters River Park - LG Perriam Oval and The Billabong which previously was Dangerfield's Rubbish Dump. This land was compulsorily acquired by the Corporate Town of St Peters in 1971 after the major landholders refused to sell and it went to trial in the Supreme Court of South Australia in 1969 and ended up in the High Court of Australia.

Brief Summary St Peters River Park Acquisition of Land by St Peters Council 1938:

1938

Portions 726-730 from top of embankment to centre of river, at the rear of the properties facing Eighth Avenue and River Street, St Peters, were purchased in 1938 by the Corporation of Town of St Peters.

Portion 725 of Centre of River Torrens rear of Eighth Avenue purchased in 1938 by the Corporation of Town of St Peters

1942

Portion 739, River Street, Drain

1965

Portion of 737

1966

Area Goss Court 475,476,477,478 Recreational

1967

Area Goss Court & Eighth Avenue Lots 475 & 476, Pt 469,470,477, 481, PT A Reserve

PT A, River Torrens & Goss Court St Peters Cr, Feb 1967, Easement

Area Goss Court Pt 34 Section 475, St Peters Cr, July 1967, Reserve

Area rear River Street Pt 731-739, St Peters Cr, Jul 1967, Reserve

Area of River Bank Gilbert Street, Gilberton PT 5, Section 475 St Peters Cr, Sept 1967, Reserve

1968

PT 734, River Street St Peters Cr, Feb 1968, Reserve

1969

Harrow Road SP River Park, Pt 479-480, St Peters Cr, Feb 1969, Reserve

1971

Area Lots 827 & 828 SP River St, St Peters Cr, Mar 1971, Reserve

Pt Lots 32 & 38 River Torrens, Mar 1971, Reserve

1971

Compulsory Acquisition by order of the Supreme Court of SA of Lots 33 & 34 from Rogers & Brewster and Dangerfield to Corp of St Peters

1972

Pt 727/728 1 River Street purchased by Corp of St Peters sold 3 in 1980 (3 River Street)

Area Goss Court Lots 475 & 476, Pt 469,470,477, 481, PT A, St Peters Cr, Reserve, Sep 1972

1980

Pt of 727/728 River Street, St Peters Gazetted for sale by Corporation of St Peters



## 5.0 Registers & Planning Regulations St Peters River Park 1982-2022

### 5.1 Register of the National Estate, Australian Heritage Commission 1982 River Torrens (excluding City of Adelaide) ID6235

The Register of the National Estate (RNE) was established under Part IV of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* and was used to describe a collection of buildings and sites that were worthy of preservation for a variety of reasons.

The National Estate covered natural environments as well as European history and Aboriginal culture.

The Register of the National Estate was compiled between 1976 and 2003 by the Australian Heritage Commission after which the register of 13,000 places was maintained by the Australian Heritage Council.

On the 28 of September, 1982, the River Torrens (excluding City of Adelaide) was registered as part of the National Estate.

The entry into the Register of the National Estate stated that the listing covered the whole of the River Torrens from its source in the Adelaide Hills to the coast.

The nomination included the following local government areas as part of the listing – East Torrens, Tea Tree Gully, Campbelltown, Payneham, Walkerville, St Peters, Hindmarsh, West Torrens and Henley & Grange Councils.

The classification adopted by the Register of the National Estate was that the River Torrens represented heritage values of natural and cultural heritage significance.

It was important for two reasons. The first was the 'Statement of Significance' which acknowledged the River Torrens as having 'Indigenous heritage values'.

This highlighted the association between the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri and the Traditional owners – the Kaurna of the Adelaide Plains.

The River Torrens it was claimed also had geomorphological, geological and ornithological significance.

The listing specifically referred to the River Torrens as an entity and that its boundaries were:

- (a) to a distance of 60m from each bank
- (b) to a distance of 60m either side of the centre line of the river.

This second component of the listing of the River Torrens defined the concept of a 'boundary' for a riverine environment as part of the entity's conservation and cultural heritage.

This concept of a protective boundary for a riverine environment was the first step towards a progressive understanding of the environmental needs of rivers and waterways. This understanding was reflected in the Corporate Town of St Peters objective from 1912 to acquire land for the purposes of creating a recreation park around the River Torrens.

The listing in the Register of the National Estate and its identification of the River Torrens as having cultural heritage and environmental values influenced the Development Plans of the Corporate Town of St Peters from the 1980s until its amalgamation in 1997.

## 5.2 Corporate Town of St Peters Supplementary Development Plan 1988

The Development Plan for the Corporate Town of St Peters (1988) was visionary in its arguments informing what principles of development control should apply to the Corporate Town of St Peters, and more specifically to individual zones, including the area around the River Torrens.

The Plan stipulated what conditions and what kind of development was to be permitted. It clearly specified that 'no development' could be undertaken within the boundaries of the River Torrens.

### *"Corporate Town of St Peters Table StP/1 Development Plan 1988*

#### *Kind of Development*

*The erection of buildings, change of use of land, earthworks and other construction for the purposes of:*

#### *All Development*

#### *Conditions*

*No development being undertaken within 60 metres of either side of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens.*

#### *Principles of Development Control*

*The principles of development control for metropolitan Adelaide apply to the area of the Corporate Town of St Peters. The following additional principles of development control also apply to the council area.*

#### *General*

- 1 Development should be in accordance with the Metropolitan Adelaide Plan, MA/4, and St Peters Plan Map StP/1, including that part of the urban area in the adjoining council area. See Fig 5*
- 78 Development should take place in a manner which does not cause soil erosion or the silting of watercourses or create any unstable embankment or cutting."*

The Corporate Town of St Peters Supplementary Development Plan (1988) specified a set of conservation and heritage objectives that would apply to any development within, or which might impact on reserves such as the St Peters River Park:

#### *"Conservation*

*Objective 16: Protection from waste of water resources*

*Objective 18: Conservation and re-establishment of vegetation*

*Objective 19: Protection of biological systems to an extent which enables them to naturally restore or maintain equilibrium.*

#### *Heritage*

*Objective 21: Protection of land and items of scientific and natural interest*

*Objective 24: Conservation of landscapes of aesthetic merit, including sites and localities of natural beauty."*

*Extract from Supplementary Development Plan, Corporate Town of St Peters, 1988.*

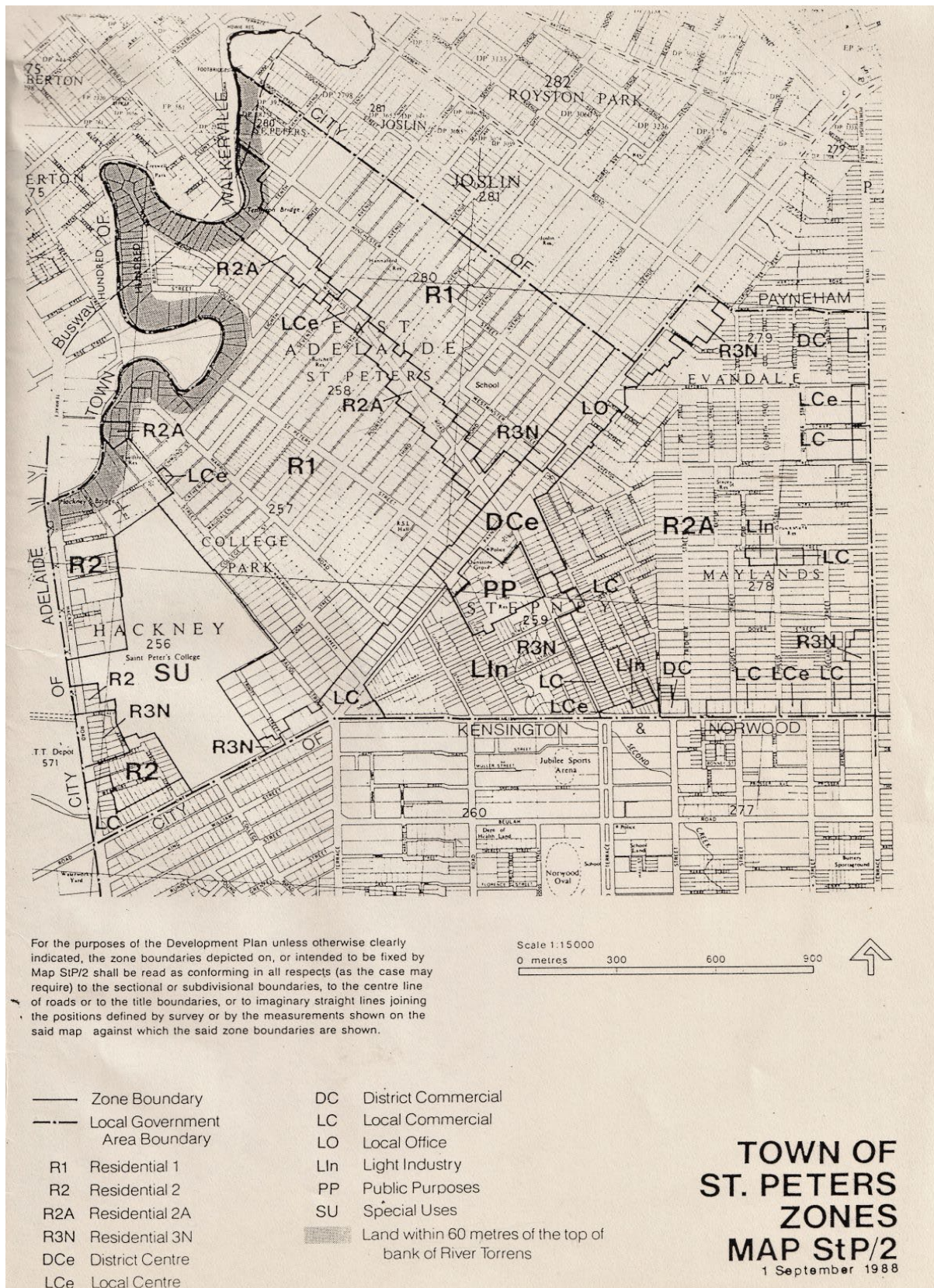


Fig 5 The Plan outlined the principle of development control showing that no new development was to be undertaken within sixty metres of either side of the 'of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens.'

Supplementary Development Plan, Corporate Town of St Peters, September 1988.



### 5.3 Development Plan City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters February 2021

In the intervening years from 1988 until 2021 there were many events which impacted on the St Peters River Park including the 1997 reform to local government boundaries. This saw the amalgamation of various councils across South Australia. Along with this reform to local government, there were various changes to the South Australia's Development and Planning Regulations and South Australia's Development Act 1993.

In 1997, following the amalgamation of the former Corporate Town of St Peters with the City of Kensington and Norwood and the City of Payneham became the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters. A 'Community Land Management Plan for the St Peters River Park' was developed.

One aim of the Management Plan was to 'stabilise the cliffs by planting appropriate native species along the top and sides of the river cliffs.' River red gums, blue gums, wattles, melaleucas and she-oaks representative of the original vegetation which once grew beside the River Torrens were to be planted according to detailed landscape plans prepared by Ceilings & Partners for the St Peters River Park.

In February 2021, The Development Plan for the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters documented zones, maps and contained explicit written policies which guided property owners and others as to what could or could not be done in the future on any piece of land in the area covered by the Development Plan.

With respect to the St Peters River Park, and adjoining properties, the rules remained consistent with the Corporate Town of St Peters Supplementary Development Plan 1988.

The Development Plan for the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters (2021) stated that the St Peters River Park and Linear Park were within the LP(RT) Zone described as Linear Park River Torrens and that no development could be undertaken within sixty metres of either side of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens:

*"TABLE NPSP/1*

*Conditions Applying to Complying Development*

*Located in the St Peters Area Shown on Map NPSP/1 (Overlay1)*

*Kind of Development*

*Conditions*

*All Development*

*No development being undertaken within 60 metres of either side of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens."*

*Extract City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters Development Plan February 2021.*

The City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Development Plan February (2021) defined the boundaries of the St Peters River Park and conditions of development.

This was particularly relevant to adjoining Allotments on Eighth Avenue, River Street and River Street South, Harrow Road and Goss Court in St Peters. Refer to Fig 6

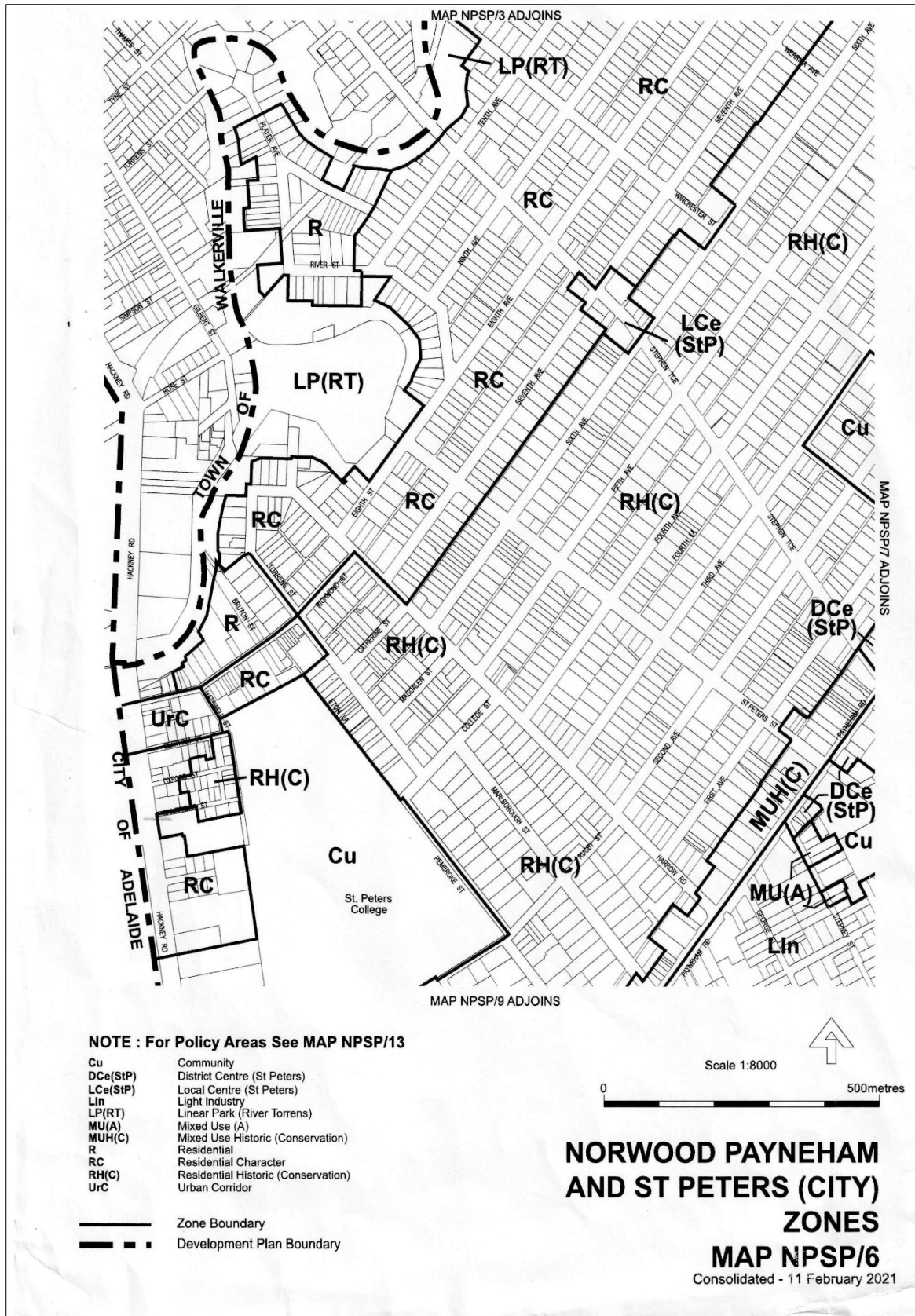


Fig 6 The City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Zones Map NPSP/6 (February 2021)



#### 5.4 South Australian Planning & Design Code March 2021

From 19 March 2021, the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (PDI Act) replaced the *Development Act 1993*. A system of state-wide planning rules was introduced via the Planning and Design Code (the Code). The Code became the single reference point for the state's planning and development industry.

A significant element of the planning reform involved the revocation and replacing of all 72 South Australian Development Plans with a single state-wide planning rule book, the Planning and Design Code.

The introduction of this new system meant the revocation of the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Development Plan of February 2021 and with it the conditions of development as they applied to the St Peters River Park and adjoining properties.

Prior to 19 March 2021, no development could be undertaken within sixty metres of either side of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens.

However, the new SA Planning and Design Code states:

*“that no development can be undertaken within 20 metres of either side of the boundaries of the River Torrens or within the River Torrens”.*

This difference in what is now the legal exclusion zone along the River Torrens appears an anomaly within the current Planning and Design Code (the Code) as it relates to the St Peters River Park and makes no allowance for differing factors that impact on the River Torrens from source to sea.

Some of these factors include the physical-geographical factors, climate variability and river engineering structures that have historically modified the natural river and river flow including road works, mining, dredging, diversions, cofferdams, channelization, levees and flood control works.

#### 6.0 Brief History of St Peters River Park

Following Colonel Light's survey of 1839 of Country Sections District B, the 400 acres east of Hackney including Sections 257, 258 and 280 on the River Torrens were owned by absentee English investors.

The land comprising Sections 257 and 280 remained farming country for a generation after European settlement of the new Province of South Australia in 1836. The Register Newspaper commented in 1865 that 'the proprietor deserves the thanks of all lovers of the picturesque for having left unmolested so many of the gnarled gum trees. Cattle graze on the riverbanks and dairy cows eat the lush grasses by the river.'

##### a) East Adelaide Investment Company Ltd 1878

It was not until 1878 that the English landlords sold Sections 257, 258 and 280 to speculators John Spence and Arthur Harvey who formed the East Adelaide Investment Company Ltd. Harvey and Spence embarked on an ambitious engineering and capital works program to redirect flood waters from Second Creek into a new outlet at the horseshoe bend in the River Torrens via an open drain that would eventually become St Peters Street.

The new genteel subdivision on the reclaimed flood plain was called 'The Avenues' and was in the 1880s one of the largest real estate ventures in Adelaide. However, Spence and Harvey were financially challenged by the capital works required to drain the marshy land and for it to be developed.

In 1880, Arthur Harvey, Managing Director of the East Adelaide Investment Company Ltd, advertised in the Adelaide newspapers 'river allotments for sale only two kilometres from the city'. The only takers in the northern Section of 258 and 280 were sand-miners and carters who progressively quarried the banks of the river for loam, gravel and washed sand. They also felled the ancient river red gums for wood supplies and building materials changing the riverine environment.

In 1880 Mining Captain Samuel Terrell and his sons along with James Matthews purchased lots 738 and 739 in East Adelaide. Their boundary being a diagonal line to the River Torrens from what is now the right-angled bend of River Street. The Gilbert family were also sand carters and lived in River Street.

One of the largest operators was the Bickle family located on the Gilberton side. In 1893, they added Terrell's land holding to their own. This meant they held all the land that comprised the River Torrens and the land between where the river meandered around the oxbow bend. This land from Gilberton to St Peters was worked as a sand mining business until 1960 when sand mining was not allowed and so it was then sold to the HL & RF Dangerfield and later became 'Dangerfield's Rubbish Dump'.

The sand carters and miners had the greatest impact on the riverine environment in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The banks of the River Torrens in St Peters are composed of clayey loam, with seams of sand running out into the riverbed both materials as well as the river gravel were of commercial use. The area around the horseshoe bend was mined for over 80 years.

In 1887, Harvey & Spence's East Adelaide Investment Company Ltd collapsed leaving the underwriter - the Queensland Mortgage Company and the British Empire Land Mortgage & Loan Company as the owner of a large area of land allotments in East Adelaide.

#### b) Frank Woolley (1861-1941) & British Empire Land Mortgage & Loan Company

Frank Woolley was the South Australian representative of these London-based mortgage institutions and an accountant and land developer. Woolley would play a critical part in deciding the fate of the land bordering the river in the St Peters Council.

In 1912 Frank Woolley advertised the land for sale as 'the only large piece of land available for building sites within the two-mile radius from the G.P.O.'. There began a series of attempts by the former St Peters Council to acquire the river frontage still in Woolley's hands.

Detailed plans were formulated as early as 1912 by the St Peters Council for the development of the river in the St Peter as a recreational park but did not proceed as negotiations with Frank Woolley and the St Peters Council over the land were not successful.

Consequently, Woolley went ahead with the subdivision of eighty-five allotments from Ninth Avenue to the river within which Player Avenue records the name of his Woolley's wife's family from Angaston. A suspension bridge was designed by CF muller and built to connect the new subdivision to Walkerville, the Gilberton Swimming Pool and the tramway. The Swing Bridge was opened on 20 March, 1920. However, land sales were slow.

#### c) Corporate Town of St Peters Council Land Acquisition for Reserve

In 1927 land at the rear of Eighth Avenue and River Street in CT1032/104 concerning allotments 726 to 730 were subdivided in Plan 882 to create a new boundary for portions of the allotments. The centre of the river was the former boundary, but it now was defined as the top of the riverbank.

In 1938, the opportunity arose whereby the Corporate Town of St Peters could purchase some of this land and at a meeting of the St Peters Council on 7 April, 1938, it was moved and carried that Allotment 725 to the centre of the river, and Pt Lots 726 to 730 being a portion of the riverbank be purchased by the corporation. This of course was in the area referred to as 'oxbow or horseshoe bend'. Refer Fig3.

The Corporation of St Peters long term plan to establish a recreation park in the area along the river in St Peters was delayed again. The onset of World War 2 and in the decade following the end of the war in 1945 the focus was clearly on nation building.

On 1 March 1954, Adelaide suffered a major earthquake for 20 to 30 seconds, recorded as 5.5 on the Richter Scale at Darlington to the south of the city. It caused damage to three thousand buildings including collapsed and cracked walls, smashed windows and collapsed chimneys in the southern suburbs of Adelaide.

Some houses were reduced to rubble and several city buildings were cracked and damaged including the Adelaide Post Office. Due to a lack of earthquake recording equipment in the 1950s no devices measured the movement of the earth along the River Torrens or in suburbs nearby.

d) River Torrens Embankment Collapse River Torrens Embankment River Street, St Peters 1955

In early September 1955, part of the riverbank bordering River Street in St Peters collapsed. Some fencing at the rear of properties adjoining the riverbank had fallen with part of the cliff edge into the river. From the photo which appeared in *The Advertiser* on 2 September 1955, it appears from the angle of the photograph, the area that comprises the northern bend of the Oxbow of the river along River Street was the location of the collapsed embankments.

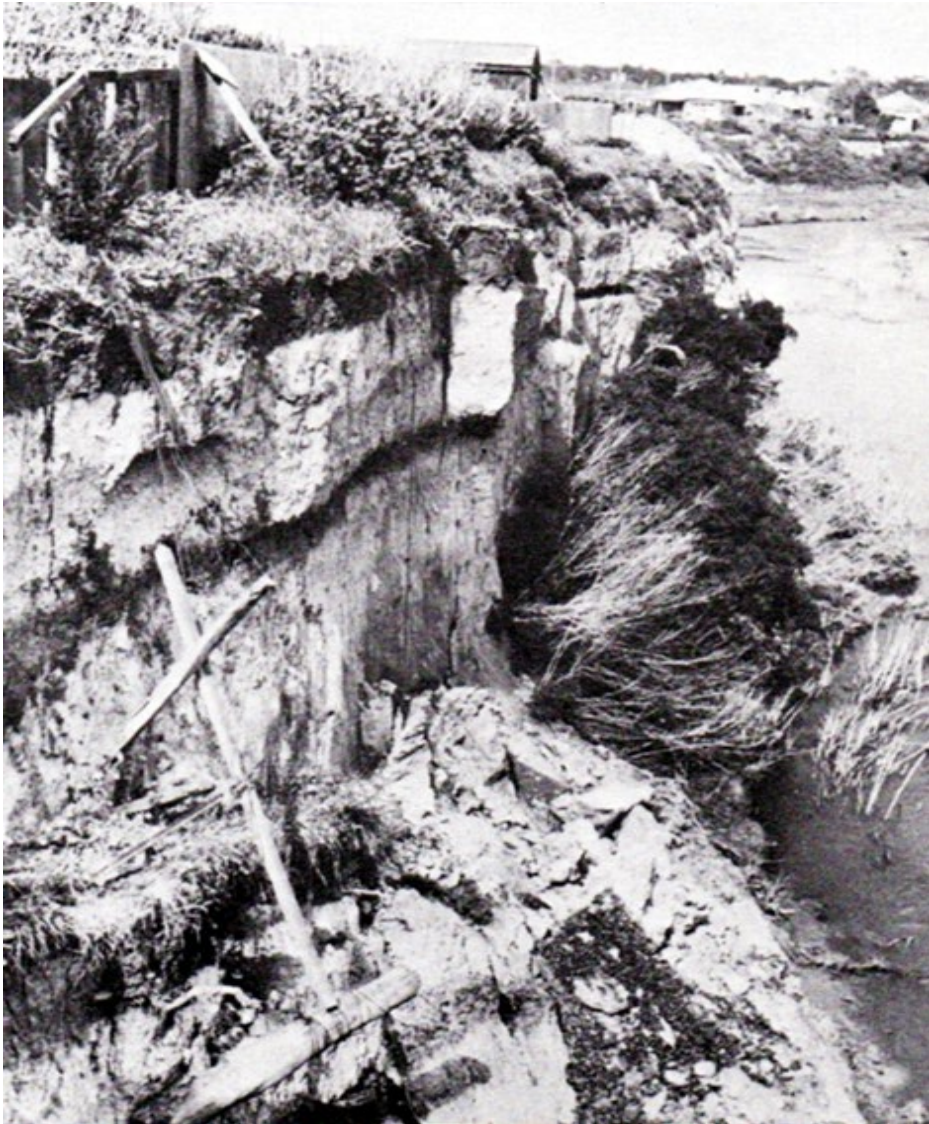


Fig 7 The Advertiser, 2 September 1955

### e) The Proposal to Create a 'Pleasure Ground'

The meeting of the Corporation of the Town of St Peters Council which was held on the 1 September 1955 recorded that:

*"Cr Perriam drew the Council's attention to the erosion taking place on the banks of the River Torrens at the rear of River Street South near Eighth Avenue, East Adelaide. He would like a complete investigation into the matter, as soon as possible, with the view of having the river straightened in this locality."*

*Cr Perriam moved that the General Purposes Advisory Committee investigate the position. Seconded Cr Hayter Carried."*

*Corporate Town of St Peters Council Meeting, 1 September 1955.*

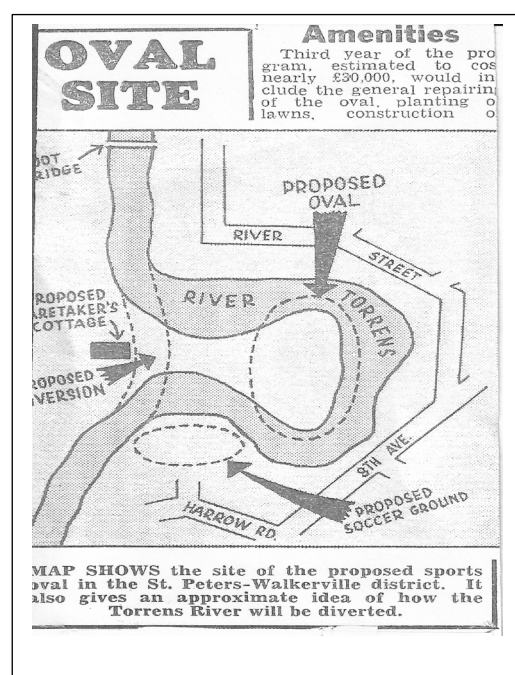
Following the meeting, the members of the St Peter's Council General Purposes Advisory Committee and the Mayor of the Town of Walkerville inspected the erosion occurring along the River Torrens. They examined the area along both sides of the riverbank downstream from the Tennyson Bridge and at the rear of Eighth Avenue and River Street, East Adelaide.

The suggestion was made at the meeting between the two councils to divert the River Torrens by cutting a channel at the rear of Dangerfield's property. This would enable the River Torrens to run a straight course and to bypass the 'horseshoe bend.' It was agreed that the legal ramifications of diverting the river be considered and a further report prepared for the councils' consideration.

On the 13 October, 1955, the Corporate Town of St Peters received legal advice on the proposal to divert the River Torrens and to establish a 'Pleasure Ground' on portion of the river in the vicinity of the 'horseshoe bend'. Further discussions and meetings were held between the Corporate Town of St Peters and the Town of Walkerville.

The Walkerville Council resolved at a meeting on 7 November, 1955, that it agreed to Lots 32 and 33 being annexed to the St Peters Council for recreational purposes - provided that the project proceeded and that all expenses were to be paid by the St Peters Council.

Inspired by the Melbourne Olympics of 1956, the grand vision was to convert Dangerfield's' Rubbish Dump into a state-of-the art stadium facility and oval for the British Empire Games which were to be held in Australia in 1962. Unfortunately, for the St Peters Council no funding was forthcoming from the Playford State Government.





## f) Corporate Town of St Peters Council Land Acquisition for Recreation in 1960-1980

Discussions and representations continued regarding the proposal to divert the River Torrens and create an oval on land which was part of the horseshoe bend. Finally in 1964, the Sir Thomas Playford and the State Government agreed to a grant of 37,000 pounds (\$70,000 approx.) towards the cost of works to establish the oval.

The State Government grant was less than half of the estimated costs of 74,000 pounds to acquire land and undertake engineering works to cut a new channel for the River Torrens and to extend the Second Creek drain. Approval was granted from the State Government to the Corporate Town of St Peters to borrow 100,000 pounds for the project.

The South Australian Land Board had estimated that the Dangerfield property was valued at 16,730 pounds but this was rejected by Ray Dangerfield as adequate compensation for his property.

In March 1966, the St Peters Council was able to commence the first stage of the project which was the diversion and extension of the Second Creek Drain from its outfall in centre of the horseshoe bend to a new outlet that would enter the river near the end of Harrow Road.

The new drain would divert floodwaters from St Peters Street outlet to the new outlet at Harrow Road. It was necessary to divert water from the centre of the horseshoe bend which would then enable the re-routing of the River Torrens.

News Review  
30-3-66

# Council's Project To Re-route River

## *To Provide Recreational Area*

**St. Peters Council has embarked on an ambitious project to eliminate a large horseshoe bend from the River Torrens to provide valuable recreational space.**

The horseshoe is as the bottom of St. Peters Street and is bounded by River Street and Eighth Avenue.

Details of the project were announced last week by the Mayor of St. Peters (Mr. E. W. Stanford).

Preliminary work to the eventual cutting-off of the horseshoe bend and the re-routing of the river has started.

This involves an extension of the Second Creek (St. Peters Street) drain, which is a major outlet for storm water from the eastern suburbs.

The extended drain will skirt the horseshoe bend of the Torrens River near Eighth Avenue and provide an outlet for the St. Peters Street drain near the end of Harrow Road.

**1,100 Feet**

Mr. Stanford said that the extension would comprise approximately 1,100

feet of 102-inch diameter concrete piping.

It would be the largest capacity underground stormwater drain to be installed in St. Peters and possibly the biggest in the metropolitan area.

The extension of the drain will be the first stage in council's plans to establish a recreation area in the present bed of the river.

The area in the centre of the horseshoe is an eyesore for residents living in the areas surrounding it. Most of the area is covered in rubbish and undergrowth.

Mr. Stanford said that St. Peters Council had decided to negotiate with some 23 property owners for the purchase of land adjoining the river.

The Town Clerk of St. Peters (Mr. Pitt) said that a purchase agreement had

been reached with most of these persons.

Negotiations are proceeding with the remainder.

### Walkerville

Some of the land required is in the Walkerville Council area. Walkerville Council has agreed to sever and annex the area to St. Peters for the establishment of the recreation area.

Council has drawn up a tentative plan in which it is proposed to establish a large oval or playing field in the creek bed.

Areas surrounding the recreational area will be beautified and landscaped.

Mr. Stanford said that as soon as St. Peters owned and controlled the necessary land, the second stage of the project — the deviation of the River Torrens itself — would be started.

It has been estimated

that some 20 acres of land would become available for recreational purposes.

Mr. Pitt said that no decision had been reached as the type of facility to be provided for recreation.

Cost of the drain will be in the vicinity of \$46,000. Half of this cost will be met by Government Grant.

The drain itself would be completed in about 10 weeks, Mr. Pitt said.

### Effect

The whole proposal will have the effect of beautifying a section of unattractive river.

It will also eliminate serious erosion problems experienced by property owners in River Street and Eighth Avenue.

Footnote: Mr. Pitt told News-Review that each 102-inch pipe was 10 feet long and weighed 16 tons. The first pipe was laid on Monday.



The extension of the Second Creek Drain required the use of huge concrete drainpipes 2.5 metres in diameter which weighed over sixteen tonnes. Work began 20 March 1966 at the 'horseshoe bend' and St Peters Street with the drain skirting the river on the southern side from Eighth Avenue along the bank to its new outlet.

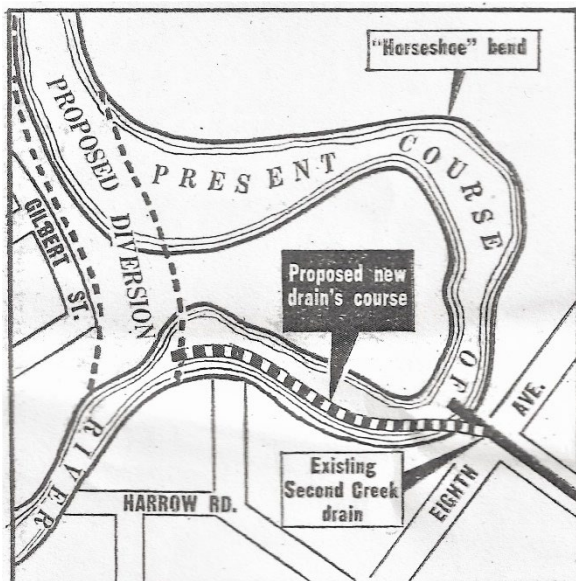


Fig 8 The Sunday Mail 19 March 1966.

#### g) Kaurna Cultural Sites River Park 1966

On the 25 March, 1966, Aboriginal remains were unearthed by the excavations being undertaken as part of the new Second Creek Drain extension project. Given the date that the remains were found, it is believed that they were on the horseshoe bend southside of the river from St Peters Street and Eighth Avenue. The area is currently part of the Billabong.

During the Dangerfield occupation there was an entry point for trucks to dump rubbish from Eighth Avenue down to the river embankment on this southern side. It is believed that this access point provided a starting point for the Second Creek drainage works.

The remains that were discovered in March 1966 were part of a Kaurna burial area at what was a significant ceremonial site – the horseshoe bend. There is little information other than a small new article in *News Review*, 23 March, 1966, stating that 'Bone Find at St Peters' near River Torrens'.

The remains that were retrieved (as there is no information on how many were simply dug over by mechanical means) by the work men digging that part of the trench contacted authorities, in this case the South Australian Police who delivered them to the SA Museum who currently still hold them.

The way in which waters run or drain was a crucial semiotic feature of Kaurna cultural life and its survival, and of the social structures that existed within differing ecological zones. *Kauwi* referred to rivers, creeks, springs, lagoons, reed beds, estuaries and the coastal waters of Gulf St Vincent.

Rivers, creeks and springs connected the Kaurna to Country through ecology and cosmology. The Kaurna carefully managed the resources of the fragile riverine and coastal environment of the Adelaide Plains for millennia. Life-sustaining *Kauwi* was essential on earth and in the sky world where the Milky Way was known as *Wodliparri*. In the dark spaces of *Wodliparri* was Yurda who was associated with secret-sacred rites and river formation.

The celestial river *Wodliparri* reflected the *Karrawirra Parri* (River Torrens) and was a focus for important ceremonial rituals and provided a series of camping sites.

For the Kaurna, waterways were more than lines on a map as these rivers and creeks were 'songlines' with rights, responsibilities and relationships that sustained a complex web of life and obligations. Sacred sites were part of this cycle.

Areas such as St Peters and adjoining locations along the Karrawirra Parri provided an environment that supplied crucial resources. There were a number of perennial springs that flowed all year round renewing the river and providing a supply of fresh water to sustain all life in a riverine environment.

In pre-European times *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* was part of the Karrawirra Parri environment whether the river was permanent or seasonal. These ancient forests were most extensive on grey heavy clay soils of the riverbanks at St Peters and Walkerville and on the floodplains such as that of Felixstow which were subject to frequent or periodic flooding.

*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* was prevalent where subsoils were moist and heavily laden with clay content. In pre-European times, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* lined the River Torrens and its creeks which crisscrossed the Adelaide Plains from the western scarp of the Mt Lofty Ranges.

The ancient forests of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* in St Peters and Walkerville supplied the Kaurna with resources for ceremonial artefacts, funeral biers and firewood for burials. The clay soils of the river were also a source of ochre for Kaurna ceremony.

The Karrawirra Parri was also the location for major Kaurna burial grounds because in certain areas the soft sandy soils were easy to excavate to create burial mounds. This was certainly the case in what is now referred to as the St Peters River Park.

Over the next years, more Kaurna remains would be disturbed as part of the St Peters River Park project but given the times, there was little understanding of the significance or cultural relevance of what 'unearthing Aboriginal remains' along the River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri really meant or how this would later be interpreted and documented.

#### h) St Peters Council Land Acquisition 1967 -1972

As the St Peters Council embarked on the first stage of its major River Torrens Recreation Park it pursued land acquisition from 1967. Additional land at the rear of properties on facing River Street and Eighth Avenue was purchased from 1967 until 1969. Land was also purchased on Harrow Road and Goss Court and an area that was part of the Gilbert Street embankment in Gilberton. This land was described as 'Reserve' land.

In late 1969, the St Peters Council ran into a stumbling block when a number of landholders would not agree to sell including Roger, Brewster and Dangerfield so the Council was forced to go to litigation to compulsorily acquire the land.

The case ended up in the High Court of Australia where the property was compulsorily transferred to the Corporation of St Peters and the full amount of compensation as decreed by the High Court was paid to 'Dangerfield & Others'.

As the River Torrens was still subject to flooding, little work was proceeded with however, the development of the Kangaroo Creek Dam in 1969 had a major impact on river flows through out the whole of the River Torrens including the area in St Peters which it was hope would eventually become a recreational reserve. The 'horseshoe bend' was periodically subject to increase flows and flooding until the Kangaroo creek Dam was built.

By 1972 all the property that was to be part of the Recreation Ground had been formally transferred into the ownership of the St Peters Council. The last parcel was the land used by Dangerfield as a rubbish dump bound by the 'horseshoe bend' in the river. Over a six-year period land had been progressively purchased from twenty landowners to give a total area of ten hectares.

#### i) The Creation of the River Torrens Recreation Park 1974-1980

In 1974 the St Peters Council announced that subject to further State Government financial help the next stage of developing the recreation park was being planned. On the 6 November 1976, the Mayor of St Peters Max Otto announced that the State Government had agreed to fund two thirds of the \$300,000 to develop the reserve and to divert the River Torrens in a straight line by passing the 'horseshoe bend':

*"The development involves the diversion of the River Torrens by cutting across the neck of the loop, and the formation of a level area that will be grassed and available for use as playing fields. The course of the river will be about seven hundred metres shorter when the neck is cut out.*

*The first three hundred metres of the loop will be filled in, but the rest will be retained in its natural state. Though cut off from the main stream by the diversion, the loop will be fed with the river water by underground pipeline. After forming the creek and a lake in the loop, this water will flow back into the river through another pipeline.*

*Two weirs will be built in the river to make allowance for the difference in fall resulting from the removal of the loop. The Weirs will hold back a body of water. It is hoped that engineering work will be finished by May 1977."*

*The Advertiser, 6 November, 1976.*

Engineering works saw major landscape disturbance and modifications including the diversion of the River Torrens and the cutting off - of the horseshoe bend. (This area was later known as 'The Billabong'.)

The diversion of the river it was claimed would manage bank erosion but there were differing opinions on this matter.

The President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, BJ Vogt, warned against interfering with the course of the river and called for further studies to be conducted on the proposal as it could worsen erosion 'the project should be more than-a-straight forward engineering job.' (The Advertiser, 23 March 1974).

The St Peters Council proceeded with the diversion and two weirs were built to control the flow of water and the water level in the new main river channel. These were the Pickering Weir at the upstream end of the diversion and at the lower end, the Pitt Weir.



Fig 9 View of the new river channel from Pickering Weir looking south to Pitt Weir 1977

k) The St Peters River Park and The Billabong 1980-2003.

On the 9 March 1980, the Mayor of St Peters, Max Otto officially named and opened the St Peters River Park which included the dedication of the Lindsay Perriam Oval. It was named after the former Mayor Lindsay Perriam who dedicated much of his time in office to making the recreation park a reality. The two weirs were named after Donald Graham Pitt, former Town Clerk of St Peters Council and Allan Frances Pickering, former Town Clerk of St Peters Council.

It was declared that the aim of the St Peters River Park was to provide the community with a place for recreation of an informal and passive kind within a natural environment. It was hoped that by revegetating the park with original native species that this would encourage the return of native wildlife to the park.

In 1985, the St Peter's Council applied to the Australian Bicentennial Grants to further develop the St Peters River Park and to create an 'urban billabong' in an old section of the River Torrens known as the 'horseshoe bend'. This project was inspired by the listing of the River Torrens on Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission in 1982.

The St Peters Council grant application specifically stated that it wanted to create an ecosystem that was as a living example of what might have existed before European settlement. The Council received \$10,600 from the Bicentennial Authority and a further \$86,000 from the Commonwealth Employment program with a contribution by the St Peters Council the budget for the Billabong Project totalled \$110,000.

The South Australian Environment and Planning Minister Don Hopgood officially opened the Billabong on 16 October, 1988. A boardwalk was constructed around the edge of the old river, native trees including River Red Gums were planted while introduced species of olive, willow and ash trees were removed, reed growth was sympathetically controlled, new aquatic and bushland plantings encouraged, and water flow into the area was to be improved through pumping.

Following the opening interested residents formed the 'Friends of the Billabong' on 24 October, 1988, which became an advisory committee of the St Peters Council. The Friends of the Billabong under the Chairmanship of Dr Colin James were responsible for continuing the program of replanting and caring for the Billabong and making sure that the park retained its aim of passive recreation.

In 1997, the newly formed City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Council commissioned a new study to prepare a detailed concept plan to return the Billabong to its pristine pre-European settlement state.

The concept documented dense River Red Gum plantings and a dense understory of shrubs along the top of the embankment around the whole of the horseshoe bend. The stated aim was to screen out housing and roadways and to provide an upper story corridor for bird life and to assist with stabilising the embankments.

At the same time, the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board was seeking opportunities to trial the construction of wetlands along the River Torrens to improve the ecology and water quality of the river and to reduce the amount of rubbish entering the river.

This wetlands project would also entail major ground works, diverting flows from Second Creek and reconfiguring drainage and installation of trash racks in the St Peters River Park.



Working in conjunction with the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters the Billabong Wetlands project received \$950,000 from the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board, with a \$200,000 grant from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust program.



Fig 10 View to River Street looking north across The Billabong March 2001



Fig 11 Current view to River Street looking north across The Billabong March 2022. Note the severe algal bloom and that many trees have been removed from the reserve embankment area at the rear of a number of River Street properties.



The official opening of the Billabong Wetlands occurred on 30 March 2003 and was launched by the South Australian Minister for Environment John Hill.

This project would not be the final project that would be undertaken to reshape the Billabong and the St Peters River Park in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but it was the closing of one chapter in a long history that had started in 1912 with the idea of creating a recreational park in St Peters by the River Torrens.

Denise Schumann Cultural Heritage Consultant 2022.