

WAITE ARBORETUM FACT SHEET: P. WAITE 1834 – 1922

(Arboretum seats, memorial seats, history features)

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PETER WAITE 1834 - 1922



Photos: Terry Langham **Left** Peter Waite's portrait in Urrbrae House, **Centre** Peter Waite and his dog Shrimp sculpture in the Waite Arboretum, **Right** Peter Waite and Shrimp in 1908 (Source University of Adelaide - Zeitz, 2014, p.12.).

1. NAME – DOB – DOD: Peter WAITE 9 May 1834 Pitcairn, Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland - 4 April 1922 Victor Harbor.

- **Occupations:** Pastoralist and philanthropist: "*benefactor (general)., grazier (cattle)., grazier (sheep)., grazing industry leader*" (Findlay, 1976).
- **Location:** facing north and on the northern side of labyrinth
- **Nearby tree/plant species:** #2193A (& 2193B, #2193C), K15 *Aesculus californica* California Buckeye HIPPOCASTANACEAE W. Coast USA. 2009



Photos: Terry Langham



Photo: Terry Langham #2193A (& 2193B, #2193C), K15 *Aesculus californica* California Buckeye
HIPPOCASTANACEAE W. Coast USA. 2009

2. QUALIFICATIONS:

"Waite trained and worked as an ironmonger in Edinburgh and Aberdeen" (Findlay, 1976).

3. AREA OF RESEARCH - WORK:

"... On 8 June 1859 he arrived in Melbourne in the British Trident and went to his brother James's station, Pandappa, near Terowie, South Australia. In 1862 with (Sir) Thomas Elder Waite bought the adjoining Paratoo run, and he took over Pandappa's lease when his brother died in 1863. ..." (Findlay, 1976).

"Drought beset the north in 1864-66 but from 1869 Elder, Waite and N. E. Phillipson accumulated sheep and cattle runs from Beltana to the Queensland border, though after 1880 resumptions caused some loss of profits"

- *In 1883 Waite became chairman of Elder's Wool & Produce Co. Ltd, a subsidiary of Elder Smith & Co.; in 1888 they were amalgamated and he became chairman of directors of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd, displaying remarkable ingenuity and initiative.*
- *After Elder's death in 1897 his interests and those of Waite and Phillipson were merged in the Beltana Pastoral Co. Ltd; Waite was its managing director, and also of the Mutooroo Pastoral Co. Ltd, in 1898-1911.*
- *He had directorships in the Commercial Union Assurance Co. Ltd, the British Broken Hill Co. Ltd, and the S.A. Woollen Co. Ltd. He held Momba station in New South Wales"* (Findlay, 1976).

“Waite gave leads to pastoralists with his improvement and management of semi-arid salt bush country.

- By poisoning vermin, fencing paddocks and providing permanent water he achieved larger sheep numbers; he emphasized breeding, flexible stock movement and the rotation of paddocks. A member of a railway extension committee, in 1874 he had pressed for a northern rail link with Adelaide.*
- He advocated large leases of long tenure and close personal supervision, and he gave useful evidence to the 1897-98 pastoral lands commission.*
- An exacting, energetic employer, Waite lived at Paratoo until he bought Urrbrae, near Adelaide, in 1874.*
- He was a member and vice-president of the Pastoralists' Association of South Australia and West Darling and the Federated Employers' Council of South Australia. In 1875 he was chairman of the Stockbreeders' Association” (Findlay, 1976).*

4. RESEARCH SPECIALITY: as above

“In the 1870s Waite was a patron of the arts and later became a benefactor to the pastoral and agricultural industry, donating Urrbrae Estate to the University of Adelaide in 1913, subject to life tenancy for himself and his wife; half was to be for agricultural studies and the rest for a park.

- A further 114-acre (46 ha) site nearby was given to the South Australian government for an agricultural high school.*
- In 1915 Claremont and part of Netherby, also near Urrbrae, were bought and given to the university, followed in 1918 by 5880 shares in Elder Smith & Co. Ltd to enable the land to be used as intended.*
- The total value of his gifts to the university was estimated at £100,000; in 1923 the Waite Agricultural Research Institute was established (Findlay, 1976).*

5. FURTHER INFORMATION - SOME WORDS OF HUMOUR, INTERESTING FACTS, ETC:

“In 1874 Waite purchased a city estate for his family at Urrbrae. In the late 1880s he demolished the original house on the property to build his own grand residence. Completed in 1891, it featured a number of innovations, including a tiled roof, electric light and Australia’s first domestic refrigeration plant” (Routledge, 2001).

“The Urrbrae House Historic Precinct is situated on the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide on land bequeathed by Peter Waite to the University in 1922, for use in part as an agricultural research and teaching facility and in part as an area for public recreation. The land has remained unsubdivided since 1839” (Federation House - Urrbrae House, 2016).

“In October 1913 Waite established the gift of his Urrbrae estate to the University of Adelaide, subject to life tenancy for himself and his wife. Half of the estate was to be for agricultural research and teaching and the rest for a public park. In 1915 Waite purchased the adjoining estate of Claremont and part of the estate of Netherby, adding it to his gift, and in 1918 set aside 5,880 shares in Elder Smith to be invested, with the income to be used for the advancement of agricultural education. Waite’s gifts to the University, which amounted to £100,000, constituted one of the largest public benefactions ever made by a South Australian colonist. He also donated 114 acres to the state government to found what is now the Urrbrae Agricultural High School” (Routledge, 2001).

6. PERSONAL INFORMATION:

"On 21 November 1864 Waite married his first cousin Matilda Methuen (d.1922) at Woodville South Australia; they had eight children" (Findlay, 1976).

"Peter Waite was offered a knighthood when he was 83 but rejected the honour on the grounds of age. ... His legacy has surpassed even his vision as the Institute has achieved not only prominence in Australia but international renown as a centre of scientific excellence. Urrbrae House now has permanent exhibitions on Peter Waite and on the adjacent arboretum and guided tours are given of both the house and grounds" Routledge, 2001).

"Waite retired in 1921 and died of heart failure on 4 April 1922 at Victor Harbor; he was survived by his wife and four children and a memorial service was held at St Michael's Anglican Church, Mitcham. His state was sworn for probate at £160,000. His family continued the tradition of generous gifts to the university and the institute" (Findlay, 1976).

7. PHOTOS:



Photos: Terry Langham

8. REFERENCES:

Findlay, M. 1976, 'Waite, Peter (1834 – 1922)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, [Online, accessed 21 June 2016] URL <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/waite-peter-993/text7959>

"Select Bibliography

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- *The Mutooroo Pastoral Company Limited After Fifty Years* (Adel, 1951)
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Federation House Urrbrae House, 2016 'Urrbrae House, Glen Osmond' [Online, accessed 20 April 2016] URL <https://federation-house.wikispaces.com/>

Routledge, 2001, *S.A.'s Greats: The men and women of the North Terrace plaques*, edited by John Healy (Historical Society of South Australia Inc, 2001).

