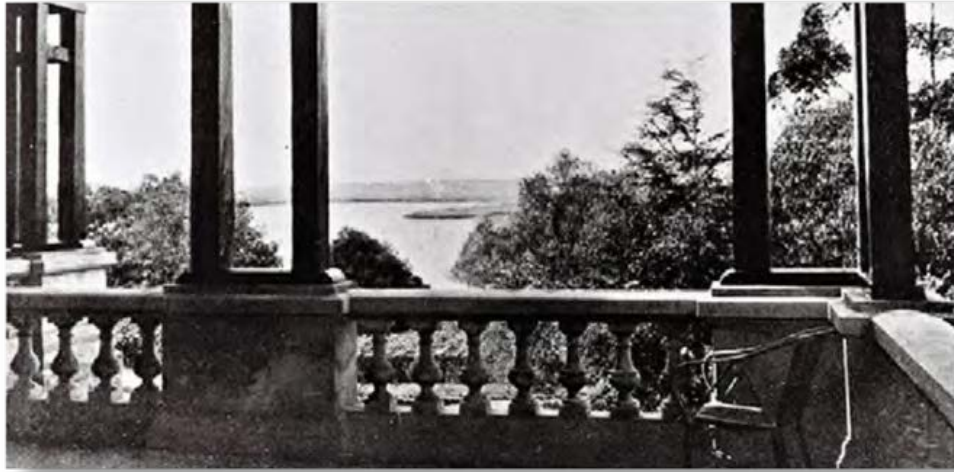


Newsletter for the members of the Mount Lawley Society (MLS) Est. 1977



## 2 Ellesmere Road, Mount Lawley - Killowen Estate

*The Killowen Estate was the brainchild of Robert Thomson Robinson who set about creating the crème de la crème of garden estates in 1903 on his nine acres overlooking the Swan River – with panoramic views to the Darling Ranges. There were meandering pathways through rose trellis passages, designer grass slopes, pergolas, arbors and a Roman bathing pool of great beauty. The completed Killowen gardens were said to contain a greater range of trees, plants and shrubs than any other garden in Australia. Not surprisingly, apparently, there were five groundsmen employed to manage the upkeep. The property had a workman's lodge, a sundial and an attractive entrance from Ellesmere Road. The house was named after the, then, Lord Chief Justice in the UK, Lord Killowen.*

There is more on Killowen and RT Robinson on page 4

## OVERVIEW:

- From the President
- AGM and Barbecue Event
- Guest Speaker Series
- 100 Years Ago – Water and Works
- RT Robinson and Killowen
- We want to hear from you!
- Membership Renewals

**We aim to bring you a mix of new and old updates in and around our neighbourhood.**

**If you have some photos you'd like to share – maybe your garden, architecture, renovation hints or leadlights, or anything that you think represents the different characters of Menora, Inglewood or Mount Lawley, please email them to us at [www.mountlawleysociety.org.au](http://www.mountlawleysociety.org.au)**

Dear members and friends

It's hard to believe we are at the beginning of another new year! I hope your Christmas was filled with peace, love, goodwill and lots of food!

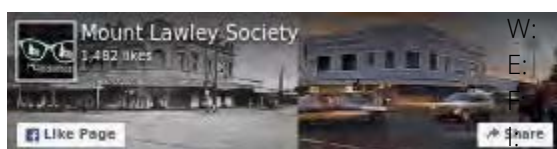


Our AGM is on Sunday 22 January, so will look forward to seeing many of you there and hope you can attend our barbecue preceded by a croquet experience which will start at 5.00pm. For full details of this event see Events Coming Up in this edition of *From the Verandah*.

We have a lot happening this year, starting with the first of our Guest Speaker Series on 27 February. Also planned is another well-loved Leadlight Tour in April, and the ever popular Quiz Night later in the year.

On behalf of the committee, I wish you all a happy and safe New Year!

Happy reading,  
Mark Hodge  
President



W: [www.mountlawleysociety.org.au](http://www.mountlawleysociety.org.au)  
E: [mountlawleysociety@gmail.com](mailto:mountlawleysociety@gmail.com)  
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# Events Coming Up

## AGM 2023

Forrest Park Croquet Club,  
Harold Street, Mt Lawley  
Sunday 22 January 2023 at 7.30pm.

Please note, admission is free and only members can vote.

Barbecue and Croquet Experience from 5.00pm for Members and Friends  
\$20 payable at the door

Prior to the AGM, we would love to chat with you around the barbecue and you can even enjoy some croquet so arrive from 5.00pm – it doesn't matter if you haven't dabbled in croquet before, it should be a fun time!

The barbecue, salads and croquet are included in a \$20 admission and you can pay on the night. There won't be sale of alcohol, but please feel free to BYO drinks.

Please RSVP by Monday 16 January if you wish to attend either the Barbecue and Croquet Experience or AGM – email [mountlawleysociety@gmail.com](mailto:mountlawleysociety@gmail.com)

## GUEST SPEAKER SERIES 2023

Our exciting new Guest Speaker Series 2023 will be held throughout the year at the Forrest Park Croquet Club.

### FEBRUARY MEETING

**The Evolution of the Mt Lawley Subway: 1906 to the Present Day**

The history of how the Mt Lawley subway came to be, how it saved lives, its use by trams, and how it needed to be widened. A mighty story!

Speaker: Phill Matson

Monday 27 February 2023

Arrive at 7.00pm for complimentary refreshments  
for a 7.30pm start

**No charge but please bring some cash for the raffle !**

For the rest of 2023, the presentations are planned to be  
24 April, 26 June, 28 August and 23 October.

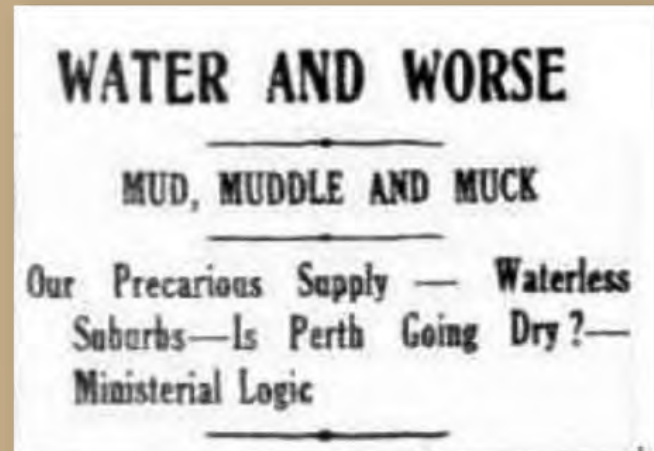
We have some exceptional speakers lined up, so put these dates in your calendar.

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

## WATER AND WORSE - MUD, MUDDLE AND MUCK

In view of the ongoing traffic disruptions we have recently had along Beaufort Street as the Water Corporation renews 100-year-old pipes, it seems pertinent that we should look at the problems and colourful language that are reported, under the above heading, in *The Sunday Times* for 14 January 1923. It also shows us that the water issue in Perth has been a topic of debate for a very long time!

The original article is quite long so here are a few snippets ...



*...Recently a Mount Lawley resident got up in the morning, and, as usual, went under the shower; but no water was forthcoming, finally he managed to obtain a wash in some water in which clothes had been soaking all night and then went to his office without his usual cup of coffee.*

*...It seems a most extraordinary state of affairs when a law-abiding, self-respecting ratepaying member of the community, who has to pay exorbitant water rates, should have to put up with inconveniences such as this; but it has ceased to be extraordinary, it is simply the ordinary state of affairs, part of the numberless difficulties that the unfortunate inhabitants of North Perth and Mount Lawley have to labour under for many months of the year.*

*...But of course, according to the Minister for Works, it is our fault entirely. Mr George says, in a tone of pained reproof, that if we are foolish enough to use water for our gardens, how can we possibly expect to have enough for culinary purposes. Well, the stuff he supplies is only fit for a Chinese garden, and what the people want is water that they can drink and enough of it.*

The article goes on to propose a solution.

*...It is quite absurd to criticise anything without suggesting a remedy. The remedy in this particular case seems to be the Helena River, upon the upper reaches of which the Mundaring Weir is now built. Every winter countless billions of gallons of pure water pour over the weir and are wasted. A thousand streams come hurrying down from the hills to mingle uselessly with the salty Swan. As much water is wasted in a few months of the winter as would keep Perth in pure unadulterated water, and lashings of it. All the year round.*

It was 1996 that Mundaring Weir last overflowed!

Roger Elmitt  
MLS History and Archiving Sub-committee

The full article from that day is on our website <http://www.mountlawleysociety.org.au/100-years-ago-14-january-1923-water-worse-and-muck>



# ROBERT THOMSON ROBINSON AND KILLOWEN



Robert Thomson Robinson (known as 'RT') was born in 1867 in Ballybay, County Monaghan, Ireland, to Margaret (née Thomson) and John Robinson. His family moved to Victoria in 1873 and then to Albany, Western Australia in June 1878. Robinson was sent to Adelaide to be educated, attending Prince Alfred College, and became a lawyer being admitted to the Western Australian Bar in 1889 and entering into partnership with S J Haynes in Albany. Robinson was appointed as King's Counsel (KC) in 1914. Also known as 'Cocky Robinson', he was, by all accounts, a unique larger-than-life individual who married three times, fathering twelve children.

In 1908 he was elected to the Perth Road Board (now the City of Stirling), was an executive member of the WA Town Planning Association, a member on the Kings Park Board, Minister for Forests, and more. He served as a Member of Parliament under several Premiers representing the seat of Canning (21 October 1914–12 March 1921) and was also the Attorney-General of Western Australia (27 July 1916–17 May 1919).

In 1906, RT inherited his father John's half share of the 700 acres making up Location Z to become known as the Mount Lawley Estate that had been bought originally in 1900.

His father's partner, Samuel W Copley was a real estate speculator. In developing the land, the objective was to attract wealthy business people and high-ranking public servants with houses built to high standards. The plan worked and Mount Lawley became an area of prestige. Copley and RT were ably assisted by the legendary town planner and architect, Harold Boas.

RT got right behind the concept of creating an attractive garden suburb by selecting a block for his own house in a prime location. No detail was missed in the design of RT's house. He had a keen interest in horticulture and was a collector of plants, and he sought advice from the best for his estate plan including consultation with the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens in London.



The estate was a masterpiece in garden estate terms taking full advantage of the elevated riverside location. All credit to the collaborative endeavour of RT and the others involved. A feature common to Federation gardens was the inclusion of a kitchen garden not far from the house, with an adjoining fowl run and cow paddock.

Charles Lancelot Oldham is credited as the designer of the gardens and architect of the 30-room residence, noted in the period for its size and scale, having the first swimming pool in a private residence and a tennis court with changing rooms. Oldham also designed 'Sorrento', RT's Albany holiday home.



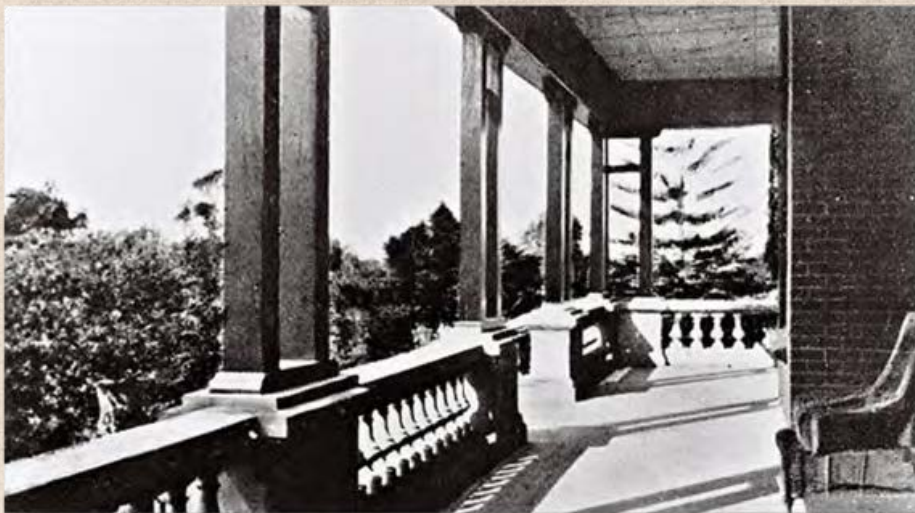
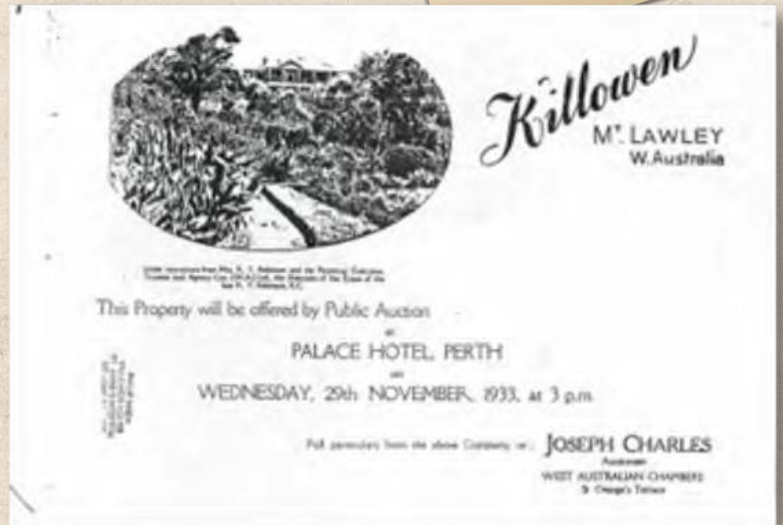
# ROBERT THOMSON ROBINSON AND KILLOWEN (CONT)



Robert Thomson Robinson passed away at home in 1926 after a short illness at the age of 59 years. His widow, Elizabeth, and some family stayed at Killowen until its sale in 1933.

On 4 November 1933, The West Australian newspaper ran an article on a Farewell to Perth function held by Mrs R T Robinson, with an impressive guest list, as the family prepared to vacate Killowen.

The house was purchased in 1935 by the Sisters of Mercy to become the first Sisters of Mercy Hospital in Western Australia. The first baby was delivered on 17 July 1937 following the introduction of a maternity service. The house is still there in the grounds of the St John of God Mt Lawley Hospital and contains several medical suites.



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Our Archives relies on people discovering their family's and their home's history.

Do you have any stories on the people that lived in your house in the past? Have you found anything of interest when cleaning out or renovating?

Do you have any questions for our History and Archiving Subcommittee?

If so then please contact us at [mountlawleysociety@gmail.com](mailto:mountlawleysociety@gmail.com)



# THE HISTORY OF OUR SUBURBS IN PHOTOS

A couple of local businesses have seen the value in recognising the heritage of our suburbs. Two of these are RAMS Financial Group and Embodied Corporate Solutions who have hung photos from our Archives in their offices.

They look fantastic and, hopefully, encourage some conversation about the history of this area.

In 2023 we are planning on adding to our photo collection on our website so keep a look out.

Maybe your house, family or street will feature.

Please visit our Historical Photos page on our website  
<http://www.mountlawleysociety.org.au/historical-photos>



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