

All Saints, Mitcham VIC



We were delighted when All Saints Anglican Church, Mitcham, approached us nearly two years ago and asked to be included in this year's Calendar. Our photographer, Robin Page was very happy to arrange this. Melbourne people generally know Mitcham as a significant suburban hub between two major thoroughfares – the Eastern Freeway and Whitehorse Road. Below is the North side of Mitcham shops showing the original Church in 1950.



Source: Vic Collections

For readers further afield, Mitcham lies 20 km from Melbourne's central business district, in the very populous eastern region that spread out, after World War II, from the city and Port Philip Bay towards the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges. This site is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people.



In its early days Mitcham was rolling countryside. The name came from a local flower farm called Mitcham Grove. First settled in the 1860s, it hosted very rural endeavours such as orchards, brick-making and pottery kilns. Above is an early photo of the orchards in Mitcham and Donvale. It became known as a scenic beauty spot, with intrepid ramblers coming – perhaps by the railway that reached Mitcham in 1886 – attracted by the forests and good views. When the area's first Anglican church opened in 1888 it enjoyed these pastoral surroundings.

Happily, Mitcham still retains tracts of parks and bushland dating from those early times, such as Antonio Park and Mullum Mullum Creek. Above is pictured a contemporary painting of Mullum Mullum Creek by Dai Wynn.

(Click on the painting to see more of his work).



These parks are valued open spaces in an overall ambience of hilly, well-treed streets. Bushland along Mullum Mullum Creek, which flows into the Yarra River, has been almost entirely regenerated and is home to a wealth of native birds and animals. Adjacent to Antonio Park, gifted by an early local family, is Scherkolt Cottage pictured below. It was built by pioneer settlers and now an historical museum.



Just as Mitcham the suburb has grown and flourished over time, so has the Anglican Church presence hereabouts. The serene little wooden church erected by early settlers in 1888 which was originally known as Christ Church is now preserved as the Parish Hall.



The parishioners now worship in a very fine, spacious new building created in 1958. It was designed by modernist architect Raymond Berg is most distinctive, recognised as significant by the Victorian Heritage Register. It is of steel frame construction with brick end walls and side clerestory windows, with beautiful use of woodwork and shallow butterfly roof giving a sense of soaring space and light. A focal pine carving of Christ in Majesty by sculptor Clifford Last OBE hangs above the altar. The building is complemented by a very striking external steel-framed tower supporting a cross. It retains stained timber furniture, including a pulpit, lectern and two-toned pews, a marble altar and cylindrical acrylic light fittings.



It is a pleasure to write about the lively program of liturgical and community activities in which All Saints Church is engaged. Sunday services range from traditional to contemporary. They include a Mandarin language service for the local Chinese community, and three age-groups of children's church. The parish has a strong welfare focus and a lively op shop. Its Stitch and Savour craft group held on Friday mornings welcomes local people from both inside and outside the parish to learn craft skills and experience an atmosphere of faith, kindness and support. All Saints' Facebook page likewise shows them as a busy, engaged and loving church community.

