

After 150 years, family nursery is blossoming

BUSINESS REPORTER

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CELEBRATION: Carl Heyne with son Luke, 3, sister Sarah and father Garry. Picture: TRICIA WATKINSON

GROWING up spending afternoons and weekends at his father's nursery, there was no doubt about where Carl Heyne would forge his own career.

Carl says his father, Garry, took very seriously the responsibility of developing Heyne's Garden Centre into a thriving business, along with being a great father and husband.

"For us to spend time with our father often meant spending time in the nursery," Carl says. The Beulah Park business set the scenes for some of his earliest memories.

"I remember riding around the centre's little concrete path during weekends on my blue and yellow tricycle," he says.

"A typical day for me back then was to come and spend time with my Dad at the nursery. I would pick up the gravel and little plants from the garden beds and put it in the back of my tricycle.

"When I got older I used to help customers bring the empty trolleys from the carpark back to the nursery."

Trusted staff members would pick up Carl and his siblings, Sarah and Adam, from school and drop them off at the nursery, where they would do their homework in their father's office before returning home.

These days, Carl is a father himself and Heyne's Wholesale Nursery's general manager.

The business was started by Carl's great-great-grandfather, Ernst Bernard Heyne in 1869, and has had sites in a range of locations, including Rundle St in the CBD, and Summertown, in the Adelaide Hills. This year, it is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

The business is marking the occasion with a display garden at the Royal Adelaide Show, described as a "tip of the hat" to Ernst Heyne.

The display celebrates his achievements, including sketches of his plans for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne.

The suburban garden centre, on The Parade, is believed to be the state's oldest one registered. It features a historic stone cottage, where Carl and his siblings were born.

In 1984, the business moved its wholesale nursery from the banks of the River Torrens, at Marden, to Burton.

That followed the Marden site being acquired to make way for the O-Bahn service.

Carl says several palms marked the entrance to the nursery, and the trees, which remain there, still bring back childhood memories.

"I remember playing under those trees and I like taking my kids on the O-Bahn and pointing it out to them," he says.

Carl says his father's decision to set up at Burton was a gamble because at the time the area was "desolate".

"It was a bold move to go to such a remote area," he says. "But my father could see the writing on the wall for urban sprawl in the northeast. "Burton was a bit like a farm – there was a lot of machinery around and we all learned to drive at a very young age because of the open space around here."

Garry is now semi-retired, while Carl's brother Adam is heading up a new arm of the company, Next Generation Products, featuring imported garden art and pots.

Sarah, the company's administration manager, is moving into a nursery operations role. Carl's cousin, Michael, heads up the company's Beulah Park garden centre.

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CARL HEYNE