

Hindmarsh – a short history

Susan Marsden

Introduction

Hindmarsh was established as South Australia's first secondary town outside Adelaide and its first suburban village. Bowden and Brompton were laid out as villages soon afterwards. The appeal of the area's location for working class residents and for commercial and industrial users has never altered, making it the State's oldest and most persistently working class and manufacturing district. Nineteenth century relics of these uses have survived, but, ironically, much of the town's past, and its characteristic blend of residences, public buildings and industrial premises has been threatened or destroyed by the twentieth century expansion of the last ...

Part One...historical outline.

1. 1838-1852: the first suburban villages

South Australia is, at present, in the ascendant to what is to us a most interesting class of emigrants – respectable labourers and artisans, and intelligent and educated small capitalists, aspiring to improve their conditions, or to keep their places in society, after the struggle has become hopeless in the Old World. (Stephens, *The Land of Promise*, 1839)

The history of the Hindmarsh district is intimately associated with that of Adelaide: they are sisters, interdependent and yet distinctly individual. The very physical characteristics of Hindmarsh – and consequently, much of its history and heritage – were determined by the siting of Adelaide.

In 1836 Colonel William Light located the South Australian capital about six miles from the coast on rising ground beside the River Torrens, while the port of Adelaide was sited to the north west beside a creek running into the sea. This meant that the land lying between the port and the capital, much of which was described by Light as 'one of the most level plains I ever saw', was soon affected by the traffic of settlers and goods entering and leaving the colony. The flat land presented no obstacles to the construction of roads or railway, and was eminently suitable for building. Indeed, Light's surveyor-assistant, B.T. Finniss, observed:

After all, what is six miles over a dead flat? Is it not absurd for persons who have witnessed in England the power of science to shorten distances to be frightened at six miles. What indeed will be the effect of this distance, it will put the first settlers at some expense to get their goods removed, but in the process of time as the population and wealth increases, Adelaide will approach nearer the Harbour, then six miles will become a vast suburb studded with shops and warehouses.¹

The commercial attractions of the colony's most heavily-traversed district were combined with the natural resources of the plain. This formed part of the Torrens floodplain and so it was level, fertile country with deep alluvial soil and extensive deposits of gravel, sand and clay with areas of limestone. In such an arid

climate, the river itself, irregular though its waters were, was also a factor of great significance.

The River Torrens proved to be a curse as well as a blessing. Adelaide was carefully situated by Light above the likely flood levels. Hindmarsh was not, and it was frequently flooded when excessive winter rains tipped the river over its banks. The deep gullies which criss-crossed the district indicated the many ancient alternative courses taken by the river waters. They formed such a distinctive feature of the landscape that as late as 1924 the Mayor recorded in his Annual Report a descriptive listing of 49 gullies which had once extended over the district's roads.

Small sections of at least three of these gullies have survived on private properties, and should be preserved as an integral part of the Hindmarsh heritage. Fortunately, one of these includes part of the district's best-known gully, which extended across Lindsay Circus (Hindmarsh Stadium) and Holden Street. This was depicted – with an adjacent house (owned by the Dench family) which also remains – in a painting by James Shaw of 1864.

The Mayor commented in his 1924 Report:

The drainage of the town has always been a difficult question. In the early days it was easy, because there were so many gullies intersecting the roads and properties. These gullies were utilised for drainage purposes for years, but as the town grew stagnating water became 'taboo', first by private owners and later by the public in general, as the question of public health became better understood. This necessitated filling up the gullies intersecting many of the streets in Hindmarsh, Bowden and Brompton ...

The site of Hindmarsh is very flat, making the draining of many of the streets almost impossible. Only one portion, viz., Bowden-on-the-Hill, (Ovingham) is elevated enough to run off the stormwater, and in consequence a good storm of rain will flood many of the streets, and frequently the Port Main Road and the Torrens Road, particularly the latter, are in flood in the rainy season.

However, the attractions of the area far outweighed its possible disabilities. The natural resources and the location provided the basis for rapid development in the district of both agriculture and industry, once land was made available to the colonists. Colonel Light began the layout of both the capital and the adjoining country sections in 1837. The country sections were laid out in large areas of 134 acres or 80 acres each. The present Hindmarsh district includes the original preliminary sections numbered 353, 354, 355, 370, 371, 372, 374, 2066 and 2067. Light also marked out the routes of the major roads, including Port Road, with its wide reservation for a canal, which was never built, and Torrens Road.

The size of the sections was a reflection of the fact that the British Government planned for the concentration of population, trade and manufacture in the capital city, surrounded by farmland estates. Light's layout [of the capital city of Adelaide] provided 1,000 town acres completely enclosed by parkland, but the profits to be made from subdivision and speculation so close to the city proved irresistible to the fortunate

purchasers who selected the most favourably located country sections [beyond the Adelaide parklands].

When Section 353, Hindmarsh Village, was settled it was called an 'excrescence' ... and a blot on the theory upon which the infant colony had been so recently founded ... The critics argued that Wakefield's concept of 'concentrated settlement' meant only one city and the establishment of a secondary town disfigured his theory of colonisation. It struck at the very idea of a colony where the gentlemen were expected to own the land and the free passage labourers to labour for them ... Thus at the outset the working men of Hindmarsh village were not playing the rules of the game. They were establishing themselves as independent of their betters, an independent outpost in a society of higher and lower orders transplanted from Britain.²

The Governor himself, John Hindmarsh, selected Section 353 early in 1838, for a total of about £73 (\$146) only. Within weeks he had the triangular section subdivided as 'Hindmarsh Town' and sold it 'to a number of ordinary people who quite openly stated that they intended to work their own small half-acre lots and form a village.'³

Hindmarsh was, therefore, distinctive from the start, firstly as South Australia's first secondary town, which provided a model for other rural/suburban villages about Adelaide. Secondly, Hindmarsh was intended from the start as a self-made and independent working class town. It was brought into being by an eight member 'committee of management', consisting of skilled workers and the lower middle class who had negotiated the sale with the Governor. From these beginnings stemmed the proudly-repeated legend that Hindmarsh village was bought and settled by 200 workers.

The layout of that original village is still apparent. Given its significance in South Australian history, this should be preserved and enhanced. A village focus, Lindsay Circus, was set out at the centre of the triangle, part of which was to be a cemetery, but after public opposition it became a reserve. It is now the Hindmarsh Stadium and Oval. A site in the south-west corner of the triangle, which was originally intended as the local market, became the Hindmarsh Cemetery in 1846, making this one of the State's earliest, and one of particular local and genealogical significance.

The village was bounded by John Street (South Road), the River Torrens and Port Road. Port Road eventually became the public and commercial face of the town, while Adam and River Streets attracted the tanneries, wool-washing, flour mill and breweries which used the river. The width of the streets and the size of the original allotments provided opportunities for purchasers both to build dwellings and to develop cottage or backyard industries and commercial activities. There were 200 allotments of half an acre each and the diversity of land use this allowed is still apparent in the surviving heritage.

As a whole this was quite a dignified and relatively generous design, one which certainly gave a good return to the Governor's syndicate but without abusing the

opportunities or the aspirations of the purchasers. This was in stark contrast to the subdivisions of Sections 354, 355, 370 and 371, directly across the Port Road, which were subdivided as Bowden, Brompton and extensions with a view to crowding in as many allotments as possible for sale to the maximum number of working-class purchasers.

Early in 1839, with improvements to the land at Hindmarsh already started, and with a continuing high demand for allotments, the new village of Bowden was laid out on Section 354. The village was nicely situated between Hindmarsh and North Adelaide, with frontages to the Port Road and the parklands, but its cramped grid-pattern character meant that it was never as attractive as either North Adelaide or Hindmarsh.

Bowden was sold in the form of a lottery with major prizes as allotments of 10 and 14 acres. Inevitably, these were rapidly re-subdivided with streets only 33 feet wide and block frontages as small as 30 feet.

The original subdividers were not only careless in their design of the village, they did not even bother to name the streets. When the first Assessment was made for the Hindmarsh District Council in 1853, it was recorded of 'Boden':

The streets of this township are not named. The centre street running N and S is popularly called 'Gibson Street'. A street parallel with this on the western part of the township is sometimes called 'Drayton Street'. A broad street running angularly with the main street and on the east of it may be called 'market street' as it contains the Market Place. The cross streets I have called 1st Street, 2nd Street and etc., but without authority.

So this was the origin of those unimaginatively named narrow side streets, which at that stage included only up to Twelfth Street. Later sub-dividers obligingly added another five, named Thirteenth to Seventeenth Streets.

The 1853 assessment of Bowden was further complicated by the system of allotments into which the village was divided. '... the whole, both in number, size and form are extremely irregular. The smaller allotments are about 1/16 acre each.'⁴ Assessment records show that many allotments in both Bowden and Brompton were owned by a few individuals, including Eckley, who owned 117 in Bowden in 1853, Bassett, Burnell, Shearing, Reid and Rundle, several of whom were also local industrialists and shop-keepers.

These people soon formed a local 'Establishment', who came to dominate the economic, civic and social affairs of Hindmarsh, and who profited further from the development of the area by purchasing and subdividing allotments and building cottages for rental by labourers, semi-skilled tradesmen and the simply poor who sought refuge in Bowden and Brompton.

Brompton was laid out adjacent to Bowden in 1849, with similarly narrow streets and small allotments, although these were slightly larger than in Bowden. These three villages became, and remained, the district's centres of population, commerce and industry. In Hindmarsh especially, development was rapid, helped by the influx of

people who had been camped on the parklands and who were ordered to leave in 1838. Many had already been engaged in labouring, lime-burning and brick-making and they transferred their pursuits with them. Others took up tanning, milling, carrying and building. Most also took advantage of their blocks by keeping stock and growing food. Several small farms were established fronting streets near the river (Robert, Torrens and Manton Streets) and Torrens and Port Road. Large numbers of pigs and goats roamed the streets and vines and fruit trees grew in the yards, all of which supplemented the working men's daily wages. Shops and hotels were erected, wells were sunk, school classes were conducted and subscriptions were gathered to build a chapel.

By 1841 there were about 200 houses in Hindmarsh proper, with a population of 661. Bowden's population was 293. Adelaide's population by then was 9,000. The population of Hindmarsh and Bowden was said to be mainly engaged in the carrying trade between the port and the city, and in brickmaking and labouring.⁵ Most of the early industries were backyard affairs. Indeed, backyard manufacturing was typical of the early phase of industrial development not only at Hindmarsh but in South Australia in general.⁶ Bowden and Brompton were both advertised as eminently suitable for brickmaking and building, and the two pursuits went together: the early assessment records make numerous references to 'house and brickfield', and by the mid 1850s more than 60 brickmakers were recorded in the district altogether.⁷

Given the small scale and rather temporary nature of these industries, it is not surprising that there seem to be no surviving relics, nor is there much indication of the few larger industries of this period, such as Ridley's Mill, Shearing's pottery at Carrondown (next to Brompton), and the wool-washing and tannery premises at Hindmarsh.

Several members of the emerging local Establishment soon involved themselves also in social affairs. Some of the first residents built a 'Mud Chapel' in Hindmarsh as early as 1838. This was succeeded a decade later by a large permanent Congregational Church which is still standing in Hindmarsh. A manse was built at the same time as the first to be built by Congregationalists in South Australia. This is now in private use.

John Ridley and George Shearing became members of a building committee which was responsible for the construction of a non-denominational Christian Chapel in 1845, which stands on part of Lindsay Circus, near the corner of Hindmarsh Place and Manton Street, behind the Museum. Apart from being the oldest surviving church and public building in Hindmarsh, and one of the earliest churches standing in South Australia, it is significant as a pioneer solution to the spiritual needs of the diversity of colonial creeds as a non-denominational chapel. Amongst others, the Anglicans conducted services there, but it was not long before funds were raised to build their own church.

While there was generous support from local businessmen and tradesmen, the subscription list reads like a 'Who's Who' of Adelaide in 1850. The Governor gave £5, the Lord Bishop £10 ... and Captain Charles Sturt ... subscribed on three occasions.⁸

All Saints Church was opened in 1850, as the first Anglican Church between Adelaide and the port. The limestone and brick church was designed by Henry Stuckey, and it is one of the few remaining buildings of that important early architect of South Australia.

Although they were much rowdier and less respectable, hotels were as important as churches as social centres and meeting places. They are now also a dominant feature of the district's heritage. Given the increasing local population and the passing needs of travellers, several hotels were quickly established on the Port Road. The Land of Promise was licensed as early as 1840 (as its immigrant-encouraging title suggests). Others included the Commercial Inn, the Hope Inn, Hindmarsh Bridge Hotel, Governor Hindmarsh Inn and, in the interiors of the villages, hotels named after local trades such as the Brickmakers Arms, the Tanners Arms, the Joiners Arms and the Farmers Arms. Several of these hotels were supplied by Crawford's brewery which operated in Hindmarsh from as early as 1843. The names and the sites of most of these hotels have almost all been retained, but most of the buildings themselves have since been substantially altered. Two exceptions where the original single storey character has been retained are the Joiners Arms and the Gaslight Tavern (originally the Brickmakers Arms, then the Gasworks Hotel).

Other social institutions were also formed during this period which have left their mark on the built heritage. The Hindmarsh and Bowden Mechanics institute was set up in 1847 as the first in the Colony, contemporary with the Adelaide Institute. Most of its library books were only on loan from men such as John Ridley, and membership was very small and dwindled to nothing during the exodus to the Victorian goldfields in the early 1850s. The Institute was revived again after that so that the young working men of the district might 'improve' themselves. The fate of the Institute became firmly bound up with the new Hindmarsh Council, which was most supportive, as, for almost all its subsequent history the Institute was accommodated in buildings also used by the Council.

Firstly, the 1850s library was housed in Council offices on Port Road, then in the new District Council Hall of 1860. In 1879 the Institute committee gathered funds to take advantage of a Government subsidy for institute buildings, and work started on a hall at the rear of the Council offices in 1880 (as commemorated by a tablet). This building is now the Assembly Hall.

Plans for the new Institute Building had included both the hall and an additional storey on the existing Council offices and library building at the front. After the hall was completed, the Council offered a new lease to the Institute Committee for more office space, so the Institute pressed on with the remainder of the originally planned alterations, which were opened in 1886. The handsome two storey building and hall formally became the Town Hall after 1891 when the Council agreed to take over the buildings – and the debt – from the Institute. Both were extensively remodelled in 1937, but the complex as a whole incorporates at least part of the 1860 office as well as most of the 1880s buildings.

Although this account takes us beyond the village period it nicely illustrates the ways in which existing buildings might incorporate in their walls successive stages of a rich

local history.

If this was a common occurrence in nineteenth century public and commercial building, it was the norm in most domestic building. Throughout South Australia, the typical small house or cottage has generally started life as a simple two-roomed or perhaps four-roomed affair, with additional rooms being added behind, usually with a skillion roof. By contrast with these practical rear additions, which frequently descended to the use of such materials as galvanised iron and timber, additions to the front of the house were often made for prestige. There, rooms would be more spacious, windows larger and verandahs more ornate.

Some of the earliest cottages in Hindmarsh were constructed of *pisé* (rammed earth) or wood. A few of these have survived, or, as described, have been incorporated within enlarged brick houses, and disguised (and preserved) with render. Many other early cottages dating from this period and the 1850s and 1860s have also survived in whole or in part because they were constructed of that more durable material, brick.

Even where stone was used in slightly larger houses it was generally in conjunction with locally made red brick as quoins and interior walls. This early red brick residential character of Hindmarsh distinguishes the district from most of the other old metropolitan areas where stone and pug was much more commonly used. Certainly, in surrounding districts and in the city there are numbers of houses constructed of bricks, large numbers of which were, of course, produced in Hindmarsh.

By the early 1850s, Hindmarsh was described as ‘thickly inhabited’, by the families of farmers, skilled workers and service workers, rising small capitalists and by the labouring poor.

Even in the 1840s there was a sub-class, bordering at times on the criminal. The lowest elements not only from Hindmarsh and Bowden but from surrounding villages congregated in the Hindmarsh inns. One resident named Jarman auctioned his wife in (the Land of Promise) ... the degradation of poverty merged into the criminal element. By day the villages to the general observer passing along the Port Road retained the respectable appearance of English villages, but on long winter nights the Port Road became infested with thugs and highwaymen. The Police Commissioner believed their strongholds were the villages of Hindmarsh and Bowden.⁹

The area certainly became a refuge for the very poor if not for some of the criminals of Adelaide. On the other hand, many of the residents were honestly working class in origin aspiring to middle class respectability. They contested the Police Commissioner’s assertion and stressed local achievements.

They pointed to the physical appearances of neighbourliness –friendly societies, mechanics institute, churches – as proof of a strong law abiding community spirit. Rather they suggest an aspiring strata with petit bourgeois values at the top of a developing hierarchy of the working class of Hindmarsh.¹⁰

Despite these emerging class differences – which were physically expressed in the types of housing and the areas within the district in which different groups were located – the local Establishment continued to describe themselves as working class and this contributed to the district's strong sense of local identity. Such men dominated the Hindmarsh District Council, which was formed in 1853, mostly on the initiative of these Hindmarsh businessmen, although the district then included widespread agricultural lands, stretching west to the sea and north west to Port Adelaide.

Parsons sums up this 'private township' period from 1838 to the formation of the Council in 1853 by noting that it had progressed at faster rate than most of the suburban villages near Adelaide due to its geographical advantages and as it could supply commodities and services the rest of the Colony required. With the general improvement in economic health by the 1850s, and the provision of regular local employment the numbers of permanent dwellings expanded. More and more half-acre lots were split up to provide small cottages for workers and rent-paying tenants and the cottage industries gradually became the nuclei around which larger businesses – such as the Dench brothers' tannery – emerged.¹¹

Parsons noted that English ideas were still influential as the people who needed mill workers or brickmakers or tanners tended to buy land near their factories where they provided cottages for rent to their employees. Commonly, the proprietor also lived near or at his factory, which reinforced the ties between his family and the surrounding community. The district's leading industrialist, John Ridley, lived there until 1850. His daughter, Annie, gave her impression of life at Hindmarsh as

There at that early date was room for all, work for all and food for all, and for each and all, health and happiness.¹²

In one of the interviews conducted [by Susan Marsden] for the 'Hindmarsh Project' in 1979, Mrs. Evelyn Wilson, who was born at Bowden in 1886, described her great grandparents settling there on arrival in South Australia in 1850. Her account vividly illustrates the hardworking, respectable, upwardly aspiring character of many of the early residents of the district. Thomas Lawton was advised to buy in Bowden as it had good prospects of development:

... it was the best area around because the people that came with them were very religious people and they were Church folk. They weren't the riff raff or the drinkers or anything ...

... therefore he bought this property from Sixth to Seventh Street, Bowden ... (and) set about building their home, his eldest son with him, and first of all they built a limestone room and of course he brought his tools and everything with him and they very shortly got a place and thatched roof and dirt floor rammed down hard and while my great grandmother and younger children stayed in Gawler Place until it was ready and then they came down there.

The 1853 Assessment reveals an already-extended house of four rooms in brick on two double allotments with one-and-a-half at the back. About that time Thomas went to seek his fortune at the gold diggings. Anne, left at home with four children, decided to teach them, 'and when the neighbours knew she was teaching they asked

her would she teach their children so before very long they were meeting in her dining room and she was teaching them.’ Thomas Lawton opened a boys’ school on the adjacent clock when he returned, and ‘Lawton’s School’ continued until 1908. Besides that, ‘my great grandfather was very far-reaching and he started the first building society for people to get a home of their own ... the Bowden Building Society or Wymouth Building Society. This operated from about 1854 to 1908: ‘they used to meet once a fortnight when there was sufficient money in, they would have a draw and somebody would have enough cash to get a home. That was the beginning of it.’

Mrs. Wilson’s interview also indicates the inter-relationship between oral history, documentary records and the physical heritage of a locality, and shows how important it is to locate, research and preserve each before all is lost.

2 1853-1874: consolidation

One of the first tasks of a newly-formed District Council was to get the district surveyed and assessed so that rates could be raised. This was carried out in Hindmarsh in 1853. This first Assessment Book and almost all the subsequent books have been preserved and they provide an invaluable source of information as to the history of individual buildings and the development of the district.¹³

The 1853 Assessment Book is particularly detailed and provides an excellent impression of the district, and the emerging characteristics of its different parts. Hindmarsh proper had the largest number of houses and businesses and the largest number of sizeable establishments. They included Magarey’s (formerly Riddleys) flour mill and houses, Crawford’s brewery, Dench’s tannery, seven brickfields and shops and residences owned by Pickering, Scammell, Hunwick, Shearing, Langman and others. Altogether there were 14 shops, five of these on Port Road, five hotels and a schoolroom. Approximately 70% of the 235 houses were constructed of brick. Other building materials included *pisé*, ‘stucco’ (probably also *pisé*), concrete, wood, wattle and daub, and a ‘ruinous’ Manning Cottage. This was a prefabricated house which would have been shipped from England very early in the piece.

Bowden had an almost equal number of buildings. It displayed the characteristics of a settlement almost independent of Hindmarsh, with as many shops and workshops (16) and hotels (5), 2 stables, Linn’s factory, 2 tanneries, 3 brickfields and a schoolroom. As at Hindmarsh, the shopkeepers and other local businessmen had the largest premises. For example, William Drayton owned a shop and a 7 room two-storey house on nearly half an acre in Drayton Street.

Appropriately enough, as Gibson Street is said to have been named after James Gibson, the 1853 Assessment lists him as the owner/occupier four allotments there, with an obviously prosperous establishment. This is described as ‘Brick house of 6 Rooms, Store, cellars, detached buildings.’

Gibson’s store was a fore-runner of a whole string of shops which were built along the street in ensuing years, giving it a distinctive commercial character which is still apparent and somewhat unusual as shops in such numbers tended to line major thoroughfares through the suburbs such as Port Road or South Road.

Several of these shops were butchers' shops. One of these is listed in the 1853 Assessment, together with a two storey residence, owned by J. R. Rundle. Another 3 shops, a workshop, bakehouse and 'cowyard' also listed in Gibson Street in 1853.

In Bowden altogether there were about 200 houses, about 60% of which were brick (many are unspecified). There was a similar range of other building materials as at Hindmarsh, including a Manning Cottage, a 2 roomed mud cottage and a considerable number of stone houses. There was an even greater diversity of dwelling types, ranging from one room lean-to's and two-room tenements to two storied houses with up to 7 rooms each.

The dwellings so bluntly labelled tenements were rows of two-roomed attached cottages let to tenants. There were 4 groups of these, including one row of 11 stone tenements on Port Road. These tenements and the numerous small detached rental cottages became a distinguishing characteristic of Bowden's social life and its heritage.

Large parts of Brompton were still vacant land, mostly divided into allotments which were held by many different owners. Most vacant lots were half an acre in size. Probably because of its more recent creation, Brompton's buildings were more 'pioneering' in type. No one building material predominated, although there were at least as many *pisé*, mud, lathe and plaster and wooden houses as brick, stone or concrete houses, which there were about 70 in all. There were four shops and workshops and one hotel.

All the remaining parts of the district (within the modern council boundaries) were farmland. Even within the so-called 'thickly inhabited' villages there were many vacant blocks, about 80 in Hindmarsh, and nearly 600 in Bowden alone! Brompton's undeveloped allotments have been referred to. They included three and a half acres sown to wheat.

Indeed, in 1856 taking the district council as a whole, there were 361 farmers compared with the next most numerous and predominantly female occupation, domestic servants, who were 151 in number. The briskness of the building trade was reflected in its 84 workers, and 62 brickmakers. The only other numerous trade was that of carrier. It seems that most of the working population turned out to help with harvest: women dropped their housework and children skipped school (as school records show). The District Chairman reported that the Council was anxious to start cutting drains 'while yet labour might be withdrawn for the purpose without interfering with harvest work', which he believed was 'the true interest of the District'.¹⁴

By 1871 the numbers of farmers in the district were more than halved, while increasing urban development was indicated by a rise in the numbers of merchants (from 14 in 1856 to 105), blacksmiths (24 to 41), tailors (8 to 99), tanners (15 to 97) and carriers (40 to 63). The total population had changed less dramatically, rising from 3,602 to 4,473, and the total numbers of houses from 812 to 1,020.¹⁵

As these figures suggest, this was a period of consolidation, positioned between eras of more rapid development. Until the boom of the 1870s, farming remained as important an occupation as industrial or service work. Although after the 1850s

wheat growing was mostly supplanted by dairying, fodder crops and fruit and vegetable growing. These forms of farming persisted in the outlying areas, in parts of Croydon, West or (New) Hindmarsh and north of Torrens Road.

Mr. Sam Johnson described his boyhood in Brompton in the early years of this century when he would play with his friends from the crowded streets in the open paddocks opposite the Brompton School:

... nothing on the north side of Torrens Road, nothing ... no houses. There were wheatfields and there used to be a chappie by the name of McQuillan that used to graze his cows. He had a wonderful herd of cows.¹⁶

At the same time, between 1853 and 1874, a series of events occurred which contributed much to the urban and industrial development of the whole district. The most important of these – but not the most locally popular – was the construction by the Government of the railway line between Adelaide and Port Adelaide. This was completed in 1856, and a railway station was opened at Bowden (and another at Alberton). The Port-City Railway was the first to be built for steam engines in South Australia, and the Bowden and Alberton stations are the State's oldest.

In its early years the line was most useful for the transport of goods from the Port to the City. A great volume of goods were transported through Hindmarsh, but not at first transported from Hindmarsh itself. Apart from the Bowden Station residents had no access to the line, which was routed through Bowden between Port and Torrens Roads. This caused some local hostility, as the line sliced through backyards and small holdings. Residents petitioned for many years for extra level crossings and stations. Only two underpasses were provided, which are still in use at Gibson Street and Chief Street.

The Gibson Street underpass provided a clearance of only eight feet, which was criticised by residents, who also said that the Railways Board was using gullies that existed instead of making proper roads. Access to Bowden Railway Station was by way of a private road which was often left untidy: 'there was for some years a large lake outside the entrance which had to be pumped out occasionally into the Torrens when the smell became too overpowering'.¹⁷ The lake has gone but Station Place retains an air of privacy, strongly reminiscent of the mid-nineteenth century, although undoubtedly much tidier. It has been recommended as a heritage precinct.

Bowden was further split by the northern railway line which was pushed through to connect Adelaide with Gawler in 1857. Together the two railway lines cut Bowden into three, without contributing much beyond severe inconvenience to the residents at the time. The northern line, which runs along part of Bowden's parkland frontage, also effectively cut off access to the northern parklands [of Adelaide]. At the same time, by cutting off the top north eastern corner of Bowden-on-the-hill (Ovingham), it effectively insulated that area from the widespread destruction and rebuilding which accompanied industrial expansion in the twentieth century further down the hill. This has contributed much to the distinctive residential heritage of this small area.

The most 'upper class' section of all in this area was along Park Terrace, fronting Adelaide's northern parklands. Here, several quite large and distinctive

dwellings stand, some of which were occupied by notable South Australians, including George Fife Angas and the photographer, Captain Samuel William Sweet. Sweet's house, at 51 Park Terrace, was built in stages in the 1860s and the 1870s. Sweet bought the house in 1874 from his photographic business partner, William Gibson, probably because the darkroom and other facilities were already established there. The Sweet family lived at Bowden-on-the-hill until 1917; during which time Sweet's photographic views of Adelaide became widely known.

During this period, the River Torrens was crossed by bridges, but no relic of these early bridges remains, nor is there any site indication of the toll bar which operated to collect tolls on the Port Road between 1867 and 1870. Carriers, riders and stock drovers went to great lengths to avoid these tolls, with the result that minor district roads became as muddy and as near-impassable as the Port Road. This was condemned in 1866 as, 'in such bad order as to be little used, and bears the unenviable notoriety of being one of the worst kept and most greatly neglected roads in the Colony'.¹⁸

Besides transport services, good and bad, other services were provided in the district. In 1867 Hindmarsh gained the police officers it had long requested. They were located in a small station/residence which stands behind the more imposing station and courtroom which was built in 1911.

Private schools were licensed by the Government, the first of these being in Hindmarsh in 1861. The first public school was built at Bowden in 1872. A medical officer was appointed for the district in 1860 and a local Board of Health was formed in 1874/5. Ultimately its reports were to contribute to a great improvement in the district's character as far as public health was concerned.

Hindmarsh also benefited directly from the philanthropy of one of South Australia's founders and its most active benefactor, George Fife Angas. Angas, it is said, took a paternal interest in the welfare of Bowden residents partly because his town house, 'Prospect Hall', sat on the hill overlooking the parklands in the north-east corner of the village. The house, which dates from about 1854 still stands, although much-altered. 1865 Angas engaged Thomas Harkness as missionary to the poor people of Bowden and so founded the Hindmarsh Town Mission, which has continued to operate continually ever since as a benevolent institution.

The other single most important factor in the district's industrial and residential development during this period was the construction of the Australian Gas Company's gasworks at Brompton in 1863. This, '... the first major step in converting a semi-rural village into a manufacturing township, went by hardly noticed and with nothing like the uproar associated with the construction of the railway'.¹⁹ This remains the single most important historical industrial complex in Hindmarsh, one of the most important in South Australia, and certainly the State's most spectacular relic of a large, early public utility. The complex includes impressive bluestone and brick buildings and gasometer which were erected and extended over a period of years.

The first gas was delivered to the city in 1863 with limited reticulation within Hindmarsh by 1864. As gas consumption increased so did the locally-employed workforce, and this meant that new families of workers were attracted to the district.

Other businesses and industries were also established or slowly expanded. A new brewery was set up in Richard Street, Hindmarsh in 1859. For most of its long working life (until 1927) this was known as Haussen and Co., and the main brewery building is still in use as a warehouse, one of the few early industrial buildings to have survived.

The numbers of tanneries and brickyards increased, Shearing's pottery at Carrondown expanded and William Tamlin started a ropeworks in 1871, which was moved to its present location alongside the railway line at Brompton in 1875.²⁰ The existing long ropeworks shed, although of a later period than the 1870s, is a particularly interesting industrial relic, its structure clearly illustrating the techniques of rope-making.

A cabinet-making business was started in the 1850s by James King, which grew into a large firm of building contractors and undertakers. The family became closely involved in local sport and municipal affairs and their firm was responsible for a number of major and minor buildings in the district and elsewhere in Adelaide. James King built more than 80 houses in and around Hindmarsh, including the doctor's residence in Manton Street (1886), which is the most substantial house still standing in the district, as well as the ornate Savings Bank of South Australia on Port Road (1911) .

With the gradual increase in population brought about by these expanding businesses and the movement of people out of Adelaide, the time was ripe for further subdivision and housing construction. Croydon, with about 15 houses (Assessment Book), is mentioned as a small agricultural hamlet in Bailliere's 1866 *Gazetteer*, together with Carrondown, north of Brompton. Coglein Street was known as McCarron Street after the Patrick McCarron, subdivider of Carrondown prior to Patrick Coglein's activities in the same area. Brompton itself is described as a small village, and the numbers of houses had remained at about 70, according to the 1865 Assessment. Although the numbers of houses had barely increased, there were now eight shops, 11 brickyards, a chapel and, towering over all, the gasworks.

The 1866 *Gazetteer* described Hindmarsh as a suburban village, surrounded by flat country with soils well adapted for agriculture and the manufacture of bricks. The population was about 3,500, including that of the neighbouring villages.

Hindmarsh (proper) has a post and money order office, a mechanics' institute, a public pound, a volunteer rifle corps, and an Oddfellow's lodge, 4 brickyards (Shearing's 2, Muggridge's, and Sutton's), a steam flour mill (Magarey and Co's), a brewery (Crawford's), 2 tanneries (Dench's and Pascoe's) and 2 fellmongering and wool-washing establishments (Taylor's and Peacock's). The hotels are the Commercial, Black Lion, Jolly Miller, and Land of Promise

²¹.

As the only hall, the Council's District Hall of 1860 was the pivot of non-alcoholic entertainment, and this was fostered by the Council. Tea-meetings were held to raise funds for Sunday Schools, groups such as the Teetotallers League and the Bowden branch of the Band of Hope met there, and the Institute's subscription lectures were held there.

The *Gazetteer* does not mention the district's churches, but these, too, were increasing in number. Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches were established in Bowden and Brompton in the 1840s, but no trace of them survives. A new Wesleyan Church was built in East Street, Bowden in about 1850, enlarged in 1854 and converted to a hall after a new church was opened in 1876.

Much religious activity took place in more informal surroundings:

Bowden and Brompton were villages that saw much evangelical work and lay preaching with 'missions' of various kinds springing up from time to time, both from established churches and groups which coalesced about some outstanding religious resident ... Many such meetings were held in the open air and some were sponsored by the total abstainer groups; Band of Hope and similar organisations.²²

The miller, Thomas Magarey, was an ardent supporter of the Church of Christ, and was responsible for starting its first Sunday School in Australia at one of his mill cottages in 1854. Church services were held there from 1855 until 1866 when a proper church was built in Roberts (Orsmond) Street. The church still stands and continues to be called the 'Robert Street Church' by some.

Both the workplaces and institutions such as the churches contributed to a sense of community and local identity. As suggested, there were many links between social and economic activities, given the roles assumed by local manufacturers and businesspeople.

The workplaces dominated the entire lives of the residents far more than is now realised. The employees worked long hours, walking from home which was close by, sharing their leisure time, worshipping and drinking and visiting together. Their work associations underpinned strong local identifications as generation after generation followed in the same occupations run by the familiar family firms. The link between local work and close-knit local community is revealed graphically in the phrase, 'You can't throw a brick in Hindmarsh without hitting a relative'. By 1874 this close-knit, inter-related and self-distinct working community was quite evident.

These have remained some of Adelaide's suburbs with the strongest local identification, and generally in these areas many informal and formal working class organisations flourished. As early as 1850, with the colony's constitution soon to be adopted, tradesmen and artisans at Hindmarsh formed an Elective Franchise Association, which amalgamated with another association in 1859 to form the South Australian Political Association. This operated until at least the 1880s, drawing up a programme of workers' demands for each election and supporting land reform and protection for colonial manufactures.²³

Such support was timely, for, by 1874 South Australia was enjoying a sustained economic boom, based on rural prosperity but having marked effect on urban trades, industries and services and suburban housing construction.²⁴

3 1875-1913: boom and poverty

Between the formation of the Hindmarsh District Council in 1853 and its partition in

1874, Council affairs were troubled by frequent disputes between residents of the extensive rural districts (beyond the present boundaries) and those in the suburban villages. Ratepayers in the outlying districts complained frequently that councillors were neglecting their interests in favour of the three towns. They attempted to get partition along these lines but it was the town wards which finally made separation a reality, in 1874, having reached a point in urban development which made their interests quite obviously incompatible with the rural wards.

The Corporation of the Town of Hindmarsh was proclaimed late in 1874, comprising an area only slightly larger than the present Council. One of the major employers of local labour, the tanner, Benjamin Taylor, was the first Mayor.

Hindmarsh was not alone in making the change from semi-rural District Council to urban Corporation, for at this time the colony's prosperity was producing a boom which had particular effect on the suburban districts surrounding Adelaide. The Adelaide metropolitan area's rate of population increase was faster even than that in Melbourne's 'marvellous' decade, leaping from 4.5% between 1871 and 1876 to 7.6% between 1876 and 1881.

This phenomenally rapid rate of increase was pushing the suburban circle out further in all directions. The fastest development was south from Unley ... But even to the north and east of the city, previously more settled, the main council areas typically increased the number of their residents by the substantial amount of about 60 per cent. The 1881 census showed for the first time more people living outside the Corporation of Adelaide than inside it. Adelaide had become truly suburban.²⁵

By 1881 the population of Hindmarsh had increased to 7,176. Most of the district could truly be described as an industrial city and a working class suburb. Parsons quotes at length a newspaper description of Hindmarsh in 1883, which reviewed these rapid changes.

Hindmarsh, the region of brick-kilns and tanners odorous essences, though perhaps not the most desirable suburb for some, is without doubt one of the most important places in the colony. While it is regarded as the second suburban corporate town – Norwood and Kensington being the first – it must be conceded from a commercial point of view it stands first. The population must be now at least 8,000. The trade is not sufficient to maintain such a large population, but ... one only needs to stand on Bowden station and witness the large passenger traffic morning and evening from the city ... when he will be convinced that Hindmarsh is not only a large commercial area but also the home of hundreds of artisans (and domestic servants) who spend one-third of their time in the metropolis working. During the past few years new townships have been laid out, and the rapidity with which they have been built upon and occupied is astonishing. It is only a short time since the land on which Brompton Park, Brompton Park Extension, Carrondown, Riddleton (Ridleyton) and Hindmarsh West now stand was one large plain; now it is covered with dwellings. With an evident desire to make the most of the land these townships have been laid out with very narrow streets, which in the course of time will be found to be detrimental to the interests of the town.²⁶

The chief items of trade were noted, as in the past, as flour, gas, bricks, pottery, processed hides and wool, rope, soap and beer. The nine main tanneries employed about 150 men, the gasworks 50 men, Jarvis' coach-builders 20 men and King and Son 36 men. Several new buildings, including King's, had been recently erected along the Port Road. The report did not mention numbers of other workers, but the 1881 census recorded 188 brickmakers, 85 draymen, 486 labourers, 111 domestic servants, 40 unemployed – and, at the other end of the scale, 54 members of the professional class and 13 gentlemen, ladies and 'independent means'. These occupations tended to concentrate in different areas: retail, professional, manufacturers, skilled workers in Hindmarsh proper, labourers and semi-skilled in Bowden and Brompton, where many brick carriers were also located.²⁷

The reporter noted approvingly that there were nearly as many churches (nine number) as hotels (14). The Hindmarsh Model School, which was built in 1878 soon after the introduction of a New Education Act, was described as 'by no means an inferior edifice'. It could accommodate 1,000 pupils although the maximum attendance so far was less than 900 (which is much larger than present attendance at the same school). There were also several private schools. These would have included Thomas and Anne Lawton's school at Brompton, which was started by Anne Lawton in the 1850s and Carrondown School in the Baptist Hall in Coglin Street.²⁸

The next school to be opened by the Government was in 1886 at a somewhat isolated site on Torrens Road, Brompton. Both at Hindmarsh and Brompton, original school buildings are still in use.

This was a period of extensive building and rebuilding. Much of the Hindmarsh heritage of houses, shops, hotels, public and civic buildings and structures such as bridges, dates from this era. Most of the older hotels were rebuilt or enlarged and several new hotels were constructed. These substantial two storey buildings still dominate many of the town's streetscapes, not only along Port Road but especially in the narrower streets. For example, the Brompton Park Hotel (built in 1880) appears suddenly to the beholder amidst streets of small houses.

Similarly, several churches such as the Bowden Bible Christian Chapel were enlarged and new churches and halls were built. These included the Hindmarsh Congregational Church (1880), the imposing Wesleyan Methodist Church on Port Road (1876), the 'Glanton Street Church', which was the West Hindmarsh Methodist Church (1885), two new Christian Churches, built one after the other at Hindmarsh in 1877 and 1903 near the original Christian Chapel, All Saints' Schoolroom (1882) and the first Church of Christ school hall in South Australia (1880). Congregational and Anglican Churches were built at Croydon towards the end of the period after 1910 and the Hindmarsh Baptist congregation grew so rapidly it, too, constructed two church buildings one after the other and side by side, in 1879 and 1884.

The district could well be described as a hive of religious activity during this period, as not only new and larger churches and halls were constructed but less formal activities proliferated. The several missions included the Bowden and Brompton Methodist Mission, for which two halls were built in succession in about 1900 and 1909 and the Anglican Home Mission which was started at Bowden in 1883 with a Mission Church dedicated as the Church of the Good Shepherd in 1885. The

Bowden Salvation Army Corps, which was formed in 1882 was the second to be established in Australia after that in Adelaide. A 'barracks' was used at Brompton and then in about 1890 the Chief Street Citadel was obtained.²⁹ Religious-minded residents may have been but the enthusiasm of the 'Salvo's' brass band aroused most irreligious emotions: a newspaper article of 1883 refers to the Band's noise and obstruction of Chief Street!

Between them, this great diversity of churches and the much-enlarged hotels provided a remarkably wide range of social activities besides simple worship or beer. There were Sunday Schools and picnics, illicit brickmaking and wrestling matches, tea meetings and illustrated lectures. Inquests public meetings and election campaigns were held at rooms provided by the hotels; new social organisations, new church groups, new schools sprang from meetings and fund raising entertainments held at Church halls.

Several new societies and organisations emerged during this period. Apart from some trade unions and political groups they included the Hindmarsh Volunteer Fire Brigade (1884), The Hindmarsh Volunteer Rifles (1885), the District Nursing Society (1893), the Bowden Kindergarten (1908), the Hindmarsh Town Orchestra (1908) and the Hindmarsh Brass Band (1912). Each of these supported the community life of the district and gained some fame beyond its borders: the District Nursing Society, for example, was the precursor of the present State-wide organisation, the Royal District Nursing Society of South Australia. Generally, these societies were accommodated in rooms provided at the Hall, in private houses or church halls. District nursing was a project suggested by the rector at the Church of the Good Shepherd at Bowden, with a room made available at the Town Hall from 1896. Messages were accepted by Chemists Parker and Coombe each side of Port Road. Both these Chemist shops are still in existence.

The Bowden Kindergarten in Seventh Street was opened in the premises which had been constructed for use as a private school by the Lawtons. The Kindergarten was in itself worthy of note as the first free kindergarten to be established outside the City of Adelaide.

The basis for all this social activity was, of course, continued population growth. Between 1871 and 1901 both the population and the housing approximately trebled, the population reaching 10,011 and the houses 2,135. Although all sections of the town, even the erstwhile farmlands to the north and west, showed an increase, by far the greatest increase was in the Brompton Ward, which grew from 581 to 4,463 people and 147 to 931 houses.

Brompton Ward (which then included Croydon Ward) was the scene of the most active subdivision and housing construction during this period. New suburbs were created adjoining Brompton to the north-west: Brompton Park and Ridleyton, and beyond South Road at Croydon and North Croydon.

Much of this area was subdivided by Paddy Coglein, the 'King of Brompton Park'. Patrick Boyce Coglein, an Irishman, made his fortune in South Australia conducting a timber yard and hotels, buying land and houses in the metropolitan area, and going in for pastoralism. He was elected to the House of Assembly where he remained at 'intervals imposed by defeat at the polls', from 1860 to 1887, representing in turn probably more districts than any other man 'in the history of responsible government in South Australia'.³⁰

Coglein was described as the most picturesque figure in Adelaide in his day, eccentric of speech, self-seeking and charitable in turn, although it was his pursuit of wealth

and ‘the assumption of power which he felt wealth entitled him to’ which marked his behaviour in Hindmarsh as resident, speculator and Mayor.³¹

His first subdivision involved cutting up ‘Croydon Farm’, probably in 1850, which resulted in the hamlet of Croydon mentioned previously. Naturally, he took advantage of the 1870s boom to undertake further profitable subdivision.

Coglin laid out Brompton Park and Ridleyton North in about 1876, when he moved to live in a large house on an extensive block of land in Coglin Street which effectively separated the one subdivision from the other as he provided no connecting roads. The site of the house itself is marked by an old palm tree. His most enduring legacies were the pocket-handkerchief allotments of his subdivisions which were condemned even at the time and certainly later:

... old Paddy Coglin subdivided the land into blocks of 15 feet by 90 feet deep, can you imagine a 15 foot frontage for a house? He said he was trying to help the working man but actually I don’t think they should have allowed it ... We all used to say, ‘Old Paddy Coglin’s houses!’ It was a bad subdivision actually.³²

Inevitably, tiny single fronted houses or row cottages were built on these allotments. Usually the single-fronted houses were built in pairs. Apart from their small size, many backyards in Brompton Park were below street level, so that rainwater collected there in stagnant pools which, together with the household refuse and the muddy, unmade streets contributed to the deaths of many children from typhoid. By contrast, Croydon and North Croydon, beyond South Road, were more generously laid out, with the express intention of attracting the more prosperous working class resident:

Mr. (Richard) Day who had a farm here, realised he couldn’t keep the farm for very much longer, so he decided that he would sell blocks of land for £20 each so as to encourage a good class of young people to settle in Croydon. And one of the rules was that no hotels should ever be built in Croydon ... The people of Croydon were a good class of tradespeople, plumbers and carpenters and mostly worked with their hands, though occasionally you might get someone in an office ... There wasn’t anybody out of work. Not even in the Depression days. Yes, they were a hardworking, honest, clean living people. We all knew each other.

(The Irish and the poor) congregated around Brompton. See, there weren’t any poor people in Croydon. They were in Brompton and what we called the lowest, down there as we regarded them ... you did not mix – the South Road is the great divider.³³

North Croydon was subdivided in the early 1890s near the Croydon Railway Station, which was opened in 1888. The remaining land – apart from a core about Day’s own farm – was subdivided in the following decade, with the numbers of new houses increasingly rapidly in the first years of the twentieth century.

Miss Anna Martin, whose father was works manager at the Adelaide Potteries in Brompton Park described the house he had built in 1899 after marrying, as one of the

first in the new Croydon subdivision. 'I was born in 1904 and I can remember when the houses only went to two streets after this one ... All the rest was paddocks.' Martin had bought three blocks of land, planted 60 fruit trees on one, vegetables, ducks, hens and even a cow on the other. The house itself, a well-built spacious villa, was clearly of the type expected:

... he had it built by a Master Builder. If you notice the lines of the house – I've had builders here and they look lovingly at these lines. There is more make in this house than you find in the present day houses.

The Martins were also involved in the establishment of St. Barnabas Church at Croydon, holding meetings, in their dining room. 'Father managed all the business, mother got all the money in.'

The more spacious double-fronted houses, commonly known as villas, were built in large numbers in the suburbs from the 1870s to about 1920. In the Hindmarsh district, the great majority of these were located in the newer and upper working class suburbs of Croydon, as suggested, and West Hindmarsh and New Hindmarsh (now also West Hindmarsh) .

West Hindmarsh is situated on section 372 to the west, which was originally a long section running down to the river from Port Road. It was owned by Admiral Cator, used as a wheat farm by Crawford Brothers, and subdivided on behalf of Miss Cator in 1880. The first section opened up was West Hindmarsh, between Grange Road and Port Road, followed New Hindmarsh, between Grange Road, John Street (South Road) and the Torrens.

Here there was a repetition of the aspirations which guided the settlers of Hindmarsh 40 years before. Perhaps by this time the suburban ideal was firmly established in South Australia and sub-division automatically allowed for backyards of sufficient size but in these new townships the nineteenth century suburban dweller again used his allotment for economic reasons to supplement his regular income ... In 1886 the *Hindmarsh Exhibition Gazette* ... mentioned the orchards, vegetable gardens, and horticultural nurseries of New and West Hindmarsh ... Allotment size and street width in the new towns of Hindmarsh Ward suggested some semblance of rational town planning.³⁴

Apart from the generally larger houses built in the area these larger blocks and vacant paddocks gave the suburbs a semi-rural air until at least the 1920s. Older residents (many of whom have remained) recall cows grazing and the many almond trees: 'they used to pay all their rates and taxes with those almonds ... it was a pretty common thing.'³⁵ Many householders erected windmills to lift water from the Torrens for their fruit and vegetable crops: others sank wells, as was usual in most parts of the district until widespread reticulation. The area at the back of New Hindmarsh was known locally as the Green Hills, and this whole section was undulating as it was crossed by old river gullies.

Besides the houses themselves, many of which have been retained in this dominantly residential area – as at Croydon – surviving distinctive features such as gully remnants, the river banks of the Torrens, windmills, wells and early street tree plantings, such as the

unique lemon trees along Jervois Avenue, should be retained.

In summary then, Hindmarsh was never simply the homogenous working class district perceived by outsiders. The social distinctions between the different villages were already apparent by the late 1840s. As described, by the early 1850s these distinctions and the varied economic uses of the different areas were apparent in the built environment and this is clearly reflected in their heritage

During the years of active growth and change between 1875 and 1913 the distinctive character of the original villages was further reinforced, for example, by the expansion of shops, hotels and public buildings along the Hindmarsh section of the Port Road, and by the proliferation of row cottages in Bowden, Brompton and Brompton Park, while the housing and gardens in the new subdivisions of West Hindmarsh, New Hindmarsh and Croydon reflected the upward aspirations many of the workers and tradesmen who had first settled in the villages. Most continued to work there and their children attended Hindmarsh or Brompton Schools or one of the several small private schools. These included a Catholic School run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, whose two storey convent building still stands at the corner of Port Road and Chief Street. The one-storey schoolroom stood at the rear.

Many another substantial public or commercial building was erected on Port Road during this period. Most were situated along the major thoroughfare, which was, until the 1920s, restricted to the south western track of the present two track highway. However, the size of Bowden-Brompton community stimulated construction along the north-eastern track also.

Such buildings included the enlarged Town Hall and the several hotels; the three imposing bank buildings: the National Bank (1874), the Bank of Adelaide (1909) and the Savings Bank of South Australia (1911); the Post Office (1884) and shops such as Richard Worthley's 'Furniture Emporium' (1899), Coombe's Chemist (1892) and Parker's Chemist (1880).

Besides, the entrance to the Port Road, at the Torrens Crossing, was vastly improved by the construction of the new Hindmarsh Bridge. In its original form, the bridge, which replaced the earlier timber structure, had two piers each made up of four cast iron cylinders with wrought iron bridge girders and iron buckle plates. The 1880 plaque is attached to the bridge, which was widened in 1928 and 1952 and re-decked in 1936, and remains one of the busiest in metropolitan Adelaide. [It has since been demolished.]

An even more important event in suburban development, in general, as well as at Hindmarsh during this period, was the construction of the horse tram system. One of the earliest of these companies was the Adelaide and Hindmarsh Tramway Company Limited of 1877, which in 1880, opened a line from Adelaide and along the north-west side of Port Road to the Terminus in John Street (South Road). The car shed and stables (since demolished) were situated on the corner of John Street and Grange Road, and later the manager's residence (which remains) was built alongside.

All the private horse tram systems were taken over by the Municipal Tramways Trust, which was formed in 1907. The horse-drawn lines were converted for use by electric

trams, and one of the first purpose-built structures was the Manton Street-Holland Street bridge, crossing the Torrens, which was opened in 1909. Although this was at first used only by horse-drawn cars, this bridge – now used for one way motor vehicle traffic – is also one of the earliest known reinforced concrete bridges in South Australia.

The combination of train and tram services meant that many city workers could commute daily to and from Hindmarsh. This provided a further boost to the district's population.

Besides local industrial and commercial expansion provided additional employment. Relatively few industrial buildings or structures remain even from this era: parts of the industrial complexes lining Adam Street, Hindmarsh, date from this era as well as a gasometer and large sections of the expanded gasworks complex and the Avenues Tannery in West Hindmarsh. But the impact on the industrial expansion also had direct consequences for the district's residential heritage as several manufacturers built rows of cottages for their employees.

Some surviving examples include thirteen houses in West Street, Brompton, which were built by J. and C.R. Hocking, the brickmakers, in 1894. Another brickmaker, Job Hallett, built several sets of cottages, including a row along South Road at West Hindmarsh which housed some skilled English brickmakers he had brought to Australia to operate his new machinery in 1912. One of Job Hallett's sons, Geoff, recalled that they owned as many as 40 houses, many of them built from their bricks and rented to the workers for a rent equal to one day's work. Before the South Road houses were built they owned a number in Chief Street, Brompton, near the 'home' brickyard, where Hallett started.³⁶

Private home building was assisted by the activities of several local building societies. These included the Weymouth Building Society (already mentioned), the Permanent Economic Building Society and the Hindmarsh Building Society. Each of these occupied premises in Bowden and operated along similar lines, with members depositing small amounts of money each week and finally gaining a loan by ballot. The Hindmarsh Building Society, founded in 1877, has grown to become one of the State's largest financial institutions.

Hindmarsh was just as dramatically affected by the severe depression which followed close on the heels of the boom in the mid 1880s. Many people faced unemployment or wage cuts. The Council tried to launch some public works to assist the unemployed, but was unable to spend enough to ensure success. One task accomplished was the laying out of the Aboriginal Section to house Hindmarsh's 282 Aborigines.³⁷

Little progress was observed during the next five years but the very presence of cheap rental housing encouraged an inflow of poor and unemployed families from elsewhere in the State. They included an unusually high proportion of widows some of whom could find work as laundresses, cleaners, shop assistants or as piece-workers.

As could be expected, charitable work was active during this period: the rigors of winter and economic depression both was the basis for the formation of the District

Nursing Society, and the Hindmarsh Town Mission records note an upsurge in relief work. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Homes were also opened, in 1897.

The misery and poverty of that era must be considered a legitimate, if unfortunate, part of South Australia's history. Consequently, the cottages and the missions which are the only surviving relics of that physical environment should be preserved as part of that history.

From the turn of the century, building construction picked up again and a large proportion of the houses in Croydon and West Hindmarsh were erected between the late 1890s and 1913.

4. 1914-1945: peak and decline

During this period, at one and the same time Hindmarsh reached its peak as a populous working class community and began its serious decline, in part because of the expansion of the very industrial and commercial premises which had sustained the community in the nineteenth century.

It is during this period, which lies well within verbal recall, that the close-knit, self-supporting character of the community, its eccentrics and its popular identities, its daily activities, difficulties and pleasures are brought vividly to life in interviews such as those carried out for the Hindmarsh Oral History Project in 1979. Characters such as Granny (Hannah) Wing, a local midwife, Dingy Rowe, the theatre owner, Sticky Davis, the sweet shop man and the formidable Miss Duce at the Hindmarsh School live on in the collective memories of old Hindmarsh residents.

Obviously, some attempt should be made to preserve the buildings and places associated with such characters and popular activities, including the surviving residences or workplaces.

South Australian author, Max Colwell, based his novel, *Half Days and Patched Pants*, set in the 1930s Depression, on such eccentrics, the dispossessed and the gamely-struggling in Brompton. The Children's Playground was an abandoned pug-hole, while the old men of the district gathered at the gazebo which still stands on the Port Road plantation:

The Bummer's Rest was like a big Abo wurley in the middle of the lawns that lay between the two lanes of the main road. It was round and had a seat in it shaped like a semicircle. All the old blokes from Mike's street sat there to get away from their old women. When it was full and everyone stretched out there was a big heap of legs and boots in the middle of it ...

The old blokes used to talk about the Church and priests and working half days and getting free food from the Government.

They used to swear and smoke and spit a lot too.³⁸

The history of this period encompasses a series of major events. These included the Depression and the First and Second World Wars as well as significant local changes: improvements in public health, amenities, transport; the rise and then decline of the residential population as Adelaide's outer suburbs grew, and, at the same time the intrusion of new industries and warehousing from city sites to Hindmarsh, Bowden

and Brompton. Relatively little new housing was built after the First World War, apart from at the new subdivision of Renown Park. And much of the existing small scale housing actually degenerated as maintenance was not kept up. By the 1930s Bowden and Brompton was classified as one of Adelaide's slums, an image reinforced by the detailed assessment of the Building Act Enquiry Committee's report on Substandard Housing, which was released in 1940.

Therefore, in comparison to the previous periods, there are relatively few buildings or structures of heritage significance, and indeed, much destruction of highly significant items, such as Ridley's (and Magarey's) flour mill.

Several public buildings and structures are worthy of note, including tramways bridges at Hawker Street and Cawthorne Street, the Croydon Public School (1915), the Bandstand (1921), the Soldiers' Memorial Hall (1922) the Croydon Picture Palace (1923), the premises for the Mothers and Babies' Association and the Hindmarsh Town Mission.

Civic pride was reflected in the construction of the Walter Burley Griffin-designed incinerator in 1936 and the modernisation of the Town Hall in 1937, with the celebration of the town's centenary in the following year perhaps a fitting conclusion to an era of community identity which was under threat and in some respects already in decline.

5 1946-present: devastation and renewal

Between 1947 and 1976 the population of the Hindmarsh district declined from 14,542 to 8,691. This was despite the impact of the post war immigration schemes which brought large numbers of Greek, Italian and Yugoslav families, in particular, into this inexpensive inner suburban environment.

The Mayor's *Annual Report* of 1962 noted that the South Australian Town Planner's Department considered that Hindmarsh, as a consequence of its closeness to Adelaide and manufacturing districts, should become a centre for storage, commercial or wholesale purposes. 'This trend can be seen even today, and by bold and proper planning can be assisted considerably.' Nor was the Council critical of plans (suggested in 1960) for large freeways to be routed through Hindmarsh.

As a result, by the 1970s, the oldest developed parts of the district, Hindmarsh, Bowden and Brompton, had lost many residents – and housing – to industries and were characterised by a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial establishments, although the suburbs to the north and west had remained predominantly residential. The sheer threat of freeways construction had cast a blight over the older areas, contributing to their further decline.

The Metropolitan Adelaide Transport Study, released in 1968, caused great consternation in Hindmarsh, where approximately 25% of its area would eventually be lost. Despite local opposition, the Highways Department proceeded to buy properties. As the Mayor reported in 1978: 'The consequent social and environmental impact on the Hindmarsh area, particularly in the Bowden Brompton area, was devastating.'³⁹ A survey of the many houses owned by the Highways Department showed that their standard fell much below the general standard of housing in the area,

contributing to a further downgrading of the district noted by the remaining residents. Bowden Brompton's higher than average proportion of elderly, immigrants, separated and divorced people tended 'to make it a fragile community little able to withstand the disruptive effects of Highways' activities.'

After much agitation, including preparation of the 'Hindmarsh Study', the North-South Transportation Corridor proposal was finally abandoned in 1983. Positive plans are now being made to improve both the living conditions and the economic use of the area. These plans must incorporate efforts to preserve the district's surviving heritage, which in large part is a heritage of the successful balance of residence, community activity, commerce and industry which characterised Hindmarsh until as recently as the 1920s.

¹ State Library of SA [SLSA], 1054 (M), 'The diary of B.T. Finnis'.

² Kerry Wimshurst, 'Nineteenth Century Hindmarsh', B.A. Honours thesis, University of Adelaide, 1971, pp.5-6.

³ Ronald Parsons, *Hindmarsh Town*, Adelaide, 1974, p.2.

⁴ Hindmarsh District Council Assessment Book, 1853, p.17.

⁵ J. Allen, ed., *The South Australian Magazine*, July 1841-September 1842, p.187.

⁶ E.S. Richards, 'The Genesis of secondary industry in the South Australian economy to 1876', *Economic History Review*, XV, September 1975, p.134.

⁷ M. Hardy, 'History of Woodville, 1837-1874', Woodville 1954, V.I, p.90.

⁸ Parsons, pp.277-278.

⁹ Wimshurst, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰ Wimshurst. pp.33-34.

¹¹ Parsons, pp.38-39, 26.

¹² Quoted in Wimshurst, pp.27.

¹³ This included the present Council districts of Woodville and Henley and Grange until 1874. All the Assessment Books to that date are in the possession of the Corporation of Woodville. In this account, reference to the Hindmarsh district is restricted to the region included within present Hindmarsh Council boundaries.

¹⁴ Chairman's Report, 1853 in Parsons, p.44.

¹⁵ Statistics, 1856 and 1871, for the District of Hindmarsh, in Hardy 'History of Woodville', I, p.90.

¹⁶ Transcript of interview with Mr. Sam Johnson by Susan Marsden (Hindmarsh Project, 1979. Copies of all these interview transcripts have been lodged with the Hindmarsh Council). [The full set is also held in the SLSA.]

¹⁷ V.M. Branson, *Hindmarsh Sketchbook*, Adelaide, 1977, p.49.

¹⁸ R.P. Whitworth, *Baillieres South Australian Gazetteer and Road Guide*, (Adelaide, 1866) p.10.

¹⁹ Parsons, p.79.

²⁰ The subsequent history of the company is provided in Parsons, pp.115-116.

²¹ Whitworth, p.101.

²² Parsons, p.270.

²³ Jim Moss, 'South Australia's Colonial labour movement', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 6, 1979, pp.19,20.

²⁴ W.A. Sinclair, 'Urban booms in nineteenth-century Australia: Adelaide and Melbourne', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no 10, 1982, pp.3-14.

²⁵ Sinclair, p.3.

²⁶ Quoted in Parsons, pp.127-128.

²⁷ Wimshurst, p.91.

²⁸ Information from Mrs. E. Wilson (interviewed for the Hindmarsh project in 1979).

²⁹ See newspaper cuttings at Hindmarsh Council 1882-1883, p.12.

³⁰ Both quotes from R. Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, Adelaide, 1927, II, p. 247.

³¹ See Parsons, pp.136-39

³² Interview, Mr. Laurie Martin, Hindmarsh Oral History Project, 1979.

³³ Interview, Miss Anna Martin, Hindmarsh Oral History Project, 1979.

³⁴ Wimshurst, p.92.

³⁵ Interview with Mr. Gil Bettison, Hindmarsh Oral History Project, 1979.

³⁶ Information from Assessment Books and from interview with Mr. Clarrie O'Brien, and Mr. Geoff

Hallett, Hindmarsh Oral History Project, 1979.

³⁷ A.C. Tonkin, 'Hindmarsh 1871-1891', University of Adelaide History Department - urban project, 1971.

³⁸ Max Colwell, *Half Days and Patched Pants*, Adelaide 1975, 1977, p. 67.

³⁹ Report for the ten years ending in 1978, by the Mayor of Hindmarsh.