

## **The Lower North of South Australia – a short history**

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In the recent history of the Lower North some changes and events are of such significance that they have been used to divide the history of the region into a series of chronological periods. These periods are based upon those suggested in the State Historic Preservation Plan *Historical Guidelines*<sup>1</sup> but they have been altered to fit more closely the actual sequence of events in Region 8.

The periods are as follows:

1. 1837 - 1854
2. 1855 - 1868
3. 1869 - 1884
4. 1885 - 1904
5. 1905 - 1928
6. 1929 - the present.

The reasons for such divisions will become apparent in the following historical account.

#### **1. 1837 to 1854.**

South Australia was founded upon the premise that controlled subdivision and sale of its 'waste lands' would make the fortunes of gentlemen and establish lesser folk as a prosperous and stable population. Once the site of the capital city was fixed (by William Light at Adelaide in 1836) all subsequent exploration usually involved the search for land suitable for exploitation. Inevitably, the country north of Adelaide, now known as the Lower North, was soon traversed. Colonel Light himself named and reported favorably on the Barrosa (now Barossa) Valley in 1837. Johann Menge was so impressed by the valley's potential his advice made the fortune of George Fife Angas.

As Angas' agent, Charles Flaxman took out seven Special Surveys of the area of which six, totalling 24,000 acres, were transferred to Angas in 1840.<sup>2</sup> Quite accurately, Menge had written to Angas in 1839 describing this area as 'the Cream, the real Cream, and nothing but the Cream of South Australia to skim from the milk of which our dear friend Mr. Flaxman has already made a beginning...'<sup>3</sup>

Edward John Eyre traversed the region on his first northern journey in 1839, naming the Rivers Broughton and Hutt. At least two subsequent large land-holders were directly influenced by Eyre's expedition. George Charles Hawker joined the expedition north and on its way back he left the group to look over the country along the Hutt. He later returned and in 1841 established Bungaree (District Council of Clare)<sup>4</sup>. Eyre's enthusiasm for the same locality encouraged John Horrocks to establish a sheep station just south of the source of the Hutt as early as 1839 (D.C. Clare).<sup>5</sup> In 1840 E.B. Gleeson set up a sheep run beyond Horrock's station that later

included the town site of Clare. John Horrocks died following a shooting accident during an exploration for new runs further north (north of Spencer's Gulf) in 1846.

Much of the exploration of the remainder of the Lower North region was carried out by pastoralists themselves. For this, the first age of European conquest and settlement in South Australia, was a golden age for the men who arrived with the capital or the determination to claim huge areas of land and to stock them with cattle or sheep. During this period the entire region was taken up as pastoral runs. These were of two kinds. The huge runs were at first, literally, squatted on. Stock was moved about vast areas as supplies of natural feed and water determined. Despite the avowed aims of regulating land-holding (and of preventing the 'evils' of squatting) no attempt was made to regulate these pastoralists until the Government introduced Occupation Licences in 1842. These licences were still vague as to the extent of the runs, and did not give security of tenure, so that few improvements were made to the land so held. In 1851 Pastoral Leases, which ran for a fourteen years' term and provided compensation for improvements were introduced.

Hawker's early experiences as a pastoralist in the region are probably typical. He was sent 'a few thousands' by his father, with which he bought merino ewes. He travelled with them back to the Hutt and camped where he intended to settle, 'for in those days where you camped to settle you had many miles all round you, and no-one could settle near you'. Another hopeful arrived the morning after, but Hawker told him 'Clear out, this is now my holding, you are too late to steal my country'.<sup>6</sup> Yet he named the run 'Bungaree', meaning 'my country' as he was told by the Aborigines who had up until then used that country as their own headquarters. For many years, as was usual, Hawker paid no rent. By the early 1850s the run was 267 square miles with 100,000 sheep (and 52 shepherds).

'Bungaree was a big place then. It went south to near where Watervale is, north across the Broughton ... west to within a few miles of where Snowtown is, and east to the Hill River property'.<sup>7</sup> Those men, like Hawker, holding Occupation Licences, as well as new pastoralists took up Pastoral Leases from 1851. Given the greater security of tenure, they made more extensive improvements, including not only shepherds' huts and water storage, but also substantial shearing sheds and homesteads.

The other type of pastoral occupation was, from the start, freehold, and represented an unfair waiving of the rules of orderly survey by allowing large capitalists to specify areas for 'Special Survey' beyond the limits of surveyed Hundreds, in effect picking the eyes out of the good country. This was belatedly recognised by the Government and the Special Survey system lasted only from 1839 to 1841. By that time, however, thirty-three Special Surveys had been carried out in South Australia. At least twelve of these were located in the Lower North, either along permanent watercourses, such as the Rivers Light, Wakefield and Gawler, or in the well-watered southern hills and valleys of the Barossa and Lymedoch (Lyndoch) districts.<sup>8</sup> Single holdings were of 4,000 acres or more.

The 24,000 acres of Special Survey taken up by his agent even alarmed George Fife Angas, who recalled Flaxman to London 'before he decided to buy the Colony outright and proclaim his patron sovereign'.<sup>9</sup> Selectors such as Horrocks (already mentioned) and Joseph Gilbert of Pewsey Vale (D.C. Barossa) squatted on surveys before these were made formally available, and they almost immediately started upon construction of permanent homesteads and other improvements.<sup>10</sup> Some of the most notable homesteads date from this early period of freehold occupation and include

Pewsey Vale, Tarrawatta (D.C. Angaston), Glen Para (later, Corryton Park) (D.C. Barossa), and Holland House (now Turretfield) (D.C. Light).

The Angas' holdings established that family as the Barossa's leading members and major local and colonial benefactors for the ensuing sixty years; George Fife's sponsorship of groups of German settlers led directly to their settling as tenants on his land in the Barossa, forming the first settlement at Bethany in 1842.

In practice, it was frequently the same men who took up land in the Special Surveys as well as other holdings under Occupation Licence or Pastoral Lease. A wide reading of local histories and Lands Department lists yields an impression of large-scale and sometimes quite scattered holdings held in a few hands. These included Hawker, Gleeson, Levi, Dutton, Masters, Bowman, Fisher, Morphet, Hughes, Browne, Keynes, Gilbert, Bagot and McBean. Frequently, lands purchased formed the nucleus of large leasehold pastoral estates.

Even after the Special Surveys were discontinued pastoralists could still secure their head stations by asking for local surveys or simply by outbidding small selectors when hundreds were declared and the land came up for auction.<sup>11</sup> Anlaby was secured in this fashion, with F.H. Dutton also leasing more than 200 square miles about Anlaby and eastwards on the Murray Plains. The Browne brothers, starting by sheep farming on land purchased in the Lynedoch Special Survey, in 1839, moved north squatting on tracts of land which became the Booborowie (D.C. Burra Burra) and Canowie (outside the region) runs in 1843, then further north to the Flinders Ranges. Through the 1850s and 1860s they acquired (mostly leasehold) more than twenty properties throughout South Australia, including in Region 8, besides Booborowie in the far north east, Buckland Park (D.C. Mallala) in the far south west. By 1860 W.J. Browne's total South Australian holdings of leasehold property comprised 2,000 square miles.<sup>12</sup>

Given such extensive holdings by a few men it is hardly surprising to find that by 1871 more than 40% of the alienated land in South Australia was held by less than 2% of the landowners.<sup>13</sup> The 'peacocking' of good land, and actual 'dummying' by pastoralists also to a large extent blocked the move by farmers north of the Barossa and southern hills areas.<sup>14</sup> This was despite the fact that by 1854 all the central part of the Lower North had been surveyed as hundreds (and was therefore open for purchase by farmers), the earliest being the three southern hundreds of Mudla Wirra, Nuriootpa and Moorooroo (all 1847).<sup>15</sup>

The pastoral stations, and subsequently many of the towns, were linked by travelling stock routes (TSRs), which connected not only runs within the region but criss-crossed from the Murray River (the overland routes from New South Wales) and to Yorke Peninsula and Eyre Peninsula. The exact TSR routes varied at first, but were confirmed when Government surveys were undertaken in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Their location is still quite clear on modern survey maps, and a number of watering points, such as Accommodation Springs (D.C. Truro) and Narcoota Springs (D. C. Eudunda) also survive.

Apart from their own stations (which became in effect small settlements, complete with private churches, as at Hamilton, and schools, as at Grieveston homestead, near Truro) pastoralists were also responsible for the closer settlement of the region, beginning during this period. This responsibility took several forms. Many of their employees, whose passages had often been paid for, were subsequently set up as small

land-holders (or tenants), publicans, shopkeepers and schoolmistresses.<sup>16</sup> Besides the shepherds' and boundary-riders' huts which are representative of this group of people, so too are a number of early farmhouses and hotels. The large land owners – particularly Angas and the South Australian Company – also leased considerable acreages to small tenants, some of whom subsequently purchased their land. This was no doubt a major contributing factor in the early close settlement of the Barossa Valley. It should be emphasized that this period (1837-1855) was perhaps the most significant in terms of surviving heritage for the Barossa, (and adjacent southern districts) given the permanent nature of settlement, houses, farms and townships, evident by 1855.

Besides sheep-farming, the large landowners were also prompt in taking advantage of other financial possibilities. The other two major activities which had a pronounced effect were township formation and copper mining. Unlike most of the rest of South Australia, the majority of towns at least within the central and southern parts of the Lower North were private rather than Government townships. Gawler was laid out in 1839 and Horrocks laid out Penwortham, as the first village north of Gawler in 1840. The next town, Clare, was laid out by Gleeson in 1842. Coulthard created Nuriootpa after 1850 and Truro was subdivided on behalf of Angas in 1848. By 1855 other major towns such as Lyndoch, Tanunda, Angaston, Kapunda and Burra had long since been surveyed, sold and settled, as well as a string of smaller townships such as Auburn, Mintaro and Watervale.<sup>17</sup>

Besides subdivision and speculation many of these landowners continued their association with the new townships, as councillors, as local members of parliament, and as donors of land or money. A number of churches of every denomination were started during and soon after this period due to such assistance, as for example, St. Mark's at Penwortham.

But the most dramatic development during this period was due to the discovery of copper, and its exploitation, initially by those same pastoralists who had leased the land upon which it was discovered, notably Dutton and Bagot at Kapunda.

In the mid 1840s the colony of South Australia was suffering severe recession; the focus of settlement was south of Gawler and in the Lower North, pastoralism had at most spread 'a thin veneer of settlement' across the landscape. The discovery of major copper deposits and the opening of mines at Kapunda (in 1844) and at Burra (1846) for the first time shifted north the focus of attention of the entire colony. Tours to view the workings at Kapunda, and the 'monster mine' at Burra became commonplace, and contributed to a more general awareness of the region's potential, with selectors soon clamoring for land adjacent to and en route to these 'tent cities'. The influx of Cornish, Welsh and German miners has left a lasting impact on these towns, and many of the miners later settled on nearby blocks of land. The Burra mine had attracted a population of 5,000 by 1850.<sup>18</sup> The impact of the bullockies, who pioneered the roads south, carting the ore, was also immense.

They were the pathfinders who made their own roads, their own creek crossings and campsites. In the busiest years of the copper boom twelve hundred drivers were punching eight thousand bullocks between the Burra mines and Port Adelaide along a variety of routes down the Light Valley and the Gilbert Valley ... soon a string of wayside inns marked the end of each day's journey. Blacksmiths' shops were set up near the inns and around many of these

places small villages grew.<sup>19</sup>

Several place-names date from this ore-carting era; one of the most interesting derives from a single bold act by Captain Bagot in creating a defined route from Kapunda to Gawler. As his partner, Francis Dutton, recounts,

at the commencement of our operations it soon became apparent, that unless the drays, on passing to and fro, all kept the same road, they would only cut up the ground without consolidating the track. To obviate this, Captain Bagot, with his usual energy, hit upon an ingenious and novel plan. He started with a bullock-dray, to which a plough was attached, and planting small flag-staffs as guides in advance, he had a single furrow thrown up, a few inches deep, the whole way from the mine to Gawler Town, a distance of eighteen miles. About two miles from where the mine road joins the Gawler Town road the plough broke, the day being then already far advanced; but, nothing daunted, he caused the men to lop off a limb of a tree having a fork at one end, substituting this for the plough, the line or furrow was completed by sundown.

A plough furrow is not easily effaced, so the drays had a good guiding line to follow, and by always keeping on the same track, the road in a short time became completely formed, and is now one of the best beaten roads in the Colony.<sup>20</sup>

This makeshift plough, cut from a sheaoak tree, was later abandoned by the side of the track. The area from that day became known as Sheaoak Log, now a township.<sup>21</sup> At a time when most towns were being unimaginatively named after London suburbs or some other unrelated British place, Sheaoak Log's derivation must be unique.

In 1843 another route, the Gulf Road, was established between Burra and a swampy place on the coast, which was surveyed as the first northern Government township, of Port Wakefield, in 1850. A string of private villages was created, as described, during these years along these routes. They included Auburn, Watervale, Mintaro, Hoyles Plains (Halbury), Leasingham, and (in 1856) Stockport and Riverton.

Frequently hotels preceded the villages, sometimes by several years; Dunn's Hotel (near the present site of Balaklava) is an example, the hotel surviving only until 1870, dying with the demise of teamster-travel. Other hotels, serving travelling stockmen or other groups besides teamsters, were also established at an early date. As they were frequently the new settlement's earliest community buildings they were subsequently used for many purposes, from District Council Chamber to prison lock-up.<sup>22</sup>

The copper miners and the teamsters contributed to and coincided with an inrush of farmers to the same country, and the same villages soon became service centres to farmers. The 'boom' began in the mid 1850s but was severely – if temporarily – checked by the exodus to the eastern colonies' goldfields between 1852 and 1854. By 1855, as will be described, the rush was on again ...

Like gold, copper in South Australia henceforth became Everyman's Eldorado. Numerous finds of copper were made in the region, many small mines being worked hopefully, if somewhat intermittently. There are relics of several such mines scattered about the region, some having produced sufficiently to sustain a small (if impermanent) settlement, for instance at Wheal Barton, near Truro

(established on Angas land in 1849). But minerals (even at Burra and Kapunda) – as today's South Australians must re-learn – could not sustain settlement, nor for that matter could the equally exploitative agricultural methods of the early wheat farmers. The dozens of small settlements which reached their peak during the 1860s soon afterwards virtually disappeared as the mines closed and the small and densely populated farm holdings were amalgamated.

Again, the major exception is the Barossa Valley, and this must be in part due to the careful farming methods and self sufficiency of the small-scale farms of the German settlers.<sup>23</sup> Land use was also quite diverse as early as the 1837-1855 period within the valley and nearby, as besides wheat, fruit and pastoralism, viticulture was also established in a small way.

Commercial production of wine was first made by Johann Gramp at Jacob's Creek (D.C. Tanunda and D.C. Barossa) in 1850 from vines planted in 1847. Joseph Gilbert planted vines at Pewsey Vale in the same year and from then on the district began to develop as a wine-producing area. The early commercial wine-makers were essentially of two groups: the small German and British settlers in the valley proper and the British pastoralists in the higher eastern parts of the valley. Many of these settlers planted vines in the 1850s and established cellars in the 1860s, for example Joseph Seppelt (in the former group) at Seppeltsfield and David Randall (in the latter group) at Glen Para.<sup>24</sup>

The other significant local industry was, sadly, the totally exploitative use of the magnificent red gum forests in the extreme south east of the region. Few relics now remain of the timber-getters and their saw-pits or of the huge ancient trees themselves, though numerous buildings and structures, built in red gum, have survived.

In summary, during this period all the major activities which have characterized the region since, and which have shaped its heritage were established during this period, and in particular in the Central Hill Country. The first district councils which were proclaimed in the region after the Act was passed in 1852, closely follow this pattern of development. The establishment of district councils is a reasonable indication of both population size and stability. The first council proclaimed was Clare (1853), followed in 1854 by the District Councils of Barossa East and West and Upper Wakefield, then Tanunda (1855) and Port Gawler (1856). There was then an almost ten year lapse before a new burst of council formation, following on the heels of new townships' birth between 1865 and 1868.<sup>25</sup>

## **2 1855-1868**

The expansion of agriculture and the founding of towns on what was then the frontier of settlement in South Australia were well described by D.W. Meinig, as,

initially a slow and selective development in districts of greatest promise, soon a more rapid filling in as the goodness of the land was proved, then a quickened move out-ward as both confidence and speculation gained strength, accompanied by continued minor developments in previously by-passed localities of special difficulty... defined as much by marginal townships as by marginal farms.<sup>26</sup>

During this period all of the region remaining under lease, but for three dry and barren eastern sections of land, was surveyed and declared as hundreds, most by 1860. This provided an opportunity to many farmers whose attention had now turned northwards from the small worked-out blocks south of Adelaide. In 1855, the opening up of the lucrative gold-fields' markets for breadstuffs, signalled the start of the wheat boom in the Lower North, with Clare becoming the service centre of the North.

Expansion was helped considerably by the use of the mechanical stripper, which was coming into general use in South Australia by 1850 – although most pioneering histories emphasise the back-breaking hand labour still required by the poorer settlers. The expansion of the wheat frontier east and west was held back, largely because of the much greater labour required to clear and work the dense mallee lands. By contrast, the plains country near Gawler and the more lightly timbered country northwards was cheaper to clear and cultivate and was actually better suited to wheat growing than the wetter country east and south of Adelaide.

Soon the Lower North was booming, and with it the local businesses, the schools, the churches and building as a whole. 'Houses and sheds had to be built on every little farm', and townships, as loading places, were established only a few miles apart. 'These closely placed townships are a distinctive feature of the South Australian areas that were settled during the early concentration on wheat.'<sup>27</sup>

The push north was hastened as the Burra and Kapunda copper mines came into full production. The discovery of huge new deposits at Wallaroo in 1862 gained new markets for Clare and the surrounding farmers and a route was made with Bumbunga and Lochiel as posts along the way.<sup>28</sup> The combination of wheat and copper - and cartage costs - encouraged the rapid extension north of the colony's new railway system; as each town was reached its permanence was assured. If bypassed, its eclipse was almost equally certain.

In 1857 the railway was extended to Gawler from Adelaide. The copper teams were re-routed through Riverton to the Gawler terminus (by-passing Mintaro, which went into a decline until saved by its slate quarries). By 1860 the railway was extended via Freeling (which became the transit centre for the Barossa Valley) to Kapunda. As the major northern terminus – as the Government took a further ten years to push the railway through to Burra – Kapunda<sup>29</sup> thrived, while large workshops, workers' cottages and an impressive railway station were established during this period of railway construction at Riverton. Burra copper was now taken overland to Kapunda, and the old Gulf Route to Port Wakefield was virtually abandoned by copper teams. The bullockies had always had difficulties, especially in winter when crossing the aptly-named Hell Fire Creek and passing Devil's Garden, near Balaklava. However, Port Wakefield itself then became one of the colony's main wool ports.

The establishment of the railway system greatly reduced freight costs and provided a further stimulus to copper mining and agriculture: wheat was carted to Gawler in bullock drays, then when the railway was opened to Kapunda it was carted to Roseworthy, Riverton and Kapunda, the last two having mills to crush the grain for local use. This in turn stimulated the growth of new townships, such as Freeling (1860), Riverton and Stockport, and within them local industries.

It was mainly during this period that the smelters, the foundries, the mills and breweries were established at both large and small country centres. In the longer term

the very railway system which had assisted in their growth contributed to their decline, as the ease and cheapness of travel enabled the concentration of industries in Adelaide, the railway terminus. Particularly during the late 1850s South Australia became noted for implement making and the manufacture of spare parts. Gawler, in particular, became well-established as a commercial and industrial centre for the surrounding and northern districts. Between 1857 and 1870 several new industries opened or expanded, particularly foundries and workshops such as James Martin's, supplying agricultural machinery and mining equipment, flour mills and 'no less than seven wheat stores' flourishing in the 1860s 'as a result of the growing northern agricultural activity'.<sup>30</sup>

Besides the large works at towns such as Gawler, Freeling and Kapunda, most local blacksmiths and wheelwrights were capable of manufacturing and repairing implements. The blacksmith and the wheelwright's premises (and their contents) which have been preserved at Scholz Park in Riverton are an excellent example of such small but enduring businesses, and of the lives of the families so involved.

August and Wilhelmine Scholz arrived in Riverton in 1865, where he set up a temporary coach-building and wheelwright shop, the first in that new settlement. By 1886 Scholz was well-established in the joint business of wheelwright, machinist, coach-builder and blacksmith 'and when his three sons grew up they too entered the trade'.

In the 1860s, we find that every new town had its complement of tradesmen. Things could not be bought ready-made. Repairs were always needed. It was early recognized that the blacksmith was almost indispensable to the community. Everyone ... needed something he could make – something of iron, be it for the farm, the mill, the building or the home ... nails ... tools ... tanks ... fencing gear ... increasingly larger farm machinery... drays and wagons ... And there were always repairs ... the blacksmith for iron repairs, the wheelwright for wood. Each season brought its own demands...<sup>31</sup>

Several of the townships, such as Dutton (north of Truro), which had been surveyed during the previous period, began to develop in the late 1860s. Dutton and a string of other small settlements were populated mainly by migrating German and Wendish families. Some of these settlements, such as those of the Jesuits at Sevenhill and the Moravian Brethren at Bethel, were unique.

Small family groups of Moravian Brethren had migrated from Saxony and settled in the Barossa between 1848 and 1852. In 1856 Pastor Schondorf moved with 180 Wendish followers, north to Bethel where they built their first church and school, the congregation surviving until the early 1900s.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, small Wendish settlements were established at places such as St Kitts (D.C. Kapunda) and Peter's Hill (D.C. Riverton), and a German settlement at Hoffnungsthal (Hope Valley) (D.C. Barossa).

Religious life provided the social life for many of these early settlers, whilst also often underscoring bitter social differences which sometimes forced apart these small communities, so that it is not surprising that in these settlements churches and church-schools preceded the inevitable hotels and blacksmith premises.

Consequent upon the survey of hundreds, the Government also embarked upon the survey of townships, formally created at set distances serving specific hinterlands. A number of these towns existed 'on paper' only, 'damned to extinction' by adjoining

pastoralists, who were fighting to maintain their territories by large-scale purchase of rural sections and by purchase of town allotments. In 1865 Hansborough, Anama, Hilltown and Davies (now Hanson) were laid out in the Hundreds of Julia Creek, Hart, Milne and Hanson, but none of them survived. For example, F.H. Dutton bought most of the Hansborough lots, together with thousands of acres of land in the surrounding rural areas.<sup>33</sup>

Until the introduction of purchase on credit, in 1869 the relatively wealthy pastoralists could better afford both the time (to travel to Adelaide for auctions) and the money than the potential farmers to purchase mutually desirable land. During this period, then, many of those who had established large mostly lease-hold runs, converted crucial tracts to freehold. Some of this was by way of purchase in the course of the usual survey and sale procedure; much was as a result of specific request for survey and purchases. Land was surveyed as part of the Government's program of expansion from existing settled areas, or on request from any genuine applicant for a survey of up to 640 acres, whether or not it was in a hundred. This was the case with land purchased by Hawker, Dutton and John Ellis, for example.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, when the first fourteen year pastoral leases expired in 1865, their holders were usually given the first chance to purchase land held by them on lease. A number of new pastoralists seized their opportunity at this stage and took up residence within the region. Frequently land speculators bought the land not acquired by lease-holders and subsequently rented this out or sold it on terms. The struggle to meet these repayments soon became a dominant theme in the lives of the small-farming families who then worked the land.

This period then, witnessed both an expansion of agricultural settlement, particularly in the Central Hill Country and in cleared 'plains' (actually, natural clearings in the scrub) to the east and west, as well as a consolidation of pastoralism. While the huge runs were reduced in extent as areas were resumed for survey by the Government, large areas, being converted to freehold (as described) made continued occupation quite secure. This led to an increase in the numbers of stations as well as improvements upon them.

At the same time, by the mid 1860s post and wire fencing was coming into widespread use. This not only defined station boundaries but also usurped the role of the shepherd and contributed to the building of larger and more permanent buildings, such as boundary riders' huts, and virtual villages were clustered about an increasingly substantial station homestead.<sup>35</sup>

There was a brief but severe set-back in 1863-1864 when drought combined with falling wheat and copper prices to affect all land users in the region. 'Werocata' (D.C. Balaklava) was abandoned by Samuel Sleep at this time. Philip Levi went bankrupt. A number of properties – large and small – changed hands, and copper mining at Kapunda and Burra went into decline. Wheal Barton, re-opened for the first time since 1852, and soon closed again. Most of the settlement's population dispersed or moved to Truro, which was doing nicely on the through-trade of the Adelaide to Sydney route (via Wentworth).

During this period farmers moved in great numbers north of Gawler and the Barossa Valley into the Central Hill country, and their social and physical needs stimulated the growth of a number of settlements, some of which were then connected by rail to Adelaide. All the smaller settlements enjoyed a period of peak population and

prosperity in the 1860s. A new group of District Councils were established at this time. They included Freeling (1867), Gilbert (1866), Kapunda (1866), Mudla Wirra North and South (1867), Port Gawler (1856), Rhynie (1866), Saddleworth (1868), Carrington (1865), Stanley (1865) and Waterloo (1868). The pre-eminence of the larger towns was assured, as the establishment of Corporations at Clare (1868), Gawler (1857) and Kapunda (1865) attests.

At the same time, while large areas of leasehold land was resumed for survey, pastoralists consolidated their position by converting significant areas to freehold. Pastoralism continued to dominate the eastern and western areas (the Murray Plains and the Coastal Plains) because of the difficulties and expense involved in clearing and farming the dry and the mallee-covered country.

### **3 1869-1884**

The 1870s were boom years beyond all doubt. Prices were good and prospects seemed unlimited. The existing towns prospered and assumed a more solid appearance despite the opening of a whole series of new towns which were established (more successfully than the last set) by a Government convinced of the civilizing benefits such townships brought to frontier life.

In the eastern (Murray Plains) and western (Coastal Plains) areas, whilst survey and some settlement had taken place in previous years, notably near the coast at Port Wakefield and Two Wells and on the fertile soils in the northern part of the Hundred of Balaklava, the main settlement by farmers and town-dwellers took place in the 1870s and 1880s.

This was due to a combination of two factors, firstly, land laws which were framed as a deliberate inducement to farming the mallee and dry lands of the Colony and secondly, some technological innovations which facilitated clearance and cultivation. The Scrub Lands Act of 1866 represented the first attempt at developing these areas, without much success. The Strangways Act of 1869, however, is pivotal in the fortunes not only of Region 8 but of most of South Australia. Simply put, the Act allowed payment for land to be made on credit, with terms of occupation and improvement before the final payment was accepted, the aim being to promote these developments. A series of amendments during the following years generally served to extend the credit provisions and ease restrictions. Regulations were also aimed at preventing fraud and dummying.<sup>36</sup>

The immediate result was a land rush of enthusiastic proportions. The 1870s also saw an expansion by farmers north, encouraged by good seasons, venture past the 10" rainfall line.

However, clearing by hand was laborious and expensive. Four years' credit was little help if a family spent most of that time preparing its land. Two developments which proved to be of great assistance were 'mullenizing' and the stump-jump plough. Charles Mullen, a farmer near Wasleys, in 1868 developed a technique of knocking down and burning the mallee, then sowing and harvesting a crop of wheat. The mullenizing technique diffused gradually through the farming community and, by the mid 1870s was having widespread impact.<sup>37</sup>

The invention of the stump-jump plough in 1876 by R.B. Smith on Yorke Peninsula

further assisted with the problem of ploughing with the stumps still in the ground.

During this period, the familiar factors of closer settlement and railway construction contributed to the establishment and boom of a number of new townships. These included, in the east, Eudunda, Robertstown, Sutherlands, Bower and Mt. Mary and in the west Balaklava (established by Charles Fisher), Wasleys, Blyth, Snowtown, Lochiel and Barunga.

The development of townships throughout the region was much assisted by the extension of the railway system both northwards and east-west. In the north, Burra was reached in 1870, the line having been extended from Riverton (1869). As had occurred at Gawler and Kapunda, Burra now benefited as railway terminus for coach-lines and wheat drays from the surrounding and northern districts. This was as well, for the Burra mines closed in 1877.

The Kapunda mine was closed in 1878, and both Burra and Kapunda had to adapt to changed circumstances. Kapunda benefited from a diversion of the immense river trade via Morgan in the east (on the River Murray) when the Morgan-Kapunda section of railway was opened also in 1878, while its effect on the new township of Eudunda which lay between was crucial. A section of the line (now dismantled) also passed through Sutherlands, Bower and Mt. Mary, all of which developed as railway sidings.

The Burra-Hallett section of railway was opened in 1878, and this in turn provided a stimulus to the township of Mt. Bryan.

The western railway system was a significant development, not only for the region but also as it heralded a shift in focus from Adelaide as terminus to a local port; in this first case, Port Wakefield – a model which was followed in other wheat-growing districts in South Australia.<sup>38</sup> The line, initially constructed as a narrow-gauge horse-powered tramway, was authorized for construction in 1869 and opened in 1870. This provided Fisher, who was besides a large land-owner also a grain merchant, with sufficient reason to establish a township as a wheat-shipment site halfway along the tramway at Balaklava. The line was built purely to carry wheat from the agricultural region which had developed in the Central Hill country about Auburn in the 1860s.

Like the copper Gulf Road the tramway fostered settlement and development along its route, including the expansion of wheat-growing in the adjacent coastal plains. Besides Balaklava the other towns which were created as a direct result were Hoyleton (the terminus), Saints (horse-changing point) and Bowmans. The tramway proved to be so successful, soon channelling large consignments of wheat to Port Wakefield, that it was extended in 1876 northwards to Blyth Plains, and there and then, of course, another township (Blyth) was created. The line was also refitted for locomotives, which began service in the same year (1876).

In 1878 a further section of line was constructed between Port Wakefield and Kadina. This provided farmers with direct access to the deep-water port at Wallaroo, rather than at Port Wakefield, but that town benefited from its increased importance as a railway town. So did Balaklava.

Almost concurrently with the Port Wakefield-Kadina-Wallaroo connection a line modelled on the same system (shifting wheat from a new agricultural district to the nearest coastal shipping service) was planned and constructed further north. This was a line connecting with the Port Wakefield-Kadina system running eastwards to

Barunga Gap then extended to Snowtown (both opened during 1879). Snowtown was surveyed as the terminus off that railway and proclaimed in 1878. Although this line, like all the others, was built for wheat, Snowtown was utterly dependent on the train to bring mail, perishable goods and general cargo, and was the only way passengers could travel there as there were no made roads connecting the town with other centres.<sup>39</sup>

The two major railway systems, the northern line and the western system were connected in 1880, when a narrow-gauge line was built connecting Balaklava (on the western line) with Hamley Bridge (on the northern line). Hamley Bridge was literally just that, a town which started after the opening of a railway bridge on the northern line in 1868, though for some years after that it was 'only an unimportant and uninviting railway siding', useful mainly in that it was the nearest point of railway contact with Adelaide for the western towns.<sup>40</sup> Then, due to Government foolishness in building railways of different widths, Hamley Bridge took new importance as a break-of-gauge junction.

All the traffic of the western system had to be handled at Hamley Bridge, and it rapidly became a railway town. Engine drivers, firemen, cleaners, guards, porters, clerks and maintenance men were stationed at Hamley Bridge.

A large team of transhippers was employed ... and the long narrow station yard was frequently packed from end to end with cleaning and transfer sheds, with lines of trucks ... puffing yard engines and shunting horses engaged in the struggle to organise trucks in and out of the transfer sheds, whilst at the same time keeping the main lines clear for through traffic.

All available houses in the town were occupied and several boarding houses in addition to the two hotels were needed to accommodate the unmarried men employed.

... The years between the creation of the break-of-gauge in 1880 and its removal in 1927 must be regarded as Hamley Bridge's Golden Age.<sup>41</sup>

Had the junction been made via Halbury (D.C. Balaklava) – which was probably laid out with this in mind – rather than Hamley Bridge, this may have made Halbury (whose suburban blocks remain largely empty paddocks to this day) more prominent in the development of the Lower North.<sup>42</sup>

All residents of the region were only too well aware of the making or breaking of towns due to the route taken by new railways, and their precise location was always the subject of intense local rivalry. For example, originally Hamley Bridge was to be connected with Dunn's Bridge, not Balaklava proper.

This brought violent opposition from the citizens of Balaklava as it was claimed it would mean the death of their town. After continued opposition, deputation and all pressure available, the powers that be agreed to use the Balaklava Station.<sup>43</sup>

Wheat was the main item carried, but in the eastern and western districts if farmers were close enough to a railway siding they could also profit by selling the mallee stumps grubbed by the million in the course of wholesale clearing, which were sold as firewood (and still are) in Adelaide. This provided farmers with an income which they

all needed badly during the early years of effort and during later drought years. Tall neat heaps of bagged wheat and great stacks of mallee roots henceforth were a characteristic sight at all railway stations and sidings. Often, each farmer had his own stacking site near the railway. On the Murray Plains Sutherlands commemorates William Sutherland, who held 2,000 acres of dense scrub in that district. He opened his own railway siding 'to assist his operations in the wood trade', together with a store and post office, to help the local 'mallee grubbers'.<sup>44</sup> No-one cared to foresee the end result of all this individual effort, the great blank, empty reaches of land which characterize much of the Lower North today.

Wheat and little else besides was the produce of these regions, flush with fertility of those first seasons of continual cropping. Even the pastoralists – who also benefited from the railways for exporting wool – put large areas under crop. In 1876, C.B. Fisher sold Hill River Station (D.C. Clare) to J.H. Angas, having converted 60,000 acres to freehold. During the 1870s the station was reputedly the largest single property in South Australia to be under crop: 600 horses were used in teams on the land.<sup>45</sup>

If the railway brought a township into existence and supported the wheat farming of its hinterlands, the subsequent development of the town and farms was largely the responsibility of the new settlers themselves. Farming life was a family affair in which everyone helped to build the cottages, to make the furniture, prepare the food, clear, harvest and fence the land. School was held in spare household rooms as were the earliest church services, and the construction of separate schoolrooms and churches also involved much hard work, assisted by donations of land and money and labour.

The building of churches was complicated by the deep religious schisms which divided every community, not only those between Catholic and Protestant but within the Protestant groups, in particular the Methodists and the Lutherans. Such divisions are faithfully reflected by the profusion of tiny but sturdy churches which now dot a depopulated (and religiously united) countryside. Planning for the various public buildings, including later Mechanics Institutes, meeting halls and council edifices, went on for many years before the buildings were actually completed – a whole series of such being constructed in country towns throughout South Australia in the 1870s and early 1880s.

At the same time, the Government began to assume a greater role in public building during this period, replacing private agencies with purpose-built post offices, for example, and constructing police stations and law courts which were of an almost completely standardized plan across the land. With the introduction of compulsory education in 1875, the Government also started an extensive public schools building program not only in the larger centres but also in quite isolated places, located so as to be within walking distance of surrounding farms. Like the little churches, these now-empty schools are today the most commonly occurring potential heritage items besides the farmhouses themselves.

This general account of the developing township communities around a series of substantial public and private buildings is well reflected by specific examples, such as at Balaklava. After the establishment of Balaklava in 1869 some of the services which soon followed are as listed:

- Fisher's Wheat Store (1869)
- Balaklava Hotel (1870)
- Post Office (1871)

Flour Mill (1874)  
Primary School (1876)  
Church of Christ (1877)  
National Bank (1879)  
Railway Station (1880)  
Institute (1881)  
Council Chamber (1883).<sup>46</sup>

While copper mining declined in importance during this period, on a smaller scale other mineral developments continued to support local economies. Near Kapunda, marble was quarried from about 1870 (D.C. Kapunda), and became famous as the origin of the marble used in the construction of the South Australian Houses of Parliament.<sup>47</sup> During the 1880s (and 1890s) flagging and kerbing stone quarries near Riverton were productive, as were the Mintaro slate quarries during the 1870s and 1880s (having begun in the 1850s). In the west, Lake Bumbunga's potential as a salt site was recognised as early as 1868, although a lease was not taken up until 1881. This worked by evaporation at the north end of the lake. The nearest town, Lochiel, developed slowly with the industry; its survival in the twentieth century has been almost totally dependent on salt.<sup>48</sup>

By far the most dramatic – yet shortest lived – mineral development was gold. In 1868 the Barossa gold rush drew 4,000 miners within the month following the discoveries in a place called Spike Gully (D.C. Barossa). Some individuals quickly made a fortune from their shafts, as much as £1,000 per man, but the settlement itself barely outlasted the excitement, and virtually petered out in the 1870s.<sup>49</sup>

After this time it was agriculture, and a steady accumulation of community services serving farming families which provided an enduring basis for both new and older settlements throughout the Lower North.

#### **4. 1885-1904**

In South Australian rural history cause and effect are mixed. Overclearing, overcropping and overgrazing have both contributed to and badly suffered from the effects of periodic drought or flood. In the 1880s and 1890s, certainly, the entire colony was devastated as a result.

Until the 1880s and 1890s farming in South Australia was virtually a form of shifting agriculture. As farmers cropped their soils to exhaustion they moved on to the new frontiers, the old farms frequently reverting to grazing. Region 8 was influenced twice by this process: in the 1850s and 1860s, as farmers moved into the Barossa and Central Hill country from their wheat-sick southern lands, and again in the 1870s and 1880s as they migrated east and west to the mallee lands and north to the dry marginal areas.

Many family histories follow this pattern of migration even within the boundaries of the region. The story of the family of Thomas and Mary Ann Masters is typical. Thomas Masters, a carpenter, arrived in South Australia in 1839, married Mary Ann in 1840 and mixed carpentry work with farming at Morphett Vale and Myponga in the 1850s. In 1858 they moved north to a drier climate, taking up 700 acres of good country at Reeves Plains, where they stayed fourteen years before retiring again to

Adelaide.

All four sons 'went on the land, pioneering the mallee from the seventies onwards, in various districts'. One, Thomas Charles, rented his father's farm from 1872 till 1889.

As land farther north kept coming out, he would, with neighbours, make inspection, and he took up a section at Sutherlands, just as mullenizing became the vogue. Selling this at a profit, before he put a crop in, he turned his attention to the Dalkey scrub.

Securing a section north of the Pinery, he rolled down two hundred acres ... A magnificent crop of twenty-seven bushels to the acre was reaped.

Swan (a Gawler blacksmith) ... constructed a (stump-jump) plough for Thomas Charles Masters ... good crops at Dalkey, and its sale ... gave Thomas Charles an opportunity to exploit land at Barunga and in the scrub of Wokurna and Willunga.

For years it was a hand-to-mouth struggle, but finally, with the advent of superphosphate it paid well. He then purchased land in the Balaklava district, to which he added the old racecourse paddock of the Werocata Station, adjacent to the township, and built a home, where he died in 1915.<sup>50</sup>

The prosperity of the 1870s and early 1880s was stopped dead in the mid 1880s by a series of droughts, particularly severe in 1885, and another drop in world prices for wool, wheat and copper. These external influences prevented the same economic recovery which had occurred after the drought of the 1860s. There were also big floods in many districts following heavy rains throughout South Australia in 1890. Government survey slowed and large areas on credit were surrendered by selectors to the Government. Many farmers sold up and moved out, even in the well-watered districts about Clare and Riverton.<sup>51</sup> This in turn led to an amalgamation of holdings, a process which has been repeated several times as closer settlement schemes have faltered and small farmers moved out again.

The dry eastern plains virtually reverted to pastoralism, in smaller holdings than formerly. The abandoned farmhouses testify to the heart-breaking experiences of the would-be wheat farmers, one of whom scrawled these lines across his door:

Squatter's glory,  
Farmer's hell;  
Land of buggery,  
Fare thee well!

The locality in later years was accordingly named Glory Crossing.<sup>52</sup>

After 1884 further amendments were made to the Crown Lands Act which eased selectors' payments and allowed for easier surrender. This was in response to prevailing difficult conditions. A new departure in the 1885 Act, 'based on the increasing urbanization of the State ... and the rising political power of the workers' was the provision for working men's blocks. These were to be of twenty acres on Crown, town, suburban or reserved land, and were auctioned for twenty-one year leases.<sup>53</sup> Halbury – that unsuccessful township mentioned previously – had 2,500 acres of suburban land surveyed into small acreages and unsold, which made it ideal for the plan. The first sale, early in 1886, was of leases at Halbury. It had become widely recognized that eighty acre blocks were barely sufficient to provide a living, so the

twenty acre blocks were only expected to provide a supporting income and kitchen garden for an agricultural labour force. This was hardly the right economic climate for such labourers, and it seems hardly surprising that there are apparently no surviving farmhouses on any of the working men's blocks at Halbury, although for a time blockers were members of the Homesteaders' League.<sup>54</sup>

Eleven small sections of land were also set aside as working men's blocks in 1892 overlooking the River Gilbert, near Riverton. The blocks were readily taken up and homesteads built. Some blocks still serve the original purpose while others have been bought by adjacent land-owners (D.C. Riverton).<sup>55</sup>

As much Crown land had already been surveyed and sold, attention now turned to the wide reserves which had been provided as travelling stock routes. These were now hardly used. Entire sections, particularly of that route which passed through the east of the region, and then turned to the Murray, were subdivided into small blocks in the late 1880s and early 1890s. They were eagerly taken up by struggling selectors, and for a time there were thriving communities at places like Neales Flat (between Truro and Eudunda) (D.C. Eudunda). But not only were the blocks small, the land itself was marginal, and that entire subdivided stock route, east of the hills, is today marked at regular intervals with the pathetic ruins of farms.

It was also during this period that the last three hundreds in the region – in the even drier mallee land in the north-east – were surveyed and made available to farmers. Large numbers, particularly second and third generation German families, moved out into what had been known as the Murray Scrub. Some farmers survived, but there now seem to be more of the original churches and graveyards than farmhouses still standing.

At the same time as drought and depression, farms throughout the region began to suffer from the effects of repeated cropping of the soil. Declining wheat yields forced some to new lands, as described, but many were forced to search for new ways of managing land. While mechanical inventions had provided the stimulus to agriculture during the 1870s, techniques adopted during the 1880s and 1890s were concerned with modifying the traditional system.<sup>56</sup> Many local histories describe the ensuing period of diversification, the interspersing of sheep with cropping, the use of fallow and crop rotation and the introduction of superphosphate, all of which helped farmers recover but also changed the size and character of farms and with them the landscape of the region.

While these changes became widespread after the practical successes of individual farmers, they were initiated by Roseworthy Agricultural College (D.C. Light). The College was established between 1883 and 1885 as the first agricultural college of its kind in Australia, and it became immediately involved with publicizing and developing improved methods of agriculture. It was assisted by the foundation of the Bureau of Agriculture in 1888 and by the formation in virtually every country town, of local agricultural branches.

Other Government assistance was the even more practical provision of permanent water supplies. Beelitz Well (D.C. Light) was built near Freeling when the Swinden Reservoir dried up after the 1892 drought. The Barossa Dam (D.C. Barossa) near Williamstown was completed in 1902 and excited much local and outside interest as it was one of the first true arch dams in the world and the highest dam in Australia at that time. Four hundred men and their families

camped there during its construction. Its distribution system ultimately served most of the area between Gawler and Port Wakefield.<sup>57</sup>

Diversification within the region was particularly marked. It included an expansion of dairying and an enormous increase in vineyards. Clare Butter Factory opened in 1894 and branch creameries were established at Watervale and Mintaro.

Despite the general economic recession, the winemaking industry experienced great prosperity during these twenty years, and the period is regarded as the second major period of advance, a consolidation of the patterns begun in the 1850s. Entry to British markets and the elimination of Victoria and New South Wales as competitors – where vineyards were being wiped out by *Phylloxera* – helped this development.<sup>58</sup>

Established wine-makers in the Barossa received added impetus and new concerns began production both in that area and in new districts altogether, the largest of which was Wooroorra Vineyards near Riverton (D.C. Riverton).

Within the Barossa, Fromm began his Wonganella winery at Gomersal (D.C. Light) and Basedow at Illaparra near Tanunda. Companies also moved in. Chateau Tanunda was started as a commercial venture by G.F. Cleland and Company in 1889, while Tolley, Scott and Tolley set up their Angas Park Distillery in 1894 (D.C. Angaston). D. & J. Fowler, wholesale grocers, established Kalimna vineyards in 1895 (D.C. Kapunda).

Improved wine-making methods also improved the quality and marketability of wines, while the development of steam-powered engines, crushers and pumps enabled the production of large volumes of wine. In the Barossa Benno Seppelt is said to have been one of the outstanding innovators, whose methods were adapted to other wineries.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the winery at Sevenhill (D.C. Clare), where the Jesuits had first produced wine in 1856, a number of other wineries were established about Clare in the 1890s. These included the Stanley (1894) and Wendouree (1895) wineries (both in D.C. Clare).<sup>60</sup>

Despite the flood of credit selectors let loose after Strangways' Act of 1869, pastoralists in the region had continued to prosper.

By 1891 there were in the Central Hill Country thirty-six pastoral estates over 5,000 acres which together covered ... over half the alienated land in the Central Hill Country ... (The story of these pastoralists was quite different from leaseholders in the dry north). Because they held freehold properties in an area far less affected by drought they had a safe retreat for their stock (and) ... they settled in it, building homes which were to be the pride of succeeding generations. They clung tenaciously to the land which they had settled and subsequently bought. Half a century after their arrival at least twenty-eight of the thirty-six largest estates still remained in the hands of the original purchasers or their descendants ...

... Having acquired land which provided them with wealth and the basis of social distinction (the landowners became) ... part of a new Colonial upper class (and) took on the outward and visible signs of the British ruling class. They stood for Parliament, kept open house and were extremely generous with their public gifts. They treated their employees with the *noblesse oblige* expected of

an English gentleman, not only organising their work but taking an interest in their spiritual and intellectual well-being.<sup>61</sup>

By this time, too, these estates had become diversified and several were notable as horse, sheep or cattle studs as well as for the size and quality their wool clip.

During the 1890s some of the largest freehold estates were broken up, although sometimes their division was simply into two or three quite large holdings. For example the Martindale Estate (D.C. Clare) was divided into 'Wirrilla' and 'Martindale' in 1891. This break-up was to accelerate in the early twentieth century, as will be described.

As always during a depression, interest turned to minerals. There was a general exodus of men to the West Australian goldfields and to Broken Hill during this period. Perhaps more importantly for South Australia many of the larger implement makers prospered as they manufactured quantities of equipment for these mines. Within the region itself gold still produced flurries of excitement: a mine was worked briefly near Angaston, and another nearby, the Golden Gate Mine.(D.C. Angaston), opening in 1904, closed in 1907 ( reopening later) .

During these years social activities were as pronounced as were economic changes. Despite recession most of the townships had by now reached a size capable of sustaining a range of clubs and societies as well as businesses, and numbers of these date their formation to this period. Given greater working class consciousness as well as moves for Australian Federation, interest in political matters was intense, while sport and other organized leisure activities also assumed importance once the farm was well-established.

At the same time church continued to be well-attended. Federation was in the air here, too, with the 1901 union of the Wesleyans, Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists. Union had a direct effect on the region's heritage as (in several places) it led to an exchange of buildings between Methodists and Lutherans, the Methodists taking over the smaller Lutheran Church. For example, St. Peter's Uniting Church at Freeling, originally Methodist, became Lutheran in 1901, then with Lutheran Union in 1967 it became Methodist again. This saga of changeover of tenants of the building is an extreme example of what happened all over Region 8, as changes in circumstances led to the rise and fall of various congregations. Of course, this tended to occur mainly in the towns. In the surrounding countryside quite frequently the churches have simply been abandoned, their old congregations dead, buried and almost forgotten.

## **5. 1905 to 1928.**

This was a period of reasonable prosperity – perhaps the last for the region's smaller towns, as after this time they suffered from a series of larger events: decline in rural population; increasing individual mobility and powerful competition from both Adelaide and from larger local towns. Because of this local prosperity main streets throughout the region were rebuilt. They presented a new public face of shops, banks, workshops and public buildings, blending solid local interest, traditional building techniques and materials but appearing also as modern and as hopeful as the new century. Businesses like Eudunda Farmers opened a series of branches in

towns beyond Eudunda. Tin sheds were pulled down and vacant blocks filled in. The streetscapes which resulted have by and large survived, especially in towns such as Blyth, Riverton, Robertstown and Eudunda, because their client populations have long since stabilized. Some of the smaller towns, such as Rochester (D.C. Blyth) and Navan (D.C. Riverton), have since then disappeared.

Some towns were also given a boost by further extensions to the network of railways – but again, this was the last of the railways’ golden age (as motor vehicles increased in number). In 1917 work on the Adelaide to Port Augusta railway reached Mallala, which created opportunities both for Mallala and the surrounding district. Further construction faltered as, once again, deputations from many towns pleaded their case for alterations in the proposed route, with the salt companies at Lake Bumbunga agitating for the line to go west of the lake, although the eastern route was more direct. Finally, construction to Bumbunga was completed in 1922, and the section to Snowtown in 1923.

Work began on conversion of the western system of railway lines to broad gauge in 1924, and finished in 1927, after which all of these towns had a direct link with Adelaide (a mixed blessing for local firms), and goods and messengers no longer trans-shipped at Hamley Bridge.<sup>62</sup>

During this period large areas, particularly in the Central Hill country that had been originally bypassed by the railways, were now connected. The line from Gawler to Nuriootpa was opened in 1911, while a line from Riverton to Clare was opened in 1918. This junction increased Riverton’s importance as a railway centre, but a far more dramatic event soon afterwards placed that station on the map. As contemporary headlines have it, ‘Russian runs amok ..., wild scenes at Riverton’.

In 1921 while passengers from Broken Hill breakfasted at Riverton, an insane Russian shot and wounded passengers on the train. He was recklessly tackled by one Percy Brookfield, a New South Wales M.P., who succeeded in disarming the man but was himself fatally wounded and later died in Adelaide.

This period was last witness of old ways of life and harbinger of the new. Colin Thiele describes his boyhood at Julia Creek (D.C. Eudunda) during the 1920s amongst a traditional and almost totally German farming community, yet he himself and his contemporaries broke with that life almost completely.<sup>63</sup> These communities survived the Great War (1914-1918) but not the exodus of the 1920s nor the depression which started earliest in the country districts, as early as 1928.

This was the last efflorescence of the huge estates and of the grand styles of living which had characterized them. Perhaps the change is best summarized in the following account:

It is difficult to picture for you young people today quite what our home life at ‘Pewsey Vale’ was like. The big house, the family of nine children, the constant visitors ... The big garden ... [and] the community life of the families of the workmen, each family in its own cottage, the village school, and the church as a centre for all.

... We daughters led busy lives when our school days were over, contributing service to the upkeep of the home, which, as we grew up, and especially after World War I, became difficult to maintain.

We had trips to England and holidays in the other States, but were mainly at

home. Labour was scarce and the property seemed heavily overburdened with buildings – most of the stables disused with the advent of the motor, many of the cottages falling into disrepair as the families grew up and wanted a more exciting life, and a dwindling number of single men replaced the married station hands. As wages soared and profits declined, much of the upkeep of the place seemed pointless, and it was only your grandfather's great love of the place and our love for him which made it worth while holding on for his life-time. We all knew that it would have to go when the question of probate and fair division had to be faced."

(William Gilbert died in 1923 and his wife and four daughters settled in Adelaide).<sup>64</sup>

Many of the large estates were resumed by the Government and subdivided into smaller farms. Soon after J.H. Angas' death (in 1904) the first subdivision of the Hill River Estate was made, in 1907, and again in 1910 and 1912, though the Angas family retained 4,000 acres and the original homestead.<sup>65</sup> 'Wirrilla' was bought and subdivided in 1914.

The process accelerated in the 1920s with the introduction of the Soldier Settlement Schemes. For example, the sprawling Hummocks Station, in the west was subdivided for this purpose at that time, having been purchased at the end of the Great War from T.E. Barr Smith. The size of the original station is indicated by the fact that six soldier settler blocks were surveyed out of one sheep paddock alone, and five out of another. The Hummocks Estate (D.C. Snowtown) is considered one of the most successful of all the soldier settlement schemes of that period although some farmers had to move because their blocks were too small.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these efforts at closer settlement, however, the process of amalgamation on small holdings continued. The history of the Mt. Templeton Station (D.C. Snowtown) reflects these events: it was offered to the Government in 1906, surveyed into sections, sold and put under wheat. Subsequently it was re-absorbed for pastoralism and for larger wheat farms.<sup>67</sup>

The search for improved and diversified means of primary production also continued, spurred in many districts by increasingly severe problems of soil exhaustion and erosion. In the late 1920s a lucrative lucerne seed industry was established by L. & A. Pearce at Booborowie, and that district soon became the State's major producer. That development came at an opportune time.<sup>68</sup> In other districts the dairy industry prospered.

At Lake Bumbunga, the salt industry was permanently established, although production – and the fortunes of individual companies – fluctuated with demand. Lochiel's fortunes as a town fluctuated accordingly. By 1910 there were at least three leaseholders scraping thousands of tons of salt when the lake dried up (usually each December). In 1913 the Australian Salt Company was established and its works were erected north of Lochiel. From 1914 salt was carted to the Company's refinery at Port Wakefield.

The Company was liquidated in about 1922, the present Australian Salt Company being formed in 1924. Since 1930 this Company has held the leases of all the lake and it has continued to operate from the works north of Lochiel established by the original Australian Salt Company (D.C. Snowtown).

The methods of scraping and shifting the salt were at first horse-powered and then

motorised. The horses hated the salt and the introduction of tractors by the Australian Salt Company in the early 1920s made for a more humane as well as a more efficient industry.<sup>69</sup>

The introduction of the motor car and tractor was not the only innovation which eased life in the countryside. Every local history records the reticulation of their district, pipelines being constructed from the Bundaleer and the Barossa Reservoirs, and the introduction of electricity. Radio also tied communities closer together, and increased the impact of the city on country dwellers. The record of local enterprises, well-attended district agricultural shows and concerts, is that of a last efflorescence before eclipse.

The big event of these years was, of course, the Great War (World War I) which lasted from 1914 to 1918. Almost all the social activities of those years were fundraisers, including Red Cross balls and Belgian Relief Fund concerts, while cricket and other sports declined not only because the young men had enlisted but because such frivolity was considered unseemly. Every part of the region and every town encouraged its young men to enlist, and suffered their loss, and it is not surprising that almost every town after the War contributed to a local memorial. Mallala's memorial is perhaps the most remarkable example of local pride and attempted originality.

Beyond these personal losses and the raising of memorials the region was little affected by the War, although large areas were surveyed and taken up by soldier settlers in the early 1920s. These settlers have in many cases since contributed to the region's heritage, starting like their predecessors as young single men in hastily assembled huts, marrying and with their wives making their farms, their permanent stone houses and contributing to community activities as time passed.

## **6. 1929 to the present.**

The scope covered by this last period needs some explanation. While events and developments of these last fifty years or so have been as dramatic with as marked an effect as any in the preceding years, this must be qualified with respect to the region's heritage. Firstly, the region's enduring human-made characteristics were established well before the turn of the century, as already described. Secondly, many districts and most of the small towns reached their apogee in the 1870s and 1880s, with a final flourish in the 1920s, so that virtually all their significant heritage dates from those eras if not earlier.

The third qualification, by contrast, is due to the sheer scale and complexity of the twentieth century heritage. The heritage study has of necessity focussed upon the region's earliest surviving heritage, its best-preserved most typical heritage and the unique or the unusual.

Finally, most of the changes since the 1920s have hardly been restricted to the Lower North alone. Throughout Australia country districts have become increasingly urbanised, and this is reflected in the buildings and structures which date from those years. For example, as described in the previous section of this report, the use of brick within the region was rare until the 1930s due to the ready availability of local stone. By contrast, since motor transport became widely adopted, brick, concrete and various prefabricated materials have been trucked into the region and their use has largely

superseded that of stone.

Ironically, a new local industry started in 1938 which produced prefabricated material for use, both locally and in Adelaide, mainly in the construction of ceilings and some houses. This was the 'Solomit' strawboard factory which was established at Freeling, manufacturing 'strawboard' from the remains of the abundant crops of hay for which the Freeling district had long been famous. By the 1950s and 1960s hundreds of thousands of sheets were used in ceilings and cold storage buildings. Several houses at Freeling were constructed of strawboard and at least a few in Adelaide (near Gepps Cross), and the material was also considered for use by the newly-established South Australian Housing Trust. The business was sold in 1975 and moved to Victoria.<sup>70</sup>

Probably the most dominating structures of the post-war period, and ones which symbolize enormous changes in agriculture, marketing and in the making or breaking of towns are the wheat silos.

The towering concrete grain silos of those towns that have been selected as gathering points, look to the traveller like beacons over the plains and give some assurance to the inhabitants that their town will have a continued existence.<sup>71</sup>

This sense of assurance is justified – for the towns so chosen.

The introduction of bulk handling of wheat at silos during the 1950s confirmed the decline of the many townships, such as Halbury which had owed their existence largely to their functions as local rail-way loading places for bagged wheat. The status of the larger towns, where silos were built, was confirmed and reinforced.

Bulk handling saved the costs of bags and bag sewing and made handling of wheat much easier for farmers. The smaller sidings were only equipped to handle bagged grain. Farmers quickly changed to bulk and began carting to the railway stations at which silos had been erected: Snowtown, Redhill, Brinkworth, Bute and Nantawarra silos were all erected in 1956 or soon after. A small amount of bagged grain was received at some of the sidings for a few seasons more but within a few years of 1956 grain buying ceased at Condowie, Burnsfield, Lake View, Barunga Gap and Bumbunga. Another service had been centralised in the major towns. It further weakened people's attachment to their local area.<sup>72</sup>

South Australia was the last of the major cereal-growing States to adopt bulk-handling. However development was rapid after the success of the first bulk installation (at Ardrossan in 1952). The South Australian Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited, owned and controlled by growers, was set up in 1954 and assumed exclusive right to handle bulk grain with the passing of the Bulk Handling of Grain Act in 1955. The construction of bulk storages soon followed, and Balaklava was included in the second group of silos erected in South Australia, in 1956.<sup>73</sup>

This was a horizontal iron building, as were the other silos of that period (including those listed in the quotation above). The familiar 'towering concrete' silos which are now established at virtually every main railway centre in the Lower North (for instance at Kapunda, Owen, Burra, Stockwell, Roseworthy and Eudunda) were not built until the 1960s and later. Steel vertical silos were also built in the 1960s, for example at Balaklava (which also has concrete silos) and at Snowtown.

A similar type of structure which dominates the skyline of towns, as at Owen, is the concrete water tower: 'As this tank rears its head 120 ft. up, it looks as though it is vieing with the grain silos for top place in the town.'<sup>74</sup> This tower was built in 1942, and like the silos, represents a further step towards uniformity of services across the region, in this case, of water reticulation.

Just as the rationalisation of wheat handling affected the entire region so did the rationalisation of other services. Motor transport was particularly effective in enabling the centralisation of services in larger towns at the expense of smaller centres which had once served their immediate localities. Good roads, cars and school bus services made it inevitable that the multitude of small schools would close, with children moving daily to larger more distant schools. This affected not only the school buildings themselves but frequently the associated settlement. School had been a focus of community life and with the shift both children and parents increasingly identified with the larger town, where they shopped and attended meetings and abandoned their local halls, shops and other services.

With the schools closed, the grain yards gone and the railway sidings no longer in use, one by one the other services ceased: shops closed, telephone exchanges and post offices followed suit. Some small towns all but disappeared, although some local churches, district halls and sports facilities are still in use.

The larger towns and farming lands in general have, in their turn, been affected by competition with and influences from Adelaide (including, in the southern districts, the impact of commuter populations and city land prices). The following description of Kapunda's future applies equally to other similarly placed towns in the region:

Kapunda's future appears to rely ... in the long term, on its continually dwindling distance in time from Adelaide. It is no longer exceptional to live in Kapunda and work in Adelaide.<sup>75</sup>

The whole Barossa is especially vulnerable in this regard.

Besides these long-term changes with their inevitable but not immediate effects, there have been major events which have had notable impact, again not only within the region but world-wide.

The beginning of the period was marked by the severe depression, which started as early as 1928 in rural South Australia, and remorselessly intensified during the early 1930s. Men roamed the countryside in search of work, supported by rations, rabbits and the charity of farm families. The Barossa and Mongalata goldfields briefly lived again, as the hopeful unemployed moved back. By contrast, many of the small farms, particularly those worked by soldier settlers of the previous decade, and in the marginal and mallee lands, were simply abandoned. The personal tragedy of this defeat cannot be overstated.

The tendency towards a gradual increase in the size of farms was accentuated as small blocks were amalgamated by the remaining (or absentee) landowners. Today also most farms are mixed, usually producing wool, fat lambs and grain, with a successful minority dairying and stud breeding. The range of sizes still varies greatly according to climate and soils, with the largest holdings generally in the drier eastern or western districts.

While it accentuated and ushered in change, World War II (1939-1945) has left few specific relics in the region. While its effects were more pronounced than those of

World War I, there seems to have been less energy or interest in, for example, creating memorials; frequently these were simply updated after the war.

However, this war posed a far more direct threat to Australia, as a number of bunkers and other fortifications in the region attest (for instance at the Gawler airfield). The Proof Range near Port Wakefield assumed much greater significance during the war, and fortifications were also built there.

The Proof and Experimental Establishment (D.C. Port Wakefield) at Bald Hill south of Port Wakefield was established when the Commonwealth Government bought the large, flat coastal site in 1926, the first rounds of ammunition being fired in 1928. Activity was fairly minimal until the outbreak of world war in 1939, when the range was permanently staffed by the Army and became the main range for the testing of munitions manufactured in Australia. This upgrading also directly stimulated Port Wakefield's economy and employment and has been of lasting benefit to the town.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, Mallala benefited from the establishment of an Air Force base north of the town in 1940, which was used for pilot training during the war. The Base virtually became a self-sufficient town with a population of 2,000 at its peak. To serve that population highly efficient services were built, including an elaborate sewerage disposal system, relics of which remain.<sup>77</sup> The site has since had an interesting and equally significant history. Between 1950 and 1960 the Base was converted to a hostel to house up to 400 European migrants immediately on arrival, and after that it became famous as a motor racing track, with an annual meeting which attracted thousands of spectators.

For this period, Mary Burrows' account of the Riverton district holds true for most of the Lower North:

Riverton is a sure and stable district, but its people are not wealthy. They enjoy a comfortable way of life with all the modern conveniences in the home, modern transport, machinery and entertainment, but the holdings are not large... One always finds the need to watch expenses, but not the same fear of reverses ...

Since 1900 the story of agriculture in the Riverton district is similar to that throughout the State. The most notable events affecting it were perhaps the 1914 drought, the two World Wars and the advent of power farming.

The drought and the war years were times of ... restrictions and uncertainty (although) the years which followed brought improved returns and higher prices...

The introduction of power farming brought a new set of problems. The new machinery was expensive. Tractors needed fuel from overseas, whereas horses were sustained by fodder grown on the property. The overwhelming advantages it offered in saving time and labour, however, could not be ignored. The trickle of change in the late 'twenties gained force in the 'thirties and reached flood proportions after World War II.<sup>78</sup>

It remains for future historians to fully document those changes and to identify the heritage of the second half of the twentieth century. Given the growing local interest in and care of the region's earlier heritage, it seems certain that much of that subsequent heritage will also be recognized and preserved.

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- <sup>1</sup> Susan Marsden, *South Australian Historic Preservation Plan: Historical Guidelines* (Heritage Unit, SA Dept. for the Environment, 1980) pp.5-6.
- <sup>2</sup> E. Hodder, *George Fife Angas. Father and Founder of South Australia* (London, 1891) p.247.
- <sup>3</sup> Quoted in G. Young et al, *Barossa Survey* (Adelaide, 1977) vol. 1, p.11.
- <sup>4</sup> Walter Hawker, 'Reminiscences of George Charles Hawker of Bungaree', p.2.
- <sup>5</sup> Hans Mincham, in *The Mid North of South Australia...* (University of Adelaide, 1977), p.1.
- <sup>6</sup> Hawker, p.3.
- <sup>7</sup> Hawker, p.5.
- <sup>8</sup> Refer to map of Special Surveys (1840), reprinted in G.L. Buxton, *South Australian Land Acts 1869-1885* (Adelaide, 1966) Appendix C.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in Gilbert Herbert and Paul Stark, 'Manning Houses' (No. 53) (Ms. National Trust of SA, CL 2919).
- <sup>10</sup> Gilbert's 'Wiltshire Survey' was not made until 1843, but he occupied the site in 1839 'and set about establishing his home on English ideals' with a stone house, outbuildings and fencing erected no later than 1843. G. Morphett, ed., *The Gilberts of Pewsey Vale* (Pioneers' Association, Adelaide, 1949, p.7).
- <sup>11</sup> Eleanore Williams, in Mincham, *The Mid North of South Australia*, p.9.
- <sup>12</sup> 'A history of the Booborowie District', pp.1-5.
- <sup>13</sup> Buxton, p.15.
- <sup>14</sup> 'Peacocking' was picking out the best land in an area, for example, all river frontages. 'Dummying' was the taking up of land by selectors, supposedly independent, who were actually acting on behalf of large landowners.
- <sup>15</sup> Dates of declaration of Hundreds obtained from Lands Department.
- <sup>16</sup> Mrs. David Randall of Glen Para writes, 'so these people we brought out, being a superior class of artisans, trades-people, shepherds, etc. could not fail to be a great benefit to the Colony ...' in her *Reminiscences*, ed. G. Morphett, (Pioneers' Association, 1939) p.4.
- <sup>17</sup> M. Williams, *The making of the South Australian landscape* (London, 1974) pp.338-9, and Mincham, p.2.
- <sup>18</sup> Mincham, p. 2.
- <sup>19</sup> Mary Burrows, *A brief history of Riverton* (Riverton, 1973), p.5.
- <sup>20</sup> Francis Dutton, *South Australia and its mines* (London, 1846, Facsimile, 1978), p.270.
- <sup>21</sup> Rob Charlton, *The history of Kapunda* (Adelaide, 1971), p.10.
- <sup>22</sup> Surviving examples include the Wheatsheaf Hotel near Kapunda, the Eudunda Hotel and the Old Nain Hotel at Daveyston.
- <sup>23</sup> G. Young et al, p.46.
- <sup>24</sup> Katrina McDougall, *Winery buildings in South Australia ... The Barossa region* (University of Adelaide) pp.5, 94, 112.
- <sup>25</sup> Lands Department.
- <sup>26</sup> DW Meinig, *On the margins of the good earth* (Chicago, 1962), p.170.
- <sup>27</sup> W.S. Kelly, *Rural development in South Australia* (Adelaide, 1962), p.15.
- <sup>28</sup> R.J. Noye, *Clare - A District History* (Adelaide, republished 1980), p.29.
- <sup>29</sup> During the latter 1860s the town was 'the Colony's largest wheat receiving station and had (a) twice-daily service to and from Adelaide'. Quoted in Peter Donovan, *An industrial history of South Australia*. Industrial buildings of South Australia, Working Paper 2 (University of Adelaide, 1979), p.18.
- <sup>30</sup> Susan Woodburn, 'Summary of historical background', in Hignett and Co., *Gawler Heritage Study Stage 1* (1981) pp.4, 19.
- <sup>31</sup> Mary Burrows, *The Challenge and the Triumph: the Scholz story* (Riverton, 1981) pp.45, 65-66.
- <sup>32</sup> John Doecke, *Saxony to South Australia* (1980) pp.32-35.
- <sup>33</sup> M. Williams, pp.344, 346.
- <sup>34</sup> M. Williams, pp.105-106.
- <sup>35</sup> See 'Iron Mine Image' No. 1, p.1 concerning this change in the Booborowie district near Burra.
- <sup>36</sup> See Buxton for a detailed history of these land acts, 1869-1885.
- <sup>37</sup> M. Williams, p.144.
- <sup>38</sup> This account of the western railway system is based on P.F. Donovan, *Port Wakefield and district...* (Adelaide, 1978), pp.20-21, 25; Jean Moyle, *The Wakefield; its water and its wealth* (Clare, 1975), p.159; and (Balaklava Centenary Book Committee) *Balaklava, change and challenge* (Adelaide, 1977) pp.21-22.

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- <sup>39</sup> Alan Jones, *Snowtown; the first century 1878-1978* (Adelaide, 1978) pp.60-61, 62.
- <sup>40</sup> *Back to Hamley Bridge* Souvenir (1933), p.1.
- <sup>41</sup> *Back to Hamley Bridge*, p.5.
- <sup>42</sup> *Balaklava...*, p.22.
- <sup>43</sup> *Balaklava...*, p.23.
- <sup>44</sup> State Records of SA, Research Note 344, 'Notes on Sutherlands'.
- <sup>45</sup> National Trust of SA, 'Hill River Homestead', File No. 2481.
- <sup>46</sup> *Balaklava...*, pp.23, 32, 46, 48, 52, 57, 88, 104.
- <sup>47</sup> Charlton, p.120.
- <sup>48</sup> Jones, pp.230, 317.
- <sup>49</sup> H.Y.L. Brown, *Mines of South Australia*, p.202; National Trust file 1754; Royce Wells, 'Early mining in the Adelaide Hills', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 2, 1976, p.57.
- <sup>50</sup> Frank Masters, *The family of Thomas and Mary Ann Taylor Masters*, (Pioneers' Association, Adelaide, 1945), pp. 1-3.
- <sup>51</sup> Noye, p.44; Mary Burrows, *Riverton...*, (Adel., 1966), p.44.
- <sup>52</sup> J.W.R. White, *Morgan Centenary 1878-1978*, pp.84-85.
- <sup>53</sup> Buxton, pp.75, 77, 78.
- <sup>54</sup> W.F. Gregor, *District of Halbury* (Halbury, 1975), p.49, and his verbal information, 1982.
- <sup>55</sup> Burrows, p. 46.
- <sup>56</sup> Donovan, *An industrial history of South Australia*, p.52.
- <sup>57</sup> Information provided by E. & W.S. (1982).
- <sup>58</sup> Donovan, *An industrial history*, p.56.
- <sup>59</sup> McDougall, pp.9-11.
- <sup>60</sup> Mincham, p.4.
- <sup>61</sup> E. Williams, pp.9, 11.
- <sup>62</sup> Jones, pp.65-67.
- <sup>63</sup> Colin Thiele, 'A 'twenties country community', lecture delivered at the Historical Society of South Australia, 7 May 1982.
- <sup>64</sup> E. Gilbert, *The Gilberts of Pewsey Vale*, G. Morphet, ed. (Pioneers' Association, 1949).
- <sup>65</sup> Lands Dept; National Trust, File No. 2481.
- <sup>66</sup> Jones, pp.296, 299, 307.
- <sup>67</sup> Jones.
- <sup>68</sup> *History of Booborowie District*, pp.12, 15.
- <sup>69</sup> Jones, pp.230-238.
- <sup>70</sup> Thelma Kuhlmann and Owen Bockmann, *Horses, Harrows and Haystacks* (Freeling) (Adelaide, 1981) pp.41-42; S.A. Housing Trust (Board Minutes, 1938).
- <sup>71</sup> M. Williams, p.482.
- <sup>72</sup> Jones, p.315-16.
- <sup>73</sup> *Balaklava...*, p.103; D.L.J. Aitchison, *South Australian Year Book*, No. 1, 1966 (Adelaide, 1966), p.321.
- <sup>74</sup> *Alma-Dalkey 1875-1975* (Hamley Bridge, 1975), p.18.
- <sup>75</sup> Charlton, p.58.
- <sup>76</sup> Donovan, *Port Wakefield*, pp.51-53.
- <sup>77</sup> *District Council of Mallala*, booklet (n.d.), p.9., and verbal information, Gerald Carmody, District Council of Mallala (1981).
- <sup>78</sup> Burrows, *Riverton*, p.68.