

Port Elliot and Goolwa — a short history

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1802-1838

The main themes of this period are:

- (a) exploration
- (b) Aboriginal-European contact and conflict.
- (c) pastoral development.

This region has a rich Aboriginal heritage as the result of thousands of years of occupation, evidence for which includes the famous canoe and shield trees and the extensive remains of middens in the coastal dunes and near Goolwa.¹ However, this study is concerned with the heritage of the Port Elliot-Goolwa district since the period of initial contact by Europeans.

The first recorded contact by Europeans was off-shore in 1802, when the voyages of exploration by Matthew Flinders and Nicolas Baudin intersected at Encounter Bay, so-named by Flinders as a result of the meeting. The encounter was actually south-east of the Murray Mouth (which neither explorer discovered), and Baudin named a nearby point Cap de la Rencontre, later renamed Cap Fenelon.

Australian, American and French whaling and sealing vessels soon followed in the wake of these discoveries. There are several references to visits to the Cape Jervis-South Coast areas by sealers stationed on Kangaroo Island. These visits dated from at least the 1820s but there is no record of actual habitation nor other physical traces in the Port Elliot-Goolwa region. The visits were, in fact, usually raids, as the men kidnapped Aboriginal women to use as servants and sexual companions on Kangaroo Island. Charles Sturt later attributed the hostility of the

Aborigines of the region to the behaviour of these sealers from Kangaroo Island.²

The first formal contact with the region was deliberately planned, as part of Captain Charles Sturt's discovery of the River Murray and his voyage downstream in 1829-30 to find the outlet of this impressive river. Sturt named the Murray and Lake Alexandrina where the river ended. His last campsite was made near the present site of Goolwa. From there he made the disappointing discovery of the dangerous river outlet to the sea. Sturt's expedition as a whole was of enormous significance to the subsequent colonisation of the vast Murray-lands, and of South Australia as a distinct Province.

Captain Collet Barker was sent by the New South Wales Governor in 1831, to further investigate the area between St. Vincent's Gulf and the Murray. Though he was speared by Aborigines after swimming the Murray Mouth, his survey and Sturt's favourable published reports greatly encouraged the proponents for setting up a new colony. The South Australian Foundation Act was passed by British Parliament in 1834, with the first ships arriving at Kangaroo Island late in 1836.

The South Coast-Lower Murray region was understandably a focus for attention, prior to the despatch of the first colonist ships, so much so that the instructions given the first Surveyor-General, Colonel William Light, are quoted in full, as follows.

As far as the imperfect information already possessed enables the Commissioners [South Australian Colonization Commissioners, in London] to judge, the district between Gulf St. Vincent and the Murray, or Lake Alexandrina (provided a good harbour can be found) appears to combine the requisite advantages in the highest degree. This district is sufficiently central, according to the report of Capt. Sturt, it contains an abundance of highly fertile land, it appears well

supplied with water, it is conveniently situated for intercourse with Nepean Bay [Kangaroo Island] and Port Lincoln and if a communication should be discovered between Gulf St. Vincent and Lake Alexandrina, the River Murray and its tributary, would afford the most important facilities for communication not only with the interior of the new colony, but also with that extensive portion of New South Wales [then including Victoria], which lying to the west of the Blue Mountains, is practically excluded from connection with the eastern ports.³

But Light dismissed that part of the district described, close to the Murray and the sea at Encounter Bay as the site for the capital of the new colony without bothering to visit the area, having decided that the Murray outlet would not be navigable and that the coast was too exposed to the Southern Ocean to provide a safe harbour.⁴ Although Adelaide was sited near St. Vincent's Gulf instead, its early years were disturbed by arguments about the suitability of the site, as opposed to other sites at Port Lincoln and Encounter Bay, with Encounter Bay being the particular favourite of even the Governor – Hindmarsh – himself.⁵

The debate hinged always on the navigability of the Murray Mouth and the suitability of harbours on the southern coast, a debate which continued long after Adelaide's permanence was assured, the Murray Mouth had been navigated and ports had been established at Port Elliot and at Victor Harbor on the south coast. Victor Harbor's history is inseparable from that of the rest of the South Coast district, but this historical background must be restricted to the subject of the heritage study, comprising the District Council of Port Elliot and Goolwa.

Colonel Light visited Encounter Bay in June, 1837, calling at the whaling station established near Rosetta Head. The first systematic exploration of the Port Elliot-Goolwa area was made by T.B. Strangways and Y.B. Hutchinson in December, 1837.⁶

Strangways and Hutchinson and party were sent by Governor Hindmarsh to see whether Sturt's channel (past the present site of Goolwa) was the only outlet to the sea. They also visited and named Currency Creek and Hindmarsh Island. Their exploration was cut short by the drowning of four men (including Judge Jeffcott and the whale fishing owner, Capt. Blenkinsop) attempting to take a boat across the Murray outlet. However, Strangways and Hutchinson were obviously both impressed by the countryside they had visited as both became large land-holders in the area, Hutchinson also becoming directly involved with the subdivision of Goolwa Extension in 1856, long known as 'Hutchinson's Town'⁷

This region – given the reports of its fertility, its possible harbours and its likelihood as the site for the capital city – attracted considerable attention from the speculators who founded the colony (both those who emigrated and those who remained in Britain as absentee land-owners). For these reasons, the country about Currency Creek, abutting Lake Alexandrina and including part of present Goolwa became one of 36 favoured areas in South Australia selected for 'special survey' This was carried out under the direction of the Surveyor-General, E.C. Frome, between December 1839 to January 1840. An elaborate town, worthy as the colony's capital, was laid out at Currency Creek, and a smaller town was drawn up as a river port, called Town on the Goolwa, which is now the northern part of Goolwa.⁸ The special survey was made on behalf of a consortium of speculators, calling themselves the Currency Creek Association. Neither Currency Creek nor Town on the Goolwa were developed as town blocks although much of the country land was soon in use.⁹

The *South Australian Register* of 7 May 1851 reported the Currency Creek township as having been laid out and allotted too early, but that a square mile of country land was occupied, with 200 acres of crops, 'and the whole would soon be in request, were

not the property in the hands of a few absentees’.

Speculators aside, a number of settlers were attracted to the region for similar reasons, the first permanent settlement being made by the Reverend Ridgway Newland’s party at Yilki, near Rosetta Head in 1839, with other settlers moving along the coast and taking up land at the foot of the nearby hills known as Hindmarsh Tiers.¹⁰ Their much-maligned predecessors, the Aborigines and the whalers, provided vital advice and assistance in food-gathering, cultivation and harvesting.

By 1839-40 also parts of the district were being used by pastoralists, literally squatters in those early years, although they also included men such as Dr John Rankine. Rankine settled at Strathalbyn in 1839 and grazed sheep and cattle over a wide area, including Hindmarsh Island, near Goolwa, which he leased, ferrying the stock over on his private ferry.¹¹

1840-1890

Main themes:

- (a) river trade and harbour development
- (b) township development; houses, government agencies, industries, community facilities
- (c) agriculture
- (d) railways.

This was by far the most significant period as far as the history and the heritage of the region’s main towns are concerned, and was directly linked to the dramatic rise and decline of the river trade along the Murray and its tributaries, and the industries and facilities which were developed in response. Permanent structures, attesting to the town’s important role during those years, still stand; in part thanks to their decline once the river trade had ended, in part thanks to some of the townspeople’s justifiable

pride in their heritage. The preservation Of Goolwa's old bow-fronted shop, a tramway carriage and the Railway Superintendent's house are good examples of this.

The early settlement of the whole South Coast region was limited by the poor transport links with Adelaide because of the rugged, densely timbered ranges separating the two. This made the region virtually independent, and meant that a wide variety of crops and stock was raised on the coastal plain and in the coast-facing foothills, to enable self-sufficiency.

In the period between 1840 and 1850, while the numbers of settlers grew steadily, general interest in the area declined. As Simpson Newland describes it,

By this time it was generally understood that there was no prospect of the capital being moved from the site early fixed upon, and the fortunes of Encounter Bay were waning. Many of the more important settlers found themselves cramped for room, and cleared out for the South East ... Many more took their flocks north ... The places of those who left were filled by newcomers, and farmers supplanted squatters.¹²

A good description is given in 1850 by 'an old colonist', of the scattered agricultural settlement, the area under cultivation and the handful of settlers in the Port Elliot-Goolwa district. Some of the places he visited are still in existence.¹³

One of the earliest of these settlers and one of the largest landowners was Colonel Thomas Higgins, who took up a large tract of country at Currency Creek in 1840 and built his homestead 'Higginsbrook', which still stands. Higgins also owned the land on which he later subdivided and named the township of Middleton.¹⁴

Inland was deep sand, hilly and heavily timbered, all of which made the journey to Encounter Bay via Square Waterhole (Mount Compass) extraordinarily tortuous, and exacerbated the isolation

of the settlers.¹⁵

Police were stationed at Goolwa from 1840, following the killing of the 'Maria' passengers and crew on the Coorong by the Aborigines. A police-station house was built there by 1850¹⁶ and a postal station was established at Freeman's Nob (Port Elliot) and Currency Creek.¹⁷ However, the real stimulus to township development at these places, and at Waterport and Middleton, was made when work began on port facilities and the railway to serve a hoped-for river trade.

A succession of South Australia's early governors had great personal interest in the South Coast region, particularly in terms of its role in the development of the Murray trade. Hindmarsh wanted Adelaide moved there (his son, John, later lived at Port Elliot), Gawler explored along the river as far as the site of Morgan, and Sir Henry Fox Young thoroughly examined the river with his wife, Lady Augusta and party in 1850. They returned by boat to Goolwa, from there to Port Elliot and then Adelaide, convinced that vessels on the river could open up the interior. In Adelaide Young proclaimed a bonus of £4,000 to the first two iron steam boats 'that shall successfully navigate the River from Goolwa to the Darling Junction'.¹⁸

As cargoes had to be moved from the river to the sea the only alternative to the dangerous passage of the Murray Mouth was the construction of a canal or a railway between Goolwa and the nearest safe anchorage on Encounter Bay. Governor Young decreed this to be at Horseshoe Bay, which was charted (1850) and proclaimed Port Elliot (1851), despite much popular criticism of its obvious dangers and support for Port Victor (Victor Harbor). He also proposed a scheme for a railway connecting Port Elliott and Goolwa, again despite opposition particularly from Port Adelaide merchants. ¹⁹

The necessary public works were started before the first paddle

steamer had even started upon the river, and, these no doubt, were for greater inducement than the cash prize. Governor Young decided to finance the works from the Land Fund despite much opposition, in what were the first extensive public works undertaken in the colony.

By 1852 the Government had completed jetties at Port Elliot and Goolwa, the stone obelisk at Freeman's Nob, the Port Elliot harbour-master's cottage, moorings and buoys. Works started included the Port Elliot and Goolwa Railway, the Railway Superintendent's house at Goolwa²⁰ and works for the supply of water to Port Elliot.²¹ Water was piped from springs at Waterport, which is said to be the first reticulated water supply in South Australia.²²

In 1853 the first two river steamers paddled the route upriver. Captain Francis Cadell (with Governor Young aboard) took the 'Lady Augusta', and William Randell in an earlier, quite independent trip, took the 'Mary Ann'.²³ Cadell brought his paddle-boat through the Murray Mouth, and departed from Goolwa with a locally made barge, the 'Eureka', and Randell steamed from Mannum for clearance at Goolwa before travelling upstream. Their spectacular successes and remunerative cargoes provided an immediate stimulus to further inland settlement and to the development of a massive river trade in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, with Goolwa as final port at the 'bottom end' of the river system, and Port Elliot as sea-port. Port Elliot and Goolwa were soon linked by the planned-for railway, reduced as a cost-cutting measure, to a single track, horse-powered tramway, nevertheless now acclaimed as Australia's first public railway. This was operating by 1854, with the associated works and all the port facilities virtually complete. One of two railway loops, with a siding, was built midway between Port Elliot and Goolwa, and the site readily attracted settlers and industries, including a large flour mill.²⁴ The section

owner, Colonel Higgins, promptly had the site surveyed and laid out in 1856 as the township of Middleton.²⁵

The Port Elliot and Goolwa Railway, together with the activities associated with the river trade, attracted an influx of settlers. They included farmers, who cleared the dense scrub and grew good crops, and townspeople who built houses, stores, schools, hotels, churches, mills, and kilns within an astonishingly short period of time, as the heritage survey of the surviving early buildings and sites will show.

A new government town known as Goolwa was surveyed during 1853, south of the 1840 surveyed Town on the Goolwa, with an interesting layout focussed entirely on the river. The quarter-acre blocks were auctioned in that year, and by 1857 were all taken up. Adjoining sections were also privately subdivided during these years, including Goolwa Extension (Hutchinson's Township) and North Goolwa. Goolwa Extension was also an interesting design, incorporating public walkways and a carriage-way, both features a rarity in Australian town subdivisions, even at this time.²⁶

With the river opened, the railway working and wharfs established at Goolwa and Port Elliot, the volume of trade increased enormously. Paddle steamers towed barges carrying supplies upriver to pastoralists, to the gold diggings and to new-grown towns, and returned laden with wool. Extensions to the Goolwa Wharf were soon necessary, and a few determined captains ran boats directly through the Murray Mouth, with regular services between Goolwa and Port Adelaide starting in 1857.²⁷ A signal and pilot station was set up at the outlet and beacons were provided along the safest route to Goolwa. Port Goolwa was proclaimed in 1857, and was made a customs point – one of a chain of customs ports which so complicated the intercolonial trade – and a ships survey centre.²⁸

The river crews were a skilled, rough lot, 'half-seamen, half-

landsmen, who could turn their hands to almost anything',²⁹ and whose visits enlivened Goolwa and provided business for the police, the prostitutes and the three hotels. The captains operated also as traders, storekeepers, builders and speculators, all of which had a marked impact on the Town of Goolwa. This was apparent in the career of Cadell himself, and of the men he brought out from his home, 'Cockenzie' in Scotland. For instance, Captain George Gain Johnston built 'Cockenzie' house at Goolwa and benevolently provided several plain, Scottish cottages for his employees in Goolwa Extension, which was accordingly known until quite recently as 'Little Scotland'.³⁰

The government town of Port Elliot was surveyed in 1852, when the first public works, and the first hotel, now 'Arnella', were constructed. The hotel builder, old Thomas Dodd, who was in 1850 the only settler near Freeman's Nob, started construction in that year well in anticipation of the port's development:

Mr. Dodd informed us that the section we were upon was 107, that it was the only one eligible or attainable to lay a township upon, that the house was eighteen feet from a Government Road, and would be situated at a point of four cross-roads, viz. to Encounter Bay and the Goolwa, Adelaide and Port Elliot.

Should a house of public accommodation prove necessary for the intended port, 'there', as Mr. Dodd observed, 'will be the very building and all ready. 31

Port Elliot was proclaimed a township in 1854. In its early years, much of the town's private settlement was located north of the railway, and in Dodd's Extension and at Waterport, which was surveyed in 1856,³² while its public buildings and structures were concentrated in Port Elliot proper, towards Freeman's Nob. At Waterport, several houses may actually predate the port. There were later established brickworks, a school, a store and a

cemetery³³ as well as the police horse stables.

Port Elliot's major development was concentrated into the few years it survived as a port.³⁴ Ships began to call regularly from 1852, with the largest number, 85, calling in 1855. In that year too, work finished on the breakwater, but soon afterwards heavy seas dislodged the blocks and further undermined the port's reputation with the wrecking of four ships in 1856. In 1864 Victor Harbor was chosen to replace Port Elliot as the sea outlet for the Murray trade and took with it both the trade and the dramatic development. There was a last burst of local building during a prosperous season in 1867. There is a panoramic photograph of the town taken in 1866 which shows almost all the major buildings by then completed, a good number of which are still in use today.³⁵ Subsequent development was largely a consolidation and extension of the town's facilities and services, such as the Public School (1880), the new Council Chambers for the District Council of Port Elliot (1879), the Institute (1882-3), a Granite Works and a dairy.

Port Elliot remained predominantly a government town – while it remained a port – with most of the industries being concentrated at Goolwa and Middleton. However flour mills were built at each of these towns as well as on Hindmarsh Island and at Currency Creek, which otherwise remained a small rural hamlet.³⁶

Like other important country towns, Goolwa's industries included breweries, a saw mill and a flour mill, as well as an industry which was virtually unique, that of ship building and repairs. Goolwa was the first Australian river port where vessels were built, and became the second most productive after Echuca (Victoria). Between 1853 and 1912 a total of 37 paddle steamers and 23 barges were built at Goolwa, out of more than 350 vessels built for the Murray trade as a whole (1852-1853).³⁷ After its establishment in 1864, the main shipbuilding and repair works at Goolwa was the Goolwa Iron Works,³⁸ to which was added a

foundry, and which included a 'patent' slip in the river. The foundry produced not only ships and engines but also other machinery, castings and railway trucks. It was greatly expanded when taken over about 1867 by Alexander Graham, by the 1870s employing 30 to 40 tradesmen almost continuously. Its size and near-permanent employment was something of a rarity in South Australian industries in the nineteenth century. Despite this, the relative impermanence of industrial structures is also obvious, as there is almost no trace left today, apart from the extremely rare old Beam engine³⁹ and the small stone chart room.⁴⁰ After the lapse in shipbuilding in the 1880s, the major machinery was sold to the Chaffey Brothers and removed to Renmark about 1888.

Middleton's fortunes as township and small industrial locality were started and stopped as a direct result of changes in the railways. This was the case in many South Australian towns, such as Terowie in the north and Robe versus Beachport in the south east.

After the establishment of the first siding in 1854, the flour mill was built nearby (see above), then a hotel and Batson's brickyards, about 1857, together with several houses, stores, a school and a chapel. Several other workshops were also established, including the blacksmith for the railway horses, the railway carpenter's shop, a local blacksmith⁴¹ and a workshop to chop and bag a typical local product, wattle bark, which was used for tanning.⁴² The bark and Bowman's flour were sent upriver by boat, via Goolwa. For a time, Middleton's population rivalled Goolwa's, and it was given a further boost when, for some perverse reason, the government decided to provide a rail connection between Strathalbyn and the seaboard not at Goolwa but at Middleton. Extensive earthworks were required, and three large viaducts were constructed over Currency Creek,⁴³ Black Swamp and Finniss River, with the line being completed and the first carriage of wheat being made in 1869. The railway was

horse-powered, the horses being changed at Finniss and Middleton, and operated without connection to Adelaide until 1884. Soon afterwards, steam locomotives were introduced, and the railway was diverted from Currency Creek through Goolwa. Middleton's significance as a railway centre ended abruptly after 1885, and the original town has remained much as it was.

The development of the towns, and of upriver markets, provided a further stimulus to agriculture, as shown by the extent of clearing and the surviving farm buildings. Wheat was also grown on Hindmarsh Island, and a jetty and a new ferry service were provided. Charles Price bought land there in 1854, and with his family imported and bred Hereford cattle and Shropshire sheep. The Rankines also bought land and built there.

At this stage, the hilly inland, now the Mount Compass and Nangkita districts, remained virtually unoccupied and unused.

During these years there was a rather complicated history of the creation of district councils, their disbandment, amalgamation and incorporation, beginning with the District Council of Encounter Bay, formed in 1853 and comprising the whole of the old 'Encounter Bay' area, including Port Elliot and Goolwa. Each council, largely comprising local farmers and businessmen, agitated for improved government facilities and agonised over the costs of providing for other improvements themselves, though these were gradually made.⁴⁴

During these years also, unlike Port Elliot, Goolwa continued to benefit from the increasing river trade, which brought in more residents, and industries, provided the means for the establishment of schools and churches and pressure for additional or enlarged public buildings, such as its first railway station (1872) and further extension to the wharf and customs house.⁴⁵ Goolwa was gazetted a municipality in 1872, The period between 1878 to 1884, during a boom in South Australia and the eastern

colonies, was a peak in trade, so much so that delays occurred with the carrying of cargoes by rail. This may have been one of the reasons a rail was opened between Morgan and Adelaide so that cargoes could be diverted before reaching Goolwa.⁴⁶

As the railway had helped create the river port, so railways destroyed it. Inter-colonial rivalry backed the efforts of each government to develop railways to draw off the river trade to their respective capital cities. The Echuca line was opened to Melbourne in 1884, which effectively restricted the South Australian ports to trade on the river reaches below Echuca. Of greater impact in Goolwa, however, was the opening of the Morgan line in 1878, then the Murray Bridge line in 1886. By 1890 trade was more or less finished, so Chas. Hodge recorded Goolwa, 'at one time a busy port, and a thriving, happy, important town, but now a back number, due to the canker of centralization' .⁴⁷

1891 to present

The main themes for this period are:

- (a) tourism, recreation and subdivision
- (b) social change and agriculture – the closer settlement of Mt. Compass – Nangkita; the impact of new techniques
- (c) public works: the barrages.

The history of the main towns in this region was made by the river trade, underpinned by the railways, undermined by the decline in both and sustained by farming and tourism.

Goolwa, Port Elliot and Middleton became, with Victor Harbor, major resort centres, amongst the earliest outside Adelaide. This characteristic feature of turn-of-the century sea-side resorts – particularly pronounced at Port Elliot, with its much-vaunted romantic coast – form a significant part of these towns' surviving

heritage.

From the 1890s the southern end of the promontory at Port Elliot was increasingly built upon, 'mainly guest homes ..., some erected so close to the rocks that the flying sand of the storm reaches them.'⁴⁸ Governors stayed during summer at the old Globe Hotel above the cliffs. During the First World War, Port Elliot became a rest and recreation centre for soldiers, and Mrs John Trigg was largely responsible for the creation of the present Memorial Gardens, cut into the hillside over the bay.⁴⁹ Several of the old hotels and the larger houses were converted to guest houses in each of the three towns, and new guest houses built, such as 'Mindacowie' at Middleton in 1911.

The growth of Goolwa and Port Elliot continued steadily, as the permanent residents provided for new public buildings and services, such as the Hotham Congregational Church at Port Elliot in 1901, and celebrated agricultural shows, regattas and other forms of recreation. In each of these towns during this last period this steady growth and the summer influx have encouraged landowners to subdivide, thereby adding to the extent of the towns, although not necessarily to their closer settlement until after the 1950s with the boom and apparent sprawl of 'shacks' and retirement homes and caravan parks.

The development of railways elsewhere in South Australia not only tapped the river trade but also opened up areas in the mid-north much better suited to wheat farming. Some wheat growing continued around Goolwa and Currency Creek, but elsewhere it virtually died out. So, along with the empty shipyards and other workshops, flour mills closed also. Gradually, grazing and fodder crops assumed dominance and from the 1890s, dairying and market gardening. The expansion of the dairy industry, which remains important today, depended upon superphosphate top dressing and the cultivation of subterranean clover, introduced into the region in 1902. Milk factories were later established at

Mt. Compass and Hindmarsh Island. The coastal towns provided services for the farming districts as well as the tourist industry, although Victor Harbor eclipsed the other towns in both spheres from the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

The only major public works carried out during this last period were, again, connected with the River Murray, and are of national significance. These were the five barrages that were built at the Murray Mouth to maintain fresh water in the river and to assist irrigation by gravitation by holding the water at a sufficiently high level. The national River Murray Commission recommended their construction, with preparatory work starting at Goolwa in 1935. The five barrages are the Goolwa Channel, Mundoo Channel, Ewe Island, Boundary Creek and Tauwitchere Barrages. All were completed by 1940.⁵¹ While Goolwa was the permanent base, a temporary camp, virtually a galvanised iron township, complete with a school, was also created during construction, and dismantled and sold afterwards.⁵²

While the most significant period in the history of the south coast ended with the loss of the river trade, that of the Mount Compass and Nangkita areas was about to begin. The Mount Compass history compiled by residents asserts that ‘no land is completely useless’ as this land was assumed to be as late as 1890;

...not only Government but most people considered this waste land.

It was the depression of 50 years ago (1890) that forced the pioneers to take up this land because it was cheap.⁵³

The heritage of the area was, and has remained, closely tied to its rural development and provides a particularly good rural example in South Australia of what geographers have termed ‘sequent occupance’ that is, changes through time in land use for a cross section of a region.⁵⁴

Apart from timber cutting, the main use of the area was for sheep

grazing, although the bullock-dray halt at the Square Waterhole also supported a hostel as early as 1856, and the government road maintenance man was established near Mt. Compass in 1872. His vegetable garden showed the promise of the swamplands in the area, although large land leasers in the area, Gardner Brothers and Wright Brothers also grew fruit, vines and vegetables. This aroused interest in the area. Mount Compass was first surveyed in 1880, but, in the prevailing depression, was re-surveyed into 100 acre Workingmen's Blocks in 1893. From the success of some of these settlers grew a pressure for possession, and the population steadily increased.

The resumption of leases and their subdivision was subsequently extended to the village settlement of Nangkita. Nangkita was one of several quite radical communalist village settlements made by the city unemployed and supported by the government with grants of land and rations. Legislation established 'Village settlements', of which 13 were formed, eleven along the Upper River Murray and two elsewhere, near Mount Remarkable and at Nangkita.⁵⁵

Nangkita was formed in 1894 when the first settlers arrived mainly from Port Adelaide. Blocks of swamp – the fertile land – were allotted and the men and their families grubbed tea-tree and built wattle-and-daub or tin huts, as well as drains and fences. A school was started there in 1894 and a post office in 1898.

Several of these relics of the settlement survive, but not the village settlement itself which lasted barely two years and was finally dissolved in 1900. The arable land was divided up into five sections for each of the families.

Despite this, closer settlement provided the basis for community development. At Mt. Compass the old roadman's cottage was a social centre until residents built the local hall in 1903, which in turn, became the district's centre, with socials, meetings, church services and school (1904-34) being held there.⁵⁶

Drains and windmills became a feature of the landscape while vegetable growing on the swamps was important, but with the introduction of superphosphate and clover, the former 'poor' land on the hillsides became invaluable as pastureland, particularly for dairies.

Transport played a key role in the history and development of the whole Port Elliot-Goolwa Council district, as shown in the above historical account. It was no less important in the twentieth century, as motor traffic and vastly improved roads enabled farm produce to be moved quickly to city markets, brought more tourists more often to the coast, and, by tying the disparate parts of the district together in time, made the whole more homogenous and inter-dependent.

¹ Goolwa Midden has been recorded by the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Unit (now Heritage Unit) File No. S65/5/13; Canoe Trees: see R. Edwards, *Aboriginal bark canoes of the Murray Valley* (Rigby, Adelaide, 1972).

² J.S. Cumpston, *Kangaroo Island 1800-1836* (Roebuck, Canberra, 1970, 1974) p.126 (Sturt's comments), pp.129-130 (on capturing women).

³ *A Brief Journal of the Proceedings of William Light ...* [Light's Journal] (Adelaide, 1839, facsimile 1962), p. 57.

⁴ Light's Journal, pp. 36-37, 57.

⁵ Sturt's survey of Encounter Bay in 1838, and negative report on 'the outlet and the shore eastward to Cape Rosetta' ended many such doubts and contributed to Adelaide's development, *Royal South Australian Almanack*, 1839.

⁶ Royal Geographical Society of Australasia S.A. Branch), *Proceedings*, vol. XXXVIII, 1936-37, p. 30. Their story is written in 'A hast account (written by the Late Y B Hutchinson, January 1838, and copied by P.O. Hutchinson, a son, July 1889, of an expedition to Encounter Bay and Lake Alexandrina at the latter part of 1837', State Library of SA [State Library of South Australia].

⁷ W.A. Pretty, 'Annfields' (historical notes on that property, Hutchinson St, Goolwa), introduction. Filed at Goolwa National Trust Museum (1980).

⁸ The area fronting the river in Goolwa (now the camping reserve) was laid out in blocks about 200 feet long by 30 feet wide, a layout similar to some English dock areas, which suggests that as early as 1840 the government had plans for Goolwa as the port for the river trade. J.C. Tolley, 'Goolwa' (National Trust booklet, n.d.), p. 5.

⁹ John Lewis gives a good account of these Special Surveys in *RGSSA Proceedings*, Vol. XVII, 1915-16, pp. 19-29; Currency Creek, p. 28. A copy of the town plans and of the Special Survey plan, together with a list of original town and country allotments is in State Records of SA [SRSA]. See also J.C. Tolley, *South Coast Story. A History of*

Goolwa Port Elliot Middleton and the Murray Mouth (District Council of Port Elliot and Goolwa, 1968), p. 15.

¹⁰ There are many references to Newland's family as pioneers on the South Coast, the most extensive being in the various publications by a son, Simpson Newland, including his *Old Time Memories* (Adelaide, 1895), and *Memoirs ...* (Adelaide, 1926).

¹¹ Notes on Charles Price and John Rankine by Sarah Conigrave (SLSA), reproduced in several books on the history of the region, and in full in W. Pretty's research papers, Goolwa National Trust Museum.

¹² Simpson Newland, quoted in R. Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, Vol. I (Adelaide, 1925) p. 97.

¹³ E.M. Yelland, ed., *Colonists, Copper and Corn in the colony of South Australia 1850-51/by Old Colonist Melbourne* (Re-published by Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1970).

¹⁴ R. Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers ..*, Vol. II, (1925-7) pp. 18-19 (Thomas Higgins).

¹⁵ Residents of Mount Compass District, *The History and Development of Mt Compass* (Adelaide, 1946), p. 14.

¹⁶ *S.A. Parliamentary Papers*, [SAPP] 1851, Paper 6, p. 15.

¹⁷ *SAPP*, 1852, Paper 24.

¹⁸ J.C. Tolley, on investigations preparatory to commencing navigation, in 'Events leading to the establishment and some aspects of the River Murray trading era', p.4. SLSA D3804 (T).

¹⁹ See 'Map of Railway', 1850, in *SAPP* 1851, Paper 6, and also chart of Port Elliot harbour.

²⁰ List of works started and completed" in Report of the Colonial Architect, W. Bennett Hays, 26 July 1852, SRSA. 1324/13.

²¹ *SAPP*. 1852, Paper 41: a description of these water works, also Tolley (ref 22).

²² Tolley, p. 27.

²³ There are many accounts of these first journeys, and of the subsequent river boat era. See, for example, A. Grenfell Price, *Founders and Pioneers of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1921), chapter on Francis cadell, and Tolley's papers and publications, including D3804 (T.)

²⁴ Which still stands. Tolley, *South Coast*, p. 48.

²⁵ Tolley, *South Coast*, p. 48.

²⁶ Verbal information, Mrs. V. Lawrence, and town plan.

²⁷ Tolley, 'Shipping through the Murray Mouth', SLSA, D3804 (T).

²⁸ Tolley, SLSA, D3804 (T), p. 22.

²⁹ Simpson Newland, *Paving the Way: A romance of the Australian Bush* (Adelaide, 1893); 1962 reprint, p. 342.

³⁰ Notes by Leslie McLeay on Cockenzie and Little Scotland, filed at the Goolwa National Trust Museum with Pretty's papers, 1980.

³¹ Yelland, pp. 83-84.

³² Tolley, *South Coast*, p.30 and Chas, R. Hodge, *Encounter Bay* (Adelaide, 1932), pp.81-82.

³³ Verbal information, Mrs. L. Randall

³⁴ Paragraph on Pt. Elliot based on Tolley, *South Coast*, pp.26-35, 44-47.

³⁵ Verbal information, Mrs. L. Pomery.

³⁶ The Middleton (1855) and Currency Creek (1858) mills survive, and also a small building associated with the Goolwa Mill (verbal information, Mrs. V. Lawrence).

³⁷ Tolley, 'River Murray vessels', D3804 (T), p. 10.

³⁸ Tolley, *South Coast*, history of Goolwa Iron Works, pp. 21-24.

³⁹ Aboriginal and Historic Relics Unit (now Heritage Unit), Australian Heritage Engineering Record, 'Steam Engine', John Connell (Inventory No. 5801).

⁴⁰ M. Robinson, *Historical highlights: Encounter Bay and Goolwa* (Adelaide, 1975) p. 90.

⁴¹ Tolley, *South Coast*, pp. 48-49, 53. The mill, a blacksmith's shed and the brickyards cottage survive.

⁴² Verbal information, Mrs. L. Randall.

⁴³ This viaduct survives but has been altered. The adjacent early road bridge also survives and is of almost unique construction. Australian Heritage Engineering Record, Inventory No. 5295.

⁴⁴ See also L. Pomery, 'Port Elliot Council Chamber 1879-1979' (Port Elliot, 1979).

⁴⁵ Tolley, *South Coast*, pp. 16-20.

⁴⁶ Tolley, *South Coast*, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Hodge, *Encounter Bay*, p. 69.

⁴⁸ Hodge, *Encounter Bay*, p. 82.

⁴⁹ Verbal information, Mrs L. Pomery.

⁵⁰ R.P. Bourman, 'Sequence occupance of the South Coast Region of South Australia', *Taminga*, 7 (1969), pp. 15-16.

⁵¹ Tolley, *South Coast*, pp. 70-72.

⁵² See auction booklet for sale of plant and equipment used in the construction of Murray Barrages, 1940, in Pretty, file 'Paddle steamers' route to the Murray Mouth, Goolwa National Trust Museum.

⁵³ *The History and development of Mt. Compass*, foreword.

⁵⁴ Bourman, pp. 7-15.

⁵⁵ M. Williams, *The Making of the South Australian Landscape* (London, 1974), pp. 238-41, and L.K. Kerr, 'Communal Settlements in South Australia in the 1890s', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1951, SLSA.

⁵⁶ Both paragraphs: information provided from R.P. Bourman, 'A study in social and industrial archaeology in the environs of Nangkita, South Australia', *Aspects of South Australian History* (Adelaide University, 1978), pp. 59-67, and *The history and development of Mt. Compass*, pp. 22-23, 44, 77.