

Susan Marsden, 'A short history of Kangaroo Island'

1802-1835: Ultima Thule

'It is however, a curse entailed upon the wicked, to be contented in no situation; and these rovers having again set sail, usually follow the coast ... until they reach Kangaroo Island, in latitude 35.5. This Island, nearly 300 miles in circumference, is the *Ultima Thule*.'

(*Hobart Town Gazette and Sydney Gazette*, 1826)¹

Ultima Thule lay at the end of the world. In the early years of the nineteenth century, Kangaroo Island was indeed far from the reach of European civilization. Even today that remoteness, the hint of lawlessness and something of the unique implied in the designation, *Ultima Thule*, colours the visitor's impressions of the island and characterises much of its heritage.

Even the Aboriginal inhabitants died out or abandoned the island many hundreds of years before its rediscovery by Europeans. The island's physical limitations, including poor soils, scarce water supplies and 'interminable scrub', limited European settlement throughout the nineteenth century to little more than semi-subsistence farming and two modest townships.

Despite its proximity to the South Australian mainland, the island has a most distinctive regional history and heritage. This is a reflection of both its peculiar remoteness and harsh nature as well as of its role in the earliest phase of European contact with South Australia. Between the first formal sighting in 1802 and official settlement in 1836, Kangaroo Island was better known and more frequently visited than the mainland. Partly because it was occupied during those intervening years by a few 'Robinson Crusoes' the island figured prominently in plans made for the formal British colonisation of South Australia. Here, the first colonists landed and the first of the Province's towns was created.

The island may be considered the most significant region in the State for the period of

early European contact. However, soon after formal settlement, the limitations of the island for large scale commercial and industrial development were made manifest and most of the population and almost all interest shifted to the mainland.

For this very reason much of the island's natural and cultural heritage has survived. Apart from the magnificent natural heritage, the most significant heritage dates from the period of early European contact from discovery to the disbanding of the town of Kingscote and the whaling stations.

In State terms the other major heritage relates to the island's position in the heavily-trafficked seaways of an established colony: the lighthouses, shipwrecks, landing places and graveyards, representing the dangers and refuges of its wild seas and complex coastline. Indeed, for many years, outsiders saw this as Kangaroo Island's main function. As Francis Dutton observed in 1846,

Kangaroo Island, a large and generally speaking, barren island, serving as an admirable barrier to break the force of the Southern Ocean, and containing several safe and commodious harbours, into which vessels can at all times run for shelter, if necessary.²

The first recorded sighting was made by Captain Matthew Flinders in the *Investigator* in 1802, on his voyage of discovery which had started from England in 1801.

Circumnavigating Australia, travelling from the west, Flinders carefully charted the southern Australian coastline. He stayed several days on the Dudley peninsula part of the island and many of the place names are those he gave, including Kangaroo Island itself, named in gratitude for the fresh meat provided by kangaroos killed at Kangaroo Head. (The spelling was later changed to Kangaroo). From the island, Flinders also named Investigator Strait, Backstairs Passage, and Mount Lofty, which was clearly visible on the mainland. On the island amongst other features named were Christmas Cove, Prospect Hill (with its fine view), Point Marsden, Cape Willoughby and Nepean Bay. A cairn was erected in 1906, to mark the supposed position of Flinders' landing at Kangaroo Head.

Flinders was closely followed by Captain Nicolas Baudin, who was engaged on a similar scientific and exploratory voyage for France. In 1802, soon after encountering Flinders,

Le Geographe travelled along the northern coast of the island as far as Murat Bay, before having to abandon the expedition and return to Port Jackson. During that voyage a crew member engraved on a rock at a soak near the present town of Penneshaw, 'EXPEDITION DE DECOUVERTE PAR LE COMMENDANT BAUDIN SUR LE GEOGRAPHE 1802'. The original Frenchman's rock was eventually removed to the National Gallery in Adelaide but a replica – enclosed by a dome constructed in 1906 - still marks the site beside the soak at Hog Bay. There is evidence of a similar inscription in a cave at Baudin's Ravine des Casoars at the western end of the island, but this was obliterated only in recent years.³

In 1803, after re-equipping his expedition and obtaining a second ship, Baudin returned and sailed completely about the island. Most of the features he surveyed have retained their French names, including Capes de Couedic, Borda, Cassini and Gantheaume and Vivonne and D'Estrees Bay. The French also renamed the island itself, but the original name of Kangaroo Island survived.

Baudin continued, sailing into Western Australia. There, he encountered some American sealers in the *Union* who, when told about Kangaroo Island, hastened eastwards. Half the crew was set down beside the estuary to Pelican Lagoon, which has ever since been called American River. There in 1803-1804 they built a schooner, *Independence*, using local timber, at a site which has been identified. The remainder of the crew cruised about the island, sealing, killing 12,000 seals as they roosted along the shores and on nearby islets.

From then the slaughter was on as regular visits were made by British and American crews in search of seals, kangaroo and salt for curing the skins. Fine salt scraped from dry lagoons led sealers to use Kangaroo Island as a base camp. Salt gathering was, of course, the first mineral mining undertaken in South Australia, the earliest recorded site being at White Lagoon in 1814.

Usually operating from Sydney sealers were temporarily stationed on the island for the killing season, with bare provisions: Harvey's Return on the north coast, was named after one such sealer, associated with Joseph Murrell of Sydney.

In 1804, unnerved by the possibility of French annexation after Baudin's visit, the British

Government sent a surveyor to Kangaroo Island as a possible site for colonisation. The Grimes Report was so unfavourable (in fact it seems doubtful he even visited the island), condemning its poor timber and soils and the lack of fresh water, that colonisation of this entire southern Australian country was set back another thirty two years. Ironically, another report by a Captain Sutherland, who claimed to have visited Kangaroo Island in 1819, was so optimistic (and inaccurate) that it led to the first formal colonisation of the island, with the establishment of the South Australian Company's settlement of Kingscote in 1836.

In the meantime from about 1806 Kangaroo Island's very remoteness attracted settlers of a different kind, semi-lawless men who were escaped convicts, ships' deserters and sealers. They brought with them Tasmanian Aboriginal women and abducted other women from the Murray Mouth-Encounter Bay tribes. Some of the men were notorious for their crimes and cruelties and one visitor described Kangaroo Island at that time as the most vicious place in the British Empire. If so, it was but a foretaste of the carelessness, cruelties and conflicts which attended contact between other British ruffians and Aboriginals at the frontiers of settlement throughout Australia. The Aboriginal women and children on Kangaroo Island besides providing companionship, went trapping and gathering and kept the men both comfortably fed and able to trade skins and salt for rum and tobacco with the occasional ship.

In 1827 a ship was sent from Sydney to round up the worst offenders and the remainder settled more quietly under the self-styled 'governorship' of Robert Wallen at Three Wells (Cygnet) River (mis-named Henry Wallen at the Kingscote cemetery).

Most of the men and women were transients, but from about the early 1820s several settled permanently on the island, ultimately achieving a rough respectability in the more decorous society which succeeded formal colonisation. Nat Thomas, who lies buried at Antechamber Bay, was typical.

One of the earliest settlers on Kangaroo Island he left Sydney in 1824 as a crew member of a sealing ship bound for Bass Strait, but by 1827 had left the ship and with two Tasmanian aboriginal women had come to Kangaroo Island and settled at Antechamber Bay. There with a group of other sealers he lived a rough, but to he and his companions,

an idyllic life feeding on wallabies and home grown vegetables. They kept two 10 ton whale boats in Chapman's Creek in which they sealed or visited the mainland to replenish their supply of aboriginal women. He was a ruthless man. When a young aboriginal boy ran away from him, he cut off the lad's ear so close to the head that part of his cheek was removed and he later died. In September 1836 dressed in wallaby and kangaroo skin clothing, Nat Thomas and some mates met the emigrants from the John Price who had just landed near Kingscote and badly frightened them.

By the 1850s Thomas was styled farmer and grazier, taking up one of the first pastoral leases issued in the Hundred of Dudley, his part-Tasmanian Aboriginal daughters marrying the more respectable settlers who had arrived after colonisation.⁴

There are many stories of the other men and women. The women were known simply as Sal, Bess, Emma, Puss and Polecat. The 'wild men' included Jacob Seaman, George Bates, 'Abyssinia' and 'Governor' Wallen, whose productive farm at Cygnet River was sited on the best soil on the island which is still the main source of local vegetables.

Though the tales may be part legend and part truth, the lives of these islanders also left tangible relics: in the 1920s anthropologist Norman Tindale and his colleagues unearthed traditional Tasmanian artefacts; and the women themselves are buried at near-secret locations about the island. Some of the men have more formal burial sites: George Bates' tombstone inscription at the Penneshaw cemetery makes interesting reading. Bates' house itself, in Penneshaw, has been claimed to be the oldest stone house in South Australia. The existing cottage was, however, rebuilt using some of the same stone and possibly the same foundations at the exact site at the turn of the century.

'Freshfields' at Antechamber Bay was the home of Nat Thomas and his wife, Sophia (also called Sal), who was a Tasmanian Aboriginal. The original four roomed cottage dates from about 1827. Although it was later extended and completely encircled by additions, the dwelling is an extremely rare, intact relic of that period of pre-colonial European contact. Thomas died in 1879 and with Sophia lies buried by the river below 'Freshfields'.

The ruins of Jacob Seaman's hut are at Point Morrison and vestiges of Wallen's farm lie at Cygnet River. Wells, such as those at Cape Rouge and beside other beaches

provided a small but sufficient water supply.

Reports by Captain Sutherland and by other whalers and resident sealers aroused interest in Britain in the possibilities of establishing a colony in South Australia.

In 1834 the South Australian Act, founding the colony, was passed by the British Parliament. The South Australian Company was formed in 1835 with George Fife Angas as founder and Chairman which helped set the colony on its feet financially, and continued its role in the new country in a typical nineteenth century blend of altruism and mercantilism. For there was money to be made in Australia in land speculation, financing, whaling and pastoralism. The New South Wales experience was proving that, and the new Company tried it all. At that stage whaling appeared to be most lucrative having been to that time the major industry in New South Wales. So, its land purchases aside, the South Australian Company concentrated first on whaling. Its first goal was Kangaroo Island.

1836-1874: outpost of empire

More efficient than the Colonisation Commissioners who were to establish the Province, the South Australian Company more rapidly organised ships, workers and supplies. These left in February 1836, bound for Kangaroo Island. There, the Company proposed to form a permanent settlement and begin whaling. Other ships set sail about the same time. The *Rapid* carried the Surveyor-General, Colonel William Light, and his workers, who were to survey the new colonial lands and to make the crucial decision on the site of the capital city; and later, the *Buffalo* with its complement of worthy colonists and officials, presided over by Captain John Hindmarsh, the new Governor.

The South Australian Company ships, *Lady Mary Pelham* and *Duke of York* made landfall at Kangaroo Island in July 1836 and later the *John Price*, heralding the beginning of formal settlement. The Company's town – Kingscote, named after one of the directors – was established at Reeves Point, a site chosen because of its location in Nepean Bay and because it was near the entrance to the Gulf, with access to the mainland. Kingscote

was essentially a base for the Company's whaling activities, but it was sited in the hope that it might also develop if not as the capital city, at least as a port centrally located by the seaways to the mainland.

But soon after, Colonel Light landed at Nepean Bay. His verdict echoed that of the earlier official visitors: Nepean Bay was an impressive harbour but he rejected the site because of the poor soil and lack of water. From here Light explored the east coast of Gulf St. Vincent where, after rejecting three other suggested sites along the mainland coast, he decided to place the capital city, Adelaide, on the banks of the River Torrens.

Light's decision immediately relegated Kingscote's status, at best, to that of an outlying provincial post, but even that role was bedevilled by the impoverished resources: even the water had to be at first carried by boat from water-holes at Point Marsden, across the bay. Without ceremony the Company appropriated 'Governor' Wallen's farm, but there was little other productive land, nor was the whaling successful, although the Company persisted in setting up whaling stations both on the island and on the mainland.

Even so, the Colony's first settlement might have survived had it been a government rather than a Company town. Its difficulties were reinforced by dispute between the high-handed Company managers and their employees. Initially, every emigrant ship called there and usually at least a few colonists stayed behind when the rest shifted to Holdfast Bay. The Colony's first school was held under a bush at Reeves Point and its first burials were made in the cemetery which remains near the site of the original town. Stone for the first road construction, from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, was shipped from quarries at the same place by Company ships and salt was mined and also shipped to Adelaide.

By 1838 Kingscote had a population of approximately 400, who lived in brush or timber huts and tents fringing the shore and brick and stone cottages, the more prominent Company residences on the slopes of the hill behind Reeves Point. There was a store, a boarding house, workshops and a post office. However, later in that year the Company cut its losses, moving its headquarters to Adelaide and with them went the majority of the inhabitants. Kingscote effectively ceased to exist and the progress of colonisation of the island virtually came to a halt. Its population was only 170 by 1860, less than half that of

Kingscote before closure. By 1901 the population had risen to only 700.

Kingscote's early demise and the siting of the modern town some distance away has ensured the survival of a fascinating historical and archaeological area. It is without doubt one of the most significant sites in South Australia. A pioneers' memorial, complete with large bronze kangaroos, was unveiled nearby during the State's centenary in 1936 as a reminder that the original official settlers landed here, from the *Duke of York*, a fact which has been often overlooked in South Australian history.

The South Australian Company continued with its whaling operations for a short while after abandoning Kingscote. Two bay whaling stations operated on the island in the early 1840s. Some relics of one whaling station remain at Point Tinline, D'Estrees Bay, which was a small and short-lived affair, established in 1841. The Point was the lookout. Shreds of whalebones indicate the site of the station in the bay itself, while a nearby cave was possibly used as shelter. Twenty five years later a family named Bates used the same cave as residence when their house and all possessions were destroyed by fire. The abandoned whalebone was used as seating for the children.⁵

After the 1840s a trickle of new settlers established small farms on the island, mostly at the eastern end near Kingscote, at American River and on the Dudley Peninsula, and in rich but isolated bays, along the northern coast. Small areas of land around Kingscote, along the Cygnet River and on Dudley Peninsula near the site of the present town of Penneshaw were surveyed and became freehold before 1860. It was not until the late 1870s that any large areas of land were occupied on a permanent tenure.

After the South Australian Company muscled in at Kingscote and Cygnet River, many of the island's old timers, including Henry Wallen, went to live on Dudley Peninsula as it was further from the Company's jurisdiction. Ironically, for most of the ensuing years of the century, Dudley Peninsula was the most prosperous part of the island and the scene of its first significant agricultural and pastoral development. For example, from the late 1850s the Lashmar family held the Antechamber Bay Run of 31 square miles. At that time runs were unfenced and shepherds were employed: a shepherd's grave on the property dating from the 1860s is suggestive of what must

have been the loneliest of deaths.

The lives of the early pastoralists were no less arduous, and their early living conditions were nearly as primitive as those of the early farmers. During this period a series of sea-accessible pastoral stations were established along the north coast at Stokes Bay, Snug Cove, Western River, Middle River and Cape Cassini. Henry Snelling landed at Snellings Beach (later, Middle River) in 1840. The earliest relics of his family's occupation are four graves near the homestead, which like the others was rebuilt or replaced in succeeding years.

The owners of those runs combined a variety of pursuits – farming, grazing, timber-getting, trapping, shipping – with the same need for survival although perhaps greater financial reward as the other islanders. John Hirst, the ‘Governor of Snug Cove’ established himself on the island in 1872 and kept a journal which records in terse language the struggle by the pastoralist, in a wild and isolated country, and the gradual expansion of his activities. He grazed sheep and provided meat to Cape Borda lighthouse, went sealing, grew some crops, cut and milled timber for the Moonta-Wallaroo mines and had a silver mine. There was some possum-trapping and wallaby-snaring with the skins being shipped to Adelaide.⁶

The one exception to Hirst's brief descriptions is his account of events following the shipwreck of the barque *Mars* in June 1885. The nine surviving crew spent a night at Hirst's house; ‘The poor fellows looked very haggard and wretched having been wandering around the island almost a week without food.’ Hirst then set off to West Bay, to see the shipwreck for himself. His ride was a ‘terrible battle’ through dense scrub and rocky country, and when he found the wreck it was a ‘woful sight’.

... there it was ... beach and rocks strewn with the debris in all directions, a complete smash. Large spars, mast, timbers etcetera, broken up into fire-wood. In the evening the scene was weird and melancholy enough lit up by a bright moon as well as the phosphorescent gleam of the breakers as they rolled on the beach and rocks like battalions of sea-horses coming grandly on to be hurled back again ... hunting about to the north of the vessel I came on the remains of a poor fellow in a deep crevasse which appeared as if it had just been washed up ...

we could do nothing for him

The islanders' lives, if rigorous and healthy, were essentially dull and it is not difficult to imagine the shock and excitement when ships were wrecked along the coast. After colonisation, nearly 50 vessels were wrecked in the hazardous waters around the island; the earliest recorded is the *William*, wrecked in 1847. (Two more recent wrecks, that of *Loch Vennachar*, of 1905, and *Montebello*, of 1906, have been declared Historic Shipwrecks.)

For good reason South Australia's first lighthouse was built on Kangaroo Island. This was the Sturt Light built overlooking Backstairs Passage at Cape Willoughby. It was constructed in 1851, built of blocks of local limestone, now white-painted. The original light housing has since been reconstructed beside the National Trust Museum at Kingscote.

The square-shaped Flinders Light at Cape Borda on the north-western point of the island was built in 1858. Until the 1920s supplies for the lighthouse keepers were landed by sea at a small steep-sided bay known as Harveys Return, where relics of the iron track and the horse-powered capstan remain. Above the bay a small cemetery gives evidence of the dangers of the landings at Harveys Return and of the isolation of the keepers and their families at the lighthouse itself. The shipping disasters continued, and Cape du Couedic lighthouse was built at the south west point in 1906.

1875-1919: this stubborn foe

It was not a matter of chopping it down once, nor yet a second or third time, that did away with this stubborn foe, which, however had eventually to succumb to the attacks of more stubborn men ... in summer they fired the grass, finding this the best and cheapest way of killing the foe out ... After killing the scrub they initiated a set programme of grubbing portions of the land every year until eventually they had a cleared paddock to go into. (*Kangaroo Island Courier*, 1910)⁷

Kangaroo Island was gazetted County Carnarvon in 1874. In 1875 in response to a demand for land from wheat farmers, sheep runs were resumed and the hundreds of

Menzies, Haines and Dudley were laid out and land was made freehold along the coast near Penneshaw.

Several new towns were surveyed and proclaimed by the Government, including Penneshaw (originally Hog Bay) in 1881, Brownlow and Emu Bay, and most importantly, Queenscliffe. Queenscliffe, established in 1883, south of the original site of Kingscote, could not escape its historical associations and was renamed Kingscote at about the turn of the century. Some of the older businesses retain the former name, such as the Queenscliffe Hotel. The island's two district councils, Dudley and Kingscote, were both formed in 1888, based at the two main towns, Penneshaw and Kingscote.

By no means was there a great influx of farming families to Kangaroo Island, and their lives differed little from that of earlier residents. The bush was at once foe and friend: at the same time as farmers battled to clear land they gained a livelihood which was partly derived from the bush, notably from collecting and selling possum and wallaby skins, yacca gum and eucalyptus oil. These last two distinctive local industries flourished in the early twentieth century, and continue in a small way still. Yacca gum, cut from the yacca or grass tree, usually as land was being cleared, was exported and used in the manufacture of explosives and varnishes. Eucalyptus oil was distilled by farmers using stills of their own making and great quantities of leaves from the indigenous *Eucalyptus cneorifolia*.

As Mr. Jim Tiggemann recalled, 'thousands of tons' of yacca gum was collected. 'That was all that kept the working man going, that and the eucalyptus and the snaring ... if he never had that he couldn't exist. Now better times are here and you don't have to do it so much.'⁸

For a few years following 1905 the introduction of superphosphate and the expansion of wheat farming generally, with Government support, caused a moderate land boom on the island, but, in Bauer's words, 'this sudden burst of activity ran its course and left the community with but a slightly increased population and somewhat better shipping facilities.'⁹

Shipping was, of course, essential to the island's economy – the earliest jetty was built at Kingscote. Most stations and farms simply moved their produce from shore to offshore

ketch by way of lighters (shallow-draughted boats). As agricultural development picked up, new jetties were built after 1905 at American River, Emu Bay, Vivonne Bay and Penneshaw.

The primacy of sea over road transport at that time is reflected in the seawards orientation of many of the homesteads, farm houses, tracks and other relics, such as threshing floors. After harvest bags in which barley and wheat were transported were too heavy to cart across land to the regular ports, so threshing floors were constructed on various farms near the coast and several of these remain at the eastern end of the island. Barley and wheat was harvested, threshed practically on site, and dragged down to the sea. For example, Henry F. Bates established a farm east of Hog Bay in 1878 and built a farmhouse, threshing floor and a stone retaining embankment for a track across the cliffs to Penneshaw.

Boats and boating also contributed towards a rise in tourism, particularly from the 1890s onwards at American River. Nils Ryberg opened the first guest house there in 1895 (it was largely rebuilt and enlarged in 1928). American River and the adjoining district boomed temporarily as several other more short-lived industries were established between 1890 and 1910, including fish canning, crag fishing and salt harvesting at Muston. The island's sole railway line was built to serve that industry, being completed to Muston in 1910.

Elsewhere there were other short-lived ventures including gold-mining at the Koohinor Mines and brickmaking.

As the numbers of islanders slowly increased, so did the various public facilities required. Throughout the island's history a total of 23 schools have been established, with only 3 presently in operation. Most of the schools were set up between 1869 and 1903 and then between 1911 and 1919, coinciding with the increase in cereal growing. Although the earliest schools were at Penneshaw and Kingscote, the existing small stone schools were not erected for the Education Department until 1897 and 1910 respectively. The earlier schools were conducted at a variety of places usually provided by the parents, who also built many of the more isolated bush schools on the island. Nineteen of the 23 schools were one teacher bush schools. Wisanger School was typical: built by local

farmers as the Wisanger Farmers Assembly Room in 1884, and leased to the Education Department, this simple small building served as a focus of the district's social life until the 1970s and gave the longest continuous service of any of the schools, until 1945.

During this period, as the farming population slowly increased at the eastern end of Kangaroo Island, an abortive attempt was made to expand pastoral settlement westwards. In 1879 Robert Stockdale and the Taylor brothers brought 30,000 sheep to stock their south coast properties but many hundreds died of 'coast disease'. This soil deficiency enfeebled stock and bedevilled pastoralists in all coastal areas until the cause was determined by the C.S.I.R.O. in the 1930s.

The Rocky River homestead was closely associated with this false land boom and represents the most westerly advance of pastoral development. However the present homestead was built by Charlie May when he took over the lease for that area in 1893.

The sometimes cruel isolation of the south west was underlined by the wreck of the *Loch Sloy* in 1899. One of the crew members who survived staggered to the Rocky River homestead: search parties set out and found two other survivors but the fourth, David Kilpatrick, had died and he was buried by Charles May and a crewman. The grave with its original stone arrangement is significant as a memorial to the many who lost their lives in shipwreck and on the trek to rescue through uninhabited bush.

The sheer rugged wildness of the western end of the island prompted several South Australians to suggest a wildlife sanctuary in the area. The huge national park, Flinders Chase, was finally proclaimed in 1919, with Charles May becoming the first ranger, based at the Rocky River homestead which was later included in the park.

1920-1945: stagnation

'Thereafter the Island settled slowly into stagnation ...'¹⁰

Between the end of the minor land boom early in the twentieth century and the beginning of the large land settlement scheme after the Second World War, the island's economy, occupations and population remained essentially unchanged.

The last two Hundreds were declared; farming was boosted by the defeat of 'coastal disease', following the discovery of its causes by C.S.I.R.O. in the 1930s; better shipping facilities and other improved communications fostered further development and some modest growth in the towns and other settlements. But this was restricted to the old established areas and there were only sporadic efforts to develop the densely vegetated ironstone plateau of the island's interior. Indeed, the traditional bush-based industries of trapping, yacca gum collecting and eucalyptus oil distilling flourished during the period.

The last surviving still which continues to be operated near Cygnet River dates from that era.

The first telephone link between the mainland and the island was established by cable in 1929. The surviving cable hut at Cuttlefish Bay near Penneshaw represents a development of great significance to the twentieth century history of Kangaroo Island as its historical isolation was slowly breached. During the Second world war a coast watching post was manned by Volunteer Defence Corps members alongside the hut: the machine gun emplacements remain here and at Vivonne Bay as scarce relics of the war on the island. The only other major physical relic of the V.D.C.'s activities was a large hole which was blown by them in the long Vivonne Bay jetty as practice and to prevent enemy landings!

However, the most far-reaching effects of the war were indirect, as a result of the post war War Service Land Settlement Scheme.

1946 to the present: the last frontier

After the Second World War, Commonwealth and State Governments embarked upon large war service land settlement schemes as a reward for Australian ex-servicemen, as a means of their rehabilitation to civilian life, and as a form of State development. The War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act was passed in 1945 and accepted by all Governments. In 1946 a plan was proposed by the South Australians for a large soldier settlement scheme in central Kangaroo Island. In 1947 the

scheme was approved, and work was started on one of the largest projects of its type in Australia.

Ex-servicemen selected as settlers camped with their families in the area and provided the labour to clear the land: an uninterrupted expanse of 250,000 acres of scrub.

The men soon realized that they would have to wait a long time before their blocks would be ready for occupation. The enormity of the task ahead became apparent as they went out to begin clearing land which had defied settlement since Europeans first came to South Australia.¹¹

Camp life, early farming life, the establishment of a community and of a new town, Parndana, repeated earlier themes of pioneering in a rugged and remote environment: the Sir Cecil Hincks' Memorial Reserve commemorates these efforts, the site itself including the foundations of some of the original camp buildings.

However, the sheer scale of the project, encompassing a huge area of the island, the use of heavy machinery, State and Commonwealth support, and an introduction of 174 soldier settlers and their families, made that event unique in the island's history.

Understandably, some of the original islanders at first resented the invasion. The population leapt from 1,113 in 1947 to 2,167 in 1954, and further increases since have brought inevitable changes in the old ways of Kangaroo Island.

¹ Quoted in Neville Cordes, *Discovering Kangaroo Island* (Kingscote, 1969, 1981), p.14.

² Francis Dutton, *South Australia and its mines*, (London 1846. Facsimile 1978), p. 81.

³ See Heritage Investigations, *Early European contact with South Australia: heritage report*, (Adelaide 1981), p.11. Mr. John Anderson has subsequently received information from other local landowners that the inscription had existed and had been obliterated.

⁴ See transcript of interview with Mrs. Ivy Boettcher, Kingscote, 1980 by Heritage Investigations (she was a daughter of one of the Bates' children). The Bates family and at least three of the children lived in the cave for two years.

⁵ Information and quote from the display at the Penneshaw National Trust Museum (noted by Heritage Investigations, 1980).

⁶ John Hirst's diary (1864-1914) is owned by Colin Bell, Kingscote. Excerpts from the diary were recorded and transcribed by Heritage Investigations, 1980, including Hirst's description of the 'Mars' incident.

⁷ Report of a visit to John and Alfred's farm, in *Turner Family History*, p.9.

⁸ Interview with Mr. Jim Tiggemann, Brownlow, Kangaroo Island, by Heritage Investigations, 1980.

⁹ F.H. Bauer, *Kangaroo Island, a short guide* (Adelaide 1955), p.4.

¹⁰ Jean Nunn, *Soldier settlers* (Adelaide 1981), p.12.

¹¹ Nunn, p.21.