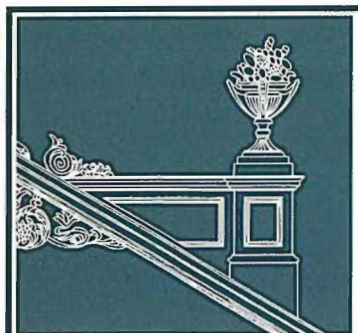


January 1993  
Number 2



# State Heritage

## NEWSLETTER

*Issues and information on heritage conservation in South Australia*



Loreto Convent (The Acacias) Portrush Road  
Stencilwork in dining room c.1880s.

# Maritime Archaeology

Sarah Kenderdine, Maritime Archaeologist at the State Heritage Branch, has been busy over the past year. Sarah was commissioned to survey the River Murray for historic shipping sites. Her report has produced a study of 61 shipwrecks, 87 land sites and 16 historic vessels with recommendations for the management, conservation and interpretation of these sites. It is the first survey of its kind in South Australia.

Sarah has also produced another first. She organised the first riverine submerged site archaeological conference to be held in Australia. This was held between September 21-23, 1992 in the historic port of Echuca.

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## NEW HERITAGE LEGISLATION

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**For the past two years, a broad ranging review has been seeking ways to improve the planning system. In conjunction with this process, a working party has looked in detail at the Heritage Act and its administration.**

Councils have long been asking for responsibility for their local heritage. One of the major changes to the Act which concerns local communities is the creation of a new tier of heritage listing, the responsibility of which lies with local councils.

Under the new system local communities will have a much greater say in what places form part of their local heritage. To achieve this, the community need to work closely with their local council; the new legislation will provide a better channel for their enthusiasm than we have had in the past.

As with the State register if a local council wants to list its heritage places a heritage survey must be carried out for their particular locality. Protection of heritage should be part of an open and public process, with documented and valid criteria for the assessment of heritage.

If anyone would like a copy of the draft bill, please ring Francesca Stropin from the State Heritage Branch on (08) 207 2380.

*The purpose of the conference was to co-ordinate the programs undertaken by the three states responsible for the cultural heritage protection and management of shipwreck and riparian sites on the River Murray, and its tributaries.*

*The Murray has existed for about sixty million years. During the last 40,000 years Aborigines moved into the Murray and there is evidence of their habitation on the river. It is only in the last 200 years that the river has been regulated to harness its sources. Control of the river has been costly, the issues which arose from the conference will help to make the most of the river's cultural resources.*

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## Insurance for Heritage Properties

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The question of insurance for heritage listed properties has at times created some concern from owners and insurance companies.

It is important to note that the State Heritage Branch does not force any owner of a heritage property to rebuild a property to its original state where damage has occurred. Each situation should be specifically evaluated according to circumstances.

Heritage places can be insured with no greater risk for the insurance company than any other old building or structure.

There are a number of options available to owners of a property faced with reconstruction of buildings after damage.

If a place is damaged in a fire or by some other event its reconstruction is not the only option that can be pursued. If a building is completely burnt out in a fire its cultural significance may largely be gone. Reconstruction in philosophical terms in these circumstances is not regarded as appropriate.

A place extensively damaged in a disaster may be demolished, redeveloped, reconstructed or stabilised in its damaged form. There are many options depending on the desire of the owners, available resources, the degree of damage and what cultural qualities might remain.

If any owner of a heritage property has had experience of an insurance company treating that property differently from others because it is on a heritage register, the Branch would be interested to know more about the circumstances. Please contact Peter Bell on (08) 207 2390.



## LITTRA HOUSE *- a week in the country!*

***Between the 5th and 13th of April 1992, something unusual happened in an isolated corner of South Australia's outback. Near a small area of Lake Littra (close to the border of Victoria and New South Wales), a portable city was erected by members of the Loxton Community. Their vision: to restore a structure that is part of South Australia's history.***

The structure is Littra House, a former sheep inspection station and used as a place of residence by the sheep inspector for a short time. It is a structure that reflects on the one hand pastoral history in South Australia (along with the concomitant reflections of hardship and success encountered by many pioneering Australians in the 19th century) and on the other it highlights the separate nature of the colonies prior to Federation and the liberal policy of free trade. Such a house is unique in South Australia.

In 1863, a sheep inspector was appointed to prevent the dreaded disease scab entering South Australia. Henry Sneyd Glenie was the first sheep inspector: he had come from the rich high rainfall country of Ceylon, and Australia's arid country could not have been more different.

Glenie, living in spartan conditions with a large family near the Chowilla Homestead, had resigned in 1869 and was replaced by Alex McLeod, the first tenant of the new stone building. In 1871, Littra House was built for £160.

*Littra House - the finished product after restoration by the Loxton Probiants.*

With a grant from the State Heritage Branch members of the Probus Clubs of Loxton (with an average age of 66) rebuilt Littra House with limestone found at the site and along the creek beds and elsewhere (about 3 tons of stone were collected).

Among the pink sands of the Chowilla area, amid the red gums, black box and coobah (wattle) trees, a small village was erected with caravans, tents, bus, two trucks carrying equipment and materials, a front end loader and a hydroplat. 'Dunny Ave', a wood-fired hot water service and a pump and pipeline from nearby Punkah Creek were essential items.

About 28 people stayed for the week with others dropping in and out at various stages of restoration. Men and women combined to mix mortar, lay stone, strip old plaster, replaster and point walls, cook, play golf on the dry lake bed, fish; sing and dance the week away, but, there were many aching muscles and bandaged hands.

Asked why they had put so much effort into restoration of a place that was so isolated, the team of workers said that although the work had been hard, they had satisfaction and fun. There had been a camaraderie that was unique: people that would not ordinarily have met had joined together to form good working and social relationships. The ultimate goal was the preservation of something special. As Joe Mack stated the restoration was '...for future generations to see what life was like back then' and 'to be proud of that history'.

The restoration of Littra House by the Loxton community is one example of accepting the responsibility of protecting those moments in history that can never quite recur.

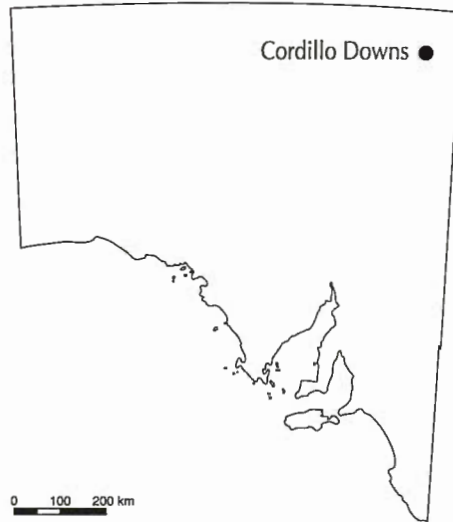
# CORDILLO DOWNS

In 1883 in the far North of South Australia the Beltana Pastoral Company (founded in the late 19th century by Sir Thomas Elder, Peter Waite and Nathaniel Phillipson) began construction of a woolshed for its burgeoning sheep industry. It was however no ordinary woolshed.

The size and construction of Cordillo Downs woolshed is remarkable. Measuring approximately 13 metres by 60 metres with a unique arched corrugated iron roof, the shed's size and form is accentuated amid the isolated red gibber desert of central Australia.

**BELOW:** Cordillo Downs woolshed.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S FAR NORTH



Timber is difficult to find in central Australia and it was for this reason that the distinct curved roof was used. The use of timber was minimised and the roof was given strength from the vaulted, rivetted corrugated iron roof sheets supported by heavily buttressed stone walls.

The woolshed thrived with activity in the late 1880s and 1890s with a record 82,000 sheep shorn in 1890. In 1941 a decision was made to abandon sheep and stock with Shorthorn cattle.

Over 100 years after its construction the woolshed is being restored. In 1989 a violent storm had damaged the woolshed. Some emergency repairs were carried out in 1991, and last July Duncan Ross-Watt Conservation Architect with the State Heritage Branch led a team of architects and volunteers to continue the repair of the collapsed roof and buttressed walls.





Two people immensely pleased with the restoration of this technically and aesthetically significant structure are Rex and Laurie Jarman who were shearers at Cordillo in 1939 and 1940.

The brothers were part of a family of eight brothers and their father owned a dairy and market garden at Flinders Park in the 1930s. They were lucky enough to sell milk, cream and vegetables during the 1930s depression where Rex remembered that many children wore no boots or shoes. Their brother Frank suggested that they work as shed hands at Cordillo to earn extra money and they went on to become shearers.

Laurie stayed for 2 years, while Rex stayed for about 3 months. But both remembered with fondness the many people they had met. For instance Tom Cruise (the mailman), 'The Mad Eight' who would shear 2,200 sheep a day, and the shearers who bicycled from Lyndhurst 600 km away to reach Cordillo Downs. One of the cyclists reminisced to Rex how he woke one night to find a dingo

on his chest reaching for the knapsack of food that had been carefully hidden in the tree above.

Rex remembers how the shearers slept in galvanised huts and belted unsuspecting snorers with their boots, and the Afghan camels that were used for the transportation of goods.

In order to reach Cordillo Rex and Laurie travelled for about three days in a Buick and slept on the ground when necessary. They travelled via Broken Hill as the Strzelecki track was in poor condition in those days. Their route to Cordillo entailed crossing Cooper Creek, which at times would be in flood; in these circumstances the Buick would be placed on a punt (see picture).

The Nineteenth Century was an age of discovery for Europeans in Australia. Cordillo Downs woolshed is one reflection of that spirit of discovery. Laurie and Rex Jarman can rest assured that part of that history will continue to be reflected in a tangible way through the preservation of the woolshed.



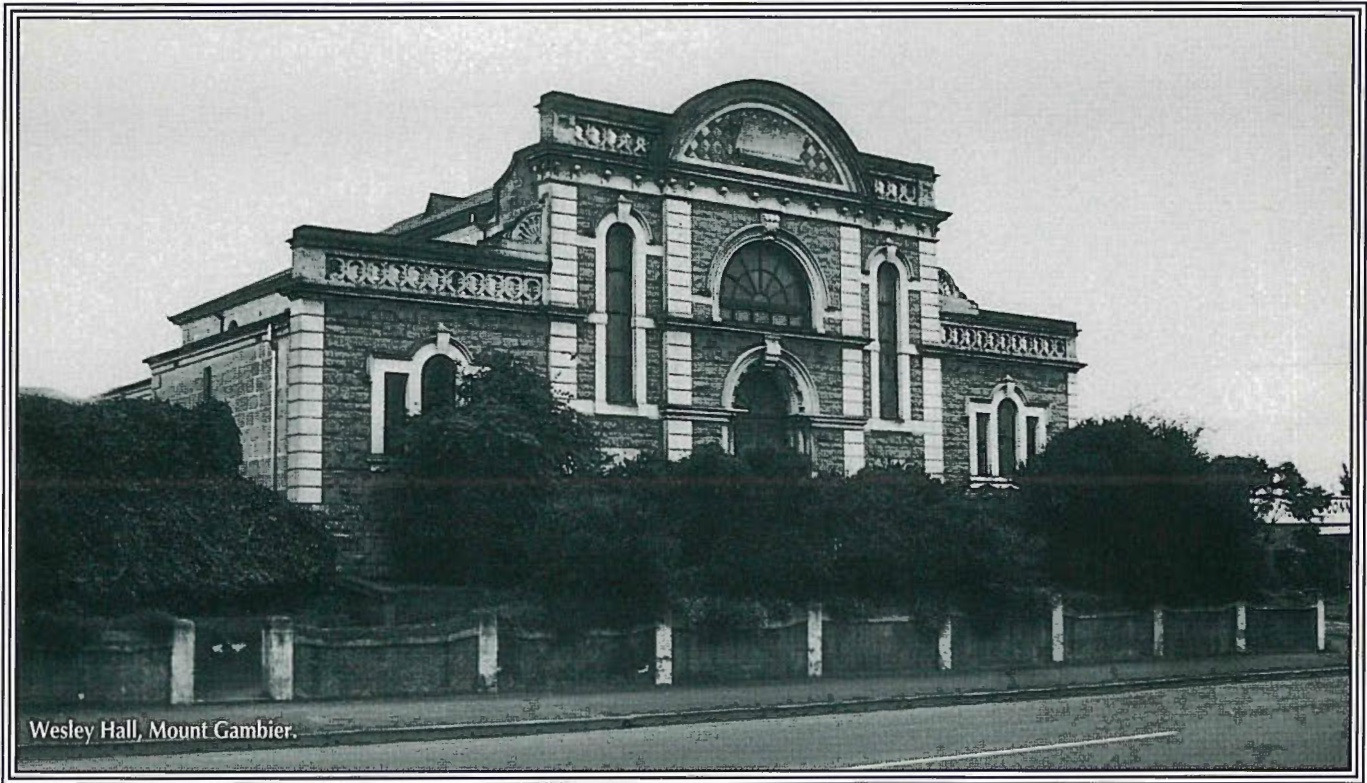
**TOP** Rex Jarman (on the left) at 21, at the time of his shearing days.

**CENTRE:** The Buick crossing Coopers Creek on a punt.  
Courtesy: Rex Jarman.

**BELOW** From left to right: Laurie Jarman, Peter Wells (Conservation Architect at the State Heritage Branch who helped restore Cordillo woolshed) and Rex Jarman.

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# NEW USES *for* HERITAGE BUILDINGS



Heritage buildings can be changed, altered or added to for new uses. What is important in any change is to understand the significant heritage features of that building, and to then protect those features. The fabric of the building is significant and should generally be retained. Change which is reversible normally presents few problems, it is the destruction of heritage features that cannot be reversed that creates problems.

Skillshare have negotiated a long term lease of Wesley Hall and will use it for office training, hospitality, retail sales and other courses. A community based organisation partly funded by the government for training long term unemployed, *Skillshare* is also actively involved in enterprise development.

The original fabric and external appearance of Wesley Hall will not be changed. To adapt the building to the needs of

**It is sometimes said that the conservation of historic places and development are mutually exclusive: the restoration of Balhannah Mine and Wesley Hall in Mount Gambier are two examples that contradict this myth.**

*Skillshare* the interior will change but the original grandeur of the building will remain. New classrooms will be created through timber partitioning and benchspace will be adjusted to house computers. Authentic colour combinations will help to maintain the original atmosphere of the hall.

The community of Mount Gambier is obviously interested in retaining its heritage: to complement the government subsidy for the restoration of the building, the community has supported the restoration through volunteer work and donations of materials such as paint.

In keeping with the needs of the Mount Gambier community the Wesley Hall will maintain its sense of history and early twentieth century architectural style but be put to a modern day practical use. This process will be effected through the co-operation between the State Heritage Branch and architects and builders in Mount Gambier.

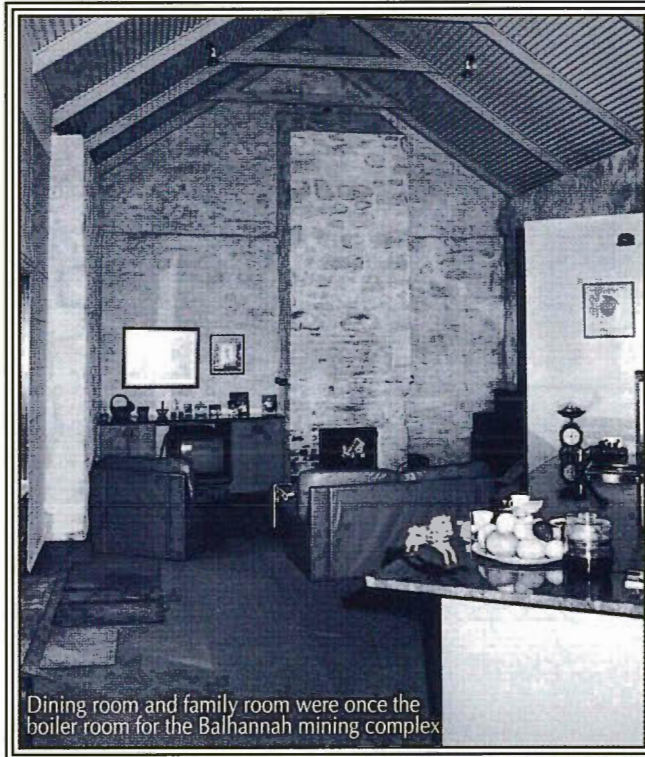
Another structure regarded as a model for sympathetic redevelopment of historic buildings for new uses is Balhannah Mine. The Mine complex was placed on the Register of State Heritage Items in 1986. The site is remarkable as the most intact group of nineteenth century mining structures in South Australia. In 1869 rich bismuth ore was discovered at Balhannah and by 1871 the mine complex had been built.

At the time of the inclusion on the Register, the mine buildings were uninhabitable and derelict. With considerable capital, skill and energy Polly and Chris Woods (former owners of Balhannah Mine complex) restored and redesigned a disused engine/boiler house into a residence. It remains a remarkable achievement.

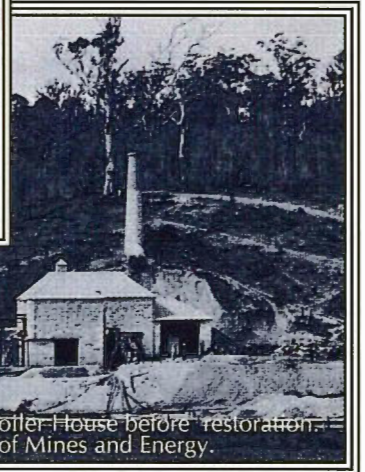
With sandstone walls up to 1.6 metres thick the exterior of the building was left intact. No windows or doors were

added or destroyed. The original fabric remains while the interior fits the needs of a twentieth century family.

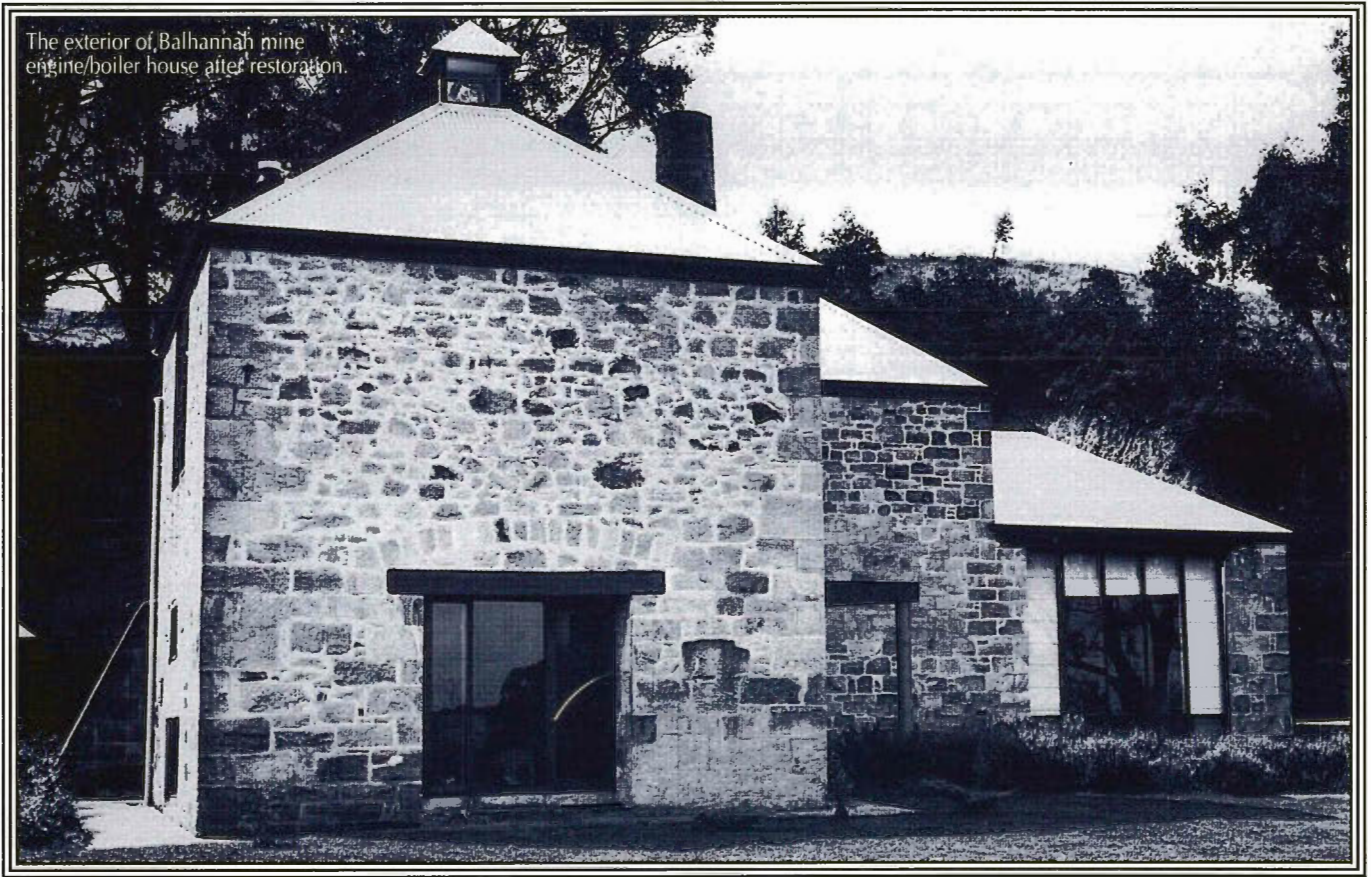
Current owners Penny and Greg Marshall have now added their distinctive interior design and are proudly and happily living at Balhannah Mine with their two children.



Dining room and family room were once the boiler room for the Balhannah mining complex



Balhannah Mine Engine/Boiler House before restoration. Courtesy: SA Department of Mines and Energy.



The exterior of Balhannah mine engine/boiler house after restoration.

# THE NATIONAL TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The National Trust is an independent community body that works for the conservation of our natural and built environment. It is often confused with the State Heritage Branch. Although both organisations are concerned with saving South Australia's heritage the National Trust is not a government body and therefore an important lobby group for the community.



greater public understanding and participation.

## Building Conservation Advisory Service (BCAS)

With the growing awareness that old buildings play an important role as part of our built environment, the trend towards 'restoration' has steadily increased. As a result the Trust is now operating a Building Conservation Advisory Service.

The BCAS is able to assist property owners that are concerned about particular building matters and seek to obtain independent and totally impartial advice. The services are conducted by a fully qualified conservation architect.

For more information about the Building Conservation Advisory Service or how to become a member contact The National Trust of South Australia, Ayers House, 288 North Terrace, Adelaide or telephone (08) 223 1655.

Founded in South Australia in 1955, the Trust has 7,000 members and 2,000 volunteers who assist in the management of 28 nature reserves, 61 museums and 100 buildings throughout the State.

While the old image of the Trust as the guardian of fine old buildings is partially true, the Trust does far more than this.

The Trust's most important role is in advocacy, which leads to its involvement in many areas, particularly conservation, tourism and the arts. Within each of these areas the Trust promotes conservation issues to ensure

## CONSERVATION PRACTICE NOTES

The Heritage Conservation Practice Notes are an invaluable informative guide to the conservation of South Australia's built heritage. A special folder is available to contain the loose leaf sheets and booklets.

*Heritage Development Guidelines 2.2; Advertising and Signs on Heritage Buildings in SA* is the latest edition, and is available for purchase.

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