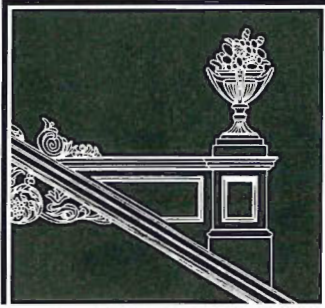


July 1996 • Number 9



State Heritage

NEWSLETTER

ISSUES AND INFORMATION ON HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Newsletter of the State Heritage Branch
of the Department of Environment and
Natural Resources

ISSN 1320-4173

July 1996 Number 9

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Front Cover:

Unveiling of the Boer War Memorial (or South
African War Memorial) in 1904. The Memorial is a
significant landmark in Adelaide and is a reminder
of South Australia's involvement in the Boer War
between 1899-1902. It was entered in the State
Heritage Register in 1987. Courtesy City of
Adelaide Archives.

VALE IAN AUHL

The death of well regarded South
Australian historian Ian Auhl at his
Burnside home on 22 March 1996 at
the age of 81 deserves notice in these
pages.

Ian was one of the pioneers of the
modern heritage movement and laid
the foundations for the development of
Burra as one of the best interpreted
historic sites in Australia. His resolute
campaigning from the 1960s onwards
was a vital factor in saving the town's
built heritage, while his numerous
publications and the donation of much
of his research material to the Burra
Community Library and the State
Library are lasting legacies to the South
Australian community.

Ian was awarded an OAM in 1980 for
services to conservation, particularly at
Burra and Tea Tree Gully. He is
survived by his wife and two children.

The Vanishing Monuments to a Silent Era

by Dylan Walker

What do the Hindley Street car-park,
Beehive Building, Adelaide Town Hall,
Market Plaza and the Lotteries
Commission building have in common?
All five sites and many others around
the city once housed thousands of pic-
ture goers during the silent era. Such
was the size of the cinema industry
from 1905 to 1929 that any spare hall
around Adelaide was grabbed by
enthusiastic entrepreneurs. This article
is a short trip to the silent era to
capture the frenzy of the cinema exhi-
bition industry.

One of the first entrepreneurs to take
advantage of the novelty of moving
pictures in Adelaide was Wybert
Reeve. From 1891 to 1900 he leased
the Theatre Royal in Hindley Street
where the Hindley Street car-park now
stands. It was here on 19 October
1896 that, under Reeve's direction,
Frank St Hill and Frank Moody
screened moving pictures to an
Adelaide audience for the first time.

In those days the Theatre Royal had a
theatrical reputation of being '...the
home of sweetness and light' and the
effect of Adelaide's first picture show
was '...disappointing owing to the fact
that too much light was let into the
building, thereby causing the figures
thrown upon the screen to appear
fainter than they would have been
under more satisfactory arrangements.'¹

In the evening of 19 October 1896, the
projection equipment was relocated to
one of the large shops of the Beehive
Building in King William Street. This
was Adelaide's first silent picture
house. Ten exhibitions were given
each day Monday to Friday, and twelve
on Saturdays. One month later St Hill
and Moodie closed shop and moved
their equipment to Perth.

In December 1896, Reeve purchased a
Lumiere cinematographe and as well
as screening pictures at the Theatre
Royal, he toured the country towns of
South Australia exhibiting the new
marvel. In Burra people arrived at 7
pm and by the advertised time of 8
pm, every seat in the institute hall was
taken. Such was the popularity of

moving pictures in South Australia that
in the first full year of screenings thirty-
seven venues were used.

From 1898 to 1905 interest in moving
pictures waned. By late 1905, when
interest and film popularity picked up,
the Government had since amended
the 1882 *Places of Public Entertain-
ment Act*. These amendments, which
covered mainly fire restrictions, limited
the number of screening venues. As a
result, the re-emergence of the cinema
in Adelaide in 1905 saw great use of
the Adelaide Town Hall and little use
of any other venues around the city
and suburbs.

The most popular film screened in
1906 was *Living London* presented at
the Adelaide Town Hall by the Tait
Brothers. Other popular screenings
were parochial films such as
*Happenings Taken at the Adelaide
Show, Adelaide's Fire Service* and
Animated Adelaide. However, the sig-
nificant event in that year with regard
to cinema history was the screening of
what is claimed to be the world's first
feature film, *The Story of the Kelly
Gang*. It was premiered at the
Adelaide Town Hall on 26 December.

During 1907, the number of picture
shows in Adelaide had increased and
by 1908 it had become obvious that
moving pictures had become a part of
the entertainment establishment. On
the opening night of the huge *New
Pavilion*, on the corner of Pulteney
Street and North Terrace, the canvas
marquee's 3,000 seats were full. In the
centre of town was W.H. Bruce's 2,000
seat marquee in Victoria Square where
the Supreme Court now stands. Such
was the demand for cinema entertain-
ment that the dedication of a building
to film was justified and on 5
December 1908, Adelaide's first perma-
nent picture house, *West's Olympia*,
was opened in Hindley Street.

Over the next two years picture shows
around Adelaide became a profitable
business, yet the market was still not
fully exploited. The proprietors of the
Elite Skating Rink in Pirie Street found
an alternative use for their hall. By



Former Pavilion theatre in 1936. Built next door to the Adelaide Arcade in Rundle Street, the Pavilion was constructed in 1912. Courtesy Mortlock Library.

installing 3,000 seats they were able to open *Paris Pictures* in October 1909. W.H. Bruce moved out of Victoria Square into the *Golden Gate Hall* in Grote Street. Best's Pictures took over Bruce's old site and erected a permanent open-air picture show, which was later known as the *Trocadero Gardens*. A little further south, on the corner of King William and Sturt Streets, the *Casino Open-Air Picture Theatre* commenced in November 1910. In the same month the *Empire Picture Palace* on St. Vincent Street, Port Adelaide was opened.

Back in the city, *The Arcadia Picture Palace* was opened in Rundle Street next door to the Adelaide Arcade. This was later demolished and *The Pavilion* was constructed on the site in 1912. In Grote Street, the management of the *Empire Theatre* announced a season of pictures would be inaugurated. From that day until the late 1940s the live theatre was used for the sole purpose of screening movies. Today the facade of the *Empire* fronts the Market Plaza. Ovals were also utilised to screen pictures, and included those at Norwood, Hindmarsh and Alberton. Other open-

air picture shows to appear were *Well's* on the Norwood Parade, *Wondergraph Open-Air Picturedrome* on the Semaphore Esplanade and the *Glenelg Picture Theatre* on Mosely Square.

In 1911, the western suburbs were to have a new picture house. Located on Commercial Road, Port Adelaide, where the Masonic Hall now stands, the 600 seat *Port Picture Pavilion* opened. The following year, the *Central Picture Palace* in Wakefield Street (next door to the Wakefield Hotel) was built providing Adelaide with an additional 1,300



The Regent theatre in 1936. This was the final silent picture house built in 1928, and was one of the grand cinemas in Australia. It was significantly altered in the 1960s but retains some of its original features. It was entered in the State Heritage Register in 1986. Courtesy Mortlock Library.

cinema seats. It was claimed at the time that a record had been established in building the cinema in fourteen weeks. This was apparent when '...the aroma of moist paint was rather noticeable at the first entertainment'.²

In 1913, the *Star* in King William Street (where the Commonwealth Bank building now stands) opened and the *Wondergraph* moved out of the Adelaide Town Hall into their new palatial structure in Hindley Street. Future generations would remember the 1,800 seat *Wondergraph* as the *Civic* or *State*. Down at the Port, Ozone Amusements built the palatial 1,700 seater *Ozone Theatre* on St. Vincent Street. By the close of 1913 there were over 25,000 permanent picture house seats in Adelaide and the suburbs (this excludes the numerous halls that regularly screened films).

During the war, the *Anzac Theatre* (directly behind the Maid and Magpie Hotel) provided moving pictures to the residents of St. Peters. On the other side of town, the Torrensville Star opened. This theatre, which at the time of writing is due for demolition, was the birthplace of Dan Clifford's

Star Circuit. Down at the Bay, Glenelg Theatres built a new *Glenelg Theatre* on Colley Terrace. Herbert Clues opened his *Unley Picture Palace* on Unley Road, where the Unley Shopping Centre now stands. In the city, the *Grand* was built on the corner of James Place and Rundle Street. Today the building houses the Lotteries Commission.

Following World War One, picture houses began to dominate the streetscapes of most suburbs. No longer was a church or town hall a sufficient symbol of a suburb's success, it was necessary to have a picture house. Included in those built in the 1920s were the *Goodwood* and *Semaphore Wondergraphs*, the *Prospect National*, the *Croydon Picture Theatre*, the *Princess* at Marryatville (now called the *Chelsea*, it is the only suburban silent picture house still in use) the *Garden Theatre* on Goodwood Road, Colonel Light Gardens (a monument that still stands in all its glory, although used as a supermarket these days), the *Alberton Ozone*, located in Fussell Place (now also a supermarket), the 1,800 seat *Enfield Ozone*, and the

Kilkenny Picture Palace which was just around the corner from the *Austral Picture Palace*. Back in the city, the *York* was built on the corner of Gawler Place and Rundle Street. This picture house was demolished in the early 1960s to widen Gawler Place.

Many more picture houses were built during the silent era with the final one being the Regent - the only silent picture house still in use in the city today, although not in its original form. When the curtain fell on the silent era in 1929 there had been 110 picture house venues in and around Adelaide - some more salubrious than others but all a monument to a popular culture. As the cinema celebrates its centenary very few of these monuments are left to remind us of one of the most popular pastimes of this century.

Dylan Walker's *Adelaide's Silent Nights*, a pictorial history of cinema exhibition in Adelaide from 1896-1929, will be published in October.

1 *The Evening Journal*, 20 October 1896.

2 *The Register*, 12 July 1912.

The Stories Behind the Japanese Graves at Cheltenham Cemetery

Places in the State Heritage Register include a large number of grave sites which contribute significantly to our knowledge of the past. Events associated with the grave of a Japanese naval cadet at Cheltenham Cemetery give us an insight into Japanese-Australian relations in the late nineteenth century.

Since World War Two there has been a reluctance to fully accept Japan as our neighbour. This attitude is slowly changing. Before then the two countries had shared a growing relationship in the Pacific.

During the 1914-18 War Japanese ships had escorted our fleet on the way to Egypt. In 1921 Prime Minister Billy Hughes publicly praised Japan's naval involvement in the war, claiming that the allied triumph had in no small measure been due to the help that Japan had given, especially in making possible the safe passage of more than 600,000 ANZAC forces across the

Indian Ocean. Without the help of the Japanese fleet, he had reflected, the security of Australia, New Zealand and all the other British possessions in the east would have been severely imperilled.

In 1887 the Japanese warship *Ryuyo* made a goodwill visit to Adelaide. On board was the body of a graduate of the Japanese Naval Academy, Yoshikuma Kawakami, who died of a lung infection (phthisis) on 22 April 1887, 16 days before reaching the anchorage. On arrival it was arranged that the young cadet would be buried at what was then called the Port

Adelaide and Suburban Cemetery, Cheltenham. (The grave is in section 11, off driveway B.)

During the visit much excitement and interest was generated in Adelaide with the ship's officers being entertained by the local dignitaries at various functions including an 'at home' at Government House where the police band played popular operative selections from 'The Mikado'. Although naively inappropriate this was meant as a respectful gesture. The visitors were to be seen in the banks and shops and regularly patronised the City Baths. *(Continued on page 7)*

Japanese naval men marching through the streets of Adelaide in May 1903. Courtesy Mortlock Library.



Maintenance of historic places

Keeping the water out

The purchase of a building, be it for residential or other use, can be one of the largest investments we are likely to make. Just as we regularly maintain and service our motor vehicles, so too should we maintain and 'service' buildings in order to ensure their long term preservation. This is particularly relevant to older buildings which, on account of their age, invariably suffer the effects of deferred maintenance over the years. I have seen building walls which were in danger of collapse due to poor maintenance, and the occupiers were blissfully unaware.

A knowledgeable and systematic approach to the inspection and assessment of historic buildings will provide a useful starting point to determine areas which require maintenance and those which need urgent attention.

Water penetration through this decorative mould has resulted in major failure of the structure.



Much damage results from the entry of water into a building's fabric. This can occur as an isolated event, such as an overflowing box gutter flooding a ceiling, or it can be a long term process of slow decay - for instance the infiltration of water through the top surface of a cornice moulding causing the gradual decay of the underside as moisture evaporates and salts form.

This article looks at keeping rainwater and surface water out of the building fabric by paying attention to roofs, rainwater systems (gutters, downpipes and drains) and surface drainage.

Roofs, flashings and cappings

Winter is the time to check the soundness of the roof, one of the most important parts of the building. A leaking roof will damage not only the structural roof timbers but also the walls and ceilings below.

Inspection from within the roof space is an effective method to check the underside of a roof, particularly when it is raining. Any leaks should then be evident. Bear in mind that water may also enter a roof by capillary action aided by dust collecting between roofing slates. The key is to be thorough and observant.

Deterioration of corrugated iron roofs usually commences where the sheets of iron overlap and rust develops. Where this is clearly evident and daylight becomes visible through the roof sheets, they should be repaired or replaced.

Similarly a slate or tiled roof must retain its integrity of cover to provide protection to the building below. Failure of the nail or wire fixings holding the tiles in place can result in slippage and consequent water penetration.

Deflection of timber roof members will also result in movement of the roof cladding and create the potential for water leaks, leading to yet further damage. Changes in the loadings on timber roof structures, such as alterations or additions to a building, may redistribute the structural load and a gradual deformation of the timber framework may occur if it is loaded beyond its safe working strength.

Failure of timber structures is normally evident through deflection, twisting or splitting. Should any evidence of structural failure arise then professional engineering advice should be urgently obtained to ensure that further structural damage does not result.

Internal box gutters, ridge and hip cappings and flashings around chimneys should all be checked to ensure that fixings are intact to prevent vermin from gaining entry to the roof space as well as ensuring rainwater is kept out.

While in the roof space, electrical wiring can also be checked. The advice of a qualified electrician should be sought on the adequacy and condition of wiring within a building, particularly if the building has been recently acquired.

A visual inspection of the roof from above is easily carried out and need not be a time consuming exercise. Look for faulty or slipped roof tiles and slates and damaged or lifting sheets, cappings and flashings, particularly around chimneys. Flashings around chimneys should be firmly fixed and provide sufficient cover over the roofing material for water tightness.

Gutters and downpipes

If the building has a parapet wall check the box gutter and flashings to ensure that they are securely fastened. Ensure that box and eaves gutters are free of debris which may cause the gutters or downpipes to overflow. The entry of water from overflowing downpipes and gutters can cause extensive damage.

Check that gutters are draining freely towards downpipes or outlets so that they do not hold water (when it is not raining!) to prevent premature deterioration. Check also that balcony roofs and awnings drain effectively and that rainwater heads are kept clear of debris.

Blocked gutters and downpipes can cause saturation of the wall surface which may result in harmful salts being deposited within the wall as well as encouraging plant growth. Both of these can have serious detrimental effects on the wall's structural integrity.

Chimneys

While on the roof check the condition of the chimneys. Inspect the mortar between chimney bricks or stones as repointing may be necessary. If the chimneys are rendered inspect the top



Blocked downpipe and rainwater bead causing decay of brickwork below.

ledges of any decorative profiles to ensure they are not cracked and hence have the potential to allow water to soak into the masonry - over time this can erode the mortar and ultimately cause the chimney to collapse. Look at the top surface of the chimney to ensure that there is adequate render over the masonry, again to ensure that water does not slowly find its way into the chimney construction.

Another important place to look is down the chimney flues. The updraught of air in a flue can result in high evaporation rates if the masonry is damp, and it is common to find advanced salt decay internally, even though the chimney may look sound from the outside. This can be successfully fixed if caught in time by repointing the top section of the flue with new mortar.

Stormwater discharge

At ground level, make sure that downpipes discharge into a drain (either open or closed) which carries the stormwater away from the building. Downpipes should not discharge onto the walls of the building or the foundations. Downpipes which allow stormwater to discharge at the base of the wall can contribute to rising damp and structural cracking.

After heavy rain make sure there are no pools of water or soft ground within two metres of the base of the walls. If water stays for some hours after rain, this is a sign of poor soil drainage and there is always the chance that moisture could then slowly find its way into the foundations and underfloor space. Water-logged soil may lead to structural movement and cracking within the building.

Simon Weidenhofer

Architect

A publication covering all aspects of the maintenance of historic buildings will be available at the end of July. Call the State Heritage Branch for further information.

(From page 7)

Captain Yoshijama returned the hospitality shown to them by holding a 'complimentary banquet' on board the corvette. This festive occasion was described in detail in the Adelaide press, including the proceedings, decorations and entertainment of traditional dance and song with the official guests transported to and from the Semaphore Jetty in steam launches 'gaily dressed with flags'. The festivities concluded with 'Auld Lang Syne' being sung by the performers in Japanese. The visitors also made a donation of a 400 year old sword to the Port Adelaide Museum.

Sixteen years later, in 1903, representatives of the Japanese Imperial Navy again arrived in Gulf St Vincent. On this occasion three ships anchored in Largs Bay: the *Hashidate*, *Matsushima* and *Itsukishima*. Commander Arimori, in his youth a friend of Kawakami, honoured him by arranging a memorial ceremony and the dedication of a new grave marker at the cemetery on Sunday 10 May.

Again the visit of the Japanese naval men created much excitement in the city with luncheons for the officers, a march through the City, the ships open for public inspection with electric illumination at night, and a garden

party at Government House, where Sir Samuel Way was acting in his often repeated role as vice-regal representative.

Another Japanese site at Cheltenham Cemetery is a double grave of two merchant seamen, Chuhichi Ikeyama and Toraichi Shirahama, who died in the Adelaide Hospital in March 1929 after an horrific boiler accident on board their vessel, *Kyokkoh Maru*. The vessel was berthed at Queen's Wharf, Port Adelaide. They are buried in a double grave with individual headstones of white Angaston marble. (Their graves are located in section B, off driveway A.)

State Heritage Register Update

The following places have been included in the State Heritage Register since January 1996

Dwelling - Clear Hills,
Meadows

**St Philip and St James
Catholic Church,**
Hawker

**Catholic Church of the
Immaculate Conception,**
Quorn

Lime Kiln Ruins,
Bower

Eden Park, Dwelling & Coachhouse,
Wistow

**Former Crown Hotel
(RSL Clubrooms),**
Mount Barker

Hillside House and Wine Cellars,
Lyndoch

Wendouree Cellars,
Clare

Jacob Seaman's Hut Site,
American River

Threshing Floor,
Penneshaw

**Frenchmans Rock Monument,
Well & Pine Trees,**
Penneshaw

Christmas Cove,
Penneshaw

**Black Hill Lodge -
formerly Weirmaster's House
Ramp, Garage, Stone Channel and
Dry Stone Walling,**
Montacute

Institute/Town Hall,
Quorn

Depot Creek Weir,
Quorn

**Cassini Station Complex
and Mulberry Tree,**
Kingscote

**Mayura Homestead, Homestead,
early Kitchen and
Entrance Avenue of Pines,**
Millicent

**Former Woolwash and Fellmongery
sites, Cottage and separate Cellar,**
Millicent

**Pingle Farm, Dwelling, Barn
and Underground Tank,**
Port Noarlunga South

**Former St John's Presbyterian
Church,**
Woodside

**Wynns Coonawarra Winery
building, office, small laboratory,
cellaring space, eighteen
fermenting tanks,**
Coonawarra

**Southern abutment remains of
1857 Bridge,**
Port Adelaide

**Alberton Railway Station including
Station Building, Western Platform
and Footbridge,**
Alberton

**Former Bank of South Australia -
Seaview House,**
Port Augusta

St Augustine's Anglican Church,
Port Augusta West

**Davenport Reservoir and
Storage Tank,**
Stirling North

Water Tower,
Port Augusta

Wharf,
Port Augusta

Shearing Shed - Coola,
Port MacDonnell

**Bundaleer Reservoir Tower,
Two Aqueducts, Three Weirs,
Channel Systems and Reservoir
Keeper's House,**
Gulnare

Dwelling - The Park,
Golden Grove

**Sealing Site - Thistle Island -
Designated place of archaeological
significance,**
Thistle Island

(Part) Normanville Coastal Dunes,
Normanville

Dwelling-Clear Hills, Meadows

Built in the mid 1860s, this house is important as an example of an increasingly rare method of construction called pise. Pise was made from rammed earth reinforced with sticks and straw, and was a method of construction used in the early nineteenth century.



Yorke Peninsula Heritage Survey (1996-97)

Another regional heritage survey
is about to commence

You may have read in Issue Number 7 (July 1995) of the *State Heritage Newsletter* about a heritage survey of the Flinders Ranges. This survey is part of an extensive Regional Heritage Survey Program which aims to identify all the non-Aboriginal heritage of South Australia by the year 2000. The Flinders Ranges Heritage Survey was completed in August 1995 and a number of places identified in the survey have already been entered in the State Heritage Register.

State Heritage has now initiated a regional survey of the Yorke Peninsula and has received partial funding from the Australian Heritage Commission, under the National Estate Grants Program. Additional funding from the State Heritage Fund and from local Councils in the region will be used to commission the consultants to undertake the survey and to publish the final report.

The Yorke Peninsula Heritage Survey will cover eight local government areas including the District Councils of Bute, Central Yorke Peninsula, Minlaton, Northern Yorke Peninsula, Port Broughton, Warooka, Yorketown and the Corporation of Wallaroo.

The heritage consultants are Taylor Weidenhofer, in association with Historical Research Pty Ltd, Austral Archaeology, Geoffrey Bishop and Sarah Laurence. The survey is about to commence and will be completed in late 1997.

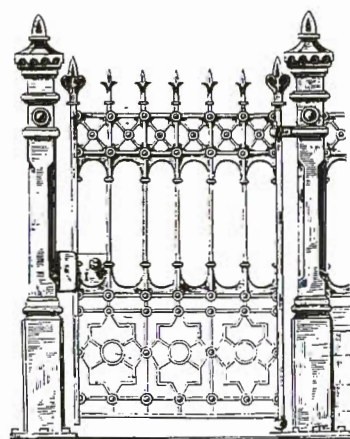
Its primary objective is to identify places on Yorke Peninsula of State heritage significance for entry in the State Heritage Register, and to determine potential State Heritage Areas. As part of the survey local heritage places and areas will also be identified and documented. Places that may be of State or local heritage significance include mining complexes, maritime structures, shops, schools, churches, cottages and houses.

It is important that local communities are involved in the heritage survey. Consultation with interested people and groups is seen as a major element of the survey process. If you consider a place in the Yorke Peninsula region should be assessed for its heritage significance please contact Simon Weidenhofer, the Survey Team Co-ordinator, on (08) 373 3332.

The final report will be published in early 1998 and will be available for sale.

Hamish Angas

Heritage Survey Co-ordinator
State Heritage Branch



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Old Bricks in South Australia

Bricks were a popular building material from the earliest years of settlement in South Australia. They were manufactured by the River Torrens within a few months of the arrival of the first Europeans. Besides being used for whole buildings, they were also very suitable for forming the corners (quoins) and the door and window surrounds in buildings made of stone. Almost all South Australian buildings had fireplaces and chimneys made of brick.

Bricks are made by forming clay into regular blocks of a convenient size to hold (usually about 1900cc), allowing any excess moisture to evaporate, then heating them to high temperature, typically about 1000 C. The clay undergoes a permanent chemical alteration, becoming harder and able to maintain its structure when wet. Well-made bricks are extremely strong and durable, requiring little maintenance. They have been known to survive for thousands of years.

As clay was abundant, and the processes of shaping and firing were fairly simple, bricks in the early decades were quite a cheap building material to manufacture. However they were expensive to transport because they were so heavy (about 3.5 kg each), and it required a lot of skilled manual labour to lay them. As a result a brick building was relatively expensive when all costs were considered. Brick tended to be most popular in places very close to brickworks or transport routes, and at times when labour was cheap.

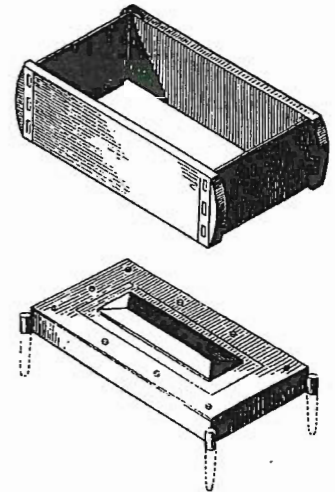
South Australia was settled during a time of rapid technological progress in the manufacture of bricks, so there was a great diversity of brickmaking techniques used here in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In general there was naturally a tendency for manual methods to give way to increasingly mechanised methods, but the process was not simple, for both techniques remained in use side by side for many decades. While the use of machinery could obviously reduce production labour, the cost of moulding each brick by hand was only one element in brickmaking, and there

were many circumstances in which hand-made bricks could compete on the market with machine-made bricks. Hand-manufacture of bricks in South Australia persisted until the 1930s, and some special purpose bricks were still being made by hand as late as the 1950s.

Methods of Brickmaking

Hand-made bricks

The earliest bricks produced in South Australia from 1837 onward were made by hand, utilising the alluvial clays of the Torrens floodplain, and employing techniques brought from England. The clay was prepared by weathering, soaking and kneading by hand to form a stiff plastic pug. This was delivered by barrow to the moulding table. The moulder sat or stood at the table, and made each brick by taking a mass of clay just a little bigger than required, and throwing it vigorously into a mould which consisted of an open four-sided wooden or iron box which had a removable bottom board called a stock.



Mould and stock for making bricks by hand (Dobson 1882)

The quality of the brick was determined by the consistency of the clay and the accuracy of the moulder. The pug had to be plastic enough to spread instantly into the corners of the mould, but stiff enough to dry as quickly as possible and hold its shape during handling. Clay for hand-made bricks was usually about 25% water by weight. Depending on the stiffness



Above: Hack marks on a hand-made brick.

Below: Characteristic fold marks on a hand-made brick.



and stickiness of the clay, it was usually necessary to sand the mould for each brick, or alternatively to lubricate it with water. The excess clay was cut away from the top of the mould with a board called a strike. The mould was then taken by an assistant who upended the brick on to a board, and when ten or twelve bricks were lined up, they were wheeled away on a hack barrow for drying.

Thus each moulding table employed a gang of three or four brickmakers whose pace of work was dictated by the speed and skill of the moulder. It is widely claimed that a highly skilled moulder could make 6000 bricks in a day. Assuming a ten-hour day, that is about six seconds per brick, which is difficult to imagine. In Adelaide the moulders usually took a periodic break from the table by wheeling their own bricks to the hack, and production of 1200 bricks in a ten-hour day was considered a good rate.

Identifying hand-made bricks

There is a high probability of finding hand-made bricks in South Australian buildings dating from before the early

decades of the twentieth century. Commons are readily identifiable, because most hand-made bricks were fairly rough, and show mould marks, air bubbles and poor arrises (sharp edges of bricks) from the moulding process. There is often a characteristic pattern of creases and folds (not cracks) in the sides of a hand-made brick, formed as the clay dragged down the side of the mould. As they were very soft, they often also have hand prints, hack marks and damage from being dropped and handled before drying. Their surfaces may also show the texture of the sand used in the mould. However, carefully made and selected face bricks may not be easily recognised as hand-made, for they can be virtually indistinguishable from machine-made bricks.

If in doubt, the simplest test for hand-made bricks is to measure a number of them very accurately, as they are certain to vary in their dimensions. Even two bricks made in the same mould by the same moulder may differ slightly in their depth, for they will not have exactly the same mass of clay in them,

and will shrink to different dimensions during drying and firing. As a brickworks would have a great number of moulds in use – every moulder's gang requiring about four or five at one time – even the best hand-made bricks will also vary by a few millimetres in their length and breadth because of slight differences in the mould sizes.

Machine-made bricks

From the early 1880s onward, the production of bricks in South Australia progressively increased, and a greater proportion of bricks was produced by steam-powered machines, although it was not until after the First World War that the majority of bricks were machine-made. There were several distinct methods of mechanical manufacture, but three techniques were most common. Two of these involved the use of wet plastic clays; the other used stiff plastic clays or dry shales as the raw material.

This is an extract from Old Bricks in South Australia, published by the State Heritage Branch in 1991.

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