

PAXTON SQUARE - BURRA.

The Burra Burra Mine. The discovery of copper deposits by two shepherds on the Burra Burra Creek early in 1845 led to the setting up of the first substantial mining venture in Australia. It came at a critical time for the struggling young Province of South Australia as the State was then known. The failure of the British Government to honour Governor Gawler's Bills of Credit in 1841 had spelt ruin to most settlers and plunged the Province into debt. The income from Burra's rich copper lode injected new life into the infant settlement and restored financial confidence. In 1848 mineral exports totalled £320,000 out of an export total of £465,000 for the State. The total value of copper mined at Burra amounted to over £6 million by 1877 the year of its closure. South Australia's return to prosperity by way of copper enabled the development of agricultural and pastoral pursuits which were to supplant copper as the leading income earner. Total exhaustion of the copper deposits by 1877 reduced the population to 3,000 while today it has crashed to a tottering 1,250.

Historic Buildings. In the early days of the famed Burra Burra mine, Cornish miners emigrated to the workings in large numbers. By the late 1840's the population of Burra had grown to 5,000 while that of Adelaide was only 18,000. The South Australian Mining Association who had won the right to work the mine purchased the 7 acre site from one of its Directors, William Paxton, a prominent Adelaide chemist and later a

pastoralist. The three-sided complex of cottages built on this site in 1853 was part of the Association's extensive housing scheme for their miners. While many of the row houses have been pulled down it is fortunate that the largest single group, Paxton Square, is still complete. Research has shown that this series of historic buildings is unique.

Ownership of Property. Paxton Square was purchased by Hon. John Lewis, father of Essington Lewis, about 80 years ago to provide housing for deserving persons of low income in the town of Burra. The John Lewis Trust Incorporated was founded and this body administers the property at the present time. Paxton Square was declared an Historic Reserve by proclamation in the Gazette of January 9, 1969. The buildings although rather neglected are structurally sound.

Local identities associated with Paxton Square.

Mr. Stanley J. Woollacott,
1 Smelts Road,
Burra North.
Phone 71.

Vice-President, Burra Branch,
National Trust of South
Australia.
Member of the Lewis Trust.

Mr. Lewis Moore,
Savings Bank of South Australia,
Burra.
Phone 182.

Bank Manager,
President, Burra Branch,
National Trust of South
Australia.

Mr. E.T. Baulderstone,
5 Quarry Street,
Burra.
Phone 56.

Councillor, former Mayor of
Burra Burra for 15 years.
Member of Lewis Trust.

Mr. Tom G. Perry,
Burra.
Phone 175.

Town Clerk, Council
District of Burra Burra.

Paxton Square Declared An Historic Reserve

On January 9th the South Australian Government Gazette set out the following proclamation:

**Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Act 1965
Hundred of Kooringa - Historic Reserve declared, South
Australia - Proclamation by His Excellency the Governor of
the State of South Australia**

By virtue of the provisions of the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Act 1965 and all other enabling powers, I, the said Governor, with the advice and consent of the Executive Council and being satisfied in terms of Section 17 of the said Act with respect to the land defined in the schedule hereto, and the consents required by the said Act having been obtained, do hereby declare the said land to be an historic reserve.

THE SCHEDULE

Paxton Square, being a subdivision of Section 1 and other land, Hundred of Kooringa, County of Burra - Given under my hand and the public seal of South Australia, at Adelaide, this 9th day of January, 1969.

By command,

R. C. DOUGLASS, Chief Secretary.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

William Paxton was a Hindley Street Chemist. In 1845 with three other Hindley Street business men, Paxton formed a company to light the streets of Adelaide with gas. This scheme was hurriedly dropped when one of the three, Thomas Bunce, decided to share with the others news he had of a copper find on the Burra Creek. A shepherd, Streair, had come to Adelaide and traded the secret of the location with Bunce for £8.

Paxton invested £140 in the get-rich-quick scheme and became one of the first directors of the new South Australian Mining Association.

The Directors, the 'shop-keeping nobodies', were within two years all wealthy men. The Burra Burra Mine had become a 'bonanza'.

Paxton acquired many of the choice sites in the new private mining town of Kooringa and soon owned the two hotels in Kooringa - the Burra Hotel and The Miners Arms (present Burra Hotel).

One of his properties on the East side of the Burra Creek became known as Paxton's Square - although the only building on it when he sold it was a Bible Chapel (now Baulderstone's store room).

In 1852 the Mining Association acquired this land from Paxton and engaged Cornish masons to erect on it 33 cottages on three sides of the square, 11 cottages on each side enclosing common land for the tenants. The cottages were erected to house Cornish deep miners especially brought out from Cornwall in the 1850's to work the deeper lodes where water had become a problem. Each cottage contained 2 or 3 rooms and the floors were of packed clay. Rental was 5/- per week.

When the S.A.M.A. finally went into liquidation in 1914 the cottages were acquired by the pioneer overlander, John Lewis, then of the Burra stock and station firm, Liston, Shakes and

Lewis. Lewis later became the Hon. John Lewis, MLC, father of Essington Lewis, the great industrialist. Mrs. Jane Melrose, of Kadlunga, Mintaro, is a daughter.

In March of 1923 Paxton Square was incorporated into a trust by John Lewis, who arranged for the Lewis Trust to be administered by a Board of Management. Lewis died a few months later (25th August, 1923).

The cottages were left in perpetual trust to house the poor and needy of Burra. The trustees for many years were Stanley Kellaway (Mayor of the Burra Corporation), Isaac Warnes (Chairman of the District Council), and Mrs. Jane Melrose.

The Trust was in 1968 being administered by members of the Lewis family (Mr. R. Lewis, Mrs. Melrose and Mrs. J. Gosse).

Until last year, Mr. Stan Kellaway junr. acted as Curator for the Lewis Trust.

As a result of a meeting early in 1968 between representatives of the Burra Corporation and the Burra National Trust, a common approach was made to the Lewis Trust to consider the appointment of local trustees. This meeting under the chairmanship of R. B. Lewis, considered what action could be taken to bring a certain number of the cottages up to acceptable standards while still fulfilling the original purpose of the Trust. It was realised that Paxton Square could not be sold nor the Trust dissolved without a special Act of Parliament.

It was decided to bring some of the cottages up to standard while respecting their original external features. New Trustees were appointed with the Rev. G. D. Sibly, as Chairman. The Board of Management was enlarged to include local trustees viz Mrs. R. Jenkinson, Mr. L. Phillips, Mr. G. Finch, Mr. S. Woollacott, the Rev. G. D. Sibly and Mr. E. T. Baulderstone.

A PLAN

A plan for renovation and

modernization of facilities was drawn up by Mr. S. J. Woollacott who has already made substantial improvements in the living amenities of the cottages.

Mr. S. J. Woollacott is the present Curator.

APPLICATION

Realising the national historical importance of the old Cornish built square and its significance in Australia's mining story, Mr. Ian Auhl submitted an application in 1968 to the Board administering the Historic Relics Act and asking that Paxton Square be proclaimed an Historic Reserve. Mr. Auhl was supported in his appli-

cation by representatives of the Lewis family.

At a meeting of the Lewis Trust, held in Burra, the Secretary of the Relics Board, Mr. R. Edwards, acting on behalf of the Board and the Protector of Relics, Dr. Inglis, asked the Trustees to consider giving their support to this move to place the buildings under the protection of the Act. This support was granted. The application was also approved by Mr. Dean Berry, President of the S.A. National Trust.

FULLY SUPPORTED

Writing to Mr. Auhl from the Melbourne University, Professor Geoffrey Blainey, author of many books on mining in Australia (e.g. The Rush that never ended; The Rise of Broken Hill), etc., stated:-

"I fully support your efforts to have Paxton Square in Burra proclaimed an Historic Reserve. Of the relics of Australia's first great mining era these cottages are perhaps more deserving of preservation than any other surviving buildings in any part of Australia!"

THE FIRST

Paxton Square is the first building in South Australia to be proclaimed an Historic Reserve under the Act. Following the full approval of the investigating board, and the approval of the Minister of Education who administers the Act, the Executive Council granted final approval on January 9th.

The present Trustees were all appointed Wardens under the Act.

UNIQUE

Paxton Square is a unique and irreplaceable complex of buildings.

As Professor Douglas Pike of the Canberra University stated in his supporting letter, Paxton Square serves not merely as a memorial to (Cornish) pioneers, but also as a signpost of national development, which one hopes will continue long after this present generation.

COME TO REALISE

The Square is not only a possession of the town of Burra but has also now become a state reserve. More and more people in Burra itself, as well as those who have made a study of Australia's pioneering past, have come to realise that in Burra there is a whole series of buildings which make this town unique in South Australia.

Such a heritage could become Burra's very future.

Burra buildings are no longer merely a parochial matter - they are becoming a state and national matter.

One wonders some times what American pride of past (and American money) would have done for such a town and its historic buildings. Perhaps the same will gradually be done for Burra as has been done for American and British towns of great historic interest.