

South Australian
Heritage Act 1978-80:

HERITAGE SURVEY
ITEM IDENTIFICATION SHEET

REGION 6 :
SOUTH EAST

Item No. : MIL:001
ITEM NAME: Former Powder Magazine
Former or other names:

LOCATION:

Address: Butte's Hill,
near Millicent

Allotment:

Section : 308

Hundred : Mayurra

County : Grey

L.G.A. : Millicent

S.H.P. Region: 6

A.M.G., Ref. Z: 54 N: 5836565

E: 438580

TYPE OF ITEM:

Description: Powder Magazine

Subject: 4.02

Period: 1860-1880

Date: 1860's

Condition: Fair

Architect:

Builder:

STATUS State Heritage List: Registered

National Estate : Listed

National Trust : Classified

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

RECOMMENDATION: State

Description:

Random coursed stone vault, built into the hillside with a door at one end and a small 'elliptical' window at the other end. Timber lintel over door. Skilled stone cutting to shape vault.

The powder magazine was used to store explosives in connection with the beginnings of the South East Drainage Scheme. It is 'all that remains of the buildings from which operations were directed whilst drainage was in progress in the area' (Bruce Towers). Work on the drainage of the South East began in 1863, and during early years was under the supervision of Dutch engineer Butte.

Report Text:

REFERENCES: J. Richards and B. Towers "Early Millicent" pp. 10-13
J. Melano, "Walking Tall" pp. 26-29

Verbal: Bruce Towers

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Slide No : 5/3,4

Film No : 5

Negative No: 9,10

Archival No:



DANVERS ARCHITECTS Date: 1983

DRAINAGE

This sketch, and the following sketch are closely associated with the early days of the S.E. Drainage scheme.

The first is of the bridge at the Narrow Neck cutting, and beneath the bridge, in the far distance the cliffs of Rivoli Bay can be seen.

The second sketch shows the old Powder Magazine, which stands at the foot of Butte's Hill near the Mayura homestead. This is all that remains of the buildings from which operations were directed whilst drainage was in progress in the area.

The first step towards the drainage of the S.E. was made in 1863, when a small sum of money was placed on the Estimates for a cutting to be made at Narrow Neck.

A newspaper report of 27-5-1864 says — "A party of eight workmen have just been dispatched from Mt Gambier for the purpose of cutting through the narrow neck of land that separated the Great Biscuit Flat from Lake Frome and the sea. It has long been known that the ridge of land, of which the Narrow Neck forms a portion, has been the means of damming back the surface water of an immense extent of land. Owing to this barrier being in the way the water accumulates to a great depth and floods many hundreds of square miles of country, and eventually the back-water works its way up towards Lacedpede Bay. It will at once be seen that this cutting is likely to be of immense benefit to the

Narrow Neck

coast country. There is a fall of 37 feet, to the mile, between Narrow Neck and Lake Frome, so that when a channel is once made, the water itself will keep it open."

And so the great S.E. Drainage Scheme was started. The following year on 19th August, 1865, it was reported that the channel, 20 feet wide and 3 feet deep, was running at 6 m.p.h., and a bridge was called for as the water was running too fast to ford.

The drainage was proving successful and it was noted that the swamps rose very little during that winter. Soon it was felt desirable to deepen the Narrow Neck and fifty "navvies" arrived by ship at Grey from Adelaide, made their way across Lake Frome in two boats and started work under Superintendent Butte.

Work started in November on digging the drain inland from Milnes Gap towards Millecent. Water on the flats behind the Gap had fallen to 3 feet, but the men still had to work up to their waists in water.

Mr Butte sent them a boat to help them cut a course through the reeds which were 9 feet high. This particular drain was to be as straight as possible, with wide curves, and had proceeded as far as Glen's Bridge, near Mayura, by March.

A newspaper report of the day says — "Messrs J. and J. Cocks. (contractors) have quite a township built at Glen's Bridge, and now that a hundred odd fresh hands have gathered, it presents a busy scene at supper

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DRAINAGE

(Continued from Page 10)

time. They are a fine body of men and the work goes on right merrily. An enterprising restaurateur, Mr Curl has opened a boarding house and I hear two more are to follow."

The surveyors then set to work on the Wylie Swamp, and the drain continued on into Millecent before winter set in. Work ceased for a time, but when resumed, the number of men increased to such an extent that Millecent became a large canvas town. Mr Aaron Lane obtained a licence to open a saloon in a large canvas tent, and later started to build the Somerset Hotel. There is a report of a terrific storm striking the canvas town and great was the destruction, many tents caught fire and the boarding houses were crowded with "refugees".

The merits of Rivoli Bay were becoming every day more apparent. A far-seeing citizen said that, as Lake Frome was 10 feet deep, the bar separating it from Rivoli Bay should be removed, and thus enable barges to load near the Narrow Neck. They would proceed across the Lake, through the channel and out into the Bay, to discharge their cargo straight into the ships thus saving many miles travel over bad roads. Someone must have got their levels wrong, because, when Lake Frome was eventually connected with the sea, it virtually disappeared.

The drains quickly got rid of the surface water and

Powder Magazine

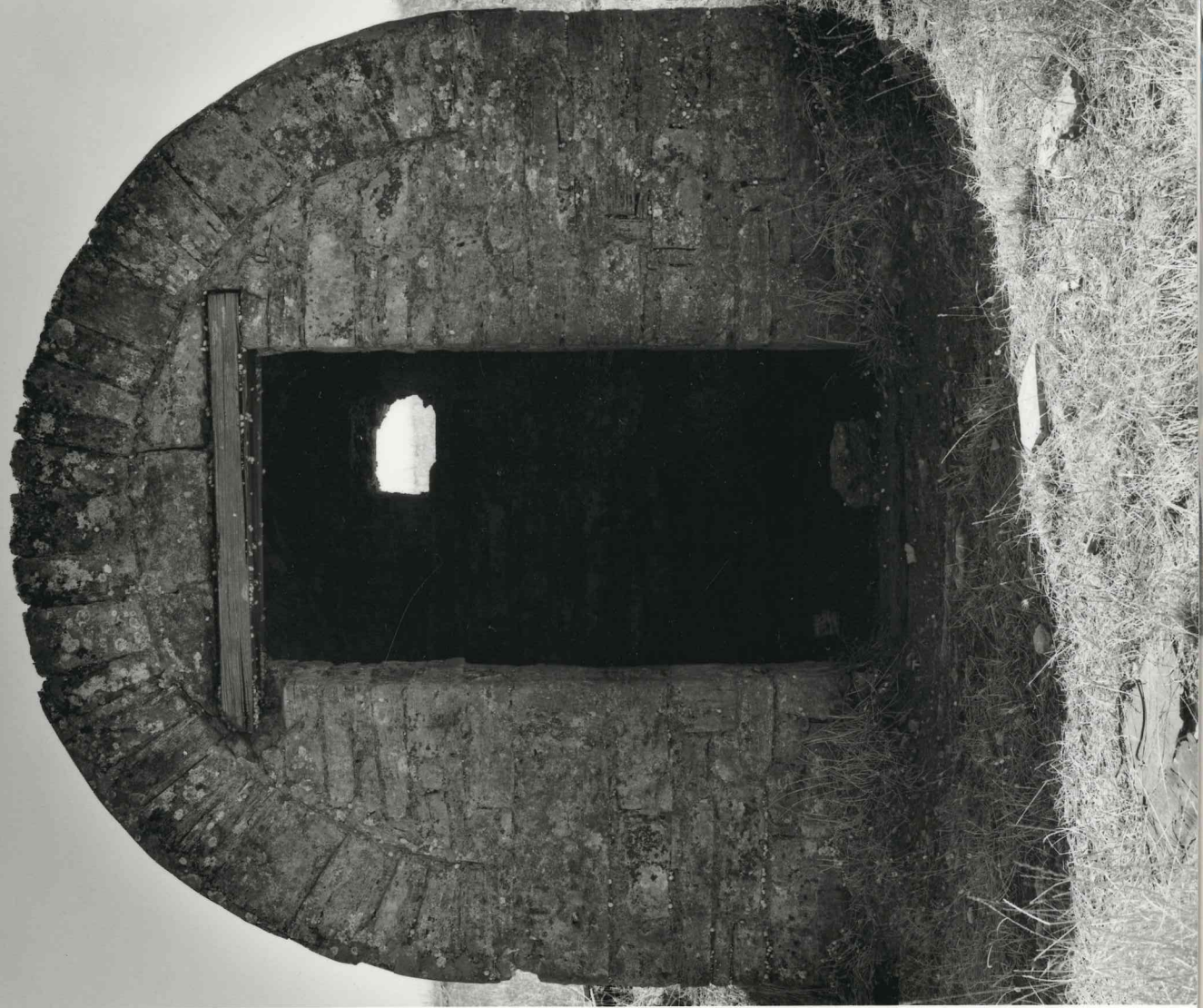
the district piece by piece was made available for selection. However there were many problems, some of which only time and experience could solve. Some said the country was over drained and as early as 1879 a deputation comprising Messrs Glen, Davenport, Stuckey and McArthur called for dams in all the outlets. The deputation was told that they could erect a dam in Milne's Gap, provided they pay half the cost. Nothing was done.

Others with previous experience of the English marshlands said the salts would rise and the crops would die. We still hear these arguments a century later.

An experimental farm situated on the Millecent flats which employed three men and a lad, was set up and the February, 1879 report, from the Superintendent, said that from 6 acres of barley, 156 bushels of grain had been harvested. From 80 acres of wheat he had reaped only 30 bushels, 10 acres having been destroyed by kangaroos. 30 acres of oats were not worth harvesting. The crops had not turned out as well as expected owing to frosts, hot and S.W. winds, red rust and wallabies.

From these humble beginnings the problems associated with drainage, have, one by one been overcome and Millecent has become one of the most productive areas of the State.





FILM 50
NO 3

SOUTH WALL POWDER
MAGAZINE, "MAYURRA"

MILLICENT
20-2-79



FILM 50
No 4

DETAIL LINTEL OF POWDER
MAGAZINE , "MAYURRA"

MILLICENT
20-2-79



FILM 50
NO 1

POWDER MAGAZINE FROM WEST,
"MAYURRA"

MILLICENTA
20-2-79



FILM 50 POWDER MAGAZINE FROM
NO 2 SOUTH, "MAYURRA"

MILLICENT
20-2-79