

BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14(6) and s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

REGISTERED NAME: Ormerod Cottages

PLACE NO.: 10360

ALSO KNOWN AS: 'Ormerod' Cottages

ADDRESS: Bunganditj Country
10 Smillie Street, Robe SA 5276
CT 5729/520 T441801 A26
Hundred of Waterhouse

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

23 September 1982

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Ormerod Cottages demonstrate the relationship between the commercial, residential and township development of Robe during its rise as a key South Australian seaport town. Erected c.1863 by shipping merchant George Ormerod, the cottages were built near Robe's portside to house workers and professionals who were necessary to facilitate the growth of the township.

INDICATIVE CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

(a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history

Established c.1863, the Ormerod Cottages are associated with pastoralist and merchant George Ormerod and his shipping company, 'Ormerod & Co.' Ormerod and his company were fundamental to the early success of Robe as a seaport town, the company becoming a major shipping company throughout the colony's South East.

Ormerod built the cottages near the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), the hub of Robe's portside activities and where his business was centred. During his time in Robe, Ormerod maintained an interest in developing the township as much as his business. The cottages housed workers and professionals who were necessary to facilitate the growth of Robe, including a lawyer, doctor, accountant, teacher and gaoler in their early years. As such, the cottages demonstrate the relationship between the commercial, residential and township development of Robe during its heyday as a key South Australian seaport town during the 1850s-1870s.

SITE PLAN

Ormerod Cottages
10 Smillie Street, Robe

PLACE NO.: 10360



Ormerod Cottages, SHP 10360, 10 Smillie Street, Robe SA, 5276, CT 5729/520 T441801 A26,
Hundred of Waterhouse

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LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

Physical Description

Comprised of four attached cottages, the Ormerod Cottages form an L-shaped single-storey terrace located on the south-east corner of Smillie Street and Cooper Street. The Ormerod Cottages are built of rendered stone and have a hipped roof clad with flat steel sheets with rolled laps.

Additional features include:

- three stone chimneys,
- five timber panelled doors with arched headers on the northern and western elevations,
- eight sash windows with glazed panels on the western elevation,
- three casement windows with glazed panels on the northern elevation.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Ormerod Cottages,
- flat roof sheets with rolled laps,
- stone chimneys.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- timber fencing,
- landscaping,
- arched timber gate on northern side,
- non-original fixtures and fittings.

History of the Place

Establishing Colonial Robe

Guichen Bay in the South East of South Australia forms part of the traditional lands of the Bungandidj people, who have been present in the area for at least 30,000 years.¹ Europeans first charted the coastline of the region in 1802 during the Baudin and Flinders expeditions and sealers established a presence at Guichen Bay in 1831.²

European exploration of the South East took place from 1839 and settlement began as early as 1840.³ Much of the South East was initially settled by pastoralists and by 1847, approximately half of the region was held under pastoral licences. As primary production expanded the colonial government began to provide a series of government towns as service and staging centres. The provision of ports to ship goods to market was also viewed as essential and Robe was established in 1846, to provide a port for the burgeoning wool clip then being obtained from the South East.⁴ Robe was officially declared a port by the Government in 1847.⁵

Situated towards the south of Guichen Bay, the town at Robe (or Robetown) emerged as the first major town of the South East.⁶ Robe became the administrative centre of the region when a Government Resident was appointed in 1846.⁷ Over the next two decades, Robe developed as an international port that serviced the local wool industry and import and export markets. It also facilitated the arrival of thousands of immigrants, including British and Irish people, as well as Chinese prospectors during the Victorian gold rush between 1857 and 1861.⁸

George Ormerod and the Development of Robe

Robe's early commercial development was driven primarily by George Ormerod, a pastoralist and merchant. Originally from Lancashire, Ormerod arrived in Australia in 1842 and first settled in western Victoria, where he worked on a pastoral station. In 1845, he formed a partnership with Charles Sharratt and established a station at Mosquito Plains, now Naracoorte. The following year, the partnership ended, leaving Ormerod as the sole proprietor. Over the following decades, Ormerod became a prominent pastoralist with multiple holdings throughout the South East, either held individually or in partnership.⁹

In the late 1840s, Ormerod developed an interest in the shipping industry and was one of several pastoralists who unsuccessfully lobbied the colonial Government to divert its seaport from Robe to Rivoli Bay.¹⁰ Accepting that Robe would remain the seaport, Ormerod relocated there in the early 1850s. He likely established his shipping company in 1853, as the first known reference to 'Ormerod & Co.' appeared in November.¹¹

Ormerod & Co. became the primary shipping company in the South East and was fundamental in establishing Robe as one of the colony's most lucrative ports. At the time, Robe exported the second largest amount of wool in the colony.¹² Between the

mid-1850s and mid-1860s,¹³ the company's total exports (international and intercolonial) amounted to £1,696,700. The company began acquiring its own steamers in 1857, after purchasing the *Ant*¹⁴ and was so successful that Ormerod & Co.'s promissory notes served as a makeshift currency throughout the South East.¹⁵

Ormerod and his company erected several prominent structures that hastened the development of Robe. The company constructed a store and warehouse (since demolished) at the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), the hub of Robe's portside activities.¹⁶ Following the wreck of the *Duilius* in 1853, Ormerod promptly constructed what is now part of Grey Masts (SHP 10364) to store salvaged wool.¹⁷ In 1855, Ormerod financed Robe's first jetty, before it was replaced the same year by a government jetty.¹⁸ He and his family lived at 'Moorakyne' (SHP 10363), a house they built in the mid-1850s.¹⁹ Additionally, Ormerod built the Ormerod Cottages around 1857 (see below).

Ormerod & Co. thrived until the late 1860s. In 1870 Ormerod relocated with his family to western Victoria at a time when Robe's role as a port was in decline. Around two years later, Ormerod died at the age of 51.²⁰ Ormerod & Co was purchased by the Grice family, who kept the name until 1878, when it became John Grice & Co. About five years later, the business was purchased by Andrew Dunn. An Australia-wide banking crisis led to the demise of the company around 1893.²¹

Ormerod Cottages

Section 26 was first purchased by Emanuel Solomon in 1846.²² Sections 26 and 27 of Robe were then acquired together by Augustus Beyer in 1851.²³ Beyer, a grocer located in Adelaide, had purchased several properties in Robe, likely as speculative ventures.²⁴ Around two years later, George Ormerod also began to purchase multiple properties in the township, including sections 26 and 27.²⁵ Ormerod founded his company the same year and temporarily relocated to what is now Granny Banks' Cottage (SHP 12646), where he resided while waiting for his house, which he named Moorakyne, to be constructed.²⁶ In that time, he and his family briefly relocated back to England.²⁷

Ormerod likely built the terrace cottages no later than 1863.²⁸ The cottages were originally comprised of four dwellings. The largest had six rooms and was situated along Smillie Street. The remaining three each had four rooms and were along Cooper Street.²⁹ Kathleen Bermingham further highlights that:

There were eight front windows, four front and four back doors: one side-door and two side-windows in the cottage abutting Smillie Street. There was ... a knocker on EACH [emphasis original] of the front doors, and another on the door facing Smillie Street. Its roof was of square iron: the kitchen floor of the northern cottage was made entirely of bricks, built in side to side, and end to end, in almost mosaic formation. There were cedar ceilings, plaster and lathe ceilings, substantial iron grates, and ten-inch hardwood flooring-boards in the other room.³⁰

The neighbouring property on section 25 comprised the courthouse and police complex (SHP 10362).

It is believed that Ormerod built the cottages to house workers and professionals who could contribute to the growth of his business and the broader township. Early residents included a doctor, lawyer, accountant and teacher. Thereafter, a local gaoler occupied one of the cottages, as did Governor James Fergusson's staff during his summer visits.³¹

Like the company, sections 26 and 27, which included the Ormerod Cottages, were first acquired by Grice and then by Dunn.³² Both sections changed hands several times thereafter, until being split in 1935.³³ Since then, section 26 containing the cottages has gone through several owners. Some time during the 1980s, the cottages were converted into a single dwelling. In 2021, it was then divided into two separate dwellings. Ormerod Cottages was confirmed as a State Heritage Place on 23 September 1982.

Chronology

Year	Event
1842	George Ormerod arrives in Australia and begins work at a station in Western Victoria.
1845	Ormerod and Charles Sherratt are granted an occupation license at Mosquito Plains in South Australia, now known as Naracoorte.
1846	Counties of Grey and Robe are proclaimed by the colonial government and are opened to claim under pastoral license. The Government of South Australia establishes Robe as the administrative centre of the South East. The partnership between Ormerod and Sharratt ceases and Ormerod assumes sole control of the license. Emanuel Solomon purchases Section 26 in Robetown from the colonial government.
1847	Robe is officially gazetted as a port by the government.
1851	1 August, Augustus Beyer of Adelaide purchases Sections 26 and 27.
1853	August, Ormerod purchases Sections 26 and 27. Ormerod establishes his shipping company 'Ormerod & Co.' December, Ormerod sells the Naracoorte property.

- 1855 Ormerod purchases additional land around the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), the hub of Robe's portside activities.
- 1856 The Ormerod family move into their new home, which they name 'Moorakyne' (SHP 10363).
- 1859 Robe becomes South Australia's second biggest port for wool exports.
- c.1863 Ormerod erects the L-shaped cottages on Section 26 no later than 1863.**
- 1872 10 April, George Ormerod dies at the age of 51. His business is subsequently taken over by the Grice family. They retain the 'Ormerod & Co.' business name for several years.**
- 1878 'George Ormerod & Co.' is renamed 'John Grice & Co.'
- 1880 23 June, local merchant John Grice officially acquires Sections 26 and 27. It is likely he purchased them earlier following Ormerod's death.**
- 1883 The Grice family's Robe operations are taken over by Andrew Dunn.
- 1884 2 January, the property is transferred to Andrew Dunn and Charles Gell.**
- c.1893 The shipping business at Robe ceases due to the Australia-wide banking crisis.
- 1894 8 October, the property is transferred to John Benn, James Grice, Charles Russell and Joseph Procton.
- 1897 29 January, the property is transferred to Winifred Banks.
- 1924 27 August, the property is transferred to John Elliot.
- 1928 2 August, the property is transferred to James Cowan.
- 1929 12 April, the property is transferred to James Dawson.
- 1935 13 December 1935, the property is transferred to Violet Helena Dawson. On the same day, Violet transfers Section 27 to Allan Dawson.
- 1965 10 September, the property is transferred to Melliar and Joan Priest.
- 1977 9 May 1977, the property is transferred to Brian and Joan Payler.
- 1978 13 September, Ormerod Cottages are nominated as a State Heritage Place.**
- 1980 20 June, the property is transferred to Ormerod Cottages Pty Ltd.
- c.1980s Ormerod Cottages are integrated into a single dwelling.**

1982 18 March, Ormerod Cottages are provisionally listed as a State Heritage Place.

1983 23 September, Ormerod Cottages are confirmed as a State Heritage Place.

24 October, the property is transferred to Ardwall Nominees Pty Ltd.

2021 April, Heritage South Australia approves Development Application 21001107 to alter Ormerod Cottages, including its separation into two distinct dwellings and the demolition of a fence and masonry wall.

16 September, the property is transferred to new owners (current owners at time of writing).

References

Books and Chapters

Birmingham, Kathleen. *Gateway to the South East: A Story of Robetown and the Guichen Bay District*. Millicent: The South Eastern Times Ltd., 1961.

Birmingham, Kathleen. *The Second Eleven Tales of Robe*. Robe: self-published, 1971.

Cockburn, Rodney. *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol. 2*, facsimile edition indexed by A. Dorothy Aldersey. 1925; Blackwood, SA: Lynton Publications, 1974.

Harfull, Liz. *Almost an Island: The Story of Robe*, reprinted edition, 2013; Mile End: Wakefield press, 2015.

Marsden, Susan. *A Glimpse of Golden Days*. Robe: District Council of Robe, 1985.

Sprengel, Wilf. *The Ecstasy and Agony of Guichen Bay*. Robe: self-published, 1986.

Williams, Michael. *The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A Study in the Historical Geography of Australia*. London; New York: Academic Press, 1974.

Reports and Theses

Dallwitz, John, and Marsden, Susan. *Robe Historical Interpretation Study: Stage 1 in the Establishment of the Robe Historical Interpretation Centre*. Adelaide: Department of Environment and Planning, 1983.

Danvers Architects. "'Greymasts" Woolstore and Attached Cottage', Heritage Item Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983.

Danvers Architects. 'Ormerod Cottages', Heritage Survey Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983.

Newspapers

'Died', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 29 November 1858, p.2.

'District Councils... Echunga. Monday, December 14', *Adelaide Observer*, 26 December 1857, p.8

'Robe Town', *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide), 24 September 1859, p.3

'Police Courts ... Adelaide: Monday, September 26. Stealing Potatoes', *Adelaide Observer*, 29 September 1855, p.4

Land Titles

Certificate of Title Vol. 3, Folio 116.

Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 244.

Certificate of Title Vol. 1653, Folio 158.

Certificate of Title Vol. 5729, Folio 520.

Websites

André, Roger. 'Wool', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, 19 March 2014.
<https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/wool> Accessed 5 March 2024.

SITE DETAILS

Ormerod Cottages
10 Smillie Street, Robe

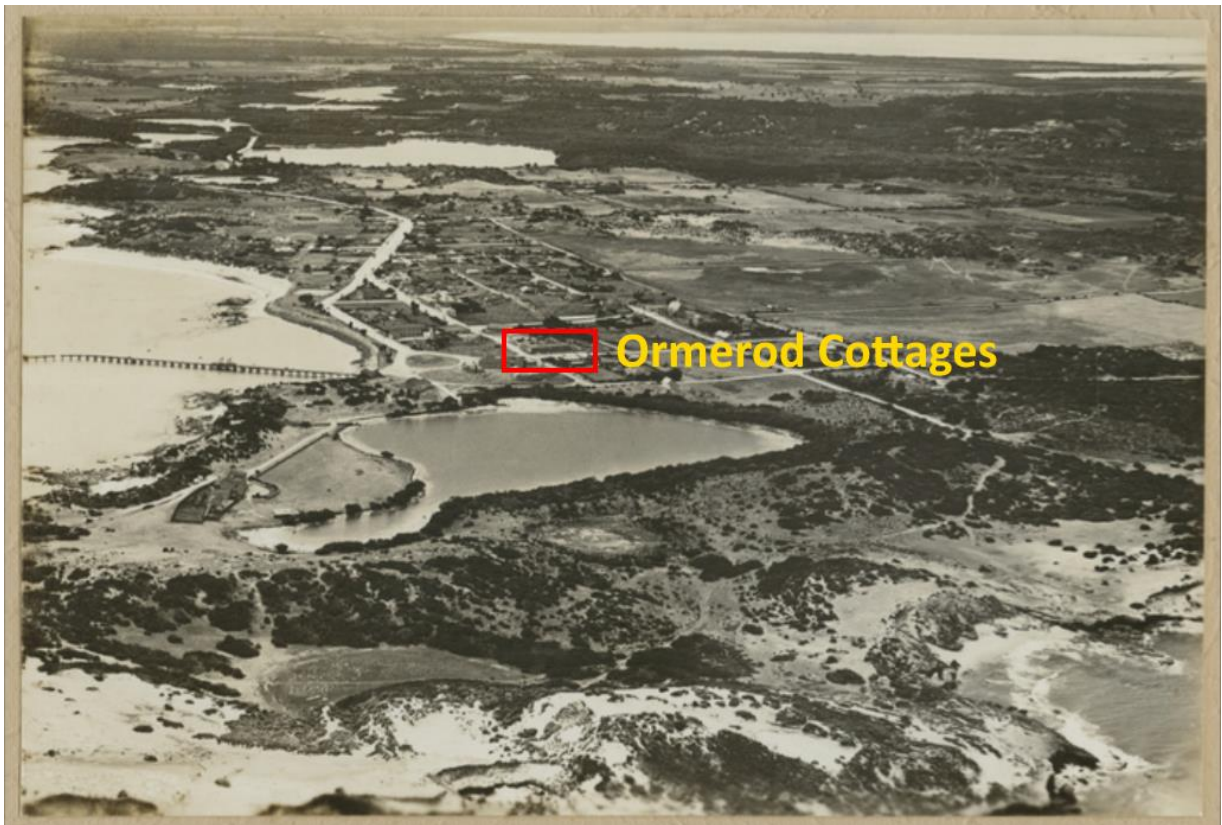
PLACE NO.: 10360

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Single-storey stone terrace cottages with a hipped roof clad with flat iron sheets.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	c.1863
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated: 13 September 1978 Provisionally entered: 18 March 1982 Confirmed: 23 September 1982
CURRENT USE:	Accommodation, c.1863 -
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	District Council of Robe
LOCATION:	Street No.: 10 Street Name: Smillie Street Town/Suburb: Robe Post Code: 5276
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Reference: CT 5729/520 T441801 A26 Hundred: Waterhouse

PHOTOS

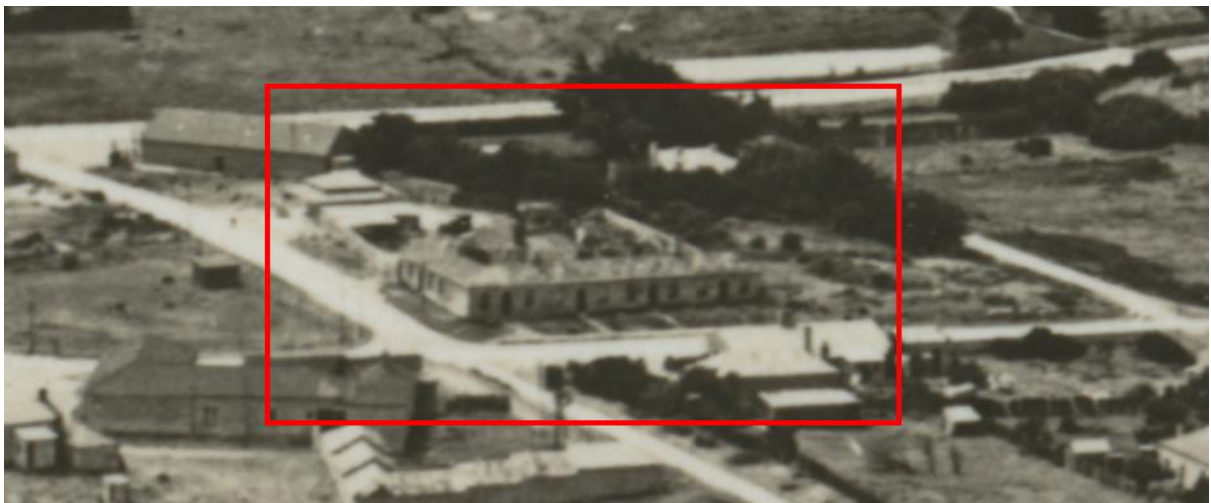
Ormerod Cottages
10 Smillie Street, Robe

PLACE NO.: 10360



Aerial view of Robe facing east showing Ormerod Cottages on Smillie Street, c.1940.

Source: SLSA B 41274



Closer view of Ormerod Cottages from the above image.

Ormerod Cottages

PLACE NO.: 10360

10 Smillie Street, Robe



Northern elevation of Ormerod Cottages facing Smillie Street, c.1980.

Source: DEW Files



Portion of the eastern elevation facing Cooper Street, c.1980.

Source: DEW Files

Ormerod Cottages
10 Smillie Street, Robe

PLACE NO.: 10360



Northern and eastern elevations on the south south-east corner of Smillie Street and Cooper Street, c.2003.

Source: DEW Files



Western elevation showing backyard, c.2012.

Source: DEW Files

Ormerod Cottages

PLACE NO.: 10360

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10360

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Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 23 September 1982

The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 27 June 2024

10 Smillie Street, Robe



Portion of the eastern elevation towards the south-east corner of Smillie Street and Cooper Street, c.2011.

Source: DEW Files



Portion of the eastern elevation towards the south, c.2011.

Source: DEW Files

Ormerod Cottages

PLACE NO.: 10360

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10360

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Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 23 September 1982

The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 27 June 2024

10 Smillie Street, Robe



Ormerod Cottages, 2023.

Source: Google Street View

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- ¹ Liz Harfull, *Almost an Island: The Story of Robe*, reprinted edition (2013; Mile End: Wakefield press, 2015), 12-14; Susan Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days* (Robe: District Council of Robe, 1985), pp.11-12.
- ² Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.11; Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days*, p.12.
- ³ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, pp.14-16; Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days*, p.14.
- ⁴ Roger André, 'Wool', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, 19 March 2014. <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/wool>; Michael Williams, *The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A Study in the Historical Geography of Australia* (London; New York: Academic Press, 1974), pp. 339-341.
- ⁵ Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.4-10.
- ⁶ Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.4-10.
- ⁷ Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days*, pp.21-24.
- ⁸ Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.10-16.
- ⁹ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.32.
- ¹⁰ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.32.
- ¹¹ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.34.
- ¹² Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days*, p.27; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.36.
- ¹³ Kathleen Bermingham, *Gateway to the Southeast: A Story of Robetown and the Guichen Bay District* (Millicent: South Eastern Times Ltd., 1963), p.123; Rodney Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol. 2*, facsimile edition indexed by A. Dorothy Aldersey (1925; Blackwood, SA: Lynton Publications, 1974), p.20.
- ¹⁴ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.37.
- ¹⁵ 'Robe Town', *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide), 24 September 1859, p.3; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, pp.36-37.
- ¹⁶ Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, p.8; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.36.
- ¹⁷ See Danvers Architects, "'Grey-masts" Woolstore and Attached Cottage', Heritage Item Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983.
- ¹⁸ Wilf Sprengel, *The Ecstasy and Agony of Guichen Bay* (Robe: self-published, 1986), p.13 and pp.15-19.
- ¹⁹ Bermingham, *The Second Eleven Tales*, p.9; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.214.
- ²⁰ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.
- ²¹ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.
- ²² Kathleen Bermingham, *Second Eleven Tales of Robe* (Robe: self-published, 1971), p.13.
- ²³ Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 244.
- ²⁴ For instance, Beyer also purchased the property that is now known as Davison's Shop (SHP 12540), located on Smillie Street. While it is likely that Beyer built the shop and dwelling at this property, it does not appear that he lived or worked at Robe. See Certificate of Title Vol. 3, Folio 116; 'Police Courts ... Adelaide: Monday, September 26. Stealing Potatoes', *Adelaide Observer*, 29 September 1855, p.4; 'District Councils... Echunga. Monday, December 14', *Adelaide Observer*, 26 December 1857, p.8; and 'Died', *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 29 November 1858, p.2.
- ²⁵ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.34.
- ²⁶ Bermingham, *The Second Eleven Tales*, p.9.
- ²⁷ Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.
- ²⁸ The cottages have been estimated to have been built between 1857 and 1863. See Danvers Architects, 'Ormerod Cottages', Heritage Survey Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983; Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, p. 33.
- ²⁹ Bermingham, *Second Eleven Tales*, p.14.
- ³⁰ Bermingham, *Second Eleven Tales*, p.14.
- ³¹ Bermingham, *Second Eleven Tales*, p.14.
- ³² Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 244, application no. 17848 and transfer no. 169742.
- ³³ Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 244, transfer no. 1203017.