DWELLING
39 COMMERCIAL STREET
BURRA

ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

Architectural

The cottage appears to have been built in three or more stages, the first in sawn timber, with subsequent extensions to the rear in round timber, mud, rubble and concrete. Of these several stages and materials, the oldest section is of greatest architectural interest.

The original section of the cottage is rectangular in plan, measuring 3.8m x 7.4m, and was divided into two unequal rooms. It is constructed of sawn timber throughout, in the form of stud framed walls clad with feather-edged weatherboards and lined with lath and plaster. The cottage has calico ceilings, and a shingled roof, later covered by iron.

All timber in the cottage is softwood imported from the northern hemisphere: spruce, yellow pine and Baltic pine from both North America and Europe. It is all mechanically sawn and planed, although dimensions vary slightly. The cottage is not a prefabricated structure, however. All joints have been cut by the carpenter on site, and the cottage plan is irregular, not modular.

While not at first sight a distinguished structure, the cottage occupies an interesting place in the development of Australian building practices. The techniques used in building the cottage are English in origin, and demonstrate the beginnings of what were to become the standard practices in Australian timber construction up to the 1940s. Examples as old as this one, while once common, are now scarce. Very few timber framed buildings in South Australia date from earlier than the 1850s, and most of those that do are prefabricated system houses.

Historical

Copper was discovered at Burra in 1845, and by 1846 the South Australian Mining Association has acquired the mine and commenced development. The town of Kooringa grew steadily in population, until by 1851, with 5000 people, it was the largest inland settlement in Australia.

Our impression today of both the mine and townships at Burra is of substantial masonry buildings, but this gives a very misleading image of the early years of settlement there. A new and large town, established quickly in a remote area where transport and labour costs are high, is inevitably composed of ephemeral buildings, chosen for cheap and fast construction, in its early years. Thus in Burra the community was at first housed to a great extent in either dugouts or timber framed cottages. Masonry construction became the norm only in later decades, and different economic circumstances.

The cottage at 39 Commercial Street is thus a scarce survivor of a large number of timber cottages erected early in Burra's development. Its construction can be dated with some certainty, for its site is depicted in two illustrations before and after it was built. In 1847, S T Gill recorded "The Burra Burra Township", with the site empty, and in 1850, W A Cawthorne showed "Kooringa, South Australia" with a cottage constructed on the allotment.

The cottage stands on one of a number of long narrow allotments running between Commercial Street and what is shown on early maps of Burra as Mine Walk, adjacent to the Paddock. Mine Walk is a pathway, now barely discernible, which was originally the entrance to the mine from the residential sector of Kooringa. The Paddock appears in early illustrations as fenced and cultivated land.

The construction of cottages in the vicinity is documented in SAMA records. A survey plan of the town in 1849 showing existing buildings left allotment 104 vacant, but put in the name "Woodbury". In August of that year, Henry Ayers wrote to the management in Burra complaining that a Mr Burslem "has been prevented from completing cottages in the Paddock" by lack of building materials, and directed that he be supplied them. Subsequently, a SAMA list of rental properties in Burra shows that P Woodbury commenced paying three pounds rent per annum for allotment 104 on 29 September 1849.

The cottage has been extended to more than twice its original floor area by the addition of three rear rooms of mixed materials and apparently built in several stages. No date is known for these extensions. The cottage remained the property of SAMA until 1914, long after the mine closed, when the Company's remaining assets were sold. The cottage has belonged to a succession of private owners since.

References

I Auhl, The story of the 'Monster Mine': the Burra Burra Mine and its Townships 1845-1877, Burra 1986.

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Information from CSIRO Division of Forestry and Forest Products.

Notes compiled by Ian Auhl, Kim Michelmore and Iris Iwanicki.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Representation on Register

Dwellings generally are well represented on the Register, but timber houses are very few. The theme of the early development of Burra is represented by the creekbank dugouts. Most of the Register items in Burra are of much later date.

Integrity

The cottage is in very poor condition. It is severely termite-infested, and much of the lining and the partition wall have been removed. However, there is little sign of alteration to the original timber portion of the cottage apart from additions, and its integrity is high.

Circumstances

The cottage is privately owned by the neighbouring residents, and is used as a storehouse and children's playhouse. The owners are sympathetic toward the building and understand its significance.

REGISTER ASSESSMENT REPORT

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE ACT 1978 ITEM NO.: 6630-10434

DWELLING
39 COMMERCIAL STREET
BURRA

Statement of Cultural Significance

Built in 1849, the cottage is significant for its association with the very early years of the South Australian Mining Association and the Burra Burra mine. It is also a scarce example of early (i.e. pre-goldrush) timber construction in Australia.

Relevant Criteria

A building important to the understanding of the evolution of South Australia's cultural heritage, and an example of one of its rare and unusual aspects.

Significant Interest

1. Architectural: Represents an important application of building materials, i.e. early use of imported sawn softwoods for framing and cladding houses.

2. Historical: Demonstrates physical evidence of an important development in history, i.e. the early settlement and economic growth of the township of Kooringa adjacent to the Burra Burra mine.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this item be included on the Register of State Heritage Items.

MANAGER
STATE HERITAGE BRANCH

Date: 6 April 1989

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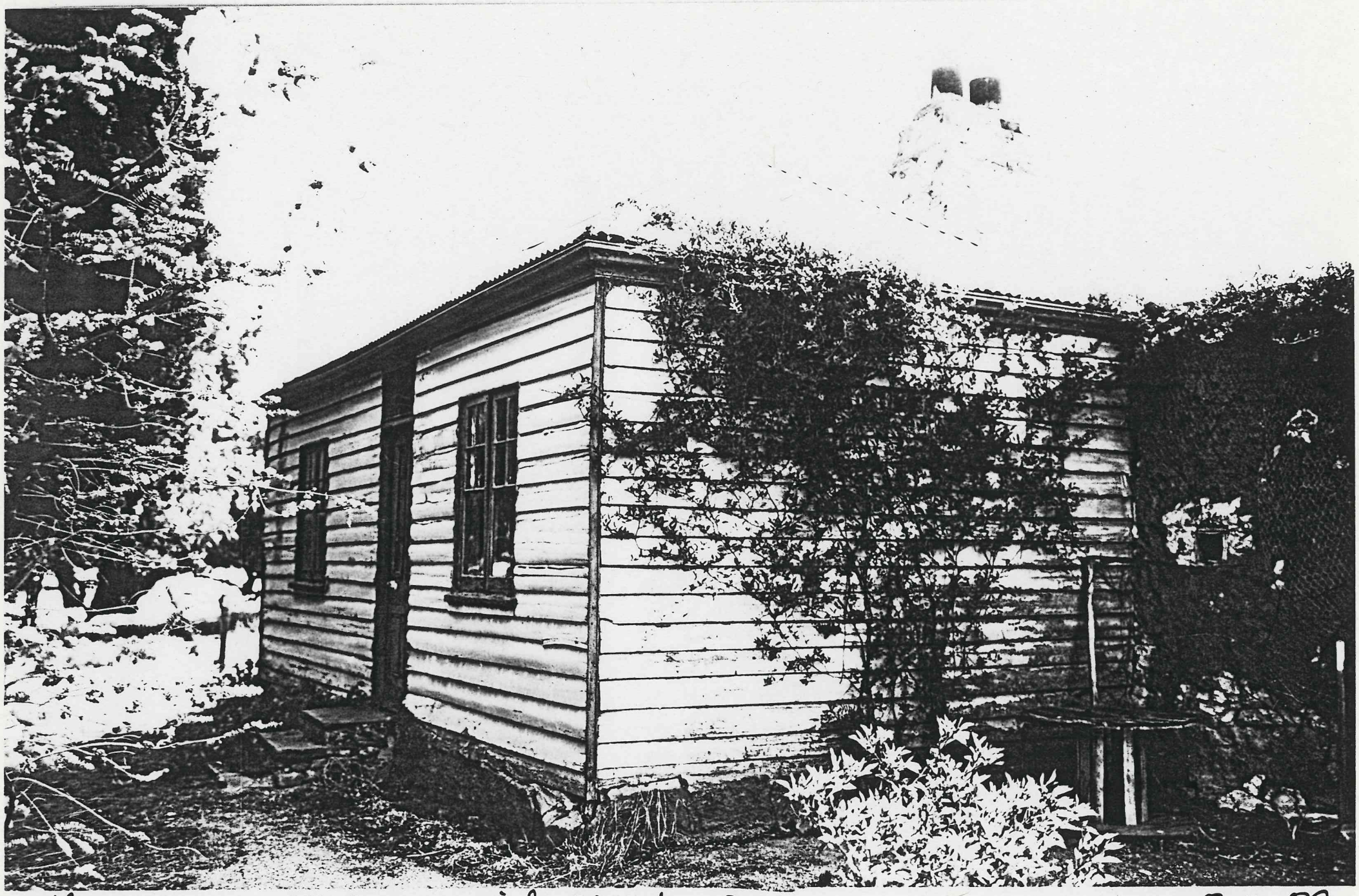
Film 1499 39 Commercial Street Burra 8.2.8
6630 – 10434



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39 Commercial Street Burra

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State Heritage Areas of South Australia

Burra State Heritage Area
Private Dwellings
State Heritage Places entered in the South Australian Heritage Register

Of the many privately built and owned dwellings in Burra, four are State heritage Places entered in the South Australian Heritage Register. These are the former home of both John and Essington Lewis, the Victorian residence known as 'Heathmont', the former doctor's residence on Market Street and an 1840s timber dwelling.

Dwelling & Coach House - former home of John & Essington Lewis
Dwelling, 2 Kangaroo Street, Burra / Coach House, 1a Ware Street, Burra
SAHR 12634 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 8 November 1984

This dwelling is significant for being the home of the Hon. John Lewis MLC who settled in Burra in 1876. A pastoralist, explorer and politician, he was also managing director of Bagot, Shakes & Lewis Ltd, one of the colony's largest pastoral companies

Dwelling, Kangaroo Street, 2005

The residence was also the childhood home of John Lewis' son, Essington Lewis (1881-1961), who lived in Burra until he was sent to St Peter's College in 1894. His role in Australia's most influential mining company (Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd) and his importance to Australia's defence in World War Two (as Director-General of Munitions and Director-General of Aircraft Production), make Essington Lewis an important Australian historical figure.

The Lewis residence was constructed before the family arrived in Burra, possibly by the South Australian Mining Association. Essington's boyhood home is aptly described by Geofrey Blainey in *The Steel Master: a life of Essington Lewis*, Melbourne (1971):

> *The family property at Burra was several acres of grassland but the house stood right up against the rough public footpath; presumably it had been built by someone homesick for the terrace houses and gregarious life of an English city. The house resembled a single-storey roadside hotel. It had freestone walls, a roof of unpainted iron, and a front verandah edged by a balustrade of laced ironwork. Not many people walked along the footpath of Kangaroo Street past the Lewis house, so that the front rooms had reasonable privacy from eavesdroppers, even on hot nights when the front door facing the street was ajar. The rear rooms of the large house were secluded, for a grassy stretch ran back one hundred yards or more to the rear of the property where stood a solid coach-house, stables, and a disused Catholic church or school room in which some of the boys were allowed to sleep when they were older.*

Coach House, Ware Street, 1994

The coach house was a substantial U-shaped stone building enclosing a courtyard, and would have been a necessary aspect of John Lewis' occupation.

It is now on a separate allotment of land (to that of the house) with its rear facing Ware Street.

Dwelling 'Heathmont'

Vineyard Terrace, Burra

SAHR 12661 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 8 November 1984

'Heathmont', originally called ' Heath Mount', was built in 1882 for Charles Drew, one of the town's leading merchants. It is a large Victorian residence on the upper slopes of the hills overlooking the township. Built during Burra's post-mining period, 'Heathmont' is testament to the town's development as a prosperous service centre for the surrounding community.

'Heathmont' and front drive, 2005

Charles Drew and his three brothers opened a supply store in the South Australian Mining Association's township of Kooringa (Burra) in March 1848. The business grew rapidly during the Burra mine's hey-day, and further flourished with the advent of the railway in 1870. Following the mine's closure in 1877 the store continued to trade successfully, as rural areas were opened up and services developed in the town. (In 1889 the business was taken over by one brother, John, who entered into partnership with EW Crewes, trading as 'Drew & Crewes'.)

'Heathmont', 1983

During 1882 Charles Drew called for tenders to build a 'fine residence' and, out of the five submitted, he selected Sara and Dunstan's tender of £1,400. The result, on the hill behind the hospital and overlooking Kooringa, is one of the largest and grandest 'Hill' houses in Burra. Charles Drew lived in 'Heathmont' for nine years until 1891, when he sold the house to Ellen Mary Sandland.

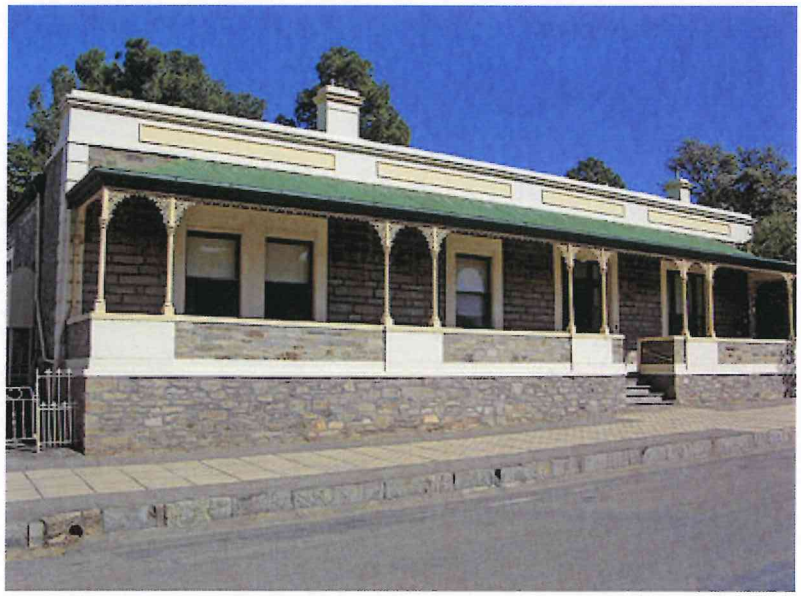
Former Doctor's Residence (Doctor Brummitt's Residence)

3 Market Street, Burra

SAHR 12246 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 8 November 1984

This formal dwelling, in the commercial and civic precinct of Burra, was built for Doctor Robert Brummitt in 1882. Behind the main house is a three-roomed cottage, with cellar beneath, which was used as the consulting rooms. A side entrance leads to these rooms.

Side entrance, 2005



Former Doctor's Residence, 2005

Doctor Brummitt practised until 1900, when he sold the property to a father and son practice. Since then it has been taken over by a succession of doctors, and was in continuous medical use until 1970.

1840s Timber Dwelling

39 Commercial Street, Burra

SAHR 10434 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 29 September 1990

This dwelling, built in 1849, predates the goldrush years, and is therefore significant as a rare example of the very early years of mining in Burra. It is, in fact, a rare Australian example of early timber construction.

The cottage appears to have been built in three stages – the first in sawn timber, with subsequent extensions to the rear in round timber and mud, rubble and concrete. The original section was divided into two unequal rooms. All timber is softwood imported from the northern hemisphere, being spruce, yellow pine and Baltic pine from both Europe and North America.

The cottage was not prefabricated, with all joints cut by a carpenter on site. The building techniques are English in origin, and demonstrate what became standard practices in Australian timber construction up to the 1940s. While this type of structure was once common, examples are now quite rare. Very few South Australian timber-framed buildings date from earlier than the 1850s, and most that do are prefabricated system houses.

1840s Timber Dwelling, 1994

Rear extension, 1994

This cottage is a survivor of the large numbers of timber cottages erected early in Burra's development. Its construction has been dated with some certainty, from two illustrations showing the site. In 1847, when ST Gill recorded *The Burra Burra Township*, the site was empty. WA Cawthorne's *Kooringa, South Australia*, drawn in 1850, showed a cottage on the allotment. Similarly, a South Australian Mining Association list of rental properties shows that P Woodbury commenced paying rent (£3 per annum) on this allotment on 29 September 1849.

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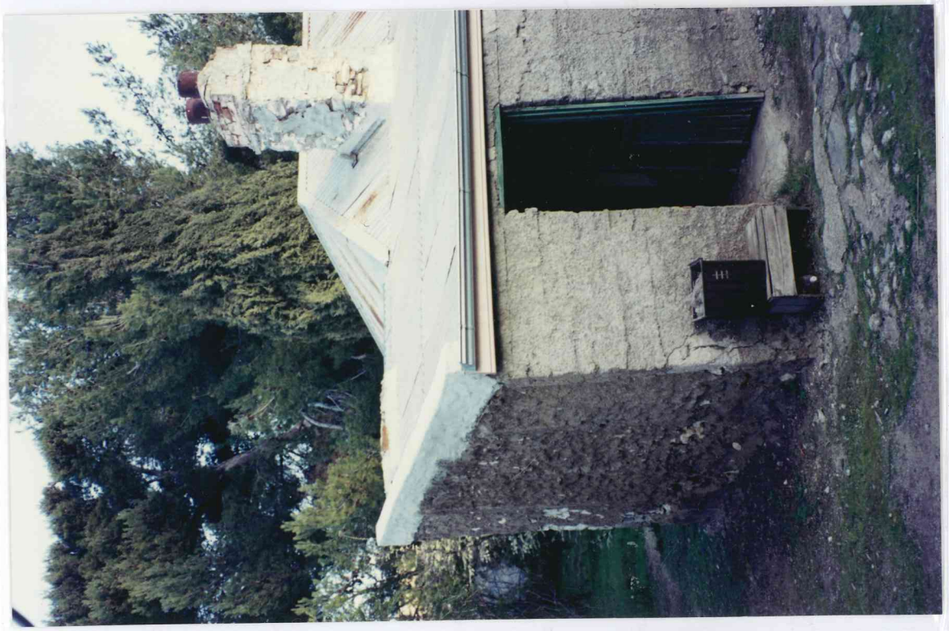
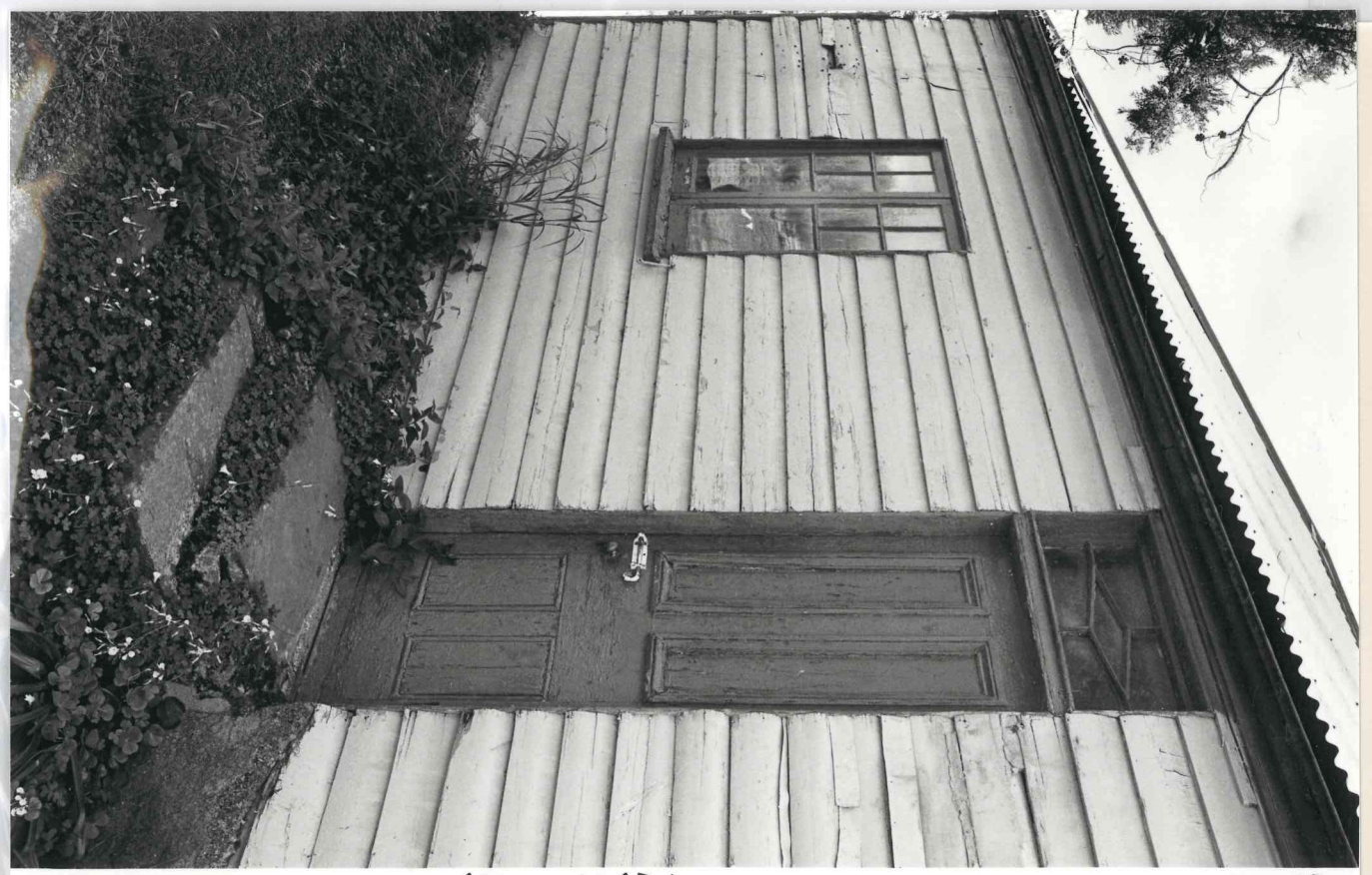


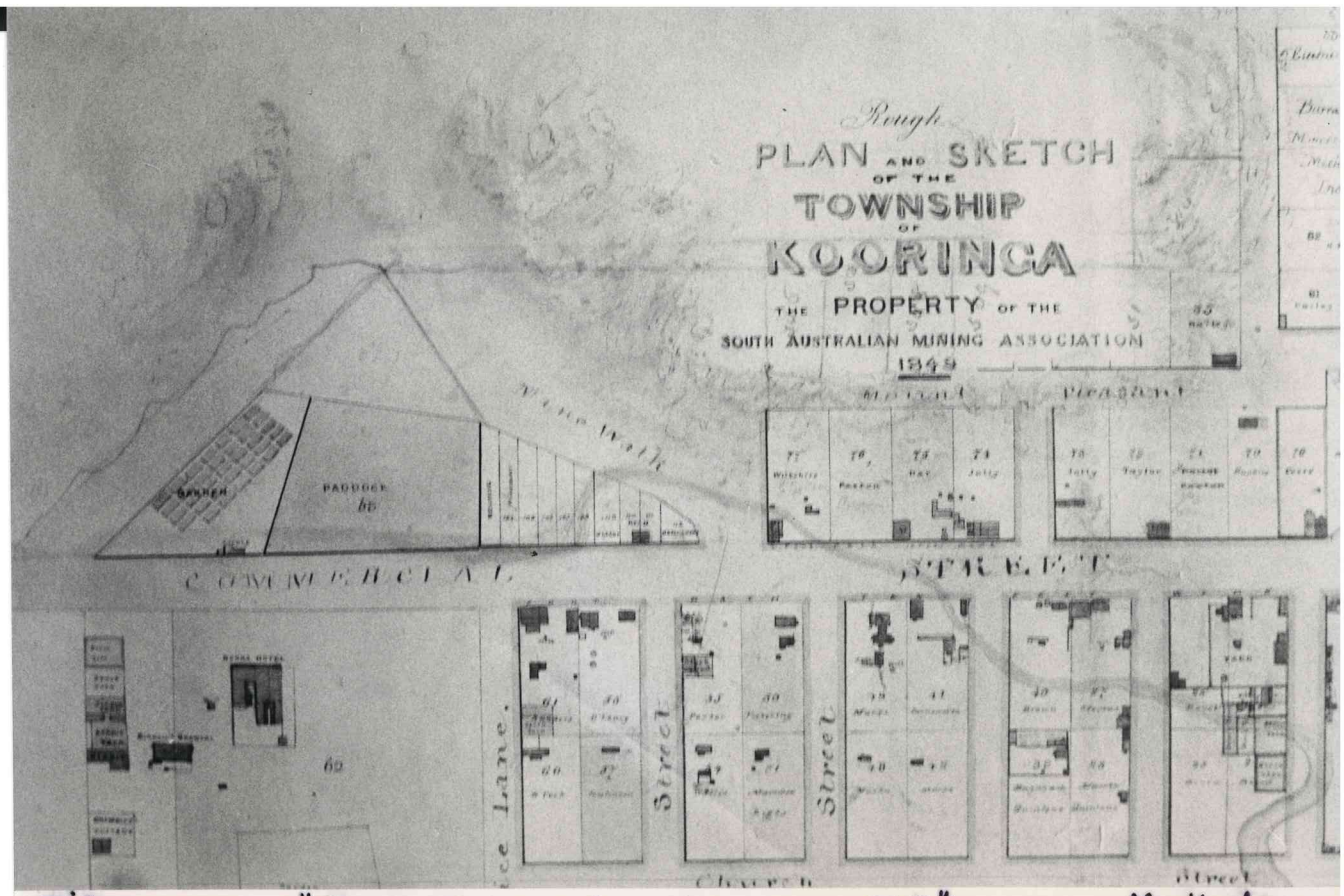
FILM No. 904 | 6630 - 10434 TIMBER COTTAGE | SEP 83



FILM No. 904 | 6630 - 10434 TIMBER COTTAGE | SEP 83

FILM No. 904 | 6630-10434 TIMBER COTTAGE | SOP 83

Film 1509 | "Kooringa South Australia 1850" W.A. Cawthorne | Mitchell Auhl 115



Film 1512 "Rough plan ... Kooringa ... 1849" Mortlock C42

FILM No. 904 6630-10434 TIMBER COTTAGE SOP 83