

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

**MONGOLATA GOLD BATTERY, REMAINS OF CYANIDE WORKS, EATING
HOUSE AND DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA**

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The site comprises the remains of a 1930s gold mining operation including mine, gold processing facilities and accommodation.

The mine (known as Byles' Mine) consists of a series of interconnecting tunnels and shafts, some lined with timber, and incorporates a gold vault protected by a reinforced concrete wall, narrow gauge railway track, ore chute and winch with internal head winch.

To the east of the mine a ten head stamp battery, which is partially operational, is located within a new corrugated iron shed. Associated with this are remains of settling tanks and nearby a dugout dwelling, formerly the manager's residence. To the east of this are the remains of the cyanide plant.

Adjacent to a creek to the south of the battery are the ruined remains of Carpenter's eating house, consisting of rendered stone walls and footings. Along the bank of the nearby creek are the remains of several dugout dwellings with some small sections of stone walling evident.

The mine is currently being worked on a low scale.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

Discovered in 1930, the Mongolata goldfield is the last of the significant gold mines to be developed in South Australia. The site is important as one of only two gold fields discovered and established in the Depression years of the late 1920s and 1930s when many unemployed people were assisted by Government initiatives to turn to gold mining. Intact examples of mining technology of that era remain on the site, including a stamp battery and mine tunnels and shafts, while ruins of an eating house and dugouts illustrate the living conditions of the miners.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*)

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

The first gold in South Australia was formally mined from the Victoria mine at Castambul in the late 1840s. Since that time several phases of significant gold production have occurred, linked to finds at fields such as Barossa, Waukaringa, Woodside, Wadnaminga and Tarcoola.

By the time gold was discovered by Henry Byles at Mongolata, east of Burra, in 1930, South Australia was in the grips of a depression, with unemployment at record levels. The find was to result in the establishment of the last of the significant goldfields in the State. At the time the Government actively encouraged unemployed men to go in search of gold, lending them tents and equipment for the purpose. A major initiative towards this end and also to improve the output of gold from the mines, was the installation of gold batteries. The battery at Mongolata was the last of five such batteries to be established by the Government between 1894 and 1933.

Although the use of explosives was discouraged by the Mines Department, shafts and tunnels at Byles' mine at Mongolata had to be blazed because of the hardness of the local rock. Nearby are the remains of an eating house, which provided both sustenance and accommodation to miners, and dugouts, a form of dwelling which are evident at several mining sites throughout the State, line a nearby creek bank.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Gold Mining in South Australia

Although gold has been mined in South Australia since the first decades of the colony's settlement, copper mining has overshadowed it in terms of economic impact and the State never really experienced 'rushes' of the scale of those in Victoria and Western Australia.

The first productive gold mine in South Australia was the Victoria Mine (SHR 14693) which was established after gold was discovered near Castambul in 1846 (Drexel, p. 103; *Gold in South Australia*, p. 6). Subsequent discoveries of gold in South Australia helped to open up the more remote areas of the state and caused minor population movements to goldfields there.

In 1851 the South Australian Government offered a £1,000 reward, on certain conditions, for the discovery of payable gold. The first claimant of this reward was William Chapman who had chanced upon gold in Donkey Gully near Mylor. He only received half the reward as the conditions were not completely met. The other half was given to the prospectors who discovered payable gold at nearby Jupiter Creek in 1868 (SHR 10460) (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 7; Drexel, p. 103). The goldfields at Echunga were South Australia's first major field and were one of the State's largest producers of gold (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 7).

The massive exodus of men out of South Australia to the Victorian goldfields prompted the South Australian Government to pass the Bullion Act of 1852. This act provided for regular escorts for miners returning from Victoria with their gold and made gold bullion legal tender in South Australia (Drexel, p. 103; *Gold in South Australia*, p. 6).

The next major find in South Australia occurred in 1868 at Spike Gully in what is now the Para Wirra Recreation Park. This goldfield, known as Barossa, attracted 7,000 people to the site within six weeks. By 1871 it had yielded gold worth £180,000 (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 8). Finds of gold at Waukaringa (SHR 10316) (1873), Teetulpa (1883) and Wadnaminga (1888) moved miners to the northern and eastern areas of the state, while gold was still being discovered in the Adelaide Hills – at Birdwood and Williamstown in the 1870s and Woodside in 1881.

Kalgoorlie in Western Australia was the focus in 1890 of another exodus of prospective miners fleeing economic depression and drought conditions in South Australia (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 8).

Discovery of gold near Tarcoola in 1893 revived gold mining in South Australia for a time. This eventually developed into one of the largest goldfields in the state, with mines worked for over 16 years (Drexel, p. 103).

The discovery in 1930 and subsequent development of the Mongolata goldfield, east of Burra, has been described as 'the last major event in the history of South Australian gold'. (Drexel, p. 103).

Mongolata Mine

Discovery and Development

Three factors contributed to the last significant peak in gold production in South Australia: the discovery of gold at Mongolata; the economic depression of the late 1920s to 1930s, which forced many unemployed men to turn to prospecting or fossicking for gold; and a change in the gold standard in 1931 which increased the price of gold (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 8).

Henry (or Harry) Byles, a drover, is generally credited with the discovery of gold at Mongolata in October or November 1930. However, a report in the *Burra Record* indicates that, before Byles' find, a 'prospector known as Teddy Bywaters pegged out (but did not register) a claim ... and started prospecting . He found gold there but apparently did not make use of his find and left the spot.' (*Burra Record*, 8 March 1933, 1a).

By late November, Byles had staked a claim on Section 177, Hundred of Mongolata, and begun work. This was reported in both the *Burra Record* and the *Advertiser*, which also informed its readers that:

The Chief Inspector of Mines (Mr L J Winton) returned on Wednesday from a visit to the new reef at Burra. He stated that there were about eight men working on the

location but so far little had been done. He could not give any indication of the prospects of the reef until he had assayed the samples which he had brought down with him, but so far as could be ascertained at present, the reef looked to have possibilities.

Advertiser, 27 November 1930, 9a

In December of that year it was reported that very little work was evident at Byles' mine, with the exception of some small openings sufficient to expose a quartz and ironstone formation, and that several other claims had been pegged out south of this (*Mining Review*, 53, 1930, p. 113-114). It was also noted at the time of the inspection by the Department of Mines, that mining would be 'hampered' by the lack of water at the new goldfield, the nearest permanent supply being a bore about 1½ miles away (*Mining Review*, 53, 1930, p. 114). The shortage of water was alleviated by an 'artificial catchment' built by the Government for domestic water supply and a bore also put down by the Government provided water for the battery and cyanide processing (*Mining Review*, 56, June 1932, p. 57-58).

At Byles Lease mining initially began as open cut work, but by mid-1931 a drive had been excavated into the hillside to follow the gold bearing formation as it dipped slightly southerly. A shaft had also been dug (*Mining Review*, 54, June 1931, p. 101-102). By the end of that year Byles' lease had been renamed the Mongolata No. 1 Mine and the tunnel had been extended to 120 feet from the adit. Other crosscuts and shafts were dug in attempts to follow the most productive lodes (*Mining Review*, 55, December 1931). Fifteen men were employed at this mine towards end of the following year (the mine was then known as Byles' Mongolata Gold Mining Co), but this number had been reduced to nine by the end of the year. 'Developmental' work was being carried out in the mine and a winze was being sunk, although most of the ore sent to the battery was being obtained from shallow levels and surface dumps (*Mining Review*, 57, December 1932, p. 66). Extensive descriptions of the mine at Byles were included in *Mining Review* reports on the goldfield, giving a detailed picture of the progress and development of that mine.

There were several other leases operating at Mongolata. These included Rampton's Lease and James and party to the north of Byles, Terry's Claim, Flaherty and party, Baker's Lease (later Golden Harp GM Co) to the south of Byles', Byrnes and party (later Orinda GM Co), Salter and Hogan, Threadgold and party and Lewis and party (*Mining Review*, 54, June 1931, p. 102).

The population of men working on these mines reached 120 between 1932 and 1934, some of them living in dugouts built into the sides of a gully south of the Byles' lease (Heritage Investigations). Another form of accommodation was provided at Bill Carpenter's 'Eating and Boarding House', (Auhl) a description of which was provided to the *Burra Record* by a visitor to Mongolata in June 1932:

One that stands out very prominently amongst its fellows is the Latagomon Restaurant run by Mr Will Carpenter of Aberdeen. What a boon this snug "possie" of Mr. Carpenter's must be to the miners ... just think what an immense amount of good he is doing by providing such beautifully cooked and served meals for the men, thus assisting in no small way the development of this big field.

Burra Record, 22 June 1932, 3a

Interest in the Mongolata field would have been boosted with the discovery of a substantial nugget from William Pexton's Takati mine in 1934. However, over the life of the field, Byles' mine remained the largest producer, recovering over 100 kilograms of bullion before mining at the field generally ceased during the years of the Second World War (Drexel, p. 131).

The Depression and Government Initiatives

By February 1931 more than 50 men were reported to be working at the Mongolata mines (*Mining Review*, 53, 1930, p. 114). The majority of these would have been unemployed men as indicated by the Director of Mines and Government Geologist in their annual report to Parliament in 1930:

The widespread financial difficulties which have so seriously affected trade, business and manufacturers, resulted in loss of employment for large numbers of employees. In many cases these men have turned their attention to gold prospecting, the fact that, owing to the depreciation of the Australian currency, gold commanded a premium of over £1 per ounce being an additional inducement. A large number of men are now engaged in prospecting throughout the state, necessitating a very considerable increase in work in maintaining supervision over their operations.

Annual Report Director of Mines & Government Geologist 1930, (SAPP 26, 1931)

The numbers of unemployed would have been significant at this time: during the 1890s unemployment levels had reached 10%, dropping slightly prior to the First World War and then worsening dramatically to reach a figure of 29% Australia wide by 1932 (Broomhill, p. 2).

Increased mining activity had implications for the Department of Mines. The three Inspectors of Mines had more sites to supervise and the Department lent miners tools and tents and in some instances issued petrol and oil to them. Prospectors were encouraged by the Department 'to investigate all possible sites for development', but there was little gold to be found. Only two new finds were made during this time, at Mongolata and at Gomersal in 1931, while many prospectors concentrated on re-working existing fields in the Adelaide Hills and elsewhere (O'Neil, p. 295).

The Department of Mines also lobbied for better conditions for miners during the Depression:

We are strongly of the opinion that the serious effort of those men who are working on rations provided by the Unemployment Relief Council is deserving of full recognition. It appears to us essential that close inquiry should be made immediately by the appropriate authority to consider our present view that an increased ration should be granted to all such men who undertake hard physical work in their endeavour to make themselves self-supporting, but who are unable at the present time to supplement their ration from any source whatsoever.

Mining Review, 54, June 1931, p. 89

By 1933 the Government Geologist, L Keith Ward, was justifying his Department's expenditure to the Minister of Mines (R S Richards):

It has been found throughout Australia that hard times turn the attention of the community to mining and that more prospecting is carried out at such times than at any other. I hold the view that a relatively small increase in expenditure is more than justified, in that the mining and prospecting work does absorb many men who would otherwise be unemployed, and moreover the State requires prospectors to be at work in order that new discoveries may be made to take the place of the mines that are worked out.

DM 659/1933, cited in HSA Item Evaluation Report, File No. 13288

Another government initiative aimed to encourage the search and mining for gold as well as to improve output from gold mines was the installation of gold batteries. The first battery to be purchased and operated by the government was located at Mount Torrens in 1894 (SHR 13288). This was followed by batteries at Peterborough in 1897 (upgraded to oil fired operation in the early 1930s) (SHR 14252), Tarcoola in 1901 (originally a 10 head battery which was expanded to 20 head in 1904) and Glenloth in 1907.

At Mongolata, the need for a battery was soon felt. Ore had to be sent to Peterborough for crushing and the costs of transport meant that only the highest grade ore was viable for processing. Following a visit to Mongolata by H W Gepp (Commonwealth Consultant on Development) and L Keith Ward, recommendations were made to erect 'a light battery of modern type' at the field, which would enable processing of lesser grades of ore and thereby positively contribute to the continuing operation and development of the field (*Mining Review*, 54, June 1931, p. 88). It was estimated that a battery and associated infrastructure would cost between £500 and £1,000. A year later it was reported that a Government Battery was being built at Mongolata with assistance from the Commonwealth Unemployment Relief Loan and was located in a 'central position on the field.' (*Mining Review*, 56, June 1932, p. 57).

Manufactured by Forwood Down Pty Ltd of Adelaide, the 10 head stamp battery and cyanide plant was operational by the end of 1932 and was officially opened by the Minister for Mines on 2 March 1933 (*Mining Review*, 57, December 1932, p. 63; *Burra Record*, 8 March 1933, 1a). The battery had originally formed part of a 15 head battery used at Mount Grainger gold field, which closed in 1904-05. By April 1933 the battery at Mongolata had processed over 200 tons of ore (*Mining Review*, 57, December 1932, p. 67). The battery finally closed in 1954.

Production of gold in South Australia waned in the years of the Second World War. Gold mining occurred sporadically throughout the state after the War – at Tarcoola, and more recently at Kanmantoo and Roxby Downs – but, with the exception of Roxby Downs, production has never reached the peaks of the earlier years (*Gold in South Australia*, p. 9). A small scale mining operation has recently been resumed at Mongolata. As part of this the battery has been restored to working order. The former Government battery at Peterborough was operational until 1997.

REFERENCES

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SA Department of Mines, *Mining Review*

SA Parliamentary Paper 26, 1931, Annual Report Director of Mines & Government Geologist 1930

The Burra Record

SITE RECORD

**MONGOLATA GOLD BATTERY, REMAINS OF CYANIDE WORKS, EATING
HOUSE AND DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA**

FORMER NAME:	Mongolata No. 1; Byles	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Underground gold mine tunnels and shafts, gold battery and remains of cyanide works and dugout nearby, ruins of eating house and dugouts in creek bed	
DATE OF COMPLETION:		
REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	Rejected
	Date:	14 October 1992
CURRENT USE:	Description:	Mine
	Dates:	
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	Mine
	Dates:	
ARCHITECT:	Name:	N/A
	Dates:	
BUILDER:	Name:	N/A
	Dates:	
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	Mining and mineral processing
	Category:	Mine
		Crusher
		Dwelling [Mining]
MISCELLANEOUS INDEX:		N/A
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Goyder Regional
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	
	Street No.:	
	Street Name:	
	Town/Suburb:	Mongolata
	Post Code:	5417
	Region No.:	8
	Region Name:	Lower North
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	CT
	Volume:	5283
Battery & cyanide works	Folio:	8
	Lot No.:	6
	Section:	Pt 23N

Meeting Date: 25 July 2002

Prepared by: Sarah Laurence

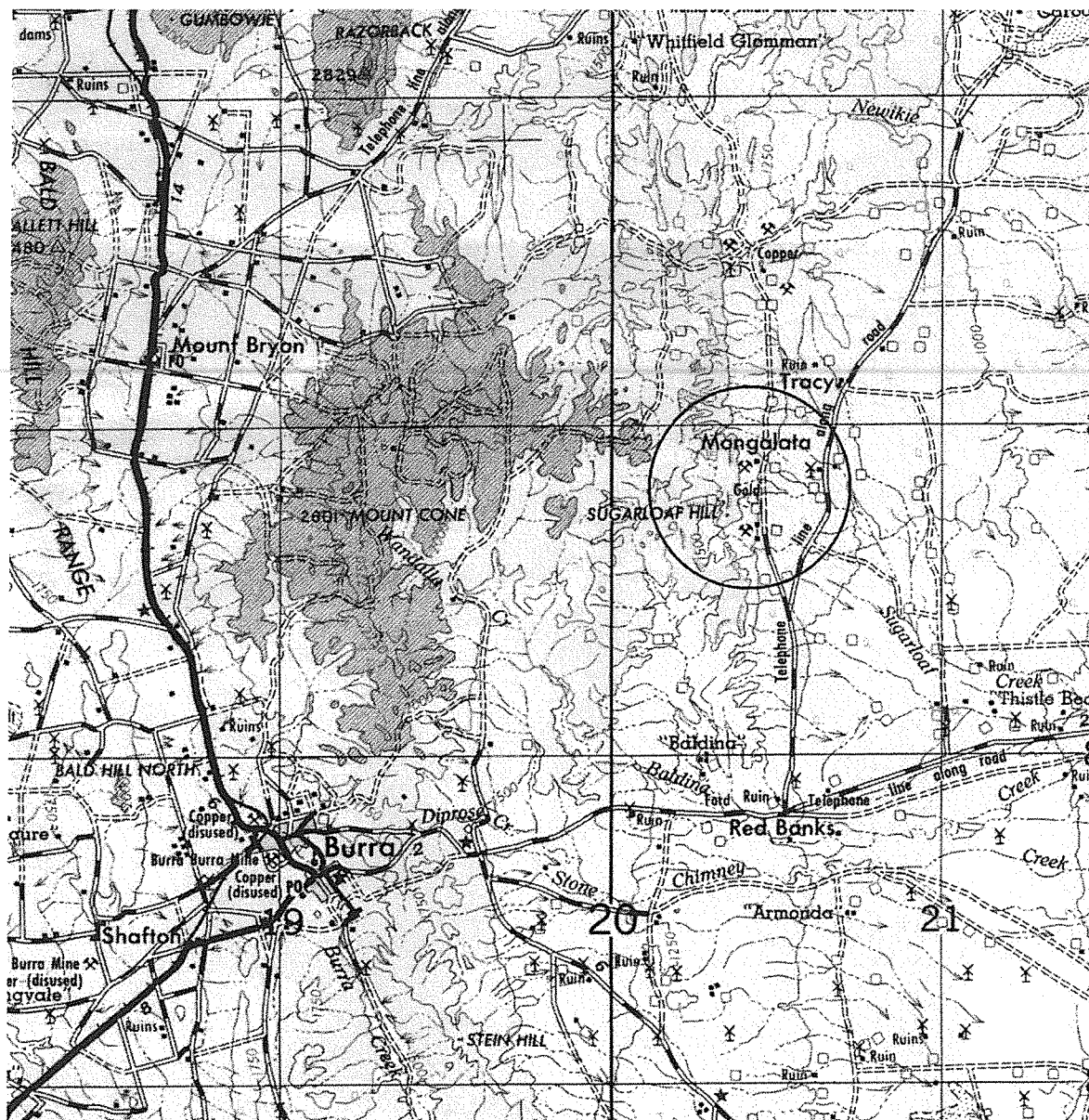
	Hundred:	Mongolata
	Title Type:	CT
	Volume:	5283
Mine, Eating House & Dugouts	Folio:	9
	Lot No.:	
	Section:	177
	Hundred:	Mongolata
AMG REFERENCE:	Zone:	54
	Easting:	320677 Mine Entrance (WGS 84)
	Northing:	6282647
	Easting:	321054 Battery (WGS 84)
	Northing:	6282589
	Easting:	320925 Eating House (WGS 84)
	Northing:	6282507
	Easting:	320926 Dugouts (WGS 84)
	Northing:	6282461
	Map Sheet No.:	6730-4
	Map Scale:	1 : 50,000
OWNER:	Name:	D T & J M Hill
	Address:	PO Box 154
	Town/Suburb:	Burra
	Post Code:	5417
PHOTOGRAPH:	Film No.:	
	Neg. No.:	

Meeting Date: 25 July 2002

Prepared by: Sarah Laurence

LOCATION PLAN

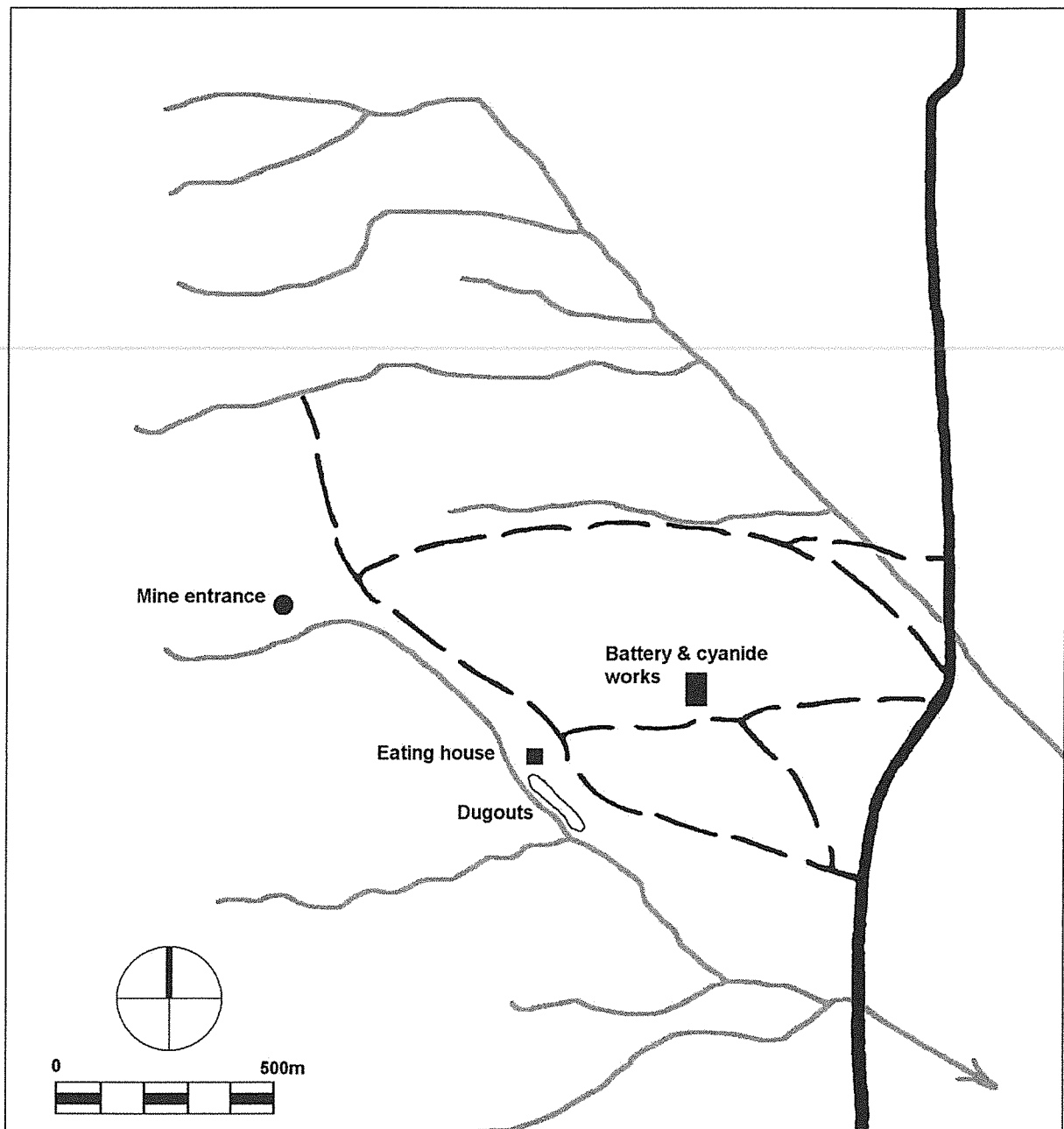
MONGOLATA GOLD BATTERY, REMAINS OF CYANIDE WORKS, EATING
HOUSE AND DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA



Scale: 1 : 250,000

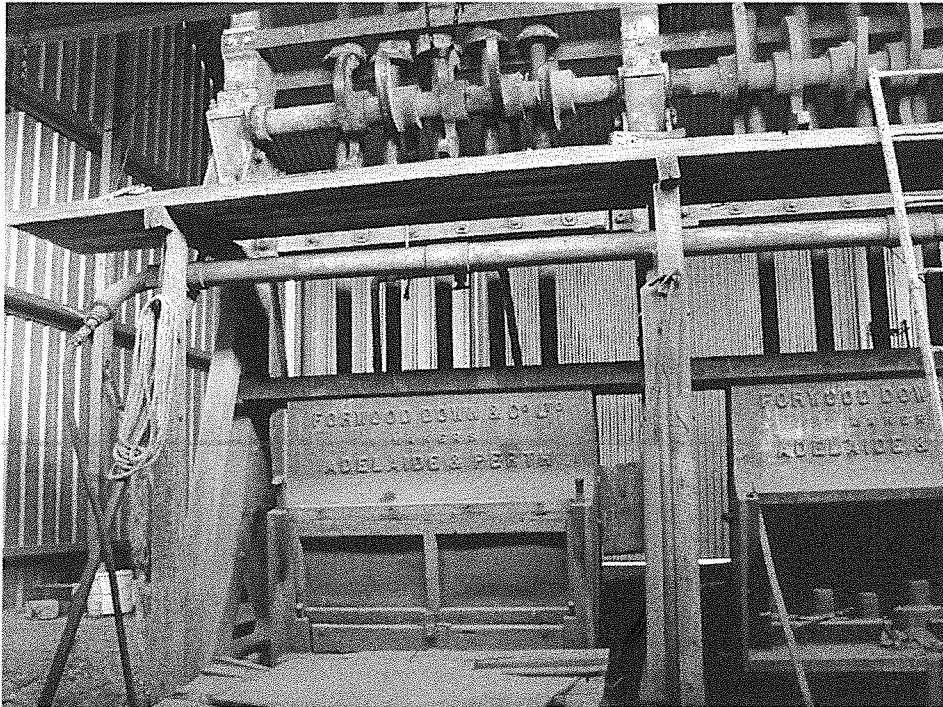
SITE PLAN

MONGOLATA GOLD BATTERY, REMAINS OF CYANIDE WORKS, EATING
HOUSE AND DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA



PHOTOGRAPHS

MONGOLATA GOLD BATTERY, REMAINS OF CYANIDE WORKS, EATING
HOUSE AND DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA



Battery



Eating house ruins

PHOTOGRAPHS

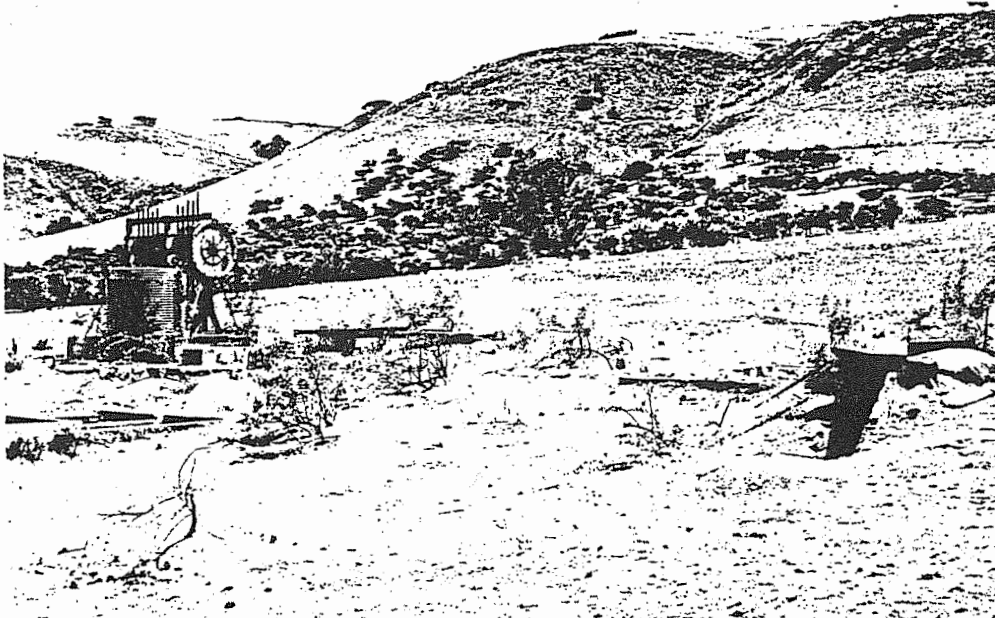
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DUGOUTS AND FORMER BYLES' MINE
MONGOLATA GOLDFIELD
MONGOLATA

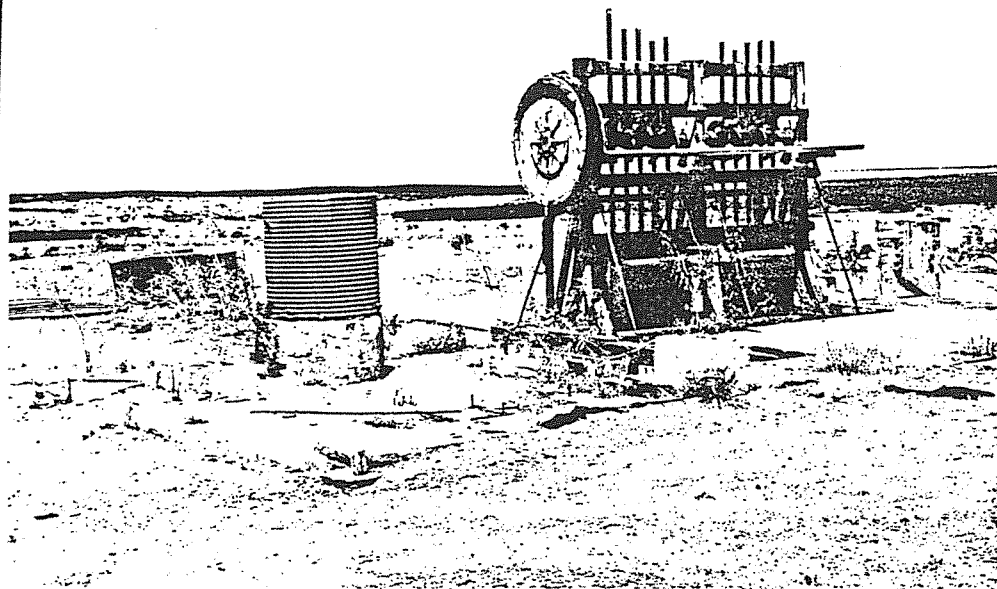


*Dugouts in creek
bank*



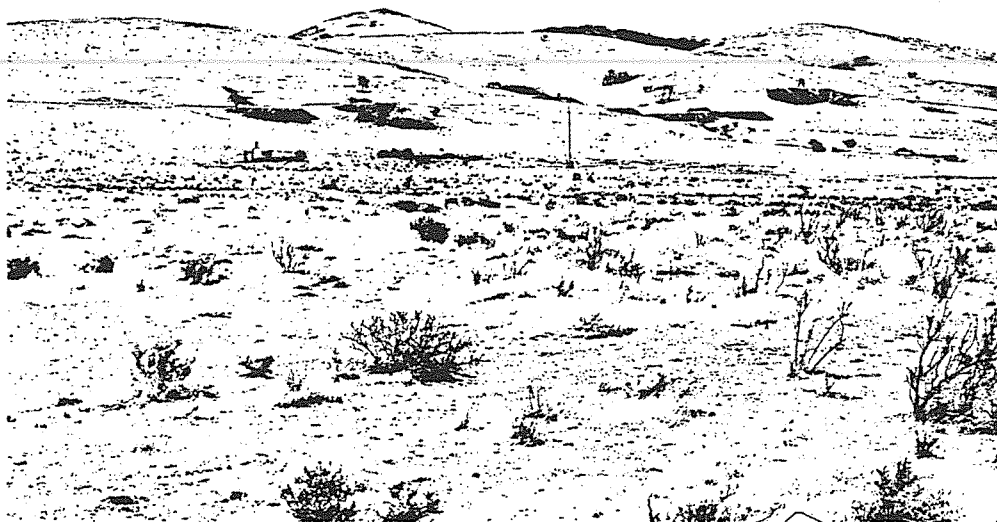
Mine entrance

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	<h2 style="text-align: center;">HERITAGE SURVEY</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">ITEM IDENTIFICATION SHEET</h3> <div> ITEM NAME: Mongolata Goldfield & battery Former or other </div>	PROJECT HERITAGE SURVEY REGION 8 Item Ref. No. 28 Office Use ITEM No. DOCKET No.
<p>HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE</p> <p>At a time of general economic depression nothing else arouses as much interest and energy as the prospect of winning a fortune in gold. In 1930 gold was discovered in the hills east of Burra at Mongolata by Harry Byles, and the new goldfield soon attracted a population of unemployed men living on Government rations, sheltering in dugouts. Between 1932 and 1934 there were 120 people there.</p> <p>A Government gold battery was opened in 1933. The 10 stamp crusher was manufactured by Forwood Down Pty. Ltd. of Adelaide.</p> <p>No doubt interest in the goldfield increased when William Pexton mined a gold nugget weighing 183 ounces in 1934. However, the goldfield lasted only nine years, perhaps again indicating its link with the depression, which ended at the same time. The whole goldfield is of interest, with its intact crusher, and other equipment, the mines, and ruins of dugouts and Bill Carpenter's Eating and Boarding House.</p>		<p>LOCATION Address Sections Pt 36E (Battery & dugouts) 177 (Mines & Eating House) 23N, 23NM, 23M, 23S (Mines) Hundred Mongolata County L.G.A. Burra Burra S.H.P. Region 8 A.M.G. Ref. 6730-V 54 32100 628240 (Battery)</p> <p>SUBJECT 4.2</p> <p>PERIOD State</p> <p>Study Area 1929-present</p>
<p>REFERENCES</p> <p>National Trust file No. 2784; Bierbaum (Public Buildings Dept.); Auhl, <u>Burra ... pictorial memoir</u>, pp 29-31, 215; Auhl and Finch, <u>Burra in colour</u>, (2nd ed.), p.63</p> <p>Verbal Archival photographs Auhl (above ref.) pp 29-31.</p>		<p>TYPE OF ITEM</p> <p>LAND Natural feature <input type="checkbox"/> Historical site <input type="checkbox"/> Historical Gdn. <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PHYSICAL CONDITION Ruined building and several structures.</p>
<p>PHOTOGRAPH Film No. 266 Negative No. 14 Direction of view to SW</p> 		<p>STATUS</p> <p>Reg. of State Her. Items Reg. <input type="checkbox"/> Interim L <input type="checkbox"/> Nominated <input type="checkbox"/> National Estate Reg. <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed L <input type="checkbox"/> National Trust CL <input type="checkbox"/> RL <input type="checkbox"/> File <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>S.A. Highways Dept. <input type="checkbox"/> Instit. of Engineers <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RECOMMENDATION (A) State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (B) Local <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARED BY HERITAGE INVESTIGATIONS</p>

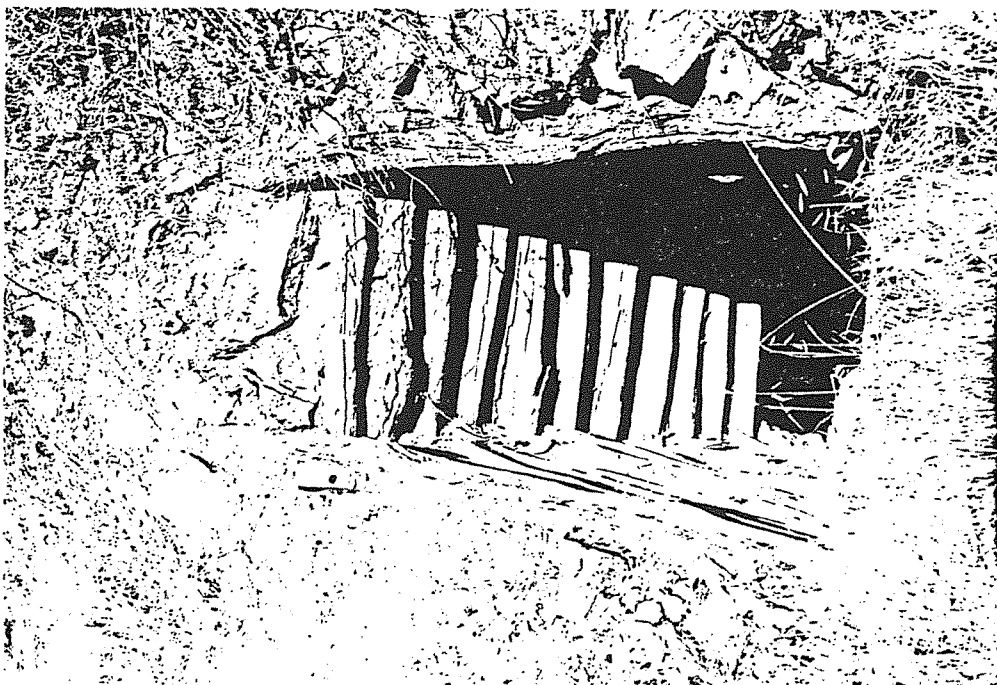


PROJECT
HERITAGE SURVEY REGION 8
Item Ref. No.28(a)
L.G.A. Burra Burra

Film No. 266
Negative No. 15
Direction of view to SE



Film No. 266
Negative No.7
Direction of view to W



Film No. 266
Negative No.13
Direction of view to S

