

KAPUNDA MINE SITE

KAPUNDA

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Historically, the Kapunda Mine site is of national importance as the first commercially successful metal mine in Australia, and the first to use open-cut methods and an acid leaching process for extraction. It is also of State importance for its contribution to the Cornish heritage of South Australia and to the State's economic recovery from a period of depression in the early 1840's.

Physically, the item is an abandoned mine site with a large open-cut and numerous shafts. On the site are scattered numerous buildings and ruins which are of archaeological importance.

Environmentally, the mine area established the mining character of Kapunda. It is a well known physical and historical landmark.

NOMINATION SOURCE/THREAT/OWNER

This report has been prepared as part of an assessment of heritage items in Kapunda which may be affected by mining proposals. The mine site is on Exploration Licence No. 943, held by Northlands Minerals Ltd. It is owned principally by the Hampel Brothers (Lots 30, 19 & 27) and the Corporation of Kapunda (pt. lot 24).

HERITAGE CONSERVATION BRANCH RECOMMENDATION:

.....
Peter Bell
.....
for Manager

It is recommended that this item be included on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized H1, H2, H3.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

.....
Chairman

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Historic Site	Ref. No. 6629-11535
	Item KAPUNDA MINE SITE KAPUNDA	Status N.Tr.
Age 1840's	Subject INDUSTRY - Primary Extractive PROCESSING OF PRIMARY EXTRACTIVE PRODUCTS	Site Type -

History

Physical

Environment

Integrity

	E	VG	AG	FP	NA
Context The first commercially successful mine in Australia and first mine in Australia to use open-cut method and acid leaching process with acid manufactured on site from local materials. Established the State's Cornish heritage and aided economic recovery from 1842 depression.	X				
Person/Group Cornish, Welsh and Irish miners.		X			
Event Discovery of copper at Kapunda by Dutton and Bagot 1842.		X			
Natural Elements A large mine site within Kapunda township, surrounded by agricultural landscape.					X
Man-Made Elements The site encompasses shaft mines, open-cut as well as numerous structural remains of archaeological interest.			X		
Representation One of a number of similar large mines in the State of which Kapunda as the first major mine is historically very important.	X				
Continuity The site contrasts strongly with the natural landscape.	X				
Local Character A crucial element in establishing the mining character of Kapunda within a rural setting.	X				
Landmark Because of its large scale and impact on the natural landscape, it is a well known physical landmark.	X				
Alterations Shafts, open cuts and buildings, many of which have been demolished, show the stages of the mine's development.			X		
Condition Not applicable.					X
Compatibility The site is presently not worked.			X		

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Historic Site	Ref. No. 6629-11535
	Item KAPUNDA MINE SITE KAPUNDA	Prepared By: Kathleen Patitsas Lothar Brasse

Supplementary Information

Adaptation: Has limited adaptation potential. An archaeological survey should be carried out.

Interpretation: Has high interpretation potential on both a local and national scale.

History and Sources

Although considerable funds have been granted to the town of Burra for this State's sesquicentenary, relatively little attention has been paid to Kapunda's mine area, even though "The Kapunda Mine was smaller, earlier, and technically as interesting as the Burra Mine. It was developed by local residents, and the initial capital of eighty pounds to purchase the land and another thousand pounds to finance the original development grew in about ten years to a capital of 64,000 pounds paying 5-10% dividends. It was the first mine in Australia to use open cut methods and an acid leaching process with the acid manufactured on site from local materials". (Cumming, 1982, p.1.)

As Geoffrey Blainey so aptly points out "The last of the Australian colonies to be settled, South Australia produced the first metal mine. This riddle can be simply explained. Metal deposits were close to the main port of Adelaide and so were soon seen and easily developed. Amongst the settlers of that paradise of civil and religious freedom were miners from Cornwall, then the world's centre of metal mining, who knew minerals and how to work them. Above all, the new colony in 1841 was depressed (...) Therefore they had a strong incentive to mine (...)". (Blainey, 1978, p.106).

The first mines in South Australia were at Glen Osmond, where silver-lead ore was discovered in 1841, and at Montacute, where a copper mine was opened in 1844, but "the Kapunda mine was the first to be worked on a commercial scale, and it was certainly the first mine to determine the foundation of a service town nearby. The Burra mine, and the mines at Wallaroo and Moonta proved to be more profitable but they were discovered later". (South Australian Museum Conservation Study, 1977, p.35).

Not only then is Kapunda copper mine important on a national level as Australia's first commercially successful metal mine, representative of the nation's first metal mining boom, but it is also significant at State level. In 1842, when copper was discovered at Kapunda, South Australia was effectively bankrupt. The exploitation of the Kapunda Copper Mine ensured the colony's economic recovery: it "stimulated an inflow of people and capital once more and not only expanded the market for agricultural produce, but for the first time focussed settlement interests towards the more northerly hill country". (D.W. Meinig, cited in S.A. Museum Conservation Study, op cit, p.36).

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Historic-Site	Ref. No. 6629-11535
	Item KAPUNDA MINE SITE KAPUNDA	Prepared By: Kathleen Patitsas. Lothar Brasse

History and Sources

On a regional level the mine made the town of Kapunda pre-eminent in the mid-north of the colony, a fact which was confirmed by the completion of the colony's northern railway to the town in 1860. From this time until a railway was completed to Burra (1870), copper ore was sent from Burra to Port Adelaide through Kapunda. In turn the town's strategic position in regard to both mines encouraged several implement makers and engineering firms to commence operations in the town, so that, for a time, Kapunda became the colony's major industrial centre outside Adelaide and the metropolitan area.

As the very *raison d'etre* of the town, the mines are obviously of local historical importance also: a planned township to be named "Victoria" (slightly north of Kapunda) was quickly abandoned when the discovery of copper became known.

On a more general level, this State is particularly renowned for its Cornish heritage and some of the first Cornish miners in South Australia worked at the Kapunda mine.

The prosperity of the town largely matched that of the mines, so that "the fact that Kapunda stagnated economically for so long after the first prosperous years has meant that the town has largely preserved the appearance which it had at the height of its period of prosperity". (*ibid*, p.39).

The following outline sketch of the history of Kapunda Mine area can be supplemented by reference to several detailed histories in the sources listed below.

The initial discovery of copper at Kapunda was made separately by Francis S. Dutton and Charles S. Bagot (the latter on the property of his father, Charles Harvey Bagot) in 1842. By January 1844 Dutton and Bagot senior had purchased section 1271 and commenced mining operations, using Cornish miners called "tributors" as they were paid a "tribute" or commission on a percentage basis. The land, originally lightly timbered with peppermint gum, soon became "denuded of almost every stick of timber for miles round" (Whitworth, 1866, p.115).

Two distinct areas were at first worked according to the localities of the separate discoveries: Wheal Dutton on the west (the hill) and Wheal Charles on the east (the plain). The ore was shipped to Swansea from Port Adelaide, and as there was little backloading on ships going to England it was classed as ballast, enabling transport at relatively cheap rates.

Water seeping into the mine proved a problem; it was bailed out by horse whims (the earliest example of their use in South Australia) and pumped out by a Draft 30" double-acting steam engine imported from England and commenced operations in July 1848. (Cumming, 1982, p.2.) This was the first steam engine erected in Australia. In 1850 the Draft engine could no longer cope with the water problem, so a 36" Buhl engine was erected at the Buhl pump shaft and the boiler house was connected by an underground flue to the tall stone chimney which still stands. In 1845 Bagot and Dutton purchased section 1284 to the south of the main mine area and then sold nine-twentieths of the mine to an English company. Dutton then sold his entire quarter share to the same company, which later (1857) became registered as the Kapunda Mining Company. This company was far more successful than the Grand Junction Company (reformed as the North Kapunda Mining Company) which probably worked the East Kapunda Mine until the gold rush and was then taken over by the Kapunda Mining Company. (Cumming, *op cit.*, p.30). (Section 1284 later became known as "Hillside Mine", and was worked by tributors from 1880 to 1884, then by the English and Australian Copper Company until 1907. (Cumming, *op. cit.*, p.30).

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Historic-Site	Ref. No. 6629-11535
	Item KAPUNDA MINE SITE KAPUNDA	Prepared By: Kathleen Patitsas Lothar Brasse

History and Sources

After production of ore peaked in 1851, problems including the labour scarcity associated with the gold rushes almost halted work for a while until full scale operations were resumed in 1855. Although the first smelting furnace had been installed as early as 1849 a refining furnace was added in 1861 to enable the production of high grade copper on the spot.

In 1861 a subsidence in the main workings necessitated rebuilding of the Draft engine house as the Buhl winding house, but this was demolished only after 1920 (conversation with Mrs. D.L. Lamb, June 1983). Of all the numerous buildings associated with the mine at the height of its prosperity (F. Sinnett described them in detail in 1862) very few remain, and there is a notable lack of information concerning their demolition (S.A. Museum Report on the Surviving Cottages - Mine Square, Kapunda, pp.7,1).

In 1865, the year in which Kapunda township became a corporation, the Henderson or "Scottish" Company leased the workings of the mine from the Kapunda Mining Company. Although the Henderson Company spent over £20,000 on new machinery associated with its patented acid leaching process, it managed to obtain only 0.5% copper in ore from the open cut mines. As a result, losses were suffered in 1874, and the Kapunda Mining Company was liquidated in 1877.

For the remaining period, individual tributors worked the mine between 1880 and about 1912; later Northland Minerals were allowed to carry out exploration under special conditions (1972) and it is considered that some threat of possible re-mining of the area exists. In November 1982 Kapunda Council wrote to the Department of Mines and Energy stating that "Council is now of the very strong opinion that the existing surface features of the whole mine area should be retained and enhanced for the purposes of a mining museum". It is difficult to see how future mining operations could possibly conserve these features and it is respectfully requested that no further mining or exploration permits be granted by your Department until this proposal can be investigated". The National Trust has given the mine area an 'A' classification.

Sources:

Advertiser 13/9/1899, p.9.

F.S. Dutton: South Australia and its Mines (London 1846)

F. Sinnett: An account of the Colony of South Australia prepared for distribution at the International Exhibition (1862).

J.B. Austin: The Mines of South Australia (Adel., 1862).

R.P. Whitworth: Baillieres South Australian Gazetteer (Adel, 1866)

R.R. Charlton: The history of Kapunda (Melb. 1971)

I. Auhl & D. Marfleet: Australia's Earliest Mining Era, South Australia, 1841-1851 (Adel. 1975)

S.A. Museum: Report on the Surviving Cottages - Mine Square, Kapunda

S.A. Museum: Establishing conservation priorities for the built environment: Kapunda, a case study (abbrev. title: S.A. Museum Conservation Study) (Adel.1977)

G. Blainey: The Rush That Never Ended (Melb. 1978)

D. Cumming: The Kapunda Mine - 1842 to 1912; (Oct. 1982)

Also searches in L.T.O., examination of early maps and conversation (June 1983) with Mrs. D.L. Lamb, 6 Queen Street, Kapunda, who spent her youth at the mine manager's house.

Conversation with Greg Drew, Mines Department, 5/-/1983.

