

# HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

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**NAME:** Mount Salt Limestone Track

**PLACE NO.:** 26430

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**Address:** 640 McLeans Road, Mount Schank SA 5291

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## 1. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOUNT SALT LIMESTONE TRACK

This track provided a direct link to the road network crossing the once extensive Mount Schank pastoral station. The pastoral history of this land started in 1843 when first squatted upon by Edward and Fortescue Arthur. Mount Salt probably became a minor centre of pastoral activity after 1851, when it became the intersection of two local land routes. W J T Clarke, an immensely successful pastoral landowner, consolidated the various landholdings of Mount Salt from 1865 to around 1872, incorporating the station into his vast Mount Schank Estate. Captain Robert Gardiner leased the estate from 1868 – 1901, before the Clarke family resumed its management. In 1921, the South Australian Government repurchased much of Mount Salt, including most of the subject track, under the *Closer Settlement Act*, which probably ended regular use of the route.

Excavating through the limestone outcropping allowed efficient passage of people and small loads through otherwise very rough terrain. It appears the track originally ran across the limestone surface and was later cut into the stone to smooth the route. Such a cutting would have been expensive, especially in the context of the track's relatively minor importance and since less direct routes were probably available. Its construction could only have been justifiable within an extensive pastoral operation like Mount Schank. The track design suited a single animal and cart or buggy arrangement, which gradually wore deeper into the surface over decades of use. A paired animal arrangement and/or wide-axled vehicles could not have fit the grooves of this track. A 1921 survey plan shows the track was originally around 2.4km long, running through both limestone and earthen ground. An associated 1921 plan of Mount Salt Station shows a buggy shed, which probably housed the vehicle that most used the track.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

A 520 metre long track running north-west / south-east for the passage of a single animal and cart or buggy. The wear pattern presents at least two phases of use, one at or near the surface and one cut up to roughly 35cm into the limestone outcropping. The track has three linear grooves, which could only have been used by a single animal (or single file of animals) drawing a vehicle with an axle width between 4' 4.4" and 5' 9.7", with 4' 10.25" axle width being the best fit. Its neat outside edges indicate they were cut to purpose, rather than

worn down. More rounded 'wear' edges are visible around the inner grooves. The track becomes a simple dip in the landscape towards its east end, where it runs through soil rather than rock, then disappears altogether.

A short section of cut track on the western end in a neighbouring property was not documented for this study.

### **3. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **Identification of South Australian Historical Themes:**

- Historical Geography

The Mount Salt Limestone Track expresses part of the historical geography of South Australia's South East. It is the physical manifestation of part of the vast Mount Schank pastoral operation, which dominated the economic and social geography of the area south of Mount Gambier until the early twentieth century. The expense of its construction and its route only makes sense within the economic and operational framework of Mount Schank Estate. Once repurchased by the government, the track was largely if not completely abandoned and the current transport routes assumed.

#### **Comparability / Rarity / Representation:**

#### **Comparison with Places in the South Australian Heritage Register**

The South Australian Heritage Register includes numerous features related with road transport, including bridges, stone walls, drains, lights, and geological sites exposed by road cuttings. Only two places relate specifically to roads themselves:

- *Old Bullock Track, Leawood Gardens*  
City of Burnside Development Plan Table Bur/2 : Schedule of Local Heritage Places (# 8252), Criteria (a) and (e).  
This is the former route of a bullock track, now a fire and walking track. Aside from the cleared trees, it does not exhibit physical evidence of its former use in the road surface.
- *Sedan Hill Road*  
Register of the National Estate (#7882), Mid - Murray District. (No longer a statutory listing).  
Noted as having natural and cultural significance, including dry stone wall construction and historic culverts.

There are no places in the South Australian Heritage Register entered on the basis of their road surface and there are no places comparable with the Mount Salt Limestone Track.

## Comparison with Places in Other Australian Heritage Registers

As in South Australia, many historic road and track features are listed in heritage registers across Australia. The following three are the closest identified heritage places to the Mount Salt Limestone Track.

- *Track, Coxs River Arms, Lake Burragorang, Warragamba Dam*  
NSW State Heritage Register (#5051480)  
An 1870 track significant for its historic role in opening up the surrounding area and its rare packed earth and stone construction.
- *Murranji Track*  
Northern Territory Heritage Register (#71)  
1885-1967 stock route. Significant route and surviving water sites including bores and windmills. No significant road surface features noted.
- *Maytown Wagon Track, Cape York, QLD*  
Queensland Heritage Register (#600427). Also associated disused historic cut stone track (Palmer Goldfield Reserve)  
1870s gold rush era tracks. Today, large sections serve as a 4WD track. The disused section features featuring some hand cut segments through sandstone outcrops up to 3m depth and a central groove for draught animals [QLD heritage Register and ISSUU 31/1/13].

The Maytown Wagon Tracks are the most comparable examples of cut stone wagon or cart tracks known in Australia. Only the Maytown Wagon Tracks and the Mount Salt Limestone Track are known to exhibit evidence of associated animal drawn vehicles in Australia.

## The rarity (uniqueness) or commonness of the Place in South Australia

While impossible to know without a detailed survey, it appears that few, if any, examples of this type of track survive in South Australia's South East. The property owners and other locals consulted had never seen another example and a Google Earth survey found no other potential examples.

The 1921 survey maps show many tracks once crossed the surrounding area. The rough quality of local limestone would have made it something to avoid if possible and few routes were probably hand cut for the purpose. None-the-less, routes with visible cart and wagon in stone wear will have existed. Landscape changes, including the crushing of limestone outcroppings to allow agriculture and the upgrading of local roads have altered much of this former landscape.

**Assessment against 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.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places that note:

*The place should be closely associated with events, developments or cultural phases which have played a significant part in South Australian history. Ideally it should demonstrate those associations in its fabric.*

*Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if they are of a class of things that are commonplace, or frequently replicated across the State, places associated with events of interest only to a small number of people, places associated with developments of little significance, or places only reputed to have been the scene of an event which has left no trace or which lacks substantial evidence.*

The Mount Salt Limestone Track is only associated with events, development and cultural phases in South Australia in the broadest sense and thus does not demonstrate important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the state's history.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

- (b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

*The place should demonstrate a way of life, social custom, industrial process or land use which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest. This encompasses both places which were always rare, and places which have become scarce through subsequent loss or destruction.*

*Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if their rarity is merely local, or if they appear rare only because research has not been done elsewhere, or if their distinguishing characteristics have been degraded or compromised, or if they are at present common and simply believed to be in danger of becoming rare in future.*

The Mount Salt Limestone Track is a rare intact example of a cut track for animal drawn vehicles.

This is a made for purpose, single animal (or file of animals) drawn cart or buggy track cut through a limestone outcropping. It was likely cut after Mount Salt station was

amalgamated into the expansive Mount Schank Estate. The track facilitated efficient movement people and small loads to and from Mount Salt Station until 1921, when the Government repurchased much of it for closer settlement. Designed for a specific road technology and never since altered for more modern transport technologies, this is a particularly intact and interpretable relic of its time.

While examples of stone showing the wear from animal drawn vehicles likely exist, only one other example was found by this study in Australia: the Maytown Wagon Tracks in Cape York, Queensland. No comparable examples have been identified in South Australia. Most historic vehicular roads and tracks could have been used by a range of vehicle types. It is unusual that this track only allows passage to limited vehicle types. Few examples will likely have been constructed in this way, with fewer, if any, surviving today.

Now long abandoned, the track is highly intact, showing no signs of impact from the ongoing pastoral operations.

I conclude that the Mount Salt Limestone Track meets this criterion.

**(c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the state's history, including its natural history.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

*The place should provide, or demonstrate a likelihood of providing, information that will contribute significantly to our knowledge of the past. The information should be inherent in the fabric of the place. The place may be a standing structure, an archaeological deposit or a geological site.*

*Places will not normally be considered under this criterion simply because they are believed to contain archaeological or palaeontological deposits. There must be good reasons to suppose the site is of value for research, and that useful information will emerge. A place that will yield the same information as many other places, or information that could be obtained as readily from documentary sources, may not be eligible.*

The Mount Salt Limestone track has been well documented. Further research would probably only reveal minor aspects about the State's history. The place does not have archaeological value as it appears few artefacts and no structures remain to be found.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

**(d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural**

**significance.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

*The place should be capable of providing understanding of the category of places which it represents. It should be typical of a wider range of such places, and in a good state of integrity, that is, still faithfully presenting its historical message.*

*Places will not be considered simply because they are members of a class, they must be both notable examples and well-preserved. Places will be excluded if their characteristics do not clearly typify the class, or if they were very like many other places, or if their representative qualities had been degraded or lost. However, places will not be excluded from the Register merely because other similar places are included.*

This type of road construction, which could only be used by a limited range of vehicles, was not common historically. The Mount Salt Limestone track does not represent a class of places.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

**(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

*The place should show qualities of innovation or departure, beauty or formal design, or represent a new achievement of its time. Breakthroughs in technology or new developments in design would qualify, if the place clearly shows them. A high standard of design skill and originality is expected.*

*Places would not normally be considered under this criterion if their degree of achievement could not be demonstrated, or where their integrity was diminished so that the achievement, while documented, was no longer apparent in the place, or simply because they were the work of a designer who demonstrated innovation elsewhere.*

The design and construction of the Mount Salt Limestone track is fairly straightforward. It was not a technical accomplishment of its time.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

- (f) it has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

*The place should be one which the community or a significant cultural group have held in high regard for an extended period. This must be much stronger than people's normal attachment to their surroundings. The association may in some instances be in folklore rather than in reality.*

*Places will not be considered if their associations are commonplace by nature, or of recent origin, or recognised only by a small number of people, or not held very strongly, or held by a group not widely recognised, or cannot be demonstrated satisfactorily to others.*

Few people know of the Mount Salt Limestone Track. It has no special association with the community.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

- (g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.**

Historical research has not established who ordered and paid for the cutting of the Mount Salt Limestone track. It appears the track is only vaguely associated with major pastoral figures, including but possibly not limited to W J T Clarke and Captain Robert Gardiner. It was a relatively minor piece of infrastructure within the Mount Schank Estate.

The Mount Salt Limestone Track does not meet this criterion.

#### **Extent of Listing / Significant Fabric / Curtilage:**

The extent of listing includes:

The visible extent of the track within Lot A57, Section 734 with a 10 metre buffer beyond each side that includes the associated limestone outcropping.

The extent of listing excludes:

All features components beyond the 10m buffer zone around the track. A short section of the track extending around 30 metres west into the next property (Section 733) has been excluded in the interests of simplifying management of the feature.

## REFERENCES:

Cockburn, R., *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, with index by Dorothy Aldersey, 2 Volumes (Blackwood SA: Lynton Publications, 1939)

MacGillivray, Leith, 'We Have Found Our Paradise: the South-East squattocracy 1840-1870', *Journal of the Historical Society of SA* 17 (1989): 25-38, accessed 20 June 2014, <http://www.sahistorians.org.au/175/documents/we-have-found-our-paradise-the-south-east-squattoc.shtml>

Proud, Cornelius, *The South-Eastern District of South Australia in 1880, being a series of articles* (Adelaide: W.K Thomas & Co, 1881)

Hill, Les R., *Mount Gambier District Pictorial, 1854-1947* (Blackwood SA: Lynton Publications, 1975)

Pam and Brian O'Connor, *Second to None: The Story of the Pioneers of Rural Mount Gambier* (Mount Gambier, SA: 1988)

Clarke, Michael, *'Big' Clarke* (Carlton Victoria: Queensberry Press, 1980).

Aslin, Geoffrey, *Kongorong from Land to Sea: An Early History* (Millicent SA: G. Aslin, 1991)

McArthur, Anne (Ed.), *Through the Eyes of Goyder, Master Planner: Transcripts of the Surveyor-General's 1864-5 detailed valuations of 79 Pastoral Runs in the South East of South Australia* (Kanawinka Writers and Historians Inc., 2007)

"By Order of the Mortgagee", *Border Watch*, 10 July 1872

"Mount Schanck Estate. History and Tragedy", *South Eastern Star*, 27 May 1910, 249d

### Plans, Maps and Planning Documents

Plan of the Hundred of MacDonnell, 1858-1889, State Records South Australia, GRS 6910.  
Plan of Hundred of MacDonnell (1871), State Library of South Australia Collections, C906

1851 Pastoral Lease Diagram Book, Volume 4, pages 186 and 192

Memorandum of Transfer (Volume 1041 Folio 162), 19 October 1915, Document #648603, (Land Services Group, Department of Planning Transport & Infrastructure)

1951 Pastoral Field Books, pages 186, 188, 192 & 193  
(Geographical Names Unit Records, Department of Planning Transport & Infrastructure)  
(With thanks to Maria Vassallo)

Field Books #51, #404, #2539 and #2544, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure Files (With thanks to Jason Eckert)

Valuation Paper #4446, State Records of South Australia, GRS03711/00001 Box 27

Diagram Book Pages, Hundred of MacDonnell, pages 4 and 29. Accessed through Piers Online

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**SITE RECORD:**

**FORMER NAME:** Track

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:** 520 metre cart and buggy track running through limestone and earth.

**DATE OF COMPLETION:** Roughly 1872 - 1921

**REGISTER STATUS:** **Description:** Confirmed  
**Date:** 12 August 2015

**CURRENT USE:** **Description:** N/A  
**Dates:** Probably abandoned from 1921

**PREVIOUS USE(S):** **Description:** Track  
**Dates:** c.1872-1921

**ARCHITECT:** **Name:** N/A  
**Dates:** N/A

**BUILDER:** **Name:** Possibly W J T Clarke or Captain Robert Gardiner  
**Dates:** c.1872-1921

**SUBJECT INDEXING:** **Group:** Transport  
**Category:** Track

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** **Description:** District Council of Grant

**LOCATION:** **Unit No.:**  
**Street No.:** 640  
**Street Name:** McLeans Road  
**Town/Suburb:** Mount Schank  
**Post Code:** 5291

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**SITE RECORD (Cont.):**

**LAND DESCRIPTION:**

**Title Type:** CT  
**Volume:** 5297  
**Folio:** 855  
**Lot No.:** A57  
**Section:** 734  
**Hundred:** MacDonnell

**OWNER:**

**Name:** [REDACTED]  
**Address:** [REDACTED]  
**Town/Suburb:** [REDACTED]  
**Post Code:** [REDACTED]

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Mount Salt Limestone Track (in red) over Google satellite imagery.  
[Note how the track would have helped provide a direct route between Mount Salt and Mount Schank Stations]

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Mount Salt Limestone Track (in red) over Google satellite imagery – Close-up view.  
[Note the track breaks into multiple paths in some places]

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Mount Salt Limestone Track - A section of the cut through the limestone outcropping.  
(Photograph looking east)



Mount Salt Limestone Track - Close-up view of a cut section of the track.  
[Note the difference between the cut walls (right) and the edges worn down by animal and wheel use] (Photograph looking east)

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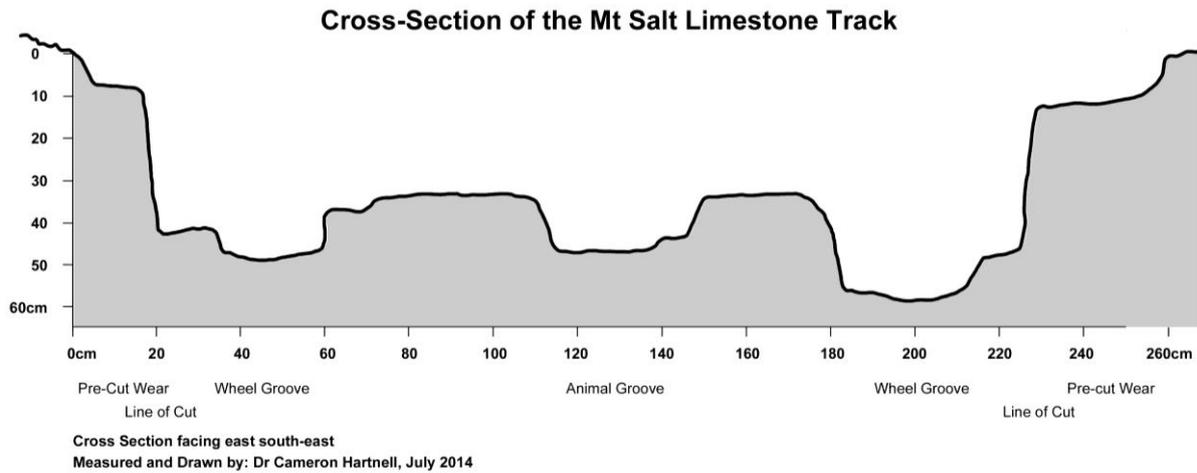
Mount Salt Limestone Track - View of the track cutting through the limestone outcropping. (Photograph looking east)



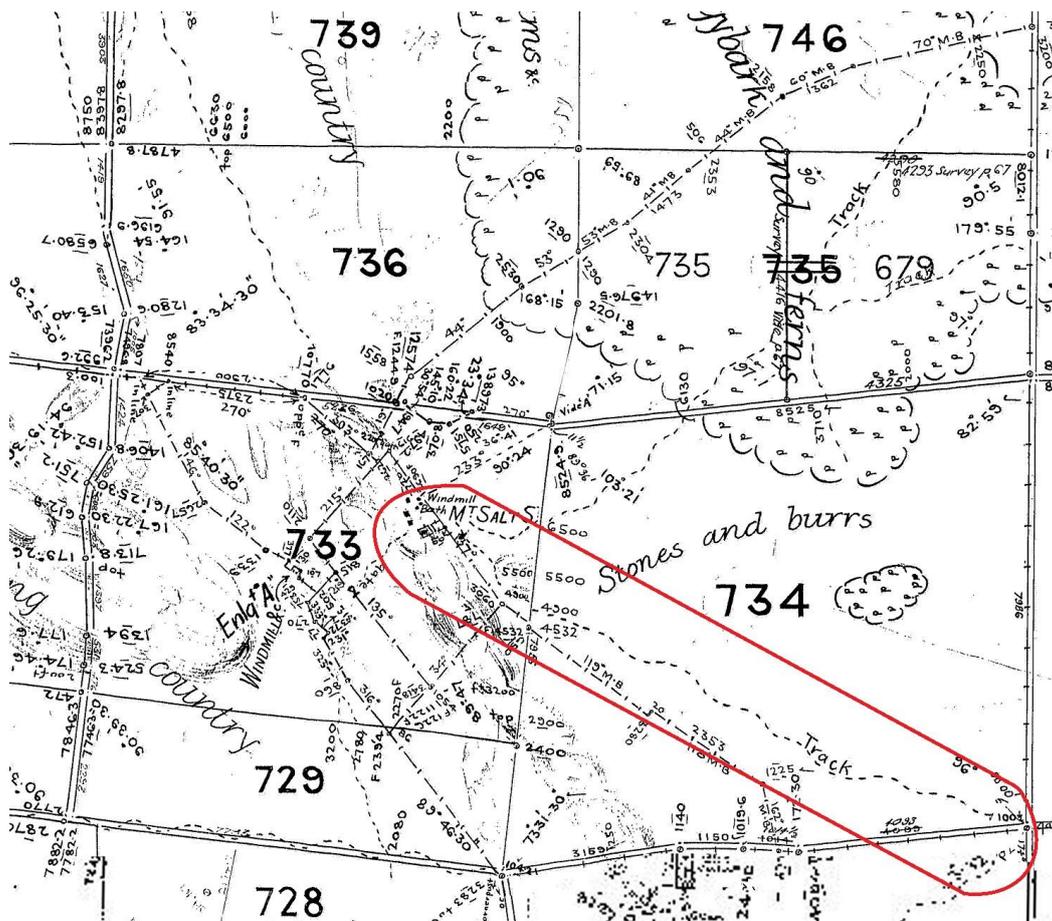
Mount Salt Limestone Track - View of the rough limestone outcropping that the track passes through. (Photograph looking north-east)

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Measured cross section drawing of the track. [Looking south-east]



Multiple 1921 government survey plans joined together, showing the track and Mount Salt Station (red boundary).  
[Note the many tracks crossing the area at that time]

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An example of a horse drawn buggy perhaps suitable for use with the Mount Salt Limestone Track. The exact type of vehicle/s used is not known but a paired animal arrangement would not have fit within the track's grooves.

This photograph is dated c.1900

(State Library of South Australia, Digital Photographic Collection, B72794)