

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout.

PLACE: 26474

ADDRESS: Shell Patch Water Reserve, Gate 32, Stuart Highway. Near Coober Pedy

HISTORY

Mining heritage in South Australia

The early economy of South Australia was based on agriculture. However, drought limited the farmers' initial successes and resulted in an economic depression. As a consequence, the early settlers looked for other ways to make both a living and their fortunes, including mining. The first metal ore mine in South Australia began operation in Wheal Gawler, Glen Osmond in 1841. Soon after, discoveries of gold, lead, silver and copper helped to shape the settlement of the State and put South Australia on the world map. Towns such as Burra and Moonta were recognised as having the largest copper deposits in the world.¹ South Australia has a distinctive mining heritage that was further recognised by the entry of Burra and Moonta Cornish Mining Sites on the National Heritage Register in 2017.

A number of South Australian towns, such as Burra, Moonta, Kapunda and Whyalla were established due to mining. Similarly, Coober Pedy was settled as a mining town after the discovery of opal in 1915. Coober Pedy is one of the largest producers of opal in the world and has played a significant role in the mining history of South Australia.

Opal mining in South Australia

Opal mining in Australia began in White Cliffs, NSW in the 1890s and in Lightning Ridge, NSW in 1901. For about thirty-five years White Cliffs was the only major producer of opal internationally and was the largest producer of precious opal anywhere in the world in 1899. Opal was first discovered in South Australia near Angaston by geologist Johannes Menge in 1849. However, it was not until 1915, when opal was discovered at Coober Pedy that South Australia became Australia's main source of opal. Further deposits of opal were discovered at Mintabie in 1922 and Andamooka in 1933.²

In 2004 more than 95% of the world's opal came from Australia with South Australian fields estimated to produce over 50% of Australia's production.³ Consequently, opal mining in South Australia is of great significance to the history of mining in Australia with Coober Pedy playing a significant role with the continuing production of opal.

Coober Pedy

In the 1890s there were reports of a gold bearing quartz reef in the area near Lake Philipson in the Stuart Range (named after John McDouall Stuart, 1858), in central South Australia. The New Colorado Prospecting Syndicate (Est 1914 by P.J Winch) sent miners to the area in search of gold. The miners were 14 year old Willie Hutchinson with his father James Hutchinson and two other prospectors, P.J Winch and M. McKenzie.⁴ While no gold was found, Willie discovered an opal floater on 1 February 1915. The first opal claim was pegged at the site on 9 February for the New Colorado Prospecting Syndicate with search leases pegged 18 February. However, due to the heat and lack of water, the party left for William Creek on 19 February.⁵

The New Colorado Prospecting Syndicate were granted five square miles of leases for mining on the Stuart Range. During this time a datum peg was positioned. It was located eight miles south of a 'stone pile' and four miles north of a 'waterhole'. All future mine fields were named due to their relationship to the datum peg.⁶

On their return to Adelaide from the Stuart Range, the New Colorado Prospecting Syndicate sought an appraisal of the discovered opal. A newspaper article at the time reported the discovery of an opal field, describing it to be 'of considerable extent'.⁷ Government geologist, L. Keith Ward, inspected the opal fields and described the opal as 'quite the best specimens yet obtained in South Australia'.⁸ It was predicted the discovery would lead to the settlement of a number of people in connection with the mining of precious stones.

Despite Ward's prediction, the heat and difficulty of access hindered the early growth of the area. However, the completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1917 provided better access to the town. Consequently, railway construction workers started mining in the opal fields. A number of miners from Broken Hill further swelled the population of Coober Pedy in 1919, after moving to the area due to concerns over safety conditions in the Broken Hill mine. After World War One, returned soldiers moved to Coober Pedy in search of a new life. It is believed the war veterans, accustomed to living in trenches, introduced the idea of living under ground to escape from the heat.⁹

The Twenty Mile field was discovered in 1921 and extended the opal fields to a length of 40 miles; 10 miles longer than the 30 miles predicted when the fields were first discovered. The Progress and Miners Association was established in 1919 in response to the lack of law and order and an absence of health and safety standards. The Association named the town Coober Pedy in 1922 after the Aboriginal word 'kupa piti', which translates as 'boy's waterhole', 'white man in a hole' or 'white fellow burrow'.¹⁰

In the 1940s, it appeared the growth of the town of Coober Pedy had reached its peak, with reports that the 'Coober Pedy's minor opal rush is over'.¹¹ This was due to limited success in a new field opened eight miles south of the main workings at Geraghty Hill. By 1946, only 34 miners were left on the field.¹² However, in 1957 an Italian partnership discovered high quality opal when they sank a 15m deep shaft at Eight Mile.¹³ As a result, deep mining began in the area.¹⁴ This deep mining, returned servicemen after the conclusion of World War Two and a new American market for opal, stimulated Coober Pedy opal production. During the 1960s and 1970s opal became a multimillion dollar industry and opal prices peaked in 1979.¹⁵

Life in Coober Pedy during this time was difficult for the miners. One of the greatest hardships was the lack of water. Due to low rainfall and high salinity in the ground water, early miners had to carry their water long distances and ration their supplies. In the 1920s water cost around £3 for 100 gallons and was carted by camel from 40 miles away.¹⁶ All used water, no matter how dirty, was saved, stored in drums and allowed to ferment. The clear water above the sediment was boiled and used again for washing.¹⁷ The pressure for a local water supply led to bore drilling between 1919 and 1921. In 1922, a surface catchment 500,000 gallon concrete tank was built,¹⁸ which supplied the area for 40 years. During the peak years in the 1960s many attempts to drill for water took place with varying success. In 1962 a 125m deep bore was dug at Shell Patch.¹⁹

In the 1970s, Coober Pedy saw an increase in the population, an increase in tourism and higher living standards. As a result, in 1977, a new drilling program commenced in order to locate a water well field. Due to evidence of a low salinity basin, two areas were selected 20-30km north-east and north-west of Coober Pedy.²⁰ The water basin was centred on the Shell Patch bore.²¹ Therefore, Shell Patch was declared a water reserve.²² From this time until March 2017, mining was prohibited in the Shell Patch water reserve.

Today, Coober Pedy is made up of over 50 different opal fields, ranging from Shell Patch 35km north-west, The Craters, 10km south-east and Rosso's Folly 15km west of the town.²³ Good roads allow access to the mine fields. The ever changing landscape is drilled, blown, excavated and noodled using large machinery. Large mounds of white dust surround the main road with ever moving and changing access tracks. Light weight huts and dugouts are scattered around the mine fields, with some reserved for habitation by the locals. However, most miners live in the main town in comfortable dugout or above ground accommodation.

Shell Patch

The development of mining in Coober Pedy occurred over a number of phases. These phases were influenced by variables such as drought, depression and war.

Opal is found along the escarpment range, which runs in a south-east to north-west direction through Coober Pedy. The escarpment has dictated the establishment of the various mining fields in Coober Pedy. The earliest mines, 1915-1918, were located to the south-east of the existing town of Coober Pedy. The Big Flat was the biggest field with a number of smaller fields extending in a ten mile distance along the escarpment. The discovery of opal at Twenty Mile in 1921 provided a significant extension to the mine fields of Coober Pedy. Twenty Mile abuts Shell Patch, which is the last opal field north from Coober Pedy.²⁴

Between 1946 until 1964 many fields were opened for mining along the escarpment. Shell Patch is one such field. A mining review undertaken in 1965, states 'Shell Patch is being actively worked and expansion of this field can be anticipated'.²⁵ The Department of Mines and Energy's *Opal, South Australia's Gemstone* handbook states Shell Patch was worked in 1954, perhaps as early as 1923, which may be supported by its proximity to Twenty Mile and was opened in 1921.²⁶ The major activity at Shell Patch took place in 1962-1963. It is likely that during this time the nominated hand-dug Dugout and corrugated iron Hut were constructed. In addition to the Dugout and Hut, many hand dug wood shored mine shafts were dug. In April 2017, many of these still remained, providing evidence of the early mining which took place in the area.

In 2015, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) over the Coober Pedy Precious Stones Field saw the re-allocation of land for opal mining.²⁷ Once released by the government gazettal, registered miners were eligible to carry out opal mining operations in most parts of the Precious Stones Field, including Shell Patch. Shell Patch together with Sputnik bore and Stuart Range No 7 bore were reserved from Opal Mining until this was removed under proclamation on 16 March 2017. On the day the proclamation became operational, a ballot was held to enable 58 miners from the 221 registered to peg a 50m x 100m claim within any of these three areas.²⁸

Crocodile Harry's Dugout and Bob's Hut

Crocodile Harry's Dugout and Bob's Hut within the Shell Patch water reserve were nominated as a State Heritage Place prior to the ballot due to concern regarding possible mining of the site. The Hut and Dugout were provisionally entered on the South Australian Heritage Register on 14 March 2017 under Section 17(2)(b) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The nominator pegged the claim which surrounds Crocodile Harry's Dugout. The nominator and the miners on the adjoining claims had a 'gentlemen's agreement' to the following conditions:²⁹

- No dirt will be pushed from the abutting claim onto the dugout claim.
- Access to the dugout will be maintained, including the access road which leads from Stuart Highway to the dugout claim.
- The abutting claims will leave a three meter easement along the northern boundary of the dugout claim.
- The abutting claims will step the cut back in order to avoid the dugout.
- The abutting claims will be back filled to provide a buffer for the dugout.
- No miner will undercut the dugout claim.
- No miner will compromise the structural integrity of the dugout.
- All parties will act in good faith of this 'gentlemen's agreement'.

The above agreement was made in order to maintain good relations amongst the community. However, under the *Opal Mining Act 1995*, there is no requirement for miners to accommodate heritage protection. A fact which was demonstrated when the claim around Bob's Hut, pegged by a miner, was bulldozed on 8 April 2017. In addition to the demolition of the Hut, many of the old mine shafts were lost. Under section 36(5) of the

Heritage Places Act 1993, penalties do not apply to any damage resulting from operations authorised under the *Opal Mining Act 1995*. Due to its demolition, this assessment will not include an assessment of Bob's Hut.

Dugouts

Limited water supplies and extreme temperatures make Coober Pedy a challenging place to live. Temperatures can reach 47°C during the day in summer and -4°C at night in winter. A well-built dugout will maintain a steady temperature of 22-23°C year round. During the early days of mining in Coober Pedy, some miners lived in tents. However, most lived in dugouts.³⁰ The earliest Coober Pedy dugout was thought to be constructed in 1915.³¹ Unlike other mining areas in South Australia, the ground in Coober Pedy is stable sandstone. Therefore, large rooms could be excavated underground with no need for structural support. This made the construction of a dugout in Coober Pedy, relatively easy, albeit labour intensive, requiring no other building materials. Early dugouts were excavated using a pick and shovel, supplemented by blasting.³² As a reporter suggested, 'At Coober Pedy you don't build a home; you dig one. Or you dig a shaft on a hill for opal and then decide to make a 'house' of it'.³³

Miners who didn't have a dugout would rent one for a small fee, which was a common practice, and lead to dugouts being passed from miner to miner with little to no documentation of the transaction. The transactions were seen as 'common law' or a 'gentlemen's agreement'. Due to the mine fields being located on Crown Land, the owner of a dugout was generally the one who lived there at the time. For this reason, dugouts were constructed on an as needs basis and were altered and enlarged as required. Therefore, no documented evidence exists of the history of most of the Coober Pedy dugouts.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout

Like the other dugouts there is little historical documentation about Crocodile Harry's Dugout. In order to establish the history of Crocodile Harry's Dugout both physical and anecdotal evidence including oral histories have been used. One source of information regarding the history of the area is the remaining mine shafts.

The simplest and earliest form of mining was carried out by sinking a shallow pit using a pick and shovel. Creating an oval shaped hole, the miner stood on one side and swung a pick to dig the other side. When the hole became deep, waste rock was hauled out with buckets. During a site inspection in April 2017, a number of these early shafts remained at Shell Patch. This may support early mining taking place in the 1960s.

Other early mining techniques included the use of a hand windlass. This was a simple hand-operated winch, which stood over a mine shaft that hauled waste rock out of the hand dug shaft. The hand windlass was replaced by petrol or diesel operated power winches and the yorke hoist.³⁴ The winches required a solid base around the top of the shaft on which to set the winch. Timber was placed around the top of the shaft to create the solid base to rest the winch on. The timber also prevented the excavated soil falling down into the shaft. Therefore, both hand powered and petrol or diesel powered winches were likely used on the wood shored shafts at Shell Patch. These wood shored hand dug shafts also support evidence of early mining in the area. Today miners use heavy machinery such as self-unloaders, blowers, bucket elevators, calweld drills, augers, circular tunnelling machines, bobcats, bulldozers and noodling machines.³⁵ These machines are much less labour intensive and have the ability to move hundreds of tons of earth very quickly.

In addition to the types of mine shafts at Shell Patch, which provide evidence of the likely periods of mining activity, Crocodile Harry's Dugout is heavily graffitied with the names and dates of people who have been there. The names and dates found in the Dugout, also provide a source of information about the age and use of the structure.

It is possible the existing Dugout at Shell Patch started life as a mine shaft. This idea is supported by the existence of two shafts, now used to provide light and ventilation to the

Dugout. It is difficult to know when the mine shafts were excavated. However, it is likely they were first dug when the area was mined during the 1950s-1960s. The shafts were possibly extended to form the dwelling, which may have begun as a small room and later became the six room dwelling which exists today. The earliest signature on the Dugout walls is by 'Dulcie' dated 10 February 1964. This suggests the site was a house rather than mine at the time. Subsequent names and dates cover the walls, most of which date from the 1970s. The range of dates present in the Dugout suggests that it has been lived in and/or visited by many people since 1964.

One name which is painted on the wall a number of times is 'Harry'. This supports the nominators claim that Crocodile Harry lived, mined and/or at the very least visited the Dugout at Shell Patch.

Crocodile Harry

Crocodile Harry was a local artist who lived in Coober Pedy from the 1970s until his death in 2006. It is thought he lived at Shell Patch in a caravan located on the ground above the Dugout in the early 1970s. He mined in the area and possibly used the Dugout during this time.³⁶ Later, Crocodile Harry pegged a claim at Four Mile where he built his home, the 'Crocodile Harry's Nest'.

His unusual dugout home, Crocodile Harry's Nest, is a tourist destination and provides an insight to his eccentric personality. Local anecdotes suggest Crocodile Harry was an alcoholic and womaniser, an assertion that is supported by the 'mementos' that adorn the 'nest's' walls. Unlike Crocodile Harry's Dugout at Shell Patch, Crocodile Harry's Nest is a habitable home with a solid floor, many rooms and plenty of natural light. Like the Dugout at Shell Patch, Crocodile Harry's Nest has paintings and carvings on the walls.

Due to his reputation, the truth behind Crocodile Harry's past is unclear. His real name was Arvid Von Blumental. He believed he was a Baron from a famous Latvian family who had to flee Latvia after World War Two. On arrival in Australia, Harry claimed he prospected for uranium before taking up crocodile hunting in the Northern Territory. As evidence to his hunting days, photographs of Harry with crocodiles line the walls of his dugout. After spending 13 years hunting crocodiles, Harry became a gravity surveyor. In this role he stumbled across Coober Pedy in the 1970s where he caught 'opal fever'.³⁷ After seeing a story about Crocodile Harry in *Stern*, a German magazine, a German lady named Marta wrote to Harry. Harry replied and in July 1977, Marta moved to Coober Pedy and married him.

Purported other inhabitants of Shell Patch

Lee Robins

Local reports suggest Lee Robbins lived in Crocodile Harry's Dugout.³⁸ Lee Robbins came to Coober Pedy in 1915 at the age of eleven. At the age of 16 he built one of the first dugout homes in Coober Pedy³⁹ and he was present at the Coober Pedy Progress Association meeting when Coober Pedy was given its name. In 1921 Robbins left Coober Pedy to mine for gold in Tarcoola and returned in 1946 after the discovery of opal at Eight Mile.⁴⁰

Bill McDougall

Anecdotal evidence suggests Bill McDougall, a Coober Pedy then Mintabie opal miner,⁴¹ mined at Shell Patch from 1963. It is thought McDougall was a visitor to Crocodile Harry's Dugout on a number of occasions, and from 1986 received permission to stay at the Dugout when in Coober Pedy.⁴² McDougall helped establish the Coober Pedy Medical centre, the first ambulance and the SES and CFS in 1964. In 1972, he established the Mine Rescue Squadron. In 2004, he was inducted into the opal miners Hall of Fame.⁴³ McDougall now resides at Mintabie.

Chronology

- 1915 New Colorado Prospecting Syndicate discover an opal floater in the Stuart Ranges in central South Australia.
- 1917 Transcontinental Railway was completed providing better access.
- 1919 Broken Hill miners moved to the area as a result of strikes over safety conditions in the mines.
- End of WW1 sees veterans move to the area for mining.
- Progress and Miners Association established in response to the lack of law and order and an absence of health and safety standards.
- 1921 Twenty Mile field, adjacent Shell Patch, was discovered and extended the opal fields to a length of 40 miles.
- 1922 Coober Pedy was named by the Progress and Miners Association after the aboriginal word 'kupa piti' which translates as 'boys waterhole', 'white man in a hole' or 'white fellow burrow'.
- 1923 The Department of Mines and Energy's Opal, South Australia's Gemstone handbook states Shell Patch may have commenced mining activity.
- 1946 Mining slump in Coober Pedy.
- 1954 The Department of Mines and Energy's Opal, South Australia's Gemstone handbook states Shell Patch may have had mining activity.
- 1957 Deep mining starts at Eight Mile.
- 1962-3 Majority of mining takes place at Shell Patch.
- 125m deep bore was dug at Shell Patch.
- 1975 Crocodile Harry lives in caravan at Shell Patch.
- 1977 Shell Patch declared a water reserve.
- 1979 World opal prices peak.
- 2006 Crocodile Harry dies.
- 2015 Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) over the Coober Pedy Precious Stones Field led to the re-allocation of land for opal mining.
- 2017 Proclamation under the *Opal Mining Act* 1995 opens Shell Patch for mining.

DESCRIPTION

Crocodile Harry's Dugout is located approximately 300m to the west off the Stuart Highway. An access track leads from the highway to the Dugout.

The Dugout is located within a cut that forms a small valley in the Shell Patch mine field. Also located within the valley and opposite the Dugout is a small room and a long drop

toilet. A small alcove on the same side as the Dugout may have been used to house chickens and/or for storage. On the bank above the Dugout is a scarecrow-like statue. There is also a hills hoist and an old truck.

The entrance of the Dugout leads down a 2m wide and 8m long passage and opens into a small room. The first room contains a table and a shelf which is carved into the rock above the table. A 2m x 2m room is located to the right of the first room. It contains a shower curtain and an overhead shower bucket suggesting it was used as a bathroom. The floor has a gutter cut in the base and a drainage bucket, which was used to collect the water. A further space is located off of the bathroom and has been filled with rubble, possibly due to subsidence.

A further suite of rooms is located on the left of the entrance passage. In order of location from the dugout entrance, the rooms include:

1. A small room with a bench possibly used for food preparation.
2. A kitchen room with sink, table and shelves. A shaft is sited above the table.
3. An open area which branches in two directions leading to adjoining bedrooms, each approximately 3m x 3m.
4. On the far side of the bedrooms is another opening approximately 4m x 3m. The room features a bench seat, a second hand dug shaft, which comes through from the ground above and another alcove, possibly used for storage of clothes. The walls in this section are subsiding in places.

The walls and ceiling are white washed and the floor has been laid with concrete. Written on the walls and ceiling are names and dates of the people who have visited the Dugout. The majority of the names are dated in the mid-1970s. However, there are some from the 1960's. The walls also feature some paintings and carvings. Some are childlike drawings while others are more sophisticated. The drawings and paintings include a landscape fresco style painting, a mermaid and the head of an aboriginal man. There is also a series of heads and bodies, believed to have been painted by Crocodile Harry.

As a number of the dugouts at Coober Pedy were originally mines prior to being converted to homes, it is likely that the Dugout at Shell Patch also evolved in a similar manner. If that is the case then it is likely that room four in the above list was the original mine. This idea is supported by the shaft located in this part of the dugout. The shaft has a rectangular top and is shored with wood and galvanised iron.

The furniture and 'built in' elements in the Dugout are recycled items such as old doors, buckets, and car bonnets. Although it is apparent the Dugout was lived in in the past, its current condition does not support habitation.

In general, the Dugout is quite sound. However, there are some areas where the walls are beginning to subside and the floor is uneven.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Heritage Significance:

Crocodile Harry's Dugout has been assessed in accordance with section 16 of the *South Australia Heritage Places Act 1993* and has been found to not fulfil any of the criteria for a State Heritage Place. Accordingly, no statement of significance can be attributed to it.

Comparability / Rarity / Representation:

Coober Pedy

Coober Pedy is recognised not only for its production of world class opal but also its underground dwellings.⁴⁴ Although the Coober Pedy locals see living in dugout homes as common place, tourists, fascinated by underground living come to Coober Pedy to see dugout houses and provide the locals with a source of income. Dugout dwellings are found throughout the entire town of Coober Pedy. Many are quite luxurious, having all the modern comforts of standard Australian homes. Some exist from the early mining days in the town.

Some of the early Coober Pedy mines are open to the public and are set up as museums and include:

- Old Timers mine
- Josephine's Gallery & Underground Mine & Museum
- Umoona Opal Mine & Museum
- Faye's Underground Home
- Crocodile Harry's Nest

Two Coober Pedy dugouts are listed as State Heritage Places on the South Australian Heritage Register and include:

- Lot 13 Hutchison Street COOBER PEDY Coober Pedy Three-roomed dugout, including the ground within two metres of the dugout space SHP18213
The dugout was entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 2001. It is one of the earliest remaining dugouts in Coober Pedy and is located in the centre of the main town. It was hand dug and represents a construction technique no longer carried out and was only applied in a few areas in South Australia. This dugout was likely constructed using a pick and shovel with supplemented blasting.
- Lot 9 Hutchison Street COOBER PEDY Coober Pedy Catholic Church & Presbytery SHP10302.
The underground church was entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 1982. Constructed in 1967, the church was the first official underground church built in South Australia.

In addition to the State Heritage Places and dugout museums in the central township of Coober Pedy, some miner's dugouts and dwellings in the surrounding mine fields have been recognised as having historic significance. Fourteen sites have been excluded from both the *Mining Act 1971* Part 1 section 8(1)(c) and the *Opal Mining Act 1995* Part 1 section 4 (1)(b). As a result mining cannot take place at these sites. The areas were excluded from mining due to their historical significance and to protect the occupation of any long term residence. The places include:

1. Fourteen Mile (Mad Peters)
2. Old Four Mile (Tibor Nagy)
3. Old Four Mile (Katherine Hope)

4. Hopeful Hills (Peter Keain)
5. Hopeful Hills (Adams Brothers)
6. Company (Rowntree)
7. Geraghty Hill (Wilson's Garage)
8. Geraghty Hill (Palmer's Dugout)
9. Geraghty Hill (Unknown Spiral Dugout)
10. Black Bob's Dugout (Tanya Griffiths)
11. 8 Mile Sheds (miscellaneous collection of old sheds)
12. Reddall's Sheds (Joyce Reddall)
13. Black Flag (SES Training Area)
14. Crocodile Harry's Nest (DCCP)

(Source - Department of State Development opal minefield staff)

Crocodile Harry's Dugout was not included in the list above. However, until the 2017 proclamation, the Dugout was protected from mining. Therefore, Crocodile Harry's Dugout has remained as an example of a miner's dugout in Coober Pedy. Dugout dwellings continue to be constructed in Coober Pedy.

Dugouts in South Australia

Living in dugout dwellings is not unique to Coober Pedy although the construction of dugouts across South Australia vary. Several dugouts have been entered on the South Australian Heritage Register outside of Coober Pedy. These include:

- Lot 174 Government Road ANDAMOOKA (Dick Clark's Residence including semi-dugout living room, two detached sleep-outs and workroom, together with dry-stone walling and connecting paths) SHP13075
- 13 ANDAMOOKA ((Historical Museum Reserve), including Frank Albertoni's house, Bob Cutzow's Dugout, Tom Brady's Dugout, Mrs Perry's Kitchen and Andy Absalom's House) SHP12663

The Andamooka style dugout is quite different to those built in Coober Pedy. The dwellings in Andamooka are 'semi-dugout'. Unlike the ground in Coober Pedy, the soil in Andamooka has a high clay content, making large volume excavation unsafe. This means the Andamooka dugouts are smaller and set into or against excavated ground with a stone/timber structure over the top. The structure has a gable or skillion roof covered in compacted soil.⁴⁵

- 31 Mine Road BLINMAN Unincorporated SA Dwelling and Dugout SHP10296
This dwelling and dugout were entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 1981. While photos of the dugout are not very clear, it appears the dugout is a small structure which is dug into the side of a bank, it is covered with logs and mud. Its construction appears to be quite different to the Coober Pedy dugouts.
- Mitchell Flat BURRA Goyder Regional Council Former Miners' Dugouts, tributary of Burra Creek SHP10050
- Mitchell Flat BURRA Goyder Regional Council Former Dugout Sites, Burra Creek SHP11187

In Burra, miners who did not want to pay for land and the construction of a house built dugout dwellings into the side of the clay creek bed. The dugouts usually consisted of a single room with a door and windows at the entrance and a chimney dug up through the bank.⁴⁶ Like the Andamooka dugouts, due to the clay in the soil, the construction of the Burra dugouts was quite different to those found in Coober Pedy. The Burra dugouts had timber and mud rooves and were not as large or comfortable as the Coober Pedy dugouts.

- MONGOLATA Goyder Regional Council Mongolata Gold Battery, remains of Cyanide Works, Eating House and Dugouts and former Byles' Mine, Mongolata Goldfield SHP11004

The dugouts at Mongolata are ruins. It is difficult to assess how the dugouts were constructed. However, photos of the ruins show a shallow cut into the side of a bank. The ground is quite rocky.⁴⁷

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 *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.

Coober Pedy, located in the the Stuart Range in central South Australia, was the first town in the State established due to opal mining in 1915. The discovery of opal in Coober Pedy marked the beginning of the evolution of the opal industry in the State, closely followed by discoveries in Mintabie in 1922 and Andamooka in 1933. The development of the township of Coober Pedy, and the surrounding mine fields, is testament to this aspect of South Australia's history. Underground dwellings allowed the miners to live in the harsh climate, thus, playing its part in the habitation and mining of Coober Pedy. Therefore, the dugouts are associated with the evolution of opal mining and establishment of the township of Coober Pedy.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout is a typical example of a dugout in Coober Pedy. It was lived in quite late in the history of Coober Pedy; most likely in the 1960s-1970s. During this era in Coober Pedy, many similar dugouts were being constructed. Earlier examples remain that demonstrate the evolution of mining in South Australia including lot 13 Hutchison Street (SHP18213)(c.1920), Old Timers mine (c. 1916), Umoona Opal Mine & Museum (c. 1920s).

The practice of mining opal has evolved since the early days of digging shallow shafts or finding 'floaters' on the surface, to deep mining using heavy machinery. Hand dug dugout dwellings extended from early mine shafts, like the one found at Shell Patch, form part of this evolution. Therefore, dugouts are associated with the evolution of the physical practice of opal mining in South Australia.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout's location, being far north-west of the main town, provides evidence of the de-centralisation and expansion of the mine fields of Coober Pedy. In addition the dugout is the only remaining one on the Shell Patch mine field and therefore provides evidence of mining on the Shell Patch mine field. This evidence is directly significant to the Shell Patch area, however provides minimal evidence of the evolution of opal mining to the entire State.

While Crocodile Harry's Dugout provides an example of the physical practice of mining in Coober Pedy, many other dugouts remain in the surrounding mine fields. Therefore, miners dugouts on the mine fields are commonplace and frequently replicated. Further, many of these are already protected due to their exclusion from both the *Mining Act 1971* Part 1 section 8(1)(c) and the *Opal Mining Act 1995* Part 1 section 4 (1)(b). These were excluded from mining due to their historical significance and to protect the occupation of long term residents.

In summary, Crocodile Harry's Dugout was constructed at a time when many similar dugouts were constructed. Therefore, the Dugout is one of many which demonstrate the evolution of opal mining in Australia. Crocodile Harry's Dugout may be significant to its local area and is associated with events affecting a small number of people.

Places protected under other legislation, namely the Mining and Opal Mining Act include:

1. Fourteen Mile (Mad Peters)
2. Old Four Mile (Tibor Nagy)
3. Old Four Mile (Katherine Hope)
4. Hopeful Hills (Peter Keain)
5. Hopeful Hills (Adams Brothers)
6. Company (Rowntree)
7. Geraghty Hill (Wilson's Garage)
8. Geraghty Hill (Palmer's Dugout)
9. Geraghty Hill (Unknown Spiral Dugout)
10. Black Bob's Dugout (Tanya Griffiths)
11. 8 Mile Sheds (miscellaneous collection of old sheds)
12. Reddall's Sheds (Joyce Reddall)
13. Black Flag (SES Training Area)
14. Crocodile Harry's Nest (DCCP)

The place **does not** fulfil 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 *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.

Coober Pedy is known for its numerous underground dwellings. Dugouts demonstrate the way of life or social custom of living underground on a mine site. This practice is of interest because it is unique to mining areas in South Australia such as Coober Pedy, Andamooka and Burra. However, in Coober Pedy the practice is not in danger of being lost due to the plentiful number of dugout dwellings in which the population continue to live today.

Dugouts demonstrate the industrial process of opal mining and in particular, the process of hand digging a dwelling from a mine shaft. The process was common on Coober Pedy mine fields in the 1960s-1970s. Today, due to safety requirements, the Department of State Development discourages living on mining sites. Further, modern machinery has replaced the early practice of hand digging. This suggests the practice of hand digging a dwelling on a mine site will not continue into the future. However, exclusion of some historic mine fields from both the *Mining Act 1971* Part 1 section 8(1)(c) and the *Opal Mining Act 1995* Part 1 section 4 (1)(b) allow miners to continue to reside in the dugouts located in the mine fields and as listed above in criterion (a). Therefore, while the practice of building a dwelling from a mine shaft is no longer practiced, evidence of this practice is not in danger of being lost as it is represented in a number of existing dwellings protected under the Mining and Opal Mining Act.

In addition a better example is listed in the SA Heritage Register:

- Lot 13 Hutchison Street COOBER PEDY Coober Pedy Three-roomed dugout, including the ground within two metres of the dugout space SHP18213
The dugout was entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 2001. It is one of the earliest remaining dugouts in Coober Pedy and is located in the centre of the main town. It was hand dug and represents a construction technique no longer carried out and was only applied in a few areas in South Australia.

In summary, Crocodile Harry's Dugout is one of many which were hand dug and many of these dugouts continue to be used today.

The place **does not** fulfil 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 *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.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout contributes to the understanding of the history of opal mining in South Australia. It is possible there may be evidence not currently visible at the Dugout which may provide additional information about opal mining in Coober Pedy. However, the information yielded would be specific to Crocodile Harry's Dugout only and would not yield physical evidence that would meaningfully contribute to an understanding of the State's history.

The place **does not** fulfil 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 *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.

Dugouts in Coober Pedy are constructed differently to other dugouts in the State and provide a representation of the town's early history including the lives of early opal miners. While Crocodile Harry's Dugout is an example of its class the Dugout is not well-preserved due to subsidence of the internal walls.

In comparison to many similar dugout homes of the same era in Coober Pedy, Crocodile Harry's Dugout is not a notable representation of its class. It is one of many dugouts built during the 1960s-1970s in Coober Pedy.

The graffiti and paintings on the walls and ceilings of Crocodile Harry's Dugout sets it apart from some of the other dugouts in Coober Pedy, but is not a feature of this type of construction. Further, graffiti and art work in a dug out at Coober Pedy is better represented at the 'Crocodile Nest' dugout at Four Mile, which is currently protected under the Mining Act and Opal Mining Act.

In comparison to Crocodile Harry's Dugout, the two State Heritage Places included below better represent the type of dug out construction in Coober Pedy.

- Lot 13 Hutchison Street COOBER PEDY Coober Pedy Three-roomed dugout, including the ground within two metres of the dugout space SHP18213
The dugout was entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 2001. It is one of the earliest remaining dugouts in Coober Pedy and is located in the centre of the main town. It was hand dug and represents a construction technique no longer carried out and was only applied in a few areas in South Australia.
- Lot 9 Hutchison Street COOBER PEDY Coober Pedy Coober Pedy Catholic Church & Presbytery SHP10302.
The underground church was entered on the South Australian Heritage Register in 1982. Constructed in 1967, the church was the first official underground church built in South Australia.

In summary Crocodile Harry's Dugout is one of a number of dugouts built in Coober Pedy in the 1960s-1970s and is not an outstanding representative of its class.

The place **does not** fulfil 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 *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.

Building houses under the ground was a typical vernacular building style in rural South Australia. Examples can be found in Burra, Andamooka, Blinman and Mongolata. In Coober Pedy, the composition of the ground is stable and self supporting, which allows large spaces to be excavated through the ground without any structural support. While the style of dugout found at Coober Pedy is unlike any others found in South Australia, the act of building a home using only the materials available is not an innovation or a departure from other vernacular building styles in South Australia. The method of building Crocodile Harry's Dugout did not require a high standard of skill or originality, and it was a standard building technique in Coober Pedy at the time.

The current condition of Crocodile Harry's Dugout does not support habitation. In addition there are some areas where the walls are beginning to subside.

Due to the degraded nature of the Dugout, it can not be considered to be an outstanding representative of a Coober Pedy dugout construction.

The place **does not** fulfil 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 *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.

Dugouts make Coober Pedy interesting and different from other rural areas in South Australia. Their construction, together with opal sales and mining underpins tourism in the area. While dugouts may be significant for the local community due to the role

they play in bringing tourists to the area, they can not be referred to as spiritual or having cultural significance to the State.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout has strong cultural and spiritual associations to some members of the Coober Pedy community, including its connection with Crocodile Harry. Other locals believe the Shell Patch area should be reserved for mining.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout does not have a strong and direct cultural or spiritual association with any particular group or community in Coober Pedy or the State; rather the association is with only a few interested individuals. In addition, that connection is not strong or special and there is no evidence of any long term association with the site.

The place **does not** fulfil this criterion.

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

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

The place must have a close association with a person or group which played a significant part in past events, and that association should be demonstrated in the fabric of the place. The product of a creative person, or the workplace of a person whose contribution was in industry, would be more closely associated with the person's work than would his or her home. Most people are associated with many places in their lifetime, and it must be demonstrated why one place is more significant than others.

Places will not generally be considered under this criterion if they have only a brief, incidental or distant association, or if they are associated with persons or groups of little significance, or if they are associated with an event which has left no trace, or if a similar association could be claimed for many places, or if the association cannot be demonstrated. Generally the home or the grave of a notable person will not be entered in the Register unless it has some distinctive attribute, or there is no other physical evidence of the person's life or career in existence.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout has a special association with a number of miners including miners Lee Robins and Bill McDougall. Both of these miners played a role in the early establishment of Coober Pedy. Their accomplishments include being present at the naming of Coober Pedy, the establishment of the Coober Pedy Medical centre, the first ambulance, the SES and CFS and the Mine Rescue Squadron. While their accomplishments are significant to the local area of Coober Pedy they can not be regarded as significant to the State. Further, their connection to Crocodile Harry's Dugout is tenuous as there is a lack of documentary evidence to support the claims that they resided at the dugout. The extent to which Robins and McDougall lived at the dugout is unknown.

Crocodile Harry's Dugout is also associated with Crocodile Harry. He is thought to have lived at the Dugout in Shell Patch when he first came to Coober Pedy in the 1970s. However, despite his artwork and his name adorning the Dugout walls, reports suggest he lived in a caravan on the dugout site, rather than in the Dugout. Crocodile Harry was an eccentric local artist and his 'work' is only significant to some members of the Coober Pedy community and has no significance to the State.

In addition Crocodile Harry is represented at his dugout home at 'Crocodile Nest'. This is a tourist destination and provides an insight to his eccentric personality. Unlike the Dugout at Shell Patch, the Crocodile Nest is a habitable home with a solid floor, many rooms and plenty of natural light.

In summary, the connection Crocodile Harry's Dugout has with Lee Robins, Bill McDougall and Crocodile Harry's Nest is tenuous. Further, their significance is to the local area rather than the State.

The place **does not** fulfil this criterion.

Extent of Listing / Significant Fabric / Curtilage:

Crocodile Harry's Dugout does not meet any of the criteria for a State Heritage Place. Consequently there is no extent of listing.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coober_Pedy

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE NO.: 26474

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: Hand dug dugout constructed as an extension of a former mine shaft.

DATE OF COMPLETION: 1960s

REGISTER STATUS: **Description:** Provisionally entered
Date: 14 March 2017

CURRENT USE: **Description:** The Dugout is not currently being lived in. It is visited only.
Dates: NA

PREVIOUS USE(S): **Description:** residence
Dates: 1960s and 1970s

ARCHITECT: **Name:** Unknown
Dates:

BUILDER: **Name:** Unknown
Dates:

SUBJECT INDEXING: **Group:** Mining
Category: Dugout

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: **Description:** Unincorporated area
Street Name: Gate 32, Stuart Highway
Town/Suburb: Near Coober Pedy
Post Code: 5723

LAND DESCRIPTION: **Title Type:** CR
Volume: 5752
Folio: 792
Section: 752
Hundred: Out of Hundreds (Murloocoppie)

OWNER: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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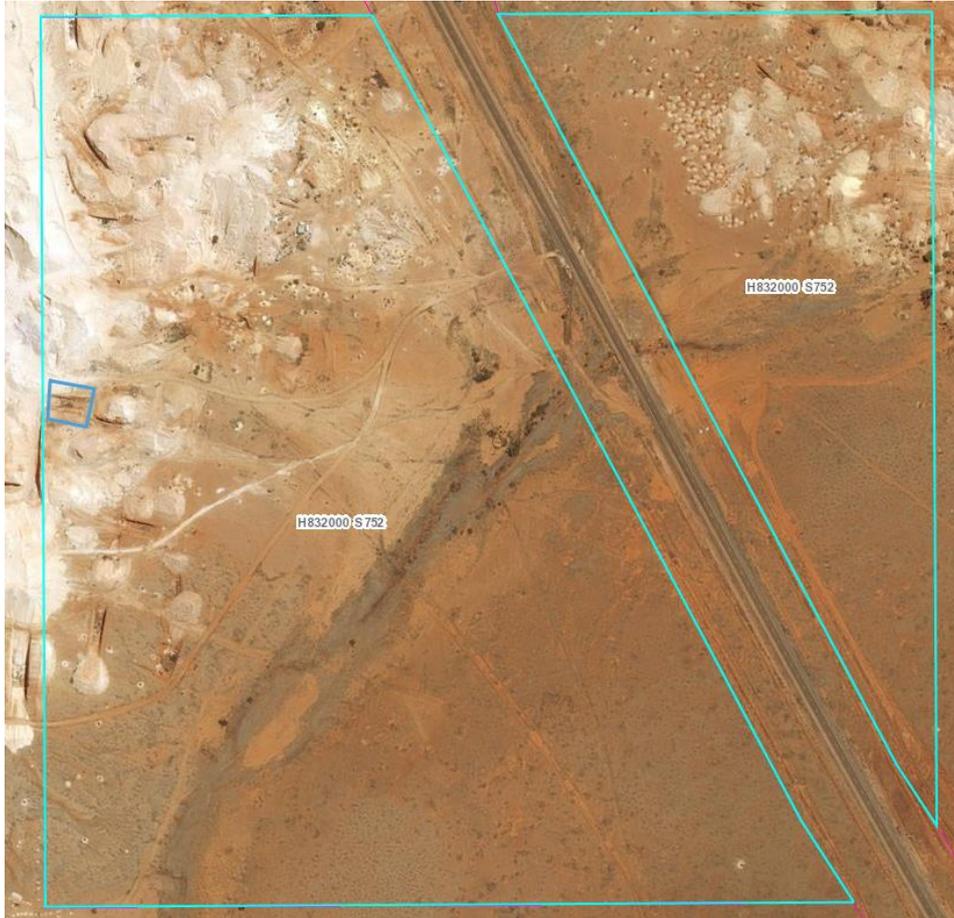
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SITE PLAN

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout, Gate 32 Stuart Highway, Near Coober Pedy

Site Plan

N ↑

Legend

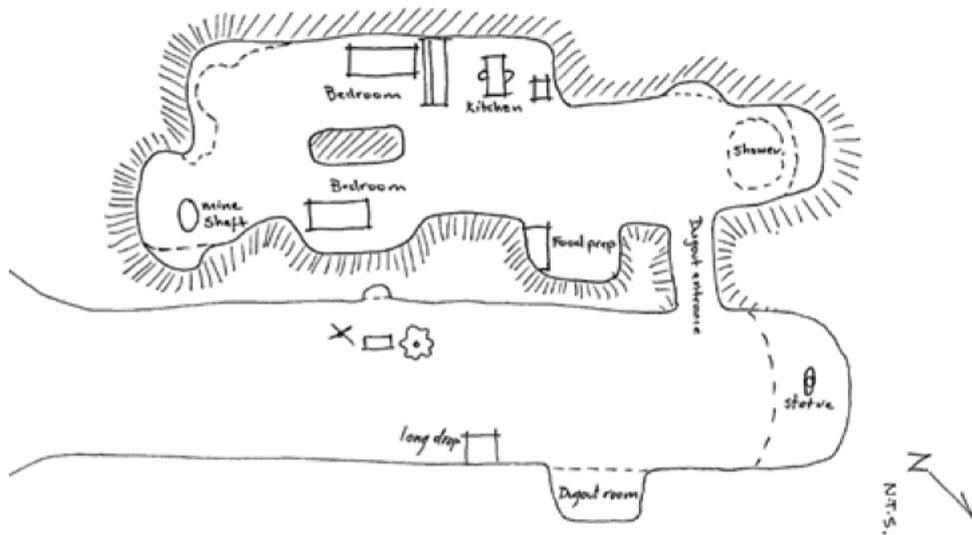
Crocodile Harry's Dugout location ———

Shell Patch mine field boundary ———

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Source DEWNR



Mining techniques. Left- hand dug shaft, middle- Yorke hoist, right- hand windlass
Source- Opal South Australia's Gemstone, Handbook 5.

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Protected (under the Mining Acts) dugout homes in the Coober Pedy minefields

Top left- Old Four Mile (Tibor Nagy), top middle- Old Four Mile (Katherine Hope), top right- Four Mile (crocodile nest). Bottom left- Hopeful Hill (Peter Keain), bottom middle- Company (Rowntree), bottom right- Company Rowntre)



Shell Patch cut, forming the valley in which the Dugout is located.

April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Shell Patch, looking down into the cut. Note the Dugout entrance on the right. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



Shell Patch, in the cut. Note Crocodile Harry's Dugout entrance to the left and scarecrow statue. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout. Note the long drop toilet and small room on the right, opposite the entrance of the dugout. April 2017

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



On top of the Crocodile Harry's Dugout. Note the top of the original mine shaft. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

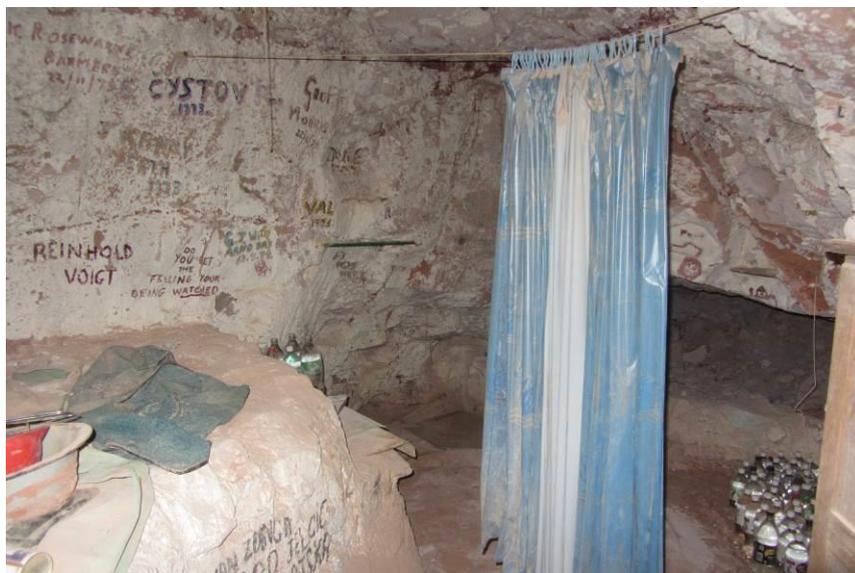
NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout, standing inside the Dugout looking up to the top of the original mine shaft. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



Crocodile Harry's Dugout shower room. Note the shower curtain and further room filled in with rubble. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout food preparation room. Note whitewashed walls, bench and names painted on the wall. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



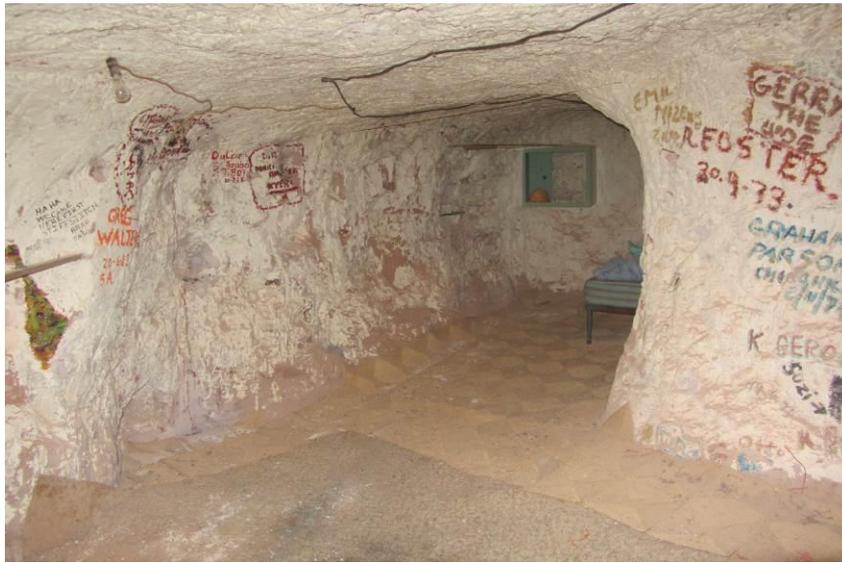
Crocodile Harry's Dugout kitchen. Note whitewashed walls and names painted on the wall. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

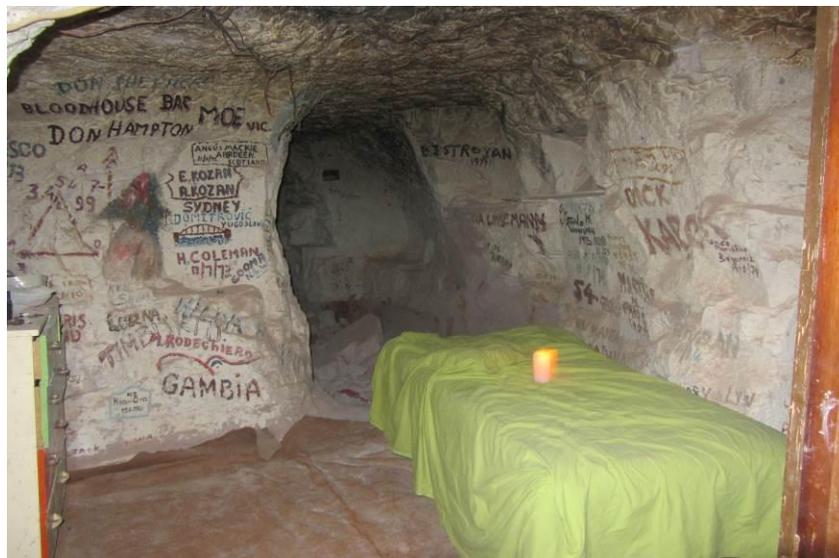
NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout bedroom. Note whitewashed walls and ceiling and names painted on the wall. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



Crocodile Harry's Dugout bedroom. Note whitewashed walls and ceiling and names painted on the wall. In the middle of the photo shows some of the wall subsidence April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout

PLACE: 26474



Crocodile Harry's Dugout end room. Note whitewashed walls and ceiling, painting and names painted on the wall. The bottom right also shows some of the wall subsidence. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



Crocodile Harry's Dugout. Painting thought to be done by Crocodile Harry. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

NAME: Bob's Hut

PLACE: 26474



Bobs Hut, now demolished. April 2017.

Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout – Comparison images **PLACE:** 26474



Shell Patch hand dug, wood shored mine shaft. April 2017.
Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



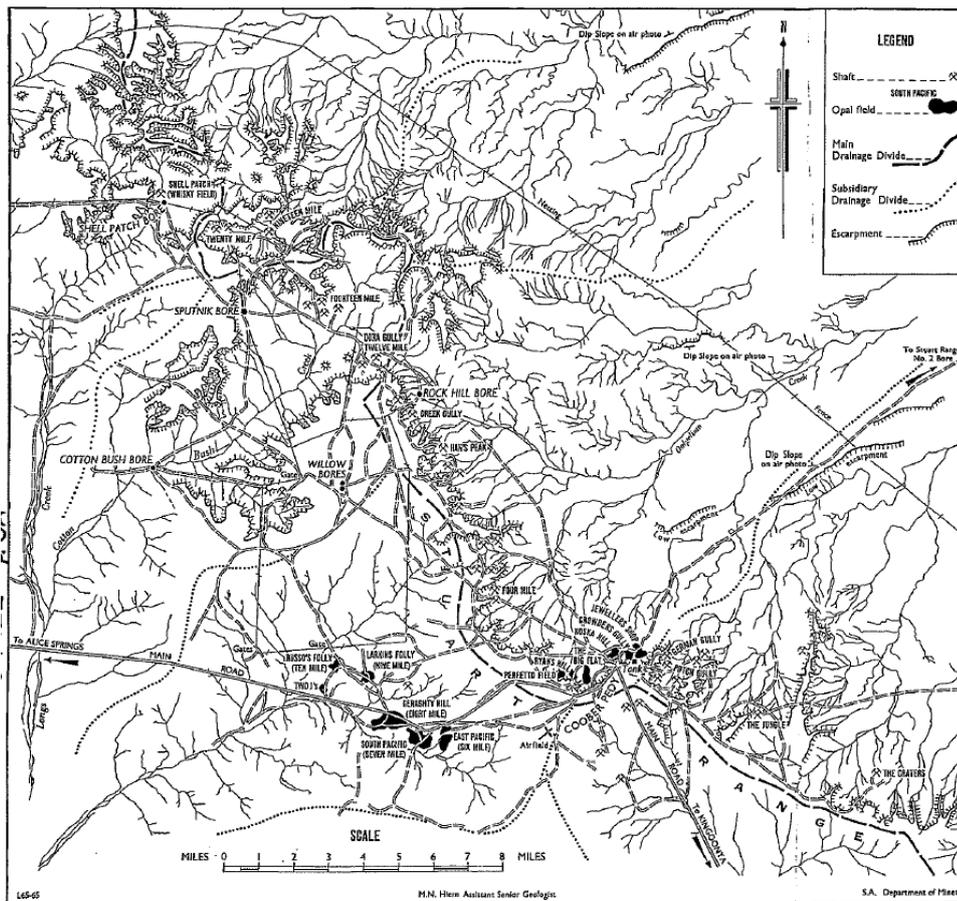
Shell Patch oval hand dug mining hole. April 2017.
Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.

PHOTOS

NAME: Crocodile Harry's Dugout – Comparison images **PLACE:** 26474



Interior of Crocodile Harry's Nest at Four Mile in Coober Pedy. Note names and art work painted on the ceiling and walls. April 2017.
Source: DEWNR State Heritage Unit.



COOBER PEDY OPAL FIELD — Locality Plan showing Workings.

Locations and names of Coober Pedy Mine Fields

Source- S.A. Department of Mines

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- ⁹ Medway, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ Medway, p. 6.
- ¹¹ 'Opal Strike Petering Out', *News* 9 Aug 1946, p. 1.
- ¹² Medway, p. 5.
- ¹³ Barnes, I. J, et all (1992). *Opal South Australia's Gemstone, Handbook 5*. (Adelaide: Department of Mines and Energy), p. 27.
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- ¹⁶ Crilly. K, p. 14.
- ¹⁷ Crilly. K, p. 12.
- ¹⁸ McNally, G.H., (1977). *Coober Pedy town water supply. Groundwater prospects and completion report. Stuart Range bores 7-10*. p. 2.
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- ³³ 'A "Township" Underground' *Daily Standard* 19 Jun 1935, p. 4.
- ³⁴ Barnes, I. J et all, p. 27.
- ³⁵ Barnes, I. J et all, p .28-36.
- ³⁶ Telephone interview Noel Turner (Shell Patch opal miner) 31 May 2017.
- ³⁷ 'You can dig a home and find a fortune' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 21 Oct 1981, p. 20.
- ³⁸ Briand. R. (1971), *White Man in a Hole*, (West Melbourne: Phuong-Hoang Press). p. 80.
- ³⁹ 'Coober Pedy Street and Road Names' *Regional Times*. 12 April 2012, p. 4.
- ⁴⁰ Medway, p. 41.
- ⁴¹ <https://thisworkinglife.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/bill-mcdougall-opal-miner-mintabie-south-australia/>
- ⁴² Email from Margaret Mackay 14 March 2017
- ⁴³ *The Monitor*. 25 March 2004. P. 17.
- ⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coober_Pedy
- ⁴⁵ Brasse and Sanders. *Andamooka Heritage Survey, Heritage Conservation Branch 1984*. p. 13.
- ⁴⁶ Heritage Branch File, *Burra State Heritage Area*, 2005 pg. 1.
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