

A History of YUNTA

First written in MAY 1987 for the occasion of the town CENTENARY celebrations held over 2 days culminating in a display of photos and a "Back to School" on the Sunday the 3rd May *87.
by Richard G McLeod

The township of Yunta was born to service the newly placed railway which stretched from the mid-north of South Australia to the border of New South Wales at Cockburn, newly created town where the ore trucks or general merchandise was transferred to and from the privately owned Silverton Tramways for the journey to Silverton and Broken Hill.

For years oxen had carted stores into and ore out of the districts many different mines, but with further development it was proposed that a railway from Burra would be a viable proposition and a initial survey was carried out to study the feasibility of joining the 2 towns by rail. The mines opted to build their own rail as far as the border if the South Australian Government would bring the line as far as the border on their side. Then with the discovery of gold in the north east at Waukeringa in 1872 and other fields quickly following it was decided to abandon the original plan of laying the track through the country where Anabama on Lilydale is today [this would have followed closely the , then, existing stock and ore routes] and to pick a route through to the border from Burra via Mount Grainger, Waukeringa and Kings Bluff.

Again this was abandoned in favour of a route which closely follows the rail line as it is today with the only hills to be negotiated being the Nackara hills.

By the time the rails were finally laid the ore was to be taken to Port Pirie where a new smelter was being built. The line was also planned to travel through "Lancelot" but lobbying saw the line going from Terowie to "Petersburg" and then back out towards Cockburn.

The railway line opened to Burra on the 29th August 1870, then from Burra to Hallet on the 10th May 1878, Hallet to Terowie on the 14th December 1880, Terowie to Petersburg 11th May 1881, On the 25th of June 1885 it reached Paratoo, Yunta about?? the end of November 1886 with Cockburn being reached on the 14th May 1887.

But the real history begins with the many Aboriginal "Tribes" which lived and roamed for centuries in this area, controlled within different tribal boundaries and meeting only to barter or to hold certain corroborees, this meeting place was mainly along the "Teetulpa" and "Winninnie" ranges.

The 4 tribes who used this country before whiteman were,
The Wilyakali who mainly covered the Broken Hill area.

The Ngadjuri roamed from Anguston and Freeling north to Clare, Crystal Brook, Gladstone, Carrieton and north through Waukeringa to Koonamore, east to Mannahill and back though Orroroo, Peterborough, Burra and Robertstown districts.

The Ngurunta people covered an area west of the Barrier and Colo ranges to the eastern shores of Lake Frome, south to about mid waters of the Eurinilla creek, north to about Boolka Lake and the vicinity of the Yandama creek.

The Jodliaura people travelled from the eastern side of the northern Flinders Ranges from Wertaalona, south to Carrieton and Craddock, east to Frome Downs, Howiluilena Station

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on the Siccus river then west to Arkaba and Hawker.

Each of these people had its own jealously guarded customs and showed a marked difference in their totems and markings such as carvings and paintings which have survived the elements and vandalism over the centuries. Unfortunately much of this vandalism can be attributed to the coming of the whiteman.

The majority of markings around Yunta only tell the story of food and bartering within the different people and so are of no real value, but some are of great value and significance so must be preserved.

For instance within the Yunta district three different types of burial took place each with its own marked characteristics and each with its deep feelings of beliefs, so the whereabouts of these sites must remain a secret to further protect their value to surviving members of the peoples.

Captain Frome was the first white man to penetrate this country when in 1846 he tried to prove the theory of the inland sea, he left Black Rock - the furthest point so far settled - and travelled via the "Siccus" to a point near Wertalooa.

On July the 25th he sighted and named a hill to the east, "Mount Victor" after a brother officer and then on his return later in the year - from his fruitless search - he travelled to the named Mt Victor to observe the country further to the east but unfortunately it rained for the whole journey and he experienced great hardship so did little exploring but did note the remarkable recovery rate of the country with a little water.

In 1850 John Williams was granted grazing rights in several areas which stretched from Quorn - Wilmington to as far east as the Nackara hills, Williams's shepherds on pushing out further and further from his home block (roughly near where Neville Sharkeys house stand today), sighted and named a spring 'YUNTA' after a name used by a tribe of Aborigines found within the area at the time.

This name 'Yunta' is reported to mean "part of a woman's anatomy" but this is not proved as three or four different meanings are given dependant on which book is being read at the time.

One group of people had a word "YUNT" for instance which means a meeting place, and who is to say that in typical white man's style the word wasn't bastardised by misinterpreting what was actually said.

However the name stuck and then in 1851 lease number 303 was granted to Levi & Williams and the name 'Yunta' was adopted for the lease name which took in most of the Woolshed range on Teetulpa where the spring of that name is found.

Within 2 years this lease or more rightly the sheep on lease 303 was brought by John Cheving of the Teetulpa lease - near the Teetulpa goldfields - and the name of the homestead block was changed from Yunta to Teetulpa as it remains today.

In 1863-65 a severe drought caused considerable hardship throughout the Northeast with sheep dying by the thousands (Alec Ross, Register 1928) and all stock were shifted off the Paratoo, Teetulpa and Winnininnie leases to grazing on the Benagerie block set up by Alec Ross's father in March of '64 following heavy rains there.

This drought broke on the 1st January 1865 when stock were quickly brought back for shearing and lambing.

The day to day management of the flocks was handled by Shepherds as no fence existed until 1880 when Alexander Hay of the North West Bend lease experimented with a 3 - 4 wire fence. Waite from Paratoo was the first from this district to use wire.

This wire soon spread throughout the northeast giving the owner of the block the grazing on his own lease for the first time and made the days of the shepherd numbered. Evidence still exists today with chimneys dotted throughout the country starkly telling the story of isolation and privatisation, these sites were picked mainly using a back drop of hills so forming a natural fence on one side, a plain falling away from in front of these camps made it easier to shepherd the sheep and allowed them to graze out to water in a creek, well or tank (earthen) then graze back for yarding at night as protection from straying or wild dogs (dingo).

The shearing in those days was carried out in selected yards situated centrally to several shepherds and usually was done in a thatched shed or leanto on a cobbled floor.

With the construction of the permanent stone shearing sheds in the 60s & 70s then the flocks were brought in as required to the central areas then walked back out to their respective areas for grazing.

This wool was then taken by either camel, donkey, oxen or horse teams for trans - shipping to England, to Kapunda originally then to the railhead as the rail progressed further north.

With the coming of the railway to this area (Yunta) it was considered that a fettlers camp every 5 or 6 miles with a gangers camp every 10 miles would maintain the rail on a day to day basis, a town of types each 25 miles would service these camps with goods as well as providing a shipping point to the local population.

Each camp was to have a name if possible taken from a local point, although some only retained the mileage name, ie 286 camp, this was for the ease of communications as well as providing a postal address.

Some of the names adopted were ; Olary from the well just out of town, on Wiawera Station , Mannahill from the eating house/relay station, Yunta was adopted from the old lease / springs, Nackara after the hill / spring named by Williams from the Aboriginal word NAKKARE meaning games.

An interesting peice here is that Mannahill was selected to become the main town along the line north of Peterborough, with a spur line planned to take materials to the differant goldfeilds north of the tracks , Waukeringa and Teetulpa etc however this was abandoned when the ore from these areas was found to be of too low a value and not enough quantity to warrant shipping south, so stamp mills were set up on site until the closing of the mines.

Yunta mean while was found to be ideally situated to become the main jump off point as it already had a n established break in the hills leading both north and south.

This unfortunately caused over the years intense rivalry between both towns with even today a feeling of cautious trust being felt when ever either town holds a function.

The first "town" or railway camp was set up along the Yunta creek but it was found that areas became flooded when it rained so a site was selected for the more permanent residences and although not many stone houses were built a Station Masters cottage was considered and finally built in late 1880's , this house is today along side the overhead watertank in the railway yard and belongs to Clair Tiver.

A goods / station office was erected on a permanent site shortly after the house and was built on a loading ramp along side the line and was approximately 60' x 80' with a half rounded roof, this shed was sold to Charles Wade of Panaramitee Station in 1974 and serves today as a crutching shed after being faithfully restored to near original state on

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Tiverton Station .

An eating house / store to service both the traveller and the railway crews was built near the position of the swimming pool today, while an accomadation hut was constructed near the Highways Dep't road plaque just to the north east of the town.

John Penna, who came from Hammond, first came to Teetulpa goldfeild about a month after gold was first discovered and is credited with being the first real store keeper as he found hardship on the feilds soon after arriving and so left to join with William Nicholls a batchelor who ran a teamsterring business working from Yunta to the gold feilds at both Teetulpa and Waukeringa.

John Penna brought Nicholls out and ran the freight for 7 years building a store/ post office in Yunta to be run by his family, he took over the Postmasters position from the Station Masters who had always had this duty along with their other work.

- This store is still used today and is owned by Frank McAvaney.

John Penna after leaving the cartage business became a driver with Hills Bros' . coach service travelling the run to Waukeringa and Erudina Station for 9 years and even when the advent of the motor truck put the horse days into the past he continued into old age delivering mail and parcels to station, then in 1936 he sold out all interests he had to the district to Harry Ding and left the district for good.

Harry Ding came to Yunta from Olary in 1933 when he brought out the small garage of Arthur Kruse to increase his carrying business, then in 1934 Harry brought out the cartage / mail run side of John Penna's business, this gave him the mail runs from Cockburn to

Mulyungarie Station, Olary to Kalabity and the 3 mail runs from Yunta; Lilydale in the south , Waukeringa twice a week and Erudina- Frome Downs in the north.

Harry Ding in his book 'Living with men' stated that by 1936 he had a contract to 'cart the P.M.G. mail' to the stations both north and south of the railway line, as well as Carrieton to Hawker, Lyndhurst to Murnpeowie and shortly after Marree to Birdsville. Probably Harry's most notable acheivement was when in 1936 he talked Alf Treager into installing a base wireless set into his garage in Yunta and this soon became an intregal part of the communications system just starting in the out back doing the work when required as a contact point for the newly forming "Flying Doctors Service" started by the Reverend John Flynn.

Harry installed wireless into each of his far ranging trucks and reports that the first wirelesses were both big and bulky but with further work Alf Treager soon reduced the size to about 8"x10"x6" with a range of about 800 miles on a good day.

The base wireless in Yunta soon became a major contact point and is credited with handling many messages both normal and emergency before the Flying Doctor Base in Broken Hill was started, the call sign allocated to Harry by the Dept' of Communications was VHU9.

In 1944 Harry passed over the management of his Yunta business to George , his brother and moved to Wilcannia, then in 1946 he sold out this side of his business to George and ceased his direct influence on the town.

George in 1953 was awarded a gold watch by Ford (Aust) for Harry's an d his association for 25 years with the company, in 1986 George was further honoured with a citizen award by the Broken Hill Community in recognition for his services to the citizens of B / Hill , the first ever awarded out side of the city.

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POST OFFICE
FRANK MACB

Harry had in 1935 built a larger garage to replace the small one he had brought from Arthur Kruse, then George in 1953 added a service station onto the side of the garage with a restruant being built in 1955, in 1972 with major changes a completely new complex was constructed by Shell (Aust)

George retired from the restruant in 1974 and from the Shell bulk agency/mail runs in 1985, then in 1986 he finished all connection with the business finally leaving Yunta in 1990. Joe Bruce, Harry and George's brother in law, brought the store / post office from John Penna about the same time as Harry brought the mail runs and for four years ran the store from the original place but in 1938 he moved into a new complex which today forms the basis of the old "Wimpy" store next door to the Shell Roadhouse.

In 1948 Joe sold the store to Ralph Briggs and moved into a post office building 2 doors down the Road.

Conmore Burt in the mid 30s built a store just down the road from Joe Bruce and ran this until 1953 when he closed the doors, today Bill Hogan who runs the Yunta side of 'Flinders Petroleum' lives and plans his work from inside the old shop.

George White a railway Porter brought Ralph Briggs out in 1954 and sold the business to Sid Cowey in May of '66.

George was active through out the district during his time here and one of the projects he was instrumental in was the planting of a plantation of trees in conjunction with 'Snow' Richardson (a Highways Foreman) in "Snow White Avenue".

Harry Ding had in 1933 started a 32v power station which was increased to 110V, eventually George increased this to 240V and supplied half the town, Lionel Breeding with his own lighting plant to use at his Hotel started to supply power to some of the remaining 'townies', a trend carried on by Sims & Reynolds when they purchased the hotel from Lionel Breeding.

Sid Cowey in August 1970 brought this lighting plant from Sim's & Reynolds and has since taken over the whole of the towns supply, in 198 Sid sold the whole supply to Dalfoam Ltd (Perry's) and moved to Crystal Brook.

"Ollie" Hucks the Patriach oh the Hucks in Yunta was a camellier and moved to Yunta in 1923 from Oodlawirra -although he had worked here for many years- and lived for a time in Fred Hucks place, his brother, along side of the tennis court and then in 1924 he moved into Frank Thompson's house a 2 roomed stone cottage just over the road, today Len Lambert lives in this house.

Vic Breeding Snr came to town in 1920 and being a railway ganger lived in one of the 2 adjoining stone cottages which were built in the late 1880s just over the line, these cottages were demolished when the 'new' cottages were built in 1924 occupying the same ground as the old ones.

Vic Snr moved up the track to other section before retiring into Yunta to live out his days in Fred Hucks's house he had brought some time before.

Both 'Ollie and Vic Snr were foundation members of the Yunta Rifle Club in 1923, Ollie had the distinction of being the first life member of the club Vic Breeding Jn and Vin Pfeiffer being the only other ones.

In 1952 Vic Breeding Jn or Snr as he is now known and Albie Sherrif, when George Ding became exclusively Shell started a garage "Plume" at the other end of town and successfully carried out this business until Vic dissolved the partnership to concentrate on his dam sinking business, Vic later became the manager of Teetulpa for A J & P A

Bill Hogan STORE

George

BEN HUCKS BROTHER
Bethells.

~~Harry Ding~~

BOB BREEDING'S
HUSKIN

ALBIE
A.M.P.A.

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McBride when Arthur Lillecrap moved on to become the travelling manager for McBrides.

Albie Sherrif was extremely active in many of the districts projects carried out in later years and can best be remembered for his "She'll BE Right" for most things.

Albie's shop was sold to Kevin Hunt after Albie's death in 1987 and has since been in the hands of managers.

Robert (Bob) Breeding who was Vic's (1st) father built a house of iron with 4 rooms in 1926 when he retired from the railways, this today is owned by Teddy Hathaway. In the early 1900's the railways had 2 tennis courts located between the line and the now bitumen road near the prefab railway houses while the towns people had a further 2 courts near where the McLeods now live but these were soon relocated to the old Nicholls blocks where they are still found today.

In 1894 Robert Cutten built a hotel which is still standing today although Lionel Breeding demolished 2 walls, 1 under the passage floor, inside about 1963 and 1968 respectively. One was to extend the dining room the other was to extend the bar and this one took in the private lounge and included relocating the external toilets to where the private bedroom was behind the private lounge.

He also purchased an asbestos framed hut from Radium Hill when it closed in 1961 and fixed it to the rear/side of the hotel as a Saloon Bar, The bar and fittings were brought in from the Waukeringa Hotel when Lionel demolished it.

The iron and timber from Waukeringa was taken to the Murry River at Loxton to set up a caravan park when Lionel left Yunta.

William Nicholl's house and stock yards were located where Con Burt's house and shop stands on the corner of Main and Railway St's and extended to that area where the present tennis courts stand

The Yunta Hall was built in 1916 on land donated by Bill Wade which had originally been owned by Gordon Fuller, father of Dudley of Wabricoola Station, the hall underwent renovations in 1979 and is controlled by the "Yunta District Hall Inc,

In 1958 Owen Lynch a station hand from Teetulpa St built a house on Greig St and started a 'Roo shooting business before selling the house to the McLeod's in 1961.

A tin framed house on the corner of Greig and Railway Streets was built by Alf Howe, Alf later sold this to Albie Sherrif who when Ken & Dot Dyker moved to Hawker in 1969 demolished the hut and used it for parking and finally as a deisel point of AMPOLs.

In 1946 Cliff Price built a 2 roomed shack on lot 48 but didn't buy the block from the Lands Dept until 1953, George also brought an ex-railways hut from Terowie and this is presently owned by Wendy Hucks.

Tom and Peter Cussack in 1959 Built an iron single bedroom house and left the stations where they had been working and moved into town before shifting to Terowie.

In 1956 Con Burt built a house opposite Huck's out of material mainly salvaged from surplus material on stations and town dumps, this house is along side the 2 Highways houses built for "Nugget" Tonkin and Rex Fleming a Foreman and Timekeeper respectively of the Highways Dept Yunta/Olary

Harry/George Ding lived for many years in the house built by Arthur Kruse opposite John Penna's place, George later moved into the old post office house until a new house supplied by SHELL was built when the new complex went up and George used Arthur Kruses old house as staff quarters while the post office was demolished.

McLeods

Hall

Gray

McLeods
1916-1979

Wendy
Hucks

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Jack & Marlene Staude and Keith & Josie Noble both purchased transportable houses about 1978, while Gary & Christine Fuller had a housing trust home built on site in 1974, Len & Ruth Harbour, Vic & Joan Breeding also located transportables in Yunta in 1980 and 1982 respectively.

The Education Dept` didn't move a house into Yunta until 1954 when the "head masters house was moved to Yunta, before this the teachers usually found accomadation by boarding out with some family within the district during the terms.

Another "school" house was moved from Mannahill to Yunta when the "second " teachers position required accomadation,

Bruce Harbour brought this when it became available in 1996, the 3rd house was moved to Yunta from Quorn in 1987 and is still in use today by the Education Dept`.