



KAPUNDA;
a study of the establishment
of a community in rural South
Australia

by
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Preface

This is not a comprehensive history of a place, a time, or a person. It is an attempt to see what happened when a medium sized settlement was established at a place reasonably remote from the main centre of the Colony. In this particular case, there was a newly established copper mine to attract other than the agriculturalists and graziers who might normally have been expected to predominate. An interaction of mining and other primary producing interests might be expected; and in this thesis there is an attempt to find if this was so.

An analogy might be drawn between the copper mines at Kepunda and the historical researcher. On the surface there was, initially, high grade ore. Mining was easy. Naturally, the process of winning deeper ores was more costly, and as it happened, the quality of the ore deteriorated. On re-working the mines, it was found that the quality of the ore was much lower than had been predicted, and much dross and useless material had to be removed before payable ore was available. So it is for the historian. Initial yields are high, and digging is required to get enough material to make operation worthwhile, if he requires more than can be easily won from the surface. This is normal. But more intensive working reveals useless - unreliable - material by the ton. In this district, where families can show settlement for about a hundred years, legends have arisen. Mostly, these legends are very comfortable and easily acceptable. No-one has had cause to doubt them, and they have gained credence by publication in some newspaper. This has had a twofold effect; firstly, they tend to authenticate that legend to the researcher; and, secondly, it tends to perpetuate the story in a district where newspapers, especially in matters of history, are often regarded as having the infallibility of Holy Writ. "Vox", of "The Advertiser", has recorded much interesting folk-lore of the district. It is doubtful whether he has recorded as much history.

One instance - not pointed at "Vox" - illustrates this. It is commonly assumed in the district that the mines closed because suitable pumping machinery could not be bought by the virtually bankrupt operators to enable working of the rich lode - whose concentration increased with depth - which was below water level. In fact, the mine was worked out. There were no indications that there was rich ore at depth. And the company concerned, was not interested to buy machinery anyway. This other may have been a story advanced by the company to explain the closing down of operations,

and it probably was; a plethora of rumours circulated at the time of the close-down. But information as to the final state of affairs was quite easily obtainable; no-one has bothered to look for it.

These are source difficulties which nearly all historians must contend with. But they seem to be exaggerated in this case, and I have spent much more time in laying ghosts during the preparation of this thesis than I had anticipated.

A preface allows an author to acknowledge the assistance of others in his preparation. In this thesis I have been much helped by the assistance of the Staff of the South Australian Archives, from whose files all of the early photographs come: by the Clerks of the Town and District Councils, by the ministers of the various Churches in the town, by the Constable-in-Charge of the Police Station, and by local residents; all of these have made records in their possession freely available to me.

The analogy drawn between copper mining and the town's history is not quite complete. Geological Surveys have indicated that there are possibly lodes which have not been encountered in previous operations waiting to be discovered. This thesis may show that there is still much more valuable historical material available in the town and district, which could be very rewarding to a patient researcher.

Abbreviations

S.A.A.	South Australian Archives
"Star"	"The Northern Star"
"Herald"	"The Kapunda Herald"
"Observer"	"The Adelaide Observer"
"Advertiser"	"The Advertiser"
"Register"	"The South Australian Register"

Reference to South Australian Archives material is given according to its catalogued number in the Archives, followed by its date (where applicable). For instance A485/1845 refers to document no. 485 in the Colonial Secretary's Office incoming file for 1845.