

SPECIAL LIFTOUT

Oodnadatta its history

The word Oodnadatta is an adaption of an Aboriginal word 'utdnadta', meaning 'blossom of the mulga'.

Oodnadatta was traditionally occupied by the Arabana people who ranged the country of rivers and springs flowing eastward into Lake Eyre.

The first European to explore the area was John McDouall Stuart and part of the route mapped by him in his journeys between 1857 and 1862 was adopted for the Overland Telegraph Line between Adelaide and Darwin.

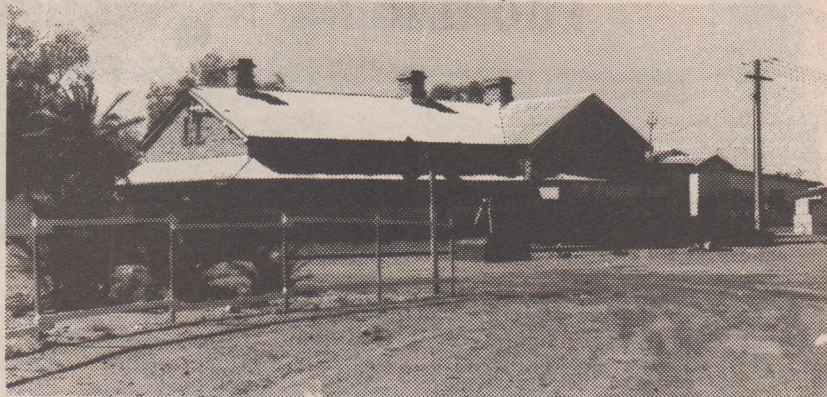
This work was undertaken between 1870 - 1872, with the first message from Darwin being sent on May 22nd, 1872.

The town site was surveyed after a proposal to extend a railhead from Warrina further north and on October 30th 1890, Oodnadatta was proclaimed a Government Town.

On January 7th 1891, the railway from Warrina to Oodnadatta was opened to traffic and the town immediately became an important railhead for the far north.

In 1911, the Australian Inland Mission hostel, now the hospital, was opened at a cost of 653 pounds. The Reverend John Flynn designed and supervised the construction of the hostel and Sister Bett was the first Sister-in-Charge.

Oodnadatta lost some of its importance as a railhead in 1928 when the rail was extended further northwards.



The historic Oodnadatta Railway Station which now acts as a Museum and tourist centre.

The decision to close the 'Ghan' line and build a new railway between Tarcoola and Alice Springs appeared to sound the death knell for Oodnadatta.

As the last 'Ghan' pulled out of the town late in 1980, many people wondered about the town's future.

The Aboriginal people, however, had other ideas.

Fanned by a desire to retain the town as their home, they sought and were given financial assistance from the Aboriginal Development Commission to buy the hotel, the general store, some old stone buildings and six fettlers' huts.

An exciting venture has been the restoration of the Oodnadatta Railway Station as a Museum and tourist centre.

From 'Air Doctor'

Issue No. 184, April 1990

SIMPSON DESERT & DALHOUSIE
THERMAL PONDS ESCORTED 4WD TOURS

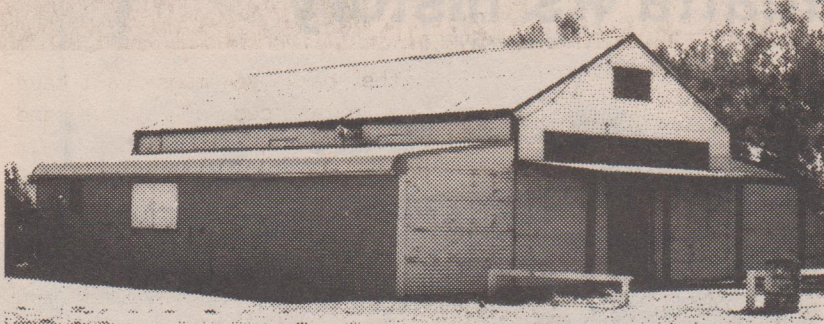
LYNNIE AND ADAM PLATE'S

**PINK ROADHOUSE
OODNADATTA**

FOR SIMPSON DESERT, DALHOUSIE THERMAL
PONDS & OODNADATTA TRACK WEATHER
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Celebrating its Centenary



The Oodnadatta Community Memorial Hall

It is hoped that during the six days in May, as many people as possible will visit the town and relive the memories of the times so often referred to as 'the good old days.'

The Oodnadatta Centenary Committee has planned a special calendar of events to ensure that all will enjoy themselves.

The festivities will coincide with the Oodnadatta Gymkhana and race meeting.

*** THURSDAY MAY 17th**

Evening - Orientation in the hall with photos and memorabilia brought by you and name tags supplied by them.

*** FRIDAY MAY 18th**

Back to school; street parade; barbecue lunch at 2pm; official opening and launching of book at Railway Station at 4pm; display at hospital. Evening - old time singalong with bonfire at the Claypan.

*** SATURDAY MAY 19th**

Unveiling of the plaque; tree

planting; 12.30 Race meeting begins, feature events Ladies Bracelet & Pastoral Cup; dance in the evening.

*** SUNDAY MAY 20th**

Gymkhana begins 10am, including camel races and novelty events for all; Thanksgiving Service at hospital in evening.

*** MONDAY MAY 21st**

Races including Oodnadatta Cup; evening Ball to be period costume.

*** TUESDAY MAY 22nd**

Breakfast and farewell.

If enough interest is shown, buses will be leaving Adelaide on Wednesday May 16th, arriving in Oodnadatta at lunchtime on Thursday May 17th. The buses will depart Tuesday morning for Adelaide. Either 'travel only' or a package tour, including meals and tent accommodation, are being offered.

Oodnadatta, between Marla and Marree on the Oodnadatta Track, and 196km from Coober Pedy, is a small town with approximately 130 residents. It is the gateway to Dalhousie thermal ponds and the Simpson Desert and was once an important railhead for the whole of Central Australia.

In 1981 the railway ceased and the town got a little smaller. The old line was ripped up and today the town stands as a centre for pastoral properties and for the Antjikirinyi community who have made it their 'sit down' place.



The town water tower and TV receiver.

Today Oodnadatta has a hospital Health Centre, a hotel - the Transcontinental, two general stores - one including the Post Office, the other the famous Pink Roadhouse, a caravan park, a police station, a race course and a Railway Museum. A well equipped school caters for half the population - the children, and a community centre looks after the welfare of many of the people.

Photos on these pages courtesy Oodnadatta School



The original Oodnadatta Store

Information on Oodnadatta

Around the town many of the buildings are old and some in a very run down condition - an artist/photographer's paradise. Others have been painted and look very flash. The two stores are two fine examples. The Railway Museum and playground is a good spot for a look at the town's history.



The Transcontinental Hotel

The town has two cemeteries, the first being just near the southern entrance with a white fence surrounding it. The second cemetery is near the Telecom towers to the south-east of the town. Both are worth a look. A stroll to them both takes the walker through the early part of the town's rubbish dump - the dump incidentally stretches for some 5km from the town's south entrance, eastwards.

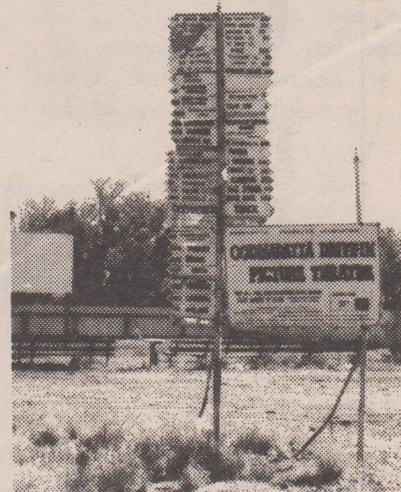
Just north of the town on the western side of the road, about 1.5km out, is the old railway dam. The dam was recently upgraded, cleaned out of silt and today is a popular swimming spot when full of water. The stone work at the flow in to the dam is worth a look as is the weir built as a catchment to the north of it. On the

other side of this, 200m on, is where the Afghan community lived in the early part of this century. A few mounds - graves - are all that remain of the settlement. A well worn trench leads into the dam from the north-east, where the Afghan cameleers lead their animals to water. The trench is about 40cm - 50cm deep in parts.

Further north of the town is Mt O'Halloran, now an important aeronautical navigational transmitter. A road leads to the base of the hill. (Turn right over the first grid out of town). A brisk walk up the hill affords a remarkable view of the red-stoned earth with a green tree belt, the Neales, to the west.

Back on the Track and a further couple of kilometres north is the Angle Pole. A sign marks the significance of this pole and a track to the west leads to a series of waterholes - popular picnic spots.

South of the town, past the Telecom towers is the claypan. This is a popular spot, nestling amongst sandhills, where the town has sports matches and motorkhanas.

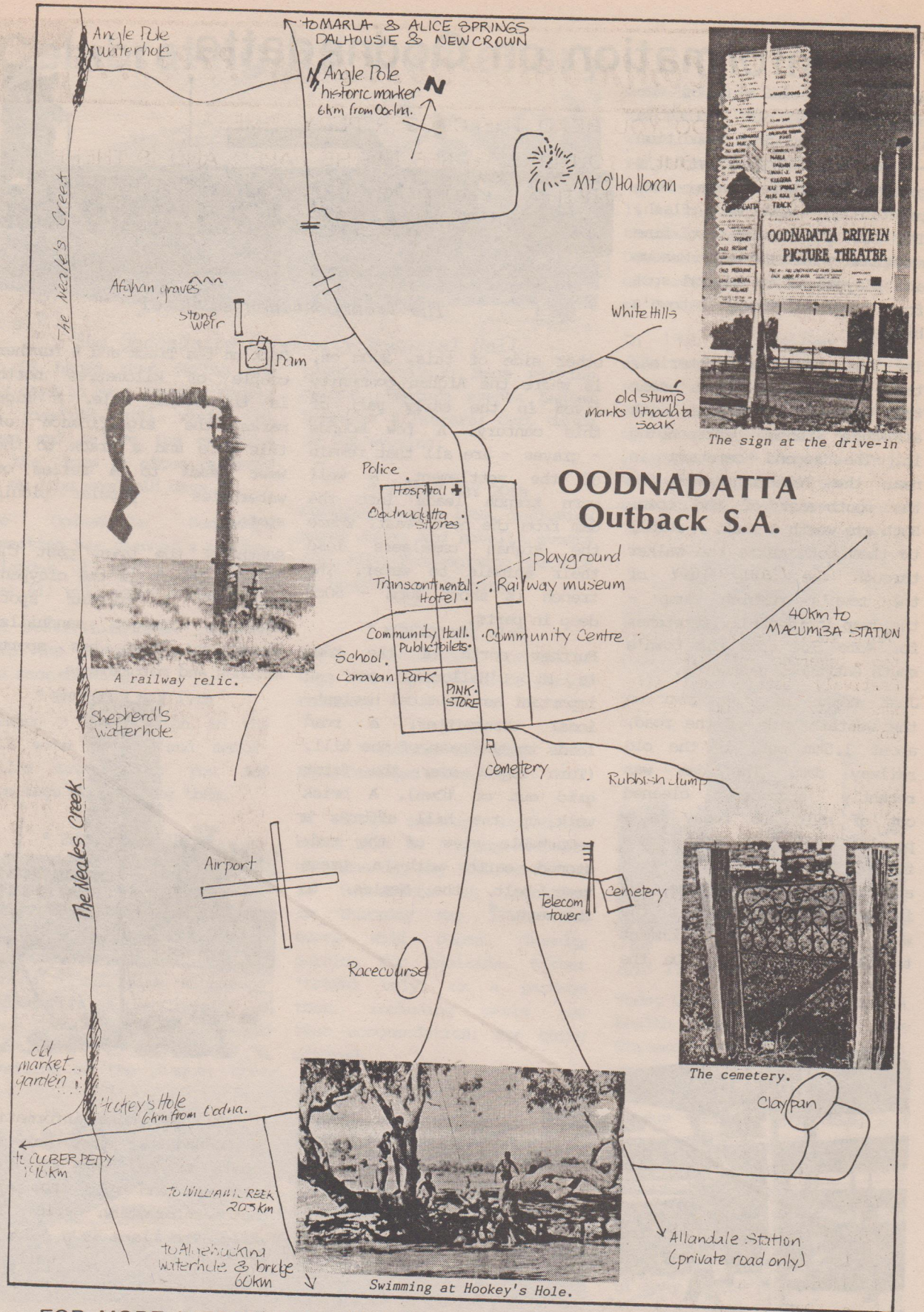


If you need more information on Oodnadatta, just ask the locals or call into the Pink Roadhouse and read the maps/photos/information on the walls. The place is a goldmine of information as well as a good spot for a bite to eat and a cuppa.

Peter Caust



Lynnie & Adam's famous Pink Roadhouse



FOR MORE INFORMATION 'ON OODNADATTA - UNDERGROUND BOOKS