Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas

THIS REGION, including Eyre and Yorke peninsulas and **Kangaroo Island**, is one of low relief, virtually all of it being less than 200 m above sea level. Much of Eyre Peninsula and the northern part of Yorke Peninsula consist of Precambrian rocks, but southern Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island are of younger Palaeozoic materials. Scrub and grassland vegetation covered the area before European occupation.

Water supply has always been a problem. The Mediterranean climate is characterised by a moderate rainfall of 250–500 mm over much of the region, rising to over 500 mm in the **Port Lincoln** area and on **Kangaroo Island**. Runoff levels are very low and hence ground water and water supply pipelines are important on both peninsulas. Pastoral landuses are dominant on Kangaroo Island and along the southwestern coast of Eyre Peninsula, while the remainder of the region is largely devoted to farming, particularly mixed wheat and sheep enterprises. One-third of the state's cereal crop now comes from Yorke Peninsula alone.

Pieter Nuyts and Francois Thyssen in the *Gulden Zeepaard* sailed as far east as the **Streaky Bay** area in 1627, and hence the western section of the region was long known to Europeans. The coastlines of the two peninsulas and **Kangaroo Island** were explored separately by Nicholas Baudin and Matthew Flinders in 1802: Flinders named Yorke Peninsula after C.P. Yorke, later Lord Hardwicke and first lord of the Admiralty. Land exploration began when Edward Eyre traversed much of the peninsula named after him in 1838–41. Eyre estimated that some 2000 Aborigines inhabited Eyre Peninsula at that time, while one estimate put the Yorke Peninsula population of the Naranga group at perhaps 500 people.

Temporary European occupation followed soon after Flinders' voyage when sealers set up camps on **Kangaroo Island** in 1803. Sealers and whalers from the eastern colonies and from the United States were active along the coastline generally in the early nineteenth century.

The South Australian Land Co had a settlement on **Kangaroo Island** from 1836–40. Col William Light visited the settlement in 1836, but transferred his group of colonists to the site of **Adelaide** instead. **Port Lincoln** was also briefly considered in the late 1830s as the site for the colonial capital. Early settlements were coastal: Port Lincoln became an official port in 1839, although the first substantial jetty was not built until 1875, and **Streaky Bay** township was proclaimed in the former year.

Much of Yorke Peninsula was taken up for sheep grazing in the 1840s, especially from 1846 to 1850. An earlier special survey for agricultural use at Port Vincent was a resounding failure. The first successful pastoralists were Alfred Weaver and Charles Parrington who drove their sheep overland from the Fleurieu Peninsula in 1846 to establish a run at Oyster Bay. Early holdings were in the southern section of the peninsula as the thick mallee scrub further north was unsuitable. Medium-term leases replaced annual occupation licences from 1851, giving a greater permanence to the pastoral landscape.

An unsuccessful mine shaft was sunk on the east coast of Yorke Peninsula after copper carbonate was discovered by Alfred Weaver in 1846. Much more substantial deposits of copper ore were found at **Wallaroo** in 1859 and at **Moonta** in 1861. These two towns, along with **Kadina**, grew rapidly and prospered in the boom years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reaching a combined population of approx 30 000. A smelter was opened at Wallaroo in 1861 and blast furnaces and converters followed by 1900. Thousands

of Cornish miners settled in the trio of towns and the area became known as Little Cornwall. The Moonta and Wallaroo mines were abandoned in 1923 due to a slump in world copper prices and rising labour costs.

Hundreds (administrative districts) in the copper mining districts were surveyed and declared in 1862. Other sections of the Yorke Peninsula were surveyed and hundreds declared prior to opening for selection: in 1869 in the southeast; from 1872–74 in the bulk of the peninsula; but not until 1878 in the extreme southwest. The first agricultural area under the Strangways Act of 1869–72 was in the Troubridge area in the southeast. The stump-jump plough, invented locally by Robert and Henry Smith in 1876, greatly aided the conversion of pastoral country to arable uses and, in particular, facilitated the use of the northern mallee lands. Agriculture, above all wheat farming, rapidly replaced copper mining as the peninsula's main economic activity after 1923. Other relatively unimportant activities have been salt production from 1891, and lime production from 1895. The latter continues with a modern kiln having been opened in 1963 at Port Vincent.

Townships generally followed closer settlement, although Maitland was established in the 1860s. **Edithburgh** and Yorketown were both established in the southern agricultural area in the 1870s: many others also appeared, a number beginning life as private townships. A large number of small ports were established in the nineteenth century, but have been replaced by fewer but larger ports this century. The state's first bulk handling of wheat was at **Ardrossan** in 1952.
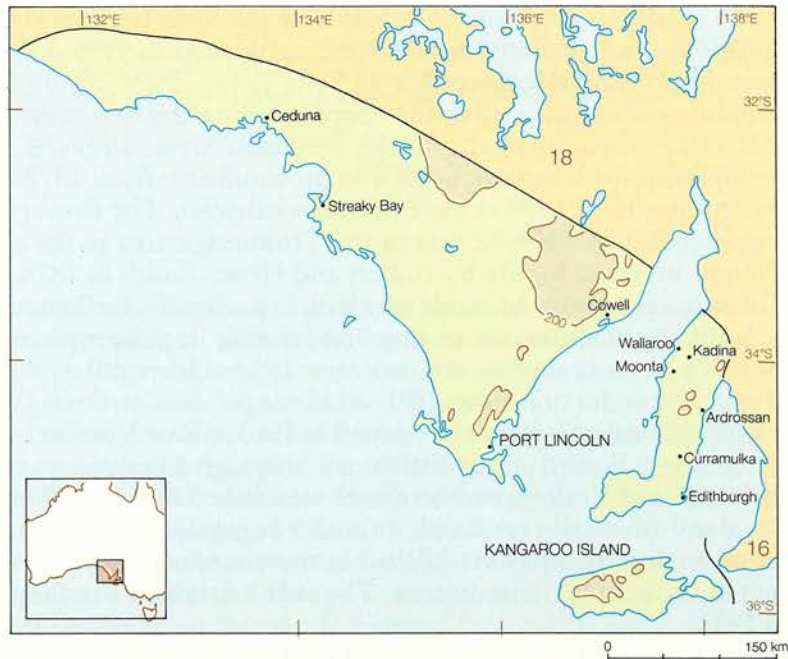
History followed a somewhat similar course on the Eyre Peninsula, although sometimes lagging by a decade or two. The first pastoral run on Eyre Peninsula was taken up in c1840 near **Port Lincoln**; the **Cowell** district was first settled in 1853. Early settlement was restricted to a narrow band along the west coast, but spread further inland in the east. Although the first wheat (30 ha) on the peninsula was sown in 1845, the greater part remained in pastoral use until the 1870s. Closer settlement and the change to arable farming in the western portion around **Ceduna** did not occur until the 1880s, when pastoral leases expired. A number of narrow-gauge railways were established between 1907 and 1926 to help open the area to wheat farming. The area used for wheat growing had increased from 30 ha in 1845 to 180 000 in 1912, and the number of sheep had increased from 4000 in 1843 to more than half a million by 1912. Grain farming had expanded beyond the Goyder Line of rainfall into marginal areas, but the enthusiastic movement inland was reversed by the serious drought of 1914. Port Lincoln, focus of the rail network, became a major port for wheat exports and second in the state to Port Adelaide, a position consolidated by major port development in 1977–78.

All three sections of the region have remained isolated and more dependent on coastal shipping than most other parts of Australia. The region experienced one of the country's earliest mining booms, but also witnessed the last of the stately wheat clippers which called at the numerous small ports as late as the 1930s. **Port Lincoln**, still the only large town, is greatly dependent on the agricultural productivity of its hinterland, and increasingly in recent decades on fishing and tourism.

Graeme Aplin

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ARDROSSAN [34°24'S 137°57'E]

Popn: 101 (1881), 819 (1911), 558 (1947), 828 (1961), 715 (1971), 961 (1981). Named by Gov Fergusson after town in Ayrshire, Scotland. Surveyed c1870 as alternative to old wool port of Parara to south. Shipments from port increased in the 1870s after opening of new agric land. Stump-jump plough invented here in 1876. Jetty built in 1877. First bulk handling wheat port in SA: first shipment in 1952, silos built in 1954. High grade dolomite deposit discov in 1950, quarried by Broken Hill Proprietary Co for steel production

Jetty at Ceduna, the last main township on the road west across the Nullarbor Plain.
WELDON TRANNIES

and yielding 90 per cent of Aust output in the 1970s. Grain handling less significant by 1980.

CEDUNA [32°08'S 133°42'E]

Popn: 116 (1911), 1292 (1961), 2794 (1981). Aborig name for waterhole was *chedoona* = 'to sit down and rest'. Nicholas Baudin's 1802 expedition named Murat Bay and settlement thus known until 1915. Original township of Denial Bay estab in the 1840s 13 km from present town, ruins remain there. Whaling station on St Peter's Island in the 1850s. Village founded in 1896, surveyed in 1900, town proclaimed in 1901. Rly from **Port Lincoln** opened in 1915. Overseas Telecommunications Commission earth station completed in 1969. Far West Aborig Progress Assoc formed in 1973.

COWELL [33°41'S 136°57'E]

Popn: 125 (1901), 673 (1911), 501 (1947), 682 (1961), 626 (1981). Named by Gov Jervois after friend J.C. Cowell. Franklin Harbour discov by Matthew Flinders in 1802. Adelaide Survey Assoc sent Robert Cock in schooner *Victoria* to explore area in 1839. First European settlers in district in 1853. Town surveyed in 1880. Police station built in 1881. Post office built in 1885, now Nat T museum. Major jade deposit in district mined commercially since 1975.

CURRAMULKA [34°41'S 137°45'E]

Popn: 144 (1901), 541 (1911), 178 (1947), 285 (1954), 218 (1966). Name: Aborig = 'drinking place for emus'. Early runs resumed by govt for sale to farmers in 1874, district opened for selection in 1876. Town gazetted in 1878. First substantial post office estab in 1885. Raeburn stud well known for Clydesdale horses in the 1920s. Corra-Lynn Cave, longest cave in SA,

known by Europeans since 1880 but first systematically explored only in 1956. Port Julia, also known earlier as Curramulka Harbour, became main port for export of produce from district. Jetty erected in 1895, replaced in 1913. **Ardrossan** took over function from start of bulk grain handling in 1952 and last export of grain from Port Julia was in 1967.

EDITHBURGH   [35°05′S 137°46′E]

Popn: 234 (1881), 869 (1911), 477 (1954), 510 (1961), 359 (1981). Named after wife of Gov Fergusson. Number of wrecks on coast before Troubridge lighthouse opened in 1856. District surveyed as agric area c1870. Town surveyed in 1869, estab in 1871. Troubridge Hotel opened in 1872. Jetty built in 1872. Saltworks opened in 1899. *Clan Ranald* wrecked nearby in 1909 with loss of 34 lives. Yorketown to northwest settled by Europeans in 1847, town proclaimed in 1870 and became most successful private township of period. Melville Hotel at Yorketown built in 1872. State port with bulk grain handling facilities opened at Port Giles in 1968.

KADINA   [33°57′S 137°44′E]

Popn: 1832 (1876), 1521 (1881), 2747 (1911), 1744 (1947), 2943 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'lizard plain'. Founded after large copper reserves discov at **Wallaroo** in 1861. Town proclaimed and telegraph to **Adelaide** opened in 1862. Wombat Hotel opened in 1862. Horse-drawn rlwy to Wallaroo opened in 1862. Kadina Museum includes Matta House (Nat T, RNE),

built for manager of Matta Matta mine in 1863. Became a municipality in 1872. Rlwy opened in 1878. Boom copper mining period in late 19th and early 20th cents. Many Cornish miners migrated to district. In 63 yrs, 1861–1923, 3.4m tonnes of ore sent to smelters.

KANGAROO ISLAND   [35°52′S 137°14′E]

Popn: 1337 (1921), 3285 (1960), 3515 (1981). Sighted and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802. French navigator Nicholas Baudin circumnavigated island and landed on it in 1803. American sealers landed at American River in 1803 and stayed several months, constructing first ship built in SA. First substantial house built there in 1844 still stands. SA Land Co settlement at Nepean Bay (Kingscote) founded in 1836 as first European settlement in SA. Col Light visited settlement but went on to site of **Adelaide** later that yr. Poor soil led to Nepean Bay settlement closing in 1840. Salt produced in the 1840s. Cape Willoughby lighthouse built in 1852, SA's oldest; Cape Borda lighthouse built in 1858; Cape du Couedic lighthouse built in 1906: Yacca gum exported in the 1890s–1930s. Tourist trade began c1905. Soldier settlement scheme estab at Parndana in 1947, development of island under such schemes continuing to 1966.

MOONTA   [34°05′S 137°37′E]

Popn: 1731 (1876), 1418 (1881), 3772 (1911), 1151 (1961), 1702 (1966), 1570 (1971), 1924 (1981). Name: Aborig *moonta moonterra* = 'impenetrable scrub'. Copper deposit discov in 1861, Moonta Mining Co

Miners' cottages, Moonta, now in the hands of the South Australian National Trust. Photograph by Reg Morrison, 1981.
WELDON TRANNIES

The northern foreshore of Port Lincoln from the town jetty.
Photograph by Doug McNaughton, 1981.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

formed. Town surveyed and named in 1862–63. Cornwall and Royal hotels, post and telegraph office from the 1860s. Miner's cottage of the 1860s (Nat T, RNE) exists. Wesleyan Methodist church built in 1865 to seat approx 1200. All Saints Anglican church built in 1873. Masonic hall, oldest in SA, built in 1875. Fourteen Methodist churches in the 1870s. Popn of approx 12 000 in immediate district in 1875. Rlwy opened in 1878. Mines School (now museum, Nat T, RNE) opened in 1891 in former Baptist church (built 1866), added to in 1903, once had 1000 pupils: first such school outside metropolitan **Adelaide**. Mines abandoned in 1923 with slump in copper prices and rising labour costs. Ruins of Richman's and Taylor's mine (RNE) and Hughes Engine Pumping House (RNE, operated 24 hrs per day from 1865 until 1923 without a major breakdown) still remain. More than 30 buildings listed by Nat T.

PORT LINCOLN [34°44′S 135°52′E]

Popn: 530 (1881), 465 (1891), 1280 (1911), 5871 (1954), 10 675 (1981). Bay sighted and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802 after his native county, Lincolnshire, in England. Suggested in the 1830s as site for capital of SA, but rejected after examination by Col William Light as harbour entrance considered unsafe. Settled and became legal port in 1839. Lincoln Hotel, opened in 1840, is oldest on Eyre Pen. Topless windmill begun in 1840 but never finished because grain harvest insufficient at time. St Thomas's Anglican church begun in 1849–50. Courthouse (RNE) built in 1862. Mill Cottage (Nat T museum) built in 1866. First jetty built in 1875, a second in 1906. Narrow-gauge rlwys to Eyre Peninsula agric districts opened 1907–26, enhancing port function. Fishing industry expanded after cannery estab in the 1950s. Major port improvements in 1977–78. Mikkira station to south was first on Eyre Peninsula, original 1840s homestead and outbuildings remain. Whaling flourished briefly on southern peninsula in the early 1800s: relics of old whaling station at Sleaford Bay. St Matthew's mission church (RNE) built at Poonindie in 1854 in Aborig village estab by Archdeacon Matthew Hale in 1850. Tourism important since World War II. Second port in SA in bulk wheat exports in the early 1980s.

STREAKY BAY [32°48′S 134°14′E]

Popn: 111 (1881), 377 (1911), 985 (1981). Matthew Flinders named bay in 1802 because of streaking effects of seaweed. Settlement earlier called Flinders. Pieter Nuyts in area in 1627. Town proclaimed in 1839. Edward Eyre set up base here on trek to WA in 1840. Hospital Cottage built in 1864.

WALLAROO [33°57′S 137°39′E]

Popn: 2075 (1876), 1685 (1891), 5282 (1911), 2141 (1947), 2403 (1954), 2043 (1981). Name: corruption of Aborig *wadla waru*. Walla Waroo run taken up by W. W. Hughes, name later shortened. Hughes applied for mineral licence in 1851 but was refused. One of his shepherds later found copper ore in wombat burrow in 1859 and lease granted in 1860. Wallaroo Mining Consolidated estab in 1862. Smelter built by 1861 to treat ore from **Moonta** and Wallaroo fields. Blast furnaces and converters installed by 1900. Thousands of Cornish and Welsh miners arrived. Boomed until 1923. Town site surveyed c1860. Hughes chimney stack built (RNE) in 1861. Customs house (RNE) built in 1862. Harvey's pumping station (RNE) built c1860, first of four at Wallaroo mines. Many 1860s buildings listed by Nat T. Nat T museum in former post office built in 1865. Police station (RNE) built in 1865. First jetty built in 1865, replaced in the 1880s. Courthouse (RNE) built in 1866. Methodist church, St Mary's Anglican church both from the 1860s. Mines closed and furnaces demolished in 1923. Became a grain exporting port after mining ended.