HISTORY OF AUBURN

Auburn, gateway to the Clare Valley, is rich in history and heritage buildings. As early as 1839, in South Australia's infancy as a colony, pioneers grazed sheep and cattle in the district. The township, which was established in 1849, was first known as Tateham's Waterhole, according to local legend.

At about the same time Auburn was being developed, copper was discovered at Burra to the north-east. The copper was transported by bullock drays along the Gulf Road from Burra, through Auburn, to Port Henry (now called Port Wakefield).

With up to 100 bullock drays a day in the early 1850s passing through the Auburn area, various services were quickly established and land sales drew many investors.

In 1857 when the copper teams were re-routed through Riverton to the new railway terminus at Gawler, the Gulf Road became less important. However, Auburn continued to flourish as a commercial centre and agricultural area.

As Auburn grew in the 1860s and 1870s, it boasted two breweries, a foundry, gasworks, flour mill and a shoe factory. Many Auburn buildings had gas lighting.
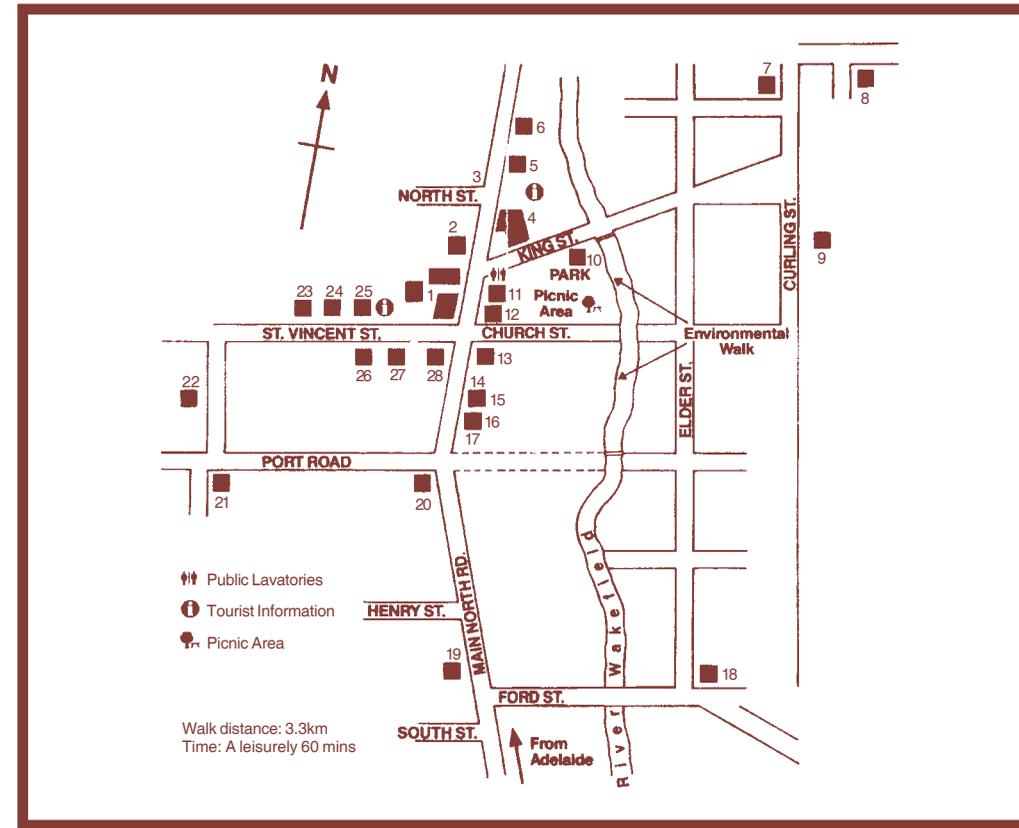
Vines were planted near Auburn in the early 1850s. 160 years later, the Clare Valley is one of Australia's premium wine regions with more than 40 producers. Eight of these are located in or near Auburn.

The stonework of Joseph Meller is still to be seen in many fine colonial buildings. This renowned stonemason had a bluestone quarry near the Eyre Creek. Other noted builders were Robert Whitehead, James Scott, Joseph Jones and William Threadgold. These resourceful men, particularly Meller, constructed most of Auburn's buildings from the late 1850s to the turn of the century.

Some of South Australia's finest stonework is to be found in the group of public and private buildings along Main North Road and St. Vincent Street. Auburn is widely recognised as an historic town and many of its buildings are listed on the National Trust, State Heritage and National Estate Registers.

One of Australia's great authors, C.J. Dennis, was born in Auburn in 1876. He is best known for the immensely popular *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke,* published in 1915.

Auburn now offers visitors an attractive variety of accommodation, many heritage buildings of architectural and historic merit, craft shops and a winery, all within easy walking distance.

Walk distance: 3.3km
Time: A leisurely 60 mins

1. **RISING SUN HOTEL Stables and Mews**
   The Rising Sun Hotel, the first commercial premises in Auburn, dates from 1850. The present building was constructed in 1907, with the stables still in use. The original loft in the stables was a temporary office for the first Auburn Telegraph. The first message was sent by Charles Todd on June 3, 1862.

2. **GENERAL STORE & WAREHOUSE**
   Built about 1860 of Auburn bluestone. Partly demolished in 1982, it was restored to become Tateham's Restaurant and Rooms. William of Tateham was Auburn's earliest known pioneer and is said to have lived in a dugout north of the town by the River Wakefield. The building is still used commercially.

3. **SITE OF AUBURN HOTEL**
   Birthplace of Clarence James Dennis. Auburn's most famous son, the poet and journalist C.J. Dennis was born in 1876 at the Auburn Hotel. A drinking fountain, birdbath and model of the hotel now stand in memory of the "Laureate of the Larrikins", who died in 1938.

4. **AUBURN INSTITUTE & TOWN HALL**
   Originally built in 1866 as a town hall by a private company of local individuals. The Institute's southern facade was completed in 1884. The building exhibits the high standard of civic pride and architecture of the period. It is a significant example of Joseph Meller's and James Scott's masonry skills.

5. **BLACKSMITH SHOP**
   Originally servicing early settlers, evidence can still be seen inside where working bullocks and horses were restrained to enable them to be shod. In the 1900s the business was converted to a motor garage. In later years the building has been used for a number of commercial enterprises.

6. **ST. BRIGID'S CONVENT SITE**
   From fundraising by local residents, a school was established and conducted from 1871 to 1887 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, an order founded by Mary MacKillop, who is believed to have visited the site. Used as a place of worship by Roman Catholics in the late 1800s, the priest travelling from Manoora.

7. **LUTHERAN CHURCH**
   Former Primitive Methodist Church. This attractive stone church was built by Joseph Meller in 1869. It has been owned by the Lutheran Church since 1926. A porch and vestry have been added to the original church. The history of ownership of this church reflects the very high proportion of Methodists as well as Lutherans in South Australia, which contrasts with the other Australian States.

8. **FORMER BUTTER FACTORY**
   Site of Auburn's second brewery which fell on hard times and was demolished. It was replaced by farm buildings, which were later converted to a butter factory. Grosset Wines established a winery here in 1981.

9. **AUBURN RAILWAY STATION**
   The Adelaide to Clare line opened in 1918. It boasted a rail/bus service twice daily and three freight trains a week. The last train service was in 1983. The building was restored and reopened in 1998 by Mount Horrocks Wines for cellar door sales and lunches.

10. **CASTINE & GOSS STORE**
    Former general store opened in 1862 by John Castine and Francis Goss on what was then the main road to Burra. It ceased to be a retail outlet when "Blucher's Drapery" closed its doors in the late 1940s. After being extensively restored by a local stone mason, it is now a private residence with attached bed and breakfast accommodation.

11. **CORN MART**
    This was built of Auburn bluestone by Meller and Scott in 1878 for William Barkla of "Koonowla". In 1947 it was purchased by the Country Women's Association.

12. **BOOT FACTORY**
    Daniel Smith had this built in 1879 to house the boot factory and store which did a brisk business in knee-high wellingtons for £1 ($2) per pair. Such a business was an indicator of Auburn's role as a service town in the latter part of the 1800s.

13. **ENGLISH STYLE SHOP**
    Former saddlery shop. Meller built this English-style shop and residence for Robert Wylie, a saddler. It later became a butcher's shop before falling into disrepair. In recent years it has been renovated and used as a bed and breakfast establishment or for residential accommodation.

14. **DENNIS CREEK**
    According to local legend, it was named after the father of C.J. Dennis. This was James Dennis, licensee of the Auburn Hotel from 1865-1877.

15. SHOP & RESIDENCE
Former jewellers. This calcrete (limestone) building with bluestone quoins was used as a bulk store for the chemist. Over the years it has had a number of commercial uses with a basement residence.

16. EARLY APOTHECARY
Built by Meller in 1876 and owned by chemist John Limbert and descendants for many years. More recently it was an antique business with a private residence.

17. MOUNTING STONE
Meller made several mounting stones including this one and another located in front of the first doctor's residence in Port Road.

18. CATHOLIC CHURCH
Former Wesleyan Methodist Church. This Gothic Revival church was built in 1866-7 by Meller and Scott. When the Bible Christians, the dominant Methodist force in the area, and the Wesleyans merged, the building became redundant. In 1916 it was sold to the Roman Catholic Church. The bell from their demolished church at Undalya replaced a cracked one in the Uniting Church.

19. UNITING CHURCH
Former Bible Christian Church. It was built by Meller and opened in 1861. William Threadgold, who came from Burra, was the carpenter. The beautiful cedar gallery, added in 1866, is a notable example of colonial craftsmanship.

20. FORMER CORN STORE
This was built in the early 1860s for Charles Bleechmore, a storekeeper, and operated as a general store-cum-wheat-and-flour store. In 1882 ownership passed to Paul Overton, the Auburn butcher, and it remained in his family until about 1980. In recent years this interesting building was converted into a pottery and later used for other commercial ventures.

21. LLANEAST
Joseph Jones, stonemason, arrived in Auburn 1855 and later built this cottage. Joseph's son, Ernie Jones, was Auburn's most famous sportsman, a great fast bowler who toured England three times, in 1896, 1899, and 1902. This is typical of the size and appearance of most residences in colonial South Australia.

22. AUBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL
Public education commenced in Auburn about 1855 in the first Bible Christian Chapel, and the school was opened in January 1860. The district trustees handed the school over to the Education Department in the late 1870s.

23. ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
This Gothic Revival church, of Auburn bluestone with quoins and arches of Watervale sandstone, was built in 1862 by contractors Pike and Daly. Joseph Meller considered the stone cutting on the window surrounds (Watervale sandstone) above the altar to be his finest work. At the time of its completion it was considered to be the most elegant building in South Australia's north. The church was attached to the Riverton parish at first, until 1870 when the Rev. C.W. Hawkins became the first resident priest.

24. FORMER COURTHOUSE, POLICE STATION & STABLES
The police station and stables were built by Meller in 1859, possibly with field stones gathered by horse and dray. The quoins and dressings are of Watervale sandstone. The stables have a shingled roof and red gum timbers from local saw pits. The courthouse, sitting room and cells were added with Auburn Bluestone in 1865, the cells being curved on top with stonework keyed in. Further additions were added in 1877, 1916 and 1928. The complex was dedicated to the National Trust in 1973.

25. POST OFFICE
This bluestone building was constructed in 1862 by stonemason Joseph Jones. The postmaster's duties in the early 1890s included the maintenance of the telegraph lines. It still continues to operate as the town's post office. The building is privately owned.

26. LIBRARY
Former Council Chambers. This building, completed in 1879 by Robert Whitehead, was the first official chambers of the District Council of Upper Wakefield. It has recently been converted into the town library.

27. OLD MECHANICS INSTITUTE
The Mechanics Institute was founded in 1859 and the Library was located at a number of places until moved to the town hall. The building has had many uses, including a private school and a boy scout hall. In the 19th century there was great concern to educate the working class, which was reflected by the building of Mechanics Institutes and, later, public schools. This was an early institute and is now used as a bed and breakfast.

28. GLOVER'S
Henry Wylie, whose initials are still evident on the foundation stone, built this shop and dwelling in 1855. Amongst its various owners were carpenters, bakers and SP bookmakers. The property was purchased by Isaac Meller in 1915 and it operated as a greengrocery until 1993, firstly by Meller and later by his daughter Mrs Jean Glover, a granddaughter of Joseph Meller. Its commercial and residential history continue with the present owners.

Mellers' Quarry
(north-east of Auburn viewed from the Riesling Trail)

Geologically a well-banded, blue grey and khaki siltstone, the Auburn bluestone is noted for the large regular blocks that could be readily worked. The bluestone was widely used in Auburn from about 1855 to 1960. This stone has also been used in buildings in Adelaide and can be seen in at least five buildings as rock-faced stonework on base or plinth courses. The best example is Brookman Building (1900) North Terrace (Corner of Frome road). Others are: Art Gallery of SA (1936), SA Museum (1908-14), former Adelaide Mail Exchange (1898) and the Glenelg Post Office.

Whitehead's Lime Kiln (dismantled in the 1970s)

Until the gradual introduction of portland cement (from about 1880) lime was the cementing material used in most mortars. Although portland cement is stronger, lime has the advantage of being more elastic, thus allowing for some movement which inevitably occurs particularly in older buildings with shallow footings. When old lime mortared structures are being repaired it is important to repoint the joints in a similar lime mortar, the principle being to keep the mortar weaker than the surrounding stone or brick. Kilns such as Whitehead's were a common feature of many country towns in the nineteenth century.
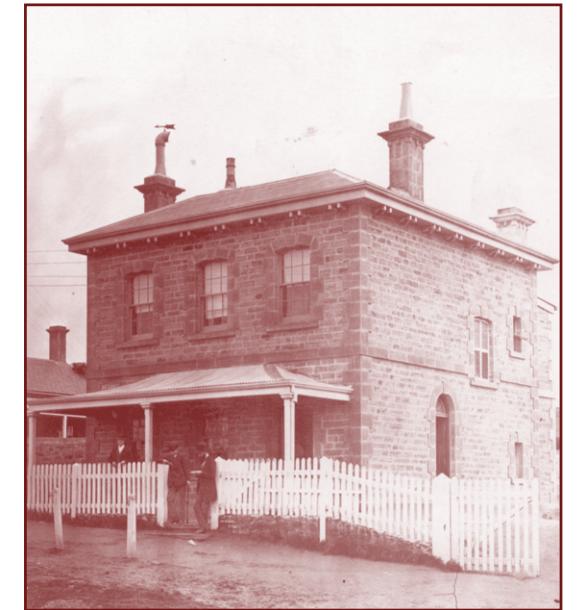
WALK WITH HISTORY AT

AUBURN

*Clare Valley
South Australia*

Auburn Post Office C.1862

AUBURN
*Gateway to the
Clare Valley
Wine Region*