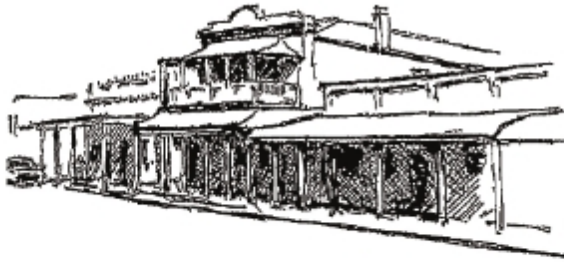


# STRATHALBYN

## A WALK AROUND THE TOWN



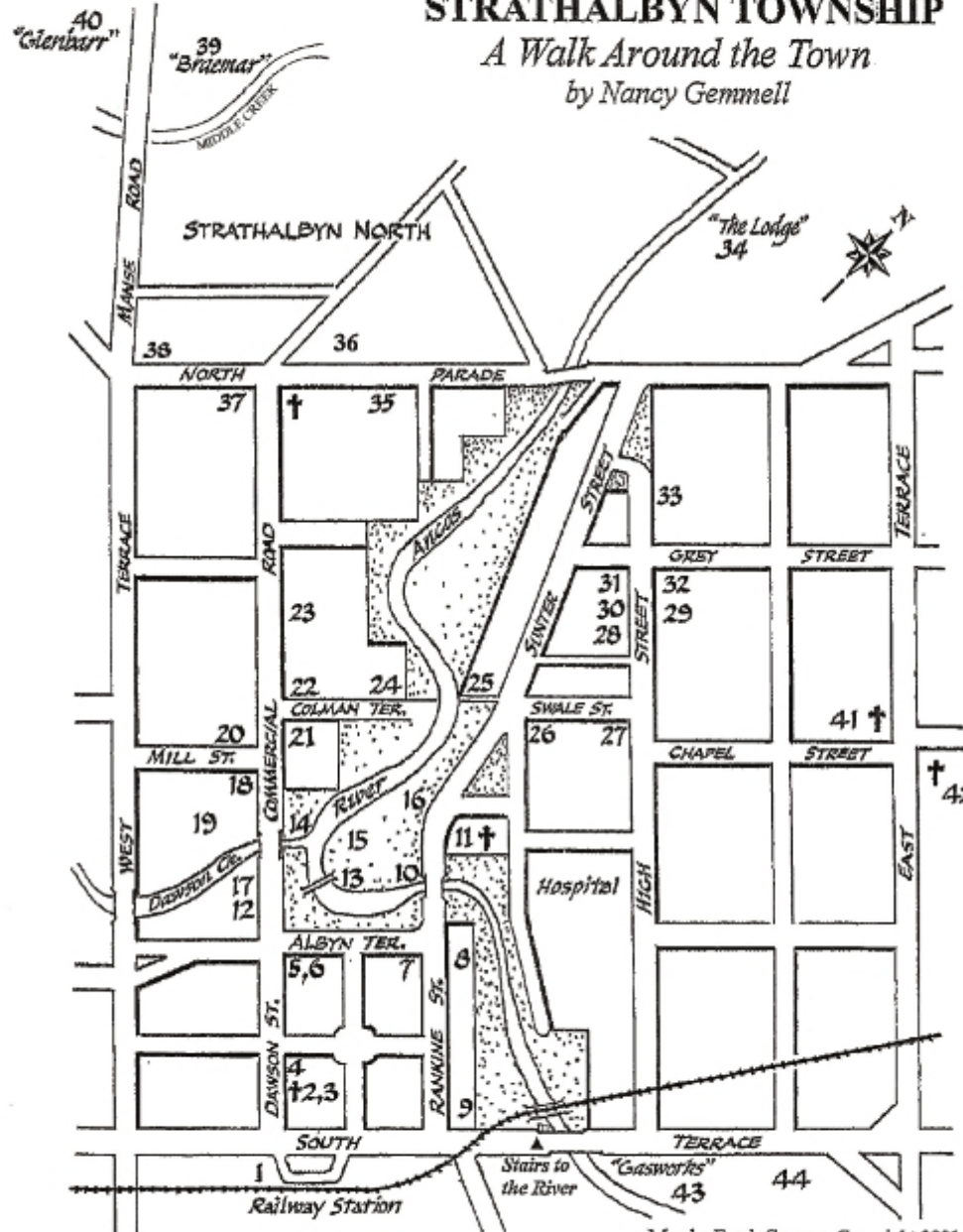
Your guided tour of the buildings and sights of historic and heritage significance, with references to the early pioneers.



Text and drawings by Nancy Gemmell  
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## STRATHALBYN TOWNSHIP

### A Walk Around the Town by Nancy Gemmell



Map by Esmic Caspers. Copyright 2001

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## INTRODUCTION

**S**TRATHALBYN was founded by affluent people who came from Scotland in 1839 and chose the Angas Valley area as a Special Survey. The best land was purchased and the town gazetted in this picturesque spot on the river with Col. James Dawson and William Rankine as Trustees for the sale of the blocks.

Descendants of early settlers still live in the district and their story is displayed in the Heritage Centre in the Old Police Station and Courthouse. Situated east of the Mt Lofty Ranges and on the edge of the dry plains around Lake Alexandrina, early prosperity came from passing travellers to the Victorian goldfields.

Later people came by coach and stayed in the town on their way to crossing the lake by schooner or paddle steamer from Milang, or changing at the Terminus Hotel to the horse tram to Victor Harbor. The building of the bridge over the Murray and the arrival of the train-line in 1883 changed the town. Four old hotels remain in the town. The countryside is renowned for its great quality farming land - grazing, cropping and vineyards. Strathalbyn also holds a monthly market.

The unusual name is thought to derive from "Strath" - a valley and "Alben" - the old name for Scotland. Although the area has expanded rapidly, with many residents commuting to Adelaide, the centre of the town remains largely unchanged. Development is carefully monitored to preserve the delightful heritage ambience of the town and Angas River precinct which is heritage listed.

**T**HE historic Railway Station **(1)** was built in 1884 when the line came down the eastern Ranges from Mt Barker Junction. Steam replaced the old horse tram to the South Coast in 1885 once the line was strengthened. The railway was very important to Strathalbyn for many years but the service to Adelaide ceased in 1984.

Opposite the Station, Dawson Street became the main commercial centre after the 1920's.

The Christian Chapel **(2)**, opened in 1873, and the Masonic Hall **(3)** in 1896. The spectacular Savings Bank (Bank SA) **(4)** was built in 1930.

On the corner of Dawson Street and Albyn Terrace, Mr Woolfitt's bakery of 1864 **(5)** has been remodelled for shops and offices.

From this point there are three ways to see the River Angas and the Soldiers Memorial Garden in the centre of the town, but all walks lead to Historic High Street. Albyn Terrace overlooks the river and picnic grounds.

On the right the row of historic shops and offices includes the Victoria Hotel **(6)** of the 1860's, the office built for the lawyer EJ Tucker in 1895. An older building, with an added façade of 1883, was used as the horse tram booking office, a school, and stock agent's office.

Next is the National Bank **(7)** built in 1867, and across Rankine Street is the Terminus Hotel **(8)** so named because the horse tram stopped here. First built by Donald Gollan in the 1840's, the hotel was burnt down in 1867 and rebuilt in its present form by Richard Hooper from Cornwall, son in law of Col. Dawson. Below the hotel is Rotary Park with the hospital on the opposite bank.

A diversion down Rankine Street leads to the National Trust Heritage Centre **(9)**, occupying the old Court House of 1867, the Police Station and House of 1858, both on the Australian Heritage Register.



*9: National Trust Heritage Centre*

There is a special display of pioneer history in the Courtroom and fine paintings, photographs, silver, china, kitchenware and clothes are set out in the house. Beyond a courtyard with cells, the large yard has wagons, implements, tools and a blacksmith's shop. An interpretative display depicts previous industries in the area.

The museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, Public & School Holidays 1:30pm to 4:00pm.

Opposite the National Bank, St Andrew's Bridge **(10)** crosses the river to Sunter Street, the War Memorial (on left) and St Andrew's Church (to the right). The first bridge was an arched wooden structure opened in 1857 by a daughter of Col. Dawson. It was rebuilt on a new alignment in 1883 and renewed in 1938.



From here Sunter Street follows the steep river bank to Bell's Corner. Across Sunter Street a path and a road lead to St Andrew's Uniting Church (11) which dominates the centre of the town from its magnificent position above the bridge. Once a small Presbyterian Church, built in 1844, it was gradually enlarged over the years. The Square tower was added in 1869 to house a bell, given by Edward Stirling, which proved too heavy for the existing tower. The clock was installed in 1896.



11: St Andrew's Uniting Church

From the corner of the park opposite the 1914 Post office (12) in Commercial Road, (the extension of Dawson Street), pedestrians can cross the Children's Bridge (13) to the Soldier's Memorial Gardens. The bridge was given by William Richardson of Dalveen in 1919, in memory of his wife Margaret, and is a very early example of reinforced concrete arch.

On the left of this bridge, Dawson Creek runs under Mill Bridge (14) to join the River Angas, and we see here the old weir which was once the town swimming pool, before the modern complex was built.

The Bandstand (15) on the hill was built in 1912 by Alexander Caldwell, and after WWI the Memorial Gardens were developed around it, including the words "Remember the Anzacs" spelled out in plants.



15: The Bandstand

At the top of the path stands the War Memorial (16) with unusual bronze relief panels of a soldier and a cavalry charge. This was designed, and the reliefs cut, by the sculptor Douglas Richardson, but the brick surrounds were installed later.

Close by on the bank some old eucalypts show the scars left when aboriginal canoes and shields were cut from the then living bark.



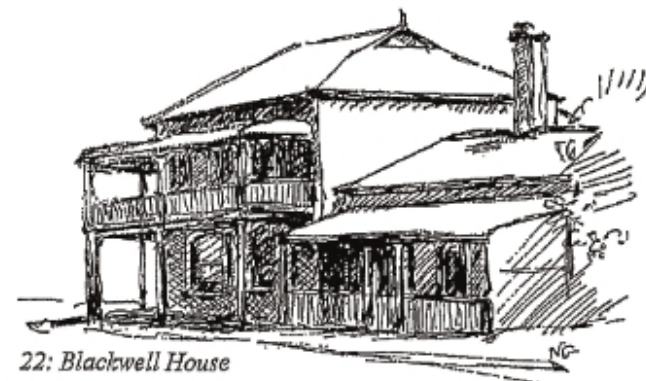
BACK in Commercial Road the classified building known as Argus House (17), now a gift shop, was built in 1870 for Joseph Elliot, the owner and Editor of The Southern Argus. It is one of the State's oldest country newspapers.

Across Dawson Creek the Mill (18), the Mill House, and the store, are a picturesque complex. The original Mill Cottage is the centre part of "Watervilla" (19), the large bay windows and extra rooms being added by Richard Hooper in 1879.

The old part of the flour mill was built by Donald Gollan in 1849 and sold to William Colman in 1851. He enlarged it over the years and it was run by the Johnston family from 1883 until 1928 when it was sold to the Laucke family. A new mill was built in Callington Road in 1961.

William Colman built the large Grain Store (20) in the 1860s, and a small tram line crossed the road to the mill. The store was used for concerts before the Institute (Town Hall) was built and was sold to the Agricultural Society when the land to the north was the showgrounds and football oval.

The building with pillars (across the road) was the Power Station (21) from 1917, when the gasworks closed, until 1939, then remodelled as Corporation Chambers. Blackwell House (22), on the corner of Colman Terrace, was built in the 1860s as a General Store and was later a butcher's shop.



22: Blackwell House



Further up Commercial Road is the former John Wesley Church, now the Chapel Theatre (23). In Colman Terrace is the old Primary School, erected in 1880 to replace an older school run by Miss Downing. A new school is now located on East Terrace and the old building was remodelled as Council Offices and Library (24). The cairn across the road commemorates the position of the first cemetery in Strathalbyn.

From here the road goes down past the Bowling Club to Lions Park, and a concrete path (formally known as the Stepping Stones) connects to Swale Street and High Street, except when the Angas is in flood.

The large store (25) on Bell's Corner was built in the 1860s by Edward Sunter, first mayor of the Corporation. When he died in 1869 it was bought by David Bell and greatly enlarged over the years. On the opposite corner the two-storey building of 1926 was once the Commercial Bank (26), while in Swale Street is the old carpenter's shop of Alexander Caldwell, built in the 1850s. Twin workmen's cottages are next door.

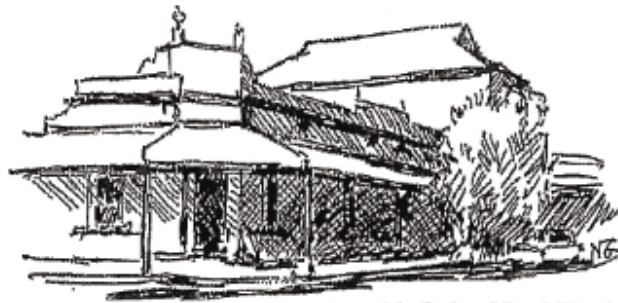


25,26: Bell's Corner

On the corner of Swale Street and High Street stands the Commercial Hotel (27), built in 1865 and enlarged and re-roofed in 1872. The balcony was added in 1882. Chapel Street leads to the Roman Catholic (41) and Anglican Churches (42). Many buildings have been preserved in High Street, which is a Heritage Precinct with underground power and old fashioned lamps, antique shops, craft and gift shops and tea rooms, very popular with tourists.

The two-storey shops were built in 1867 by Hill and Co. Coach Line (28), and across the road is Holloway's Bakery building (29) of 1850, now an antique shop and nursery. The Town Hall (30) was built in 1874 by Richard Trenouth and enlarged over the years, the front restored in 1995. The shop on the south side was a pharmacy.

London House (31), now fully restored as an antique shop, was built in 1867 for Thomas Stephens, and the stables at the rear were used by Hill and Co.



32: Robin Hood Hotel

The Robin Hood Hotel (32) on the corner of Grey and High Streets was opened in 1855, and at that time the saleyards and showground were at the rear. Later it was enlarged to include the two-storey Auction Rooms of John Cheriton.

The shop next to the car park in High Street was once the booking office for Hill and Co (33), and the other old houses, dating from the 1850s, included a blacksmith.



33: Old Houses with Blacksmith's

While in High Street your view to the north includes the River Angas emerging from the ranges, and "The Lodge" (34), once home to Sir Lancelot Stirling. The open land along the Adelaide Road was once a golf course, and during the war was the site of any Army Convalescent Depot.

On the West of the River Angas is the old subdivision of Strathalbyn North, and a longer walk over the bridge and along North Parade leads past the old Rechabite Hall (35), once also a school, past "Dollar" (36) built in the 1860s, and on the corner of Commercial Road hidden by walls and hedges, the large house known as "The Doctor's House" (37) also built in the 1860s.

North Parade continues to West Terrace and Manse Road, named for the Glebe and Old Manse of the Presbyterians, while on the corner is Noye's old school (38) built in 1857. The road leads over Middle Creek Bridge to Braemar (39) on the right, once the home of James and then Matthew Rankine and his descendants, and on the other side a long drive goes to Glenbarr (40), the pioneer home of their father William, founder of Strathalbyn. Glenbarr is now a Camp and Conference Centre.

West Terrace completes the town square, but a diversion down Mill Street gives a fine view of the Mill, Watervilla, and St Andrews Church (11) above the bridge.



From the Railway Station a short walk over the Gol-Col-Hoop Bridge crosses the river to the east end of South Terrace, passing on the right the Gasworks (43), now beautifully restored, which provided light for the town from 1869-1917. The two-storey house is all that remains of Rowe's large foundry (44), which was burnt down in 1882.