

Department for Environment and Heritage

## Flinders Ranges National Park

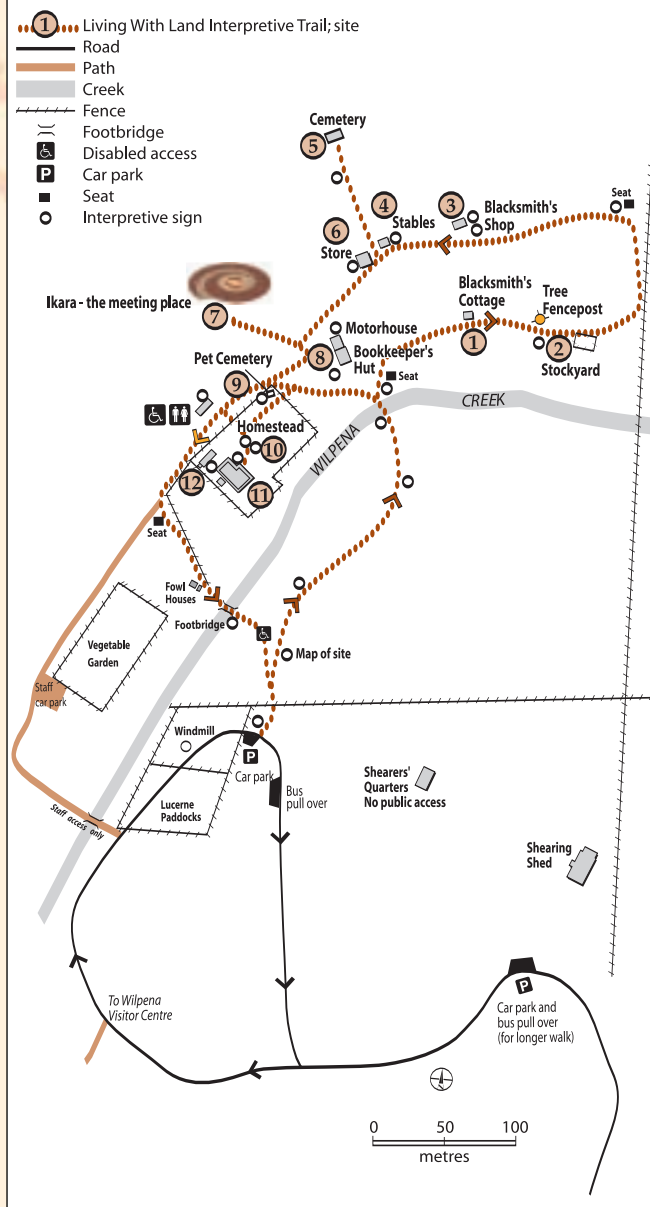
Old Wilpena Station  
Living With Land Interpretive Trail



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## LIVING WITH LAND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

*For information about features of the trail turn to page 10.*



## OLD WILPENNA STATION

Old Wilpena Station is one of the most scenically spectacular pastoral settlements in South Australia. A working station for 135 years, Old Wilpena Station slipped into retirement in 1985. The settlement is now a tranquil archive of pastoral history.

Old Wilpena Station is also an important Aboriginal heritage site. Wilpena Pound and the Wilpena Station lands have enduring cultural significance for the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges.



*Wilpena Government House c.1896*

*"Wilpena Station is one of the most significant pastoral sites in South Australia because it has one of the most continuous and best preserved histories of use in a remote setting... Almost all significant stations with a comparable history are now in ruins."*  
NPWSA planning document 1989

Aboriginal people, European settlers and their descendants share the pastoral heritage of the Flinders Ranges. The self-guiding 'Living With Land' Interpretive Trail explores the themes of self-sufficiency, improvisation and survival on the remote and isolated pastoral settlements of the Flinders Ranges.

## ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND PASTORAL HERITAGE

Aboriginal people played a vital and largely forgotten role in the development of South Australia's pastoral industry.

Aboriginal guides travelled into the interior of South Australia with explorers like Edward Eyre during the early colonial years. They located springs and soaks where base camps would be established and from which exploration parties could extend their reach. Aboriginal guides also found water for ambitious settlers like the Browne brothers who later took up the first pastoral runs in the central Flinders Ranges in 1851.

European settlers claimed the springs and waterholes that had sustained Aboriginal families and the animals they hunted. Within 15 years the infant pastoral industry had destroyed the native economy. Aboriginal families became dependent upon ration depots for their survival.

Aboriginal people adapted to a changed world in a remarkably short time. They learnt the language of the Europeans. They applied old skills used in tracking and hunting, to new situations and became shepherds, messengers and stockmen. Aboriginal men and women built fences and dams, drilled bores, chopped wood, and shored sheep. They worked as scrub pullers, butchers, trackers, wool

classers, vermin controllers, cooks and domestic servants. During World War II many stations relied solely upon Aboriginal labour.

Station employment meant that Aboriginal families could maintain contact with traditional country.

Cultural sites could be visited and customary obligations maintained. Station rations could be supplemented by wild harvest, including rabbits from the 1890s. Children could learn about country as they travelled with their families. Stockmen, fencers, and much later, road-builders, could

The Protector of Aborigines wrote of the Adnyamathanha people in 1889, that:

*"They are also extensively employed on cattle and sheep stations in the district; in fact, some stations are worked almost entirely by them. They are exceedingly useful and reliable among stock, many of them are excellent shearers."*

*"All of my brothers and sisters used to help Dad with the fencing."*

Eileen McKenzie



influence the siting of fence-lines, dams and roads to avoid damage to traditional sites.

Station jobs were harder to find in the 1950s. Increased mechanisation, unstable markets and rising production costs cut demand for hired labour. Employment on pastoral properties continues to decline today.

Many Aboriginal groups all but disappeared from the settled areas of the colony soon after contact. But in the pastoral country of the Flinders Ranges, Adnyamathanha people survived as a distinct linguistic and cultural group. Dispossessed after contact, but

sustained by an enduring spiritual relationship with country and a long involvement in the pastoral industry, the Adnyamathanha people are now returning to the land as owners and managers of pastoral properties in the central and northern Flinders Ranges.

*"Adnyamathanha people did not measure reward for work in purely monetary terms. Food, access to land, permission to bring relatives or a large family group onto the property were also considered benefits of cooperating with the pastoralists."*

Buck McKenzie





## EUROPEAN SETTLERS AND PASTORAL HERITAGE



South Australia was founded upon freedom. Strong egalitarian principles defined the new colony. Both the ambitious and the disadvantaged could prosper in a self-sustaining society of farmers, tradesmen and merchants. Money raised from land sales would be used for assisted migration to ensure an adequate supply of labour.

What worked on paper, failed on the ground. The British architects of the scheme had no understanding of how local climate, poor soils and isolation would impact upon their settlement scheme. Nor did they appreciate that the land already had an indigenous population. Unpredictable climate, extreme summer temperatures, high transport costs, food shortages and conflict with displaced Aboriginal people, challenged the dream. The scheme went bankrupt and the Crown took control of the colony five years after it was founded.



Settlers with the necessary cash took up vast tracts of land as Occupation Leases.

Undeterred by grim reports from explorers returning from expeditions to the interior, some financed private expeditions. Small parties travelled into the Flinders Ranges and beyond in search of reliable waters that could support a grazing industry. From 1851 pastoral runs were founded as new 14 year Pastoral Leases were introduced.

Two ambitious young English doctors, William and John Browne, emigrated to the colony during the 1840s. Using their inheritance they financed the establishment of several pioneering pastoral runs on South Australia's 'Waste Lands of the Crown'. They hired young energetic managers with half-share interests in the runs they managed.

*"...men who probably could never have advanced beyond ordinary circumstances, become in a few years possessed of great wealth"*

William Jessop 1862

The Browne brothers' investments yielded good returns. They purchased property all over South Australia. In one year, they were the colony's biggest exporters of wool to Britain.

Scottish and Irish immigrants provided labour on the early runs. Married couples proved more reliable than single men. Cooks, blacksmiths and storekeepers lived and worked on the head stations. Shepherds, stockmen, woodcutters and hut builders ranged across the vast properties. Teamsters carried produce and stores between the runs and trading centres.

Fortunes were made and lost on the early pastoral runs of the Flinders Ranges. The industry was troubled by high cartage costs, a shortage of labour, recurrent droughts, conflict with Aborigines, lack of fencing materials, stock losses to Dingoes and a dramatic loss of land condition from overstocking. The Great Drought of 1864 – 66 brought the infant pastoral industry to its

knees, forcing many lessees to abandon their runs.

After the Great Drought, an inquiry into the effects of drought on the Northern Pastoral Runs was commissioned. Minimum stocking rates were re-evaluated and levies reduced. Pastoral leases were increased from 14 to 21 years. For the first time pastoralists were provided with incentives to carry out improvements and manage stock more sustainably. When wire arrived on the runs in the 1870's, pastoralists began to erect internal fences. They could then divide their flocks and herds, rest paddocks and better manage their springs and bores.

Today the pastoral community can draw on 150 years of experience. Science, technology and an evolving wisdom shaped by the land, now guide the pastoral industry in the Flinders Ranges.



## LEASES AND LESSEES

Wilpena Station was a working station for 135 years. In the 1860s the run covered more than 800 square miles (2070 square kilometres). Wilpena Pound became a separate lease in 1899. In 1923 the station was carved up into five separate leases. What had been the Homestead Paddock, became the new Wilpena Station, comprising 58 square miles (93 square kilometres). In 1988 the Wilpena Station Lands were added to the Flinders Ranges National Park.

1851	Waste Lands of the Crown Lease (Pastoral) No 84 (154 square miles)	Henry Strong Price
1853	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 84	WJ & JH Browne
1855	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 84	Henry Strong Price
1868	New 20 year leases issued Pastoral Lease No 1590 (825 square miles)	Henry Strong Price & WJ & JH Browne
1889	New leases issued Pastoral Lease No 76	Henry Strong Price & WJ & JH Browne
1889	Wilpena Pound excised as a separate lease No 76A	
1889	The death of Henry Strong Price	
1892	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 72	John Maslin
1900	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 72	George Atkinson
1902	New Pastoral Lease No 932	JP Lewis
1914	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 932	HA Lewis
1920	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 932	JP Lewis
1922	Wilpena Pound proclaimed a Forest Reserve	
1923	Wilpena Station auctioned as five separate leases	
1924	Wilpena Head Station Pastoral Lease No 1504 (58 square miles)	George W Hunt
1928	Transfer of Pastoral Lease No 1504	EA & PV Scott
1931	New Pastoral Lease No 1631	George W Hunt
1945	Wilpena Pound proclaimed a Reserve for a National Pleasure Resort	
1985	Purchase of Pastoral Lease No 1631 by the South Australian Government	
1988	Wilpena Station Lands added to the Flinders Ranges National Park	

## HENRY STRONG PRICE PIONEERING THE WILPENA RUN

Wealthy investors and ambitious young managers shaped the early pastoral industry of the young colony. English doctors William and John Browne, financed the Wonoka, Arkaba, Wilpena and Aroona runs. To each new manager they offered a half share interest, a powerful incentive to expand the runs.

Henry Strong Price managed the Wilpena Run for three years. He then sold his share back to his financiers. But in 1855 Price returned as manager and sole lessee of the much expanded Wilpena Run. He paid £ 40 400 for the 825 square mile (2136 square kilometres) run.

Eager to grow his investment, Price increased his stock of sheep and cattle. Around 33 790 sheep were shorn on the Wilpena Run in 1864.

The Far North was devastated by drought from 1864 – 66. Tens of thousands of sheep, cattle, horses and working bullocks perished. Remote mining settlements, dependent upon teamsters and their bullocks for supplies, were abandoned. Over 20 000 sheep and

2000 cattle died on the Wilpena Run during what has been called the Great Drought.

In 1867 Henry Strong Price addressed an Inquiry into the impacts of drought on the Northern Runs. *"I now consider my run greatly overstocked, but I did not before ..."*

The carrying capacity for the Wilpena Run had originally been set at 120 000 sheep. Price advised that the minimum stocking rates, upon which rents were based, were much too high. He thought that a safe stocking rate for the run would be 20 000 sheep.

Through bitter experience Price now understood that he would have to manage his stock differently. Three hundred miles of internal fencing was erected on the Wilpena Run. Paddocks could then be shut off to stock and feed held in reserve.

After the drought Price again went into partnership with the Browne brothers. He travelled extensively across Eyre Peninsula assisting with the management of other runs, until his death in 1889.





## THE HUNT FAMILY LAST AND LONGEST LESSEE OF WILPENA STATION

A widely travelled surveyor, George Hunt senior could find no other place in South Australia that appealed to him more than Wilpena. When the expansive but neglected Wilpena Station was carved up into several lots in 1923, he applied for the lease of the 58 square mile Wilpena "Homestead Paddock". With his young son George, who had just finished school, George senior surveyed the boundary and internal fences of the new station with compass and chain.

There was much work to be done on the neglected property before the Hunts could run stock. Rabbits and wild dogs had to be controlled. Fences were down and needed repair. Springs were choked and had to be cleared out, and pipes, troughs and tanks installed. The Hunts began with 300 head of cattle. Gradually they built up sheep numbers, running 2700 sheep plus lambs in an average year.

The homestead and outbuildings were also in a neglected state in 1924. Repairs were needed before the men could move into the homestead. The worst of the outbuildings, including a Men's Kitchen and the original Shearers Quarters, were demolished. Surviving buildings were stabilised, repaired and maintained. George Hunt senior retired to

Adelaide and young George took over management of the station. His sister would visit and reprovision the house. She would take the washing into nearby Sliding Rock. After washing the clothes she would spread them over the rocks to dry while she bathed in the soft spring water.

In 1941 George married Elizabeth Spafford. They had three children, two daughters and a son, George junior.



The Hunts piped water from the springs in Wilpena Pound to the homestead and five kilometres beyond to water stock. They also installed large capacity rainwater tanks at the



homestead. With good water laid on they established vegetable gardens, an orchard and a large European style homestead garden that was revered throughout the district.

In 1985 the Hunts sold Wilpena Station and left the district, continuing grazing in central NSW. George Hunt had spent 61 years on Wilpena Station. In 1988 the Wilpena Station Lands were added to the Flinders Ranges National Park.

## WILPENA EATING AND ACCOMMODATION HOUSE

Everyone stopped at the homesteads scattered along the Far North Road in the 1850s. Teamsters, exploration parties, travellers, prospectors, drovers, government officials, all relied upon homestead hospitality. Stock were watered and depastured, travellers were accommodated and fed, all at the host's expense.

Traffic increased as mines began to open in the North Flinders. Disturbed by the frequency of travellers wanting food, provisions and depasturing for stock, the managers of the runs gave their support to the establishment of eating houses. From 1862 accommodation or 'eating houses' were built on the runs along the Far North Road.

Eating houses were usually located a few kilometres from the homesteads and about a day's journey apart. The small settlements provided meals and beds for travellers, stables or yards for stock, a store and often a blacksmith's shop for repairs. Some had liquor licences. Change stations with fresh horse teams were also found in dry country between eating houses.

In 1862, the manager of the Wilpena Run, Henry Price, approved a small settlement three kilometres east of the homestead. Irishman John Kirwan ran the Wilpena Eating and Accommodation House.

In 1872, Kirwan moved over the range to Edeowie, leaving his son Richard and wife to run the business. John Kirwan became the storekeeper at Edeowie and died soon after in 1873. He is buried on Edeowie Station.

With the coming of the railway in 1881, travellers began to move up the western side of the ranges. Business slowed for the old eating houses and most had closed their doors by 1890.

Henry Tilbrook travelled by coach to start work on the Oraparinna Run in 1865. He recorded in his journal: *"By nightfall we arrived at Wilpena Eating House... Several pine huts stood there ... all in good trim on this my first visit to them..."*

Later that evening the young overseer was driven out of his bed and back into the coach by bed bugs.

▼ Wilpena Eating House



## EXPLORING OLD WILPENA STATION

1

### Blacksmith's Cottage



Old photographs, journal entries and heritage surveys have revealed that several huts were built during the establishment years on the Wilpena Run. Only the Blacksmith's Cottage and Bookkeeper's Hut remain. Built in 1864, the Blacksmith's Cottage was listed as Bedroom 3 in 1888, when it was valued at £28 15s 2d (\$57). It has been variously known as Hut No 1, the Fencers Hut, the Bath House and the Honey Hut.

A pug and pine construction, the Blacksmith's Cottage was cement-rendered by the Hunt family after they acquired the Wilpena Lease. Early recognition of the heritage value of the Wilpena Station outbuildings, and regular maintenance for more than half a century by the Hunt family has ensured the survival of several early station buildings.

*The maintenance requirements of pug and pine buildings are high. The pug crumbles away over time leaving gaps between the upright pine slabs. Once exposed to the elements, buildings begin to deteriorate. Although native pine is naturally termite-resistant, it also requires protection over time when used as a building timber.*

There is no established pathway around the Old Wilpena Station site. Entrance is along the station track that crosses the creek. Disabled access is via the footbridge below the car park. A suggested route is offered on the guide map in the front of this booklet. The sites are numbered 1–12 as a sequence that you may choose to follow. The Living with Land Interpretive Trail begins opposite the car park.

There are two sign sets at Old Wilpena Station. Discreetly placed stone plinths provide information about each building. Signs are located at ground level near the doorways.

#### ▼ One of the information plinths



Larger interpretive signs define the Living With Land Interpretive Trail. Most of the signs will be found on native pine and recycled pipe mounts. Others, such as the signs in the Blacksmith's Shop, Homestead Garden and Motor Lodge, have purpose-built mounts, in which clever use has been made of recycled materials.

2

### Cornerpost and Stockyards



There were few fences on the early runs. Sheep were shepherded by day and held in brush hurdle pens at night. Cattle ranged across station boundaries and were returned during mustering. Horses were left to roam at night in search of food.

Stockyards were built from red gum and native pine, the termite-resistant pine favoured over the native hardwood. In the Home Paddock at Wilpena, timber stockyards were constructed around an old gnarled red gum. The tree served as a substantial cornerpost for several pens. The timber stockyards are gone but the old gum remains with rails attached.

An adept improviser, George Hunt built new stockyards in the Home Paddock using recycled water pipe. In 2002 the rails of the rusting stockyards were replaced with steel pipe.

3

### Blacksmith's Shop



The blacksmith's shop or 'Smithy' was the hub of activity on the early runs. The blacksmith repaired carts, wagons and drays. He made tools, wheels, nails, horseshoes, gates, well-buckets and domestic utensils. The blacksmith's services were indispensable.

The original Wilpena Blacksmith's Shop is no longer standing. In 1888 it was described as a pug and pine building in fair condition. It had an iron and shingle roof, a rubble masonry forge and gum benches. It was valued at £16 15s (\$35).

A larger Blacksmith's Shop was built in 1921 near the site of the original 'Smithy'. Well preserved, the standing 'Smithy' is of a rubble masonry construction, with a galvanised iron roof on a native pine frame. It has distinctive corrugated iron saloon doors. No trace remains of a cart shed that was attached to the building.





4

## Stables and Harness Room



For more than a century horses shaped life on the pastoral runs of the Flinders Ranges. Horses carried explorers, settlers and stockmen into the Far North. They pack-saddled stores, hauled drays, pulled carts and carriages, and delivered mail.

*"We were dependent on horses for all work" wrote Frederick Hayward, manager of the neighbouring Aroona run in the 1850's.*

Built in 1862, the Stables and Harness Room were rescued by volunteers in 1999. Urgently needed restoration work was funded by the Friends of the Flinders Ranges National Park. Close inspection of the drop-slab walls will reveal differences in slab preparation. Some slabs have been adzed, others cut by chainsaw. Timbers from the original Wilpena homestead have been recycled. In the Stables, mallee stalls and native pine rails endure but the original shingle roof had been replaced by 1888 when the building was valued at £32 (\$64).



5

## Wilpena Cemetery



Located a short distance from the homestead and huts, in a small stand of native pine, is the Wilpena Station cemetery. Only two marked graves survive. However it is thought that at least three other unmarked graves rest beneath the bulbs that cover the ground in spring.

An impressive headstone marks the grave of an early Wilpena Station manager. James Smith Clarke died suddenly aged only 38 years.

A simple slate headstone bears the name of Henry Ryan. It is said that Henry Ryan was an Aboriginal child. However, a blacksmith named Henry Daniel Ryan married Caroline Kirwan, the daughter of John Kirwan, proprietor of the Wilpena Eating and Accommodation House. Station manager James Clarke, witnessed the Ryan's marriage at Wilpena in 1864. It is more likely that the blacksmith, or perhaps his son, is buried in the Wilpena cemetery. Other members of the Ryan family are probably buried at Wilpena.

## The Store



There were few towns in the Far North before the 1870s. Teamsters spent months on the tracks, hauling produce and supplies between the remote runs and distant trading centres such as Melrose and Burra.

Supplies were purchased in bulk and held in stores on the runs. Early travellers relied upon station stores to replenish their provisions. Shepherds, stockmen and farm labourers received rations as part of their employment 'package' well into the twentieth century.

Recalling the store on the Wonoka Run in 1856, Robert Bruce later wrote: *"Everything in that storehouse was of the large, wholesale order..."*

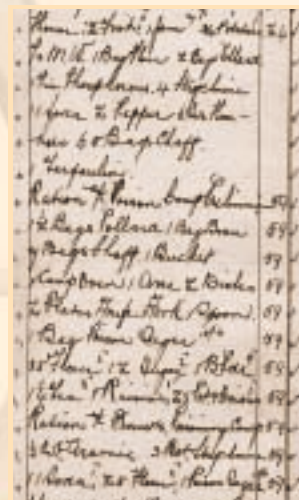
A rubble masonry building, the Wilpena Store was built in 1862. It is one of very few two-storey station buildings in the Flinders Ranges. The store was windowless; the dark, cool interior optimised conditions for the prolonged storage of food. The original thatched roof has survived, and is laced to roofing timbers with cowhide thonging. It has been covered for more than a century by a galvanised iron roof.

The upper floor was destroyed by fire and replaced in 1899. Twenty years later it had been eaten away

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by termites and was not replaced. Steps leading to the upper floor, were later removed by George Hunt. The loading bay was renovated in 1998 with a grant secured by the Friends of the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Trying to protect bulk supplies from vermin was a constant challenge for early storekeepers. Goods were regularly spoiled by ants, mice and weevils. A novel approach was tried at Wilpena - the store has suspended vermin-proof shelving.



The Wilpena Store Book provides an inventory of stock from 1902 - 1906. It also records the names of stockmen and farm labourers employed on the station, wages paid, rations distributed and goods purchased.

Regular entries appear for the 'Poison Camp'. Rations of flour, sugar and tea were allocated together with arsenic, strychnine, soda, poison sugar and chaff.





When European settlers arrived here in 1851, the lives of Adnyamathanha people changed forever. This art space, developed in collaboration between the Adnyamathanha (pronounced ad-na-mut-na) community and the Department for Environment and Heritage, interprets the impact of settlement and pastoralism on the Adnyamathanha. It explores our shared history and seeks to acknowledge the past, in the hope that our future together might be one of greater understanding and respect.

The installation sits on culturally important land at a site selected by the community. Here the Adnyamathanha share some of their stories. They remind us that they had an ancient culture before settlement. They describe what their people went through during settlement. And they celebrate their survival – 'we are still here'. Adnyamathanha sense of identity and ancestry remains strong. Adnyamathanha say they belong to their land, not that the land belongs to them.

This sculpture has been named Ikara - the meeting place. The two dominant forms represent two akurras (Dreamtime serpents) whose bodies form the walls of Wilpena Pound. The fluid akurra represents the Adnyamathanha approach to living with land. The flat-topped akurra represents the European approach to living on land.

The large stone block, quarried from a local creek bed, represents the way European settlers took control of the land, carving it up into separate land-holdings defined by rigid boundaries.

The story grid made from locally sourced slate, captures the voices of Adnyamathanha Elders who speak about family, land, traditional life, loss, the way ahead. The cracked earth, horseshoes, fencing wire and cross symbolise the dramatic changes to traditional Adnyamathanha life after pastoralists settled the Flinders Ranges - a new religion, fenced land and the arrival of hard-hoofed animals that were to destroy the traditional indigenous economy.



Indigenous Australians have the longest continuous surviving civilisation in the world. Each community has Dreaming stories that describe their origins and explain the formation of the landscape. Like all indigenous groups Adnyamathanha speak only for their Country.

The three stone engravings on the outside perimeter of the circle are symbolic interpretations of Adnyamathanha Dreaming, or Muda. Only appropriate Adnyamathanha community members can share the Muda. The stories have several layers of meaning and explore the spirit world, rules for living and caring for the land.



Ikara - the meeting place was developed over three years by a small, dedicated team. The Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) appointed community representatives to work closely with Department for Environment and Heritage staff, the artist Tony Rosella, a landscape architect and a project adviser.

Ikara was launched on 28 April 2007 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum that gave Aboriginal people full citizenship rights.



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### Bookkeeper's Hut and Motor House

Built in 1853 the Bookkeeper's Hut and Motor Lodge are the oldest surviving buildings on Old Wilpena Station. Both have had several uses, reflecting the needs of the time. Valued at £35 11s 8d (\$71) in 1888, the Bookkeeper's Hut was then a Bachelors Hall kitchen serving the adjacent Bachelors Hall. It later became the paymaster's office, the Station office, and the mail contractor's sleeping quarters. The Bookkeepers Hut appears in the Australian films 'The Rabbit Proof Fence' and 'One Night the Moon'.

The original thatch survives in the Bookkeeper's Hut beneath a galvanised iron roof. The unusual herringbone patterned floor was laid by John Wilson, a carpenter who is believed to have jumped ship. The building was restored in 2002.

The Motor House was used as sleeping quarters for farm labourers until it was adapted for use as a garage in the early twentieth century.



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### Pet Cemetery



In one corner of the Homestead Garden is the Pet Cemetery. Inspired by a visit to the Tower of London where she found a little cemetery commemorating the Tower's pets, Betty Hunt brought the idea back to Wilpena Station.

The lives of the Hunt's working dogs Bindii, Mouche, Tim, Stumpy and Waif and cats Felix and Spiegel are honoured with small inscribed cement plaques.

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### Homestead Garden



Reliable water, a sheltered position and deeper than average soils for the region, enabled pastoralists to establish orchards and gardens at Old Wilpena Station.

Bruce describes the garden on the Wilpena Run in 1856 as:

*"... a fair garden of figs, melons and others ... for being situated almost at the level of creekbed, tree and melon roots could reach down to moist earth ..."*

The last and longest lessees George and Betty Hunt, created a garden at Wilpena that was renowned throughout the Flinders Ranges for its old-world charm and productivity. Flower beds were filled with day lilies, hyacinths, canterbury bells, blue bells, tiger lilies, daffodils, iris, freesias, snowdrops, belladonnas, and lavender. Wisteria rambled over the pergola.

The Hunts grew pears, apples, oranges, grapefruit, apricots, quinces, nectarines, loquats, persimmons, grapes and vegetables.

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### Garage and Battery Room



Built in the early 1930s, the garage sits on the site of Old Wilpena Station's first 'Government House'. Stone from the chimneys of demolished buildings was used in the construction of the garage.

A rubble masonry building with a corrugated iron roof, the garage was added to a freestanding cottage that had been built at the end of the original homestead about 1921. The cottage was retained and converted for use as the Battery Room. A radio communications tower now stands alongside the old Freelite tower on 'Freelite Hill'.

The Battery Room housed the station lighting plant for more than fifty years. A bank of batteries stored energy generated by a wind-powered Freelite. The Freelite, a tower with a three-bladed propeller, was mounted on the hill behind the homestead, known to locals as 'Freelite Hill'. Diesel generators replaced wind-dependent Freelites from the late 1950s.

Computerised hybrid systems that combine solar power technology with diesel generation, are now being installed on stations. The hybrid systems are delivering continuous power to homesteads and workshops.



## Wilpena Homestead



Humble or elegant, the main residence on the early runs was known as 'Government House'. In the 1850s 'Government House' was typically a small pug and pine hut. Posts, rafters and battens were cut from local native pine. Walls were built using upright posts, often split and pugged with gravel, mud and lime mortar. Native grass or reed thatch was used to roof the huts. Most huts had rubble stone chimneys and some had flagstone floors.

William Jessop visited the Wilpena Run in 1859. Invited to the 'sundown meal' in the manager's residence he was to observe:

*"The most conspicuous thing in it ... was a huge fireplace, which, being ten feet long by seven feet high, and seven feet deep, was capable of consuming enormous trunks and stumps of trees..."*

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A stone residence was built soon after 1860. Later, in 1888 the Wilpena Homestead was described as a substantial five-roomed stone house with French windows, calico ceilings, a stone cellar, shingle-roofed verandahs, and a detached pine kitchen. The kitchen was in fact the original Government House, which survived until the early 1930s. The homestead was given an 1888 valuation of £403 4d (\$806), excluding the verandahs.

The Wilpena Homestead has undergone many modifications. Following the marriage of George and Betty Hunt in 1941, several new rooms were added. A kitchen, sunroom, office and schoolroom almost doubled the floor area of the homestead. The ceilings were lowered and the cellar filled in.

The Department for Environment and Heritage has funded extensive homestead renovations. Water and termite damaged building materials were replaced or restored. Ceilings were returned to their original height. The cellar was excavated by the Friends of the Flinders Ranges National Park.

'Government House' is now used as the operational headquarters for the Flinders Ranges National Park.

▼ The original 'Wilpena Government House' built c.1853



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## SPIRITS OF ENDURANCE - THE GREAT GUMS



Harold Cazneau was deeply moved by the River Red Gums of the Flinders Ranges. The Sydney photographer visited Wilpena in 1937. His most celebrated image the 'Spirit of Endurance', was inspired by a single great gum, now known as the Cazneau Tree.

But for the early settlers, the gums were timber trees. They were felled by fence-builders and milled in local sawpits above creeks. Fencers cut out posts and used the residue for firewood. Trunks and large boughs were adzed and used as water troughs.

Red gum was not used widely as a building timber on the early runs. Although a dense hardwood, red gum is not termite-resistant. Hut-builders preferred to use the softer but naturally termite-resistant native pine.

Not all early settlers were blind to the magnificence of the great gums that lined the watercourses of the Flinders Ranges. After visiting the Arkaba Run in 1856, Robert Bruce was to write in his reminiscences: *"What a glorious place that Arkaba Creek was in the summer time before the ruthless cross-cut saw of the fencers laid low so many of its ... giants..."*

Imposing tall red gums still trace the regions watercourses. Although many were lost during the early settlement years, a striking complement of gnarled old giants with their flared and hollowed bases have survived along Wilpena Creek. Scattered through the Wilpena Pound campground and at Old Wilpena Station are some of the finest examples of River Red Gums to be found in the Flinders Ranges.

No longer harvested, the great gums have become part of the spiritual language of the land. They inspire, inform and invite reflection.

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