

# KAPUNDA HISTORY MURAL

This mural is a re-imagining of an original community art project completed in December 2002 and displayed on a building where the Town Square is now. The original artwork comprised images painted on plywood cutouts which were fixed to the building wall. These reflect some of the town's past and present. (see photo below)

The mural remained in place for 18 years until 2020. after which the Kapunda Mural Town Committee undertook this replacement project which was completed in March 2023. Not all the images are the same as the original but they reflect the same story, from Kapunda's Aboriginal heritage to the turn of the 21st century.

## Reference to the images and their significance

1. Prior to European settlement in the region for grazing in 1838 the **Ngadjuri people** inhabited the rolling landscape of hills and waterways, living alongside the native flora and fauna. They are pictured by the waterhole at the town's Davidson Reserve which incorporates a later addition of a board walk. Many permanent waterholes are fed by springs from which the town name 'Kapunda' was derived, from the aboriginal word 'Cappie Oonda' meaning 'water jump up'.  
The beautiful migratory **Rainbow Bee-eater** takes flight while a local lady of yesteryear soaks up the natural environment. The **aerial map** depicts 650 square kilometres of land grazed at the time of the discovery of copper in 1842 and the subsequent development of a town.  
The simplistic images of birds, animals, plane and wheelbarrow were traced from the original mural cutouts made by **school children** in 2002.
2. **Francis Dutton and Charles Bagot** observe their discovery of copper in 1842, which led to the development of Australia's first significant mining town. They are superimposed over the image of the mine site as it was when finally abandoned as a non-productive mine in 1969. (Currently (2022/23) the in-situ extraction by injection method with minimal overburden is being investigated with a view to reopening the mine site.) A hand holds an impression of an 1845 painting by **S.T. Gill** in front of the mine chimney.

3. The landscape is changing as vegetation is cleared to make way for **dry land farming**. The **Irish women** of Baker's Flat are seen defending their squatters' rights from the police, while most of their husbands are at work at the nearby mine site.
4. **Ross Creek Bridge**, built of stone in 1869 survives today in good condition on the outskirts of town.
5. **Isabel Kidman** waves goodbye to husband **Sidney** from outside their home 'Erings' as he embarks on one of his treks into Australia's inland, where he built a huge cattle empire covering four states. His horse sales, the largest in the world, were held in Kapunda.
6. Political speeches to residents from the balcony of the North Kapunda Hotel were common. In the 1893 state elections, serious conflict between rival electors resulted in the only time the **Riot Act** (threat of individual prosecution) has been enacted in Australia. It was read to the rioting masses by police from the balcony of the hotel in the centre of town.

9. **Hawke and Co.** foundry, engineers and manufacturers, 1857 to 1983. This innovative company operated for 126 years and it has been said that overall it was more beneficial to the town than the copper mine. Amongst their famous products were the cast iron lace works depicted here and still evident on many houses in Kapunda. The girl on the **1920's motorcycle** and side car depicts a very common mode of transport for the 1930's & 40's.
10. **Rawady's Deli** and General Store operated by three generous and fun loving brothers for 53 years (1939 to 1992). From left: Reg, Brian and Eli were icons of the town, much loved and honoured. Those in need were silently assisted by the brothers who also cooked, baked and made deliveries on a bicycle in the early days.
11. **J.T. Johnson & Sons**, producers of stock food products began at nearby Stockport in 1923 and moved to Kapunda in 1957. Kapunda is one of the finest hay growing areas in Australia and Johnson's export hay, stock pellets and horse products nationally and around the world. As at 2023 they are the biggest employer in the town.

12. This circa 1920 scene takes in **Main Street** looking east from where the Community Church is now. A **Kapunda Celtic Festival** was a feature on the town's calendar from 1976 to 2013, however its origins date back to the 1800's when Kapunda's Celtic community celebrated St Patrick's Day. Celtic referred to those who spoke the Celt language which can today be heard in Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man and Brittany.

The pageant is led by the **town crier**, followed by a young **Celtic dancer**.

**Vivian Bullwinkle** (1915-2000) was a famous and highly decorated Nurse of WWII who survived the 1942 Bangka Island massacre and Japanese prisoner of war camps in Singapore. She was born in Kapunda. At a young age Vivian moved to Broken Hill with her parents where she later started her nursing training.

A **cameleer** joins the parade, while a couple show off traditional **Celtic costume** and the **Elizabeth Pipe Band** sounds the pageant atmosphere. The **Kapunda Harness Racing Club** was formed in 1945 and is one of the few South Australian clubs still operating as at 2023.



7. A **girls' reformatory** was operated by the Catholic Church from 1897 until 1909. It was started by Mother Mary McKillop (now a Saint). It was operated by nuns. The copper wire shapes represent the graffiti artwork found on the wall in one of the reformatory cells. The miniature fire place represents the demolished ruins of the reformatory (no longer there). These two elements are survivors of the original mural.
8. From 1855 to 1933 there were several **flour mills** in the town. This flour store, built on the corner of Mildred and High Street in 1860 has since been demolished. **Stock auctions** are still held in the town, with farmers now running sheep hand in hand with crop farming.

## Acknowledgements

**This Mural:** Started in November 2020 and was completed in March 2023, it comprised 870 voluntary hours to do the artwork and interpretive sign. Principal artist was Tony Hersey, assisted by Maxine Donald and Jon Povey, all of whom are members of the Kapunda Community Gallery. The frame and installation was done by local businessman Brenton Diener.

**Original project:** (2002) Outstanding community input involved 25 artists working on the mural, 60 on banners and signs, funding from eight sources and in-kind support from 18 other local organizations and individuals. Local lady Jan Harman coordinated the overall project with artwork assistance by professional artists John Turpie and Siv Grava from Elliston. Elaine Gardner and Zoran Krstic worked with adults and children to produce street banners and signage to complement the mural.

### Mural Town Committee

In 2016, with a vision to make Kapunda a 'mural town' a committee was formed to instigate, promote and find funding for projects such as this. Much of the work is voluntary with invaluable support from sponsors, the Light Regional Council plus some grant funding.

Other murals in the town have been promoted in a brochure which is available from the **Visitor Information Centre** or the **Kapunda Community Gallery**. The Information Centre is situated with the library at the front of this building and the Gallery is on the next corner further south on Main Street.

A Project of  
Kapunda  
Mural Town  
Committee

## The Keeper of History

Just as this mural plays a part in recounting and bringing to life the history of Kapunda, so have town identities such as Peter Swann a born, bred and lived 'Kapunda-ite'.

At the time of installing the mural Peter was 84 years of age. Following a career as a fitter and turner including time in the works section for Kapunda Council. Peter was involved in several community activities but his biggest passion was the fire service. He spent 56 years in various roles at local, state and national levels, culminating in receiving the AFSM (Australian Fire Service Medal), which Peter claims as his proudest amongst his many community awards.

Currently and for many years Peter has been Kapunda's keeper of history and the go-to man for anyone looking for historic information of the area. Peter claims he is not an historian but more a collector of information, photos and maps, dating back to 1886.

Many historic documents have been compiled by Peter on different aspects of the town and he has written one book called 'Kapunda and the Mary Mackillop Connection'. He has also researched the hard-to-decipher, hand written pen and ink registers of the Catholic Churches in Kapunda dating back to St. John's Church built in the 1850's. Of particular interest was the St. John's Cemetery which he also researched and recorded. As a result enquiries come from all over Australia and overseas from people looking to trace their ancestors.

Indeed Peter has also assisted through his knowledge and photo library, to produce this Kapunda History Mural. He continues to maintain his contribution as a valuable resource for the town.



Peter Swann in his C.F.S. dress uniform in 1999

Sign compiled and artwork by Tony Hersey and printed by Barossa Digital Print & Signs (February 2023)  
Every effort has been made to ensure all information is accurate



This is a photo of the original History Mural (2002) as it was created on cutout plywood sheets fixed to a wall opposite the North Kapunda Hotel.

