

Wallaroo Historical Driving Trail

In 1857 when Walter Watson Hughes became the new lessee of a 104 square mile section of land he called the property "Walla-waroo", a distortion of the Narungga aboriginal "Wadla-waru", meaning wallaby urine. "Walla-waroo" eventually was shortened to Wallaroo as it was too long to stamp on wool bales. Discoveries of copper at nearby locations led to a decision to build a smelting works in the town, and because Wallaroo was a natural deep harbour, a site was chosen near the seafront for the smelting works. Ore from both the Wallaroo Mines (closer to Kadina than Wallaroo) and Moonta Mines was smelted from 1861 until the closure of the mines in 1923. The smelting works employed a large number of Welsh smelter men which gave the town a distinctive Welsh flavour, as the Welsh language was used in the town for many years. The smelter eventually became the largest smelting complex in the southern hemisphere. By 1868 over 100 tonnes was being produced each week. You may also notice the square chimney of Hughes Chimney Stack the only example left in Wallaroo built by the Welsh Stonemasons—a difference to the round ones in Moonta Mines which were built by the Cornish Stonemasons.

From 1861 until 1923, Wallaroo was the port for the mineral produce of the miners of Australia's Little Cornwall. (Moonta and Kadina so named due the large number of miners from Cornwall) The first jetty was constructed in 1861 as part of the contract to build a tramway to the Wallaroo Mine. The port soon became one of the busiest in the state as ships brought cargoes of timber, coal, machinery and food supplies and left laden with copper ore and ingots and later wool and wheat. Until the establishment of lead smelters at Port Pirie in the 1890s, it was the principal port on Spencer Gulf. First small ketches and



schooners found their way into improbable harbours then came glorious windjammers, steamships and finally the towering bulk carriers which now grace the Spencer Gulf horizon. Because the bulk and tonnage of the regions commodities is so high, shipping is essential to livestock, grain and mineral based industries. The Shipping story led to the fine jetties, which grace our coastline and provide a mecca for visitors and locals alike. The Wallaroo Heritage and Nautical Museum keep the legends and stories alive for all to enjoy.

By 1865, the population of Wallaroo was about 3000 people. This increased to 4000 by the early 1900s and reached a peak of about 5000 residents in the early 1920s. When the smelting works closed after 62 years of continuous operation, it had a major impact on the local community. Hundreds left the town; some gravitated to agriculture and others to the wharf or the chemical works. The population of Wallaroo today is more than 4,000 people. With many more over holiday periods.

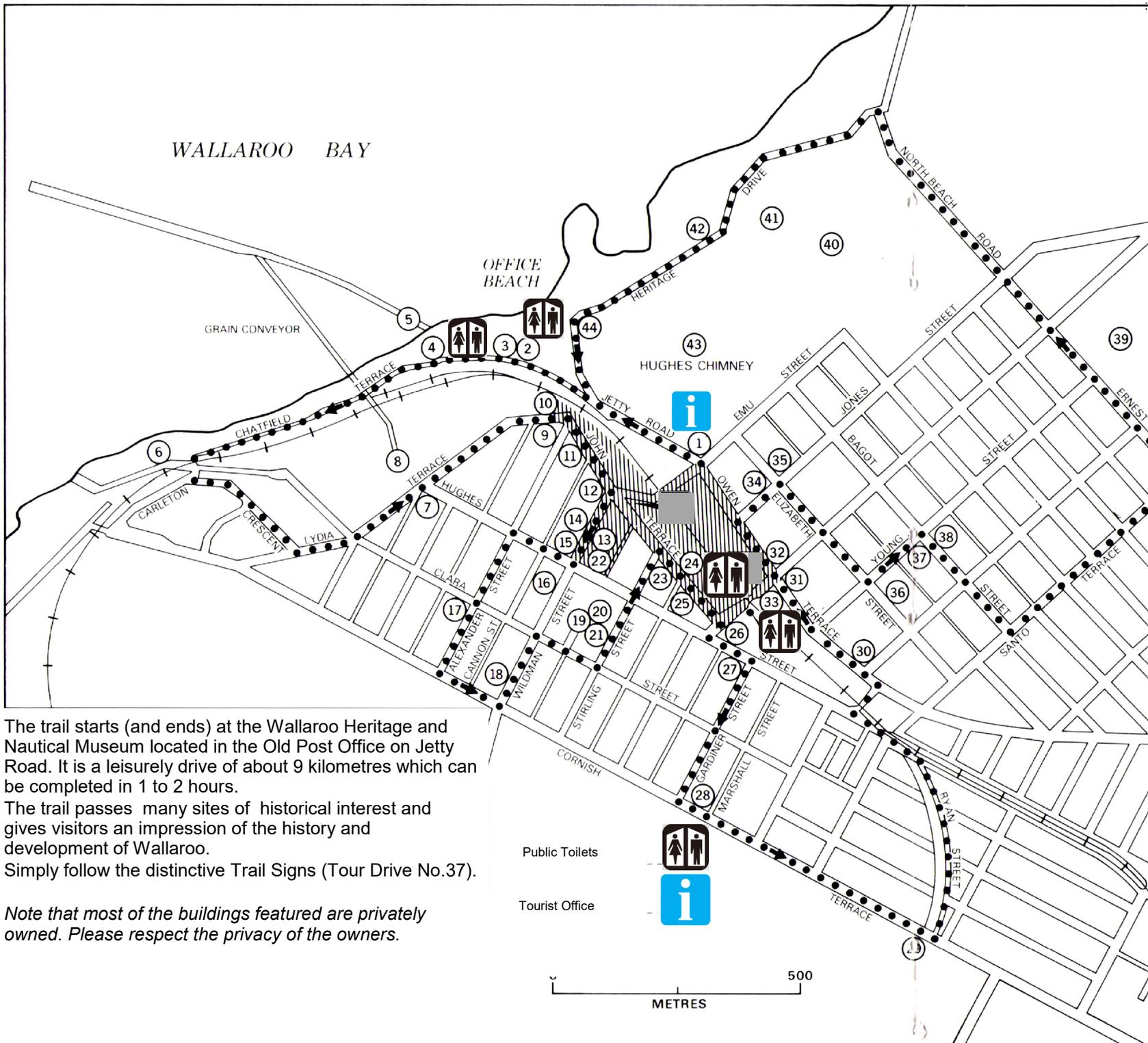
Murals can be found on the sides of some of the buildings, at the museum and also along the old railway station platform providing a snapshot of many of the highlights of the areas history.

Wallaroo today has family friendly white sandy beaches in Office Beach and the Sailing Club Beach which are both in Wallaroo township then the large expansive, North Beach which is able to be driven down on to and is perfect for family games of cricket, kite flying or just relaxing and enjoying the view. Wallaroo remains a commercial port with ships coming in to collect the grains grown on the Yorke Peninsula, in particular wheat and barley and is home to the Spencer Gulf prawn fleet. Wallaroo also hosted its first cruise ship season in 2019-20 when CMV's Vasco Da Gama visited with its more than 1200 passengers and 600 crew.



N
WALLAROO HERITAGE TRAIL

WALLAROO BAY



1. Old Post Office-1865
2. Assay Office -1873
3. Customs House-1862
4. Railway Office-1868
5. Jetty-1927
6. Price's Café-c.1880
7. Kirribili House-c.1862
8. Silo Complex-1957
9. Court House-1866
10. Smelting Works Lookout
11. Police Station and Residence-1862
12. Weeroona Hotel-1861
13. Coffee Palace-1908
14. Waterside Workers Hall-c.1902
15. Early Shops-c.1870
16. Davies Square-1861
17. Wallaroo Hotel-1862
18. Residence of Caroline Carleton-c.1870
19. Methodist Manse-1863
20. Primary School-1877
21. Methodist Church-1863
22. St Mary's Anglican Church-1864
23. Sonbern Lodge-1914
24. Railway Station-1914
25. Fire Station-1919
26. Town Hall-1902/1918
27. Prince Edward Hotel-1864
28. Early Cottage-c.1865
29. Site of Moonta Tramway-1866
30. Masonic Lodge-1914
31. Cornucopia Hotel -1862
32. National Bank-1888
33. Post Office-1910
34. Water Tank-c.1865
35. Wallaroo Times Office-c.1870
36. Lloyd Memorial Church-1866
37. St Joseph's Convent-1902
38. Kalori Catholic School-c.1865
39. Hospital-1943/1987
40. Fertilizer Works
41. Wallaroo Smelting Works-1861
42. Pump House and Dam-c.1870
43. Hughes Chimney-1861
44. Smelting Works Offices-c.1880

The trail starts (and ends) at the Wallaroo Heritage and Nautical Museum located in the Old Post Office on Jetty Road. It is a leisurely drive of about 9 kilometres which can be completed in 1 to 2 hours. The trail passes many sites of historical interest and gives visitors an impression of the history and development of Wallaroo. Simply follow the distinctive Trail Signs (Tour Drive No.37).

Note that most of the buildings featured are privately owned. Please respect the privacy of the owners.

Public Toilets 

Tourist Office 



*43 Follow the Wallaroo Copper Smelters (1861-1923) Trail highlighting the history of this Smelter, with seating and interpretive signs.