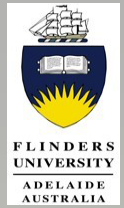




Delabole: A Cornish settlement and slate quarry in colonial South Australia

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A Hills Face Zone Cultural Heritage Project

BACKGROUND

Slate was first discovered near Willunga in 1840 by Mr E Loud, who quarried an outcrop on his property. A year or so later, Mr Daw opened a quarry east of Loud's quarry, which he named Delabole after the famous quarry in Cornwall. By 1850 there were five slate quarries manufacturing slate products in the Willunga area.

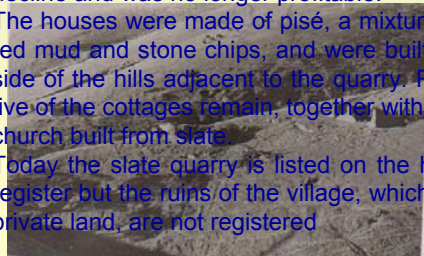
By 1868 twenty men were employed at the Delabole quarry and many lived in a small village adjacent to the quarry. The quarry produced slate tiles for rooves and floors, and a variety of products including water tanks and wine vats.

Slate from the Delabole quarry was used to roof the Adelaide GPO and Town Hall, the Legislative Council, the Bank of Adelaide, the University of Adelaide, the South Australian Museum and the Grote Street School.

Slate production reached its peak in the 1880's with 2 ships sailing each week from Port Willunga to Port Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney; but by the end of the nineteenth century the Delabole quarry had gone into a decline and was no longer profitable.

The houses were made of pisé, a mixture of the red mud and stone chips, and were built on the side of the hills adjacent to the quarry. Ruins of five of the cottages remain, together with a small church built from slate.

Today the slate quarry is listed on the heritage register but the ruins of the village, which are on private land, are not registered



Delabole houses in the 1970s



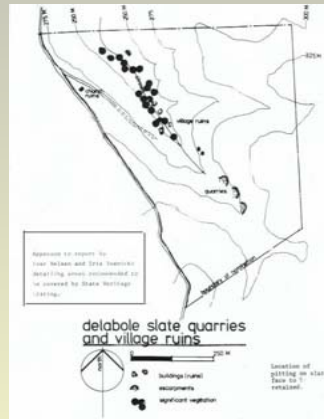
Slate Chapel



Overview of Delabole village



Sled for transporting slate



Plan of Delabole village and slate mine (Source: Heritage SA and Delabole site report.)



Well at the slate mine



Heritage listed quarry face



Examples of pisé house construction



The Delabole quarry

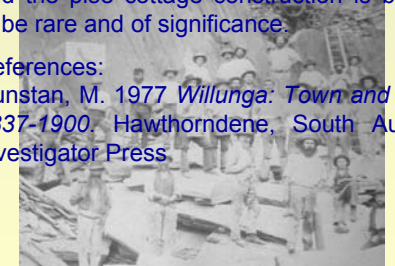
THE PROJECT

Aim: To document the Delabole ruins and quarry and to assess its heritage significance in order to argue that both the quarry and village form a unique cultural landscape and should be both listed on the South Australian State Heritage Register.

Method: A cultural landscape approach was used to analyse both the quarry and the village as an inter-related whole where the quarrymen and their families lived and worked. The history of Delabole was researched and the area was surveyed and documented.

Result: Delabole quarry and village is an example of an imported 19th century colonial landscape. The hierarchical plan of an English village is reflected in the plan of the village. The slate church is sited high on the hill, overlooking the village and the quarry. The foreman's house is below the church, overlooking the quarrymen's cottages and facing the quarry. The relationship between the features form a unique cultural landscape and the pisé cottage construction is believed to be rare and of significance.

References:
Dunstan, M. 1977 *Willunga: Town and District 1837-1900*. Hawthorndene, South Australia: Investigator Press



Delabole quarry staff, 1890s.