MAGNETIC HILL

SELF DRIVE TOUR • 44KMS • SUITABLE FOR 2WD

(Map of the self drive tour route)

- R M Williams Way
- Tank Hill Lookout
- **Orroroo**
- Pekina Reservoir
- Pekina Station Ruins
- Wynflete Ruins
- Goyders Line Monument
- **Pekina**
- **Black Rock**
- Black Rock Railway Bridge
- Price Maurice Road
- **Magnetic Hill**
- R M Williams Way

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Tank Hill Lookout
- Pekina Station Ruins
- Pekina Reservoir
- Goyders Line Monument
- Black Rock Railway Siding & Bridge

RECOMMENDED ROUTE

- Orroroo, Via Price Maurice Road
- Pekina
- Magnetic Hill
- Black Rock
- Orroroo

Pekina Creek Reservoir

The Pekina Creek Irrigation Scheme was one of the earliest irrigation schemes in South Australia, if not Australia. Irrigation was seen as a new opportunity to maintain local communities and economies. The irrigation technology was revolutionary, initially using sprinklers to apply water to the land, a new concept at that time. The scheme was first promoted in the 1880's during a time of contraction of agriculture in the north, after wheat farming had failed in times of low rainfall, as could be expected in a region 'outside' Goyder's line of rainfall.

The Pekina Irrigation System commenced in 1908, it took almost two years to construct using the "damp core method" with a possible capacity of 1,200 million litres. The reservoir originally held approximately 1,540 mega litres of water. The water was used to irrigate lucerne blocks, which fed up to 1000 dairy cattle on the Walloway Plain. Initially water was distributed by pipes and sprinklers to 40 ten-acre blocks. From 1925 the open channel scheme was adopted due to lack of rainfall and siltation of the reservoir. Over 60 years the capacity fell from 1,540 to 600 mega litres after thunderstorms in January 1941 filled the reservoir with silt, by 1973 the reservoir was abandoned.

Pekina Station Ruins

The first pastoralists to occupy the Orroroo district were the Chambers brothers, however, as no rain fell over the time they were there, they sold Pekina Run within 17 months to Price Maurice, who was then a young man of 28. Pekina Run went on to become one of the most profitable sheep runs in the colony from 1847. Conditions at Pekina were very rough and the homestead was a small dirt-floored hut with no chimney or door, poorly thatched with rushes, and far from rain proof, sheep yards were more of a priority. The sheep were kept in flocks of 1200 to 1500 with a shepherd and shepherd's huts were built from pine logs, thatch and stone chimney every few miles throughout Price Maurice's properties. Loss of stock due to wild dogs and thieving were consistent problems. By 1864, a valuation report itemised the property was carrying 50,000 sheep, 130 cattle and 70 horses. The improvements on the run comprised 25 pine, 3 gum slab, and 5 stone huts and yards, 12 of which were wire and 1 post and rail, 9 wells with water and 3 dry. At the head station, a substantial stone house, underground tank and offices; bachelors' hall and kitchen, men's kitchen, school, 4 pine huts, store and flour store, woolshed, stable, slaughter houses, fowl house, outhouses, cellar, smithy, cueing pen, drafting yards, cultivation and grazing paddocks, fenced, stock, horse and sheep yards, garden fence horse gear, windlass wells and a stone eating house. Total value of improvements, £5,968. At peak times almost 100 people were employed on the property.

Following the Strangways Land Resumptions Price Maurice simply walked off the Pekina Run around 1871 and left his stone homestead buildings and boiling down works to fall into ruin. The Pekina Run was broken up into smaller holdings of which 640 acres where the main homestead was located, was later occupied by John and Mary Northcott and seven sons, and they named it Pekina Park.

Goyders Monument

In 1865 Surveyor General George Woodroffe Goyder marked on the map of South Australia a line delineating drought affected country. The line which passes through this area became an important factor in settlement in this state being regarded as an indication of the limits of land considered suitable for agricultural development.

Orroroo receives on average only 325 mm of rain each year. This is typically spread over 79 days with approximately 286 days without rain. The story of Goyder's Line, and what it means, is fascinating. An article published in the *Adelaide Mail* in 1927 spelt out this remarkable and hugely important discovery. Here is an abridged version: "How by following the fringe of the saltbush zig-zag across South Australia from the Victorian border just below Peebinga, north to Melrose, south to Moonta, across Spencer's Gulf, and from Franklin Harbor to the Gawler Ranges, the late G. W.Goyder unerringly separated the land where the rainfall is good from that where it is poor is one of the romances of agricultural development in this State".

A dramatic expansion of early pioneers was seen following the opening of larger parcels of land. These emigrants from the south were largely the 'practical farmers' – the farmers whose experience would decide how far the wheat lands extended. However, not all those pressing at the frontiers were farmers, and the proportion of non-farmers increased the settlement spread further north.

Today, though much of the country outside the line has been brought into productivity owing to modern methods of cultivation, the imaginary boundary delineated by Goyder as long ago as 1865 is still recognised by the Lands and Survey office, and as regarded as an infallible guide by pastoralists.

Whatever agriculturalists may say about Goyder's line the fact remains that pastoralists still stand by it.

Pekina

The name of the town is thought to derive from the Aboriginal word for "creek water".

European settlement in the Pekina district began in earnest in 1846 when Price Maurice brought 3000 sheep to the district, and the township became a stopping-point for coaches on the run between Blinman and Burra. The region was settled by German and especially Irish migrant farmers. Problems with drought, rust and locusts in the 1880s meant the town grew slowly with only around 75 residents at the beginning of the 20th century.

Pekina's Irish Roman Catholic heritage has seen the district nicknamed "Vatican Valley". The first building in town was the Catholic Church, the larger existing impressive church was built in 1925.

The historic former Pekina Animal Pound which is listed on the South Australian Heritage Register, is a stone enclosure with a heavy wrought iron gate. The pound is a very rare and well-preserved example of an animal pound, once a part of the civic infrastructure of most rural communities.

Magnetic Hill

This is a well-known attraction because of its ability to make vehicles appear to run uphill. There are many differing opinions on this phenomenon, one being that it is simply an optical illusion.

Magnetic Hill was formerly known as Bruff's Hill, a name which originated from 35-year-old James Bruff of Willunga settling on Black Rock Plain, in 1897.

Murray Catford, a former local farmer, told of an acquaintance who, in the 1930's had acquired his first motor car. He was driving in the vicinity of Bruff's Hill and happened to get a puncture right on the section of road now known as Magnetic Hill. He did the right thing, put a stone in front of one of the wheels before jacking up the vehicle, only to have it roll uphill.

Black Rock Railway Bridge

The bridge spans an unnamed flood channel on the Black Rock Plain. While only about 3m high, the bridge is remarkable for its length of 241m, and in the flat open setting it is a conspicuous landmark. The bridge consists of 66 spans of wrought iron girders supported on paired cast iron cylindrical piers with classical capitals. The spaces between the piers are braced with diagonal rods.