

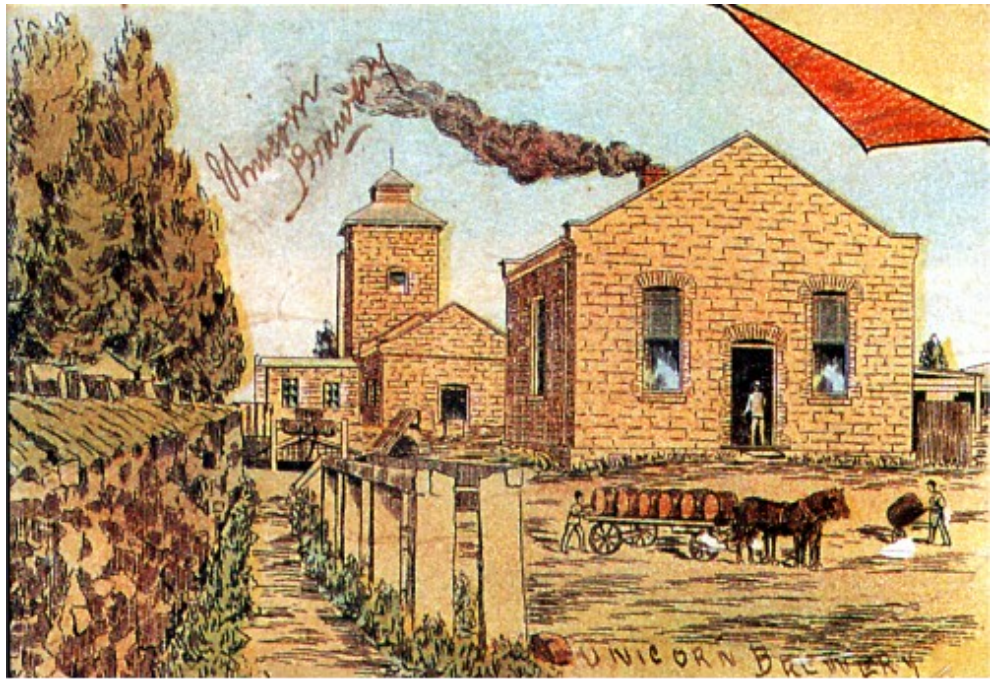

**Former Cellars of the Unicorn Brewery**
Bridge Terrace
Kooringa, Burra SA

Contact the Burra Visitor Centre for entrance with a
"Burra Passport Key"

Compiled by Julian Ratcliffe
The Burra History Group Inc.
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# UNICORN BREWERY

## BURRA
## SOUTH AUSTRALIA




1894 drawing of Unicorn Brewery

# The Unicorn Brewery (1873-1902)

**The First Brewery**
This was not the first brewery in Kooringa (Mr. Crawford of Hindmarsh Brewery -erected the first brewery alongside the original Burra Hotel on the site of the present Burra Hospital).

**A Risky Decision**
With nine hotels in the town and the imminent extension of the railway line to Terowie and eventually Broken Hill, Fredrick Thomas Jones took the risky decision to build a new brewery in Kooringa in direct opposition to the existing brewery of W.H. Williams. It was completed in 1873. In 1875, finding himself in financial difficulties, Jones had the site transferred to William Henry Banks.

**A New Brewer**
In 1870 W.H. Banks had arrived from Kapunda to run the Courthouse Hotel in Redruth. In 1871 he bought the Miners Arms Hotel in Kooringa (the present Burra Hotel). On assuming control of the Unicorn Brewery he became its new brewer.

**Steam Driven Efficiency**
This new brewery, which eclipsed the opposition's old horse powered operation boasted steam driven efficiency, a maltster and a cooperage. The Engine house with its wood-fired boiler (22feet long and 5 feet in diameter) and a steam engine that powered two 5HP force pumps for moving wort and beer around the brewery also produced steam for sterilising and cleaning.

**The Brewer's Art**
Throughout the nineteenth century all barley, sugar and hops was imported. The water was taken from a well on the property, the high mineral content being ideal for beer brewing. The malt was produced on the site and after adding the hops was lifted to the top floor of the prominent bluestone tower by steam power, where it was poured into a vat and sterilised with steam. After filtering the yeast was added and fermentation commenced. The new beer was run down by a gravity feed system of pipes into the hogsheads in the extensive underground cellars, where the temperature was a cool 65 degrees Fahrenheit ($18^0$C). Here the beer slowly underwent a secondary fermentation carbonating the beer. Up to 500 hogsheads could be stored at any one time. These hogsheads were manufactured and repaired on site at the cooperage.

**Treasure in the Cellar**
Beer varying in strength from X to XXXXXX was produced during the brewery's operation as well as porter (stout). It is said that horehound which was a noxious weed around the town was used in place of hops to give the beer its bitter taste. Horehound was credited with being something of a cure-all. There is evidence of the cellars being extended at sometime and also that some bottled beer was produced here.

**The End of an Era**
The brewery ceased production in 1902 and was sold in 1905. The reason for its closure was the introduction of new government regulations controlling the production of alcoholic beverages. The Unicorn found it too expensive to comply with these requirements and transferred operations to the Walkerville Brewery.
In 1911, the characteristic brewery tower together with most of the other brewery buildings were dismantled for their stone, when cottages were built on the property.

**Ghosts from the Past**
Young lairs finding their way into these cellars years after they had been abandoned were spooked by the eerie silence and the appearance of ghostly shadows. A hasty departure followed.

**Preserving the Past**
Acquired by the District Council of Burra in 1987, the cellars were reopened to the public as a tourist attraction in 1989.

**References:**
"In Cellar Cool" Ian Auhl
Brewery Cellars Conservation Study SA Heritage Branch