



## SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Part of a "Recorder" series on SA Railway Stations - Part 6

Port Elliot station is an important intermediate station on the SteamRanger Heritage Railway located between Goolwa and Port Elliot

The station infrastructure is maintained by the Port Elliot branch of the National Trust, who operate a small souvenir shop and historical museum in the station building and parcels shed.

Attached to this "Recorder" article are a number of historic photographs that are held by the State Library of South Australia

### SA RAILWAY STATIONS - PORT ELLIOT

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Port Elliot Station 1985

Photo: R Coombe

**Name Derivation:**

Named by Governor Sir Henry Fox Young in 1850 after his friend Sir Charles Elliot who was Governor successively of Bermuda, Trinidad and St. Helena.

**Distance from Adelaide:**

125 Kilometres

**Height above sea level:**

23 metres

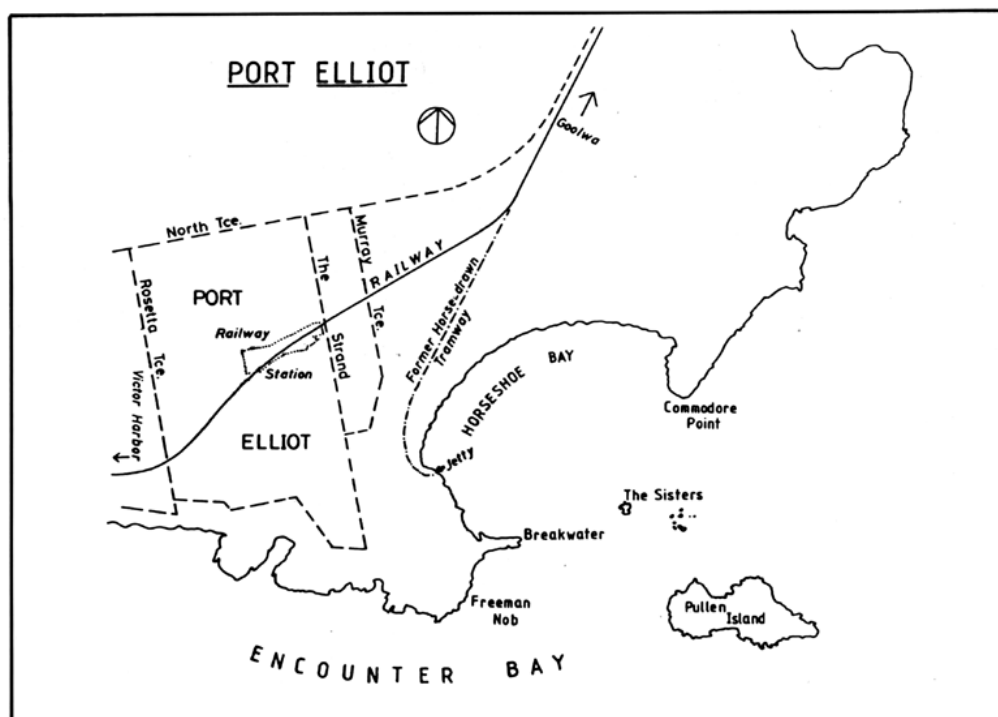
Port Elliot was the seaward end of a horse tramway which was opened in 1854 and was used to carry goods and passengers to and from Goolwa, 11 kilometres to the east. The tramway was constructed to enable goods carried by boat on the River Murray to be transhipped to ocean-going ships without the need for the river boats to negotiate the difficult Murray Mouth passage.

In 1851 work commenced at Port Elliot on the construction of the line and harbor works. By the end of that year a portion of the jetty had been constructed and a large amount of preliminary blasting for the railway had also been done. Port Elliot was declared a harbor on 28th August 1851. Work was suspended for a short while and recommenced again in 1852, the jetty being soon finished.

Even before the opening of the railway the mistake in choosing Port Elliot as a harbor began to become apparent. On May 1st, 1853 the schooner *Emu* was wrecked in the bay and all hands were lost. The official date for the commencement of the railway was one year later on 1st May, 1854. 1856 was not a very good year for shipping at Port Elliot. No date can be found for the sinking of the ship *Commodore* but it is believed that it took place some time in 1856. In July of that year the *Josephine L'Oizeau* was wrecked and in September the schooner, *Swordfish* was stranded and the cutter, *Lapwing* was wrecked. The brig *Harry* went down in December of the same year. The lack of shelter for shipping and the shallow anchorage combined to make conditions unsafe for even the smallest of the ships.

Plans were made to establish a new harbor at Victor Harbor and the work commenced in 1862. The decision came too late to prevent the schooner *Flying Fish* from becoming another casualty at Port Elliot in December 1860.

The present station yard was laid out and the platform erected as part of the extension of the line to Victor Harbor. The extended railway was open for traffic on 1st April 1864, 18 days after the schooner *Athol* achieved historical importance as the last ship to be wrecked at Port Elliot. In all 7 boats were wrecked and one stranded and subsequently broken up during the lifetime of the Port facilities. The last vessel to use the facilities at Port Elliot was the schooner *Io* which departed for Port Fairy in February 1866 loaded with 42000 feet of sawn timber.





Horsetram at Port Elliot about 1866

SLSA Photo B 45838



Railway Station at Port Elliot 1901

Building on right is original tramway station built about 1864 (Picture above)

SLSA Photo B7644