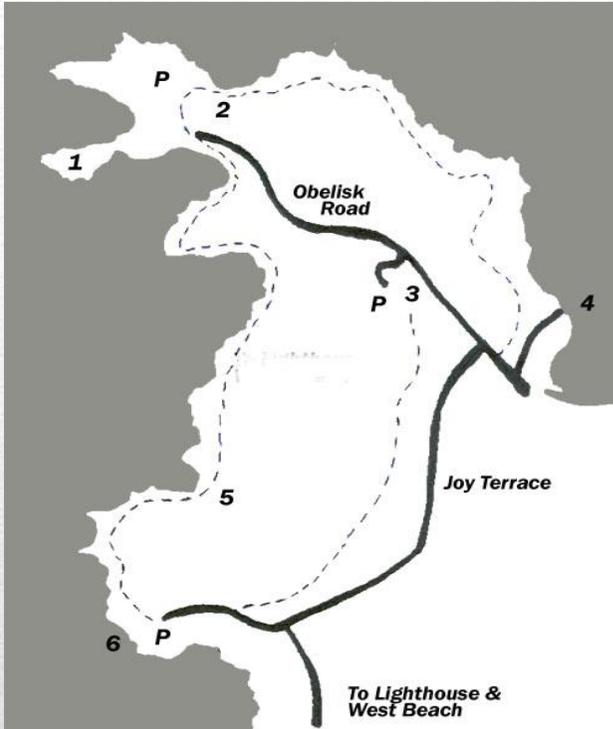
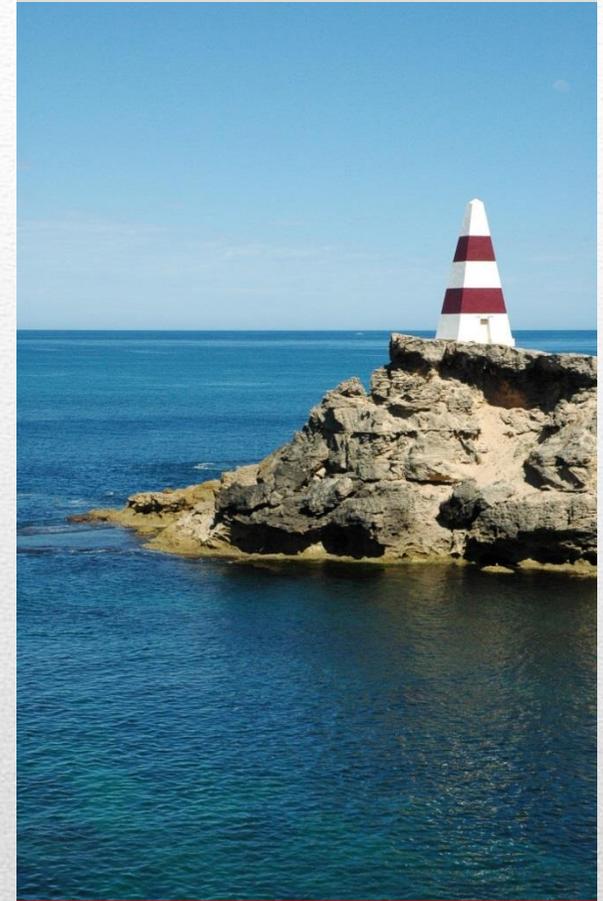


The Obelisk

Cape Dombey Area



1. Obelisk
 2. Encounter Signal
 3. Old Gaol
 4. Jetty
 5. The Blowhole
 6. Factory Bay
- P Parking



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ROBE
South Australia

The Obelisk

Robe's southern headland was originally named Cape Lannes by the French explorer Nicolas Baudin but its name was changed by Captain Matthew Flinders to Cape Dombey around the early 1800's.

Robe was founded by the South Australian Government in 1846 only 10 years after the Province of South Australia had been first settled, became an international port trading directly with London and later the site where 16,262 Chinese landed and walked to the Victorian Goldfields

Cape Dombey's most striking feature is the 40 foot tall red and white striped Obelisk which stands 100 feet above sea level, defying rough weather and decaying limestone cliffs at this dramatic point. Built in 1855 by local builder George Shivas at a cost of 230 pounds, the limestone was carted to its site by a 32 bullock wagon team.

Originally mariners were unhappy with the white painted Obelisk, as it was still difficult to differentiate the marker from Long Beach's white sand hills and the limestone cliffs of the coast.

In 1862 the Obelisk was repainted in alternate red and white horizontal bands and it can now be seen from a distance of 20kms on a clear day. Given the South East coast's notoriety for shipwrecks, with 30 wrecks occurring in Guichen Bay in 1853 alone, the Obelisk was used to store rockets fired to distressed ships which carried life lines and baskets for bringing passengers ashore thus saving many lives. Numerous dances at the local hotels, including the Caledonian Inn, were interrupted as fired rockets were heard and revellers in their finery deserted the venue to go to the aid of floundering ships. Upstairs at the Caledonian Inn you can find scrolled teak doors salvaged from the 1857 wreck of the Koenig Willem. The Obelisk has been repainted several times, the last in 2002 by the Save the Obelisk Society.

The Encounter Signal

The Encounter Signal is a modern sculpture constructed for Robe's Encounter 2002 celebrations to pay tribute to Robe's ongoing maritime tradition and the exploration of Robe's coast by English Captain Matthew Flinders and the French explorer Nicolas Baudin. The sculpture was designed by renowned public artist, Rodney Spooner. The base of the sculpture is the exact size of the Obelisk. The cross pattern on the sculpture floor indicates where the point of the Obelisk would be if you were standing inside. From this base there is created a viewing platform to the Obelisk, Doorway Rock and out to sea. The sculpture "door" is the same shape as the Obelisk door and is created from a solid block of limestone. The door functions as a gateway to the sculpture much as the Obelisk is the gateway to Robe's fishing fleet. The stainless steel panel on the back of the door is etched with the original maps of Robe's coast drawn by Matthew Flinders and Nicolas Baudin. The four sided stainless steel mast is engraved with the names of all the boats presently fishing from Robe and the French and English names for Robe's coastal area. The Obelisk corner wall reflects the importance of the Obelisk to Robe's community and attracts people to the sculpture much as the Obelisk attracts visitors. The red and white striped sides pay tribute to the maritime significance of the Obelisk while the straightness of these walls give credit to present building technology and Robe's built environment. The sculpture was funded through grants and contributions by Country Arts SA, Arts SA, South Australian Tourism Commission, District Council of Robe, and Robe Tourism and Traders Association. In kind contributions were made by Robe Encounter 2002, Robe businesses, individuals, and volunteers from the local community. The Encounter Signal was opened by her Excellency Marjorie Jackson-Nelson AC CVO MBE Governor of South Australia officially closing the statewide celebrations of the Flinders/Baudin voyage on Saturday April 13, 2002.

The Old Gaol

For about 15 years after the settlement of the South-East, all prisoners had to go to Adelaide for trial and to serve their sentences, even those guilty of minor misdemeanors. The high cost of this travel led to the construction of a gaol in Robe. The first part of the gaol was built by George Halles in 1860/61 at a cost of 1959 pounds and consisted of a small receiving yard, cells for male prisoners and the keeper's residence, with a duplicate half later being built on the southern side for female prisoners. While the original building works were underway there was concern about the standard of workmanship in the walls. Two of the early prisoners picked their way through the walls with a hook made from a light window fastening. The prisoners were soon caught but their escape led to the reinforcement of the cells outer walls with boiler plates which were came from the shipwreck of Admella on Carpenter's Rocks. Please see Admella Marker. The first prisoners in Robe's gaol were two indigenous men charged with stealing another aborigine's lubra. One of the prisoners escaped after assaulting the gaoler with a stick, but was later recaptured near Lake Bonney.

Later a prisoner named George Cateola escaped after striking the gaoler on the chest with the flat of the head of an axe, and hitting him across the head with the handle. Cannons were fired and the district notified by telegraph. Cateola's perfectly salt "pickled" body was found many months later in Lake Eliza by two bathers. Prisoners were sent from Mt Gambier to Robe for trial and to serve their sentences until 1863, and Robe's jail remained open until 1881 except for a brief period of closure between 1870 and 1872.

In 1995, following concern about the gaol's crumbling ruins, restoration of the walls of the gaol were undertaken as a Federal Government Job Skills project administered by the District Council of Robe and the South East Regional Grant Apprenticeship Scheme.