Penola is the oldest inland town in the Limestone Coast and has many attractions to offer the tourist. Widely recognised as an historic town, many of its buildings are listed on the State Heritage Register, with some owned and maintained by the Penola Branch of the National Trust of SA. Penola also offers visitors a wide variety of accommodation, art galleries, fine food and the internationally-renowned Coonawarra wine region.

Penola’s original inhabitants were the Pcrunggulla (Pipieguja) Aboriginal people who expertly farmed and hunted in and around the district’s ephemeral swamps and majestic red gums.

Prominent figures in Penola’s past have moulded the town into what it is today. These include Highland Scot, Alexander King Cameron, the pioneering pastoralist who arrived in 1845 and founded the private township of Penola in 1850. Its name is thought to derive from ‘penna-oona’ meaning ‘wooden house’, referring to Cameron’s original Royal Oak Hotel. Another Scot, John Riddoch, arrived at Yallum, eight kilometres west of Penola, in 1861 and contributed to the district’s prosperity for the ensuing forty years. He founded the Penola Fruit Colony in 1880, planted the first vines and laid the rich foundation for Coonawarra’s quality wines. His gracious two-storey homestead was completed in 1880. In 1889 the Penola Mechanics Institute and Public Library gave adults access to books, lectures and classes. Penola has a strong literary tradition as the birthplace of poet John Shaw Neilson, and home to Adam, Lindsay Gordon and Will Ogilvie, all of whom were inspired by its landscape and lifestyle. Their contribution is recognised at Poets’ Corner situated on the corner of Church and Arthur streets.

Penola has also been home to many influential people, including priest and scientist, Father Julian Tenison Woods, and Australia’s first saint, Mary MacKillop, who co-founded the Sisters of St Joseph here in 1866. Their lives and work are celebrated in displays at the Mary MacKillop Penola Centre, which includes the 1867 Schoolhouse and the re-erected 1848 Cameron homestead.

The Mechanics Institute which now houses the Wattle Range Council office, the Visitor Information Centre, the extensive Local History Collection, an excellent historical exhibition and the John Shaw Neilson Art Gallery.

Discover Penola’s remarkable heritage with the Penola Walks Mobile App available for iPhone, iPad, and Android Services from the Google Play & Apple Stores. Download the app and take a self-guided tour at your own pace.

Other places to visit close by:
- Yallum Park must not be missed. This 1880 two-storey Victorian Mansion 8km west on the Millicent Road is one of the best preserved houses of its type in Australia. Group bookings by appointment, (08) 8737 2865
- Admire the stained glass windows of the Catholic Church
- Be intrigued by the unique trees growing around the township
- John Riddoch’s original vineyard and cellars, now known as Wynns Coonawarra Estate
- Julian Tenison Woods tree and sculptures
- Penola Commemorative Walk at the Town Square
- Telephone Exchange Display at the Old Post Office
- Speak to the visitor centre and do some research at the Local History Room in the John Riddoch Centre

Across Wattle Range, the Beachport & Millicent Visitor Information Centre are also able to assist with brochures and further information on Penola and Coonawarra.

DISCLAIMER: The information in the publication was current at the time of going to press March 2019. The authors take no responsibility for the accuracy of this information and suggest that you check all details when making an inquiry.

Acknowledgements:
State Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment and Planning National Trust of South Australia West Coast Wattle Range Council Illustrations by Sue Hodge. Designed by Mark Richards.
19. LOCAL IMAGES (I)  Originally located across the road, Thomas Donald Saddler’s Shop has had various uses, lately as an art gallery.

10. TOFFEE & TREATS OF PENOLA (I)  Founded in 1860 and used in 1863 by bootmaker, Christopher Sharam, this building has since been used as a men’s barber shop and timber saloon, pharmacy, tailor’s fashion, front and antique shop.

9. BANALENS’ STORE (I)  Built as a shop by Simun McKenzie, this building was purchased by the Banalens family in 1897 and used by successive generations until the late 1970s.

8. PENOLA VETERINARY CLINIC (I)  The original 1892 Penola District Council Office was built here on land donated by William McPherson.

7. ROYAL OAK HOTEL (II)  (I)  This two-storey hotel was built in 1873 to take the place of a slab building licensed in 1848. The architect was W.T. Gore.

6. BANK OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (II)  (I)  Private residence  Built in 1869 as the Bank of South Australia which closed during the 1920s Depression. It was later used as an office for Goldleigh Mort.

5. JANE BALNAIVES’ STORE (II)  (I)  Private residence  Opened on this site in 1868, the store operated continuously until Jane’s son Robert moved the business to Church Street.


3. PENOLA PRIMARY SCHOOL (III)  This school opened in 1879 with James Greenaways as teacher.

24. PENOLA PRIMARY SCHOOL HALL (II)  Constructed in 1913 as an exhibition hall for the Penola Shire Society, the building has been restored and still is, the venue for various community activities.

23. PENOLA FANTASY MODEL RAILWAY (II)  James McKey and later his son Donald, conducted a brass征集 business on this site and later operated with Michael McKey donated the land for the McClymont Model Railway which later became known as the London Private.

22. NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK (II)  (I)  Private residence  Built in the mid-1860s with W.T. Gore as architect, this two-storey building was used continuously as a bank until 1989.

21. POST OFFICE & RESIDENCE (II)  (I)  The Telegraph Office/Residence and Post Office were constructed in 1860 and 1866 respectively. The adjacent post office was built in 1960.

20. CLARK’S SADDLERY (II)  Clark’s Saddlery & Simon’s Tannery of Fashion, built circa 1866 by Matthew Clarke, was replaced with an impressive two-storey stone building built under the direction of the Blight family. It was demolished and replaced with the present building in the 1910s.

19. PIPERS OF PENOLA RESTAURANT (II)  Constructed as a Methodist Church in 1869, the building was used by the Penola RSL from 1920 to 1929. Following the Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity Friendly Society until 1940. It was then used by the RSL, who sold it to the Penola Catholic Society in 1968.

18. ST. GILDAS’ STORE (II)  Built by George Glidstone in 1864 it became the Penola Cheese and Butter Manufacturing Company in 1869. It was purchased by the Penola National Trust in 1878 and named Cobb & Co Booking Office. It was used as a teashop and restaurant in 1964 by Mrs. Kathleen. It was then used by others and finally purchased by S.D. Cox in 1997.

17. DONALD McKEAN’S HOME (II)  Private residence  Donald McKeans was an influential member of the Royal Family. He was born in 1844 to 1890 Leonard Peake, District Clerk of the Penola District Council purchased the property in 1868 and named it St. Ives. In 1930 it became a private hospital by John Morgan Glidstone. Since the new hospital was built in 1965 it has been used as a residence, at one stage for immigrants.

16. ST. JOSEPH’S CATHOLIC CHURCH (II)  The first church on the site was built in 1869 whilst Father Julian Tersius Woods was parish priest.

15. WOODS-MACKELL SCHOOLHOUSE (II)  Mary Mackell’s first purpose-built St. Joseph’s school was commissioned by Father Julian Tersius Woods in 1868 and opened in 1869. It has national and state heritage significance.

14. PETTICOAT LANE HERITAGE AREA (II)  This site contains many old and original cottages dating from 1850, was declared a State Heritage Area on 15 December 1997.

13. GAMMON COTTAGE (II)  (I)  Decorated in 1855, the cottage was purchased from G. Smith in 1879 by William Gammon. The detached kitchen was then a common feature due to possible problems with fire. The internal metal roofs were used briefly prior to the introduction of corrugated iron.

12. WILSON COTTAGE (II)  Home of prominent gardener and host, William and his wife Agnes. The cottage is currently used as a Retro Fashion and Bricker-Shop.

11. CURCUTT’S (II)  (I)  This site was in the home of Margaret-Iva Wilson and William Neldam’s home. Wilson was a builder and poet John Shaw Neilson’s uncle.

10. DAVIDSON COTTAGE (II)  (I)  Private residence  Peter Davidson and his son built this cottage in 1863 and leased it for the use of Church of England rectors from 1889 to 1898. Reserved by National Trust SA Penola Branch in the 1940s. It was sold in 1965.

9. SHARAM COTTAGES (II)  (I)  Built in 1860, the slab cottage was the first home of bookmaker Christopher Sharam and his family. The second cottage was built in 1864.

8. MURRELL BLOCK (I)  (II)  Previously owned by Christopher Sharam, this block was purchased in 1862 by Mrs. Sharam. The Penola Branch of the National Trust of SA purchased it in 2001.

7. AIR’S COTTAGE (II)  Private residence  Henry Roden, who built this cottage in 1861, left it to his bookkeeper-housekeeper, Elizabeth Ar in 1840.

6. MACE SHAW THOMPSON’S COTTAGE (II)  (I)  TEMPERATURE HALL  This 1860s cottage, constructed in several stages, was acquired by William Thompson in 1872. The temperature hall, constructed diagonally across the road in 1864, was used for a wide variety of community purposes. It was demolished in the 1960s.

5. MCELROY HOME (II)  Private residence  Built by Stephen McIlroy in 1865, this home was one of the earliest in Penola. Stephen’s wife Margaret penned her part early Penola by taking in and caring for Irish immigrant girls until they fend for themselves.

4. FORESTERS’ HALL (II)  (I)  Private residence  Built on in 1862 by the Foresters and Freebooters. J.P. Robertson, this hall has been used by the Mothers and Babies Health Association, a dentist, the Lutheran Church, a cycle and battery service, a brewery and a retail outlet.

3. OSWALD COTTAGE (I)  (II)  This building backs onto the rear of Local Images where you will find more information.