

## COMMONWEALTH SAVINGS BANK OF AUSTRALIA

135-139 Rundle Mall

From butcher's shop to bank, this building has accommodated some significant enterprises. It was constructed in 1879-80 for William Kither, at one time an Adelaide City Council alderman.

William Kither came to Adelaide from London in 1855 as a twelve-year-old 'poor boy'. Working for his father in the butchery retail business, he succeeded to the family business in 1870. By 1880 he had rebuilt, 'at a large cost', the Rundle Street premises, thus demonstrating the success of his commercial enterprises.

In 1881 Kither was elected a member of the Adelaide City Council and alderman in 1883. In an article titled 'Civic Chaps', *Quiz and the Lantern* remarked on Kither's 'aldermanic girth', and continued:

*When you have described him as being every inch an Alderman you seem to have gone as far as it is safe to go ... As a member of the City Council he does not shine with any particular lustre. He makes no pretence to oratory, and only a few weeks ago Quiz heard him talk about an 'ansom cab . . . He has done a good deal for the poor of Adelaide too. Quiz remembers when he started a soup kitchen at his establishment a good many winters ago, and, without any device for self-advertising, proved a benefactor for the suffering. Quiz doesn't like soup kitchens; in fact he has a general prejudice against all forms of charity. He regards it as criminal that in a new country like this anyone should be obliged to beg for bread. Unfortunately we have cases of necessity, and Alderman Kither, when he realised that there was actual want, generously rose to the occasion.*

A justice of the peace, a governor of the Adelaide Children's Hospital and philanthropist, Kither was described by Loyau as a man 'of a genial and charitable disposition, and deservedly respected by all classes of the community'.



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The architects for Kither's building were Rees and Hornabrook, well known for their elaborate and creative structures. The premises captured popular attention when the South Australian Electric Light Company introduced the first commercial lighting in Adelaide at Kither's establishment one Saturday night in 1882. The brilliant

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and steady light pleased customers and attracted crowds of onlookers between the hours of six o'clock and eleven o'clock.

A significant change in the building's function occurred in 1926 when it became the workshops of the glass merchants Clarksons Limited, originally founded by H.L. Vosz in 1848. When Clarksons finally moved out of Rundle Street to Grenfell Street in 1958 it had been operating for a hundred years in three locations in Rundle Street.

Heinrich Ludwig Vosz migrated from Hamburg in 1848. Shortly after in 1851 he dashed off to the goldfields where he had an element of success and returned with the spoils to set up his own business at 82 Rundle Street. This was reputed to be Australia's oldest glass, oil and colour business.

Until 1886 all paint materials were imported, but after this date, basic house paint was produced at the premises. The company produced Vosco paint which was the first ready-mix paint in South Australia. The paint producing side of the firm was taken over in 1912 by the Australasian United Paint Co. Ltd. Vosz died in 1886.

A.E. Clarkson who had joined the firm as an office boy in 1889 later became manager and changed the firm's name in 1915 to Clarkson Ltd. J.E Williams who joined the company in 1899, was responsible for re-establishing the contracting side of the business and opened the famed leadlight and stained-glass department. He was its first artist. By the 1920s there were twenty-six people employed in the leadlight department as well as two artists who were employed as stained-glass window and leadlight designers. The firm was one of the few to employ full-time artists and did so on a regular basis until the mid-1960s.

Clarksons became the agent for English stained-glass designers William Morris and Co. Ltd., the business of which '... was founded in 1861 to revive the lost arts of the Middle Ages, and to combat the degraded past tastelessness of the early Victorian Era'.

Clarkson Ltd dominated stained-glass manufacture in South Australia against competition from the firms of Thomson and Harvey (established 1898) and later, L.G. Abbott.

Clarksons made alterations in 1932 to the premises, including removal of the balcony. Further alterations have been made, particularly since 1958 when the building was acquired by the Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia.

The chief glory of this structure is the facade. The first floor remains substantially original. The



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stuccoed enrichments to Corinthian pilasters, cornice, parapet and surrounds to openings are in excellent order although many alterations have been made to ground floor, including the addition of a canopy/veranda. The decorated parapet and stuccoed dressings contrast attractively with the squared sandstone walling of the first floor facade. The parapet features large urns. Because of its scale and style this building frontage is a significant element in Rundle Mall.

Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol. 1, 1909, p. 447; Clarkson Ltd., *A history of Morris stained glass*, 1925; Donovan, P., & J., *A guide to stained glass windows*, 1983, pp. 17-18; Loyau, G.E., *Notable South Australians*, 1885, pp. 74, 110; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 85); *Observer*, 13 May 1882; *Quiz*, 28 February 1895; *South Australian Register*, 9 November 1878, 1 January 1879, 14 July 1879; Ward, A.N., *The history of Clarkson Ltd.*, (pamphlet), c. 1970.

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide**, (1996). The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

*The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.*

*Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.*

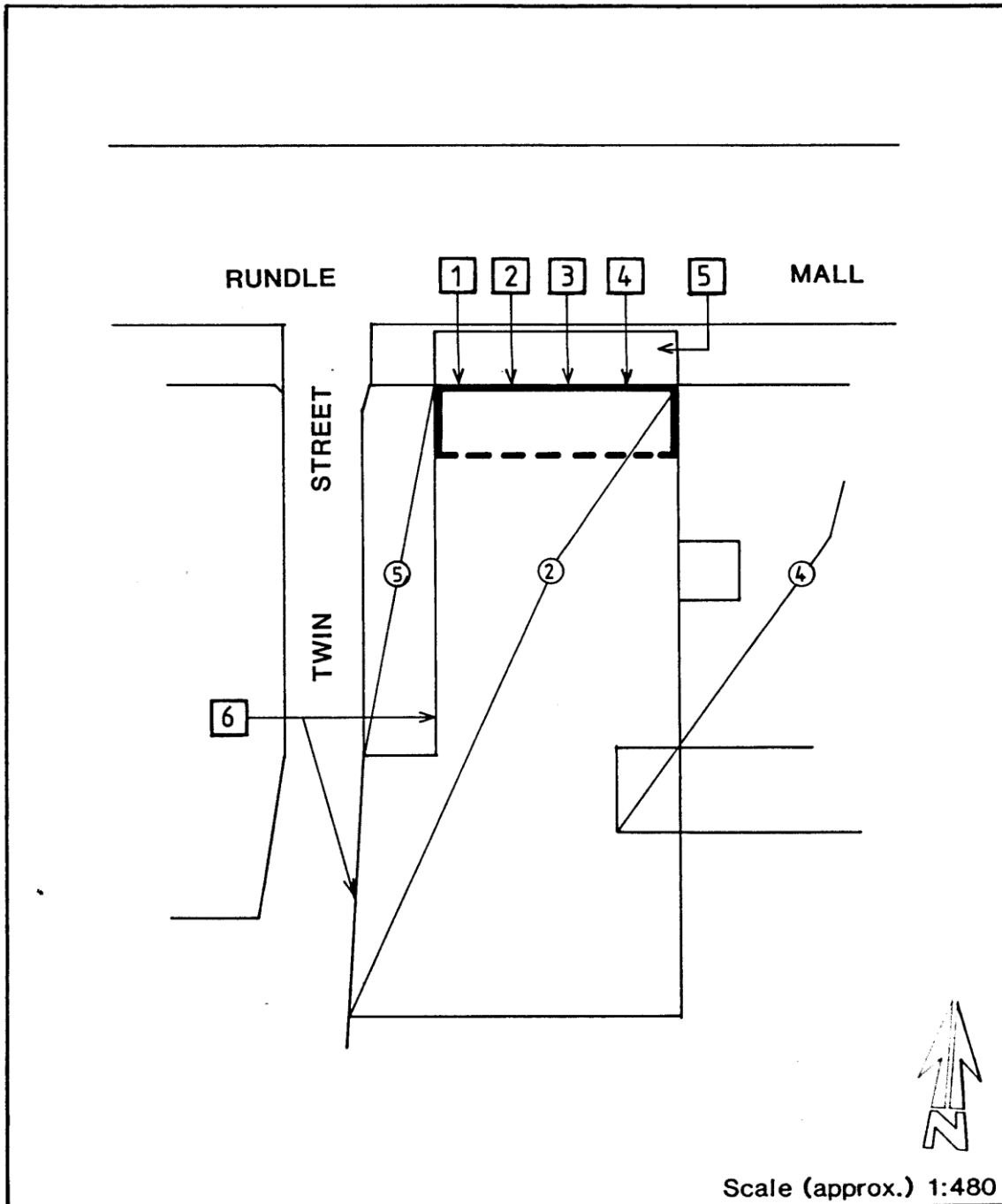


# CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

## The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	COMMONWEALTH SAVINGS BANK OF AUSTRALIA	Building No 3/2402
Address	135-139 Rundle Mall; (12-16 Twin Street)	CT 1059/127 *



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### NOTES:

1. Shopfronts unsympathetically modified.
2. Note: Parapet with sculptured pediment and decorative urns.
3. First floor facade detailing of major interest - squared hammered sandstone with extensive stuccoed enrichment.
4. Note: Pilasters with floral capitals, pediments to window openings entablature.
5. Awning of later date.
6. Brick construction.

\* (Conservation site comprises that part of the above CT to a depth of half Town Acre 85 from the Rundle Street alignment.)