

**ADELAIDE BENEVOLENT  
AND STRANGERS' FRIEND SOCIETY  
(ELDER HALL)**

17 Morialta Street

Elder Hall has considerable historical significance being identified with the Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friend Society, founded in 1849. This society is reputedly the oldest secular philanthropic society, in South Australia, its chief work being to provide housing for the poor. The *South Australian Register*, 28 February 1849 described relief to the sick and indigent, especially among newly arrived immigrants; and promoting the moral and spiritual welfare of the recipients and their children. The article went on to point out that:

*It was formerly, said there were no poor in South Australia. This was perfectly true in the English sense of the word; but there was always room for the exercise of private charity" and now, we regret to say, owing to some injudicious selections of emigrants by the [Colonization] commissioners, and the uninvited and gratuitous influx of unsuitable colonists, who having managed to pay their own passages, land in a state of actual destitution, we have now a number of unexpected claimants for whom something must be done.*

In response the society stated that emigrants exhausted their meagre funds paying for necessities in England for passage to the colony.

Landing without means of support while they searched for work, they ' . . . were reduced to great distress by their inability to pay the exorbitant weekly rents demanded for the most humble shelters' Often the society paid their rent for a short time and this assistance, together with rations from the Destitute Board, ' . . . enabled many deserving but indigent persons to surmount the unexpected and unavoidable difficulties attending their first arrival in a strange land',

In 1981 the *Advertiser* reported that the society had just held its 131st annual meeting quietly, as usual, seldom making headlines, never running big television appeals. The society provided 129 cottage homes at a reasonable rent for the 'battlers', voluntary 'dole', tiding over the unemployed until they received their cheques, grants to needy hospital patients and toys to children. The society was still performing its original role, that of bridging gaps in official services.

Funds from several well-known benefactors have enabled the society to build, buy and lease property, providing cheap housing for the needy. The annual report for 1898 noted that through the years, and including the legacy in his will, the society had received over £170 000 from Sir Thomas Elder. Accordingly, the society's hall was named in his honour. It appears that the architect was Daniel Garlick who was a committee member for several years. The committee met at Garlick and Jackman's office in May 1898 to consider tenders, and the modest hall was completed in the same year.

## Heritage of the City of Adelaide

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The building is of note architecturally for the ‘gem-like’ quality of its facade, tightly contained by bluestone rubble side walls. The composition is admirably disciplined in so small a facade with a diminutive pediment with the society's inscription and a parapet topped by a small finial. These embellishments lift the appearance of the building from a domestic scale reminiscent of a single fronted house. The integrity is high as the interior has been merely partitioned for further office space. The hall's location is as retiring as the society's public image. Morialta Street is very narrow and dominated by the rear elevation of modern multi-storeyed development. Elder Hall is thus a surprising feature of this minor, almost forgotten street.

ACA, *Digest of Proceedings*, 16 May 1898, 30 March 1898, 19 April 1898; *Advertiser*, 21 January 1981; Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol. 2, 1909, pp. 71-2; MLSA, Annual reports of Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friend Society, 1849-50, 1929-30; *Southern Australian*, 2 January 1840; *South Australian Register*, 28 February 1849.

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*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.*

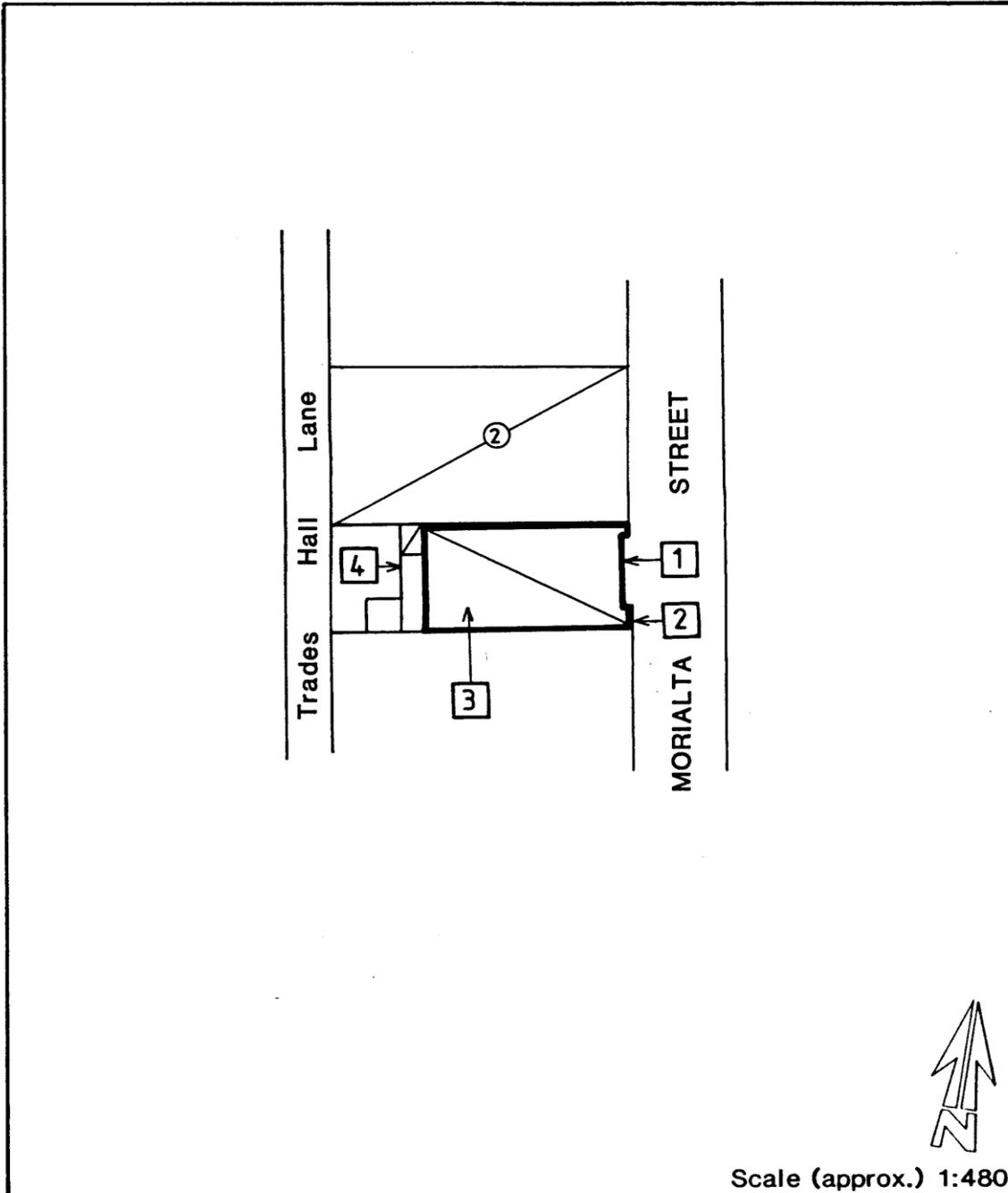


# CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

## The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	ELDER HALL	Building No	10/0503
Address	17 Morialta Street	CT	318/155



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#### NOTES:

1. Brick facade (English Bond) with stucco enrichment, bluestone plinth and decorative gable.
2. Note: Rusticated quoins and pediment above entrance.
3. Main body of building bluestone rubble.
4. Verandah.