

SHELL HOUSE

169-171 North Terrace

This building was erected for the Shell Company and is noteworthy for the manner in which it demonstrates changes in office development in Adelaide, as well as changes in land use on North Terrace.

The Shell Company was founded by Marcus Samuel (Viscount Beasted) in England in 1897 as a British company to be known as the Shell Transport and Trading Company. At the time the American-owned Standard Oil Company controlled 90 per cent of petroleum production in the world. After a successful merger in 1907 between the Shell Company and the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company, the company went on to challenge the supremacy of the American company.

Shell pioneered the oil business in Australia, opening offices here in 1900. In 1905 the British Imperial Oil Co. Ltd. was registered in London as a subsidiary of the Shell group to conduct its business in Australia. It was renamed the Shell Company of Australia Ltd in 1927. The company developed in Australia a system of bulk storage. No other company followed their example of bulk distribution from the terminal ports until 1924.

The construction of Shell's offices in Adelaide in 1931 reflected the company's strength and confidence: as *Progress in Australia claimed* ' . . . one of the most encouraging signs in the present state of the depression'. The 'up-to-date' 'New Art' ten storey office building included appointments and finishes expected of a successful business house.

Using their own products, Shell had ' . . . oil fired boilers, control of which was completely automatic', and 'the installation of the hot water radiator type, supplied from boilers in the basement, heated with automatically controlled fuel oil burners, the system being so designed that the burners are controlled by the temperature of the rooms'. Finishes included terrazzo floors, a marble built entrance and a red sand cement finish. The Shell Company's policy was always to favour local material first before obtaining what was needed from around Australia and before looking for British Empire products.

The architects were McMichael and Harris. Eric McMichael opened his own architectural practice in 1910 after being first articled to Garlick and Jackman, followed by three years for the 'Works and Buildings Department'.

Architecturally the building was notable for its interior form rather than for its external form. The interior was remarkably original with open stairwells, original lifts and lobbies, bronze work to balustrading, memorials, terrazzo work and largely original office tenancies on several floors.

Externally the building is severe and largely unadorned, particularly to the upper floors.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide



(CD Ref 3982/6)

This building makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of North Terrace as one of several which are mutually complementary. Together they form one of the most significant multi-storey building groups in the City of Adelaide, demonstrating changes in multi-storeyed construction from the turn of the century to the 1940s.

Page, M, *Sculptors in space*, 1986, p. 149; *Progress in Australia*, 2 March 1931, pp. 10-12; Shell Company of Australia Limited, *Shell in Australia*, 1928, pp. 9, 10, 15, 32, 33.

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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	SHELL HOUSE	Building No	3/0103
Address	169-171 North Terrace	CT	4254/867

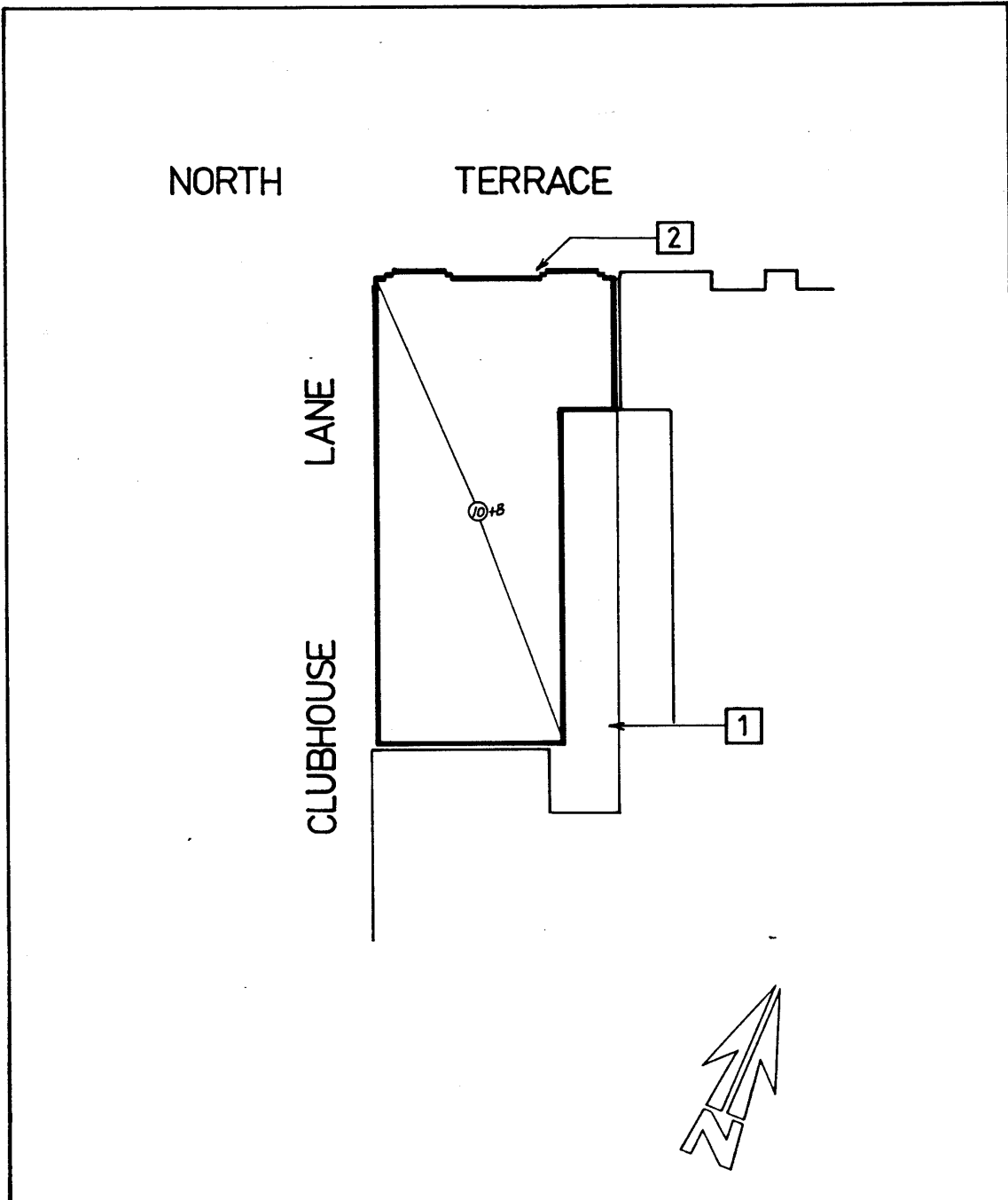


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NOTES:

1. Court.
2. Note internal appointments and detailing especially lobbies and foyer.