

ITEM NO. 9

DONOVAN, MARSDEN, STARK
CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE SURVEY, 1982WESTPAC (former AMP HEAD OFFICE IN S.A.)
23 King William Street

This building is of major historical significance due to its association with the A.M.P. Society, and the development of insurance provision in Adelaide and South Australia.

The Society was formed in Sydney on 31st August, 1848. Its beginnings were modest and conservative. The A.M.P. nevertheless pioneered the canvassing system of life assurance and under the advice actuary M.A. Black, liberalised its policies. It was during the boom period of the 1870's and 1880's that consolidation of the Society was achieved. Branches were opened in Victoria (1849), New Zealand (1871), South Australia (1872), Queensland (1875), Tasmania (1877) and Western Australia (1884). In 1935 assets of the A.M.P. amounted to over 100,000,000 pounds.

Shortly after the establishment of the South Australian branch, a building was leased by the Society at 111 King William Street. A substantial flow of business was generated and in 1880 the site of the present premises was purchased. A substantial structure was erected, typical of the boom period, this building being enlarged by the addition of a floor in 1918-1919. At the same time district offices were opened in Mount Gambier, Clare, Port Pirie and Kadina. The following list of some of the Directors of the South Australian Branch indicates the standing of the Society within South Australian society; The Hon. Alexander Hay, Dr. William Gosse, Sir Henry Ayers, Sir William Morgan, Dr. H.T. Whittell, William Kay, Robert Barr-Smith, Sir E.T. Smith, Sir Charles H. Goode, Sir J.L. Stirling and Dr. T.K. Hamilton.

Inadequacy of accommodation in the early 1930's led to the decision to erect new premises. After full consideration of alternative sites, the one on which the present structure was erected was fixed upon. On 12th December, 1934, the plans for the proposed new building were presented to Council for approval, having been designed by L. Laybourne-Smith of Woods, Bagot, Laybourne-Smith and Irwin. On 17th July, 1936, His Excellency the Governor Sir Winston, J. Dugan, officially opened the building, the Advertiser of the following day carrying a full description of the ceremony and the new structure. It was described as a building which combined "Beauty of Design with Simplicity and Utility". The following description from that newspaper is of particular interest indicating the importance of this building to Adelaide and South Australia, demonstrating the economic significance of this Institution.

"Striking for its simple beauty, quiet dignity, and symmetrical lines, and embracing the most modern innovations in building practice, the new A.M.P. Building in King William Street forms a notable addition to the architecture of Adelaide. Rising to the height limit allowed in the city, the structure impresses with its obvious solidity and artistic finish. In building for the efficiency of its services, the A.M.P. Society has added to the beauty of the city.

Actually the building is the epitome in marble and stone of the high traditions of the Australian Mutual Provident Society. It relies for its appeal and charm upon the reticent use of classical elements adopted to the form and proportions of modern building.

...
It marks a distinct advancement in the development of a city, the architectural beauty of which has already been widely acclaimed.

... The design is in the Renaissance style adapted to the requirements of modern work, where lofty proportions necessitate special treatment. From the base of the roof, the exterior of the building presents a picture typical of the solidarity of the A.M.P. Society, while from the magnificent main entrance to the twelfth storey the interior is a delightful study in delicate colour schemes, rendered possible by the judicious use of coloured marble and tiles, and walnut, blackwood, jarrah, and other suitable timbers.

The building has a frontage of 70 ft. to King William Street, by a depth of 90 ft., with elevations to Gresham Place on the north, and Gresham Street at the rear. The base is of Murray Bridge granite, and all of the elevations above the base are of cut Hawkesbury sandstone.

One of the most striking features is the main entrance which is through a magnificent arch 27 ft. high, leading to a vestibule which forms a transitional link between the architectural treatment of exterior and interior. The dado is of polished granite; the walls are of cut stone, with carving, and inscriptional panels in low relief, and there is a barrel vaulted ceiling with sunk panels. Hanging from the vault is a very fine bronze lantern."

The building remains one of the most important developments for its time in Adelaide. It makes excellent and disciplined yet vigorous use of abstracted classical elements producing a building of great significance to an understanding of commercial architecture of the 1930's. It is well finished both internally and externally, the metal work and the integrity of internal spaces and finishes deserving special comment. The integrity of the building is high, alterations such as signs and the incorporation of air-conditioning units being mainly cosmetic. The removal of the statuary from the King William Street frontage (a relic of the 1880 A.M.P. building) is unfortunate.

D.M.S.
(Amended 21/9/83)
S:DCP10C/B

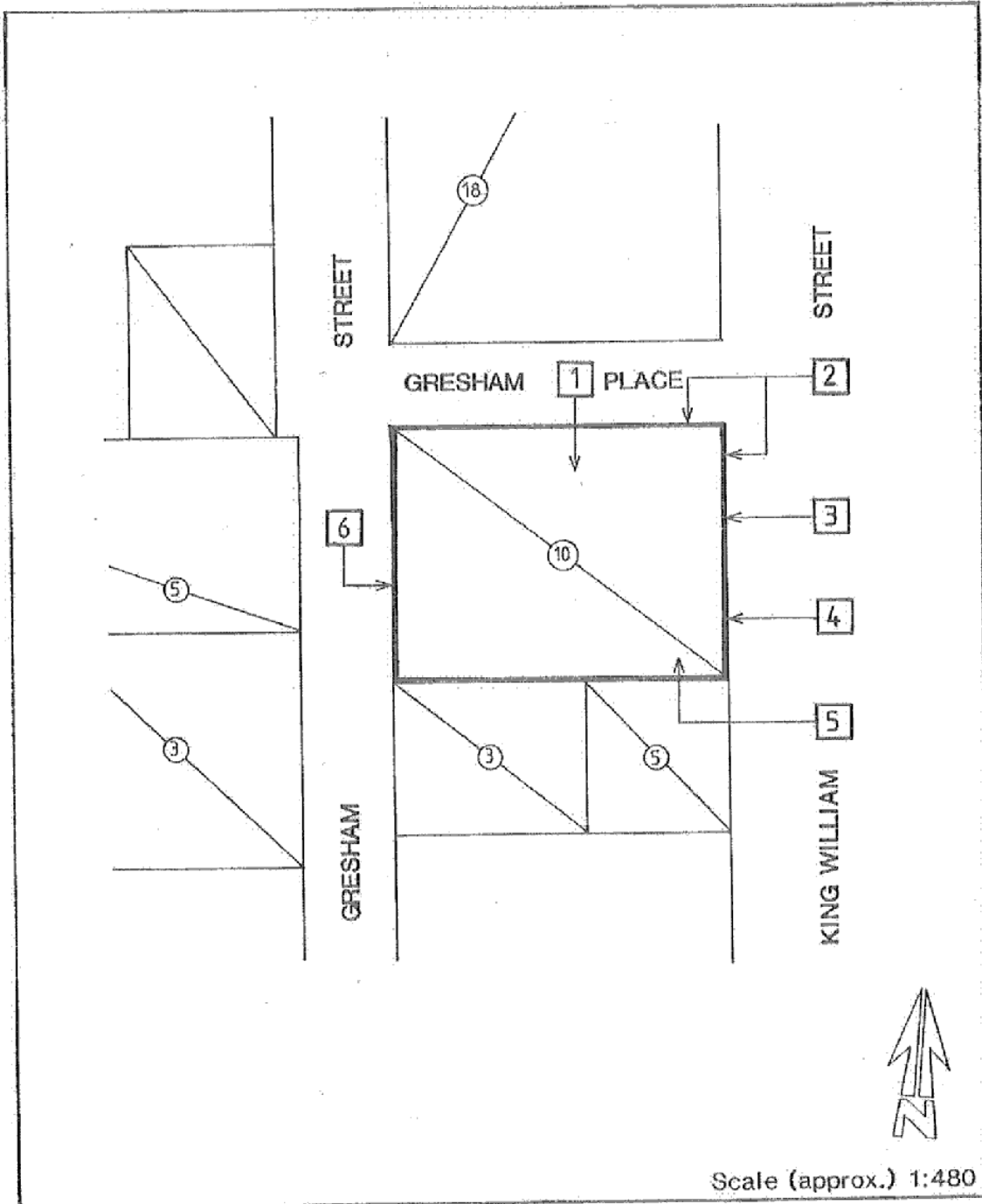


CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register - Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	WESTPAC BANK (Former C.B.A., Former A.M.P.)	Building No 2/0601
Address	19-23 King William Street; 20-24 Gresham Street	CT 4201/698





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NOTES:

1. Note Public banking area - marble clad high ceiling, arched windows, mezzanine.
2. Rendered facade, strong rustication at ground and first floor levels, granite faced plinth.
3. Note Detailed carving, pilasters, moulded string course.
4. Note Brass doors and architraves.
5. Note Lifts and foyer.
6. Less ornate facade.