

TORRENS BUILDING

202-220 Victoria Square

The Torrens building was designed to meet the requirements of the Public Works and the Registrar-General's Department. It was conceived as a huge building and covers an entire town acre on the corner of Victoria Square and Wakefield Street which was purchased by the government in 1876. As usual with public buildings, a design competition was held and a Melbourne architect Michael Egan won. Egan had recently designed a £140 000, government building in Melbourne. He had also won the University of Adelaide design competition and the Mitchell Building by William McMinn incorporates many of Egan's ideas.

The *South Australian Register*, 1 December 1877 described Egan's Torrens building proposal as a handsome, substantial looking building, by no means monumental, and simple in style. Egan reported that the elevations were in the Italian style, and designed to group with the Supreme Court, the General Post Office and other public buildings facing the square. No tower was provided as this was unnecessary 'in sight of' the post office.

Every convenience was provided for. The complex formed a quadrangle with a central court. The fronts facing Victoria Square and Wakefield Street were faced with 'freestone' (ashlar sandstone), but to save costs, the sides were rendered brick. The internal elevations were plain brick. The first storey was described as Doric, the second Ionic, the third 'simply pilastered'. The windows of the ground floor were arched, the upper windows square headed.

The central feature of the facade to Victoria Square was finished with the Royal Coat-of-Arms. 'The design generally is simple in treatment, variety has evidently not been considered an essential in giving good elevations.'

Egan's design for the new government offices was, with some improvements and modifications, carried out by the architect-in-chief, Edward John Woods. The foundations and cellars were constructed of Glen Osmond stone by Robert Huckson. James Shaw tendered successfully to build the superstructure for £55 795 in November 1879. The building was completed and occupied by December 1881.

Despite the many internal alterations and additions to the back of the building and the 'temporary' additions within its quadrangle, the main facades fronting Victoria Square and Wakefield Street remain very much as completed. The building is an impressive classical structure and a prominent feature of Victoria Square.

Advertiser, 6 August 1914; *Frearson's Weekly*, 25 September 1880; MLSA, Bierbaum files, Historical photographs (Town Acre 303); Morgan, E.J.R., & Gilbert, S.H., *Early Adelaide architecture 1836 to 1886*, 1969, p. 58; SAPP, No. 170, 1878, No. 29, 1882; *South Australian Government Gazette*, 16 January 1879, 27 November 1879; *South Australian Register*, 18 December 1876, 25 January 1877, 5 October 1877, 6 October 1877, 1 December 1877, 24 November 1877, 13 June 1878, 18 June 1878, 1 January 1879, 17 May 1879, 21 November 1879.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

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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 | TORRENS BUILDING | Building No | 11/0121-1 |
| Address | 202-220 Victoria Square; 10-20 Wakefield Street | | |
| | | CT | 4235/573* |

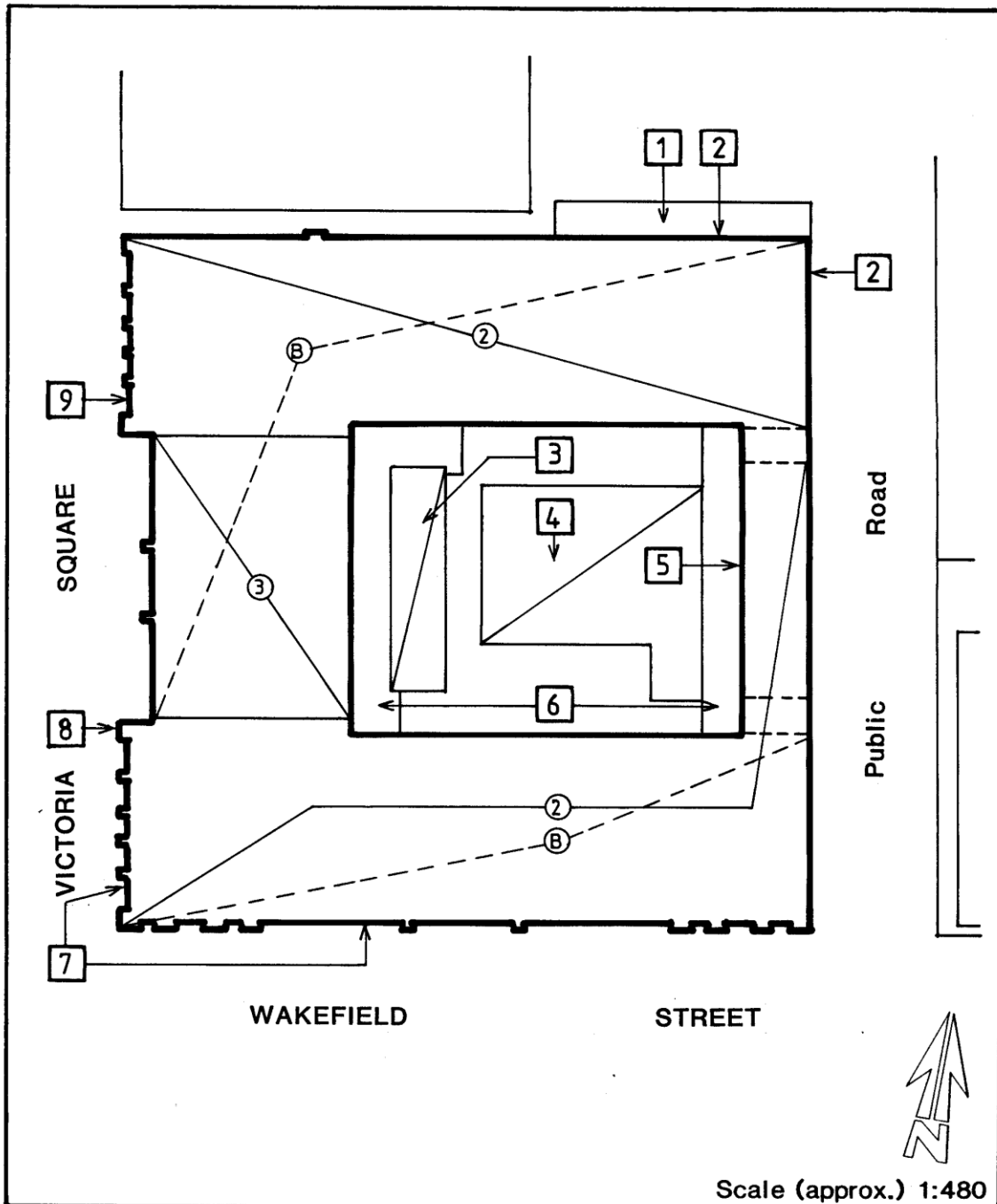


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NOTES:

1. Rendered addition.
2. Rendered facades.
3. Brick addition.
4. "Temporary" additions.
5. Brick (Flemish bond).
6. Verandahs.
7. Ashlar sandstone facades with sandstone detailing and basalt plinth.
8. Note pilasters.
9. Balustraded parapet.

* (Conservation site comprises that part of the above CT bounded by the outer perimeter of building fabric.)