

ADELAIDE MOSQUE

22-28 Little Gilbert Street

This mosque is one of the few relics of Afghan immigration to South Australia and embodies, in built form, Afghan and Mohammedan culture which is otherwise not significantly represented. Afghans were drawn to South Australia to perform duties other than to drive camels, but this would appear to have been one of their main roles in the development of the colony. Potential use of the camel had not yet been fully realised when C.H. Bagot recorded the following opinion in June 1858:

. . . the camel and dromedary would both be valuable additions to the domestic animals of Australia. In the extensive badly-watered plains in the interior their services would be most valuable but I deny their fitness for steep and stone country, particularly in wet weather . . . Although our rainy season and hilly country may not be congenial to these animals, we have quite enough of open plains and dry weather to assure their being greatly and extensively useful . . . If camels were abundant in the province, they would facilitate the working of rich copper mines that are known to exist in the north country, but which with our present mode of transport would remain untouched.

Camels were first imported in substantial numbers into Australia in 1866 by Thomas Elder whose partner had selected both the animals and their handlers (Afghans) mainly from northern India. They were landed at Port Augusta and almost immediately proved their usefulness in outback transport, carrying heavy materials in exploration and patrol.



(CD Ref 3964/18)

Although the number of Afghans remained small in the County of Adelaide, they needed a place of worship and in 1887 plans for the erection of the present mosque were approved. Erected in 1888-89 it was financed by the ' . . . life savings of Afghan camel train drivers'.

In 1891 the mosque and its locality were described in some detail in the *Observer*. The house of prayer and adjacent buildings gave shelter and accommodation to numerous Afghans, Arabs, and other adherents of the Mohammedan religion. Chief of the Mohammedan residents, Hadji Moolah, was the priest. For many years it was his desire to have a mosque built and so an unpretentious building in stone and brick, 37 feet in length, 25 feet in width, and about 18 feet in height was erected.

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The report continued that it was estimated that there were nearly 100 Mohammedans, mostly Afghans, in South Australia. The majority were brought to the colony under agreement for a stated period to be camel drivers in the interior. When their agreements expired, many Afghans settled in the city to become hawkers or take on other avocations. When they were impoverished they were always provided with food and shelter through the charity of the Hadji who permitted them to occupy the tenements in Little Gilbert Street.

The distinctive minarets, a later addition, were first described in the *Advertiser*, 13 May 1903 when the Afghan population was described in terms of 'many hundreds'. The mosque was supported by voluntary contributions from the majority of its worshippers working at Alice Springs and Oodnadatta as camel drivers. They contributed to most of the erection and upkeep of the building as the congregation resident in Adelaide in 1903 was small (25 to 30 worshippers). The minarets were stated to have cost £250 in total, two costing £150, the other two £100.

The building appears to be in sound condition although brickwork has been painted and the roof cladding is now of metal tiles. It is a prominent element of Little Gilbert Street and with its minarets is of considerable townscape significance in the south-west corner of the city.

ACA, *Digest of Proceedings*, 26 June 1893, 19 December 1897, 27 June 1898, 30 July 1900; *Advertiser*, 13 May 1903; *Critic*, 17 August 1904; Marsden, S., *Historical notes on camels in outback South Australia, prepared for Wadlata Centre*, Port Augusta, 1987; *Observer*, 12 June 1858, 2 August 1890, 4 July 1891, 14 May 1892, 23 June 1894, 26 February 1898.

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 MOSQUE

Building No

19/0524-1

Address 22-28 Little Gilbert Street

NUA 0618/1

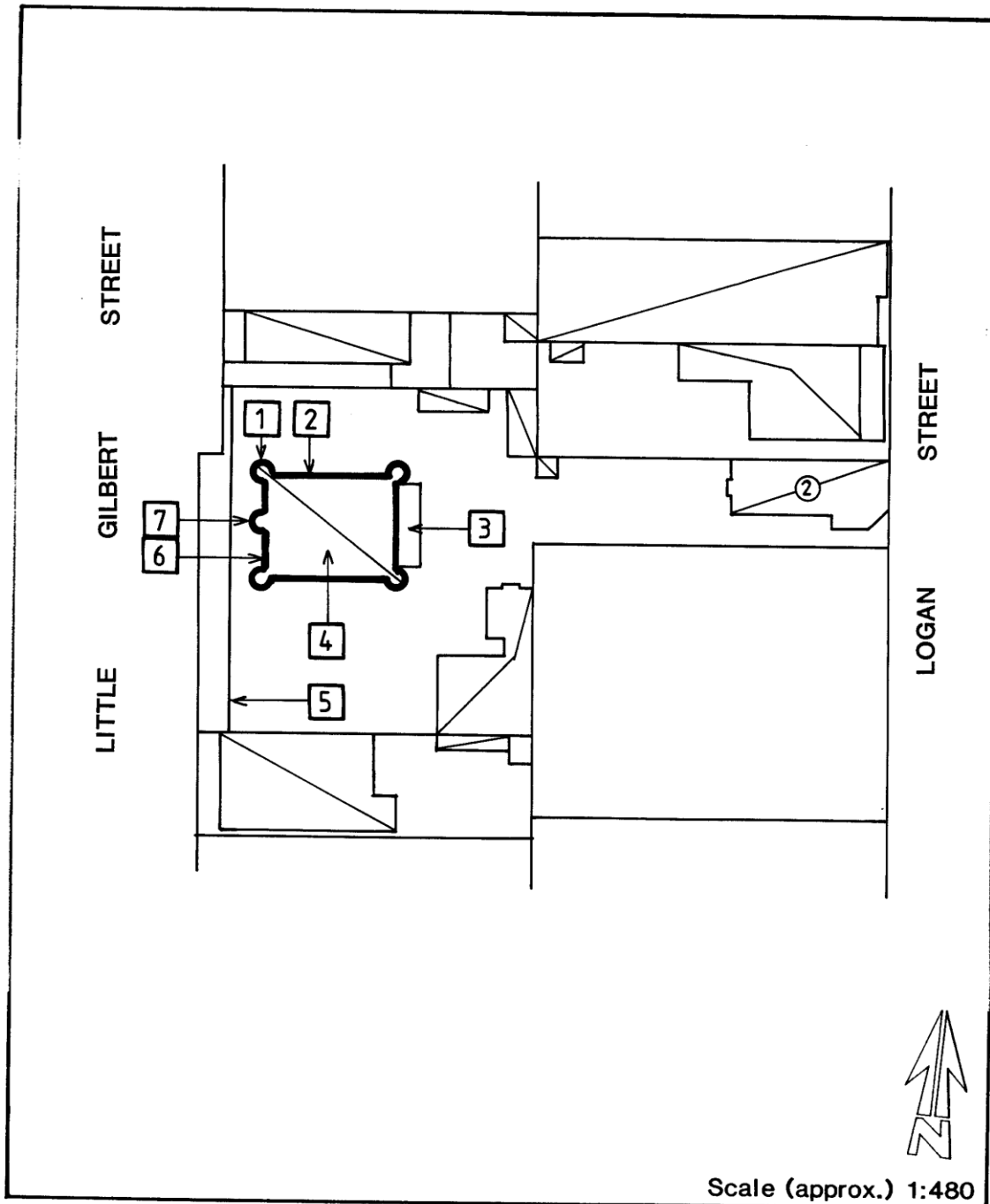


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Item	MOSQUE	Building No
		19/0524-1
Address	22-28 Little Gilbert Street	
		NUA 0618/1

NOTES:

1. Brick turrets.
2. Note Glass in all windows replaced.
3. Verandah.
4. Imitation tile roof.
5. Recently constructed brick fence provides enclosure for Mosque.
6. Coursed random bluestone with minor stucco enrichment.
7. Rendered.