

**City of Adelaide Heritage Survey (2008)**

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**NAME:** *Villa, 430-438 Gilles Street*

**ZONE/POLICY AREA:** RA2

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**APPROVED / CURRENT USE:** House / House

**FORMER USE:** Dwelling

**DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1870

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**LOCATION:** 430-438 Gilles Street

ADELAIDE SA 5000

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Adelaide City Council

**LAND DESCRIPTION:** CT-5109/127

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**HERITAGE STATUS:** Local Heritage Place

**OTHER ASSESSMENTS** McDougall & Vines, 1993

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*Villa, 430-438 Gilles Street — View to north*

**DESCRIPTION:**

This is a double-fronted asymmetrical single storey villa with an extension to the east. The walling is of margined bluestone, with rendered and painted quoins and window and door surrounds: There are decorative pilasters to the projecting room which also features a bay window. The roof is gabled and of corrugated iron with high painted chimneys: there are brackets beneath the eaves. Windows and door are timber-framed; windows are double-hung sash; the front door is timber panelled with sidelights and top lights. There is also a verandah to the front elevation with decorative posts and brackets.

The villa is located in a broad garden.

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**STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:**

This villa is of architectural value because of the high quality of its detailing, though of a common design for its period. It retains original fabric and its original form, and complements its immediate neighbour and other dwellings in the area. It is of particular heritage value because of its social history reflecting the residential development of this part of the city, particularly as the location for grand homes close to the East Parklands. It illustrates several key themes in the city's history: *2.5 City Dwellers: City, state and business leaders; 4.3 Development of the Building Industry, Architecture and Construction; 4.6.2 Victorian Houses (1870s to 1890s); and 4.6 Heritage and Building Conservation.*

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**RELEVANT CRITERIA (Under Section 23(4) of the *Development Act 1993*):**

This building is recommended for Local Heritage listing because it meets the following criteria:

- (a) it displays historical, economical or social themes that are of importance to the local area which was once predominantly residential; and
  - (d) it displays aesthetic merit, design characteristics or construction techniques of significance to the local area.
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**ELEMENTS OF HERITAGE VALUE:**

**Inclusions**

- External form and scale of the original building, including exterior walls and roof;
- Fabric and essential detailing of the façade.

**Exclusions**

- Interior detailing;
- Additions at rear;
- New services.

NOTE: The 'Description of Place and Elements of Heritage Value' listed in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan for this property are as follows:

#### Dwelling

External form, building (including bluestone additions, original fabric and stucco detailing of facade and external walls, verandah, roof, and chimneys). Excludes later rear additions.

This is the legally recognised listing and should be used for the purposes of development application assessment.

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#### **BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

In 1868 James English of Norwood, Esquire, was the owner of Part Town Acres 585 and 586, containing just over an acre and located on the corner of Gilles and St John's Streets. 'Captain' English built the house, 'a nice little Italian villa of nine rooms' on this part of the property in 1870. The architects were English and Rees and the builders were Brown and Thompson. The *Register* gave the following description:

It is furnished with bathrooms, pantries, and every requisite, and finished in superior style. A bay window projects at the eastern end with enriched pilasters on either side, and the remaining portion of the frontage has a wide verandah of ornamental design.

On 15 September 1871 English leased this portion of his land with the house to John William Downer for a period of five years, with the right of purchase at £1,400. In September 1876, Downer opted to purchase the property with his brother, Alexander George Downer, and the title gives both as owners. In July 1877, the title was transferred to John William Downer. However, Alexander George Downer lived at the residence and was registered as the owner in the Assessment Records.

Sir John William Downer (1843–1915) was a lawyer who became a prominent barrister and, with his brother George, founded a leading legal firm, G & J Downer. In 1878, he became a QC and also a member for Barossa in the House of Assembly; he was Attorney-General and State Premier in the 1880s and again for a short period in 1892. He was a member of the constitutional and drafting committees at the Australasian Federal Convention of 1897 in Adelaide and was elected as one of the six South Australian senators in the first Commonwealth parliament. Alexander George Downer, also a solicitor, was his elder brother and legal partner, and he lived at this residence until the late 1890s. As noted above, he was known as George, and was a noted pastoralist. By 1900, Charles H Warren had taken out a lease on the property and was living there, with others leasing the house in later years.

Sir John W Downer held the title for this property until it was transferred to Florence Way Downer, the wife of James F Downer, a son of Sir John Downer by his first marriage, in July 1907. In 1910, 1911 and 1913 Mrs Downer subdivided the property and sold portions to John Beare, Olivia Delmont and Kate and Christian Paterson. She retained the portion of the property with the house. In 1923, this property was transferred to Wilfred Docker, a clerk in Holy Orders; Joseph Bruce, storekeeper; and Cecil Moyes, accountant. In 1958, a Memorandum of Appointment was drawn up to vest the property in Jack Brodie, Zena Williams, Sheila Fisher and Ernest Dilena. A further Memorandum of Appointment was drawn up in 1970 and four people purchased the property as tenants in common. A medical practitioner, James Psaltis, and his wife purchased it in 1971 and sold it to Romola Enyi, a music lecturer, in 1980. Enyi died in 1988 and it became the property of George Enyi, an artist. The current owner purchased the property in 2003.

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## REFERENCES:

Adelaide City Council, Department of Building Surveying, Assessment Books, Young Ward, Town Acres 585 and 586, Adelaide City Archives: 1870 (3.1.1870); 1871 (10.1.1871); 1872 (19.12.1871); 1875 (7.12.1874); 1876 (23.12.1876); 1877 (4.12.1877); 1878 (26.11.1877); 1901 (17.12.1900); 1914 (24.11.1913).

Bartlett, Peter, 'Downer, Sir John William (1843 - 1915)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, online edition, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au), viewed December 2008.

Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, Land Services Group, Land Titles Office, Adelaide: CT119/153; CT 858/85; CT 963/29; CT 4325/677.

McDougall & Vines, *City of Adelaide Townscape Context and Local Heritage Assessment*, Adelaide, 1993.

*South Australian Register*, 31.12.1870, p. 7.