

City of Adelaide Heritage Survey (2008)

NAME: *FSMA HOUSE, 52-56 Gawler Place*
Former Claridge House

ZONE/POLICY AREA: *CBA - PA14*

APPROVED / CURRENT USE: Offices / Shop

FORMER USE: Commercial

DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION: 1926–1927

LOCATION: 52-56 Gawler Place
ADELAIDE SA 5000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Adelaide City Council

LAND DESCRIPTION: CT-5556/385

HERITAGE STATUS: Local Heritage Place

OTHER ASSESSMENTS Donovan, Marsden & Stark, 1982; McDougall & Vines, 1993



FSMA House (Former Claridge House), 52-54 Gawler Place—View to southeast

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Former Claridge House

ZONE/POLICY AREA: *CBA - PA14*

DESCRIPTION:

Six-storey Inter-War Classical Revival commercial building constructed to Gawler Place alignment and extending through to Francis Street at rear. Built on a medium sized city allotment, the reinforced concrete rendered building has strong vertical façade surmounted by projecting cornice with brackets and central protruding bay with elaborate pediment treatment with brackets beneath the cornice and recessed balcony on fifth floor. Façade articulated by metal panels to window widths and metal framed windows. Strongly coursed vertical pilasters which vertically divide façade. Cantilevered awning. Major alterations at ground floor level. Francis Street façade of unadorned render. Basement windows evident.

The assessment includes the whole of the building, with particular attention to the detailing of the western elevation: it also includes an appropriate relationship between interior floors and external features such as windows and doors.

The assessment does not include detailing to southern eastern and northern elevations, alterations to the ground floor shopfront, the cantilevered verandah, nor interiors.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

The building is of heritage value as a prominent work of architect Philip Claridge with its fine detailing in Classical Revival style, because it retains original fabric and for the manner in which it reflects the changed nature of commercial activity in Gawler Place. It illustrates several key themes in the city's history: *3.1 Economic Cycles; 3.6.1 Company Offices; 4.3 Development of the Building Industry, Architecture and Construction; 4.5.4 Inter War Commercial Styles (1920s to 1942); 4.6 Heritage and Building Conservation; 4.7.1 Adaptive re-use; 6.4.3 Friendly Societies.*

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; and
 - (d) it displays aesthetic merit, design characteristics or construction techniques of significance to the local area; and
 - (e) it is associated with a notable local personality, architect Phillip R. Claridge.
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ELEMENTS OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Inclusions

- External form and scale including exterior walls, façade elements, plaster work, bays and roof;
- Fabric and detailing of the façade.

Exclusions

- Interior detailing
- Modern entry/window system at ground floor
- 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:

Offices (Former Claridge House); external form, in particular the fabric and detailing of façade. Excludes incongruous later shopfronts.

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

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Shops previously occupied the Claridge House site. The clients for the building, Claridge House Ltd, were a new company with a capital of £60,000. Its shareholders included Philip R Claridge, architect, and Murray C Richardson, contractor.

Claridge House was designed by architect Phillip R. Claridge with Murray Richardson appointed the general contractor with cost of construction expected at £45,000. Other contractors included: Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company (reinforced concrete work); King & Son (carpenters and joiners); Swann & Sons (plumbers); WH Pitcher & Son (painters); Unbehau & Johnstone Ltd (electrical); A Neat (plaster); Pitts (pressed cement work); Clarksons (glass); CH Martin (lift screen); and TA Powell (hardware).

Constructed during the period 1926–1927, the building was a mix of retail, commercial and professional use: at ground floor level was a spacious arcade catering for shops and island shops, while the upper floors provided commercial and professional rooms. A feature of the building was the use of reinforced concrete as a fireproof construction method. At the time of the first tenants taking up occupation, the *Register* noted that the building presented many interesting features including the green cement façade. The article continued:

The employment of colour on the exterior of buildings is a revival of a very old tradition which, with the more extended use of terra cotta and cement stainers, will probably revolutionise the appearance of our cities. The “trim” of Claridge House is in pink terra cotta, and there is no doubt that the general appearance is very striking. This terra cotta was executed in Sydney by Wunderlich’s Limited to designs prepared by the architect, and the monster keystone to the arch over the balcony at the top of the building, itself 6ft. high, is something of a triumph in terra cotta for the Australian factory. A study of the exterior ... will indicate how the vertical lines have been emphasised, the

horizontal features having been subordinated behind pressed metal panels, also the work of Wunderlich Limited.

The cantilevered awning over the footpath was of reinforced concrete—reputed to be the first of its kind in Adelaide—and the concrete roof (covered in Neuchatel asphalt) was one of few in Adelaide constructed in this way at the time.



B.4839, April 1928 (SLSA)



B.4840, May 1928 (SLSA)

Philip Claridge was a leading South Australian inter-war architect whose firm and that of Woods Bagot were later responsible for the design and supervision of the former Bank of New South Wales on the corner of King William Street and North Terrace. Claridge was President of the South Australian Institute of Architects (1925–27) during the period Claridge House was constructed.

This building was effectively combined with the present Allans House immediately to the south in 1957. At that time David Murray occupied the basement of this and the whole of the building adjacent to the south. On 19 August 1957 Council approved plans for alterations for the demolition of curtain walls on all floors between the two buildings and the breaking of openings between the two buildings in the basements. Architects for the alterations were Stapledon, Hodge & McMichael.

FSMA acquired the property in 1977 subject to existing tenancies. Remodelling for the purposes of FSMA began in May 1979, in the process closing Claridge Arcade that had provided access between Gawler Place and Francis Street. This was completed in October 1979 and head office operations were transferred from temporary premises in Hindley Street on 14 November 1979.

In 1991, internal and external alterations were carried out including a new shopfront and canopy and 2005 further shopfront alterations were undertaken.

REFERENCES:

Adelaide City Council, Department of Building Surveying, File No. BAP.11716, 58–60 Gawler Place, Adelaide City Archives.

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Page, Michael, *Sculptors in Space: South Australian Architects 1836–1986*, RAIA (SA Chapter), Adelaide, 1986, pp. 168-69.

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State Library of South Australia, Library Database (Photographs): B.4712, 1928; B.4839, 29.4.1928; B.4840, 1.5.1928.

THE BUILDER incorporating The Town Planning and Local Government Journal: Vol. 7, No. 3, 20.1.1926, p. 5; Vol. 7, No. 29, 4.8.1926, p. 7.

The Builder: Journal of the Building Industry of South Australia, Vol. 7, No. 41, 27.10.1926, p. 9.