

REMAINS OF FORMER DESTITUTE ASYLUM (Chapel, Store, Lying-In Hospital and Female Section)

Kintore Avenue

The Destitute Asylum was once a large complex clustered around three quadrangles with a varied collection of buildings of 'largely official Jacobean imitation'. It was part of a government institution which cared for some of the poor and infirm. The four remaining buildings are grouped around one of the quadrangles. These buildings are an important reminder of the role that the government has played in social welfare.

The government of South Australia was forced to take some responsibility for destitute immigrants almost immediately after the colony was established. Some stepped on to South Australian shores as orphans or as widows with children or later found themselves destitute through illness or unemployment. It became necessary also for the government to set up 'Emigration Square' on the north-west Park Lands to house most assisted colonists and help those who found themselves in difficulty or could not move on immediately into jobs or independent housing. Emigration Square was to become the first location for the Destitute Asylum.

Very soon the government was forced to take destitution more seriously as the number of people dependent on aid increased and the accommodation crisis grew. A destitute board was set up in 1849 to superintend the 'relief of the destitute poor' and to manage the Destitute Asylum when it was established in 1852. In the meantime temporary accommodation was provided from 1851 on the site of the barracks complex on North Terrace.

In 1857 the first building was constructed around which the Destitute Asylum grew. This was the 'Native School' which no longer exists. Many other buildings were constructed on the site of the asylum by 1885, but only four buildings survive.

Besides the old and sick, poor pregnant women, and abandoned children, the superintendent, matron, and attendants lived there. For sixty-five years the asylum admitted thousands of colonists and provided ' . . . what aid the community, in the guise of the officials who worked there, thought they deserved.' Alongside the Destitute Asylum were housed a military garrison and a police force. In 1859 the Imperial Garrison built a barracks which was used by them until 1870. Between 1863-66, when the Imperial Garrison was involved in the Maori wars, its barracks was temporarily taken over by the asylum. By then the problem of housing for destitute children was acute, as the asylum also became a refuge for decrepit and chronically ill people, and for destitute pregnant women.

In 1866, when the garrison returned to reoccupy their barracks until they were repatriated in 1870, space was so acute in the asylum that temporary accommodation was found for its children in the 1860 first Exhibition Building (now demolished). In 1870 their premises were taken over once again by the asylum. The accommodation crisis was also alleviated by the building of the Industrial School at Magill and the purchase of the Grace Darling property at Brighton.

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The most important building in the complex is the former Lying-in hospital. One of the major functions of the Destitute Asylum was the provision of welfare for destitute pregnant women. This was set up because no other agency at that time was prepared to take on this responsibility. Victorian attitudes to welfare and sexual mores find expression here; the problems caused by sexual promiscuity could be condemned, but could not be ignored.

In 1867 the board complained that ' . . . in the females' quarters there are no means of separating women admitted for their confinement from the other female inmates'. It was considered distressing for young women to witness other women's labour, particularly when the labour was complicated or when there was a death. During six months in 1876 twenty-five single women and two married women used the quarters. When the new building was constructed in 1877-78, the women were separated, but not, however, to alleviate their distress in witnessing another's confinement, but to separate them into three classes:

- *Those who have only once 'fallen' with whom any married woman who might take advantage of the institution was placed.*
- *Those who have had illegitimate children previously.*
- *Prostitutes.*

In 1877-78 the new two storey lying-in hospital which was built by Brown and Thompson on the western boundary of the girls reformatory yard, accommodated about thirty women. Before it was completed it was decided to enclose the ends of the balcony ' . . . in order that no communication should be held therefrom with the street'. As a result the building presents a grim, blank bluestone rubble wall to passers-by.

When the new lying-in hospital building opened the number of women using it greatly increased. In his half-yearly report to the end of 1879, the chairman declared that:

The Lying-In hospital was held in such high regard as to be known all over the colony, as well as in Queensland and Western Australia, as being a very comfortable lying-in hospital. The result of such reputed comfort has been to bring females from every part of this colony, as well as from the above-named colonies, for confinement; and no less than fifty-six females have availed themselves of the comforts of this place during the half year, at a much increased cost to the Government.

The chairman's statement was perhaps too optimistic for, during an enquiry in 1885 into the Destitute Act of 1881, Dr Clindening gave evidence that 'women look upon the home as a sort of prison, and the six month detention deters many from going in.' It was not unknown for a mother with her baby under her arm to escape 'over the wall'.

From the 1870s there were alternatives to the asylum's lying-in hospital such as St Joseph's Refuge, the Norwood Female Refuge and later the Salvation Army which all provided lying-in hospital facilities. The lying-in hospital of the Destitute Asylum rapidly declined in popularity but continued to function until 1918 when the commonwealth government introduced maternity allowances for all expectant mothers.

The government Department of Chemistry took over the lying-in hospital when it closed in 1918. A new brick laboratory was built and the existing buildings modified.



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Of the individual surviving buildings, the 'chapel' was originally built in 1865 as a schoolroom for the orphaned children of the Destitute Asylum. The walls are of random rubble bluestone from (Glen Osmond) with quoins and window surrounds of brick.

The cell block attached to the western end of the former schoolroom was erected late in 1872 and was associated with the girls' reformatory which was on the site at the time. This block graphically demonstrates contemporary attitudes towards child reform - even though it is doubtful that the cells were ever used to isolate the girls.

Sometimes these girls were totally unruly. In mid-1872 they engaged in ' . . . violent quarrellings, the very foulest language uttered in the loudest tone, yells which can be heard in Rundle Street and wholesale destruction of their clothes and of Government property.' The letter detailing these outrages noted a proposal to erect cells to control the girls. These were built, but ' . . . have never been used. The girls are now generally docile, and well behaved'. Later 'outrages' were dealt with by committing the offending girls to the charge of police where they were curbed by periods in gaol rather than detention in the reformatory cells.

The offices/stores building in the south-eastern sector is one of the oldest buildings on the site. The original Glen Osmond bluestone portion with a slate roof was built in 1867 as ' . . . two additional offices near the Board Room at the Destitute Asylum'.

The eastern side of the site reflects the ad hoc development of the asylum and was also associated with the girls reformatory from 1871 to 1881. In 1876-77 a new girls' dormitory was added on to the laundry/kitchen building with two rooms being used as labour and confinement rooms associated with the lying-in wards of the original asylum. In 1885 additional mothers wards were built by J.L. Codd.

Some relief for the occupants of the asylum was provided when the Old Folks Home was opened at Magill in 1917 by which time the number of residents at the asylum had peaked at over 600. Soon afterwards, as the *South Australian Register*, 27 April 1917 reported:

The Chief Executive Officers of the Destitute Board have stayed behind, the outdoor relief department is in operation as previously, and the lying-in ward has not been moved. Otherwise, these historic and dismal premises are unoccupied.

The remains of the former Destitute Asylum, the Mounted Police Barracks and Armoury have been extensively renovated and updated between 1985-87 by Danvers Architects. They now

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function as the Migration and Settlement Museum, a Police Museum and administrative offices.

Burden, M., *Lost Adelaide*, 1983, p. 188; Dickey, B., *Rations, residences and resources*, 1986, p. 27; Donovan, P., (DHC), *Museum redevelopment conservation analysis, Destitute Asylum*, December 1983, p. 75; MLSA, Historical photographs; Parliamentary Papers 1886, *Second and Final Report of Commission appointed to report on the Destitute Act, 1881, together with minutes and proceedings, evidence and appendices*, pp. xxix, 304; SA Museum, *Redevelopment heritage study*, 1980, pp. 24-5; *South Australian Register*, 27 April 1917; Spry, A.H., 'South Australian Museum redevelopment - materials survey' in *AMDEL Report*, No. 1339, 1980, p. 34; Sumerling, P., 'Infanticide, baby-farming and abortion in South Australia, 1870-1910', BA Hons. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1983, pp. 7, 47.

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	Former CHAPEL, DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building No 126001
Address	Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	

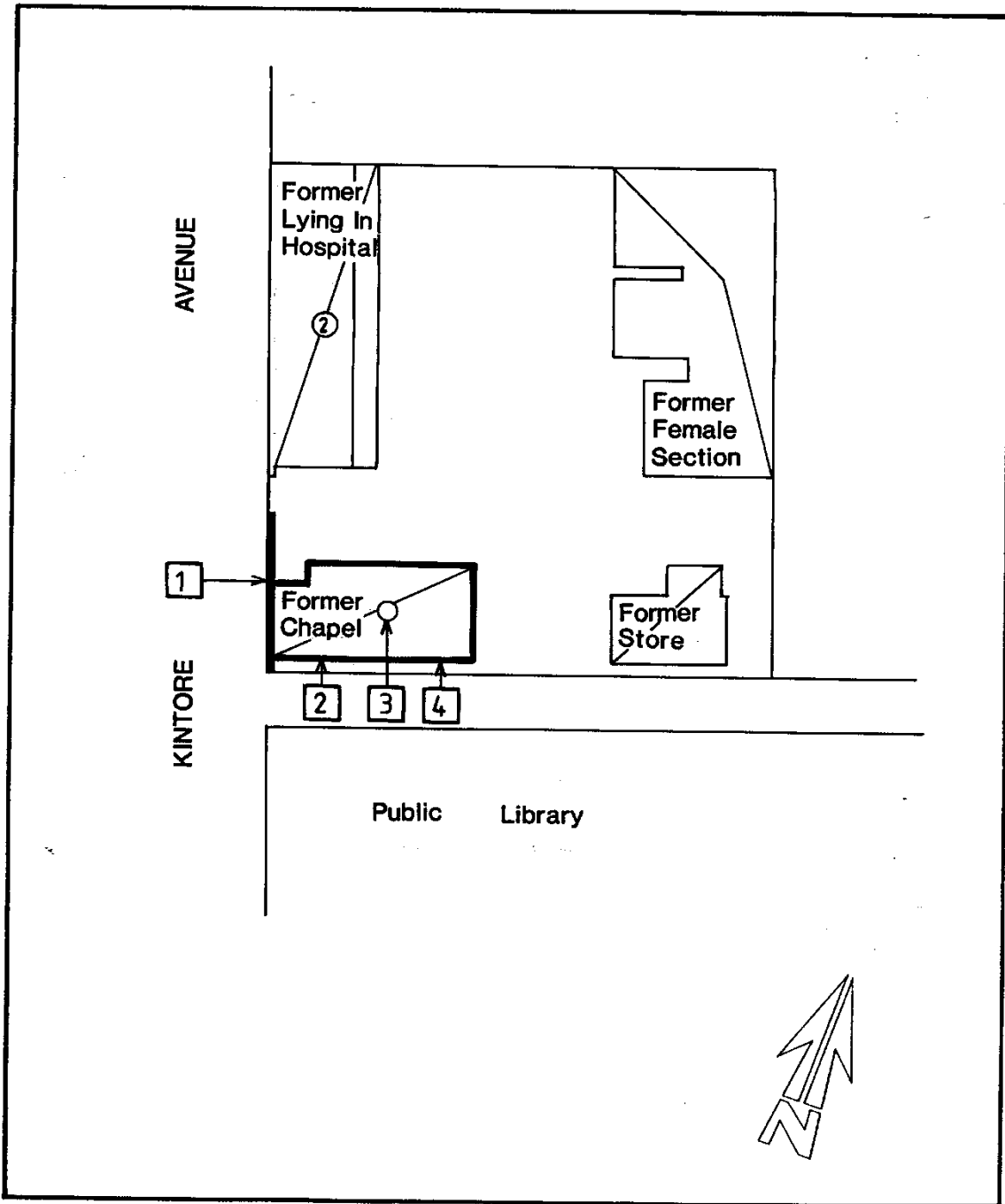


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Item	Former CHAPEL, DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building No
Address	Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	126001

NOTES:

1. Bluestone fence.
2. Dentils.
3. Cupola.
4. Bluestone rubble with brick quoins and some sandstone detailing.

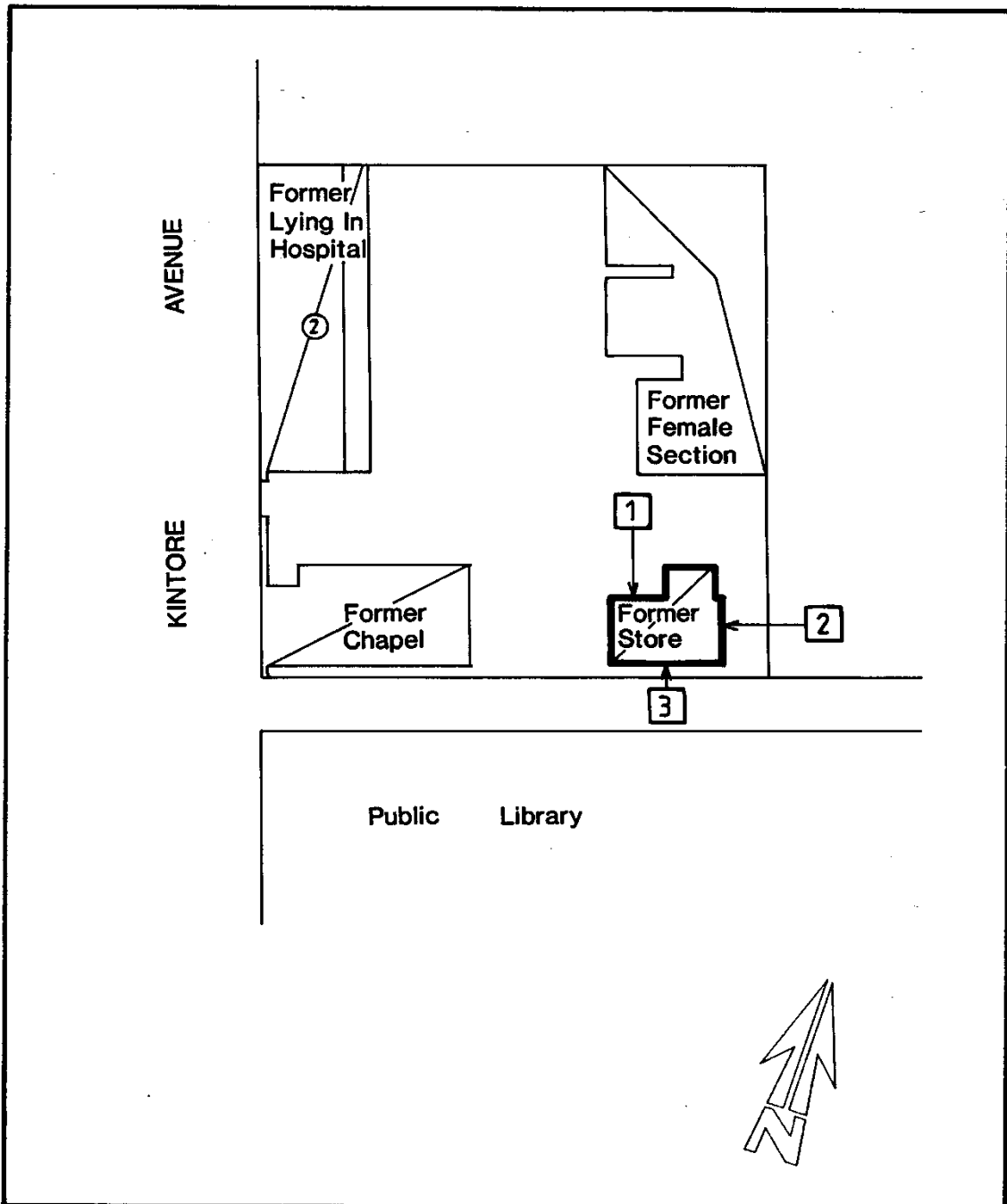


CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	Former STORE, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building N ^o 126002
Address	Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	



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The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item Former STORE, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM

Building No
126002

Address Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)

NOTES:

1. Bluestone rubble with brick quoins and some sandstone detailing.
2. Plastered facade where abutting building recently demolished.
3. Rendered facade.



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The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	Former LYING-IN HOSPITAL, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building N ^o 126003
Address	Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	

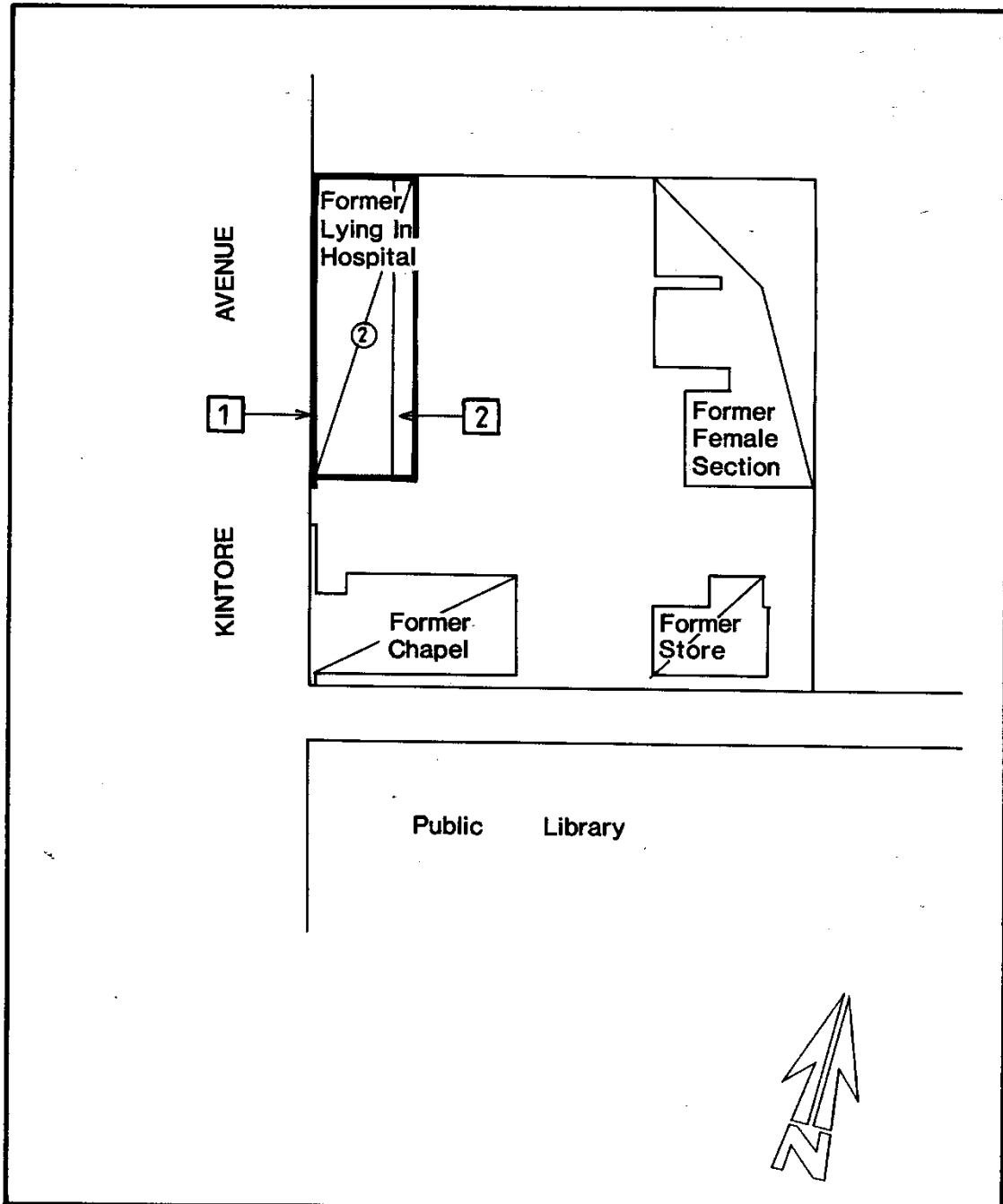


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Item	Former LYING-IN HOSPITAL, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building No 126003
Address	Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	

NOTES:

1. Bluestone rubble with brick quoins.
2. Note Balcony filled-in - curtilage includes only remaining portions of original structure.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	Former FEMALE SECTION, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building N ^o 126004
Address	off Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	

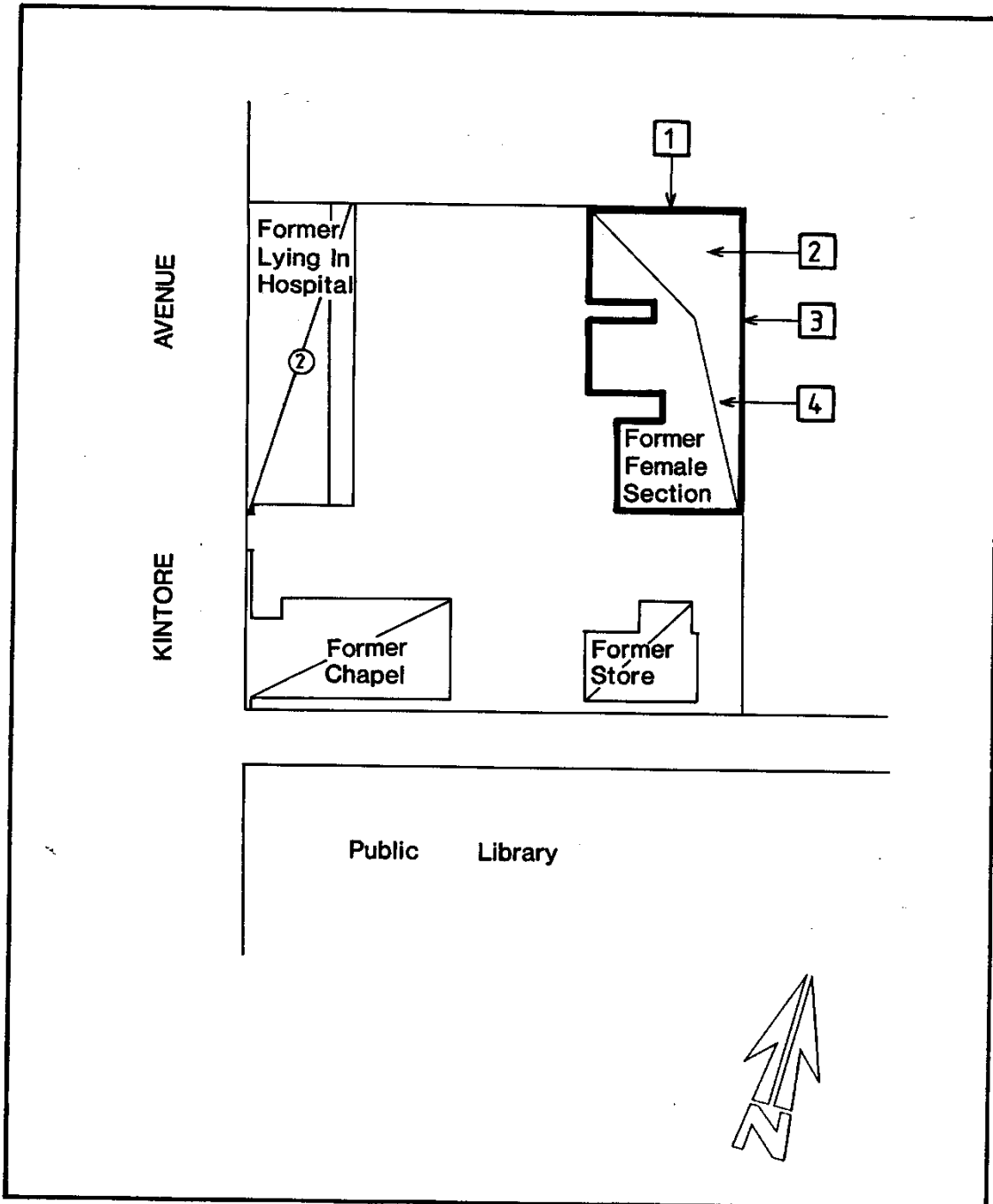


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Item	Former FEMALE SECTION, PART DESTITUTE ASYLUM	Building No 126004
Address	off Kintore Avenue (Park 12.60)	

NOTES:

1. Bluestone facade.
2. Brick (Flemish Bond) with bluestone plinth.
3. Rendered.
4. Bluestone rubble with brick quoins.