

BARR SMITH LIBRARY

University of Adelaide

Off North Terrace

This classically derived building is in stark contrast to Walter Hervey Bagot's other university building, the Bonython Hall, which was built in the mediaeval Gothic style. The library, of red-brick, stone dressings and freestone portico, is reminiscent of Georgian England, imposing, but elegant. It has also been likened to similar buildings at Harvard University. The original library complex dominates the main university lawns opposite the Victoria Drive Gates, enhanced by mature trees, and blends with the various other buildings also in red-brick and of this century.

The Barr Smith Library is a memorial to Robert Barr Smith who from 1892 bequeathed large sums of money to purchase books for the university library. After his death in 1915 the family made the maintenance of the Library its concern. Following his father, Thomas Elder Barr Smith became a member of the council in 1924 and offered £20 000 for a new library to relieve the congested state of the one in the Mitchell Building. He increased his gift to cover the expected building cost of £34 000.

Walter Bagot chose a classic style for the proposed library. The pamphlet describing the official opening of the Barr Smith Library stated that:

The tradition that the mediaeval styles are appropriate to educational buildings dies hard; but it is dying. Climate is the dominant factor, and a mediterranean climate such as this should predispose us to a mediterranean, that is to say, a classic form of architecture . . .

The design was influenced by those of Sir Christopher Wren for Kensington Palace and an addition at Hampton Court. Bagot brought his ideas back from England for adaptation to the local environment. The exterior was built in brick by H.S.C. Jarvis, and the Murray Bridge freestone portico was constructed by SA Monumental Works Ltd.

The decoration of the reading room was designed for restful effect. The 'oak' furniture and parquetry were the deepest notes of a scheme which lightened gradually towards the ceiling. This was finished in tones of antique ivory and gold with a contrasting tint of soft green, itself an echo of the colour of the terrazzo frieze:

The detail of the acanthus and other plastic ornament with which the coffered panels of the ceiling are enriched has been heightened by a dark overglaze applied over a light ground, and then wiped off the highlights.

Bagot intended that the facade with the portico facing Frome Road would head the main entrance into the university. The poplar trees in an avenue are a reminder of those plans.

The Barr Smith Library was officially opened by the governor Sir Alexander Hore-Ruthven VC on 4 March 1932 in the presence of a picturesque gathering of guests in which the

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academic dress of professors and others mingled with coloured gowns of women and the more sombre attire of men.

Despite many additions to the complex since then the main reading room is unchanged and its appearance is as calm and beautiful as ever, the decor, fixtures and fittings of the 1930s contrasting markedly with the severe utilitarian interiors of the more modern sections of the library.

Edgeloe, V.A., *Guide to the University of Adelaide*, c. Early 1980s; *News*, 4 March 1932, 5 June 1933; *Register*, 29 September 1930; *University of Adelaide: official opening and inspection of the Barr Smith Library, March 4, 1932*.

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.

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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 BARR SMITH LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Building No
122005

Address North Terrace (Pk. 12.20)

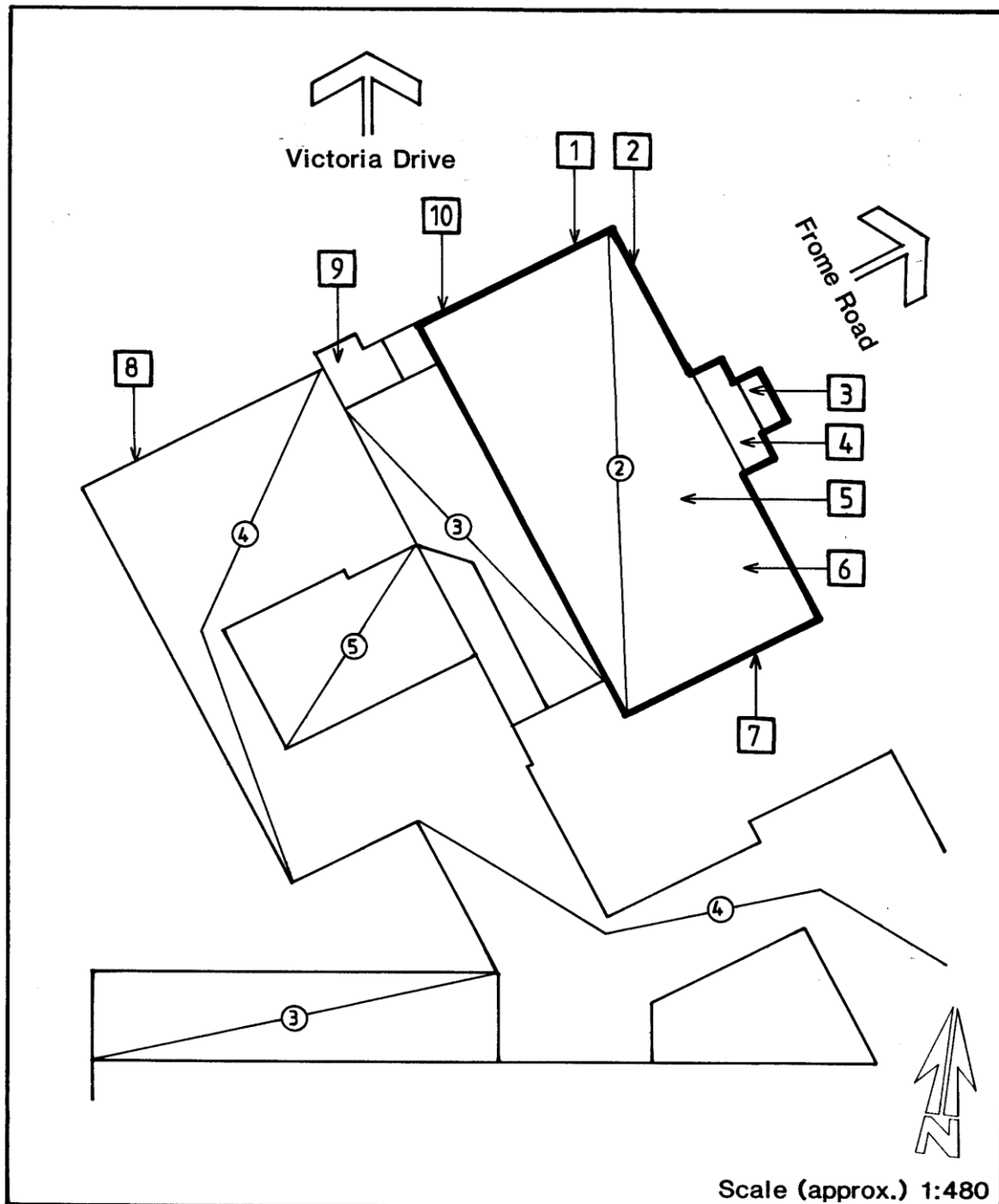


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Item	BARR SMITH LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE	Building No
Address	North Terrace (Park 12.20)	122005

NOTES:

1. Brick construction and detailing with rendered rusticated ground floor.
2. Note: Brick and rendered pilasters.
3. Steps.
4. Portico with columns and inscribed pediment.
5. Note: Elaborate internal space with coffered ceiling.
6. Note: Terra cotta tiled roof with dormer windows.
7. Note: Use of 35 pane windows.
8. Brick addition with rendered rusticated ground floor.
9. Steps.
10. Note: Detailed rendered entablature.