

## GOVERNMENT HOUSE, GATEHOUSE AND DOMAIN WALLS

### North Terrace

South Australia's first governor, Governor Hindmarsh, wrote in May 1837, 'I have but one end of my mud hut finished and all my family lay on the floor of one room while two smaller ones serve for Mrs. H. myself and a female servant'. The thatched hut was crudely constructed by the seamen of HMS *Buffalo* and roundly condemned as ' . . . an extraordinary uncouth and repulsive structure'.

When Gawler succeeded Hindmarsh in 1838 he complained that only half *his* family could fit into the governor's residence, the rest using tents, and that the ' . . . consequent hindrances to the due performance of business was very great'. The hut had only one fireplace, no kitchen, storeroom, servant's room nor outbuilding, and swarmed with vermin. Thieves had removed essential parts of a wooden prefabricated building sent out for the governor's use. Gawler appointed a board to investigate the theft, and (more to the point) consider erection of a new residence.

Gawler's plans were not modest and so required the sanction of as many other officials as possible. The board which included George Strickland Kingston promptly split into factions over the cost to the colony of erecting such a building as against the disgrace of the existing centre of South Australian government.

The board decided that a house should be erected of stone rather than brick as the government controlled a nearby quarry, and prison labour might be used which would further reduce costs. In 1839 the contractors East and Breeze started work upon what was described in the *South Australian* as a splendid building in a commanding and delightful spot, two storeys high with twelve commodious rooms. The principal front faced south-east with a long suite of offices behind. With typical colonial pride this was acclaimed as one of the best buildings of its kind in the southern hemisphere ' . . . quite a palace'.

Government House was completed in 1840 and much of that original residence survives as one of the state's oldest buildings as well as one of its most important. Since Gawler this has been the home and headquarters of the representatives of the British Monarch who once presided over colonial government with the original meetings of the Legislative Council held in the governor's sitting room. The building has been intimately linked with the political history of South Australia ever since and closely connected with the affairs of the Houses of Parliament which were built later across King William Road. The governor also continued to host formal state events, dignified social gatherings and the visits of foreign dignitaries.

The old 'Government Hut' was destroyed by fire in 1841, with much loss of valuable documents. The quality of construction of the new building was soon called into question when the whole slate roof had to be retiled in 1843. In 1855-56 Government House was doubled in size when English and Brown built a two storey addition to the south-west of the main building. At the same time they erected a new guardhouse, gates and flagstaff. The stone came from the quarry in the vicinity of the present Torrens Parade Ground.

In 1862-63 the same contractors built the L-shaped suite of rooms to the north of the main house, and A.G. Chapman built a two storey section for servants' use to the west of the kitchen in 1869. Further one and two storey extensions in 1872-78 added such amenities as a conservatory, wash-house, billiard room and administration offices.

The Duke and Duchess of York opened the first federal parliament in Melbourne in 1901. To commemorate their visit an alcove with ten emblematic stained-glass windows was made and installed at the northern end of the ballroom. They were designed by E.E Troy who was by training a wood grainer and interior decorator, expanding into stained-glass work during the mid-1890s. Above the ten windows are sixteen small arched windows, each depicting an Australian bird. This form of Australiana was a very popular feature in many homes at this time and reflected patriotic fervour generated as a result of the Boer War and federation. These painted windows are delicate and lustrous.

The old conservatory to the west of the ballroom was converted into a smoking room and then in 1933-34 to part of the state rooms complex. A new ceiling was installed and probably the masonry walls and French windows.

Other sections of Government House were altered in 1939 and 1952. In 1970 the portico of the 1855 section needed a total renovation. Apart from the Tuscan columns, the rest was demolished and rebuilt, replacing the wooden balustrading. These works were done by Hansen and Yuncken. The most recent reconstruction was in 1987 when a new stone boundary wall replaced the section along North Terrace.

The original stone wall enclosing Government House domain was erected by John Williams and Robert Palmer in 1849-50 using random stone from the nearby government quarry. While the southern boundary wall has been replaced there is a section remaining on the northern and western boundaries. The wall along Kintore Avenue and part of the northern boundary was rebuilt in brick in 1937 by R.J. Nurse.

The guardhouse and stables did not last as long, falling victim to successive road widening schemes. The 1855 guardhouse and gates were removed and rebuilt in 1874 when City Bridge Road (now King William Road) was widened. The contractor A.G. Chapman used old stone, from the previous structure together with Dry Creek stone, creating an elegant and extensive loggia which was rendered, stuccoed and roofed with Willunga slate.

In the 1920s another road widening scheme of King William Road again affected the entrance gates and guardhouse. The scheme was undertaken jointly by the South Australian Government and the Corporation of the City of Adelaide and cut off 20 feet of the government domain along the western boundary and a corner of the intersection of King William Road and North Terrace. The acquisition meant the demolition of a garage, chauffeur's residence, stables and the beautiful loggia section of the guardhouse and the re-erection of the entrance gates. The demolitions caused no outcry, indeed the *Register* of 24 March 1926 stated that '... the alteration had resulted in a decided civic improvement'.

However, there was an increasing concern about encroachment on to the government domain. The 'national question' of Government House's heritage significance preoccupied politicians,

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press and public alike until the Government House Domain Dedication Act of 13 October 1927 was passed to safeguard it from future unsympathetic development plans.

As a whole, Government House is architecturally unique with its two distinct facades of 1840 and 1855. The 1840 east facing bow fronted wing with its shuttered windows is the finest example of a Regency mansion in South Australia and now forms the south-east corner. The 1855 Italianate wing facing south is the grand formal entrance.

The two main wings of the 1840s and 1855 have had little alteration. Apart from upgrading, the interior of the main building has lost none of its grace and formality of a nineteenth century viceregal residence.



(CD Ref 1725/15)

Government House and its domain is the most prestigious site in Adelaide on a prominent corner encompassing approximately 12 acres of Park Lands. It forms a major character element on the North Terrace boulevard. The park-like setting with sweeping drives, extensive lawns and large established trees is reminiscent of English country estates, while the sense of privacy and privilege is maintained by the boundary walls and fences.

ACA, City Archives letter to attorney general from town clerk, 17 June 1925; Australian Heritage Commission, *The heritage of Australia*, 1981, p. 5/15; Borrow, K.T., Government House 1837-1901 in *Pioneers Association of South Australia*, 1982, p. 4; Department of Housing and Construction Plan Room, Plans HD238-259, plans S78T52, SIIT52, 1952, Specifications 93, 1872, 191, 1873-75, 419, 1877-78, 1428, 1887, 4655, 1933, 240A70, 1970, Specification for guard house, No. 126, 1873, Specification for boundary wall, No. 43, 1867, Specification for boundary wall, No. S203, 1937; Donovan, P., & J., *A guide to stained glass windows in and about Adelaide*, 1983, p. 15; MLSA, BRG42/25, SA Company, D6550 (T),

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Historical photographs (Government Domain), RN321, RN618, PRG 50/19/5/10.12.38; PRO, GRG 24/6/15 December, 1849, GRG 24/4/3/21.12.1838, 24/6/1/5.5.1843, 24/6/no. 1473/1846, 24/6/15.12.1849, 38/21/1/2.3.1855, Pike, D., *Paradise of dissent* (2nd ed.), 1967., p. 235; *Register*, 11 July 1925, 24 March 1926, 26 April 1926; SAPP, No. 34, 1874; *South Australian*, 24 November 1838, 18 September 1839; *South Australian Register*, 2 January 1856, 1 January 1870, 8 January 1873, 24 April 1878.

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 Government House described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. The Gate House, Piers and Walling described in this Information Sheet is a place of Local Heritage (City Significance). 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

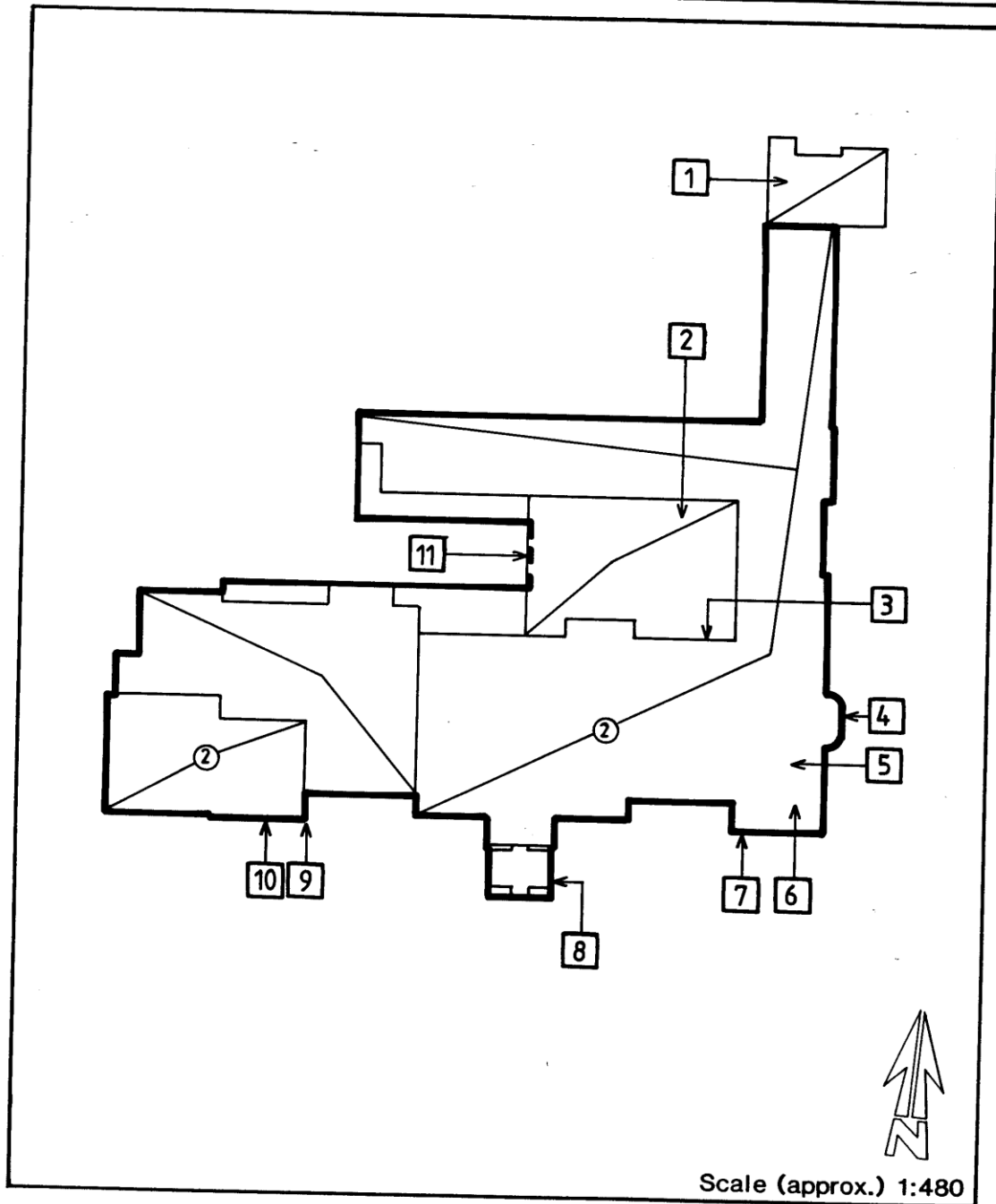
### The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Address North Terrace

Building No  
12 0501



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#### NOTES:

1. Garage.
2. Enclosed after 1880.
3. Line of building shown on 1880 Smith Survey.
4. Two storeyed bay window.
5. Slate roof to much of the building.
6. Earliest section of building. (Eastern wing)
7. Rendered masonry construction.
8. Portico with balustraded balcony above.
9. Rusticated quoins.
10. Moulded string courses around openings.
11. Curtilage unable to be precisely defined.



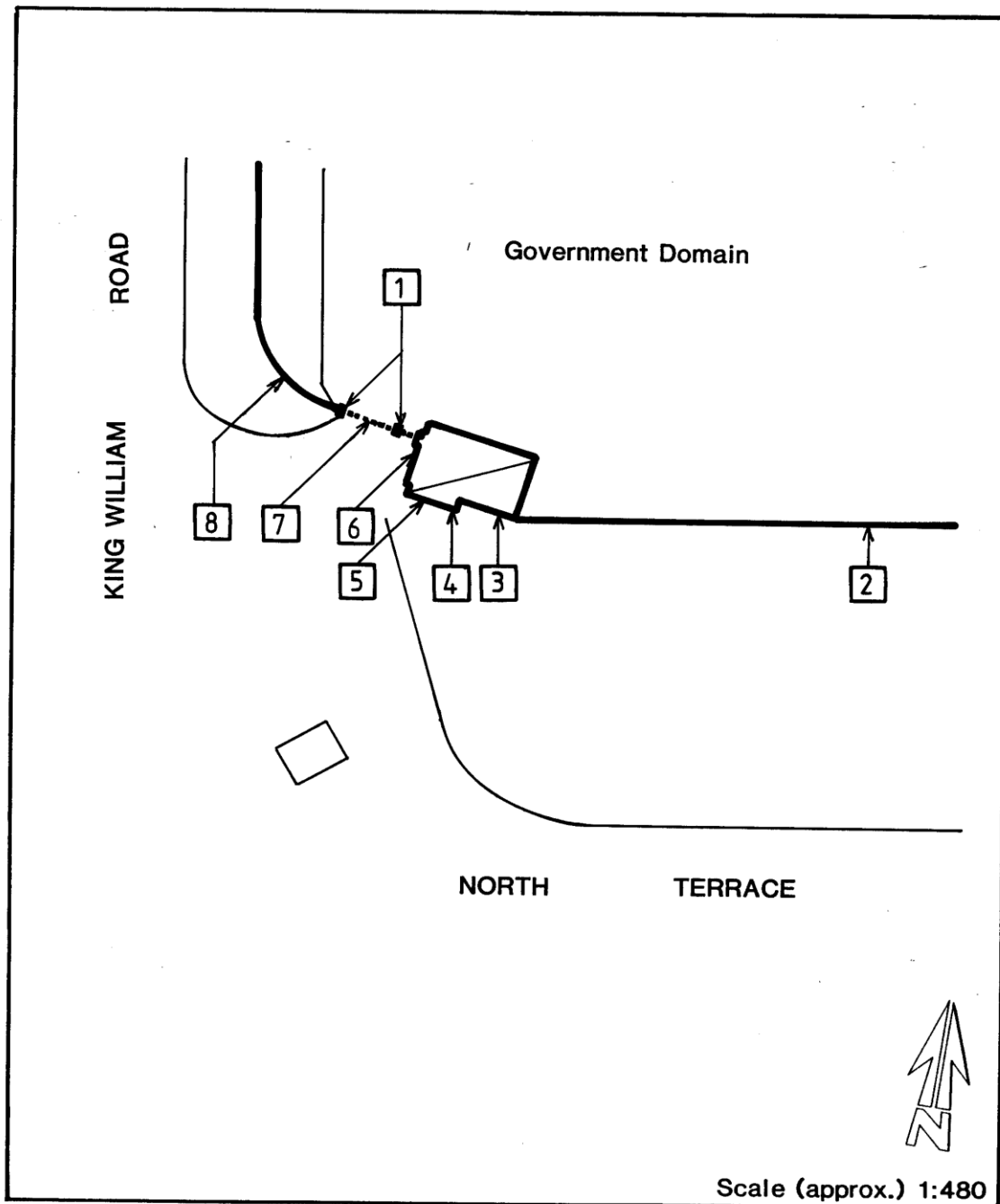


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Item	GOVERNMENT HOUSE GATE HOUSE AND GARDEN WALL	Building No
Address	Corner North Terrace and King William Road	120502



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#### NOTES:

1. Rendered pillars.
2. Limestone rubble walling.
3. Limestone rubble.
4. Rendered to approximately 2m.
5. Roughly squared bluestone with stucco enrichment.
6. Arched entry with pediment.
7. Cast-iron gates.
8. Squared bluestone walling.