

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

JOHN MCDOUALL STUART MONUMENT TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

Place Name and Address: John McDouall Stuart Monument
Victoria Square
Adelaide

DESCRIPTION:

The monument includes the statue of Carrara marble and the pedestal of Sydney trachyte. It is located in the triangular piece of garden in the north-east corner of Victoria Square, close to the onetime Treasury building.

The statue features a life size representation of explorer John McDouall Stuart in bushman's gear.

The pedestal on which the statue stands features bronze plaques that include important historical information about Stuart and the monument.

John McDouall Stuart
Explorer
Adelaide to Indian Ocean
1861–62

The bronze plaque near the foot of the pedestal at the front reads:

Erected by public subscription and presented
To the City of Adelaide on 4th June 1904 by the
South Australian Caledonian Society.
A.J. McLachlan Chief 1899–1908
Chairman Statue Committee

The bronze plaque on the eastern side gives details of :

Members of the Expedition
W.D. Kekwick
F.W. Thring
W.P. Auld
S. King
J.W. Billiatt
J. Frew
H. Nash
J. McGorrery

F.G. Waterhouse – Naturalist

Other modern plaques commemorate anniversaries of Stuart's endeavours.

Towards the base of the pedestal is a relief map of Australia that traces the route across the continent taken by Stuart and his party.

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SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME:	John McDouall Stuart Monument	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Monument	
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1904	
REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	n/a
CURRENT USE:	Description:	Monument
	Dates:	1904
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	n/a
	Dates:	n/a
SCULPTORS:	Name:	William Maxwell / James White
	Dates:	1904
BUILDER:	Name:	Walter Torode
	Dates:	1904
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	
	Category:	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Adelaide City Council
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	-
	Street No.:	n/a
	Street Name:	Victoria Square
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
	Region No.:	n/a
	Region:	Adelaide
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	CROWN
	Volume:	5779
	Folio:	247
	Lot No.:	n/a
	Section:	n/a
	Hundred:	Adelaide

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HISTORY:

As an inscription on the monument indicates it was 'erected by public subscription and presented to the City of Adelaide on 4th June 1904 by the South Australian Caledonian Society'.

The original plaster design of the statue was made by South Australian sculptor William Maxwell, though he died before the project could be taken further. The commission was completed by Sydney sculptor James White. The monument was erected by builder Walter Torode.

John McDouall Stuart, who had been a member of Captain Charles Sturt's expedition into Central Australia in 1844–46 achieved the honour of leading the first expedition to cross the continent from south to north and return successfully. This was a remarkable achievement for the period in the face of major obstacles. Stuart's feat had major implications for the immediate history of South Australia and what became its Northern Territory.

Stuart's successful crossing of the continent culminated several exploring expeditions into central Australia.

Stuart, born on 7 September 1815, at Dysart in Scotland, migrated to South Australia in 1838 where he found work with a surveying party. He was a restless man. In 1844 he joined Charles Sturt's exploring expedition in a vain search for an inland sea in Central Australia during the course of which all members of the party almost perished. This expedition introduced Stuart to both the challenges and problems of exploration in the arid interior. He made the most of the experience, first in his work as a surveyor in the area about Port Lincoln on Eyre Peninsula, and later as an explorer in his own right.

Stuart first captured the imagination of the public with his exploration of Eyre Peninsula in mid-1858. While Benjamin Herschel Babbage, publicly financed and with a large party of men, inched his way about the region to the north-west of Port Augusta, Stuart, financed by the pastoralist William Finke and with only one companion, traversed a vast region of new country in only four months. From Mount Eyre in the north the two journeyed to Denial and Streaky Bays on the west coast and returned to Mount Arden Station near Port Augusta.

Some months later, on 2 April 1859, Stuart set out for the north of the colony. Initially his aim was to survey the pastoral leases that he had received from the government as a reward for his earlier success. This completed, he turned to new exploration and succeeded in penetrating 160 kilometres to the north-west of Mount Margaret, that was itself nearly a

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thousand kilometres north of Adelaide. In so doing he found "an immense tract of country exceeding in richness of pasturage and abundance of water anything that has yet been met with". His success fueled speculation about the possibility of a south-north crossing of the continent, an achievement that the South Australian government positively encouraged when it weighed in with a reward of £2,000 for the first man to cross the continent from south to north.

Stuart made several attempts to cross the continent in the period from 1860 to mid-1862. He penetrated further north on each occasion, but the shortage of rations, lack of water, or the hostility of Aborigines, forced him to abandon each attempt.

On the fourth of his expeditions Stuart saw and named many of the features of Central Australia and was pleasantly surprised with much of the country that he passed through. Most features named by Stuart were mountains and peaks rather than rivers. The central mountain range he named after South Australia's Governor, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell, the Strangways Range after the colony's Attorney-General.

On 2 March 1860, he with two companions, William Darton Kekwick and Benjamin Head, the latter but a lad of 18 years, set off from Chambers Creek in northern South Australia to determine whether or not there was an inland sea, to establish the Centre of the continent, and, if possible, to cross to the north coast. There was a keen sense of achievement among the small party on 22 April, when Stuart's calculations suggested that they were then camped in the centre of the continent.

On this journey Stuart, Kekwick and Head travelled as far north as Attack Creek before they were persuaded to retreat. The Aborigines appeared menacing, water supplies were quickly drying up before them, the horses were exhausted, and each of the party was weak from insufficient food with Stuart himself suffering badly from scurvy. It seemed prudent to continue on another occasion. Late in June they turned homewards, following the route that they had already blazed.

Stuart had gone too far to allow others to upstage him, so set out again in 1861 to conquer the continent. His party succeeded in reaching the northern coast in Van Diemen's Gulf on 24 July 1862. They returned south suffering immense privation, with Stuart becoming increasingly weaker and their horses exhausted. William Patrick Auld, as a cadet surveyor was given the task of making the astronomical observations as Stuart became unable to do so. The party finally reached Mount Margaret Station — still 800 kms north of Adelaide — on 27 November 1862. Auld went ahead with Stuart on the last stretch of the return journey, leaving the others to follow with the horses. Stuart was in severe discomfort and a speedy return to civilization was necessary: Auld effectively nursed his leader on during the last stages of the return. They completed the journey, travelled by train from Kapunda to Adelaide, where they arrived on 17 December 1862: the remainder of the

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party arrived in Adelaide on 20 January 1863. The party were lauded at the Great Stuart Demonstration the following day, 21 January 1863.

The romantics marvelled at the adventure in the remote interior, the chauvinists revelled in the fact that South Australia's champion had done what Victorians had been unable to do, while the colony's pastoral and commercial interests eagerly awaited their chance to take advantage of Stuart's discoveries. Few remarked on the great toll on Stuart's health that the years of privation in Central Australia had taken. The government granted him £2,000 in recognition of his endeavours but he found it difficult to settle back into society, particularly because of his problem with heavy drinking. On 21 April 1864 he left South Australia to visit England. However, his health deteriorated and he died there on 5 June 1865.

On both his north and southbound journeys on this occasion he travelled a route close to that established earlier so found nothing of consequence that had eluded him in 1860. His route through the Centre lay about fifty-five kilometres to the west of what later became Alice Springs.

Stuart's endeavours opened up Central Australia to pastoral penetration from the settled areas of South Australia and led to the South Australian government arguing successfully for political control over the Northern Territory. The route he blazed across the continent paved the way for the construction of the Overland Telegraph that was completed on 22 August 1872 and, when operational, established virtually immediate communication between Australia and Europe.

Construction of the Overland Telegraph was the critical determinant of much of the early white history of Central Australia and paved the way for the pastoral penetration of the region. The construction parties did not discover much new country because they rarely deviated from the route blazed by Stuart, but the men who returned south spoke well of the region, and many of them learned skills that they were later able to turn to good use there. Perhaps, more importantly, they clearly demonstrated that white men and stock could thrive in the Centre - at least in good seasons. Moreover, the construction of the land-line, with its string of repeater stations, wells and tanks, also opened up a clearly defined overland route to the Centre and beyond that was soon followed by adventurers and pastoralists who were eager to exploit the resources of Central Australia. The telegraph also served as a datum line for later explorers in their journeys both to west and east.

The statue of John McDouall Stuart is of Carrara marble carved by Sydney sculptor James White. Noel S. Hutchison wrote of White in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*:

WHITE, JAMES (1861-1918), sculptor, was born 2 December 1861 at Liverpool, Lancashire, England, son of Robert White, journeyman shipwright, and his wife Janet, née Dunn. Apprenticed to a plasterer, James studied modelling at South Kensington. He made anatomical models for London hospitals and, while an assistant to the Scottish

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sculptor John Rhind, executed a bas-relief of John Hunter, surgeon, for the University of Edinburgh.

Having arrived in Sydney about 1884, White worked for [Achille Simonetti](#) in 1888-90 on [Governor Phillip](#)'s monument, Botanic Gardens. In 1892 White won the competition for an allegorical group on the pediment of the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage building; he was paid £252 for the completed stone figures. In the 1890s he also produced some of the stone life-size sculptures for the Department of Public Instruction building's Bridge Street facade. At Hamilton, Victoria, on 28 June 1893 he married with Presbyterian forms Jamesina Dunn, a hotelkeeper's daughter.

White had begun showing with the Art Society of New South Wales in 1891 and with the Society of Artists, Sydney, in 1896. His exhibits included his modified neo-classical plaster bust of [Professor \(Sir\) Thomas Anderson Stuart](#) (1894), a realist statuette of a bushranger, and busts of [R. B. Smith](#) (1896) and 'Conamdata—Northern Queensland Aboriginal' (1897). White advertised his willingness to sell any of his works cast in plaster or bronze, or carved in marble. In 1897 at his small foundry at Petersham he used the lost wax process to cast a statue of [William Bede Dalley](#) (Hyde Park). He campaigned vigorously for commissions for public statuary to be given to Australian sculptors. Failing to obtain the commission for a statue of [Sir Thomas Elder](#) in Adelaide in 1899 (after opposition from [Eccleston Du Faur](#)), White cast at his Annandale foundry a bronze bust of [Sir Edwin Smith](#).

Technically versatile and ingenious, in the early 1900s White became the busiest sculptor in Australia. In 1902, with the group 'In Defence of the Flag', he was the first sculptor to be awarded the Wynne prize. The enlarged cast-bronze version was sent to Perth as a war memorial next year. His numerous commissions included a carved marble statue (1904) of [John McDouall Stuart](#) for Adelaide and his monumental cast-bronze statue of [Sir John Robertson](#) in the Botanic Gardens, Sydney. White used the electrolytic copper deposit method to produce large statues of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert for Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. He worked repoussé copper for the figure of 'Commerce' (1902-03) for the Royal Exchange building, Sydney. A founding member of the National Guild of Applied Arts and Crafts, he had moved to Melbourne by 1906.

White's reputation as an artist was shattered by the costly (£6218) marble Queen Victoria monument (1907), Melbourne. He had intended the Queen to be in bronze, but accepted the committee's demands for allegorical figures and marble. While publicly acceptable, the work was anathema to such arbiters of taste as [Bernard Hall](#). Although White received a few more commissions, by 1909 his large-scale operations ceased. His last work of any size was the marble funerary monument (1912) in Waverley cemetery, Sydney, for [Harry Rickards](#).

Survived by his wife, son and two daughters, White died of cancer on 14 July 1918 while visiting Brisbane and was buried in Toowong

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cemetery with Baptist forms. His estate was sworn for probate at £70. There are hints that White's career owed much to his ability to compromise, to his persuasive tongue, to his bombast and to his great reserves of physical energy.

The erection of the monument was the initiative of the South Australian Caledonian Society which took up the challenge in 1902, though there had been talk of a monument to Stuart as early as 1883. The survivors of Stuart's final successful crossing of the continent had traditionally met each year on the anniversary of the Great Demonstration that celebrated their achievement each 21 January and kept his memory alive. William Patrick Auld, a member of Stuart's party, was a key supporter of the idea: public subscriptions were matched by the government.

The monument was unveiled on 4 June 1904 amid controversy. None of the surviving members of Stuart's party attended, not any senior government officials nor members of the Royal Geographical Society. The surviving members of the expedition were incensed that the monument was unveiled by an officer of the Caledonian Society rather than the Governor, Premier, or mayor, and the inscription seemed to imply that the monument was a gift solely of the Caledonian Society rather than the people of South Australia generally. There had also been ill-feeling that the names of Stuart's party had originally been planned for the rear of the monument and that no mention was made of Stuart's financial backers James and John Chambers and William Finke.

There was no controversy about the location of the monument, in Victoria Square and close to the Treasury building where, on a decorated platform, Governor Daly had received Stuart and his party on the day of the Great Demonstration on 21 January 1863.

REFERENCES:

David Jones, *Adelaide Park Lands & Squares Cultural Landscape Assessment Study*, Corporation of the City of Adelaide, October 2007, p. 582.

Simon Cameron, *Silent Witnesses: Adelaide's Statues and Monuments*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1997, pp. 36–40.

Noel S. Hutchison, 'White, James (1861 - 1918)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, p. 470.

Ian Mudie, *The Heroic Journey of John McDouall Stuart*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1968.

Peter Donovan, *A land Full of Possibilities: A History of South Australia's Northern Territory*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1981.

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STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

In addition to commemorating the bold exploits of one of Australia's premier explorers, the monument to John McDouall Stuart is of heritage value for the manner it invokes the era of the exploration of the Australian continent's interior and the many consequences that flowed from this. These included the South Australian annexation of the Northern Territory, the construction of the Overland Telegraph and the pastoral penetration of the interior.

Relevant Criteria (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*):

- (a) It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history, most notably the exploration of the continent's interior, the annexation of the Northern Territory and the building of the overland telegraph.
- (e) It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics as a significant monument.
- (f) It has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it, most notably the South Australian Caledonian Society that was largely responsible for promoting the erection of the monument.
- (g) It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organization, being to the design of South Australian sculptor William Maxwell and the work of Sydney sculptor James White.

RECOMMENDATION:

The John McDouall Stuart monument — statue and pedestal — is of sufficient heritage value to be included in the South Australian Heritage Register. Its heritage value is enhanced by its location at the northern end of Victoria Square in association with the monument to Charles Sturt.

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Site Plan



JOHN MCDOUALL STUART MONUMENT

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Front elevation of the John McDouall Stuart monument: view to the east

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The rear elevation of the John McDouall Stuart monument: view to north-west

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Detail of the base of the pedestal shows the relief map of Australia with a tracing of the journey by Stuart's party. Also shown is the bronze part indicating the involvement of the South Australian Caledonian Society in recognizing Stuart and his party.