

FILE NO.: 19142

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

STATUE OF CAPTAIN MATTHEW FLINDERS PRINCE HENRY GARDENS NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Life size bronze statue of Matthew Flinders, wearing full naval regalia, mounted on red granite plinth, the south face of which bears the inscription 'Matthew Flinders, Explorer and Navigator, Terra Australis, 1774-1814'. Bronze panels on the western and eastern faces of the plinth depict maps of Flinders' route around Australia and South Australia, including places named by him.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

This statue was built to commemorate the life of Captain Matthew Flinders and in particular his extensive contribution to the exploration and mapping of a large section of South Australia's coastline in 1802. It was a belated memorial to a talented explorer and navigator whose detailed and meticulous work in exploring and mapping the 'unknown coast' between the head of the Great Australian Bight and the Murray Mouth has no equal in Australia's maritime history.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*)

- (g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.

This statue was erected by public subscription in 1934 as a memorial to Captain Matthew Flinders RN, 120 years after his death in 1814 and more than 130 years after his epic journey of exploration and mapping of South Australia's coastline in 1802.

After joining the Royal Navy in 1789, Flinders first sailed to Australia in 1795. In the following years he explored the east coast and, with George Bass, proved Tasmania to be an island by circumnavigating it in 1798-99. Flinders planned a more ambitious exploratory trip during his return to England. He set sail from England in HMS *Investigator* in July 1801 with a commission to examine and survey the coast of New Holland, with particular reference to the 'unknown coast' between longitude 130°E of and Bass Strait.

Flinders arrived at and named Fowlers Bay on South Australia's west coast in January 1802 and from there on continued to explore, map, describe and name South Australia's coastline in particular detail. A significant event during the course of

the expedition was the 'encounter' between the *Investigator* and *Le Geographe* under the command of Frenchman Captain Nicolas Baudin, in Encounter Bay on 8 April 1802. Flinders' voyage was important scientifically for the botanical and zoological work undertaken, for Flinders' thorough and innovative work on navigational and cartographical problems and for his attention to the health and welfare of his crew.

Returning to England in 1803, Flinders was detained in Mauritius and was held there for several years. Once back in England, and working with declining health, Flinders completed his monumental work *A Voyage to Terra Australis* which was published a day before his death on 19 July 1814.

Flinders' achievements did not receive the acclaim they deserved during his lifetime and, with few exceptions, it was not until the centenary of his 'voyage' in 1902 that any significant memorials to him were built in South Australia. In 1934 the first and only statue of Flinders in South Australia was erected on North Terrace.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Captain Matthew Flinders

Matthew Flinders has been described as one of the world's most accomplished navigators and hydrographers and he is remembered not only for his 'achievements in the realm of discovery but also for great improvements in the science of navigation' (Pike, p. 391).

Flinders was born in Donington, Lincolnshire, England on 16 March 1774 and entered the Royal Navy in 1789 as a means of fulfilling his ambition for a life of exploration and adventure. As a midshipman he served under William Bligh on a voyage to Tahiti in 1791 and once back in England saw action in HMS *Bellerophon* engaged in naval battle with the French in June 1794. In 1795 he sailed to Port Jackson on HMS *Reliance* and spent some time exploring the east coast of Australia. From 7 October 1798 to 12 January 1799, in company with George Bass, he circumnavigated Tasmania (then known as Van Diemen's Land), proving it to be an island (Pike, p. 389; Johns, 11-13).

On his return to England he prepared charts of the known Australian coastline and published *Observations on the Coasts of Van Diemen's Land, on Bass's Strait and its Islands, and on part of the Coasts of New South Wales*. During this time he was preparing for an expedition the results of which 'were to place him among the foremost navigators of all time.' (Pike, p. 389). During his return trip to England, Flinders had developed an ambitious plan to complete the survey of the remaining coasts of New South Wales and New Holland. After seeking support from his friend, Sir Joseph Banks, the admiralty, on Banks' recommendation, gave Flinders the command of HMS *Investigator* (ex *Xenophon*), a vessel of 334 tons. With a commission to make a complete 'examination and survey' of the coast of New Holland, and in particular the 'unknown' coast between longitude 130°E (a little east of the present WA-SA border) and Bass Strait, and to discover 'such harbours as

may be in those parts', *Investigator* sailed from Sheerness in July 1801 (Brown, pp. 48-57, 98-99).

Cape Leeuwin was sighted on 6 December 1801 and Flinders decided to make a running survey of the south coast from this point. He reached the eastern most point charted by Admiral d'Entrecasteaux's expedition searching for La Perouse (the western extreme of the 'Unknown Coast') on 28 January 1802 (Brown, p. 153; Pike, p. 390). A landing was made at Fowler Bay which Flinders named after the first Lieutenant on *Investigator*, Robert Fowler.

Flinders continued with his charting of the coast, effecting landings wherever desirable 'in order that the naturalists may have time to range about and collect the produce of the earth.' In February the *Investigator* entered the mouth of a large inlet stretching northwards (Spencer Gulf); this raised great expectations that it might be the entrance to a strait then believed to stretch upwards to the Gulf of Carpentaria but these hopes soon faded.

Pike, p. 390

The first and only real disaster of the expedition came just as *Investigator* headed northwards into Spencer Gulf. *Investigator* was anchored near the southeastern tip of Jussieu Peninsula to enable shore visits for the scientists aboard. Late in the afternoon of 21 February 1802 the cutter containing the ship's master John Thistle, midshipman Taylor and six crew members was lost with no lives saved (Brown, p. 164-170). Flinders and the remaining crew were devastated. On the following day in a small cove named, appropriately, Memory Cove, Flinders had a post erected upon which was nailed a sheet of copper engraved with an inscription to the memory of his lost crew. Flinders also named Thistle Island and several of the smaller islands in the vicinity in memory of those lost (Brown, p. 169).

The expedition continued, with the discovery of Kangaroo Island on 22 March, followed by a detailed exploration and charting of Gulf St Vincent (although Flinders apparently 'missed' the opening to the Port River). *Investigator* returned to Kangaroo Island for more supplies and then sailed east.

On 8 April *Le Géographe*, a French corvette under the command of Captain Nicolas Baudin, was sighted. A description of the meeting was entered in the journal of one of *Investigator's* crew:

8 April. At 4 p.m. a Sail was seen to windward standing towards us, and soon came so near that we discovered French colours and a Union Jack, about Sun down hailed and Captain and Mr Brown went on Board and learned it was the French National Frigate the *Géographe*, Citizen Baudin commander.

Extract from Peter Good's journal, cited in Brown, p. 183

The meeting was friendly, with Flinders telling Baudin of the provisions and water to be obtained on Kangaroo Island. The place of the meeting, about 6 nautical miles south-southeast of the mouth of the River Murray (which was not recognised as such by either Captain) was named Encounter Bay by Flinders. From this point, Flinders

continued eastward and arrived in Port Jackson on 9 May 1802, having completed his exploration of the 'Unknown Coast' (Pike, p. 390; Brown, p. 183).

After making repairs to the *Investigator*, Flinders completed a circumnavigation of the continent, returning to Port Jackson in June 1803. His return trip to England was interrupted by a forced stop in Mauritius in December 1803 because of an unseaworthy vessel. At this time England and France were at war and Flinders was arrested by the Governor of Mauritius who ignored evidence of Flinders' meeting with Baudin and the assistance he had given the French. Flinders was released 6½ years later and sailed for England on 14 June 1810. He had not wasted his time on Mauritius, working on his journals, log book and papers (Pike, pp. 390-391).

Flinders arrived back in England on 23 October 1810 and, battling ill health, worked on completing his monumental work *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. He died on 19 July 1814 the day after his work was published (Pike, p. 391).

The author of a biography of Flinders in 1914, Professor Ernest Scott, wrote of Flinders:

It is doubtful whether any other single navigator in history applied names which are still in use to so many capes, bays, and islands upon the shores of the habitable globe as Flinders did. The extent of coastline freshly discovered by him was not so great as that first explored by some of his predecessors. But no former navigator pursued extensive new discoveries so minutely and consequently found so much to name; while the precision of Flinders's records left no doubt about the places that he named when in later years the settlement of the country and the navigation of the seas necessitated the use of names. . . . He is the Great Denominator among navigators.

cited in Johns, p. 15

Early monuments to Flinders

It seemed that South Australia, like the rest of the country, was in no hurry to commemorate Flinders' achievements: the majority of monuments and memorials to him that exist were erected after the centenary of his expedition in 1902.

Flinders himself erected the first memorial to his voyages at Memory Cove in February 1802, to mark the loss of eight of *Investigator's* crew in a boating accident. The original copper sheet was replaced by a plate mounted at the head of the bay in February 1897. This was again replaced in August 1924 (SHR 14214). The remains of the original copper sheet are held in the collection of the SA Maritime Museum (HSA Files).

In 1844, on the initiative of Sir John Franklin RN, former Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land and midshipman under Flinders' command on the *Investigator*, a monument to Flinders was constructed on Stamford Hill, near Port Lincoln (SHR 10221).

The centenary of Flinders' expedition in 1902 stimulated the construction of a few more monuments. Flinders Column on the summit of Mount Lofty, built in 1885, was

dedicated in honour of Flinders on 22 March 1902, a day before the anniversary of Flinders' sighting and naming Mount Lofty (SHR 14205). On the same day an obelisk was unveiled at Nepean Bay, Kangaroo Island, to commemorate Flinders' landing on, and naming of, the island. On the initiative of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch) a plaque on Rosetta Head was unveiled on 8 April 1902, commemorating the 'encounter' between Flinders and Baudin in Encounter Bay one hundred years earlier (SHR 10353).

The Statue

The anniversary of Flinders' death in 1914 prompted calls for a suitable monument to the explorer within the City of Adelaide. In 1916 the Lord Mayor recommended the 'advisableness of the erection of a statue to Matthew Flinders' and that 'this matter should be taken in hand as soon as practicable after the war.' (Adelaide City Council Archives, 958/20, Lord Mayor's minute, 1916, p. 4).

In 1918 the President of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch), the Hon. John Lewis, suggested a statue to Flinders on North Terrace. He reiterated his suggestion during his Annual Address to the Society on 30 October 1919:

I trust that the day is not too far distant when the people of South Australia will realise what they owe to Captain Matthew Flinders, and will erect a fitting statue in a conspicuous place in the city. The vantage ground of this statue should have a clear view of Mount Lofty, the summit of which Flinders named from Kangaroo Head, Kangaroo Island, on March 23rd, 1802...

RGS Proceedings, v. 20, p. 5

The Geographical Society's Victorian branch had suggested a statue of Flinders for Melbourne as early as 1911. Eventually the sculptor Charles Webb Gilbert was commissioned in May 1923 (*Age*, 19 May 1923) and the statue, located in Swanston Street near St Paul's Cathedral, was unveiled on 8 November 1925.

Sydney, however, was the first city to complete a memorial statue to Flinders. In 1917 W H Ifould, the Principal Librarian of the Mitchell Library, had written to Sir William Flinders Petrie (the grandson of Matthew Flinders) suggesting that Petrie donate his grandfather's works to the Library. Petrie agreed to this on the condition that a monument to his grandfather was erected and the library acquired the material (including Flinders' journals from the *Investigator*, his private journal, letterbooks and realia) in 1922 (Matthew Flinders Collection, State Library of New South Wales; *Telegraph*, 1 September 1922). In December 1920 the *Advertiser* reported that 'a clay model of the statue of Captain Matthew Flinders for the Mitchell Library in Sydney [had] been completed by Mr William Colton, RA.' (*Advertiser*, 20 December 1920). The 8 foot high bronze statue mounted on a stone plinth was unveiled outside the Mitchell Library in Macquarie Street in 1925.

Meanwhile South Australia plugged away with attempts to get a statue erected. Apart from the Geographical Society, the League of Empire and the Royal Society of St George attempted to convene meetings during late 1920 and early 1921 for the purpose of initiating a fund for construction of a statue. Such a public meeting was

eventually convened on 29 April 1921 where unanimous agreement was reached on 'the desirableness of erecting in the city of Adelaide a national memorial to the illustrious navigator and of raising a fund for this purpose.' (*Register*, 30 April 1921, 8f). A further fundraising meeting was held in the town hall in July 1921, after which the *Register* reported that £1,500.3.11 had already been raised (*Register*, 30 July 1921).

The *Register* reported in January 1922 on correspondence between Mr C E Owen Smyth (in London at the time) and Professor Flinders Petrie, who had written to Smyth, stating *inter alia* that:

it is well that Adelaide is moving, but I much wish that they would have a replica of Colton's figure, as the portrait was very carefully studied. It cannot be done again, as I have now given the miniature to Sydney to go with other important letters, log books, &c., to the Mitchell Library. I tried to impress upon the Adelaide folk that Mr. Colton's statue could never be surpassed, and it was possible to get a replica for about £1,000, but the feeling was entirely against me.

Register, 19 January 1922, 6d

Frederick Johns, who had been appointed secretary of the statue fund at the public meeting in April 1921, made an expansive plea for a public memorial to Flinders in an article in his book, *A Journalist's Jottings*, published in 1922, the proceeds of which were to go towards the statue fund. He argued that:

A noble statue to Flinders should be erected in some central commanding situation in the city of Adelaide. Victoria Square, near the head of the street which bears his name, would be an appropriate site. Such a statue would be alike worthy of the heroic sailor and great man that he was, and of the people who should delight to honour him. There can be no serious disputation of the wisdom of commemorating Flinders in this manner.

The spirit of this great and noble man cannot die. Shall Adelaide forget the immortal Flinders? Shall we fail to remember his life work and all that it meant to Australia. Let us raise in sculptured bronze a memorial by which he may speak to the living and to posterity. Here in the heart of the territory which he first made known to the world let there be an enduring monument, a fitting tribute to his illustrious name, indicating his resting-place in the hearts of the people.

Johns, p. 7, 21-22

These sentiments did little to further the cause until 1929, with the exception of some strongly worded letters to newspapers in 1925 on the news of statues being completed in Sydney and Melbourne (Queale, p. 107).

In January 1929 it was reported that, owing to interest earned at 5% the statue fund had increased to about £2,300 and that Frederick Johns was pushing for the establishment of a committee to oversee completion of a statue (*Advertiser*, 7 January 1929, 23c). The *Advertiser* reported in April 1929 that 'the present time was inopportune to appeal to the public for the amount necessary to complete the fund',

but that it had been decided to 'take preliminary steps for ascertaining the probable cost of a suitable statue.' (*Advertiser*, 6 April 1929, 14a).

In March 1931 the Adelaide City Council's Markets and Parks Committee received communication from J H Gosse (who was then holding Frederick Johns' former position on the Matthew Flinders Statue Fund) and recommended that a site in North Terrace Gardens, opposite Stephens Place, be allotted for the erection of the statue (ACC Digests of Proceedings, 1930-31, Markets and Parks Committee, p. 104). (In November 1934 the Lord Mayor, on the permission of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, recommended that the North Terrace Gardens be renamed Prince Henry Gardens) (ACC Digest of Proceedings, 1933-35, Markets & Parks Committee, 22 November 1934, p. 420).

It has not been possible to determine exactly when, but Frederick Brook Hitch, FRBS, was given the commission of creating the statue of Matthew Flinders. Born in London in 1877, Hitch studied art at the Royal Academy Schools and produced some statues and memorials throughout his lifetime (Waters, p. 164). Hitch had, in 1924, won the design competition for the memorial to Captain Ross Smith in Adelaide which was unveiled in December 1927 (SHR 16181).

The *Advertiser* later reported on communication between Hitch and the Flinders Statue committee and described the statue as

representing Flinders in a calm attitude, contemplating in a general sense the accomplishment of his work of exploration. The telescope and the sextant symbolised his calling of the sea, and the broken mast and strained cables at the back of the base of the statue his misfortunes by shipwreck. His costume was that of the naval period of 1800 – the Nelson period – and had been copied mainly from one at the Royal Hospital Museum at Greenwich. Mr Hitch had stated that he was much indebted to Sir Flinders Petrie, the grandson of the famous navigator, for his assistance in regard to the portrait, in lending his miniatures and other known portraits, and for visiting and expressing approval of the preliminary bust made of Flinders, and of the final portrait as represented in the statue.

Advertiser 13 April 1934, 22b

Work on the statue proceeded during 1933. At a meeting of the statue fund committee in July 1933, J H Gosse (the chairman) reported that the Agent-General (Mr Hill) and Mr T E Barr Smith had visited Hitch's studio in London and viewed a clay model of the statue. The work was described as being satisfactory in every way (*Advertiser*, 25 July 1933, 9f). Hitch had stated that, in all probability, the casting would be completed by the end of August or early September and had provided photographs of the model and drawings and details of the proposed pedestal (*Advertiser*, 25 July 1933, 9f).

The Architect-in-Chief's department was given the work of erecting the pedestal and mounting the statue, and the Architect-in-Chief, A E Simpson, prepared the specification and drawings and called tenders for the work after July 1933 (ACC Archives, File No. 173; *Advertiser*, 25 July 1933, 9f).

The bronze statue was transported to Adelaide by the P&O Company free of charge. It was mounted on its pedestal of red Murray Bridge granite quarried from Kirchel's quarry at Swanport which had been constructed by W H Martin Ltd (Bulbeck, p. 1).

On the day of the unveiling ceremony the *Advertiser* scathingly pointed out that it was thirteen years since the meeting which adopted the motion of recognising Flinders' achievements with a suitable memorial and that it 'cannot be said that the movement has manifested any undue precipitancy in coming to fruition...' (*Advertiser* 12 April 1934, 14d).

The Governor, Sir Alexander Hore-Ruthven, unveiled the statue on 12 April 1934 at a ceremony attended by dignitaries and notable citizens including the Premier (Mr Butler), Australia's High Commissioner in London (Mr Bruce), the Lord Mayor (Mr Cain), the chairman of the statue committee (Mr J H Gosse), the Chief Secretary (Mr Ritchie), Dr C T Madigan (Scout Commissioner), Brig.-Gen. R I Leane (Commissioner of Police); the Attorney-General (Mr Jeffries) Dr A Grenfell Price, Sir Herbert Phillips, Sir Douglas Mawson, Dr Charles Fenner (Director of Secondary Education) and Sea Scout Commissioner (Commander McIntosh, RANR) (*The News*, 12 April 1934, 1, 9a).

It can be said that the statue was not located in the 'central commanding situation' suggested by Frederick Johns in 1922; indeed one tree had to be removed to enable construction of the statue and another tree on the western side of the statue had to be trimmed 'in order that the memorial may not be obscured' (ACC Digest of Proceedings, 1933-35, Markets & Parks Committee, 30 April 1934, p. 173). In March 1956 the *Advertiser* published a small article which indicated that the statue 'is largely obscured by trees at its present site' and indicated that suggestions had been made to move the statue to a more suitable and prominent site, such as Victoria Square or Mount Lofty (*Advertiser*, 20 March 1956).

REFERENCES

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- Observer*, 29 March 1902, supp.
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SITE RECORD

**STATUE OF CAPTAIN MATTHEW FLINDERS
PRINCE HENRY GARDENS
NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE**

FORMER NAME:	N/A	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Bronze statue mounted on granite plinth	
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1934	
REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	Identified to Heritage SA
	Date:	9 November 2001
CURRENT USE:	Description:	Monuments
	Dates:	1934 - present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	Monuments
	Dates:	1934 - present
ARCHITECT:	Name:	Frederick Brook Hitch (sculptor)
	Dates:	1934
BUILDER:	Name:	W H Martin Ltd
	Dates:	1934
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	Monuments and Memorials
	Category:	Monuments
MISCELLANEOUS INDEX:	Flinders/Baudin/French Contact Place	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Adelaide
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	
	Street No.:	Prince Henry Gardens
	Street Name:	North Terrace
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
	Region No.:	1
	Region Name:	Adelaide City
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	
	Volume:	
	Folio:	
	Lot No.:	
	Section:	Adjacent Government House – Section 755
	Hundred:	Adelaide

AMG REFERENCE:

Zone: 54
Easting: 280853 (WGS 84 GPS)
Northing: 6133055
Map Sheet No.: 6628-3
Map Scale: 1 : 50,000

OWNER:

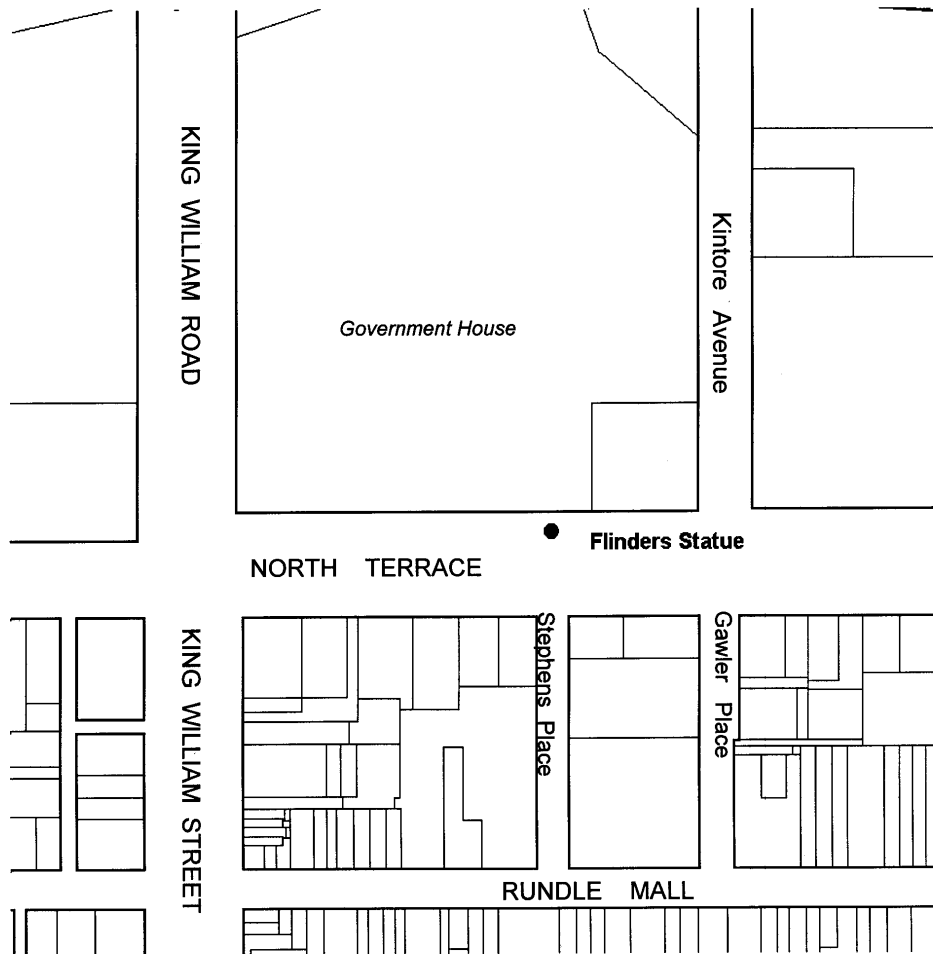
Name: Corporation of the City of Adelaide
Address: GPO Box 2252
Town/Suburb: Adelaide
Post Code: 5000

PHOTOGRAPH:

Film No.:
Neg. No.:

LOCATION PLAN

STATUE OF CAPTAIN MATTHEW FLINDERS
PRINCE HENRY GARDENS
NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE



FILE NO.: 19142

PHOTOGRAPHS

**STATUE OF CAPTAIN MATTHEW FLINDERS
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