

FORMER POWER STATION AND OFFICES

241-259 Grenfell Street

The former Power Station has important historical associations with early power generation in South Australia, and the revolutionary social and economic changes that this new technology brought about. Its location in the city exemplifies the nature and scale of power generation requirements at the turn of the century. Constructed at a cost of £8650, the station was opened by the Electric Lighting and Traction Co. in 1901 and much of the original generating halls behind the Grenfell Street office block remain. The building which faces Grenfell Street was erected in 1912-13 as offices, replacing the 1901 single storey office block. This upgrading demonstrated the development, increased use and popularity of the new technology. The ownership of the power-station also reflects the changes from private to public ownership of electricity during the twentieth century.



(CD Ref 3971/74)

As early as 1856 the new superintendent of telegraphs, Charles Todd, offered his services to establish electric light for street lighting in Adelaide even though he considered gas to be cheaper. However, more than forty years passed before electricity was established on a large scale from a central source. Until 1899 there were various privately owned plants around the city generating electricity for shops, theatres and hotels. Novel displays were made, such as the experimental trial of electric light from the top of the Post Office tower in 1881. In 1882 the South Australian Electric Light Company installed the first lighting in commercial premises, Kither's large retail butcher shop in Rundle Street (see Commonwealth Savings Bank).

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

In 1895 the Corporation of the City of Adelaide began to experiment with electric street lighting. The first electric arc-lamp was switched on at the intersection of King William Street, Hindley and Rundle streets in October 1895. Messrs Thomson of Bank Street had their own electric supply station which was supplying light to the Theatre Royal, South Australian Hotel, the Eagle Tavern and various shops, and were prepared to help the Corporation of the City of Adelaide in lighting the streets. Electric supply on a large scale commenced in 1898 after a private act of parliament in 1897 authorised the South Australian Electric Light and Motive Power Company to supply power throughout South Australia.

A power house was built in Nile Street, Port Adelaide, which was used from 1899. It rapidly changed hands, first to the Brush Electrical Engineering Co. Ltd., and then in 1900 to the Electric Lighting and Traction Co. of Australia.

This company continued to supply the whole of the direct current load at Port Adelaide until 1907 when the 4000 volt single phase supply became available from the new Grenfell Street Power House and all street lamps were changed over to alternating current. In 1904 the Adelaide Electric Supply Co. took over operations and by 1907 was supplying all electric power in Adelaide.

By the 1920s power generation requirements had outgrown the site and the Osborne Power Station was built near Port Adelaide in 1920-23. By 1930 the Osborne Power Station was providing the whole of the company's output, covering both the metropolitan area and the country.

The Grenfell Street Power Station remains a highly significant visual element in the streetscape and is of architectural note. The Grenfell Street elevation of the period 1912-13 is reminiscent of Palladian compositions, although emphasised only by shallow modulation of the facade. The elements are secondary to a dramatic horizontal emphasis set up by the boldly rusticated stuccoed base and picked up by the cement rendered strings of upper floors. The elevation to East Terrace is one of the most powerful compositions of this era to be seen in Adelaide, with manneristically handled classical elements such as rustication, key stones, arched forms and cornices. The external integrity of the building is very high, with no major alterations being apparent. The adjacent converter station building on East Terrace is stylistically similar and strongly linked to this structure (see ETSA Converter Station).



(CD Ref 3971/75)

Together with the former MTT Converter Station these two buildings make an impressive streetscape feature due to their construction, style and scale, and the siting on the Grenfell Street/East Terrace corner. These features complement and reinforce the contribution of the former Adelaide Fruit and Produce Exchange buildings opposite and the Woodmans Inn. Together they form a group of great architectural and historical significance.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

ACA, *Digest of Proceedings*, 13 March 1899, 9 April 1900; *The Commonwealth Engineer*, 1 August 1914, p. 48; ETSA, *Fifty years of public electricity supply in South Australia*, jubilee souvenir, 1949; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 155); *Observer*, 19 October 1895; *Progress in Australia*, February, 1930, pp. 7-8; *South Australian Register*, 15 April 1856.

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 POWER STATION AND OFFICES	Building No 8/0501
Address	241-259 Grenfell Street, 41-45 East Terrace, 59-67 Tam-O-Shanter Place	CT 2161/96

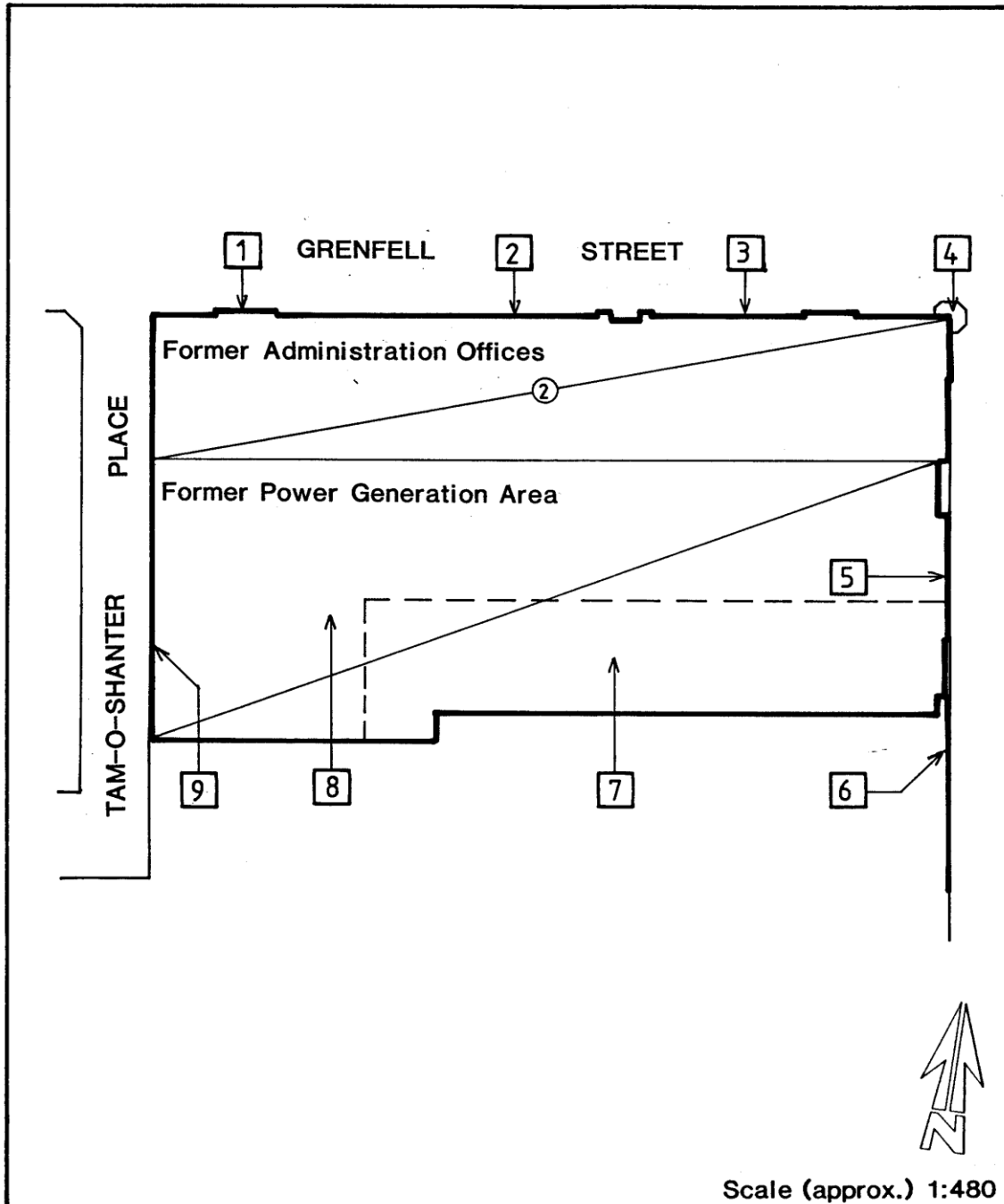


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NOTES:

1. Brick construction (English bond) at first floor level with strongly rusticated rendered ground floor.
2. Rounded pediment.
3. Rendered parapet.
4. Turret.
5. Gable over entrance.
6. Sympathetic extension of facade.
7. Iron construction.
8. Note saw tooth roof.
9. Brick (English bond).