

RECORD OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME: Woodards House

PLACE NO.: 13106

ADDRESS: 47-49 Waymouth Street Adelaide SA 5000

Physical Description

This five-storey office building was constructed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style in 1928-29. Built of load-bearing reinforced concrete, the ground floor has a rusticated plinth and the upper floors feature string courses and panelled pilasters. The ground floor features paired windows in arched frames with barley sugar columns, panels and rondels on each side of the double metal-framed sliding glass doors, also within an arched frame. Metal panels are interspaced above and below the windows between the pilasters on the upper floors, to disguise the internal floor slabs that would otherwise be visible from the exterior. These panels are decorated with circular motifs. Only one of the two lamps that flanked the front entry at either side of the door still remains. Inside the building, the foyer is largely original and has a coffered ceiling and marble dado. The original single lift still operates and the floors are terrazzo.

Statement of Heritage Significance

Woodards House, built in 1928-1929, is an outstanding example of a building constructed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style. It shows the public style of F Kenneth Milne, a prominent South Australian architect, who regarded this building as one of his most important works. Constructed as the South Australian head office of the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society, the building reflects the commercial expansion and consolidation of the capital city centre during the Inter-War period. The additional floor constructed in 1953 adds to the interest of the building by showing the effects of the Depression.

Relatively few public buildings in this style were constructed in Adelaide, and Woodard's House is certainly one of the best preserved of those that have survived.

Relevant Criterion under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

(e) *it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.*

Woodards House is an outstanding example of the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style, designed by prominent local architect, F Kenneth Milne, who regarded it as one of his most important works. Features of this style exhibited in Woodards House include a rusticated plinth, arched windows and doors and barley sugar columns at ground floor level, and metal-framed windows and decorative metal panels, string courses and pilasters on the upper floors. Relatively few public buildings in this style were constructed in Adelaide, and Woodard's House is certainly one of the best preserved of those that have survived.

The building features high quality interior finishes including polished marble, terrazzo, coffered ceilings and bronze doors and light fittings and figured blackwood panelling. Many of the original fixtures and fittings survive. Overall, both inside and out the building expresses a very high standard of design skill and aesthetic achievement, and has retained a high degree of integrity and intactness.

Extent of Listing

Components integral to the heritage significance of Woodards House include:

- Exterior walls to both street frontages including rusticated plinth, arched windows and doors and barley sugar columns at ground floor level;
- metal-framed windows, decorative metal panels, and rondels, string courses and pilasters on the upper floors;
- double metal-framed sliding glass doors;
- original internal features including foyer with coffered ceiling and marble dado, pair of brass torch lamps, terrazzo floors and original single lift cage.

The extent of listing *excludes* non-original interior features and additions.

History of the Place

Woodards House was built in 1928-1929 as the South Australian office of the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society Limited. The building was designed by the architect F Kenneth Milne, who first set up practice in Adelaide in 1909, and by the 1920s was one of South Australia's leading architects. The firm was known as Milne and Evans at this time. Woodards House is a fine example of a building constructed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style. This was an international style adopted by Australian architects, constituting a reinterpretation of the Italian Renaissance palazzo façade. It was usually large in scale, with a strong relationship to the street alignment. Features of this style exhibited in Woodards House include a rusticated plinth, arched windows and doors and barley sugar columns at ground floor level, and metal-framed windows and panels, string courses and pilasters on the upper floors. The

builder was Queensland contractor, F Fricker, who was also the applicant for building approval.

The Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society Limited was founded in Norwich, England in 1797 by Thomas Bignold and set up another section, the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society, in 1808. Both then became the Norwich Union Society. The Company's presence in South Australia began in 1874 when J Gilbert Boothly opened an agency in Adelaide. In 1898 the Norwich Union Insurance Society took over the South Australian Insurance Co. founded in 1862 and operated its business from that company's former offices located on the northern corner of Pirie and King William Streets. When more office space was needed, the Company moved to the National Mutual Building, followed by the Citizen Building, before constructing its own offices. A head office was not established in Melbourne until 1957. In 1988 the Australian group of Norwich companies commenced operations and assumed legal responsibility for business in Australia. F.K. Milne regarded Woodards House as one of his most important works. In the period between 1928 and 1945 he also designed the State Heritage listed scoreboard at Adelaide Oval (State Heritage Place No 13655), Goldsbrough House (SHP No 13239), the Hampshire Hotel in Grote Street (SHP No 11578) and the SA Brewing Company Offices in Hindley Street (SHP No 13354). Milne also designed numerous houses, including Sunnyside at North Adelaide (SHP 13554). All of these buildings are recognised in the South Australian Heritage Register for their architectural significance. Milne was a life member of the South Australian Institute of Architects and its president between 1937 and 1939. He was also active in campaigning for the establishment of a Chair of Architecture at the University of Adelaide.

Woodards House was originally intended to be eight storeys high, but as a result of the Depression, only four storeys were constructed. An additional floor was added in 1953, with the design by the same architectural firm, which had evolved into F Kenneth Milne, Dawkins Boehm & Ellis. It was built by the well established firm of William Essery & Son Ltd. This new floor adds interest to the building as it shows how the Depression affected construction in the city, with another floor being added at a more prosperous time. In 1976 the building was sold to the Catholic Church Endowment Society. It has continued to be used as offices and is currently tenanted by the SA College of English on three levels, Government Skills Australia on level two and some small government and private agencies on the ground floor. A number of offices remain vacant, including the whole of the third level, and these have recently been advertised for lease. Although the cornice between the fourth and fifth floors has been removed, the overall integrity of the building is high. The building has been well-maintained and is generally in good condition. Many of the original fittings have been retained.

REFERENCES:

- Bell, P, Cosgrove, C, Marsden, S, McCarthy, *Twentieth Century Heritage Survey Stage Two (1929-1945) Vol 2*, 2008.
- Apperley, Irving & Reynolds, *Identifying Australian Architecture*, 1989.
- Marsden, Stark & Sumerling, *Heritage of the City of Adelaide*, 1990.
- McDougall & Vines, *City of Adelaide Townscape Frontages Assessment*, 1992.
- Michael Page, *Sculptors in Space*, 1986.
- "The World's First Life Insurance Society", Norwich Life, 150th anniversary souvenir pamphlet.
- Susan Woodburn, "F. Kenneth Milne, Portrait of an Architect", Exhibition Catalogue, Flinders University, Architecture Archives, 1984.
- Register of the National Estate, Place ID 17430, File No. 3/03/001/0193

SITE RECORD

Woodards House
47-49 Waymouth Street Adelaide

PLACE NO: 13106

FORMER NAME:	Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society Building
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Five-storey office building
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1928
SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:	Description: Confirmed Date: 23 August 2013
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS	Local Heritage Place Inserted in the Adelaide City Council Development Plan through an amendment authorised 27 March 2013
CURRENT USE:	Description: Offices Dates: 1929+
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description: n/a Dates: n/a
ARCHITECT:	Name: F Kenneth Milne Dates: 1928
BUILDER:	Name: F Fricker Dates: 1929
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description: Adelaide City Council
LOCATION:	Unit No.: n/a Street No.: 47-49 Street Name: Waymouth Street Town/Suburb: Adelaide Post Code: 5000
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type: CT Volume: 5323 Folio: 691 Lot No.: 132 Plan No: F170677 Hundred: Adelaide

PHOTOS

Woodards House
47-49 Waymouth Street Adelaide

PLACE NO: 13106



Woodards House north and west elevations,
looking south-east from Waymouth Street



Woodards House, looking north-east from Bentham Street

SITE PLAN

Woodards House
47-49 Waymouth Street Adelaide

PLACE NO: 13106



Woodards House, south east corner of Waymouth Street and Bentham Street Adelaide.
(Yellow lines representing cadastral boundaries are indicative only)