

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

ROBERT BURNS MONUMENT

NORTH TERRACE

Place Name and Address: Robert Burns monument
North Terrace
Adelaide

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

Description:

The monument to Scottish poet Robert Burns includes the statue and pedestal. It is located in the forecourt of the State Library of South Australia, off North Terrace, Adelaide.

The monument features a life size sculpture of Scottish poet Robert Burns in Angaston marble that is placed on a pedestal of grey granite from Monarto South.

The pedestal includes the inscribed information .:

Robert Burns
1759–1796

and

Centennial Commemoration
by Scots of South Australia
1994

Included on a separate marble tablet near the base of the pedestal is the information:

Presented to the City of Adelaide
by the So. Aust. Caledonian Society,
And unveiled by
The Chief, Hon John Darling, M.L.C.
5 May 1894

Statement of Heritage Significance:

The monument is significant as the work of the accomplished architectural sculptor William Maxwell, and the first significant sculpture to be crafted in Adelaide by a South Australian artist. It is of secondary importance as a manifestation of the influence of the Scottish heritage of South Australia.

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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, particularly in the field of the arts and the development of architectural and figure sculpting.

(e) It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment and is the first public statue to be crafted in Adelaide.

(f) It has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it, especially the Scottish community who presented it to the City of Adelaide and celebrated the centenary of the monument's completion in 1994.

(g) It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance, most notably the work of the acclaimed architectural sculptor William Maxwell.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Robert Burns monument — statue and pedestal — on North Terrace be provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register.

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ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Criteria

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(e) It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment and is the first public statue to be crafted in Adelaide.

(f) It has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it, especially the Scottish community who presented it to the City of Adelaide and celebrated the centenary of the monument's completion in 1994.

(g) It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance, most notably the work of the acclaimed architectural sculptor William Maxwell.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Dr David Jones believes this to be 'the first statue carved in Adelaide'. He indicates the catalyst for its creation was inter-colonial rivalry that followed intelligence that the city of Ballarat had erected a statue to honour Burns.

This statue was carved from Angaston marble by notable Australian architectural sculptor William James Maxwell (8.12.1842–20.7.1903); it was set on a pedestal of grey granite from Monarto South.

When writing to the Adelaide City Council to thank it for its offer of a location for the monument, Hugh Fraser, secretary of the Burns Memorial Fund wrote:

The Society has much pleasure in pointing out to the Corporation that the materials to be used in the construction of this handsome statue and pedestal are South Australian products. The sculptor, Mr William Maxwell is also a South Australian colonist and altogether the work will show, when completed, what we as a young community are capable of achieving in works of art, to set off the lavish display of natural beauties which everywhere meet the eye in our squares and enclosures.

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The sculptor, William Maxwell, was born in Armagh, Ireland but moved with his family to Scotland when aged five or six years. His father, Francis Maxwell, was a builder, and young William worked as a stonecutter until 20 years of age before becoming a carver with William Mossman in Glasgow before going to London to train with sculptor John Birnie Philip. He established his own workshop in Glasgow in 1869.

Maxwell migrated to Melbourne in 1875 in an attempt to regain his health and travelled to Adelaide where he worked on carving features for the Bank of South Australia. He returned to Glasgow and worked there before the climate prompted him to return to Adelaide in 1878. He lived at Kent Town for some years before acquiring 45 acres of land at Edwardstown and converted the dwelling there into a country home known as Woodlands. This enlarged residence was colloquially known as the castle and gave the name to the onetime Castle Hotel on South Road and the current Castle Plaza. He and his wife had 11 children (3 dying in childhood).

William Maxwell was associated with many prominent Australian buildings. Some of his work included the statue of St Patrick, the altar and font in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney; many carvings in the Melbourne Post Office; carvings in the ES&A Bank in Melbourne. He presented a relief panel, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, to Adelaide's Clayton Wesleyan Uniting Church in 1883. Other work of his in Adelaide included the porch to the Mitchell Building at Adelaide University, those to the Institute Building, new Government Offices, the new South Australian Parliament House; the ES & AC Bank; the Commercial Bank; the Australian Mutual and National Mutual Life Association buildings. He also designed the figure of 'Industry' that featured on the Savings Bank building in Currie Street. He completed a capital for the new Savings Bank just prior to his death.

The South Australian Caledonian Society later commissioned Maxwell to carve the statue of explorer John McDouall Stuart that is located in Victoria Square. completed a model for the Stuart statue just prior to his death: the commission was completed by Sydney sculptor James White to Maxwell's design.

The Robert Burns monument was funded by donations from the South Australian Caledonian Society and John Darling MLC. It was unveiled by Darling on 5 May 1894.

The Burns monument has been repositioned on several occasions. It was originally located on the western corner of the Kintore Avenue and North Terrace intersection. The monument was moved in 1930 to a location beside the entry pathway to the Art Gallery, in 1930 because of plans to erect the National War Memorial on the North Terrace/Kintore Avenue site. However, the Art Gallery governors opposed the siting of the monument in front of the gallery and it was relocated in 1940 to a position beside the Mortlock Wing of the State Library in 1940 following intervention by state Premier Thomas Playford. It was repositioned in the same general area following redevelopment of the State Library entrance in 2005.

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REFERENCES:

David Jones, *Adelaide Park Lands & Squares Cultural Landscape Assessment Study*, Corporation of the City of Adelaide, October 2007, pp. 547, 549, 550, 570.

Simon Cameron, *Silent Witnesses: Adelaide's Statues and Monuments*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1997, pp. 16–20.

W Frederic Morrison, *The Aldine History of South Australia*, Vol. 2, The Aldine Publishing Company, Adelaide, 1990, p. 163.

Ken Scarlett, *Australian Sculptors*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1980, p. 422.

Gary Nisbet, 'Glasgow — City of Sculpture, William James Maxwell (1842–1903)',
http://www.glasgowsculpture.com/pg_biography.php?sub=maxwell_wj

Adelaide Observer, 12.5.1894; 25.7.1903.

Advertiser, 21.7.1903.

Adelaide City Council, File, Burns Statue, TC DKT 1893/1736.

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SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME:	Robert Burns Monument	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	A marble statue and pedestal	
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1894	
REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	n/a
CURRENT USE:	Description:	Monument
	Dates:	
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	n/a
	Dates:	n/a
SCULPTOR:	Name:	William Maxwell
	Dates:	1894
BUILDER:	Name:	n/a
	Dates:	n/a
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	
	Category:	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Adelaide City Council
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	-
	Street No.:	n/a
	Street Name:	North Terrace
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
	Region No.:	
	Region:	Adelaide
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	CROWN
	Volume:	5759
	Folio:	861
	Lot No.:	n/a
	Section:	510
	Hundred:	Adelaide

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ROBERT BURNS MONUMENT

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Site Plan



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Robert Burns monument carved by William Maxwell

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Rear of Robert Burns monument