BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING
Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14(6) and s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME:	London House	**PLACE NO.:** 10340
KNOWN AS:	Shop and Dwelling (London House), including Stables (proposed)	
ADDRESS:	Ngarrindjeri Country & Peramangk Country	
	7 High Street	
	Strathalbyn SA 5255	
	Section 2600 Hundred of Strathalbyn	
	CT 5806/377 F162316 A93	

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

24 July 1980

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

London House is associated with the early commercial development of the township of Strathalbyn and its establishment as a regional service and transport centre connecting Adelaide to South Australia's south-east and Victoria in the late nineteenth century. Designed in the Victorian Regency style and built by storekeeper Thomas Stephens in 1867, London House is located on High Street in Strathalbyn's north-east. Stores like London House were vital to the early success of the township, demonstrating the importance of commerce in attracting visitors and settlers to townships and securing their permanence as nodal centres.

The stables at the rear of site once accommodated horses for South Australia's largest and most enduring coaching business Hill & Co. and as such represent how regional

depots operated during the peak period of coach transport in the colony prior to the prevalence of rail.

RELEVANT/INDICATIVE CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

(a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history

London House on High Street was one of many retail businesses that opened in Strathalbyn during a period of rapid commercial expansion in the 1860s. Established under special survey in 1840, the early township benefitted greatly from its position on the transport route to Victoria from Adelaide during the gold rush in the 1850s. Taking advantage of the passing traffic, there was early investment in essential services such as hotels, a blacksmith, church, and general store. This development continued into the following decade, with the creation of a retail and municipal hub along High Street to attract visitors and potential settlers. Built in 1867 by storekeeper Thomas Stephens, London House illustrates local enterprise and the importance of early businesses to the establishment of Strathalbyn and securing its permanence as a prominent regional centre servicing the south-east of South Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The stables at the rear of the site, also constructed in 1867, were built to accommodate horses for Hill & Co. By the end of the nineteenth century Hill & Co. was South Australia's largest and most enduring horse-coaching company, running a successful mail delivery and coach transport business for over 60 years. The company's central booking office, stables and coachhouse were situated on King William Street and Pirie Street in Adelaide, with a network of regional depots dotted along transit routes in townships such as Stirling, Kadina, and Strathalbyn. The stables on Sunter Street, at the rear of London House, are an example of one of these early regional depots, representing the heyday of coach transportation prior to the dominance of rail.

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SITE PLAN

London House   **PLACE NO.: 10340**

7 High Street, Strathalbyn 5255

London House, 7 High Street, Strathalbyn SA 5255 (CT 5806/377 F162316 A93, Hundred of Strathalbyn)

N ↑

LEGEND

▨ Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
▭ Existing State Heritage Place(s)
▭ Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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Physical Description

London House is a Victorian Regency style, two-storey Shop on the corner of High Street and Grey Street with a single-storey Dwelling attached to the south-east facing onto High Street. The place also includes Stables at the rear of the site facing onto Sunter Street.

Shop & Dwelling

Built in 1867, the Shop and Dwelling are constructed of squared course bluestone with red brick quoins, string courses and detailing to windows and doorways. The Shop has a gable-style roof, while the Dwelling is gable-hipped. The façade of the Shop extends into a pointed, triangular parapet with red brick detailing creating a pediment. At the base of the pediment is a cream and maroon painted banner sign for Harrington's bordered by decorative red brick.

The windows are cream-painted, double-hung sash windows, each with a flat arch of red brick with contrasting keystone in the centre, and a flat brick sill with stone corbels. The centre window of the upper storey of the Shop is a blind window featuring an advertisement for Harrington's store painted in maroon.

The ground storey is covered by a maroon concave verandah that extends over the footpath of High Street in two stages, held up by four cream painted pillars. Each pillar is embellished with a triangular, wrought-iron filigree bracket, painted maroon to match the veranda roof. The veranda is enclosed on its Grey Street side by a cream painted panel.

A painted logo for London House Antiques and Collectables is painted in maroon on the board. Advertising signage encloses part of the verandah over the footpath. A central, cream twin leaf entrance door is flanked on either side by two shop windows. In front of the left window, facing south-west is the entrance to the cellar covered by two wooden doors with wrought-iron hinges at the top and bottom.

The attached Dwelling is set back from the footpath, with cream-painted, timber picket fence enclosing the small front garden. The door is painted cream, with a rectangular panel of leadlight above the door. The window is protected with a pointed cast iron grill.

Stables

At the rear of the site is a Stable built in 1867 separated by a twenty-first century enclosed garage with roller door. The stable is a skillion roofed, long L-shaped building on the corner of Grey Street and Sunter Street of random rubble construction with red brick quoins at the corners. Several vertical slit vents with red brick surrounds are evenly spaced along the wall, approximately two metres from the ground. A larger window on Sunter Street is protected by cast iron bars.

Attached to the back of the Shop along Grey Street is a gable roofed, rectangular building of similar construction to the Stable with random rubble walling and red brick quoins on the corners, likely built as part of the original stables. To the structures south-west is an opening surrounded by red brick quoins and a small window above. The window above is hand-made with multiple curved panels of glass and installed off-centre. Part of the corner of the building, as well as above the opening has been reinforced with iron supports.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Two-storey shop on the corner of High Street and Grey Street.
- Single-storey dwelling attached to two-storey shop facing High Street.
- L-shaped stable building at rear of site on the corner of Grey Street and Sunter Street.
- Single-storey addition at rear of the two-storey shop.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Cream-painted picket fence enclosing single-storey dwelling to south-east of shop.
- Enclosed garage with roller door opening on to Grey Street, built post 2010.

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HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The Township of Strathalbyn and Early Commercial Development

Located on the transition between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Murray plains, the town of Strathalbyn resides in an open valley on the border between Ngarrindjeri Country to the south and Peramangk Country to the north.[1]

The countryside surrounding Strathalbyn was first divided into allotments under the Angas Special Survey in May 1839, applied for by Captain George Hall and William Mein. Special Surveys were a feature of the colony's early years, enabling capitalists and pastoralists, such as Hall and Mein, to request that the Government survey an area of 15,000 acres in an area of their choice. The settlers who requested the Special Survey were then committed to purchasing 4,000 acres at one pound an acre. The Special Survey process resulted in much of the best-watered land near Adelaide being taken up.[2]

The township itself was surveyed on Section 2600 on land belonging to Colonel James Dawson and William Rankine, two Scotsmen who travelled to South Australia aboard the *Fairfield*. Both acted as trustees for the sale of allotments after the survey of the town section by E.W. Cross in 1840.[3] Unlike some other South Australian provincial towns, Strathalbyn's development was not hastened by a particular event, such as an important mineral discovery. Instead, the town developed steadily alongside early crops of wheat and maize, followed by dairy cattle and sheep grazing.[4] The *Adelaide Reporter* captured this development, commenting in August 1840:

> The Angas, or Strath-albyn, district is now becoming very thickly settled, and is … almost the best stocked survey in the province. There are already fourteen stations on it, and the stock amounts to 10,000 sheep, 1,000 cattle, and 70 horses … A township has just been laid out here in a beautiful situation … It already possesses an inn and a store.[5]

The first buildings in the town were the Strathalbyn Hotel, later known as the Terminus Hotel after the original structure burnt down in 1867, and a house on allotment 70 Commercial Road by Richard Lander, which served as the town's first store, both built in 1840. In 1844, the Church of St. Andrew was constructed. That same year Edward Sunter, who would become the first mayor of the Strathalbyn Corporation in 1868, erected a two-storey shop and residence known as Manchester and Glasgow House on Swale Street.[6]

Strathalbyn's position on both the main intercolonial routes between Adelaide and Victoria was a major factor in its early growth. During the 1850s, passage to the goldfields in Victoria passed directly through Strathalbyn, on to Milang and across the Murray by steamer to Meningie, then through Mount Gambier and Hamilton to Ballarat.[7] Although the discovery of gold in Victoria resulted in an exodus of workers

from Strathalbyn, Strathalbyn's farmers and businesses benefitted from the steady stream of workers en-route to the goldfields. Strathalbyn was the last substantial town for the next 100 miles, and travellers stocked up on provisions as they passed through the town with wheelbarrows or on horseback.[8] Some local men did well in the gold diggings and returned to buy properties around Strathalbyn.

Over the next two decades, the embryonic township grew rapidly into a 'flourishing town of considerable dimensions' supporting the surrounding pastoral and agricultural producers as a local service and transport centre.[9] Encouraged by the success of the 1850s, investment in substantial shops and commercial buildings increased. The 1860s was a period of rapid commercial development in the township, particularly in High Street, Albyn Terrace, and Dawson Street.[10] The Robin Hood Hotel had been licensed since 1855, and in 1865 the Commercial Hotel opened in competition.

In 1867, John Bills built a large store on part of allotment 53, followed by Thomas Stephens' London House on part of allotment 51. In 1868, Strathalbyn was created a municipality, separating from the District Council formed in 1854.[11] By the close of the decade, Strathalbyn had two resident doctors, three chemists, a solicitor, several general stores, the Wheal Ellen silver-lead mine, a foundry and machinery factory, two coach building businesses, its own newspaper *The Southern Argus*, five churches, two banks, several schools, a post and telegraph station, a police station and courthouse, its own gasworks, a train station and a coach terminal.[12]

In *The Making of the Australian Landscape,* Michael Williams argues that this early investment in essential services such as a public house, general store, and church, became a way for new townships to attract buyers and eventually settlers, and secure their permanence as nodal centres.[13] Between 1861 and 1867, the population of Strathalbyn tripled reaching about 900 people.[14] Strathalbyn's scenic location also made it attractive to tourists. By 1909, the population had reached about 1,000 people, and by 1923 there were 250 houses and the population of the town and district had reached 1,950.[15]

High Street

On the eastern side of the River Angas, the High Street area was the site of Strathalbyn's earliest commercial and institutional development. In the early 1860s, two shoemakers and a blacksmith opened on the street, and in 1865 the Commercial Hotel was licensed to M. Linn. By the end of the decade, nine shops had opened for business, as well as two butchers, a cabinetmaker, a chemist, and a firm of auctioneers called Paltridge and Cornelius.[16]

The pinnacle of High Street's development was in 1874 when the Town Hall and Institute complex was built, confirming High Street as Strathalbyn's main street and the centre of the town's municipal and social life.[17] After the First World War, however,

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Dawson Street to the town's south-west became more prominent, with only Bell's store and Gilbert's Garage continuing to flourish on High Street.[18]

London House

On 23 February 1867, the first advertisement for Thomas Stephens' new general store, drapery and grocery called London House appeared in the *Southern Argus*.[19] Stephens ran the store for thirteen years, taking a three-year hiatus from 1876-1879 to concentrate on his stores in the north of the state, leaving London House in the care of W.J. French.[20]

Stephens let London House to John Muir McFarlane, Mayor of Strathalbyn (1881-1883), in February 1880. McFarlane used the shop solely for 'grocery, ironmongery, and such like,' transferring all drapery and dressmaking business to his second commercial establishment at Victoria House further down on High Street.[21] In August 1883, McFarlane was the first to establish a telephone in the township, connecting London House and Victoria House with instruments and fittings provided by the Telegraph Department:

> And the telephone is now in proper working order, conversation being carried on between the two persons in the different places as easily as if they were in the same room. During the week Mr. McFarlane has had a number of ladies and gentlemen in to inspect and experiment on the instruments, and many who had previously had no experience of a telephone, expressed the greatest astonishment at its wonder, particularly when an organ played in a room adjoining the London House transmitter was heard at the Victoria House end.[22]

McFarlane operated the store for seven years until the business changed hands to Messrs Tamblyn and Richards in 1887.[23] In April 1891, Alfred Phillips opened his own store in London House, purchasing the business from Stephens.[24] Phillips ran the business successfully until 1909, when he and his wife Elsie moved to Adelaide.[25]

Over the next twenty years the business passed through several owners. In 1909, A.H. Jordan opened a store, followed by William G. Edmonds in 1911. In November 1922, Fred Virgo purchased the business from Edmonds, before selling it to M.L. Harrington in July 1924. Although he only owned the store for three years, Harrington carved out a unique market for himself, first by introducing different goods such as sports equipment, beach spades and buckets, and toys; and later by gaining the patronage of women by selling the latest and highest quality designs equal to those sold in Adelaide:

> Harrington's of London House, are making a determined effort to win the patronage of ladies desirous of securing high-grade dresses and dress materials, catering for the better class of trade which leading houses in Adelaide make a specialty of... They are in touch with the leading Melbourne and Sydney

manufacturers, and can guarantee the very latest in day and evening dresses, dress materials, lingerie, and hosiery for special or for general wear.[26]

Following Harrington's death in 1927, London House was sold to a Margaret Richardson as part of his estate and then to G.E. Scott where he opened his saddlery, harness making, and coach trimming business in 1929.[27] London House was put up for sale again in March 1932 for £600 but did not sell, and in 1935 the price was reduced to £450.[28] In June 1942, engineer John Leonard Weidenhofer purchased the property, where it remained in the Weidenhofer family until September 1980. In 1988, the *Times* advertised London House as an overnight bed and breakfast,[29] before it became an antique and collectables store in 1994.[30]

Hill & Co.

In May 1867, just months after Stephens opened his London House store, mail carriers and coachmen Henry Hill & Co. announced that they were building 'capacious stores' and a 'cellar' at the rear of London House in High Street, with stables along Sunter Street.[31] This location was to be its second presence in the township, with Hill & Co. previously running their stables from a site on West Terrace. A correspondent for the *Southern Argus* reported of 'the benefit of competition in passenger traffic between this and Adelaide' created by the move, as the route was now being serviced by three buses, two operated by Cobb & Co. and the other by Hill & Co.[32] The fare to Adelaide was 2/6d for 35 miles.[33]

At the end of the nineteenth century Hill & Co. was Australia's largest and oldest surviving horse-coaching transport company, with 1000 horses used daily in its peak year.[34] The company began in 1858 when Henry Hill, George Mills and Henry Fuller founded H.R. Fuller & Co. to manage freight of goods on the South Australian Railways. In 1862, Hill and Mills bought Fuller's share, renaming the firm Henry Hill & Co., and diversifying into stagecoach passenger transport.[35] Hill's son John began work in the goods department of his father's business, before being put in charge of the South Australian independent affiliate of Victorian coaching business Cobb & Co. in 1866.[36]

In 1871, Henry Hill bought the local branch of Cobb & Co., later selling the assets to John Hill & Co. Ltd., a new firm owned by John, Fuller and Mills.[37] Business boomed and by 1882 Hill & Co. served most of South Australia transporting passengers and mail across the state. Despite competition from railways in the late 1860s onwards, especially in the south and south-east, the firm remained competitive by opening many new routes to offset the loss in trade.[38]

Prior to coach transport, the trip to Strathalbyn from Adelaide by bullock could take anything from three to four days. The spring-cart coach reduced the journey to a day. On longer overland routes there were regular refreshment houses, with trips to Strathalbyn stopping in at Stirling East for 'snacks' and Echunga for breakfast and

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tea.[39] Stanley Poole, a local resident of Strathalbyn recalls the trip from Strathalbyn to Adelaide:

> The Strathalbyn coach used to leave Hill & Co's at 6.45 a.m.; there were no trains or omnibuses in those days... Passing through Glen Osmond, a stop was generally made at the 'Vine Inn', occasionally another at the 'Mountain Hut', but at the 'Eagle-on-the-Hill' breakfast was provided, and in the fresh morning air was welcome. On we went to Crafers to Hill & Co's stables midway between Crafers and Stirling East. With fresh horses the coach sped away to Aldgate, thence past Mylor and Warlands to Echunga the second changing station, on through Macclesfield, and in another nine miles we reached Strathalbyn, at a little after 11.[40]

In the 1870s and 1880s, people would go to the city to see the fleet of coaches leave Hill & Co.'s central location next to the Criterion Hotel in King William Street morning and afternoon, Hill & Co.'s buses serving the Strathalbyn and overland route via Milang. The 'box seats' next to the driver were sought after, and there was a long horn hanging at the rear of the coach next to the guard's seat, which would be used on the approach to each stop along the journey.[41]

Before World War One, Hill & Co. amalgamated with former competitor Henry Graves to form Hill, Graves & Co. The company ceased trading in 1920, with the business rationalised and transferred to H. Graves & Co.[42]

CHRONOLOGY

Year	Event
1839	Angus Special Survey purchased by Captain George Hall and William Mein conducted in May.
1840	**Township of Strathalbyn surveyed on Section 2600 by E.W. Cross.**
1840	The town's first buildings, the Strathalbyn Hotel, and Richard Lander's house and store, are built.
1844	Church of St. Andrew is constructed.
1851	Gold discovered in Ballarat, Victoria.
1854	District Council of Strathalbyn formed.
1858	Company H.R. Fuller & Co. is founded.
1862	Henry Hill and George Mills buy out Henry Fuller's share in H.R. Fuller & Co. The company is renamed Henry Hill & Co.
1867	**London House is erected by Thomas Stephens.**
1867	**Hill & Co. build a storage shed and stables to the rear of the site along Sunter Street.**

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1868	Strathalbyn separates from the District Council to become a municipality.
1871	Henry Hill purchases the South Australian branch of Victorian coaching business Cobb & Co.
1873	Henry Hill sells his assets to John Hill & Co. Ltd. a new firm owned by his son John, Fuller and Mills.
1876 - 1879	Thomas Stephens takes a three-year hiatus, leaving London House in the care of W.J. French.
1880	Stephens announces his retirement from his business at London House on 14 February, letting his shop to John Muir McFarlane, owner of Victoria House Drapery and Grocery Emporium also on High Street. McFarlane opens the shop on the sixteenth.
1883	McFarlane installs the first telephone in town in August, connecting his two retail businesses London House and Victoria House.
1891	London House purchased from Stephens by Alfred Phillips in April.
1909	A. H. Jordan buys London House.
1911	W. G. Edmonds takes over business at London House in March.
1922	Fred Virgo purchases London House from Edmonds in November.
1924	M.L. Harrington purchases the business from Virgo in July.
1927	Following Harrington's death, London House is sold to a Margaret Richardson.
1928	Small fire breaks out in an unused shed at the rear of London House in April.
1942	John Leonard Weidenhofer purchases the property.
1988	The *Times* advertises London House as a bed and breakfast.
1993	Stone masonry and brick conservation (DA 771/5041/94)
1994	**London House Antiques opens as an antique and collectable store.**
2006	New Z600 galvanised corrugated steel verandah replaces old verandah (DA 455/1004/2006)

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SITE DETAILS

London House   **PLACE NO.: 10340**

7 High Street, Strathalbyn 5255

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Two-storey shop built of stone with attached single storey residence. Stone addition at back of two-storey building, with L-shaped stone stables at the rear of the site.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	Store and stables built in 1867
REGISTER STATUS:	Confirmed 24 July 1980
CURRENT USE:	Antique and collectables store
PREVIOUS USE(S):	London House has primarily been used for retail business ranging from general stores to drapery and dressmaking. Some notable owners:
	Thomas Stephens: 1867 - 1880
	John Muir McFarlane: 1880 - 1887
	M.L. Harrington: 1924 - 1927
	The stables and storage shed at the rear of the site were used by Hill & Co. between the years 1867 – 1920.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Alexandrina

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	7
	Street Name:	High Street
	Town/Suburb:	Strathalbyn
	Post Code:	5255
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT 5806/377
	Lot No.:	A93
	Plan No.:	F162316
	Hundred:	Strathalbyn

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PHOTOS

London House   **PLACE NO.: 10340**

7 High Street, Strathalbyn 5255

**Front of London House on High Street with single-storey dwelling
on left, April 2023.**

Source: *Google Maps*

**Side view of London House along Grey Street, April 2023. The building's masonry and
signage was conserved in 1993 to replicate the facades during Harrington's and
McFarlane's ownership (see next photograph).**

Source: *Google Maps*

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Photograph of High Street looking South with McFarlane's store on the right c.1880.

Source: *SLSA B 23507*

Photograph of London House 100 years later in 1981, prior to conservation.

Source: *DEW Image Files*

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Northern window of the upper storey of London House prior to conservation in 1993.

Source: DEW Image Files

Rear of London House with addition. All render removed in 1993.

Source: DEW Image Files

North side of London House with rear addition along Grey Street, April 2023.

Source: Google Maps

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Photograph taken in 1971 showing the stables at the rear of London House on Grey Street. The stables are to the right.
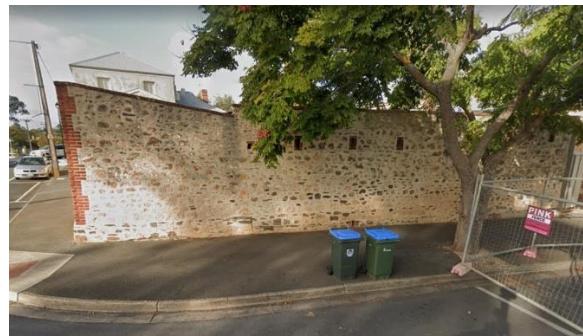
Source: NLA PIC-14196-2340

Similar perspective, taken 10 years later, showing the addition of painted signage on top of the cement render at the base of the stables.

Source: DEW Image Files

Stables at rear of London House in April 2023. Note the removal of render, and the addition of an enclosed garage with roller door.

Source: *Google Maps*

Stables along Sunter Street at the rear of the site, with visible skillion roof.

Source: *Google Maps*

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[1] Lester Firth & Murton Pty. Ltd., *Strathalbyn Conservation Study*, 17.

[2] McDougall & Vines, *Heritage Survey of the Township of Strathalbyn*, vol. 1 (2003), 5.

[3] Firth & Murton, *Conservation*, 8.

[4] McDougall & Vines, *Heritage Survey*, 5.

[5] *Adelaide Chronicle*, 28 August, 1840.

[6] Firth & Murton, *Conservation*, 3.

[7] McDougall & Vines, *Heritage Survey*, 7.

[8] Brian Simpson, *Strathalbyn: Tales from the Past* (Strathalbyn: Brian Simpson, 2004), 11.

[9] Department of Environment and Planning, *Heritage of the Fleurieu Peninsula*, pt. 1 (1988), 23 and McDougall & Vines, *Heritage Survey*, 6.

[10] Firth & Murton, *Conservation*, 5.

[11] Firth & Murton, *Conservation*, 6.

[12] Simpson, *Tales from the Past*, 12.

[13] Michael Williams, *The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A Study in the Historical Geography of Australia* (London and New York: Academic Press, 1974), 378.

[14] Simpson, *Tales from the Past*, 12.

[15] McDougall & Vines, *Heritage Survey*, 6.

[16] Firth & Murton, *Conservation*, 15.

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[18] Nancy Gemmell, *Old Strathalbyn and its People 1839-1939* (Adelaide: National Trust of South Australia, 1985), 157.

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Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 24 July 1980
The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 17 August 2023