South Australian HERITAGE COUNCIL

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) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME: Shops PLACE NO.: 11608

KNOWN AS: Shop

ADDRESS: Ngarrindjeri Country & Peramangk Country

41-43 Commercial Road

Strathalbyn SA 5255

Hundred of Strathalbyn

CT 5170/556 S12840 U1, CT 6018/96 S12840 U2, CT 6018/97 S12840 U3,

CT 6018/98 S12840 UCP

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

1 September 1983

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1916 by Frederick Woolfitt for his son Cecil, the Shops at 41-43 Commercial Road are associated with the commercial development of the township of Strathalbyn and its continuation as a regional service centre in the early twentieth century. Commercial properties like the Shops were vital to the success of the township and demonstrate the importance of local businesses in supporting primary industry.

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

Located at the meeting point between Albyn Terrace, Dawson Street and Commercial Road, the opening of the Shops in 1916 became a bookend to the picturesque streetscape along Albyn Terrace. The land had been purchased by Moses Woolfitt, a prominent local baker and storekeeper in the 1890s, however it was not until approximately 20 years later that his son Frederick erected a commercial building on the site for his own son Cecil Stanley Woolfitt. Cecil operated his general store from the premises until the 1950s, supplying the town and surrounding area with groceries, homewares and drapery for over 30 years. As such, the Shops demonstrate local enterprise and the importance of commercial businesses to the continued grown of Strathalbyn as a regional centre servicing the Fleurieu Peninsula in the twentieth century.

SITE PLAN

Shops PLACE NO.: 11608

41-43 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



Shops, 41-43 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn 5255 (CT 5170/556 S12840 U1, CT 6018/96 S12840 U2, CT 6018/97 S12840 U3, CT 6018/98 S12840 UCP, Hundred of Strathalbyn)

N↑

LEGEND

Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)

Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

Physical Description

The Shops are a single-storey, rectangular corner building comprised of twin shops facing onto Commercial Road (unit 1 and unit 2), and twin shops at the rear of the title facing Albyn Terrace (unit 3). Units 1 and 2 were built in 1916, while unit 3 is a recent structure added in 2008.

Features of units 1 and 2 include:

Units 1 and 2

- Coursed rubble stone walls with red brick façade, quoins and window surrounds (now painted),
- Symmetrical semi-circular parapet clad in corrugated iron bearing an embossed brick pattern (now painted red with cream accents),
- M-shaped, double-hipped roof, clad with corrugated iron, with an airconditioning unit located centre (not original fabric),
- Symmetrical, vertical matchboard-panelled timber shopfronts (now painted cream) with recessed, re-entrant doorways, plate glass and transom windows,
- Bullnose verandah with square timber posts, wooden brackets and metal spandrel ends,
- Brick chimney on southern side of unit 2,
- Besser brick extension at rear of unit 1 containing bathrooms,
- Corrugated iron and timber weatherboard extension with skillion roof attached to the rear of both units.

Elements of Significance:

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

- Single-storey rectangular corner building facing Commercial Road,
- Bullnose verandah.

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

- Single-storey commercial building incorporating two shops facing Albyn Terrace (built 2008) and known as unit 3,
- Rear, L-shaped, lean-to extension,
- Air-conditioning units,
- Dividing fence separating the rear of unit 1 and unit 2.

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. At the time of settlement in 1839, First Nations people had three camping places in the area, one on the peninsula, another on the site of the old pioneer cemetery along Colman Terrace, and a third just in front of where the present Victoria Hotel stands. The area was rich in grazing and agricultural land, with the Angas and Bremer rivers providing a good supply of water for cultivation.

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.³

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 1840.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 11608 5 of 19 Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 1 September 1983 The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 23 May 2024. 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. Py 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.

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.¹⁴ Between 1861 and 1867, the population of Strathalbyn tripled, reaching about 900 people.¹⁵ 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 1,950.¹⁶

Albyn Terrace

Opposite the Soldiers Memorial Gardens, the Albyn Terrace precinct has been labelled one of the most picturesque streetscapes in South Australia. According to one historian, 'Albyn Terrace, with the notable National Bank building and Victoria Hotel, manifested the elegance of the period, with subsequent buildings extending the character of the Terrace overlooking the reserve.' Like High Street north of the Angas River, Albyn Terrace was an area of early commercial and institutional development, boasting two hotels, a bank, a butcher's shop, and a bakery by the end of the 1870s.

The land between Albyn Terrace and South Terrace was originally sold to Donald Gollan (1815-1888), who came to Strathalbyn with his wife Catherine (nee Matheson) from Inverness, Scotland, in 1839.¹⁸ Described as one of the 'most influential men in the south,' Gollan's land holdings were extensive, and included the majority of the south-eastern allotments of the township. In 1864, Gollan subdivided the allotments adjacent to Albyn Terrace, naming streets after himself and his wife Catherine, and dedicating a 'fashionable circus' at the intersection where the two streets crossover.¹⁹

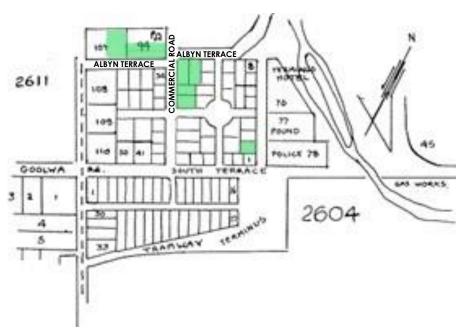


Figure 1. Allotments purchased by Moses Woolfitt in the southern part of Strathalbyn. The unnumbered lots were purchased in the mid-1860s, while parts of allotments 94 and 107 were bought in the 1890s.

Moses Woolfitt

Moses Woolfitt (1832-1897) arrived in the colony from England in 1854 and spent his first three years farming at McLaren Vale. He then moved to Strathalbyn where he started a bakery business. By the early 1860s, Moses owned several properties in and around Strathalbyn, establishing a farm and family home on part of section 2719 to the town's south-west.²⁰ Other properties included allotments 2, 30, 31, 32 and 33 of Gollan's subdivision, which he purchased in 1864.²¹ By 1865, Moses had built the Victoria Hotel on allotment 32 and a store and bakehouse on allotment 33.²²

Allotment 94 and the Shops

Name Index for Real Property Act records that Moses also purchased part of allotments 94 and 107 of section 2600 from miller William Colman in the early 1890s.²³ Allotment 94 is primly situated at the meeting point of Dawson Street, Albyn Terrace, and Commercial Road (Figure 1). It is unknown if Moses had any plans to open a third commercial business on Albyn Terrace, as he died in 1897. At the time of his death, Moses and his wife Margaret (née Kenney) had nine children and thirty-four grandchildren.²⁴ Ownership of the property was left to his third son, Frederick (1862-1939).²⁵ The bakery was inherited by his second son William (1857-1930).²⁶

Frederick (Fred) was born in Strathalbyn and educated at William Noye's private school.²⁷ After graduating, he took the position of manager at William Rogers' Sandergrove Estate. Fred and his first wife, Christina Martha (née Robinson), moved to the south-east to farm, before eventually moving to Serviceton in Victoria, where he opened up a bakery. Fred inherited the Victoria Hotel upon his father's death; however, he did not return to the township until 1910. He served as proprietor of the Hotel for two years before retiring, becoming councillor of the west ward for the Strathalbyn Council in 1914.

In 1912, Fred built his family home at the eastern end of allotment 107, facing Albyn Terrace (LHP). In 1916, the *Southern Argus* reported that Fred had presented plans for 'two modern shops' he intended to erect on a vacant corner block of land adjoining Mr. Victor J. Hill's premises. Hill was a hairdresser and tobacconist who also ran a billiard saloon.²⁸ Hill's business was located next to the post office on Commercial St/Dawson Road.²⁹ The design specifications detailed two 'handsome and well designed buildings of right up-to-date character, one of which will probably be used as a high class restaurant or café.'³⁰ The design was to be in keeping with the buildings nearby and were to be completed by 1 July.

A month later, Fred's son, Cecil Stanley (1890-1971), opened a General Store in the premises on 31 August 1916.³¹ An advertisement placed by Cecil in the Southern Argus boasted the following:

Having lived amongst you for many years past, I claim to know the requirements of the district, and by strict attention to business, I hope to merit a share of your support. I have just purchased from the Eastern States a Well-selected and Clean Stock of both Drapery and Grocery, every line of which I have marked at prices that I feel sure will keep stock moving.³²

Cecil's store was a 'Cash Bonus Business.' By paying cash to his merchants, Cecil received a discount on his goods, which he then passed on to his customers by giving them a bonus of 5 per cent on all 'Spot Cash Purchases.' This five percent was returned to the customer by way of coupons.³³

The Red Store

In the 1930s, the shop's name was changed to Woolfitt's Red Store, which was used up until the 1940s.³⁴ Advertisements for the Red Store promised the 'best of its kind procurable in the trade in all departments' and 'everything for the home' and garden.³⁵ The store also stocked groceries such as tinned corned beef, camp pie, mustard pickles, and custard powder.³⁶ In 1938, Cecil was elected as Mayor of Strathalbyn, serving his first term from 1938 until 1942, and his second from 1946 until 1948.

A photograph taken in the 1930s indicates that a stock and station agent also tenanted the southern unit next door to Woolfitt's general store on the corner of Dawson Street and Albyn Terrace, now known as unit 2. While advertisements for Woolfitt's store stopped appearing around 1947, Cecil's occupation remained as storekeeper on official records as late as 1953.³⁷ By 1958, official records noted his occupation as 'out of business.'³⁸

In the 1980s, unit 1 was tenanted by a lunchroom selling tea and coffee and pies and pasties, with unit 2 being occupied by Lee's Electrical.³⁹ Later, unit 2 housed several clothing stores such as Angas & Bremer, and unit 1 continued to be occupied by restaurants and cafes.

In 1994, the strata title was divided into two units. The title was further subdivided in 2008 and a new commercial property featuring two shopfronts was constructed behind the original shops facing Albyn Terrace.

Chronology

Cilionolo	97
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.
	Donald Gollan (1815-1888) purchases majority of the allotments to the south of the Angas River on Section 2600 (allotments 78 to 105).
	The town's first buildings, the Strathalbyn Hotel, and a house and store, are built.
1854	District Council of Strathalbyn formed.
	Moses Woolfitt (1832-1897) arrives in South Australia and begins farming in McLaren Vale.
1857	Woolfitt moves to Strathalbyn.
1862	Woolfitt's son Frederick (1862-1939) is born.
1864	Gollan engineers the Albyn Terrace precinct subdivision on allotments 79 to 84 of section 2600 of Strathalbyn.
c.1864	Woolfitt purchases allotments 30, 31, 32 and 33 of Gollan's subdivision.
1864	Woolfitt opens a bakery business on allotment 33, Albyn Terrace.
1865	Woolfitt builds the Victoria Hotel on allotment 32, Albyn Terrace. It is licensed to Henry Warland.
1868	Strathalbyn separates from the District Council to become a municipality.
1870	Woolfitt is elected Councillor for the West Ward of Strathalbyn.
1885	Frederick Woolfitt marries Christina Martha Smith (née Robinson).
1890s	Moses Woolfitt purchases part of allotments 94 and 107 from William Colman.
1912	A portion of allotment 94 along Commercial Road is sold to hairdresser Victor James Hill (CT 899/188).
	Frederick builds the family home on part of allotment 107.
1916	Frederick Woolfitt erects two 'modern shops' on the corner of Albyn
	Terrace and Dawson Street.
	Cecil Stanley Woolfitt (1889-1971), Fredericks's son, opens a General Store in the newly built shops in August.
1921	C. S. Woolfitt is elected as Auditor for the District of Strathalbyn.
1938 – 1942	C. S. Woolfitt serves his first term as Mayor of Strathalbyn.
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1948		
1958		C.S. Woolfitt sells a portion of allotments 94 and 107 where the family home is located to Stanley Giles a farmer in Meadows.
1971		C.S. Woolfitt dies in January leaving the Shops to Reginald George Montgomery and Thomas Frederick Moore.
1973		The Shops are purchased by David and Cynthia Hunt.
1983		The shops at 41-43 Commercial Road are confirmed as a State Heritage Place.
1984		David and Margaret Edkins purchase the Shops.
1987		John and Margaret Davidson, both restauranteurs, purchase the Shops.
1989		Front façade and parapet are painted and new air conditioning is installed.
1992 1997	-	Steven J. Morrison leases 'Shop B' (later unit 1) of the Shops.
1994		Land of strata title is divided into two units.
		Unit 2 (43 Commercial Road) continues to be owned by the Davidsons.
		Rear lean-to extension of Unit 2 is modified and a window and door added (DA 771/207/94).
1995		Unit 1 (41 Commercial Road) is acquired by Gregory and Elaine Tucker.
2004		Unit 1 is acquired by Nestorito O'Campo and Maria O'Campo.
2004		Unit 2 is occupied by Prices Bakery.
2006		Belinda Croser and Craig Marshall acquire unit 1.
2008		The land of the strata title is further divided, and a third 'unit' added at the rear of the site along Albyn Terrace (DA 455/S079/2007). Phillip Tindale becomes proprietor of units 2 and 3.
2017		Women's fashion store opens in unit 1(41 Commercial Road).

1946 - C. S. Woolfitt serves his second term as Mayor of Strathalbyn.

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Brochures

Down by the Riverside. Strathalbyn Theatrical-Historical Tour, a South Australian History Festival Event, May 2017.

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SITE DETAILS

Shops PLACE NO.: 11608

41-43 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: Single-storey twin shops constructed from stone, with

a brick façade and timber recessed, re-entrant

shopfronts.

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1916

REGISTER STATUS: Nomination: 6 July 1982

Provisional Entry: 27 January 1983

Confirmed: 1 September 1983

CURRENT USE: Hills & Coast (women's clothing store)

March 2019 - present Bean Machine (café)

c.2013 - present

PREVIOUS USE(S): Various commercial properties

1950s – c.2013 General Store

1950s

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

AREA:

Alexandrina

LOCATION: Street No.: 41-43

Street Name: Commercial Road

Town/Suburb: Strathalbyn

Post Code: 5255

LAND DESCRIPTION: Title CT 5170/556 S12840 U1, CT 6018/96

Reference: \$12840 U2, CT 6018/97 \$12840 U3, CT

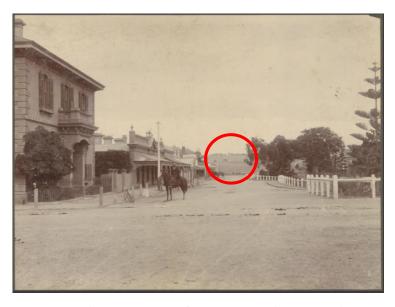
6018/98 S12840 UCP

Hundred: Strathalbyn

PHOTOS

Shops PLACE NO.: 11608

41-43 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



View of Albyn Terrace looking south-west from the Terminus Hotel in 1908. Allotment 94 at the end of street (circled in red) is still farmland with a small residence where the store now stands.

Source: SLSA B 7248



View of Albyn Terrace looking south-west from the Terminus Hotel in 2023. The Shops built of allotment 94 is circled in red.

Source: Google Maps, April 2023

Shops PLACE NO.: 11608

41-43 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



View looking east along Dawson (Commercial) Street in 1920. The red arrow is pointing at the shops on the corner of Albyn Terrace and Commercial Street.

Source: SLSA B 25410



Commercial Road in 1917. The shops are circled in red.

Source: SLSA B 29695



Shopfront of unit 1 in the 1980s.

Source: DEW Files



The Shops on Commercial Road in the 1990s.

Source: DEW Files



The Shops in May 2023.

Source: Google Maps



Southern elevation of Shops along Albyn Terrace showing the L-shaped lean-to extension.

Source: Google Maps





Aerial photographs showing the Shops in 2000 (left) and 2012 (right) after the construction of unit 3.

Source: Google Maps



Shopfront of unit 3 facing Albyn Terrace.

Source: Google Maps, 2023

¹ Down by the Riverside. Strathalbyn Theatrical-Historical Tour, a South Australian History Festival Event, May 2017.

- ² Department of Environment and Planning, Heritage of the Fleurieu Peninsula, pt. 1 (1988).
- ³ McDougall & Vines, Heritage Survey of the Township of Strathalbyn, vol. 1 (2003), p. 5.
- ⁴ Firth & Murton, Conservation, p.8.
- ⁵ McDougall & Vines, Heritage Survey, p.5.
- ⁶ Adelaide Chronicle, 28 August, 1840.
- ⁷ Firth & Murton, Conservation, p.3.
- ⁸ McDougall & Vines, Heritage Survey, p.7.
- ⁹ Brian Simpson, Strathalbyn: Tales from the Past (Strathalbyn: Brian Simpson, 2004), p.11.
- ¹⁰ Department of Environment and Planning, Heritage of the Fleurieu Peninsula, pt. 1 (1988), p.23, and McDougall & Vines, Heritage Survey, p.6.
- 11 Firth & Murton, Conservation, p.5.
- ¹² Firth & Murton, Conservation, p.6.
- ¹³ Simpson, Tales from the Past, p.12.
- ¹⁴ Michael Williams, The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A Study in the Historical Geography of Australia (London and New York: Academic Press, 1974), p.378.
- ¹⁵ Simpson, Tales from the Past, p.12.
- ¹⁶ McDougall & Vines, Heritage Survey, 6.
- ¹⁷ Lester Firth & Murton Pty. Ltd., Strathalbyn Conservation Study, p.19.
- ¹⁸ Harold J. Stowe, They Built Strathalbyn (South Australia, Investigator Press, 1973), p.20.
- ¹⁹ Strath township heritage survey, McDougall and Vines, p.4.
- ²⁰ The Advertiser, 'Death of M Woolfitt,' 3 May 1897, p.6.
- ²¹ Sailis, Name Index for Real Property Act records, 'Woolfitt,' 1863-1868.
- ²² The Adelaide Express, 'Bench of Magistrates,' 24 March 1865, p.3. South Australian Register, 'Strathalbyn,' 26 January 1865, p.2.
- ²³ Sailis, Name Index for Real Property Act records, 'Colman,' 1868-1873. Sailis, Name Index for Real Property Act records, 'Woolfitt,' 1890-1894.
- ²⁴ The Advertiser, 'Death of M. Woolfitt,' 6 August 1864, p.6.
- ²⁵ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 25 May 1911, p.2.
- ²⁶ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 7 September 1905, p.1.
- ²⁷ The Advertiser, 'Obituary,' 30 June 1939, p.14.
- ²⁸ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 31 August 1916, p.2.
- ²⁹ CT 899/188.
- 30 Southern Argus, 'Local,' 13 April 1916, 3.
- ³¹ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 31 August 1916, p.2.
- 32 Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' p.2.
- ³³ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' p.2.
- ³⁴ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 1 September 1932, p.2. And Southern Argus, 'Almonds Wanted,' 30 March 1944, p.1.
- ³⁵ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 1 February 1934, p.2.
- ³⁶ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 15 February 1934, p.2.
- ³⁷ Southern Argus, 'Red Cross Clothing Appeal,' 3 April 1947, p.1. And Lands Titles Office, CT2290/113, 1953.
- ³⁸ Lands Titles Office, CT 2559/91, 1958.
- ³⁹ DEW Files, photograph, 1981.