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**NAME:** Statue of Queen Victoria

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**Address:** Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, Adelaide

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**SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:**

**Description:**

The statue is a slightly larger-than-life likeness of Queen Victoria as at 1893, wearing a crown decorated with roses and dressed in robes flowing to her feet, as for a formal occasion. A sash angles at 45° across her breast, and there is a decorative belt with lace trim in a V-shape across her waist. She is holding a sceptre in her right hand, with the hand down and the sceptre leaning against her right arm; the orb is in her left hand, which faces upwards. The statue faces north, and gives the impression that the Queen is looking north along King William Street. It is cast in bronze and is 2.75M in height. It stands on a carved granite pedestal 3.35M high. The words 'VICTORIA RI' are engraved on the north-facing centre of the pedestal, and the engraving also records that the statue was funded by Sir Edwin Thomas Smith; the date is given as 1894.

**Statement of Heritage Significance:**

The statue of Queen Victoria is an place of State heritage significance. It demonstrates a high degree of creative and technical accomplishment, and is intrinsically related to the heritage of Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, and the City of Adelaide. The cultural heritage of both would be diminished if the place was removed.

The statue was funded by Sir Edwin Thomas Smith who was a leading figure in the evolution of the city of Adelaide, as an entrepreneur, public leader and a philanthropist. His work contributed to shaping the physical fabric of the city as well as influencing its cultural life. Over a fifty-year period he made a contribution which few could match; in many respects the Queen Victoria statue is his monument.

**Relevant 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.  
This criterion is not applicable.
- (b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance  
This criterion is not applicable.
- (c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history  
This criterion is not applicable.
- (d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.  
This criterion is not applicable.

- (e) **it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment.**

The work is an excellent likeness of the Queen during the 1890s, highly accurate in proportion and scale. It was produced as a cast from a model made by an internationally recognised British sculptor; the quality of the work is illustrated by the fact that in all, eight casts from the same model were used to create statues in public places in England, Scotland, India and Canada as well as Adelaide.

- (f) **it has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it.**

This criterion is not applicable.

- (g) **it has a special association with the life or work of a person of historical importance.**

The statue is associated with the donor, Sir Edwin Smith, brewer, philanthropist and politician. Smith was an important figure in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Adelaide. He had with a particular interest and influence in the betterment of city life, and an active role in civic development, sport, cultural endeavours and philanthropy.

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Statue **of Queen Victoria, Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, Adelaide** be provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register.



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**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:**

**(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment.**

The sculpture was cast by British sculptor Charles Bell Birch, (1832-1893). It captures the likeness, and the regal bearing for which Queen Victoria was renowned. Bell Birch was both a sculptor and artist, who exhibited art works regularly at the Royal Academy of Arts and was elected to the Associateship of the Academy in 1880. He had a distinguished career with numerous important commissions. The website presenting biographies of British artists, [www.drawpaintsculpt.com/artist-biographies](http://www.drawpaintsculpt.com/artist-biographies), notes that he showed great skill in portrait busts, and records that in 1864 he won a £600 prize in an Art Union competition for his *Wood Nymph* sculpture, which found great popularity, being exhibited in Vienna, Philadelphia and Paris. The biography also describes Birch's statue of Benjamin Disraeli on the steps of St George's Hall, Liverpool as 'magisterial'. It quotes Robert Gunnis' appraisal of Birch in his *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851*:

*Birch was one of our most reliable of portraitists, faithful to likeness, accurate in anatomy, good, without being outstanding in chiselling. His considerable practice was fully earned, and has left to us a series of works to honour the British School.*

The *Wikipedia* website records a number of statues around the world by Bell Birch, listing the following as the most significant:

*Wood Nymph*, London 1864

*Griffin*, Temple Bar Memorial, London 1880

*Lieutenant William Hamilton*, Dublin 1880

*Disraeli*, Liverpool 1883

*George Brown*, one of the Fathers of Federation, Queens park, Toronto 1884

*William Earl* a soldier, Liverpool 1887

*Queen Victoria*, Blackfriars Bridge, London, 1896.

**Note:** A total of eight statues of Queen Victoria produced by Birch were made from the same mould, although some minor variations occur with gesture, positioning of the hands and arms and the like. There are examples, all erected between 1893 and 1896, at Scarborough Town Hall Gardens, Derby Royal Infirmary, Newcastle Under Lyme, Aberdeen, Guernsey, Adelaide's Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square and Oodeypore, India.

*William Ward*, First Earl of Dudley, Dudley 1888

*The Last Call*, a statue depicting the death of a trumpeter and his horse at the battle of Kabul in 1879

An equestrian statuette of William III created for the King of the Netherlands.

Birch's art had the ability to inspire, and it was this kind of inspiration which prompted Sir Edwin Smith, who viewed Birch's model for the statue while on a visit to London in 1893, to order a cast in bronze. He wrote to the Mayor of Adelaide:

*I am anxious to present this beautiful work of art to the Citizens of Adelaide to the place in Victoria Square*



Birch's skill was widely recognised, reflected in the number of commissions he received. The fact that a number of statues of the Queen, cast from the same mould, are now exhibited at the former British dominions of India, Canada and Australia, reflects this recognition, as well as symbolising the close ties which then existed between Britain and its colonies.

This statue of Queen Victoria in Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, Adelaide was erected in 1894, a year following the death of Charles Birch, who died in 1893.

**(g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person of historical importance.**

The statue is associated with Sir Edwin Thomas Smith (1830-1919), who ordered it while in London and presented it to the Council. Sir Edwin also met the cost of the pedestal, which was constructed by Fraser & Draysey of Waymouth Street. Born in Walsall, England, he migrated to Australia in 1853. He began business as an importer but in 1860 he went into business with Edward Logue at Old Kent Brewery. When Logue died in 1862, he continued to develop the business as a prosperous concern, moving it to Kent Town in 1875.

His entrepreneurial success gave him the opportunity to enter public life and he became active in local government, serving as Mayor of Kensington Norwood in 1867-70 and 1871-73. He was responsible for asphaltting the roads, and in a private capacity donated the Town Clock and contributed £2,000 to secure the freehold for the Norwood Oval. He also became Mayor of Adelaide in 1886-87. From 1871-1893 he represented East Torrens in the House of Assembly and served as Minister of Education in 1884. He was directly involved in significant projects such as the establishment of Torrens lake, the Rotunda Lawn, and the establishment of Adelaide's horse-drawn tramways. He took a keen interest in bringing Adelaide to the highest standards, enclosing the city's squares with iron railings to replace dilapidated wooden posts, overseeing the installation of gas street lighting, and selecting the site for Adelaide's first sewage farm at Enfield.

From 1888 Smith was able to retire from his successful business and devote himself full time to public life. He became the Commissioner for South Australia at numerous interstate exhibitions as well as international exhibitions at Philadelphia, Paris and London. When the State Government faltered in establishing the 1887 Jubilee Exhibition, Smith took it over privately and turned it into an outstanding success. He was a keen chess player and sports enthusiast, being a strong supporter of athletics as well as a patron and admirer of cricket. Smith chaired South Australia's National Parks Commission, and was connected with numerous sporting clubs including the Hunt Club and with tennis, rowing, bowling, swimming, rifle and cycling organisations. He was also active on the boards of the Zoological Gardens and Botanic Gardens, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Blind deaf and Dumb Institute Elder Workmen's Home and others. He also kept up his connections with the business community, in particular the AMP Society and Savings Bank of South Australia. He was knighted for his public and philanthropic work in 1888. Popular with the public because of his enthusiastic commitment to public life and charitable causes, he never lost an election.

Smith was a leading figure in the evolution of the city of Adelaide, as an entrepreneur, public leader and a philanthropist. His work contributed to shaping the physical fabric of the city as well as influencing its cultural life. Over a fifty-year period he made a contribution which few could match; in many respects the Queen Victoria statue is his monument.

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#### **BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

In 1880 a model of a statue of Queen Victoria was erected at the junction of North Terrace and King William Street. Made by sculptor Marshall Woods, it was unveiled in October that



year. The sculpture showed the Queen in her robes at the opening of the Imperial Parliament. It was designed to show what a finished statue might look like. The model was well received by the public and public subscriptions were called for with a view to funding the statue. It was proposed that the subscriptions would be matched with funds from the State Government. However, nothing eventuated from the proposal until the visit of Edwin Smith to London in 1893. He took the opportunity to view the model for a cast of the Queen produced by sculptor Charles Bell Birch, and promptly ordered a cast, which he then offered to the City of Adelaide, proposing that it be erected in the centre of Victoria Square at the intersection, as it then was, of King William Street, Wakefield Street and Grote Street. The Council, in full agreement with the proposed site, accepted the offer, and the statue was cast in bronze at the Thames Ditton foundry in London. The firm of Fraser and Daysey submitted the winning tender of £275 to construct the pedestal, using red granite mined from the vicinity of Palmer.

The finished statue, sited as proposed by Smith at the centre of the Square at the median point between Wakefield and Grote Streets, was unveiled on 11 August 1894 in the presence of the Governor, State Ministers and a large public gathering. The *Advertiser* reported:

*With all the éclat befitting the occasion the Queen's statue was unveiled on Saturday afternoon. Her majesty's subjects in her province of South Australia are a loyal people, and nothing was wanting in the demonstration to signalise that devotion to the throne, and that affection for the venerable sovereign who has conferred lustre on it, of which the Queen's statue in the noble square that bears her name will be a lasting symbol. The presence of vice-royalty, of the chief unctionaries of the State, of the city fathers, of the military, of the school children, and of the general public, conspired to give the proceedings a completely representative character.*

The statue was well received by the public. On the Queen's death seven years later, large numbers gathered at the statue to mourn her, with the statue being draped with funeral decorations for the occasion.

At various times in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s there were proposals to move the statue on the ground that it was considered a hazard to traffic. In each case the Council considered the arguments, obtaining costings and engineering advice about the practicalities of doing so. However, in each case the decision was that no action would be taken, and the statue still remains in its original position.

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## REFERENCES:

### Books

Burgess, H.T (ed.) *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, vol. 1, facs. ed'n, 1977, Adelaide, Austaprint

Cameron, S, *Silent Witnesses: Adelaide's Statues and Monuments*, 1997, Adelaide, Wakefield Press

Ward-Jackson, P, *Public Sculpture in the City of London*, 2003, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press

### Newspapers

*Register*, 11 August 1894; 13 August 1894

*The Advertiser*, 13 August 1894

### Internet

*Dictionary of Australian Biography Online* – entry on Edwin Thomas Smith

Website [www.drawpaintsculpt.com/artist-biographies](http://www.drawpaintsculpt.com/artist-biographies) - entry on Charles Bell Birch

*Wikipedia* – entry on Charles Bell Birch

### **Adelaide City Council**

*Digest of proceedings* – entries for 1894

Jones, D, *Adelaide Park Lands and Squares Cultural Landscapes Assessment Study* - Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, .October 2007

*Town Clerk's Docket* 1894/0773 – letter from Edwin Smith, offering to present the statue

*Town Clerk's Docket* 1932/383 – suggestions for moving the statue of Queen Victoria.

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**SITE RECORD:**

**FORMER NAME:** Not Applicable

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

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The statue of Queen Victoria is located in the centre of Victoria Square, looking northwards along King William Street.

**DATE OF COMPLETION:** 11 August 1894

**REGISTER STATUS:**

<b>Description:</b>	Nominated
<b>Date:</b>	14 February 2011

**CURRENT USE:**

<b>Description:</b>	Monument
<b>Dates:</b>	1894 - 2011

**PREVIOUS USE(S):**

<b>Description:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Dates:</b>	

**ARCHITECT:**

<b>Name:</b>	Charles Bell Birch
<b>Dates:</b>	1832-1893

**BUILDER:**

<b>Name:</b>	Fraser and Daysey (Pedestal)
<b>Dates:</b>	

**SUBJECT INDEXING:**

<b>Group:</b>	Monuments and memorials
<b>Category:</b>	Memorial

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:**

<b>Description:</b>	Adelaide City Council
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**LOCATION:**

<b>Unit No.:</b>	
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**Street No.:**  
**Street Name:** Tarndanyangga/Victoria  
Square  
**Town/Suburb:** Adelaide  
**Post Code:** 5000

**LAND DESCRIPTION:**

**Title Type:**  
**Volume:**  
**Folio:**  
**Lot No.:** Road Reserve  
**Section:**  
**Hundred:** Adelaide

**OWNER \*:**

**Name:** Adelaide City Council  
**Address:** GPO Box 2252  
**Town/Suburb:** Adelaide  
**Post Code:** 5000



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**Site Plan - Statue of Queen Victoria, Tarndanyangga/Victoria Square, Adelaide**



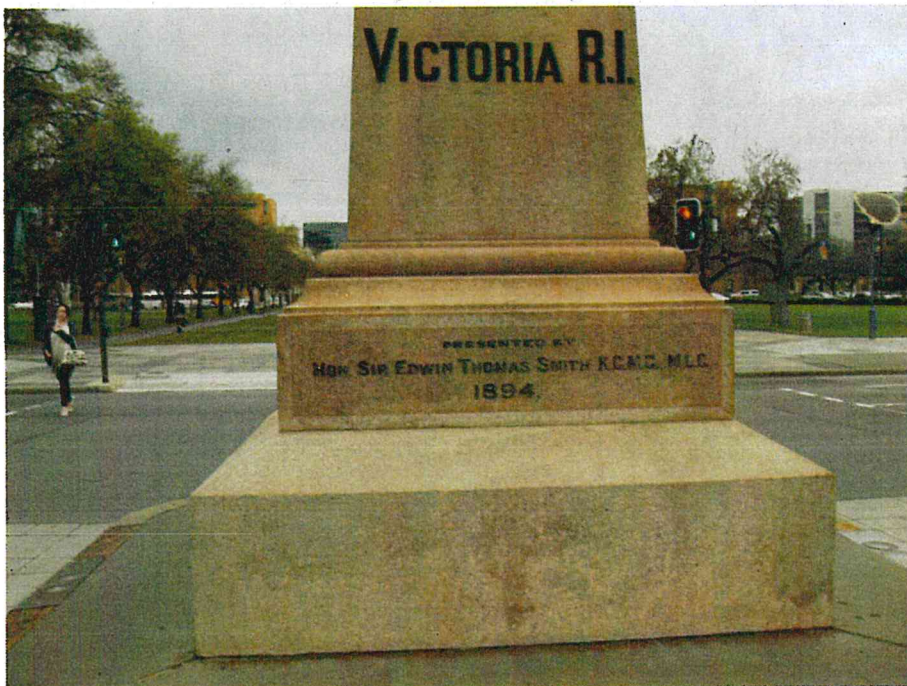
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**Queen Victoria Statue on Pedestal, northern aspect.  
Photograph G. Speirs 21 June 2011**



**Pedestal of Queen Victoria Statue, showing engraved caption and  
acknowledgment of donation by Sir Edwin Smith. Northern aspect.  
Photograph G. Speirs, 21 June 2011**



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**Funeral procession for Queen Victoria filing past the Statue, 1901**



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**Intersection of King William Street and Wakefield and Grote Streets in 1963, showing the then straight alignment of King William Street through the Square, and the statue of Queen Victoria in the centre**