

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

Place Name and Address: Charles Cameron Kingston Monument
Victoria Square
Adelaide

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

Description:

The monument includes the bronze life size statue and pedestal of Murray Bridge granite and Angaston marble. It is located on the eastern side of Victoria Square immediately west of the Torrens building near the intersection of King William Street and Wakefield Street

The pedestal which features bronze plaques depicting scenes from Kingston's life. Kingston is represented dressed in the ceremonial uniform of a privy councilor, with sword, frock coat and gaiters.

There are bronze panels on three sides of the pedestal. That on the southern side depicts Kingston's father George Strickland Kingston, another depicts Kingston presiding over the federal convention held in Adelaide in 1897 and the third represents him addressing federal parliament. There is a bronze coat of arms beneath the cornice at the top of the pedestal.

The front of the monument is inscribed:

Right Honourable
Charles Cameron Kingston
Patriot
And Statesman

Erected by the Public 1916

A bronze plaque near the base of the pedestal indicates:

Unveiled by
His Excellency The Governor General of Australia
The Rt Hon Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, P.C. G.C.M.G
26th May 1916

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

Statement of Heritage Significance:

The monument to Charles Cameron Kingston commemorates the work and achievements of a significant South Australian, particularly Kingston's contribution to the formation of a federated Australia and his influence in drafting the Constitution of Australia. The location of the monument in Victoria Square is particularly apt because of his arrest there when preparing for a duel with a parliamentary critic, and where he was later set upon by a prominent businessman.

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, particular for the manner in which it commemorates the federation of the Australian colonies and the endeavours of Kingston to bring this about.

(e) It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment, being the work of noted English sculptor Alfred Drury (1856–1944).

(g) It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance, particularly Charles Cameron Kingston and his noteworthy identification with Victoria Square.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the monument to Charles Cameron Kingston — statue and pedestal — in Tarndanyangga, Victoria Square, be provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register.

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT

TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Criteria

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(e) It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment, being the work of noted English sculptor Alfred Drury (1856–1944).

(g) It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance, particularly Charles Cameron Kingston and his noteworthy identification with Victoria Square.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The monument was unveiled on 26 May 1916 by Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson during the course of a Premiers' conference in Adelaide. The monument was erected to commemorate the life and achievements of Charles Cameron Kingston who died in 1908. Kingston, trained as a lawyer and had a remarkable parliamentary career where he gained a reputation as a radical liberal. He served in the South Australian parliament as Attorney-General, then premier for six years. He was an ardent advocate of federation and presided over the federal convention held in Adelaide in 1897. He served in the first federal parliament as Trade Minister.

Sir Samuel Way who was a major advocate for the erection of a monument to Kingston, was critical of the final result, but died before the monument was unveiled.

Charles Cameron Kingston was an eminent South Australia, one of the 'Founding Fathers' of Federation with a particular association with Victoria Square. Historian John Playford wrote of Kingston in the Australian Dictionary of Biography:

KINGSTON, CHARLES CAMERON (1850-1908), lawyer and politician, was born on 22 October 1850 in Adelaide, younger son of Sir George Strickland Kingston and his second wife Ludovina Catherina da Silva, née Cameron. He was educated at J. L. Young's Adelaide Educational

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

Institution and later articulated to (Sir) Samuel James Way. He was admitted to the Bar in 1873, after the elder brother of Lucy May McCarthy unsuccessfully opposed his application on the alleged ground that Kingston had seduced Lucy. Later in the year, on 25 June, they married. When Way became chief justice of South Australia in 1876, Kingston began to practise on his own account, and in 1888 was appointed Q.C. Over six feet (183 cm) in height and possessed of tremendous strength, Kingston was a formidable athlete in his younger days and was president of the South Adelaide Football Club in 1880-1908. He also joined the Volunteer Military Force of South Australia and attained the rank of sergeant.

Kingston's parliamentary career began in 1881 as member for the House of Assembly seat of West Adelaide. He was re-elected for the same constituency six times until his resignation in 1900. He was attorney-general from June 1884 to June 1885 in the ministry of (Sir) John Colton, but the faction leader he most respected and admired was Thomas Playford. Kingston was attorney-general in the first Playford ministry from June 1887 to June 1889, and he played an important part in the introduction of legislation for the protective tariff and payment of members of parliament.

Kingston represented South Australia at the Australasian conference held in Sydney in June 1888 and, as a strong advocate of a White Australia and opponent of Chinese immigration, had much to do with framing the formula for its regulation. After Kingston's death the Federal Labor parliamentarian Dr William Maloney described him as the originator of the White Australia policy. He did not join the second Playford ministry when it was formed in 1890. However, as a favour to the premier, and at considerable monetary sacrifice, he became chief secretary for its last six months of office from January to June 1892. Playford was absent in India for most of this period and Kingston was acting premier.

The most dramatic and colorful episode in Kingston's political career occurred in 1892. After a prominent conservative member of the Legislative Council, (Sir) Richard Baker, denounced him as a coward, a bully and a disgrace to the legal profession, Kingston responded by describing Baker as 'false as a friend, treacherous as a colleague, mendacious as a man, and utterly untrustworthy in every relationship of public life'. Kingston did not stop there. He procured a pair of matched pistols, one of which he sent to Baker accompanied by a letter appointing the time for a duel in Victoria Square, Adelaide, on 23 December. Baker wisely informed the police who arrested Kingston shortly after he arrived, holding a loaded revolver. Amidst widespread publicity he was tried and bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. The sentence was still in force when he became premier in June 1893.

Victoria Square was the scene of another disturbance in 1895, when the Adelaide manager of the South Australian Co., provoked by remarks made by Kingston, thrashed him with a riding whip and drew blood. The powerfully built Kingston wrested the weapon away from his assailant and proceeded to chastise him. He later told the press: 'Who

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

can now say that I have not shed my blood for South Australia? "What a pity", my capitalistic friends will say, "that there was not more of it".

The election of April 1893, conducted while the South Australian economy was in a depressed state, radically altered the composition of the House of Assembly through an influx of new Labor members and rural reformers. Kingston skillfully welded together the liberal factions led by Playford, (Sir) John Cockburn and (Sir) Frederick Holder and, with the support of the Labor members, defeated the conservative Downer ministry. The Kingston ministry was in office until December 1899, then the longest-serving ministry in South Australia. Kingston continuously held the portfolio of attorney-general and was also minister of industry from January 1895.

The Kingston ministry is popularly credited with the following reforms: extension of the franchise to women, a legitimization Act, a conciliation and arbitration Act, establishment of a state bank, a high protective tariff, regulation of factories, and a progressive system of land and income taxation. The sheer volume of work accomplished is striking. Not all these reforms, however, were innovations of the Kingston ministry. For example, a land tax and a graduated income tax were already on the statute book, introduced by Kingston in 1885 when attorney-general in the Colton ministry; his own ministry merely increased the rates of taxation. Kingston had opposed adult suffrage during the 1893 election but was persuaded to change his views under pressure from two of his ministerial colleagues, Cockburn and Holder, and from the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Persuaded that votes for women would be politically advantageous, he proceeded to enforce Sunday closing of hotels, which had been legislated for by the Playford ministry but had remained a dead letter. In December 1894 South Australia became the first Australian colony to enact adult suffrage.

Kingston's industrial arbitration and conciliation legislation of 1894 was the first attempt in Australia to impose arbitration by law as a means of preventing and settling industrial strife. The trade unions did not care to register under the Act and remained outside its jurisdiction. Thus the Act was not a success. The Kingston ministry also established co-operative settlements along the banks of the River Murray in an attempt to alleviate high unemployment in the metropolitan area.

The (Royal) Adelaide Hospital dispute, developing from a comparatively trivial administrative conflict in 1894, plagued the ministry during its term of office and brought the government and the medical profession into open opposition. Kingston's intemperate remarks kept the row at fever pitch. The exchange of letters between (Sir) Josiah Symon and Kingston in the columns of the South Australian Register in July 1896 were so vituperative, according to Alfred Deakin, that they 'would have justified half a dozen duels'. In 1896 Kingston also described Dr E. W. Way, a member of the hospital's honorary staff and a brother of the chief justice, as a 'medical Jack the Ripper'. A senior official of the Colonial Office, in a minute dated 24 June 1896, despaired of the dispute and dismissed Kingston as 'perhaps the most quarrelsome man alive'. Kingston's transfer to

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

Federal politics in 1901 was an important factor in bringing about settlement of the imbroglio.

Kingston's vindictive streak also came out in his savage cuts to the salary and allowances of the governor, the Earl of Kintore, in 1893. He attempted to restrict the vice-regal office further by sending documents needing approval in executive council so near to the time of the meeting that the governor had no hope of reading them. In all his dealings with Kingston, Kintore scrupulously observed the correct constitutional and social conventions and in his official correspondence never commented on Kingston's personality. However, in a private letter to the permanent head of the Colonial Office, he warned that 'in dealing with Kingston you are dealing with an able but absolutely unscrupulous man. His character is of the worst; he is black hearted and entirely disloyal'.

One of Kingston's enduring preoccupations was to reduce the powers of the Legislative Council which heavily amended or rejected the more radical legislation passed in the Lower House. Successive attempts to reform the council's constituency by widening the franchise were defeated in the Upper House. Kingston's obsession with the council continued after the April 1899 election and caused some of his supporters to fear that his uncompromising attitude would lead him to seek a dissolution of the House of Assembly, with unpredictable consequences. In December 1899 a group of members including Playford, his political mentor who looked upon him almost as a son, crossed the floor and the Kingston ministry was defeated by one vote. Kingston requested the governor, Lord Tennyson, to dissolve the parliament so that he could appeal to the people. The governor did not act on Kingston's advice but sent for the mover of the adverse motion, Thomas Burgoyne, who declined the offer, and then for V. L. Solomon who succeeded in forming a ministry. This is the last-known occasion on which a governor of South Australia refused a premier's request for a dissolution of the House of Assembly. Ironically, Tennyson, in a letter to Queen Victoria of 19 September 1899, had written of Kingston that we 'work admirably together, & I greatly value his absolute straightforwardness'. But a letter written by Lady Tennyson in July 1903 revealed that her husband 'has always said he thinks [Kingston] is a terrible bully and frightfully obstinate'. Kingston resigned his seat in the assembly in February 1900. After unsuccessfully contesting a seat for the Legislative Council in May he eventually was elected at a by-election in September. He resigned on 3 December to enter Federal politics.

Kingston's major achievement was the contribution that he made to the Federation movement. As attorney-general in 1888 he took charge of the bill for securing the entry of South Australia into the Federal Council of Australasia. With Playford he represented South Australia at the session of the Federal council held in Hobart in February 1889 and piloted through resolutions for enlarging membership of the council. At the National Australasian Convention in Sydney in 1891, he was appointed to assist Sir Samuel Griffith and A. I. Clark to prepare the original Commonwealth bill. The South Australian delegates to the second convention of 1897-98 were elected directly by the people. Kingston headed the poll. He was elected president of the convention

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

when it assembled in Adelaide in March 1897. His old political foe Baker lobbied successfully to keep him off the drafting committee. Such a move was regrettable; (Sir) George Reid later praised Kingston as the best parliamentary draftsman he ever knew. Under Kingston's chairmanship, the convention made considerable progress towards a draft constitution. Kingston and the Victorian radical H. B. Higgins were responsible for the clause relating to the arbitration powers of the Commonwealth. Division between small and large States over the financial powers of the Senate was avoided when Kingston dramatically announced that he would vote with the delegates from New South Wales and Victoria to curtail these powers.

The convention was adjourned later in 1897 to enable the colonial representatives to attend Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations. While in England Kingston was appointed to the Privy Council and received an honorary D.C.L. from the University of Oxford. He also refused a knighthood. Playford, who had resigned from the Kingston ministry in 1894 to become agent-general in London, wrote to his daughter: 'Mrs. K. did not like it ... and she made herself as disagreeable as she knew how. Poor Kingston had a fearful time of it with her'.

Kingston returned to London in 1900 with Deakin and (Sir) Edmund Barton to ensure that the Commonwealth of Australia bill passed through the Imperial parliament with as few changes as possible. The delegation gained several peripheral concessions from the British colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, but lost the most important point when Chamberlain insisted that appeals to the Privy Council not be deleted from the bill. After tenaciously arguing their case Kingston and the others had no choice but to give in, though Deakin called the whole affair 'A Drawn Battle'.

At the first Federal election in 1901 South Australia voted as one electorate for House of Representatives seats. Standing on a strong protectionist platform, Kingston topped the poll. He emphasized the social consequences of protection: the goods produced overseas by cheap labour had to be excluded to protect employment and living standards. Protection, he believed, would integrate nation-building and the interests of the working-class, and was the essential prerequisite for factory regulatory acts and the system of conciliation and arbitration he desired to establish.

The Bulletin would have liked to see Kingston become the first prime minister. Barton gave him the demanding portfolio of trade and customs. Kingston guided the first tariff through parliament; it took a whole year of untiring effort before the legislation was passed. As an autocrat he insisted upon personally making all decisions affecting the administration of the department, no matter how trivial. As a result he was a bad administrator. Moreover, he was ill from 1902 and subject to moods of great depression. Barton wrote to Deakin about his fears for Kingston's mental balance and the overworking of customs officials. In applying the Customs Act and its regulations, Kingston fell foul of business interests, notably chambers of commerce, for his meticulous checking of duties liable on imports; many importing firms were prosecuted for breaches of the law. It would appear that the dividing

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

line between inadvertent error and willful fraud was not always recognized. Predictably, Kingston enjoyed a fight with his enemies, despite the embarrassment caused to some of his ministerial colleagues, and refused to make any concessions. Nevertheless, his tyrannical style of administration abolished many anomalies and laid the foundations for a department with high standards of probity.

The last issue that Kingston threw himself into was the conciliation and arbitration bill of 1903. As the pioneer of such measures in Australia, he drafted the bill but disagreement broke out in cabinet over whether the proposed legislation should apply to British and foreign seamen engaged in the Australian coastal trade. Sir John Forrest was intransigent in his opposition, Barton sided with him and Kingston resigned from the ministry in July 1903. Shortly afterwards his health broke down completely. Political unsettlement and the intervention of an election delayed the bill from gaining the royal assent until December 1904.

In December 1903 Kingston was elected unopposed for the new seat of Adelaide. When the first Labor ministry was formed by J. C. Watson in 1904, he was invited, with the concurrence of the Labor caucus, to join the ministry. Unlike his colleague Higgins he did not accept, probably because ill health was already causing frequent absences from parliament. It is unlikely that Kingston ever considered joining the Labor Party; his scorn of caucus tyranny suggests that he remained a nineteenth-century radical and individualist. The Labor Party gave him immunity at the November 1906 election and he was re-elected unopposed, although by this time clearly too ill to carry out his parliamentary duties. Kingston died of cerebro-vascular disease in Adelaide on 11 May 1908, and was accorded a state funeral. In earlier days he had profited from mining interests in Western Australia and at Silverton, New South Wales, but he was devoid of all money sense and left an estate of less than £2200. However, his wife, who died in 1919, left an estate of some £30,000.

Kingston was the dominant and outstanding figure in late colonial politics in South Australia. He was also one of the leading figures in the Federation movement and left his stamp on the early Commonwealth. A passionate and explosive personality, he was a warm and generous friend. But he was also a bullying and vindictive foe. In 1898 he insisted that his former friend turned critic, E. Paris Nesbit, Q.C., be kept in a lunatic asylum, despite the medical superintendent's opinion that Nesbit should be released.

Kingston's almost total preoccupation with politics may possibly be linked to the tragedy of his family life. His marriage was not a happy union and he soon returned to lechery. He was widely believed to be the father of the firebrand Labor politician A. A. Edwards. His talented elder brother, Strickland George Kingston, to whom he was close and who had been his legal partner until receiving six months imprisonment in 1884 for shooting at a cabman, became an alcoholic and eventually suicided in 1897. Disputes with his family over the terms of his father's will dragged on through the courts for many years. There was no issue from his marriage and his adopted son died in 1902. His wife's behaviour became increasingly eccentric.

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

For radicals and Labor supporters, the Bulletin's obituary of Kingston summed it all up: he was 'Australia's Noblest Son ... a good Australian all the time, and a good Democrat all the time'. He is still regarded in radical circles as one of the greatest Australians, a tremendous reformer, and a wild man to boot. However, the tribune of the people was also an autocrat with a titanic ego, and the passions which often motivated him were not those of a gentle idealist. Deakin, admiring his 'great ability' and 'indomitable will', noted that 'No man more enjoyed the confidence of the masses'. Yet he regretted that 'Kingston's courage verged upon unscrupulousness' and observed: 'Strong passions had crippled his self-development'. Beatrice Webb had mixed feelings when she met him in 1898. She admired him as 'an industrious, upright and capable administrator, with great Parliamentary powers'. At the same time she was disturbed by his 'spite' and 'demagogic dislike of any distinction or superiority', epitomized by his 'war with "Society", the University and his colleagues in the legal profession'. More recently Douglas Pike, in his *Australia: the Quiet Continent*, had similar qualms: 'he liked to champion the weak as a lawyer, but as Premier he preferred to bully the opposition. His support for arbitration in industrial disputes and votes for women won him repute as a Democrat, but most of his reforms were designed to hurt his enemies more than to help the people'. A bronze statue by A. Drury of Kingston in the uniform of a privy councillor was unveiled in 1916 in Victoria Square, Adelaide, a portrait by Ambrose Patterson is held at Parliament House, Canberra, and a bust is held in Parliament House, Adelaide.

Sculptor Alfred Drury (1856–1944), who was awarded the commission for the monument, was born in London. He studied first at Oxford School of Art, then South Kensington Schools under Jules Dalou from 1881 to 1885 before working for Dalou in Paris. He had designed and crafted the bronze statue of Sir Thomas Elder before this commission. It was somewhat ironical that Kingston who had been regarded as a champion of the less well to do should have been portrayed as a privy councillor.

REFERENCES:

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Simon Cameron, *Silent Witnesses: Adelaide's Statues and Monuments*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1997, pp. 62–67.

John Playford, 'Kingston, Charles Cameron (1850 - 1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp 602-605.

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A Lys Baldry, 'A Notable Sculptor: Alfred Drury',
<http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/drury/baldry.html>

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME:	Charles Cameron Kingston Monument
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Monument
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1916
REGISTER STATUS:	Description: n/a
CURRENT USE:	Description: Monument Dates:
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description: n/a Dates: n/a
SCULPTOR:	Name: Alfred Drury Dates: 1916
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: Town/Suburb: Adelaide Post Code: 5000 Region No.: n/a Region: Adelaide
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type: CROWN Volume: 5779 Folio: 247 Lot No.: n/a Section: n/a Hundred: Adelaide

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places

CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

Site Plan



CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT
TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE

[illegible]

Design of the pedestal of the Kingston monument
State Records: GRS_10956_1_1_4

CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON MONUMENT
TARNDANYANGGA / VICTORIA SQUARE



View of the Kingston monument to the west showing front elevation, coat of arms and two panels

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places



View to the east showing the rear elevation of the monument and two panels on the pedestal

Adelaide Park Lands Heritage Places



Panel depicting Kingston presiding over the 1897 Federal Convention



Panel depicting Kingston addressing federal parliament



Panel featuring Kingston's father, George Strickland Kingston