



Brighton Town Hall, c1911 (*Image: Holdfast Bay History Centre*)

FORMER BRIGHTON TOWN HALL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

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DEWNR
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ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

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1. BRIEF HISTORY OF FORMER BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

The District Council of Brighton was proclaimed on 3 November 1853, the twentieth local government authority to be set up in the South Australian colony. Five years later the district was divided, and the Corporate Town of Brighton was established along with those of Marion and Glenelg.

The initial five Council members were appointed by the Governor, with Major TS O'Halloran selected as Chairman. One of their first decisions was to appoint Mr F Pearce as Council Clerk and Rate Collector for the District. The first election of representatives of ratepayers within the district took place at a public meeting on 3 March 1856.

Council meetings were initially conducted in rooms at the Thatched House Tavern, and later the Brighton Inn. From around 1863 it is believed that the Council met in a building on the northern corner of Brighton Road and Hulbert Street until 1869. A meeting of ratepayers was held on 2 October 1868 to discuss the accommodation needs of the Council, and shortly afterwards the decision was made to purchase land for the construction of combined Council Chambers and Town Hall. Plans for the building were prepared free of charge by local carpenter and joiner George William Highet who then successfully tendered for the construction, along with Edward Turner for the masonry and brickwork and George Sansom for the plastering and stuccoing. It is interesting to note that GW Highet, an early pioneer of the district, had a long association with the Council, serving variously as Town Clerk, Auditor and Councillor over a twenty year period.

Completed in September 1869 at a cost of £320, it was only the fourth town hall built in the colony, after those of Kensington and Norwood (1859), Adelaide and Port Adelaide (both 1866). The 1859 Norwood Town Hall was replaced with the present structure in 1883 (SHP 12721), making the Brighton Town Hall now the third oldest surviving Town Hall in the State. If purpose-built stand-alone Council Chambers are also taken into account, only the Highercombe, Bungaree and Burnside Chambers pre-date Brighton (see Appendix for complete list of State Heritage listed Town Halls and Council Chambers).

The official opening of the Brighton Town Hall on 22 September 1869 was celebrated with a tea meeting and concert, attended by a large gathering of local residents and presided over by Brighton's Mayor, Mr Nicholls. Over the next seventy years this building served a vital role within the local community. Apart from its primary purpose as the venue for Council meetings, centre of local government administration, and venue for public meetings of the citizenry of Brighton, it also accommodated the Institute reading room and public library, and served as the meeting place for a multitude of local clubs and associations. Amongst these were the Rechabite Lodge, Brighton Band of Hope, Oddfellows, Good Templars, Volunteer Rifles, Freemasons, Literary and Debating Societies, as well as a venue for concerts and socials, lantern lectures, political meetings, moving pictures and variety shows. It was also used during the day to accommodate a grammar school, and a girls' school, hired out for Sunday religious services, and even operated for a time as a roller skating rink.

Early photographs show a stone and brick boundary wall, built in 1871, flanking the entry off Brighton Road, and there was a public well nearby. The original 1869 hall was extended several times, firstly in 1874 when a small meeting room was added at the rear, along with a toilet. In 1896 the eastern wall of the Hall was opened up enabling this back room to be converted into a stage, complete with proscenium arch, and creating a room beneath used for storage. The hall was provided with electric lighting in 1914, and by 1919 a large addition to the front of the building had been completed.

By 1921 the Town Hall had become inadequate for the needs of the growing town, and consideration was being given to building new Municipal Offices and Council Chamber. This eventually resulted in the completion of a new Art Deco style building on Jetty Road in 1938 (SHP No 14464). In 1929 the Institute relocated to a new building on the corner of Brighton Road and Torr Road, known as Bagshaw Hall, and the Town Hall continued as the Mothers and Babies' Health Association (1925) and the Brighton, Seacliff and Marion sub-branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League (1935). After the Council offices moved to the new premises in 1938, the Returned Services League (RSL) and Mothers and Babies Health Centre continued as the main tenants.

By 1954 the Aged and Invalid Pensioners Association was also based there, and around that time the 1919 addition to the front of the building was demolished and replaced with a new front section built in brick. The lease to the RSL (by then operating as the RSL Bowling Club) expired in 1970 and was not renewed, but the club continued to occupy the site until relocating to new council-owned premises jointly with the Brighton Bowling Club Inc in 2008. The Hall has apparently been unoccupied since. In December 2011 the Holdfast Bay Council resolved to revoke the Community Land status for the portion of the site occupied

by the former Town Hall building, and to dispose of the property as a potential redevelopment site. The Council recently demolished the 1954 brick additions to the front of the building, which according to a 2013 structural engineering assessment had become unsafe.

The Town Hall was recommended as a local heritage place in both the Brighton Heritage Survey (Dallwitz & Holt, 1991) and the Brighton Heritage Review (McDougall & Vines, 1998) and was entered in the City of Holdfast Bay Development Plan as a local heritage place in the Development Plan Amendment authorised on 29 March 2001 (No. 4434).

Association with Susan Grace Benny

Contributing to the significance of this site is its association with the pioneering female politician Susan Grace Benny, who in 1919 became the first woman in Australia to hold political office at any level of government.

Mrs Susan Grace Benny (known as Grace) was the wife of former mayor of Brighton (1903-05) and later federal senator, Benjamin Benny. Mrs Benny was herself appointed as a Councillor representing the newly created ward of Seacliff on the Brighton District Council on 22 December 1919. Though not elected in the formal sense, her appointment followed a nomination from the Seacliff Progress Association, supported by a petition drawn up and signed by the majority of ratepayers of Brighton asking the Governor to appoint her as one of two councillors for the new ward. An educated and intellectually acute woman with an interest in politics and social justice, she sought public office as a means to advance the position of women in the area. A contemporary report on her appointment explicitly refers to her motivation as follows:

She entered the Council from a sense of Public Duty, believing that there is work to be done in Municipal life which will not even be commenced unless a woman undertakes it.

(The Adelaide Observer, 20 December, 1919, P.46).

During World War I she had been president of the women's branch of the South Australian Liberal Union (the political party led by Archibald Pearce, which held power in SA intermittently between 1910 and 1920). In this capacity she had been influential in ensuring that equality of divorce for women was placed on the party's platform, leading to an amendment of the divorce laws in 1918. At the time of her appointment to the Council a fulsome account of her achievements published in the *Advertiser* described her as a 'live wire', and 'broad minded and tolerant, and by no means a woman of the suffragette type, and probably is better known in Brighton than any other woman in the district' (*Advertiser*, 13 December 1919, p1). The reassuring tone conveyed by the reference in the article to

Mrs Benny not being the 'suffragette type' (and therefore not too much of a threat to the male-dominated status quo?) reflects somewhat on the attitudes of the day.

Mrs Benny served on the Brighton Council for just two terms, retiring after unsuccessfully running for the position of Mayor in 1922. She would have attended Council meetings in the Brighton Town Hall throughout this period. Though her association with the Council was relatively brief, Mrs Benny went on to an active career outside politics, establishing and running an employment agency for working women in Adelaide. She is recognised by the Local Government Association with the naming of a scholarship for young women seeking a career in local government.

2. DESCRIPTION

The former Brighton Town Hall is located in the Council area of the City of Holdfast Bay, in the southern metropolitan area of Adelaide. The original (1869) section of the Hall comprises a simple, single-storey rectangular building running east-west, with frontage to Brighton Road. It is located immediately to the north of the Hove Station on the Adelaide to Brighton railway line. The hall is of quite modest dimensions, described as '48 feet long, by a breadth of 28 feet, and 20 feet in height' (approximately 15m x 9m x 6m) and originally included a raised platform of 8 feet (2.5m) at the eastern end. The building is of limestone construction over a concrete foundation, with brick quoins and stucco dressings. Exterior walls are now rendered and painted, but the front façade was once lined to represent dressed stone. It has a gable-ended roof laid with terracotta tiles (originally corrugated iron – possibly slate?), and three round-arched windows set high up on each of the north and south elevations. Historical photographs show that the western elevation originally contained a central entranceway sheltered by a small portico, with a pair of semi-circular headed 'blind' windows on either side. Evidence of the location of these original features on the western façade has been revealed by the recent removal of the later (1954) addition to the front of the building. Above the central door opening there is a circular niche with stucco surround. At the time of its completion the building was described as being 'in the Gothic style of architecture' (*SA Register*, 23 September 1869 p3), however the simple massing, parapeted gable and semi-circular arched windows suggest Victorian Romanesque might be the more applicable term (Apperley et al).

A small addition at the rear, identified as the 1874 meeting room, appears to be of painted brick construction with parapet walls. A series of later additions to the north, south and east, completed between 1919 and 1954 are of brick, concrete block and weatherboard construction with corrugated iron skillion roofs. A deep verandah of modern iron

construction (c1970) was added to provide shelter on the northern side overlooking the former bowling green.

The building is in a generally dilapidated state, having been unoccupied for some years and is littered with discarded furnishings.

The interior of the main 1869 Hall retains a number of intact original features, including plaster ceilings and timber framed windows, however the plaster walls below window height have been clad in non-original timber panelling and several large openings have been created in the north and south walls connecting to the later additions. The timber floor boards in the main hall appear to be in good condition and may be original. The eastern end of the building retains the wide archway created in 1896 to enable the back room to be converted into a stage. The south–eastern corner of the main hall has been fitted out as a bar, and internal walls have been clad with timber panelling, but apart from this is one large open space as originally built.

Additions to the north contain offices and a large kitchen, as well as an entry foyer which still has RSL Club notice boards on the walls. The condition of the extension on the southern side appears to be quite poor with obvious damage to floor boards. The eastern stage area, now fully enclosed by later additions, has later door openings on the east and south walls, the latter leading to toilets. Numerous small rooms at the eastern end of the building appear to be used for storage.

3. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Identification of South Australian Historical Themes:

The Brighton Town Hall is illustrative of a number of historical themes, particularly Social History / Development, and Political / Government History.

Political/ Government History

The Brighton Town Hall is representative of the introduction of local government and its role in the period of suburban growth and consolidation from the 1850s. On 25 November 1852 the Colonial Government passed *The District Council Act, 1852*, to provide for the establishment of District Councils throughout the settled areas of the colony. Many districts began organising public meetings to establish their own councils. The earliest district council was that of Mitcham which formed on 12 May 1853. Within the next six months, district councils had also been formed at East Torrens, Onkaparinga, Hindmarsh, Angaston, Yatala, Kensington and Norwood, West Torrens, Highercombe (later Tea Tree Gully), Clare,

Encounter Bay, Willunga, Nairne, Talunga, Echunga, Kondoparinga, Macclesfield, Mount Barker, Brighton, Clarendon, Morphett Vale and Munno Para East (Robbins & Robbins, 1987).

The District Council of Brighton came into existence by proclamation in the *South Australian Government Gazette* on 3 November 1853. As one of the first municipalities to be established in the colony, it is one of the earliest examples of the operations of local government in the regulation of local affairs and the maintenance of civic infrastructure in South Australia. The District Council of Brighton initially extended from the coast to Main South Road and the Sturt River, and from the Field River at Hallett Cove to Anzac Highway. Five years later, on 25 November 1858, a portion of the district was severed from the District Council and the Corporate Town of Brighton was established.

The Council had responsibility for managing a wide range of services on behalf of residents, including mapping of the district and assessing the value of properties for determining the rates, development and maintenance of local road systems, licencing and supervision of slaughter yards, inspection of licenced hotels, management of stray animals, and ensuring that weeds and vermin were kept in check. The Council also represented the ratepayers in petitioning the Colonial Government for concessions and grants to support the development of the district.

Most early councils used hired rooms in local inns or taverns for their meetings, but the questionable suitability of this accommodation for the sober deliberations of the civic body soon prompted calls for purpose-built chambers befitting the dignity of the office. The District of Highercombe was first to commission its own Council Chamber on 28 May 1855, and had its first meeting there on 26 November 1855. This fine Georgian stone building was confirmed as a State Heritage Place in the South Australian Heritage Register in 2000 and is notable as the first building of its kind in South Australia.

Brighton's Town Hall, built some fourteen years later in Victorian Gothic style, is less impressive architecturally, though it is still an attractive well-proportioned structure if later additions are disregarded. Unlike Highercombe's Chamber, which was designed by architect William Weir, Brighton's Town Hall is a modest vernacular structure designed by its builder G W Hightet, and resembles a standard church building of its era. Its completion in 1869 is an indicator of the population growth of the district, and the expansion and consolidation of the local council's role in the regulation of local affairs and provision of public facilities.

Brighton Town Hall is also importantly associated with the first woman in Australia to hold a political office. Councillor Susan Grace Benny was appointed in 1919 and served two terms as Councillor representing Seacliff ward.

Social History / Development

As the focus for a diverse range of communal activities spanning over a century the Brighton Town Hall played an important social and cultural role in the establishment and consolidation of a new suburban community. It is representative of the formation and maintenance of societal bonds in a colonial and post-colonial setting. It housed an extensive range of social clubs and societies, and was the early home of the Institute and library, venue for public lectures and theatrical and musical entertainments, headquarters for the Brighton Town Band, and sporting activities including roller skating, cricket, tennis and bowls. It also served for short periods as church and schoolhouse, in the absence of more permanent accommodation in the district. A number of local services such as the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association operated from the Hall. After the construction of new municipal offices in Jetty Road in 1937 the old Town Hall was leased at a peppercorn rental to the Returned Sailors, Soldiers Imperial League, Brighton, Seacliff and Marion Sub-branch. The building served as the clubrooms of the RSL for fifty years.

The Brighton Town Hall is typical of the establishment of civic infrastructure to support the growth of local communities in South Australia in the second half of the twentieth century.

SA Women's History

South Australia has often led the way in women's political development. South Australia was the first colony in the Southern Hemisphere in which a bill for women's suffrage was introduced (1885). Although it was not passed at that time, South Australia was eventually the first Colony to legislate Women's Right to Vote in 1894. This did not occur across the whole of Australia until 1902, and it was also in that year that Australian women were first granted the right to seek election. However, it was not until 1921 that the first woman won a seat in any State's Legislative Assembly (Edith Cowan in Western Australia), and then a further 22 years elapsed before any woman entered Federal Parliament (Dorothy Tangney and Enid Lyons in 1943).

In the context of this development, it can be seen that when Susan Grace Benny was appointed as a Councillor on the Brighton City Council in 1919, she was not only the first woman to hold office in local government, but was also the first woman politician to serve at any level of government in Australia. The event therefore possesses considerable symbolic significance in South Australia's history, and particularly in women's history. Mrs Benny's

appointment followed many years of lobbying by the South Australian Council of Women to secure adequate representation for women alongside men on all boards and committees. This had led to the *Municipal Corporation Act Amendment Bill 1914* making women eligible for election to positions in local government (Oldfield, 2003, p217). Although working in local councils does not have the same political reach as representatives at the the State or Federal level, Susan Grace Benny can be seen to have a wider significance than the average Local Councillor because she was the first woman to achieve office in any political jurisdiction in Australia.

In addition to her ground-breaking work in local politics, Mrs Benny also made significant contributions in other areas of social reform and women's rights. In 1916 she was only the third woman in South Australia to be appointed a Justice of the Peace, within a few weeks of legislation being passed enabling women to become legal practitioners. Her influence in bringing about the reform of South Australia's divorce laws is mentioned above, and she is also noted for founding the Elite Employment Agency, assisting unemployed women to find work and providing a meal and a bed for many during the Depression (Suzanne Edgar, Australian Dictionary of Biography online).

In order to commemorate her significance, Brighton Council named a park and a community building after her. Susan Grace Benny House was a council-owned property named in her honour on the corner of Brighton Rd and Highet Rd, which housed the Brighton Women's Service from 1976 – ie after her death in 1944 - as well as the local Red Cross. It was demolished some time after 1980. The Susan Grace Benny Park on Mott Tce/Nandera Cres/ Ocean Vista survives. Benny Crescent is named for her first husband Benjamin Benny, a former Mayor of Brighton Council.

The Benny family home between 1898 and 1925 was a substantial seaside villa known as 'Stoneywood', at 81 Marine Parade Seacliff, but this address is now occupied by modern residences and it is assumed the Benny house was demolished.

Susan Grace Benny died in 1944 and is buried in the Scotch Cemetery at Morphett Vale. Her gravesite is marked by a small inscribed stone, accompanied by an interpretive panel erected by the Onkaparinga Council to commemorate her life. The gravesite was nominated for the SA Heritage Register by the Onkaparinga Council in 2012, however it was assessed as not meeting the criteria for entry as a State Heritage Place.

It is noted that her contribution the advancement of women in local government is also commemorated in the naming of the Grace Benny Award, a scholarship offered through the

Australian Local Government Women's Association (South Australian Branch) Inc (ALGWA(SA) to support skills development for elected members.

In summary, though there have been a number of places connected to Susan Grace Benny, the place that most closely represents the reason for her significance is the Brighton Town Hall / Council Chambers, her place of work during the period she served as a Councillor.

Comparability / Rarity / Representation:

The Brighton Town Hall is the third oldest surviving purpose-built Town Hall in South Australia. The two earlier Town Hall Buildings already on the South Australian Heritage Register are those of the City of Adelaide, and Port Adelaide and Enfield (both completed in 1866). These buildings are designed on a much grander scale, reflecting the more central importance of these two municipalities in the early development of the State. In contrast the Brighton Town Hall has a modest presence, indicative of its grass-roots origins in a (then) sparsely populated outer suburb. It served its community well until the expansion of the district in the twentieth century called for a grander and more impressive edifice. A grand new Town Hall was planned to be built on the old site at a cost of £20,000, but the scheme was eventually abandoned after years of discussion and controversy, culminating in a writ being issued to restrain the Council from proceeding. Eventually, after more debate and delay, the present Art Deco Council Chambers and Municipal Offices in Jetty Road were completed and opened in 1938. A concert hall was later added alongside the Municipal Offices. The old hall, still serving a useful purpose, managed to escape demolition.

In appearance, the building resembles a rather ordinary ecclesiastical building, such as would be found in any rural community across the State. Its distinction lies in its historical associations for the community of the Brighton area, as an example of a useful civic building devoid of pretention or ornament, but which served as a focus for the community's cultural and social activities over several generations.

Early civic buildings dating from the colonial period were typically replaced with larger and more impressive structures as communities grew and evolved. The original Norwood Town Hall, for instance, was demolished and rebuilt on the same site in 1883). The Brighton Town Hall is unusual in that the original building is largely intact, and despite the increasingly unsympathetic accretions of the twentieth century can still be clearly understood in its original form.

Other examples exist of stand-alone Council Chambers in metropolitan centres and rural townships. Notable amongst these are the State-listed Highercombe Council Chambers (SPH No 10703), completed in 1855, and believed to be the oldest example of its type in

the State. Other early Council Chambers already entered in the SA Heritage Register include those at Willunga (not built for the purpose), Bungaree and Port Elliott. The Brighton Town Hall is a relatively rare early example of a combined Council Chamber and Town Hall.

Comparable Places in the SA Heritage Register

There are currently 38 entries in the SA Heritage Register relating to places described as current or former Town Halls and/or Council Chambers. These range from tiny single room Council Chambers such as those at Port Elliot, to large complexes containing numerous separate elements, such as the Adelaide Town Hall. Like the Brighton Town Hall at least four of the 38 listed places were originally built to accommodate both functions. These are the Adelaide Town Hall, Thebarton Council Chamber, Town Hall (Thebarton Theatre) and Hall, Henley Beach Town Hall, Council Chambers and War Memorial, and Port Adelaide Enfield Council Offices (former Port Adelaide Town Hall). Many more also accommodated additional functions, such as Institute/ Library, cinema, or theatre.

Construction dates range between 1855 (Highercombe Council Chambers) and the 1950s (parts of the Mitcham Council Chambers), and a wide range of architectural styles are represented.

A list of comparable places currently entered in the Register is provided as an attachment to this report.

In addition there are another 26 designated local heritage places described as current or former Town Halls and/or Council Chambers (these include some that are also State listed).

The Former Brighton Town Hall therefore would not be considered to be a rare example of its type, though it is one of a relatively small number which have survived from the early colonial period (pre 1870).

Assessment against 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.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places that note:

The place should be closely associated with events, developments or cultural phases which have played a significant part in South Australian history. Ideally it should demonstrate those associations in its fabric.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if they are of a class of things that are commonplace, or frequently replicated across the State, places associated with events of interest only to a small number of people, places associated with developments of little significance, or places only reputed to have been the scene of an event which has left no trace or which lacks substantial evidence.

The former Brighton Town Hall demonstrates important aspects of the evolution of the State's history, specifically the establishment of local government and the development of social and cultural life in colonial South Australia. It is closely associated with formation of the community of Brighton, which was amongst the earliest of the inner metropolitan suburbs, and it played a significant role in the social and cultural life of its citizens for over 120 years.

The place is also associated with Australia's first female politician, Susan Grace Benny. As her place of work during her two terms in office between 1919 and 1922, the building is closely associated with an important milestone in the social and political history of the State relating to the participation of women in the democratic process, where South Australia is acknowledged to have taken an early lead.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does** meet this criterion.

(b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

The place should demonstrate a way of life, social custom, industrial process or land use which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest. This encompasses both places which were always rare, and places which have become scarce through subsequent loss or destruction.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if their rarity is merely local, or if they appear rare only because research has not been done elsewhere, or if their distinguishing characteristics have been degraded or compromised, or if they are at present common and simply believed to be in danger of becoming rare in future.

The structure is typical of a vernacular nineteenth century building, of an architectural type already well represented in the South Australian Heritage Register. Although a comparatively early example of a colonial civic building it would not be considered a rare or uncommon example.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does not** sufficiently meet this criterion.

- (c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the state's history, including its natural history.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places that note:

The place should provide, or demonstrate a likelihood of providing, information that will contribute significantly to our knowledge of the past. The information should be inherent in the fabric of the place. The place may be a standing structure, an archaeological deposit or a geological site.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion simply because they are believed to contain archaeological or palaeontological deposits. There must be good reasons to suppose the site is of value for research, and that useful information will emerge. A place that will yield the same information as many other places, or information that could be obtained as readily from documentary sources, may not be eligible.

The structure is typical of a vernacular nineteenth century building, and would be unlikely to provide additional information through examination of its fabric that would significantly add to an understanding of the state's history.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does not** sufficiently meet this criterion.

- (d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

The place should be capable of providing understanding of the category of places which it represents. It should be typical of a wider range of such places, and in a good state of integrity, that is, still faithfully presenting its historical message.

Places will not be considered simply because they are members of a class, they must be both notable examples and well-preserved. Places will be excluded if their characteristics do not clearly typify the class, or if they were very like many other places, or if their representative qualities had been degraded or lost. However, places will not be excluded from the Register merely because other similar places are included.

Although subsequent additions have compromised the external appearance and interior intactness of the original 1869 building, the nineteenth century form (including 1874 and 1896 additions and modifications) is still clearly legible and capable of demonstrating the building's intended purpose. The later additions, though reflecting the building's evolution through the twentieth century, are generally of inferior quality

and tend to detract from the simplicity of form and proportion represented in the original structure. These later additions could be removed in order to reinstate the building's original appearance without detriment.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does not** sufficiently meet this criterion.

- (e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.**

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

The place should show qualities of innovation or departure, beauty or formal design, or represent a new achievement of its time. Breakthroughs in technology or new developments in design would qualify, if the place clearly shows them. A high standard of design skill and originality is expected.

Places would not normally be considered under this criterion if their degree of achievement could not be demonstrated, or where their integrity was diminished so that the achievement, while documented, was no longer apparent in the place, or simply because they were the work of a designer who demonstrated innovation elsewhere.

The Brighton Town Hall is a simple vernacular building fairly typical of its type and era. Whilst it is a competent example of South Australian colonial architecture, retaining a significant proportion of its original fabric despite a series of later unsympathetic additions, it does not demonstrate a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment, nor is it an outstanding representative of construction or design.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does not** sufficiently meet this criterion.

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

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

The place should be one which the community or a significant cultural group have held in high regard for an extended period. This must be much stronger than people's normal attachment to their surroundings. The association may in some instances be in folklore rather than in reality.

Places will not be considered if their associations are commonplace by nature, or of recent origin, or recognised only by a small number of people,

or not held very strongly, or held by a group not widely recognised, or cannot be demonstrated satisfactorily to others.

There is evidence that the Brighton Town Hall has cultural associations for local residents, having played an important role in the social history of the district of Brighton. However it is difficult to make a strong argument for significance at the state level.

The former Brighton Town Hall **does not** sufficiently meet this criterion.

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

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the provided Guidelines for State Heritage Places, that note:

The place must have a close association with a person or group which played a significant part in past events, and that association should be demonstrated in the fabric of the place. The product of a creative person, or the workplace of a person whose contribution was in industry, would be more closely associated with the person's work than would his or her home. Most people are associated with many places in their lifetime, and it must be demonstrated why one place is more significant than others.

Places will not generally be considered under this criterion if they have only a brief, incidental or distant association, or if they are associated with persons or groups of little significance, or if they are associated with an event which has left no trace, or if a similar association could be claimed for many places, or if the association cannot be demonstrated. Generally the home or the grave of a notable person will not be entered in the Register unless it has some distinctive attribute, or there is no other physical evidence of the person's life or career in existence.

This place is closely linked to a person of some historical significance in the context of the State, namely Susan Grace Benny, the first woman to achieve political office in Australia.

Through her work as a local Councillor Mrs Benny achieved a number of important things for her local community, however her appointment as Councillor for Seacliff Ward on the Brighton Council has symbolic importance at the State level because it marks a significant milestone in the political advancement of women in South Australia. She was the first woman in the country to benefit from the amendment of electoral laws to promote gender equality in the electoral process, and her example may have inspired other women to become more active in the political sphere, and to contribute to the women's movement in the context of the State.

It is appropriate to consider the building where she worked during her term of office as as a Councillor as being representative of her significance.

The former Brighton Town Hall is considered to have a special association with a notable person, Mrs Susan Grace Benny, who was a pioneer of women's participation in the democratic process in South Australia, and therefore **does** meet this criterion.

Extent of Listing / Significant Fabric / Curtilage:

The extent of listing **includes** the original form and appearance of the 1869 hall, together with 1874 and 1896 additions. It includes any surviving original elements of the exterior and interior.

The extent of listing **excludes** all twentieth century modifications and additions.

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Heritage Places Database <http://apps.planning.sa.gov.au/HeritageSearch>

Local Government Association of SA website <http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=240>

Adelaidia website <http://adelaide.sa.gov.au/people/susan-grace-benny>

Australian Women's Register website <http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/737079?c=people>

State Library of SA photographic collection

Additional material provided by nominator (includes material from the City of Holdfast Bay History Centre).

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431.

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME: N/A

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: A simple rectangular single-storey hall with limestone walls, gabled roof clad with terracotta tiles, rendered brick quoins and stucco dressings. Includes single room brick extension to the rear with parapet walls. Excludes 20th Century additions.

DATE OF COMPLETION: 1869

SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS: **Description:** Nominated

LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS **Date:** 23 October 2013
Description: Local Heritage Place No 4434
Date: Holdfast Bay Development Plan Amendment authorised 29 March 2001

CURRENT USE: **Description:** Vacant
Dates: 2008 - present

PREVIOUS USE(S): **Description:** Social Club/ Bowling Club
Baby Health Centre
Institute and Library
Private School
Town Hall and Council
Chambers
Dates: 1869-2008

ARCHITECT: **Name:** George William Highet
Dates: 1869

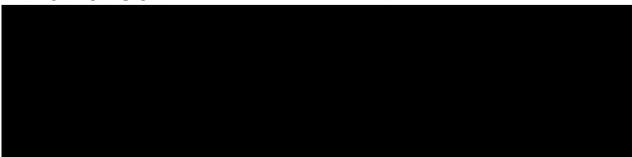
BUILDER: **Name:** E Turner, G Sansom & G W Highet
Dates: 1869

SUBJECT INDEXING: **Group:** Community Facilities
Category: Town Hall

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: **Description:** City of Holdfast Bay

LOCATION: **Street No.:** 388
Street Name: Brighton Road
Town/Suburb: HOVE
Post Code: 5048

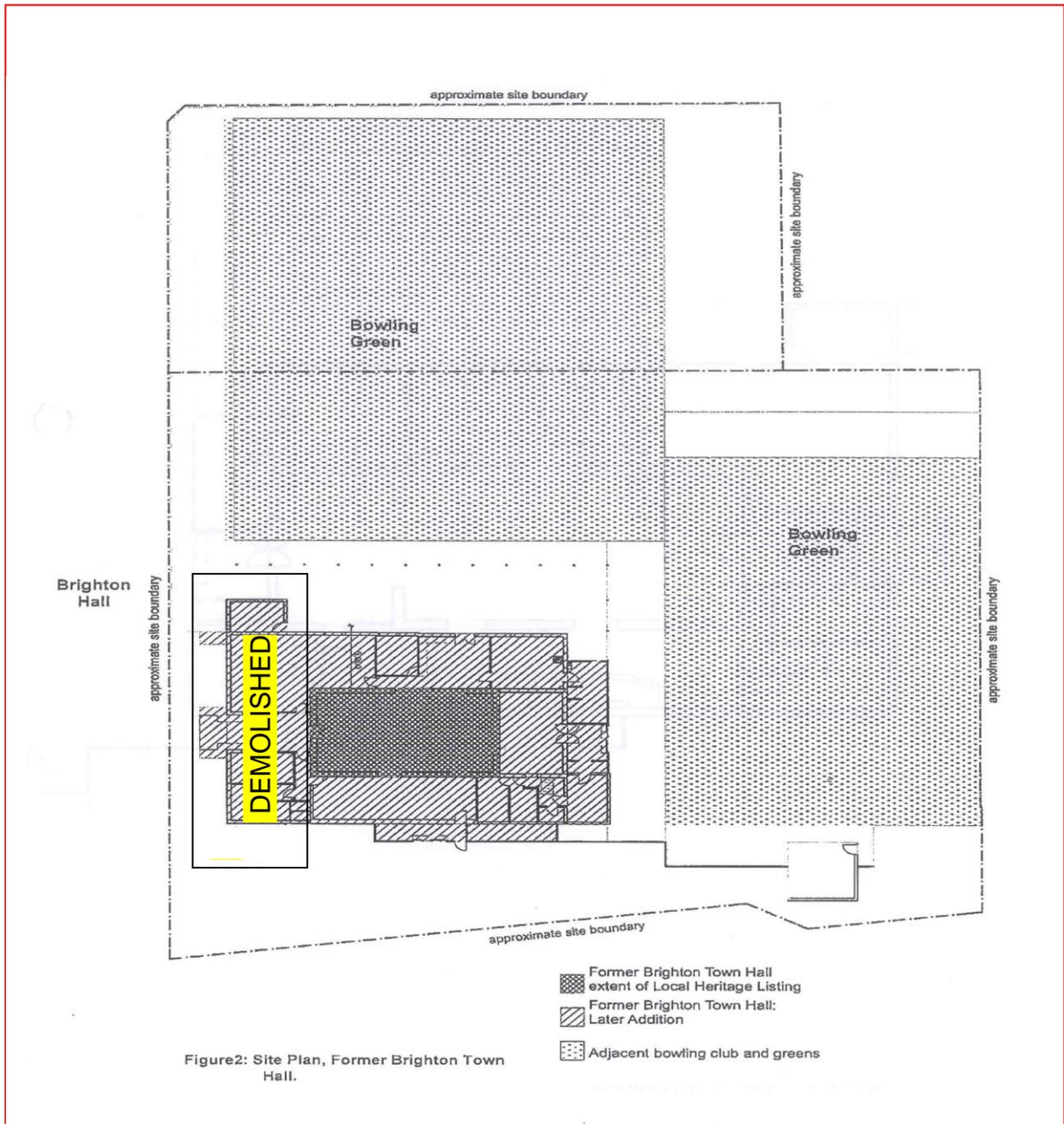
LAND DESCRIPTION: **Title Type:** CT
Volume: 5148
Folio: 889.
Lot No.: Lot 1, DP36909
Section: -
Hundred: Noarlunga

OWNER: 

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431.

SITE PLAN

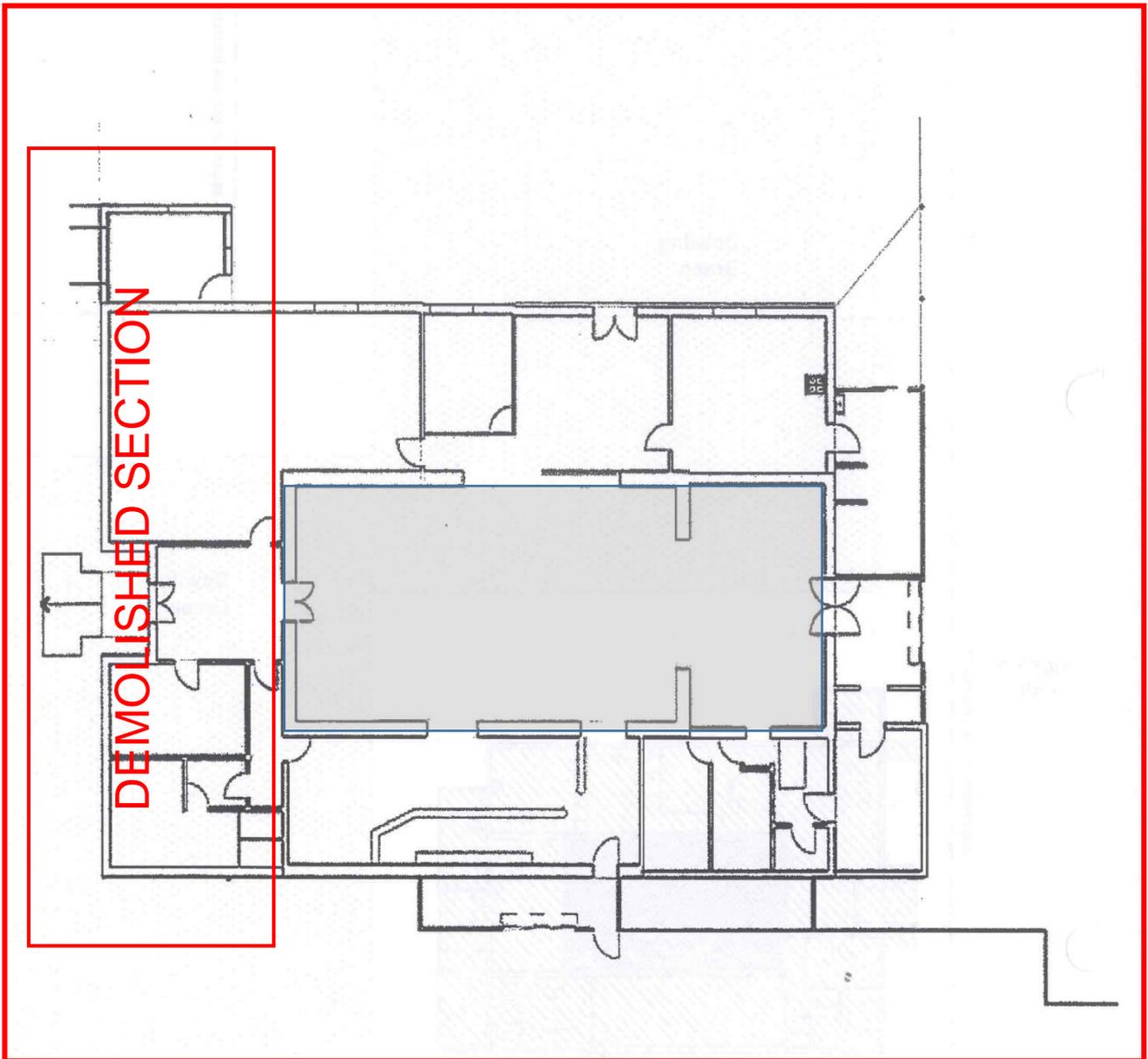


Site Plan (adapted from Flightpath Conservation Management Plan) extent of site and indicating demolished section of the building.

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431.

FLOOR PLAN



Floor Plan (adapted from Flightpath Conservation Management Plan) showing location of building and indicating demolished section on western side. Shaded area shows proposed extent of listing.

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431.

SITE PLAN



Former Brighton Town Hall generally indicating the extent of listing (outlined in orange)

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431

PHOTOS



People arriving at a function at the Town Hall Brighton, 1918 (image supplied by nominator). Note original small portico and limestone and brick boundary wall



Brighton Town Hall November 2013 after demolition of western additions (DEWNR 2013)

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431

PHOTOS



The former Brighton Town Hall, western elevation after removal of the 1954 brick façade. (DEWNR 2014)



Northern elevation from former bowling green. (DEWNR 2014)



Rear (eastern elevation) showing parapet walls of 1874 addition (DEWNR 2014)



View from north-east showing 1874 additions at rear (DEWNR 2014)



Interior showing proscenium arch (former 1896 stage) at eastern end of hall with RSL Club bar and timber wall panelling (DEWNR, 2014)



Interior, south-western corner of main hall, with front doors on right (DEWNR 2014)

NAME: Former Brighton Town Hall

PLACE NO.: 26431

PHOTOS



Brighton Town Hall as it was at the time that Susan Grace Benny served as a Councillor, c1920 (SLSA photographic collection, PRG 280/1/20/43)



Councillor Susan Grace Benny c1919

