

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks **PLACE NO.:** 26449

Address: 1-21 Chief Street, Brompton

COMMENTARY ON ASSESSMENT OF FORMER GASWORKS SITE, BROMPTON

The project team commenced assessment of the heritage value of the nominated site, based upon the information contained in the following documents:

- 1984 Heritage Investigations *Hindmarsh Heritage Survey*
- 1986 *The Unquenchable Flame* (published history of SAGASCO)
- 1986 Heritage Assessment Sheet (SHP 11823)
- 1987 South Australian Heritage Register entry (SHP 11823)
- 1997 McDougall & Vines Local Heritage Place report
- 2015 Flightpath Architects *Conservation Management Plan for the former Origin Site - Brompton Gasworks*

It became readily apparent that none of these sources matched in fact, mapping, photographs and the naming of successive buildings on the site. Therefore, we were compelled to undertake a primary source assessment of the site, in order to fully understand the heritage values of the remnant parts of the place. The following report corrects several incorrect facts about the place.

It is recommended that the entry for State Heritage Place 11823 be revised to reflect the correct information and that the 2014 Draft Conservation Management Plan be updated to reflect the below research. Refer *What Exactly Are The Buildings Currently Entered In The South Australia Heritage Register?* below for a detailed explanation. Some of the corrections include:

- The 1987 South Australian Heritage Register (the Register) entry (SHP 11823) describes buildings no longer standing in its Statement of Significance
- The earliest extant photograph of the site (State Library of South Australia BRG 350/34/1/2/382) is dated 1880. It is much earlier and dates from about 1866+. Further, the photograph is noted in sources as taken from the railway line. The photograph is actually taken from the rear of the site, with a pug hole in the foreground and the railway and Port Road behind the featured buildings. Almost all SAGASCO buildings in the photograph no longer exist.
- The naming of retort houses – the East Street Retort House No.1 noted in the Register entry is in fact Retort House No. 3, erected 1879. The Chief Street Retort House No. 2 in the Register is actually Retort House No. 4 and was not erected in 1891, but in stages from 1901-1911.
- The 1872 former purifying house is potentially the oldest building on the site. The building is noted as erected c1900 in the McDougall & Vines SAGASCO site report.
- The support buildings extant on the site have been dated in various reports, but we have found no evidence to support these dates. From an architectural

analysis of building details, we believe that the buildings date from 1860s-1900 and were part of the 19th Century operation of the place.

- It has become clearly apparent that the SAGASCO site was in a constant state of change over its history. Retort houses were erected and replaced as manufacturing methods changed. New retort houses were erected on available land and old ones were then demolished. Evidence of earlier retort houses, chimneys and gasholders is difficult to ascertain today on site, as the site was altered so many times over its 1860-1990s history.

Questions also arose as to why further buildings were not included in the 1986 assessment and subsequent entry of the place in the Register in 1987. The project team's historian, Dr Peter Bell, in the employ of the SA Heritage Branch at the time of the nomination, recalled that the Minister's representative of the day requested that the other support buildings remaining on the site not be entered on the Register.

Finally, the project team also acknowledge that there is a substantial degree of ground contamination associated with the site. This has no bearing on heritage value as stated in the *Heritage Places Act 1993* and therefore has not been considered in this report.

What Exactly Are The Buildings Currently Entered In The South Australia Heritage Register?

The identity of the surviving structures entered in the South Australian Heritage Register (the Register) is not entirely clear. The 1985 Hindmarsh Heritage Survey, which first nominated elements of the gasworks site for the Register, referred to the 'First Retort Building' on East Street, which it said was the original, built in 1862, and the 'Second Retort Building' (including the chimney stack) on Chief Street, which had been planned in 1872, but not commenced until 1890 and completed in 1920. It also drew attention to a Gasholder still standing then, the Governor House and the Manager's Residence. In objecting to the Interim Listing in 1987, the Gas Company replied that the two retort houses were the second of 1879, and the third, of unspecified date. In response to this, the then State Heritage Branch dropped words like first and second, and defined the structures that were entered in the Register as the '1879 Retort House, Remains of 1891 Retort House and Chimney Stack'. Most writers since have retained this nomenclature and dates.

Today we can extract historical information from National Library of Australia's Trove newspaper search tool, which was not readily available in the 1980s. In all, four horizontal retort houses were publicly recorded by the newspapers as being built at Brompton, in 1862, 1873, 1879 and 1901, the latter being extended in three stages up until 1911. The first three of these were reasonably well-documented. The fires were lit in the second retort house on 28 March 1873, and the journalist commented, 'The old retort house contained seven furnaces with 35 retorts, the new retort-house contains seven furnaces, with 49 retorts.' (*The Advertiser* 29 March 1873, p. 3) The journalists were invited back six years later for the opening of the third retort house. It was described as 250 feet long and 65 feet in height. (*The Advertiser* 6 September 1879, p. 12) This is probably the more intact retort house which still stands, in the angle of East Street and the Port railway. The 1879 description of the plant explicitly referred to the second and third retort houses, implying there were three standing at the time. This was amplified by another description six years later: 'There are three retort-houses at Brompton. They are long, narrow buildings, built of brick, with corrugated iron roof, and are open to the railway, on to which they abut.' (*SA Register* 22 June 1885, p. 7) This implies that they were identical or very similar buildings, long, narrow and parallel, built close together at right angles to the railway line in the eastern corner of the site. Coal entered the site via the branch line through Retort House No. 1, and from there was distributed by internal tramlines to Retort Houses Nos. 2 and 3.

There is little photographic confirmation of these events. Photographic coverage of the gasworks site is surprisingly poor, and confusion has arisen by writers mistaking a well-known photograph of the Port Adelaide gasworks for Brompton. (*Parsons 1974, p. 78; Donovan & Kirkman 1986, p.1*) The only good 19th century photograph known of the Brompton site is one which the State Library of SA (SLSA) catalogue attributes to Samuel Sweet, and gives the date as 1880. (*SLSA BRG 350/34/1/2/382*) The photograph is probably a good bit older than that, as it does not show the second retort house, built in 1873. Sweet arrived in Adelaide in 1866, and could have taken the photograph at any time after that. What the photograph from 1866-1873 does establish is that the existing retort house is not the first one built, as it is not in the same location, and significantly different in detail from the one in the photograph. The second and third retort houses must have later been built to the left (east) of the one shown, and it is quite likely that the surviving one furthest east on the East Street boundary is indeed the third one built in 1879.

Dating the remains of the larger retort house along the Chief Street frontage is less straightforward. There is a suggestion in most accounts that it was built in stages. The *Hindmarsh Heritage Survey* believed it had been commenced in 1890 and completed in 1920. It also believed the retort house had been designed in 1872 and then unaccountably delayed, but missed the fact that two other retort houses had been built in 1873 and 1879. The former State Heritage Branch assessment also adopted the date 1891 for the Chief Street retort house.

In fact the first stage of the Chief Street retort house seems to have been built in 1901, designed by Resident Manager and Manager of the gasworks 1886-1915, William Ray:

Owing to the increasing consumption of gas, the South Australian Gas Company are enlarging their producing plant at the Brompton works A new retort house on the Chief-street alignment has been erected. It has a span of 132 ft by 80 ft in length, with a central roof span of 70 ft by 30 ft in height, with two side spans, each 28 ft by 20 ft in height, which rests on the side walls. The outer walls are built of Tapley Hill stone, with brick pillars. The main roof is partly supported by large cast iron pillars. This retort house is only a quarter of the original size intended ... The chimney, which is sufficiently large for a duplicate of the new retort house, is 70 ft in height. (The Advertiser 8 November 1901, p. 8)

The description of the stack as "sufficiently large for a duplicate of the new retort house" meant that the next retort house to be built alongside would share it. The article went on to say that "the retorts will be heated by an improved system" and "other improvements are made for handling coal and coke". This probably meant that a mechanical stoking system had been installed in the new retort house, as we shall see later.

A cryptic report of a board meeting in 1903 mentioned 'Additional railway sidings and turntables have been fixed at Brompton, and the new retort-house is in use.' (*The Advertiser* 18 August 1903, p. 6) The following year's report said 'Fires have been lit in the new retort house at Brompton, and it is being brought into use.' (*Adelaide Observer* 20 August 1904, p. 34) This must be the first extension to the Chief Street retort house. It is difficult to believe that there were new extensions in both 1903 and 1904, and presumably these reports refer to the same extension. Or did the 1904 report simply mean that new furnaces were being brought into production inside the retort house built the previous year?

Another newspaper report on Brompton in 1906 said 'The latest addition is the new retort-house on the Chief Street alignment.' Curiously, it went on to describe the new building in words almost identical to those used to describe the retort house of 1901: 132 feet by 80 feet in plan, Tapley Hill stone, brick pillars, large cast iron pillars etc. (*The Advertiser* 7 July 1906, p. 5) This must be based on a description supplied to the journalist by the Gas

Company. If it seemed to be describing the same building, that was because the new extension of 1906 would have been identical to the first building that went up in 1901. The second stack, now demolished, would have been built to serve the 1906 extension.

A 1911 report on a visit to the gasworks by the Governor was most informative. It described a retort house in which the retorts were charged and discharged by a De Bruer mechanical stoking machine, a vast improvement on shovels and muscular arms. The gas company had recently expanded the Brompton site from 3 acres to 8 acres (1.2hectares to 3.2hectares), creating its present form by purchasing land parcels extending north-east to Drayton Street and north-west to Second Street. There were three existing gasholders, the first one of 70,000 cubic feet, and bigger ones of 200,000 and 1,000,000 cubic feet, and a monster of 2,250,000 was planned for the newly-acquired land. It proudly announced: 'One of the most recent improvements was the construction of a large underground tank, which holds some thousands of gallons of tar' (*The Advertiser* 24 August 1911, p. 11)

The article concluded: 'Extensive alterations are also being made at Brompton. The new carbonising house has been extended and progress in this direction is still being made.' (*The Advertiser* 24 August 1911, p. 11) The last sentence seems to mean that the retort house built in 1901 was extended (for the third or fourth time) in 1911, and further extension was intended. However, no later newspaper references to extension of the retort house have been found. The sequence of events appears to be that the Chief Street retort house was built in four parts, starting from the railway end in 1901, with extensions in 1904, 1906 and 1911. It appears that the 1911 extension completed the Chief Street building, and was the last horizontal retort house built at Brompton.

The Chief Street wall was inspected for evidence of physical breaks or joins which might reflect periods of construction. It is made up of twelve panels (plus a couple of irregular smaller panels at both ends) in Tapley Hill bluestone. The panels are separated by brick pilasters, which would make it easy to disguise construction breaks, but the stonework is remarkably uniform, and the cornice and plinth show no breaks. The wall was fully repointed c1980, further masking earlier joint lines. The fenestration is interesting. There are two panels with two arched openings, and then one narrower panel with one arched opening. That repeats regularly, 2-2-1-2-2-1-2-2-1-2-2-1 from the railway end. This suggests that the furnaces inside were arranged in four modular groups, and tends to confirm the newspaper evidence that the building was built in four stages, with its parts probably being completed in 1901, 1904, 1906 and 1911. One construction break can be detected in the bluestone, and its location tends to support this theory. It comes at the end of the first 2-2-1 module, roughly in line with the standing chimney a quarter of the way along the wall. It probably shows the end of the fourth retort house of 1901, the first built on the Chief Street frontage. The surviving chimney stack, measured by the method of counting brick courses, is almost exactly 70 feet high, as the 1901 newspaper report said. All the iron columns throughout the building were cast by May Brothers of Gawler.

Hence the two buildings at present entered in the Register are probably the Third Retort House of 1879, and parts of the Fourth Retort House and its internal stack, built in stages between 1901 and 1911. The stack dates from 1901.

It is not clear whether all these retort houses (three small and one very large by 1911) represented a steady increase in capacity, or whether the later ones were built to replace the earlier ones. Two vertical retort houses were built in 1920 and 1925, and to what extent these superseded the older horizontal ones is likewise unclear. Bearing in mind that the gasworks site included only a relatively small area of land until 1911, it must have been very crowded if all of these retort houses were standing simultaneously, and linked by tramlines carrying coal and coke. Further vertical retorts, probably totalling six, were added until 1945.

What all previous assessments of the Brompton complex have overlooked is the Purifying House. The existing one is probably the third one built. An early description of Brompton said:

Arrangements have been made to commence the purifying-house immediately. It is to be 72 feet long by 36 feet wide inside [22metres x 11metres], and to be built with open arches in front to secure ample ventilation. (SA Register 25 February 1863, p. 3)

This is the building to the right (west) of the retort house in the Sweet photograph. A slightly later account foreshadowed the need to expand purifying capacity:

From the condensers a tube runs onward to the purifying house; this is not quite finished, but is in a very forward state. Adjoining there is a building which is used at present as a storeroom, but which it is intended to turn into a second purifying house when required. (The Advertiser 9 May 1863, p. 2)

Both of these buildings have been demolished (as has everything in the Sweet photograph) to make way for later retorts. The purifying process moved into a much larger building further north in 1872. A journalist described it at some length:

At the lower end of the yard is a building evidently designed from experience. It is 150 feet long, 45 feet breadth, and about 20 high. This contains four purifiers, but ultimately will hold eight. Here the gas receives the finishing before being stored in the holder. There are four iron tanks, each 20 x 12 and seven feet deep. In the bottom is the place of ingress, and round the sides shelves support six or seven floors of gratings. As each grated floor is placed in position it is covered with three or four inches of lime, and an airtight cover is screwed on over all. The egress is provided for so that the whole volume of gas must pass through several floors of lime before leaving for the meter. This effectually removes the slightest extraneous matter and renders it fit for use. (SA Register 3 May 1872, p. 5)

These dimensions conform exactly to the large building in the north corner of the original Brompton site, last in use as the Origin Energy canteen. Its date of 1872 makes it the oldest large building on the site, significantly older than either of the two retort houses currently entered in the Register. (The dates of some of the smaller buildings remain unclear.) The building can be recognised in engravings of the Brompton gasworks published in 1890. (*Pictorial Australian*, August 1890, p. 116)

1. BRIEF HISTORY OF FORMER SAGASCO GASWORKS SITE, BROMPTON

The Brompton Gasworks site has a long and complicated history. It was in gas production of one kind or another for almost 150 years. There were five distinct generations of technology operated on the site to produce flammable gas for sale. The gas product itself changed over time. Since the 1860s, Adelaide's gas appliances have at times burned carbon monoxide, hydrogen, propane, butane and today methane. The site itself reflects these changes in its built heritage. It has been repeatedly rebuilt, and whole generations of buildings and engineering structures have been demolished. The fragments that remain are a fascinating cross-section of one of Adelaide's early major industrial enterprises.

The technology of gas production in the nineteenth century involved taking coal and subjecting it to 'destructive distillation' that is burning it with insufficient oxygen to allow it to burn completely. Burned in a fireplace, the combustion products of coal are mainly carbon dioxide and water vapour. But heated slowly in a controlled atmosphere with very little oxygen, the volatile hydrocarbons in coal will evaporate and the coal will smoulder, emitting a number of substances but principally carbon monoxide, which is flammable and can be sold as a fuel for heating and other purposes. The solids remaining in the retort will be reduced to coke, mostly carbon, which is also commercially valuable as a very efficient fuel.

When South Australia was settled by Europeans in 1836, the use of gas distilled from coal as a fuel in Europe was about 30 years old. There were already civic gasworks in large cities in England, Germany and the USA. In 1836 the Australian Gas Light Company was formed in Sydney and gas production commenced there five years later. Gas production proliferated in Melbourne and major Victorian towns in the 1850s with the prosperity of the gold rushes. Construction of a gasworks was seen as a landmark event in a city, proclaiming economic prosperity, urban amenity and civic pride.

In 1861 the South Australian Gas Company was formed in Adelaide. Its chairman was Henry Ayers, who had made his fortune from the Burra copper mine in the 1840s, and was a prominent politician and serial Premier of South Australia throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The directors were all prominent Adelaide entrepreneurs.

A site for the gasworks was purchased at Brompton, an industrial suburb which had been surveyed in 1849 on the route of the Port Railway, and work commenced in 1862. On 23 December 1862, Henry Ayers laid the foundation stone of the gasworks in the base of the smokestack. (*SA Register* 26 December 1862, p. 7) Work on the retort house, coal store and gasholder was already substantially underway, and the eight 6 metre iron columns for the gasholder frame were being unloaded at Port Adelaide. (*The Advertiser* 26 December 1862, p. 6)

An early account said that engineer S.R. Scoltock, who had designed the Geelong gasworks, 'is now engaged in preparing the plans for the buildings and erections required by the company'. (*The Advertiser* 25 January 1862, p. 4) But that changed, for a year later Scoltock's name was forgotten, and the work was under the supervision of Clerk of Works, George Anderson, who was said to have designed 'The whole of the buildings and works'. In July 1863 the board would appoint him Engineer and Manager on a salary of £300 per annum and a house on the premises. He would remain in charge of all the Gas Company's operations on its multiple sites until 1886. (*SA Register* 25 February 1863, p. 3; Cumming & Moxham 1986, p. 15; Minutes of Directors Meeting 20 July 1863)

On 30 May 1863 Ayers returned to Brompton for another ceremony, as the fires in the retort were lit amid the customary speeches and toasts. 'Success to the Adelaide Gas Company, and may its light never go out.' (Loud cheering.)' (*The Advertiser* 26 June 1863, p. 7) Commercial gas production at the Brompton gasworks had commenced. It was a labour-

intensive process: coal was manually loaded into horizontal retorts, and red-hot coke manually unloaded after firing about six hours later.

To sell gas, the company also had to build a distribution network, a system of leak-proof iron pipes buried under the streets, capable of taking gas long distances under pressure. Legislation had given the company the right to dig up public streets to install gas mains, effectively giving them a state-sanctioned monopoly. The first mains headed for the City of Adelaide, where the largest concentration of customers lived, but the extension of the pipes was slow and expensive. It would take decades before large areas of metropolitan Adelaide had a gas supply.

There was more at Brompton than retorts and a gasholder. If coal was pure carbon, the product distilled from the retort would be pure carbon monoxide, and the process would be over. However, coal is the geological product of vegetation which rotted on the bed of an anaerobic swamp millions of years ago, and contains much more than carbon. The gas generated by the retorts contained water vapour and carbon dioxide, which reduced its flammability as well as rusting the pipes, complex hydrocarbons in the form of phenyls, resins and tars, and noxious products such as sulphur dioxide, phosphorus pentoxide and ammonia. These had to be removed by a series of processes involving condensers, scrubbers and purifiers, in which the gas was progressively bubbled through water, sprayed with ammonium hydroxide, and passed through quicklime and iron oxide. These activities were housed in a complex of buildings which expanded and became more sophisticated over time. There were some saleable by-products: the ammonia and sulphur were combined to form ammonium sulphate, which was in demand as an agricultural fertiliser. But the tars and other liquid wastes were simply discarded into pits on site. Another growing industry on site was the manufacture and maintenance of meters for customers.

To the Gas Company, the holy grail they sought was the contract to light the streets of Adelaide. Previously Adelaide was in darkness at night; the only street lighting was the obligatory lantern each tavern had to keep burning in the street. In 1867 they gained a small contract, and the first gas street lighting was installed in part of the City. But the Council were deterred by the Company's steep asking price of £7 per lamp per annum, and weren't convinced that street lighting was a local government responsibility anyway. For decades there was debate about the desirability of gas lighting, but by the early 20th century electricity was available as an alternative, and it became apparent that gas was better suited to heating, and electricity was more efficient for lighting. The last gas street lights disappeared from Adelaide in 1922. By that time the company was concentrating on selling gas for commercial and domestic cooking and heating.

There was relatively little physical change at Brompton in the first ten years. The original plant of 1862 had deliberately been built with excess capacity, to allow for production to be expanded. A report on a board meeting in 1870 heard that 'In the original construction of the retort-house and the various parts of the machinery for the manufacture of gas an ample margin was allowed for a large increase of production, so that there have been but few alterations made, nor will many others be necessary for many years to come.' One improvement was laying a branch line off the Port Railway into the gasworks site in 1869: the rails actually ran through the retort house. Previously the coal had had to be double-handled from rail wagons onto drays for delivery. The coke was back-loaded on the same line and sold to the railway company as locomotive fuel. A second gasholder was also built in 1870. (*SA Register* 4 January 1870, p. 5S)

The Gas Company expanded its customer base and its manufacturing capacity in increments over many decades. The first major expansion at Brompton came in 1873 when a second retort house was built alongside the first one. (*The Advertiser* 29 March 1873, p. 3) This too was planned to be extended, and met demand for some years. In 1879 the

third retort house was added, probably the one still standing on the East Street frontage. (*The Advertiser* 6 September 1879, p. 12) By 1881 a third larger gasholder was built to increase storage capacity. In 1883 an explosion at the new gasholder woke the neighbours and brought a flood of anxious letters to the newspapers. While the explosion sounded impressive, it involved only a small quantity of gas outside the gasholder, while workers were trying to repair a leak; there were no injuries and the damage was slight. (*SA Register* 18 April 1883, p. 7)

Demand for gas was booming as the 20th century dawned, and the Gas Company shareholders were told 'a new retort house at Brompton was necessary'. The plans had already been drawn up four years earlier. (*SA Register* 16 August 1897, p. 6; *Chronicle* 1 September 1900, p. 33) It went up the following year, on the Chief Street frontage, next to the railway. (*The Advertiser* 8 November 1901, p. 8) It was called the Fourth Retort House, but it was much bigger and more sophisticated than its predecessors, and was loaded and unloaded by a mechanical stoking machine, making a huge saving in labour and time, and bringing down production costs. For the remainder of the era of gas-making in horizontal retorts, the bulk of gas produced would come from the Fourth Retort House. It was extended in three stages, probably in 1904, 1906 and 1911, each stage a duplicate of the original, eventually presenting a long handsome masonry facade in Chief Street. (*Adelaide Observer* 20 August 1904, p. 34; *The Advertiser* 7 July 1906, p. 5; *The Advertiser* 24 August 1911, p. 11) Completion of the Fourth Retort House in 1911 made most of the old gas-making retorts redundant. A plan of the gasworks in 1913 shows the Second Retort House still in use, the First apparently demolished, and the Third used as a coal store. By 1924 the Third was the Engineering Shop. (Donovan & Kirkman 1986, pp. 106 & 110)

Horizontal retorts had another nine years of dominance at Brompton. In 1920 the first vertical retort house was built. Vertical retorts had many advantages over the old technology. They were tall steel furnaces, and they worked continuously, with coal loaded into the top, and coke withdrawn from the bottom. By contrast, the horizontal retorts operated intermittently, with repeated cycles of loading and unloading. Also the vertical retorts had a much smaller footprint and were operated mechanically and to a large extent automatically, making a big labour saving. The First Vertical Retort House was built beside Chief Street, at the north-west end of the Fourth Retort House. Its efficiency meant that the outlying Glenelg and Port Adelaide gasworks could close, and gas production could be concentrated at Brompton. The Second Vertical Retort House was built alongside it in 1925, and others were steadily added until there were six vertical retorts by 1945. During this period the horizontal retorts progressively fell into disuse.

A new technological development in 1950 added water gas plants to the vertical retorts at Brompton. This involved adding a new stage after carbonisation to extract more energy from the coal. Steam is blown through the heated coke to generate hydrogen, so the finished product is a mixture of carbon monoxide and hydrogen.

An even more radical new technology arrived in 1959. A pipeline was built connecting Brompton to the new oil refinery at Port Stanvac, and new re-forming plant was built to treat by-product refinery gas. This was a new product, mostly a mixture of the flammable gases propane and butane, and was a far more flexible fuel than coal gas because it lent itself to liquefaction. Gas could be delivered in bottles to customers far from a gas main. A liquid petroleum gas (LPG) bottling plant was built at Brompton to serve this completely new market. In 1964 a second re-forming plant was added to treat Port Stanvac by-product gas. The carbonisation of coal was winding down, and the old retorts were falling into disuse.

There were even bigger changes ahead. In 1966 South Australia had its first natural gas strike at Moomba in the far north-east of the state, and large methane gas deposits were proved over the next few years. In 1969 a natural gas pipeline opened connecting Moomba

to Adelaide, and the coal gas era was over. Brompton became the centre of the reticulation system, distributing natural gas from Moomba through the existing mains. Over the next few years, all remaining coal carbonisation retorts at Brompton were demolished. In 1971 re-forming Port Stanvac gas ceased at Brompton, and the plant was removed the following year. There was extensive demolition of old buildings and structures, but at the same time, outlying technical and administrative functions were being relocated to redundant buildings at Brompton. During the years of deconstruction at Brompton, the shell of the Third Retort House and part of the Fourth Retort House were retained, possibly because they formed sections of the masonry perimeter wall which had been a feature of the Brompton Gasworks site since 1863.

In 1978 the SA Gas Company merged with the SA Oil & Gas Corporation, to become SAGASCO, which was acquired by Boral in 1993. In 2000, Boral's energy arm was spun off to become Origin Energy. All operations ceased at Brompton over the next few years, and the land was acquired by the Land Management Corporation (now Renewal SA) in 2010.

Brompton Gasworks: Chronology of Events

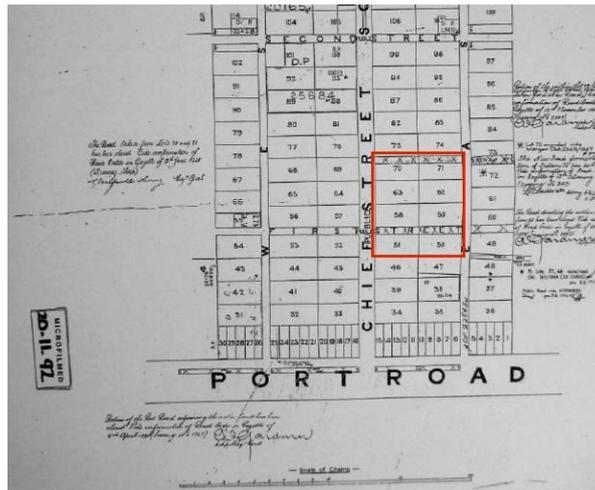
This chronology gives a background overview of developments in the gas industry generally. The principal source is *Donovan & Kirkman* 1986. Events specifically related to the Brompton site are in bold.

- 1802 First experiments in Europe with gas distilled from coal as a fuel
- 1812 Gas Light and Coke Company formed in London
- 1816 Gasworks built in Freiberg, Saxony
- 1817 Expanding gasholder developed
- 1821 City of Baltimore lit by gas
- 1836 Australian Gas Light Company formed in Sydney
- 1841 Gas production commenced in Sydney
- 1850 Melbourne Gas and Coke Company formed
- 1852 San Francisco Gas Company formed
- 1857 Gasworks in Hobart
- 1858 Gasworks in Kyneton and Ballarat
- 1859 Gasworks in Castlemaine
- 1858 Gasworks in Bendigo and Geelong
- 1861 South Australian Gas Company (SA Gas Co) formed in Adelaide**
- 1862 Construction of gasworks commenced at Brompton**
- 1863 Commercial gas production at Brompton works**
- 1863 Gasworks in Brisbane
- 1866 Gasworks at Port Adelaide (SA Gas Co)
- 1867 First gas street lighting in City of Adelaide
- 1868 Provincial Gas Company (PGC) formed in Adelaide
Gasworks at Gawler (PGC)
- 1869 Gasworks at Kapunda and Strathalbyn (PGC)
Rails laid from Port Railway into Brompton retort house
- 1870 Second gasholder built at Brompton**
- 1872 Gasworks at Thebarton (PGC)
- 1873 Second retort house built at Brompton**
- 1875 Gasworks at Glenelg (SA Gas Co)

- 1878 SA Gas Co and PGC amalgamated
- 1879 Third retort house built at Brompton**
- 1881 Third gasholder built at Brompton**
- 1883 New Brompton gasholder explosion**
- 1884 Ammonia scrubber installed at Brompton**
- 1892 Gasworks at Port Pirie (SA Gas Co)
- 1895 First electric street lighting in City of Adelaide
- 1897 SA Electric Light & Motive Power Company formed
- 1898 Port Adelaide electric power station built
- 1901 Fourth retort house built at Brompton (Chief Street)**
Adelaide (Grenfell Street) electric power station built
- 1904 Fourth retort house at Brompton extended**
- 1905 Adelaide Electric Supply Company formed
- 1906 Fourth retort house at Brompton extended**
- 1910 New retort house built at Port Adelaide
- 1911 Fourth retort house at Brompton extended**
Brompton land extended north to Second St and east to Drayton St
- 1912 New 64M cubic metre gasholder built at Brompton**
- 1917 Gawler, Kapunda & Strathalbyn gasworks closed
- 1920 Vertical retort house built at Brompton**
- 1922 Glenelg & Port Adelaide gasworks closed, all production at Brompton**
Adelaide street lighting entirely electric
- 1925 Second vertical retort house built at Brompton**
- 1928 Vertical retort house built at Osborne
- 1939 Dehydration plant built at Brompton**
- 1941 Meter shop at Brompton destroyed by fire**
- 1942 New meter shop built**
- 1943 Fifth vertical retort house built at Brompton**
- 1945 Sixth vertical retort house built at Brompton**
- 1950 Water gas plant built at Brompton**
- 1959 New plant built at Brompton to treat Port Stanvac by-product gas**
Liquid petroleum gas bottling plant built at Brompton
- 1964 Second re-forming plant to treat Port Stanvac by-product gas**
Carbonisation of coal ceasing, retorts falling into disuse
- 1965 Meter shop at Brompton closed**
- 1966 Natural gas strike at Moomba
- 1969 Moomba natural gas pipeline opened
Reticulated natural gas distributed from Brompton
All coal carbonisation retorts at Brompton demolished
- 1971 Re-forming Port Stanvac gas ceased at Brompton**
- 1972 Re-forming plant at Brompton removed**
Extensive demolition of old buildings and structures
Outlying tech and admin functions being relocated to Brompton

- 1977 Thebarton gasworks closed and demolished
- 1978 SA Gas Co merged with SA Oil & Gas Corporation, became SAGASCO
- 1979 Osborne gasworks closed
- SAGASCO museum opened at Brompton**
- 1993 Boral acquired SAGASCO
- 2000 Boral energy arm became Origin Energy
- 2000s (early) Operations ceased at Brompton**
- 2010 Land acquired by Land Management Corporation (now Renewal SA)

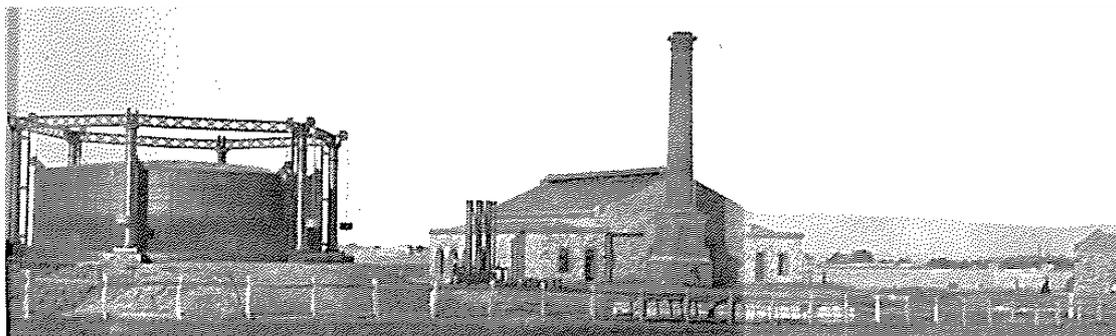
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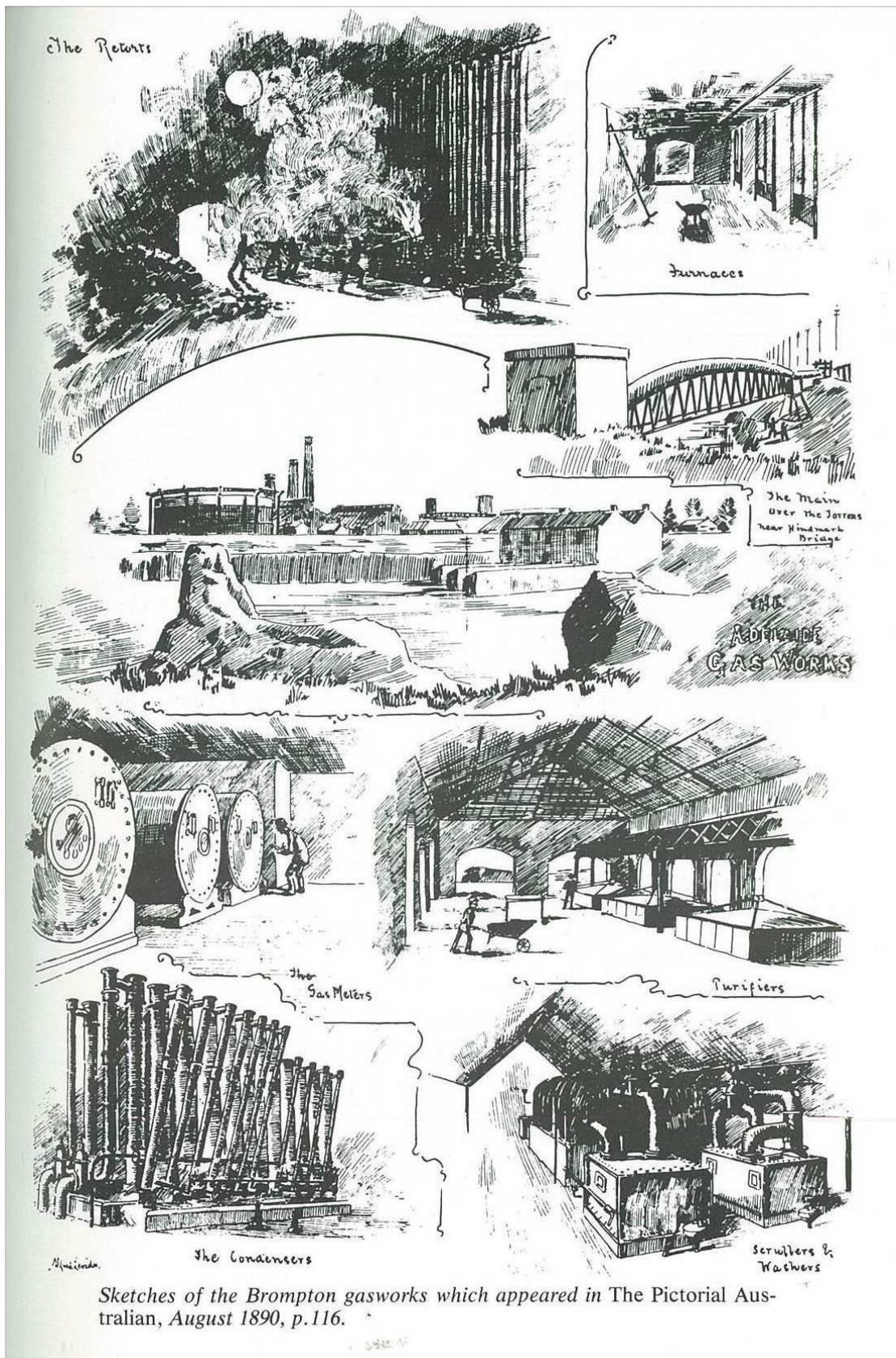
Original SAGASCO land holding (red) – Dr P Bell.



Brompton Gasworks attributed to Captain Sweet, c1870 (B21543, courtesy of State Library of SA). View is from NE, possibly from Second St – note pug hole in foreground. [Other texts note this image was taken from the railway line – this is incorrect.]



View of Port Adelaide Gasworks. c1870 [This image incorrectly cited as Brompton Gasworks in The Unquenchable Flame (front page)]



Sketches of the Brompton gasworks which appeared in *The Pictorial Australian*, August 1890, p.116.

Extracted from *The Unquenchable Flame*, p65.

[Note – extant Purifying House (B22) is most likely the interior sketched RH side, second to bottom row of illustrations – same proportions, archways correct, height correct.]

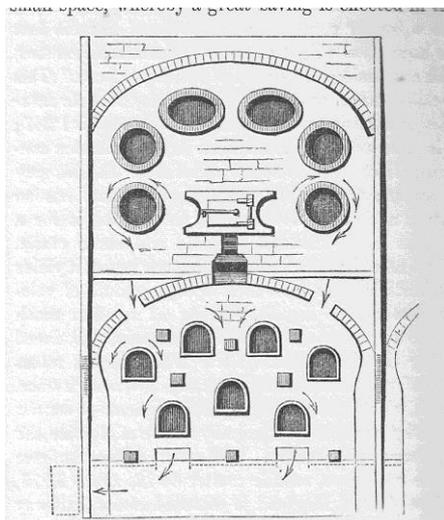


Fig. 1020. ARRANGEMENT OF THE RETORTS.
(Front elevation, exterior.)

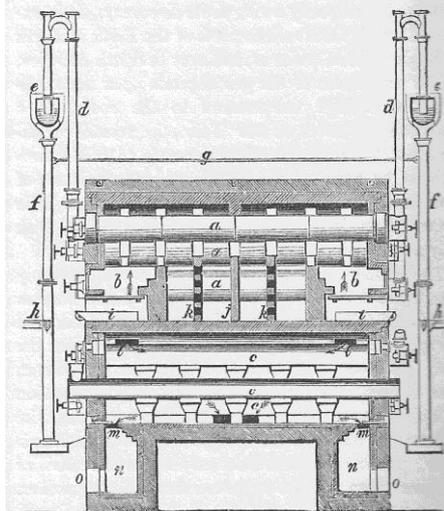


Fig. 1021. ARRANGEMENT OF THE RETORTS.
(Side elevation, in section.)

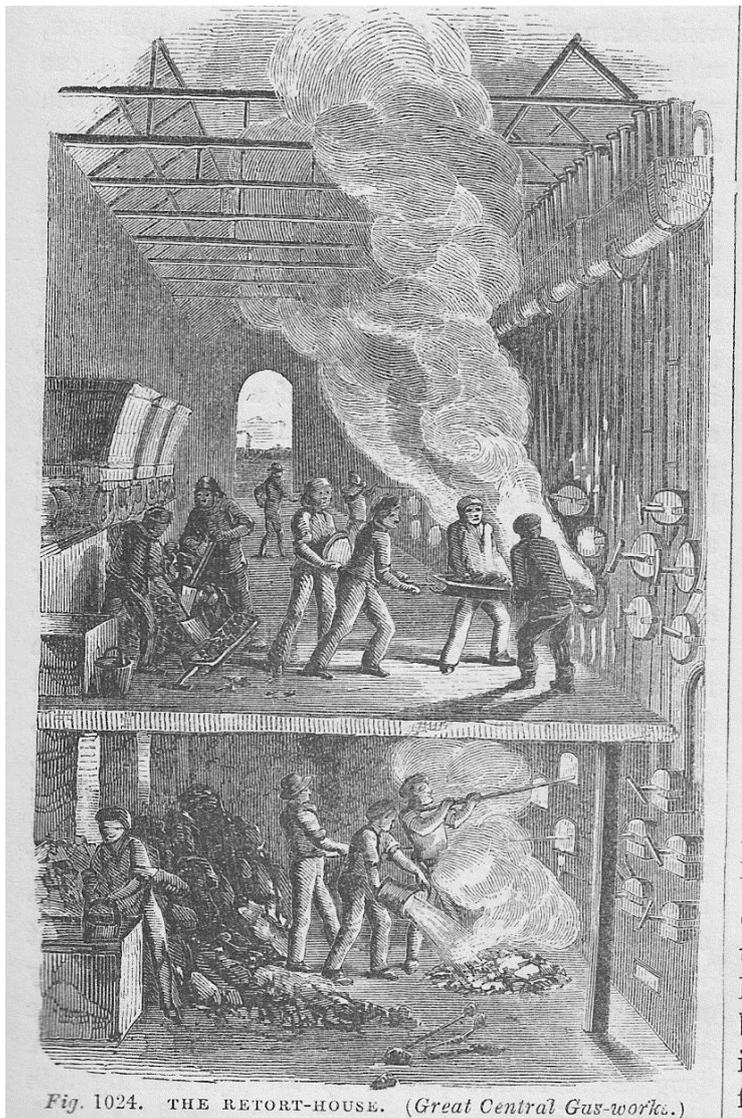


Fig. 1024. THE RETORT-HOUSE. (Great Central Gas-works.)

Typical horizontal retort furnaces of the period – from
Cyclopaedia of Useful Arts, published in 1854



Shows now demolished vertical retort houses, along with the roof of B22 (Purifying House),
with slated roof (BRG 350/34/1/2/1, Courtesy of the State Library of SA)



Aerial view, c 1968 – looking north-east – from *The Unquenchable Flame*, p 253.



Aerial view, c 1965 – looking east – from *The Unquenchable Flame*, p 260.

DESCRIPTION

As there are several buildings extant on the former Gasworks site, they have been scheduled below for clarity of discussion. The B building numbers (ie **Bxx**) reflect the building numbers used by SAGASCO/ Origin Energy prior to departure.

BUILDING/ STRUCTURE

(Horizontal) Retort House No.3 (1879) [SHP 1]

Currently part of SHP 11823.

Last used for maintenance and storage activities.

The former (Horizontal) Retort House No. 3 is of random rubble bluestone construction, with brick quoins, brick trims to openings and face red brick 'dentil' trims to shallow eaves and across gables. The masonry gable form roof is clad with corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) and features a raised ridge vent along the length of the roof. The principal facade to the railway line incorporates a variety of segmental arch doorways and windows – all altered over time. It is clearly evident that one opening was used for coal delivery and another used for removal of waste. Two high level, stucco trimmed roundel vents have been modified to accommodate later metal louvre vents. A stuccoed, blind, triple-arched window features in the gable front. The rear gable end is similarly detailed, with an additional, later CGI clad shed attached to the facade and a roller door opening adjacent. The East Street facade is without openings and the internal facade (faces north-west) has openings to the adjacent shed structure. The construction detailing is similar to that evident on buildings B18, B24, B27 & B106 (bluestone walling, brick quoins, brick dentils to shallow eaves). SHP2 is only similar in construction material.

Intactness

The former Retort House No 3 is of high intactness, with the early form of the building still clearly evident. Brick trimmed arch openings, quoins and brick dentil eaves detailing remains, reflecting the detailing common to many buildings on the site. Openings have been added since the Second World War to the side and rear facades, but earlier openings for industrial purposes are also extant. Openings facing the railway line have been in-filled with brick, as required over time, but are reversible. The interior has been refurbished, with new services, a concrete floor and a recently replaced CGI roof. Later partitioned rooms, gantry steelwork and exhaust ductwork are not of

IMAGE



heritage value.

Considerable heritage value – as a majority of 1879 external fabric remains, although altered in part. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer clearly evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form and layout. It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the period. The building is of 'considerable' historic and architectural heritage value as one of the early remaining key industrial buildings on the site from the early 1870-80s period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide. The former Retort house No. 3 and attached masonry boundary wall adjacent the rail line also forms part of the enclosing wall of the site – continuously maintained in one manner or another since 1863.

(Horizontal) Retort House No. 4 (1900-11) (Ruin) [SHP2]

Currently part of SHP 11823.

Last used for storage and as a boundary wall.

The former Retort House No.4 is of random rubble bluestone construction, with brick quoins and red brick pilasters and brick trims to openings. The roof of the building (now removed) was supported by a cast iron column and beam frame, some of which is still extant. The brick trimmed roundel vent tubes along the plinth of the Chief St facade are of note, illustrating the number of now-removed retort furnaces. The railway facade gable has been cut down at some time after the roof was removed and the parapet re-moulded flat. Three roundel vent openings trimmed with face brick and several coal/waste delivery openings feature on this facade. It is clearly evident that some openings were used for coal delivery and others were used for removal of waste. The rear and internal side walls have been demolished at some stage. The construction detailing is only generally similar to that evident on buildings B18, B24, B27, B106 & SHP1 (bluestone walling, brick quoins).

Intactness

The Former Retort House No. 4 is of moderate intactness, with the early form of the building still mostly evident. Brick trimmed arch openings, quoins, pilasters remain, reflecting the detailing seen on many buildings on the site. The North-east and South-east walls are mostly demolished,



but much of the cast iron support framing for the roof remains. Some openings facing the railway line have been in-filled with brick as required over time, but are reversible. The interior is lost due to the removal of walls and roof. The retort vent flues are in part extant, under later concrete floor slabs.

Considerable heritage value – as sufficient 1900-1911 external fabric remains, although much is lost. The specific past purpose of the building is still evident (retort house + chimney flue), in form and layout. It is considered of architectural interest, featuring details common to several buildings on the site from the period. The substantial scale of the footprint and the cast iron framing associated with the roof are of particular interest. This structure is of 'considerable' historic and architectural heritage value as one of the remaining key industrial buildings illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations in early 20th century Brompton and wider Adelaide. The former Retort house No. 4 also forms part of the enclosing wall of the site – continuously maintained in one manner or another since 1863.

Former (Horizontal) Retort House No. 4 Chimney (1900) [SHP3]

The former Retort House No. 4 Chimney is of brick construction – detailed with a plinth, pass through tunnel and decorative coping. The chimney was originally enclosed by the retort house, with just the top section protruding through the now lost gable roof. The chimney vented two retorts, located either side of the flue, along the centre of Retort No. 4. Arched openings (bricked over) can still be seen as evidence of the venting system of the retorts.

Intactness

The former Retort House No. 4 Chimney is of moderate to high intactness, with the form of the flue structure still evident. Metal straps have been attached at some point, to stabilise the structure. The loss of the retorts and roof structure does in part compromise the understanding of the use of the flue. The chimney flue is a landmark within the locale.

Considerable heritage value – as sufficient 1900 fabric remains. The specific past purpose of the chimney is still evident, (retort house + chimney flue). It is considered of architectural interest, as the brickwork has been articulated as it rises in a



proportional manner. The substantial scale of the chimney is of particular interest. The chimney is of 'considerable' historic and architectural heritage value as one of the remaining key structures associated with Retort House No. 4, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations in early 20th century Brompton and wider Adelaide.

Former Purifying House (1873) [B22]

Last used as an Amenities Building & Cafeteria.

The former 1873 Purifying House is of random rubble bluestone construction, with red brick striped quoins and trims to all openings. The building features a series of archways to three sides, all originally open for ventilation purposes (necessary for gas purification process). Brickwork detailing is similar to other early buildings on site, with feature eaves dentil brickwork and striped brick corner quoins (see also B23). The roof is a low-pitch, CGI clad, hip form roof and is of recent construction (all roof framing replaced (visually evident on site). It replaces an earlier slate-clad roof of similar proportion. The original ridge vent to the roof was not retained when the roof was rebuilt. All archways have been enclosed (probably post Second World War) and the interior adapted as the canteen, storerooms, laboratories and locker/ amenities rooms. Internal walls have been rendered and a concrete floor slab laid. The building is of architectural interest as (originally) an open pavilion, featuring stonework and brick detailing common to other early buildings on the site.



Intactness

The former 1873 Purifying House is of moderate to high intactness, with the original external form of the place still evident today. The open nature of the building is still evident, despite later enclosure of archways. The roof has been replaced, but is of a form similar to that of the original roof. The interior is no longer intact.

Considerable heritage value – a majority of the external fabric of significance remains to illustrate the early 1873 date and former use of the place. The building is the third purifying house to be erected on the site, but it is the oldest known structure extant on the site today. Further, the place is of architectural merit as an illustration of a 1870s design response to the particular functional requirements of a purifying house – part of a production process no longer practiced. The open arch detailing along walls, along with stripped

quoins and brick eave dentil detailing provides evidence of the early operations on the site.

Former Boiler House (c1870-80) [B18]

Last used as a Maintenance Building.

The former Boiler House is of random rubble bluestone construction, with gable parapet ends and red brick quoins and trims to openings. Two round head brick arch windows and a central door feature along the North-east facade, fitted with c1980s window and door joinery. Stucco trimmed roundel vents feature to gable ends. The building form and construction detailing is similar to that evident on buildings B24, B106 & B27 (gables, bluestone walling, brick quoins, brick dentils to shallow eaves, roundel gable vents). This form and detailing is also evident on the first purifying house (now demolished) featured in the 1866-1873 Sweet photograph of the site. Based on this evidence, it is probable that B18 dates from the early years of the Gasworks – broadly 1870-80. Later additions (1920s) are attached to the rear. Three wide round arch head openings are still evident along the rear abutting wall, suggesting the need for considerable access inside. A later canopy shelters the entrance. A late 20th century transportable office is attached to the side of the building, with an opening in the original wall of the building. Past repairs to the masonry of the building have been executed using furnace bricks sourced from elsewhere on the site. The interior of the building is a single space and was last refitted as an administration space in c1990s, with smooth plaster walls, suspended ceilings and a concrete floor slab.



Intactness

Of moderate intactness, with the early form and masonry detail of the building still evident, despite alterations to provide new openings to adjacent buildings. Past masonry repairs are not sympathetic, but reflect site practices typical to the time of the gasworks. The interior is of low/ nil intactness.

Some heritage value – as a majority of 1870-1880 external fabric remains, although altered in part. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form, layout and numerous wall openings. It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the period. The building is of 'some' historic and architectural heritage value as one of a collection of remaining

ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the early 1870-80s period, illustrating the early production processes and scale of gas production operations on site, in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide.

Building (c1890-1910) [B102]

Last used as a former Reticulated Gas Workshop.

This building is of masonry construction, with a (later) render finish to exterior walls and face red brick 'dentil' trims to eaves. The gambrel roof form is clad in CGI. Little evidence of early wall openings is extant today, mostly due to the later render finish and past additions to the building. Later openings to the side of the building (large sliding timber door) and the windows facing railway line all date from post-Second World War. The building corner adjacent the Retort House is chamfered in form – most likely to accommodate a past rail turntable/ trolley (refer 1913 plan of site in *The Unquenchable Flame*). A recent transportable office has been attached to the building, with further wall penetrations to suit access. The interior features bagged render masonry to walls, a recent concrete floor slab and an early 'mini-flute' lined ceiling, following the roof line in part for further internal height. The construction of the building has not been confirmed, but the roof form and ceiling lining is gambrel in form – a more common design feature in South Australia from the 1890s onwards.



Intactness

Of moderate intactness, with the turn of 20th century form (but not finish) of external walls still evident. Brick dentil eaves detailing remains, reflecting the eaves detailing common to many ancillary buildings on the site of the late 19th century period. Later windows, doors and internal finishes reduce intactness. The early 'mini-flute' ceiling lining is of note and is evidence of its period of construction.

Some heritage value – as early external fabric remains, but has been altered in finish. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form, layout and numerous wall openings. It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the late 19th century period. The building is of 'some' historic and architectural heritage value as one of the youngest of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the 19th

century period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations on site, in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide.

Former Works Superintendent's Cottage (c1870) [B24]

Later meter shop, last used as a Museum.

The former Works Superintendent's Cottage is of random rubble bluestone construction, with brick quoins, brick trims to openings and face red brick 'dentil' trims to shallow eaves. The hip form roof is clad with CGI. Principal facade incorporates a central door, flanked by pairs of round arch head windows (with later window joinery). Symmetrical arrangement of facade reflects local domestic design typologies of the period. Segmental head archway formed in bluestone 'lean-to wall between this building and B106 (former Carpenters' Workshop) adjacent. The East Street facade masonry has been fully rendered at some stage. Fireplaces/ chimneys are no longer evident. Interior has been substantially refurbished, with a recent concrete floor slab, replastered walls and a plasterboard ceiling. The building form and construction detailing is similar to that evident on buildings B18, B106 & B27 (bluestone walling, brick quoins, brick dentils to shallow eaves) A hipped roof is evident in about the position of this building in the 1866-1873 Sweet photograph of the site. Based on this evidence, it is probable that B24 dates from the early years of the Gasworks – broadly 1870 – before the erection of the 2nd Retort House. Of further note is the siting of the cottage, on the perimeter of the site, continuing the Gasworks tradition of enclosing the site from surrounding streets.



Intactness

The former Works Superintendent's Cottage is of moderate to high intactness, with the early form and function of the building still clearly evident. Brick trimmed arch openings, quoins and brick dentil eaves detailing remains, reflecting the eaves detailing common to many ancillary industrial buildings on the site of the late 19th century period. Further, the roof form is probably that seen in the 1873 photograph of the site. Window sashes and all internal finishes have been replaced and the East Street facade has been rendered.

Some heritage value – as a majority of c1870 external fabric remains intact. The past purpose of the building is potentially understood as a cottage,

(symmetrical design typical of an Adelaide cottage, although window styles are unique). It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the period. The building is of 'some' historic and architectural heritage value as one of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the early 1870s period, illustrating the scale of gas production operations on site, in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide. The cottage also forms part of the enclosing wall of the site – continuously maintained in one manner or another since 1863.

Former Carpenters' Workshop (c1870-80) [B106]

Last used for general storage/ maintenance.

The former Carpenters' Workshop is of random rubble bluestone construction, with brick quoins, brick trims to openings and face red brick 'dentil' trims to shallow eaves. The masonry gable form roof is clad with CGI and features a raised ridge vent along the length of the roof. The principal facade incorporates a central, wide, segmental arch door/s, flanked by matching width, segmental arch head windows (with later window joinery). The exposed side facade features a brick trimmed loft window/door and also a recent roller door opening. The East Street facade masonry has been fully rendered at some stage. The building form and construction detailing is similar to that evident on buildings B18, B24 & B27 (bluestone walling, brick quoins, brick dentils to shallow eaves). This form and detailing is also evident on the first purifying house (now demolished) featured in the 1866-1873 Sweet photograph of the site. Based on this evidence, it is probable that B106 dates from the early years of the Gasworks – broadly 1870-80. Post-Second World War rectangular windows have been cut into the East Street facade. A bluestone, lean-to structure of similar style and provenance joins this building to the adjacent B24 building. The lean-to features a pair of segmental arch timber doors to the front facade and a similar opening in the side wall, connecting to the rest of the building. The interior of the building has been altered over time, but two chimney flues are evidence of former forges/boilers. A later concrete floor has been laid inside. Of note is the siting of the Workshop, on the perimeter of the site, continuing the Gasworks tradition of enclosing the site from surrounding streets.



Intactness

The former Carpenters' Workshop building is of moderate to high intactness, with the early form of the building still clearly evident. Brick trimmed arch openings, quoins and brick dentil eaves detailing remains, reflecting the eaves detailing common to many buildings on the site. Window openings to East Street and the exposed side have been added since the Second World War, the East Street facade has been rendered and window sashes and most internal finishes have been replaced.

Some heritage value – as a majority of 1870-80 external fabric remains, although altered in part. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form, layout and numerous wall openings. It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the period. The building is of 'some' historic and architectural heritage value as one of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the early 1870-80s period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations on site, in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide. The former Workshop also forms part of the enclosing wall of the site – continuously maintained in one manner or another since 1863.

Former (reputed) Chemistry Laboratory (c1870-80) [B27]

Last used as an office, plus attached bluestone wall.

The former Chemistry Laboratory is of random rubble bluestone construction, with gable parapet ends and red brick quoins and trims to openings. Walling is laid in a variety of bedding patterns, but these appear to reflect ongoing repairs, rather than extensions to the building. Door and windows facing courtyard have all been changed and small window openings formed (c1980s) within render infill panels in walling. Window and door joinery is c1980s, as is glazed lobby joinery at south end. A brick trimmed roundel vent features to internal gable end. The construction detailing is similar to that evident on buildings B24, B18 & B106 (gables, bluestone walling, brick quoins, brick dentils to shallow eaves, roundel gable vents). This form and detailing is also evident on the first purifying house (now demolished) featured in the 1866-1873 Sweet photograph of the site. Based on this evidence, it is probable that B27 dates



from the early years of the Gasworks – broadly 1870-80. A bluestone boundary wall sits on the boundary, between this building and B106. A c1980s steel framed verandah is erected along the courtyard faces of the building and along the inside face of the adjacent masonry boundary wall. The interior of the building has been upgraded with plaster to walls, a new ceiling and a recent concrete floor slab. Of note is the siting of the Laboratory and adjacent boundary wall, on the perimeter of the site, continuing the Gasworks tradition of enclosing the site from surrounding streets.

Intactness

The former Chemistry Laboratory building is of moderate intactness, with the early form of the building still clearly evident. Brick quoins and brick dentil eaves detailing remains, reflecting the eaves detailing common to many buildings on the site. Window and door openings to the courtyard have been altered since the Second World War and window sashes and most internal finishes have been replaced.

Some heritage value – as a majority of 1870-80 external fabric remains, although altered in part in the courtyard area. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form and layout. It is considered of architectural interest, repeating details common to several buildings on the site from the period. B27 is of ‘some’ historic and architectural heritage value as one of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the early 1870-80s period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations on site, in 19th century Brompton and wider Adelaide. The former Laboratory also forms part of the enclosing wall of the site – continuously maintained in one manner or another since 1863.

Sundry platform walls (c1870-1900)

The platform walls along the railway alignment are of bluestone construction, with red brick copings and quoins.

Intactness

The sundry railway platform walls lining the side of the railway are of low to moderate intactness, with the form of platform edges still evident.

Some heritage value – a majority of c1870-1900 fabric remains, although dilapidated in part. The specific past purpose of the walls is still evident, illustrating their general industrial purpose in form. The walling is of 'minor' historic and architectural heritage value as part of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings and structures on the site from the early 20th century period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations on site, in late 19th and early 20^h century Brompton and wider Adelaide.



Workshop/Store Addition (1920-20s) [B18]

Last used as a Maintenance Building.

The former workshop/store is of red brick construction, with gable parapet ends featuring brick dentil work. Several windows and doorways have been added/alterd over time. A later canopy shelters the entrance. The interior of the building is a single space and was last refitted as an administration space with partitioned offices in c1990s, with smooth plaster walls, suspended ceilings and a concrete floor slab.



Intactness

The former workshop/store is of low intactness, but the early form and masonry detail of the building is still evident, despite alterations to provide new openings to adjacent buildings. The interior is of low nil intactness.

Minor heritage value – a majority of c1910-20s external fabric remains, although altered in part. The specific past purpose of the building is no longer evident, but the building still illustrates its general industrial purpose in form and utilitarian detail. The building is of 'minor' historic and architectural heritage value as one of a collection of remaining ancillary industrial buildings on the site from the early 20th century period, illustrating the production processes and scale of gas production operations in 20^h century Brompton and wider Adelaide.

Former Administration Building (c1920s) + c1950-70 additions [B29]

The former administration building was erected by 1924 and was constructed of red brick, with render face concrete lintels and band beams, with a CGI gambrel roof. Additions in the 1950s and then by 1970 mostly matched the detailing of the 1920s building.

Intactness

The former Administration Building is of moderate intactness, with the form of the 1920s structure still clearly evident. Internal rooms have been altered, but several period fireplaces and partitions remain.

Minor heritage value – as sufficient 1920s fabric remains. The specific past purpose of the building is still evident (administration building). Later post Second World War additions to the place do not add to this significance, as they were erected after the significant period of coal carbonisation gas production. The c1924 section of the building is of 'minor' historic heritage value as one of the remaining structures associated with the manufacture of coal fired gas, illustrating the scale of gas production operations in early 20th century Brompton and wider Adelaide.

Appliance Testing & Research & Development Building – Laboratory (c1870s (bluestone section)/1920s/1979) [B23]

The Appliance Testing & Research & Development Building – Laboratory was erected in three stages (c1870s (bluestone section)/1920s/1979). The ground floor masonry section was constructed as a pointed random rubble bluestone building in c1870s, with red brick quoins and trims to openings. Altered, original narrow brick arched head windows and wide doorways remain today, facing the interior of the c1979 addition to the building. The architectural detailing of the quoin work matches that of Former Purifying House (B22) and hence most likely dates from the 1870s period. Openings and brickwork are also similar to those on the first purifying house (now demolished) featured in the 1866-1873 Sweet photograph of the site. Based on this evidence, it is probable that the base of B23 dates from the early years of the Gasworks – broadly 1870-80.

The building was substantially modified in c1920. The original roof was removed (potentially a gable



roof, but details are unknown) and a brick upper floor added, complete with a hipped CGI roof (without eaves). The addition today features a timber floor and office partitions from the late 1930-50s period. Windows throughout were replaced during this period and were all steel framed in construction. Ground floor window openings featuring steel frames were probably also incorporated at this time.

The most recent addition to the place was erected 1979, to the South-west side, in red brick. The addition conceals original brick arch openings to the building.

The c1920s hipped roof was replaced with a new roof after 1980 – the upper floor did not have an eaves overhang before this period (BRG 350/34/1/2/74)

Intactness

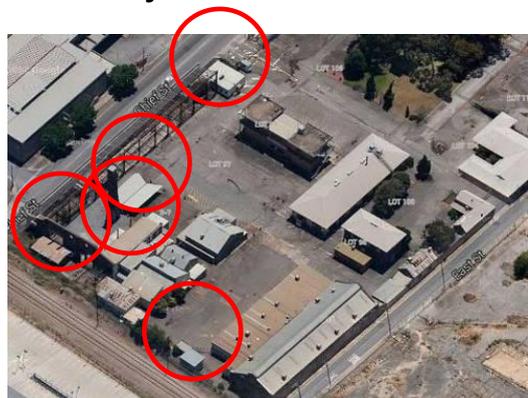
This building is of low intactness. Little of the original c1870s form of the building remains extant, other than face bluestone and now altered brick trimmed windows. Later additions to the building are utilitarian. There is no laboratory equipment extant in the building today.

Minor heritage value – little fabric of significance remains to illustrate the early date and former use of this building, other than the stonework itself. The ability of the place to demonstrate the coal carbonisation era on the site is questionable. Further, the early part of the building has been irreversibly altered due to later additions, which are of little historic or architectural merit.

Other buildings on the site, within the Nominator's boundary of nomination

Free-standing transportable office buildings, free-standing carport and transportable building, located within the shell of SHP2

Nil heritage value – recent in construction – well beyond the significant period of coal carbonisation gas production.



Transportable buildings, located between SHP2 & B18

Nil heritage value – recent in construction – well beyond the significant period of coal carbonisation gas production.



'Onie-Gegi' Catalytic Re-Forming Plant Building (c1960)

Two-storey, cream brick building, located between SHP2 and B22.

Nil heritage value – constructed after the cessation of gas production by coal carbonisation at Brompton – the period of significance on the site.



Shedding, located adjacent to SHP1

Nil heritage value – recent in construction – well beyond the significant period of coal carbonisation gas production.



Shedding (free-standing, gable roof), located in centre of site

Nil heritage value – recent in construction – well beyond the significant period of coal carbonisation gas production.



2. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Comparability / Rarity / Representation:

South Australia:

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton stands today as the most intact complex of a coal carbonisation gasworks in South Australia. There are three gas works entered in the South Australian Heritage Register, as State Heritage Places:

Brompton Gas Works, 1879 Retort House, Remains of 1891 Retort House and Chimney Stack
Brompton

Subject site – no retort furnaces left, but still has 2 retort houses, chimney, purifying house, ancillary buildings intact on site.



Former Colonial Gas Company Strathalbyn Gas Works including Dwelling and Outbuilding
Strathalbyn

Site contains minor masonry buildings – no furnace infrastructure and much smaller in scale to Brompton Gasworks



Former Provincial Gas Company (later SA Gas Co) Gawler Gas Works
Gawler South

Shell of one building remains – very small in scale compared to Brompton.



Other Gasworks Buildings in South Australia:

SA Gas Co Gasworks (Thebarton)
23 James Condon Drive, Thebarton

Demolished – was on the site of the Ice Arena

SA Gas Co Gasworks (Port Adelaide)
Rosewater

Demolished – was probably out the back of the old railway station (National Rail Museum)? But not too sure

SA Gas Co Gasworks (Osborne) Osborne	Demolished by end of the 1980s
Port Pirie Gasworks Alpha Terrace, Solomontown	Demolished in 2012
Glenelg Gasworks Glenelg	Demolished
Brayville Gasworks Plympton Park	Demolished Was near corner of Marion and Sturt Rd, adjacent Marion drive-in
Kapunda Gasworks Kapunda	Demolished Located near railway station – no evidence today

Australia:

There appear to be few 19th century gasworks complexes left in Australia. The most intact gasworks of the coal carbonisation type is the gasworks in Bendigo, Victoria (listed on the Victorian Heritage Register). The (former) Bendigo gasworks still contain retort furnaces. The authors have been unable to locate (using internet) any other gasworks of similar integrity in Australia to the Brompton Gasworks.

Former Bendigo Gas Works 8 -32 Weeroona Avenue Bendigo, Vic	Entered in the Victorian Heritage Register Complete with retort furnaces Higher integrity to Brompton Gasworks
Gas Works Site 35-39 Esplanade Launceston, Tas	Entered in the Tasmanian Heritage Register Appears to contain vertical retort house and possibly a horizontal retort house Similar condition to Brompton Gasworks, but features vertical retort
Hobart Gas Works complex (incl. chimney) 2 Macquarie Street, Hobart, Tas	Entered in the Tasmanian Heritage Register Well maintained early building and chimney – but no retort houses evident today (now Hogs Breath Cafe) More intact than Brompton Gasworks, but less buildings
Gas holder Brisbane (Newstead) QLD	Only gas holder remains – used for art installations Not comparable with Brompton Gasworks
Stripping Tower, South Brisbane, QLD	Cast iron tower structure, part of 19 th century industrial process Now relocated as feature of a local park Not comparable with Brompton Gasworks

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 SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton was established in 1863 and demonstrate the coal carbonisation type of gas service infrastructure present in 1863-1960s western Adelaide. The Gasworks were a key catalyst for industrial and economic growth in 19th century western Adelaide, as industry was located adjacent the Gasworks, due to the cost of pipework and technical limitations of gas supply of the day. Therefore the Gasworks were an integral part of the industrial history and character of the western suburbs and a reminder of a past way of living and industry no longer practiced today.

The pre-1964 extant structures (including the buildings/structures comprising the existing State Heritage Place and also nominated ancillary buildings/structures) on the site are of significance, as they illustrate the scale and functional needs of coal carbonisation period the Gasworks, 1863 - 1964. After 1964, gas was produced on site using LPG and Natural Gas products. While retort furnaces and equipment have been removed, there is sufficient remaining building fabric of significance – retort houses, chimney, purifying house and ancillary buildings - to understand the scale and operation of the place.

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton meets this criterion, as the site demonstrates an important aspect of the State's history – the early pattern of industrial and economic growth in 19th and early 20th century western Adelaide.

I conclude that the Place meets 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 former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton was established from 1863. The process of gas production involved carbonisation of coal to produce gas – a common industrial method in 19th Century South Australia (and the world in general). Gas production was a key colonial industry – essential for lighting, heating water and many manufacturing processes. After 1964, gas was produced on site using LPG and Natural Gas products. Therefore, the extant structures (including the buildings/structures comprising the existing State Heritage Place and also the nominated ancillary buildings/structures) on the site pre-dating 1964 are of significance, as they illustrate the scale and functional needs of a South Australian coal carbonisation gas works 1863-1964. The Gasworks site is rare in South Australia – it is the only remnant coal carbonisation gasworks site in the State of sufficient integrity to understand such industrial processes. While retort furnaces and equipment have been removed, there is sufficient remaining building fabric of significance – retort houses, chimney, purifying house and ancillary buildings - to understand the scale and operation of the place. Gasworks sites remain at Gawler and Strathalbyn, but are difficult to interpret, as so little fabric of significance remains.

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton meets this criterion, as the site has rare qualities of cultural significance – as the only former 19th and early 20th century coal carbonisation gasworks industrial site extant in South Australia.

I conclude that the Place meets 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.

Criterion (c) predominantly relates to sites of natural/archaeological significance that contribute to our understanding of the past. The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton is considered an archaeological site of research value. The remaining walls and chimney illustrate the scale and functional requirements of a horizontal retort coal carbonisation gas plant of the late 19th century, in the early suburbs of Adelaide. The nominated ancillary buildings/structures illustrate the scale of operations on the site.

It is considered that the heritage value of the Gasworks site is better illustrated through Criteria (a) and (b) in this instance, as a clearer argument can be proposed under these criteria.

It is further recommended that the Gasworks site **be 'designated' as a Place of Archaeological significance** pursuant to section 14(7)(b) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

I conclude that while the Place may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the state's history, including its natural history, other Section 16 criteria better illustrate the important heritage value of the Place.

The Place 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.

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton is one of a class of industrial places representing coal-gas production in 19th and early 20th Century South Australia. Two other sites are already entered in the South Australian Heritage Register – at Gawler and Strathalbyn. The intactness of the Brompton Gasworks site is moderate, with some buildings remaining to illustrate past coal-gas production processes (two retort houses, chimney flue, purifier house, ancillary buildings). The Brompton Gasworks is far more intact and is much larger than the Gawler and Strathalbyn sites, despite the fact that the horizontal and vertical coal-gas retorts have been removed. There are few coal-gas gasworks entered in the Register and while the intactness of the Brompton site is only ‘moderate’, it is still far more intact and of a larger scale than the other sites State heritage-listed sites. This criterion requires places to be an ‘outstanding’ representative of a class of places – the moderate intactness of the Place compromises its ability to be an outstanding example of the class of such places in South Australia.

It is considered that the heritage value of the Gasworks site is better illustrated through Criteria (a) and (b) in this instance, as a clearer argument can be proposed under these criteria. I conclude that the Place is not an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance. Other Section 16 criteria better illustrate the important heritage value of the Place.

The Place 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 former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton are utilitarian in design, built of local materials (bluestone, red brick), designed to be fit for purpose. As buildings, they were designed to accommodate coal-gas production processes (eg: retort furnaces, purifier tanks). When compared with other 19th Century coal-gas operations documented elsewhere in Australia, the Brompton buildings appear to be typical, rather than innovative in design. The quality of stonework and incorporation of brick dentil detailing to eaves of many buildings is of aesthetic interest, but is not innovative or particularly creative for the period of construction.

I conclude that the former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton does not demonstrate a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.

The Place does not 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.

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton are of potential social value for former employees of SAGASCO/Origin Energy, as a place of work/socialisation. The association is of a specific, 'normal' nature, to a small group of little state-wide significance.

I conclude that the former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton does not have strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it .

The Place does not 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.

Whilst there is no association between the former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton and the life/work of a person or event of significance, there is a clear association with the longstanding, publicly-listed South Australian Gas Company – founded 1861. The SA Gas Company was a significant supplier of gas in South Australia, initially providing the fuel for the development of industry in Bowden/Hindmarsh and progressively supplying gas to the whole state. Many prominent and influential South Australians were early members of the Board of the SA Gas Company, including Sir Henry Ayers. The Brompton site was the first and principal site of the Company. Further, it was the last site to be de-commissioned by the Company, after the business was absorbed by Boral/ Origin Energy.

The former SAGASCO Gasworks at Brompton has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance – in this case the SA Gas Company, an organisation of historic importance to South Australia.

I conclude that the Place meets this criterion.

3. STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The 1863-1964 former Brompton Gasworks site is of historic significance to South Australia because it influenced the early pattern of industrial and economic growth in 19th and early 20th century western Adelaide. The Gasworks was a catalyst for the early industrial growth of western Adelaide, supplying fuel from 1863 onwards to newly established factories, which were located nearby to take advantage of the new gas supply. It was an integral part of the industrial history and character of the western suburbs and a reminder of a past way of living and industry no longer practiced today.

The Gasworks site is also of historic significance as the only former 19th and early 20th century coal carbonisation gasworks industrial site extant in South Australia. While retort furnaces and equipment have been removed, there is sufficient remaining building fabric of significance – retort houses, chimney, purifying house and ancillary buildings - to understand the scale and operation of the place during its period of significance.

The site also has a special association with the SA Gas Co, an organisation of historic importance to South Australia. The SA Gas Co was a publicly listed company from 1861, and company directors included many of South Australia's most prominent citizens of the 19th and early 20th century.

Extent of Listing / Significant Fabric / Curtilage:

The Extent of Listing includes the following structures within the heritage value polygon, reflecting the 1863-1964 period of significance of the Place:

High heritage value:

- (Horizontal) Retort House No.3 (1879) **[SHP 1]**
- (Horizontal) Retort House No. 4 (1900-11) (Ruin) **[SHP2]**
- Former (Horizontal) Retort House No. 4 Chimney (1900) **[SHP3]**
- Former Purifying House (1873) **[B22]**

Medium heritage value:

- Former Boiler House (c1870-80) **[B18]**
- Building (c1890-1910) **[B102]**
- Former Works Superintendent's Cottage (c1870-80) **[B24]**
- Former Carpenters' Workshop (c1870-80) **[B106]**
- Former (reputed) Chemistry Laboratory (c1870-80) **[B27]**
- Sundry platform walls (c1870-1900)

Low heritage value:

- Workshop/Store Addition (1920-20s) **[B18]**
- Former Administration Building (c1920s) + c1950-70 additions **[B29]**
- Appliance Testing & Research & Development Building – Laboratory (c1870s (bluestone section)/1920s/1979) **[B23]**

The Extent of Listing within the heritage value polygon excludes:

- Free-standing transportable office buildings, free-standing carport and transportable building, located within the shell of SHP2
- Transportable buildings, located between SHP2 & B18
- 'Onie-Gegi' Catalytic Re-Forming Plant Building (c1960)
- Shedding, located adjacent to SHP1
- Shedding (free-standing, gable roof), located in centre of site

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NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME: SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: Whole of exterior and interior of buildings/ structures on the site known as SHP1, SHP2, SHP3, B22, B18, B102, B24, B106, B27, Sundry platform walls along railway alignment, B18, B29, B23.
Transportable buildings, Onie-Gegi building, shedding adjacent SHP1 and any other site shedding excluded from Place listing.

DATE OF COMPLETION: 1863-1964

REGISTER STATUS: **Description:** Nominated
Date: 17-September 2014

CURRENT USE: **Description:** vacant
Dates: 2010 – 2015

PREVIOUS USE(S): **Description:** Gas works
Dates: 1863 - 2010

ARCHITECT: **Name:** SAGAS Co (Engineers)
Dates: 1863 to 1964

BUILDER: **Name:** SAGAS Co
Dates: 1863 to 1964

SUBJECT INDEXING: **Group:** Utilities
Category: Gas Works

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: **Description:** City of Charles Sturt

LOCATION: **Unit No.:** n/a
Street No.: n/a
Street Name: 1-21 Chief Street
Town/Suburb: Brompton
Post Code: 5007

LAND DESCRIPTION: **Title Type:** CT
Volume: 5554
Folio: 1
Lot No.: Lots 104, 105 & 106
Section: Filed Plan 212611
Hundred: Yatala
Title Type: CT
Volume: 6055
Folio: 957
Lot No.: Lots 95, 96, 97, 98, 99 & 100
Section: Filed Plan 218912
Hundred: Yatala

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449

SITE RECORD (Cont.):

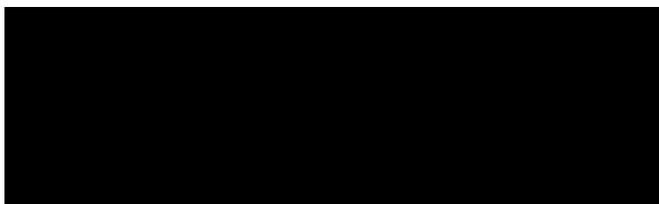
LAND DESCRIPTION (Cont.):

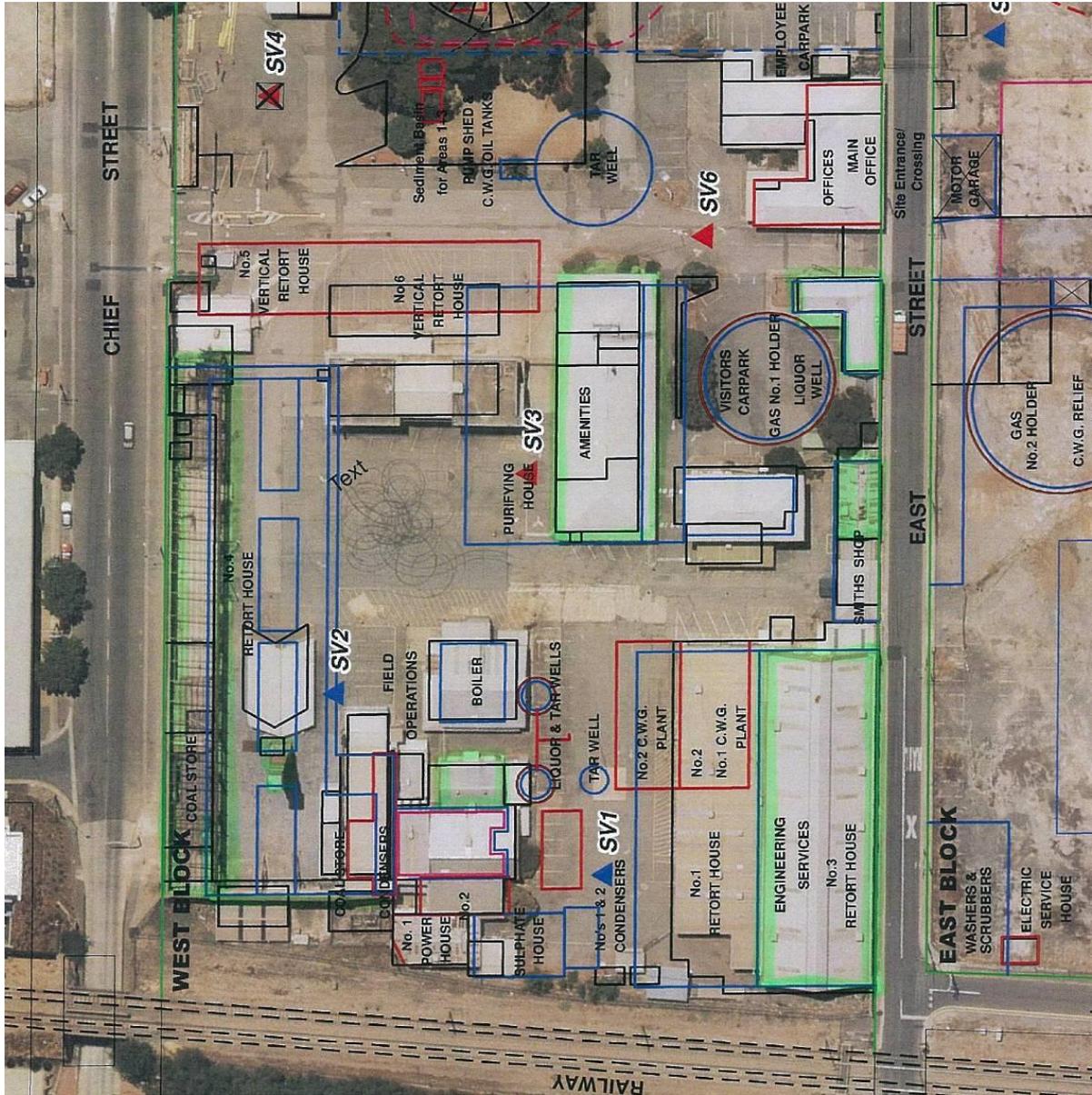
Title Type: CT
Volume: 6055
Folio: 958
Lot No.: Lot 91
Section: Filed Plan 207183
Hundred: Yatala

Title Type: CT
Volume: 5781
Folio: 429
Lot No.: Closed Road Marked A, Road
Plan 1093
Section: n/a
Hundred: Yatala

Title Type: CT
Volume: 5781
Folio: 435
Lot No.: Closed Road Marked A, Road
Plan 2359
Section: n/a
Hundred: Yatala

OWNER:





Site Plan, showing Building Uses (Courtesy Renewal SA (2014))



NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton - Building SHP 1
(Horizontal Retort House 3) from NE end (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton - Building SHP2
(Horizontal Retort House 4) from NE end (2015)**

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building SHP 3
(Horizontal Retort House 4 Chimney), from NE end (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B22
(Former Purifying House), from SE end (2015)**

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B18
(Former Boiler House), view from NE end (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B102
(Former Reticulated Gas Workshop), view from SE end (2015)**

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B24
(Former Works Superintendent’s Cottage), view from NW side (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B106
(Former Carpenter’s Workshop), view from NW side (2015)**

NAME: Former SAGASCO Gasworks

PLACE NO.: 26449



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton – Building B27
(Former Chemistry Laboratory), view from NW side (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton
– Sundry platform walls,
view from railway line (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton
– Building B18 (Workshop/ Store),
view from SE side (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton
– Building B29 (Former Administration
Building), view from NW side (2015)**



**Former SAGASCO Gasworks, Brompton
– Building B23 (Former Appliance Testing/
R&D/Laboratory), view from SW side
(2015)**