

SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME: Haigh Mansions

PLACE NO.: 26578

ADDRESS: Karna Country

323 Esplanade, Henley Beach

CT 5280/561 A200 D31903 Hundred of Yatala

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Haigh Mansions demonstrates an important evolution in the way South Australians lived during the twentieth century. Haigh Mansions is the earliest surviving example of the purpose-built flat developments that began to reshape the suburbs after the First World War, providing the middle class with a popular alternative to conventional detached housing. Haigh Mansions is an uncommon example of this new, modern way of living introducing elements that were widely emulated in later purpose-built flat developments including, two-wing configuration separated by a light well improving access to natural light and ventilation, and external reinforced concrete staircases employed as an architectural feature.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(a) *it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history*

In the early twentieth century modern flat living emerged as an entirely new lifestyle in South Australia, albeit one predominantly for the very wealthy. The first bespoke multistorey flat complex was Dwelling – Ruthven Mansions (SHP 13368), constructed in the City of Adelaide in two stages, 1912 and 1915. The disruptive impacts of the First World War subsequently halted the further construction of flats and only a few bespoke flats were built before the 1930s. After the war, the reconfiguration of existing homes into flats emerged as an expedient means to provide more affordable homes for people in desirable locations. However, these conversions, while conveniently located, did not necessarily provide the conveniences associated with modern living.

Purpose-built interwar flats democratised modern flat living, bringing the new lifestyle within reach of middle-income earners in line with social change. Purpose-

built interwar flats responded to demand for housing in popular areas and on transport routes and represent the first wave of urban infill to occur in South Australia. The designers and financiers of purpose-built interwar flats sought to increase the number of occupants who could be housed on a suburban block while simultaneously improving the quality of life of those occupants.

Haigh Mansions, built in 1921 is the earliest surviving block of purpose-built interwar flats constructed in South Australia and demonstrates the early evolution of a new, modern and democratised way of living for middle-income earners at a time of immense social change. As one of the first to be built it also introduced design elements that would be widely adopted in subsequent interwar flat developments, such as a two-wing configuration separated by a light well, improving access to light and ventilation for occupants, and external reinforced concrete stairs employed as an architectural feature. Haigh Mansions also remains highly intact and retains a high degree of integrity when compared to other places with similar associations.

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

Purpose-built flats emerged during the interwar period as the first popular alternative to conventional detached housing for middle income earners. Purpose-built flats also brought profitable real estate investment within reach of the middle classes and were predominantly built as infill development to satisfy demand for modern accommodation on public transport routes and / or in desirable residential areas such as seaside suburbs. At least 50 purpose-built flat developments were built in metropolitan Adelaide and regional centres before the Second World War halted the construction of dwellings. It is the introduction of this new modern way of living that is considered to be of cultural significance to South Australia.

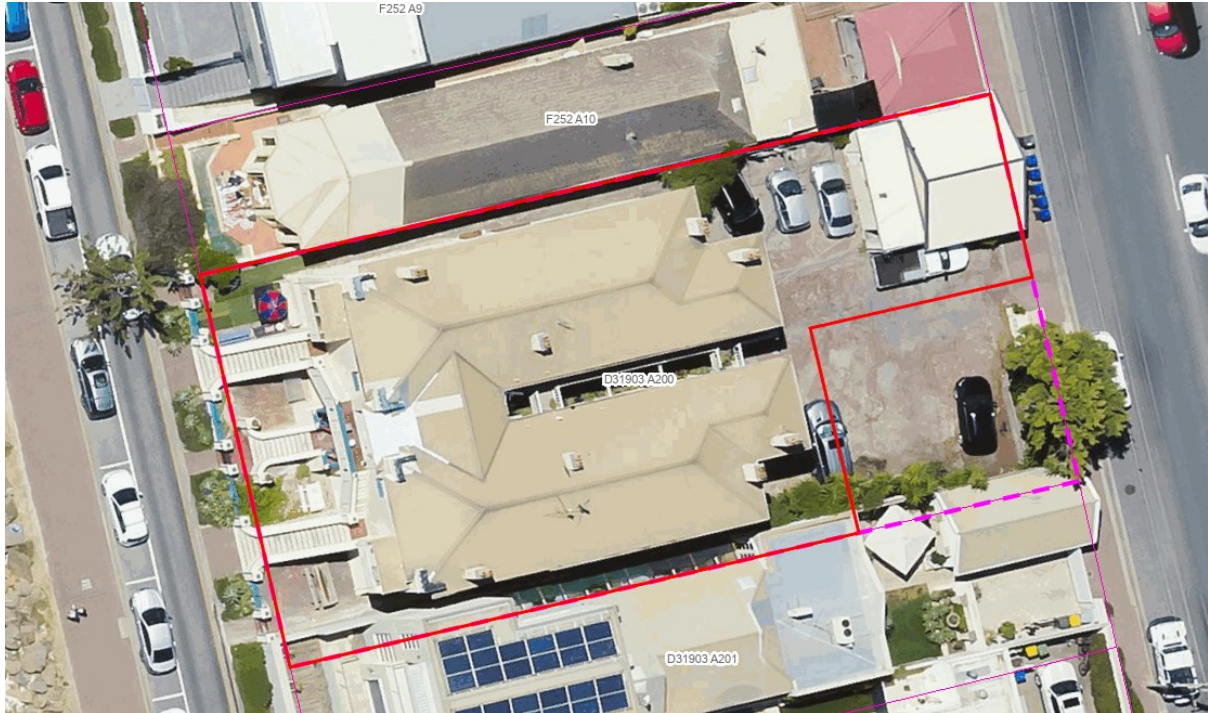
Due to the halt imposed on construction of dwellings by the second World War, purpose-built interwar flats are uncommon in South Australia, with only 50 known developments occurring between 1912 and 1942. With the passage of time purpose-built interwar flats have become increasingly endangered, as a result of their positioning on transport corridors and in seaside suburbs. These popular sites are now again prime locations for redevelopment and urban densification and only 35 purpose-built interwar flats are known to remain. Of these 35, Haigh Mansions is the earliest surviving example and one of only a few that remain highly intact making it an uncommon example of purpose-built interwar flats.

SITE PLAN

Haigh Mansions

PLACE NO.: 26578

323 Esplanade, Henley Beach



Haigh Mansions (CT 5280/561 A200 D31903 Hundred of Yatala)

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

- Stone and brick block of flats, including staircases,
- Associated garage and laundry block,
- Front fence and cast-iron front gate,
- Original external materials including face brick walls (now vermiculite-coated) and marble stair treads,
- Remaining leadlight windows,
- Original interior details, fittings and finishes including ceiling roses, cornices and mouldings; built-in joinery; plate rails; fireplaces, including fireboxes, grates and fireplace surrounds; skirtings and architraves; and original floorboards.

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

- Kitchen and bathroom fitouts,
- Non-original interior paint and floor coverings,
- Letterbox wall,
- Trees, shrubs, and landscaping,
- Pressed cement urns,
- Blue Local Heritage plaque.

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LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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Provisionally entered by the South Australian Heritage Council on 15 February

Confirmed by the South Australian Heritage Council on 27 June 2024

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

Haigh Mansions is a U-shaped, two-storey block of flats constructed from stone, brick and reinforced concrete and is located on a sloping foreshore site. The structure consists of two symmetrical wings linked at the western end and features hipped roofs; a symmetrical western feature façade, dominated by three large, reinforced concrete staircases; two cantilevered balconies; and an integrated stone and rendered brick front fence. The ground floor is raised approximately 2 metres above street level to the Esplanade frontage.

The block is comprised of eight flats, four upstairs and four downstairs, with the space between the northern and southern wings forming a light well. The flats to the western frontage (the Esplanade) have main entrances through common entry porches, one upstairs and one down. The downstairs porch is accessed via the central feature staircase. The upstairs porch is accessed via the two flanking feature staircases, which form doglegs and meet in front of the porch, with a common central landing forming a balcony. This balcony is supported above the downstairs staircase by four reinforced concrete columns.

The upstairs flats to Seaview Road have main entrances accessed via semi-internal reinforced concrete staircases on the northern and southern sides of the building, both covered under the main roof. The southern staircase is now fully enclosed (not original fabric). All four upstairs flats have rear entrances located in the light well, accessed via a timber staircase structure.

Additional external features include:

- Flush-rendered front façade (originally squared, rock-faced sandstone with brick quoins, now painted),
- Flush-rendered northern and southern side walls,
- Face brick rear walls (now spray-coated with cream vermiculite),
- Pebbledash-rendered base courses (now painted),
- 'Haigh Mansions' in decorative lettering on front balcony spandrel, flanked by recessed lozenge-shaped fields,
- Marble treads to western frontage stairs,
- Remnant leadlight glazing including to main entrance door side lights, western entry hall windows and elsewhere,
- Corner parapet towers to façade, with stylised dentils,
- Eight chimneys, each with two terracotta pots,

- Cast iron front gate,
- Freestanding garage building facing Seaview Road.

Typical original interior living area features include:

- Ceiling cornices,
- Architraves,
- Skirtings,
- Floorboards,
- Plate rails,
- Fireplaces, including fireboxes, grates and fireplace surrounds,
- Built-in shelving.

Elements of Significance:

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

- Stone and brick block of flats, including staircases,
- Associated garage and laundry block,
- Front fence and cast-iron front gate
- Original external materials including face brick walls (now painted) and marble stair treads,
- Remaining leadlight windows,
- Original interior details, fittings and finishes including ceiling roses, cornices and mouldings; built-in joinery; plate rails; fireplaces, including fireboxes, grates and fireplace surrounds; skirtings and architraves; and original floorboards.

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

- Kitchen and bathroom fitouts,
- Non-original interior paint and floor coverings,
- Letterbox wall,
- Trees, shrubs, and landscaping,
- Pressed cement urns,
- Blue Local Heritage plaque.

History of the Place

Please refer to the Assessment Report for the full history.

Haigh Mansions

The Kurna people¹ are the traditional owners of the Henley Beach area, known as Witongga (reed place).² Prior to European contact, 'autonomous, extended family groups' lived on the Adelaide Plains, named according to their place of dwelling,³ speaking dialects of what is now known as the Kurna language. Witongga was an ephemeral wetland system, lying between coastal dunes and red inland dunes to the east, fed by Karrawirraparri/Tarndaparri (River Torrens) and draining slowly into Wongayerlo (Gulf St Vincent). A 'prime' traditional summer living place for Kurna people, Witongga supplied a rich source of food, reeds for basket making, and other resources.⁴

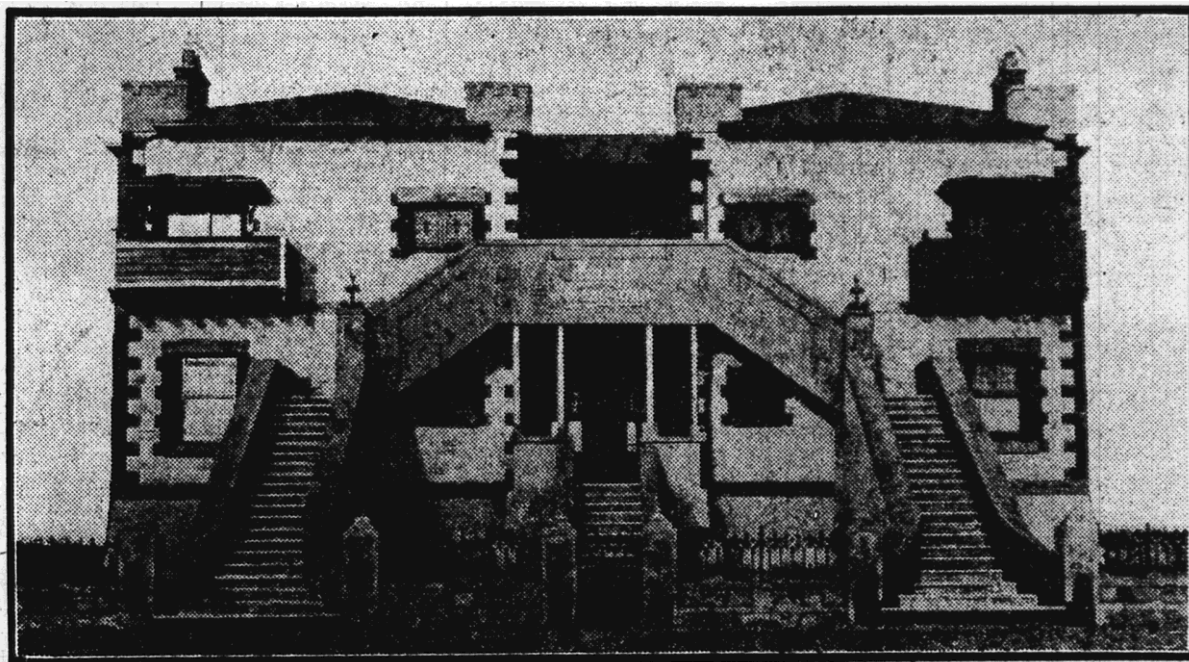
The Henley Beach area was first surveyed by Colonel William Light in 1837,⁵ as part of his broader survey of the district of Adelaide for the South Australian Colonization Commission, under the *South Australian Colonization Act*. William Bartley subdivided the Township of Henley Beach on Sections 2080 and 448, which he auctioned through his agents E. Solomon and Co on 15 February 1860. Named after Henley-on-Thames, a town closely associated with the sport of rowing in Oxfordshire, England, Henley Beach was advertised as suitable for 'sea bathing' and as a 'healthy locality [...] being also free from those noxious smells which have been cause of complaint elsewhere.'⁶

A horse-drawn tramway from Adelaide via Hindmarsh and Grange reached Henley Beach on 13 February 1883,⁷ and later a steam-powered railway from Adelaide via Woodville and Grange was opened in February 1894. The tram service was electrified in 1909.⁸ These public transport connections increased the desirability of Henley Beach as a place to live, the area becoming one of Adelaide's notable seaside resorts, along with Semaphore and Glenelg. The Henley Beach Jetty was completed in September 1883 and by the early twentieth century, Henley Beach boasted various seaside attractions during the summer months, including a jetty kiosk and merry-go-round.

In 1883, Charles Wright Lester and Mary Stephens purchased Allotment 94 of Section 448, Hundred of Adelaide, but the land remained undeveloped. By 1920, Allotment 94 was reportedly one of a few remaining vacant blocks along the Henley Beach Esplanade. During that year, the allotment was purchased by Alfred Ernest Haigh for £1,300 and the sale was settled on 11 October.⁹ According to a family story, the Henley Beach site was chosen over another site at Somerton Park on the toss of a coin.¹⁰ However, the proximity of a railway connection to Adelaide is also said to have played a role in Haigh's decision.¹¹

Alfred Haigh built two structures on Allotment 94, namely a two-storey block of eight self-contained flats, which he named Haigh Mansions, and an adjoining five-roomed

bungalow to the south (substantially modified in c.1996 and c.2004). Haigh Mansions was built by Harry Fawcett and completed in August 1921 at a total cost of £4,000.¹² Alfred Haigh also built several private bathing houses associated with Haigh Mansions in front of the flats, on the beach.¹³



Haigh Mansions, 1921

Source: *Mail* 8 October 1921 p. 8

Unlike Ruthven Mansions, which was built for a wealthy English developer, Haigh Mansions was built for a middle-class South Australian businessman and is believed to be South Australia's oldest-surviving example of a purpose-built interwar flat development. Haigh Mansions' innovative design featured two wings running perpendicular from the beach and linked at the western end, forming a U-shaped building. The space between the northern and southern wings increased penetration of natural light into each flat while also allowing for cross-ventilation. Haigh Mansions is believed to have been the first purpose-built interwar flat development in South Australia to feature a split-wing arrangement.¹⁴

As built in 1921, the front façade of Haigh Mansions, facing Gulf St Vincent, comprised squared, rock-face sandstone with brick quoins. The front elevation was dominated by three large reinforced concrete staircases with marble treads, which provided access to the four western flats (two upstairs and two downstairs) from the Esplanade. The ground floor stood a considerable height above the street level off the Esplanade, responding to slope of the site and necessitating a staircase associated with the ground floor flats.

Haigh Mansions is believed to have been the first block of purpose-built interwar flats in South Australia to possess such staircases. Similar external 'walk-up' staircases appeared in later flat developments such as Stirling (1938) at 2 Saltram Road, Glenelg

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and Pennsylvania (c.1938-1939) at 32 Weewanda Street, Glenelg South. Meanwhile integrated, semi-internal reinforced concrete and external timber staircases provided side and rear access, respectively, to the upstairs eastern flats. Each upstairs flat on the western side also possessed a cantilevered balcony supported by joists with decorative birdsmouthed ends.

The original design of Haigh Mansions employed some features characteristic of the Californian bungalow style, such as a rock-face sandstone façade with brick quoins as well as the aforementioned birdsmouthed joist ends on the cantilevered balconies. These elements were most likely employed to help the building blend into its surrounding suburban context.

Haigh Mansions and the neighbouring house may have been designed by Adelaide architect F. W. Hocart, who designed two other buildings for Alfred Haigh during the 1920s, namely Haigh's Buildings at 41 Rundle Street (LHP, completed 1923), and a five-storey building to the south of Haigh's Buildings on Featherstone Place, connected to Haigh's Buildings by walkways (completed 1927, now demolished).¹⁵ Haigh's Buildings was also built by Harry Fawcett.¹⁶

After the completion of Haigh Mansions and the neighbouring house, Alfred Haigh lived in the house while letting out the fully-furnished flats,¹⁷ with initial tenancies lasting between 6 and 12 months. The flats were first advertised for rent from October 1921.¹⁸ An early tenant of Haigh Mansions was Owen Worthley,¹⁹ a younger brother of Frederick (Fred) Irwin Worthley, the 'shady but visionary'²⁰ Torrensville businessman who later commissioned Everard Court (flats) in 1939 (SHP 26529). Alfred Haigh also 'regularly' offered the Haigh Mansions flats as accommodation to family and friends and during the early 1930s, Haigh himself lived in one of the flats.²¹

Following Alfred Haigh's death in 1933, Haigh Mansions was left to his widow Eliza Ann, known as Lettie. Lettie later married Jack Fawcett, a brother of builder Harry Fawcett, and lived at Haigh Mansions until she was no longer able to care for herself. The family sold Haigh Mansions and the neighbouring bungalow in May 1950.²²

Later changes

At some point prior to 1953, the façade of Haigh Mansions was flush-rendered, most likely when the original sandstone deteriorated in the marine environment of the Henley Beach foreshore, while the upstairs balconies were roofed and enclosed, probably to serve as small sleepouts. Sometime prior to 1999, the birdsmouthed joist ends supporting the cantilevered balconies were sawn off and the joists enclosed by fascias and soffits. The original cast iron fence panels were replaced sometime between 1953 and 1999 and the replacement panels were in turn removed prior to 2007. Eight decorative pressed-cement urns were added to the front façade after 2007 and the rear-facing brick walls were painted around the same time.



Haigh Mansions (left) and the neighbouring bungalow (right) in 1953, following storm damage to the Henley Beach foreshore, note bathing house on right.

Source: PRG 287/1/15/181 SLSA



Haigh Mansions

Source: DEW Files, 2 January 2024

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Chronology

Year Event

- 1860 William Bartley subdivides the Township of Henley Beach on Sections 2080 and 448.
- 1883 **March, Charles Wright Lester and Mary Stephens acquire allotment 94 of Section 448, Hundred of Adelaide.**
- 1920 Alfred Ernest Haigh acquires allotment 94 of Section 448, Hundred of Adelaide for £1,300.
- 1921 August, Haigh Mansions completed for Alfred Haigh by Harry Fawcett, with plumbing by E. Eglington, joinery by G. H. Soar, bricks supplied by J. Hallett and Son, stone by G. J. Ackland, timber by A. Townsend, and cartage by O. E. Bruce.**
- October, flats within Haigh Mansions are advertised for lease.**
- 1950 May, the Haigh family sells Haigh Mansions.**
- 1953 Front elevation of Haigh Mansions flush-rendered and upstairs west-facing cantilevered balconies enclosed by this date.
- 1999 Birdsmouthed joist ends supporting the cantilevered balconies sawn off and the joists enclosed by fascias and soffits, and original cast iron fence panels replaced by this date.
- 2007 Brick urns added to Haigh Mansions' front elevation; rear-facing brick walls painted.
- 2014 15 May, Haigh Mansions is listed as a Local Heritage Place.**

References

Books and Chapters

- Rob Amery and Vincent (Jack) Kanya Buckskin, "Pinning down Kurna names: Linguistic issues arising in the development of the Kurna Placenames Database" in I. Clark, L. Hercus and L. Kostanski (eds), *Indigenous and minority placenames: Australian and international perspectives* (2014) ANU Press
- Christine Lockwood, "Early Encounters on the Adelaide Plains and Encounter Bay" in Peggy Brock and Tom Gara (eds), *Colonialism and its Aftermath: a History of Aboriginal South Australia* (2017) Mile End, SA: Wakefield Press
- Barbara Santich, *Haigh's Chocolates, Enjoyed for Generations, Established 1915* (2015) Mile End SA: Wakefield Press

Reports and Theses

- Danvers Architects Pty Ltd, 'Heritage Survey of the City of Henley and Grange' (May 1993)
- Karl Winda Telfer and Gavin Malone with assistance from Matthew Osborne and Tom Gara, "The City of Charles Sturt Kurna Meyunna Cultural Mapping: A People's Living Landscape" (2012) p. 5

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Journals

Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions – 323 Esplanade, Henley Beach' in *Henley and Grange Historical Society Journal* (November 1999) No. 20

Giles Walkley, "Adelaide's Supreme Flats" in *Spirit of Progress* (Summer 2016)

Newspapers

"Auctions." in *South Australian Advertiser* 8 February 1860 p. 4 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1202002>

"Adelaide and Hindmarsh Tramway Company" in *Adelaide Observer* 28 July 1883 p. 8 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article160085955>

No title in *Mail* 8 October 1921 p. 8 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63853911>

"Building Sold Privately" in *News* 19 May 1950 p. 24 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article130790212>

Websites

City of Charles Sturt, Witongga 'Reed Place' (Reedbeds) <https://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/community/arts,-culture-and-history/kaurna-culture/witongga>

Henley Grange Historical Society, Stories from Henley and Grange <https://henleyandgrangehistory.org.au/stories/>

Archival

CT 1107/47

SITE DETAILS

Haigh Mansions

PLACE NO.: 26578

323 Esplanade, Henley Beach

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Two-storey stone, brick and reinforced concrete flats
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1921
REGISTER STATUS:	Identified 8 December 2022 Provisionally entered 15 February 2024 Confirmed 27 June 2024
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS:	Listed 15 May 2014
CURRENT USE:	Flats 1921-present
BUILDER:	Harry Fawcett, contractor; E. Eglington, plumbing; G. H. Soar, joinery; J. Hallet & Son, bricks; G. J. Ackland, stone; A. Townend, timber; O. E. Bruce, cartage 1921
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	City of Charles Sturt
LOCATION:	Street No.: 323 Street Name: Esplanade Town/Suburb: Henley Beach Post Code: 5022
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title CT 5280/561 A200 D31903 Reference: Hundred: Yatala

PHOTOS

Haigh Mansions

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323 Esplanade, Henley Beach

All images in this section are from DEW Files and were taken on 2 January 2024 unless otherwise indicated.



Haigh Mansions, western elevation



Haigh Mansions, northern and western elevations

PHOTOS

Haigh Mansions

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323 Esplanade, Henley Beach



Haigh Mansions, eastern elevation



Haigh Mansions, western elevation detail

PHOTOS

Haigh Mansions
323 Esplanade, Henley Beach

PLACE NO.: 26578



Original cast iron gate



Steps with marble treads



Typical flat interior (unit 1) showing a fireplace, plate rail and built-in bench storage

Source: www.realestate.com.au April 2017



Typical flat interior (unit 7) showing a fireplace

Source: www.turnerrealestate.com.au February 2023



Typical flat interior

Source: www.realestate.com.au July 2019



Typical flat interior (unit 7) showing entrance

Source: www.turnerrealestate.com.au February 2023

¹ Karl Winda Telfer and Gavin Malone with assistance from Matthew Osborne and Tom Gara, "The City of Charles Sturt Kurna Meyunna Cultural Mapping: A People's Living Landscape" (2012) p. 5

² Previously spelled Yertabulti or Yerta Bulti but revised in 2010 following the adoption of a 'phonemically inspired orthography which more closely [represents] the distinctive sounds of Kurna,' see Rob Amery and Vincent (Jack) Kanya Buckskin, "Pinning down Kurna names: Linguistic issues arising in the development of the Kurna Placenames Database" in I. Clark, L. Hercus and L. Kostanski (eds), *Indigenous and minority placenames: Australian and international perspectives* (2014) ANU Press

³ Christine Lockwood, "Early Encounters on the Adelaide Plains and Encounter Bay" in Peggy Brock and Tom Gara (eds), *Colonialism and its Aftermath: a History of Aboriginal South Australia* (2017) Mile End, SA: Wakefield Press p. 65

⁴ Kurna Meyunna Cultural Mapping pp. 22-34; City of Charles Sturt, Witongga 'Reed Place' (Reedbeds) <https://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/community/arts,-culture-and-history/kurna-culture/witongga>

⁵ Danvers Architects Pty Ltd, 'Heritage Survey of the City of Henley and Grange' (May 1993) p. 9

⁶ "Auctions." in *South Australian Advertiser* 8 February 1860 p. 4 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1202002>

⁷ Danvers Architects Pty Ltd, 'Heritage Survey of the City of Henley and Grange' p. 38; "Adelaide and Hindmarsh Tramway Company" in *Adelaide Observer* 28 July 1883 p. 8 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article160085955>

⁸ Henley Grange Historical Society, Stories from Henley and Grange <https://henleyandgrangehistory.org.au/stories/>

⁹ CT 1107/47; Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions – 323 Esplanade, Henley Beach' in *Henley and Grange Historical Society Journal* (November 1999) No. 20 p. 26

¹⁰ Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions' p. 26

¹¹ Barbara Santich, *Haigh's Chocolates, Enjoyed for Generations, Established 1915* (2015) Mile End SA: Wakefield Press p. 42

¹² Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions' p. 26

¹³ Barbara Santich, *Generations* pp. 42-43

¹⁴ Historic aerial photography accessed via EnvMaps strongly suggests that earlier and now demolished flat developments, such as Poole Mansions at Henley Beach (1918) and Victor Mansions at Glenelg (1919) were designed in monolithic form without light/ventilation wells.

¹⁵ Barbara Santich, *Generations* p. 48

¹⁶ Barbara Santich, *Generations* p. 43

¹⁷ Barbara Santich, *Generations* pp. 42-43

¹⁸ No title in *Mail* 8 October 1921 p. 8 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63853911>

¹⁹ Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions' p. 26

²⁰ Giles Walkley, "Adelaide's Supreme Flats" in *Spirit of Progress* (Summer 2016) p. 23

²¹ Roger Andre, 'Haigh Mansions' p. 26

²² "Building Sold Privately" in *News* 19 May 1950 p. 24 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article130790212>