4.0   ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1   Introduction

The statutory and non-statutory heritage listings that apply to the Commonwealth-owned portion of the Adelaide GPO are set out in Chapter 1.

The heritage values of the place were most recently assessed by Lovell Chen as part of the National Survey and Assessment of Australia Post (owned) Heritage Properties (prepared for Australia Post in May 2009). This assessment formed the basis of the current Statement of Significance for the CHL.

Based on the more detailed work undertaken as part of the HMP, a revised assessment of CHL values.

The assessment includes a comparative analysis which considers the Adelaide GPO within the development of Australian Post Offices, generally and as a grand, capital city GPO. Its role within the oeuvre of noted architects and public servants including, Edmund J Wright, Edward Woods, John Smith Murdoch and Charles Edward Owen Smyth, is also considered. The comparative analysis also provides context for an assessment of the place as an example of the monumental Victorian Free Classical style - the preferred mode for public and civic buildings in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

4.2   Typological overview of Australian post offices

This section of the analysis provides an overview of post office design in Australia. It is based on a typological research essay prepared by Lovell Chen as part of the 2009 survey of properties owned by Australia Post (National Survey and Assessment of Australia Post (owned) Heritage Properties, 2009, see Appendix A). This examined historical typologies of post offices and identified particular phases that reflect the evolution of post office buildings deriving from changes in their function, services and technology. The essay provides a typological and thematic context for considering individual post offices nationally, including their overall heritage values and relative levels of significance.

The essay is provided in an abridged form below.

Note that the date ranges provided for each identified post office 'generation' are indicative only and not intended to imply that the postal typologies cited, or the historical phases outlined, occurred exclusively within the date ranges. For example, the Adelaide GPO was first envisioned through a design process held in 1865, but is considered in the essay as part of the second generation of Australian post offices constructed between 1870 to 1929.

4.2.1   *First generation post offices: 1803 to 1869*

On the eve of Governor Macquarie's arrival in 1809, the emancipist boat builder, Isaac Nichols, was installed as the first Postmaster for New South Wales. Nichols collected incoming and outgoing overseas mail, and supervised its transport to and from ships, distributing it from his own house. After Nichols' death in 1819, his successor, George Panton, established the European settlers' first Post Office building outside a private house. Mortimer Lewis, the colonial government architect in NSW, designed a General Post Office for Sydney in 1825. His design reflected its perceived importance as a civic building, being temple-fronted with half columns, as with a contemporary bank. Its 1848 successor was similar, but with the columns free standing in a full front portico.

Melbourne and Adelaide had each gained a provisional postmaster and post office in 1837 (Melbourne's in a bark hut, Adelaide's in a general store) and then small GPOs in 1841, both on their present sites. Stamped services were introduced in 1850-51 in NSW and Victoria. By then Sydney, Hobart, Launceston and Melbourne all had morning, midday and afternoon deliveries in their city areas, and the major colonial settlements had all been linked by regular packet boats and overland transport. The regional post offices gained their first stimulus in the early 1850s, aided by the spread of stage coaching.

Post offices of this first generation typology usually included a residential component of several rooms and storage areas, 'offices' and kitchen for the store owner or postmaster and family, a front room for business transactions, or, in the case of stage coach inns as at Ararat and Hamilton in Victoria, multiple front rooms, guest rooms, public kitchen, privies and stables. As overland telegraph lines were developed, the Morse code apparatus tended to be accommodated in specific rooms.

Post offices were progressively rebuilt from the 1860s onward. The design was concentrated in the hands of colonial government architects. Unusually, the competition for the design for the Adelaide GPO, held in 1865, was won by architects in private practice. Outside of Adelaide, the South Australian tendency in later purpose-built postal buildings was often for telegraph offices to open first, with the post office moving its activities in later and the final result being an improvisation of sorts. This happened in Moonta (1865), Kingston and Meningie (1873), Laura (1872-4), and Hawker (1881).[20] South Australia, as with NSW, lacked Victoria's level of colonial wealth and the retention of a residential form for numbers of regional post offices was a sensible path financially.

Despite this tendency towards domestic expression, by the end of this period, the postal system had expanded to become a major component of most colonial governments, with sizeable public service establishments and, generally, specific ministers in each colonial cabinet.

4.2.2 *Second generation post offices: 1870 to 1929*

The second generation in Australian post office design spanned stylistic phases including middle and later Victorian Italianate and round-arched, free treatments of Gothic and Romanesque, Federation, Free Style, Neo-Baroque and Neo-Georgian. The Adelaide GPO adopted a free Classical style based on Renaissance Revival antecedents. Elsewhere, Colonial, then State Architects' offices designed most of these post offices up until c.1907-11. These public works offices were at the height of their powers in this period, headed variously by prominent and talented architects including Wardell, Clark, Kerr, Barnet, Hanson, Temple-Poole, Bindley, Vernon, Owen Smyth, Brady, Beasley, Walker, Rickards and McRae.

Looking at the buildings themselves, post offices began to rival the railway stations as social gathering places, and became almost nineteenth-century replacements for marketplaces or town squares. This social dimension registered in the second generation of colonial post offices from the 1860s, when most acquired porticos, porches, stepped aprons, imposing postal halls, colonnaded perimeters and enclosed post box areas. While some retained the residential component that had marked the earliest post offices, these were more distinctive in their identity than their temple-fronted or single-storey predecessors had been. These changes were fuelled by the growing perception that post offices worked as civic centres and town meeting points. Post offices also came to be seen as the embodiment of civic progress and local vitality, as important to many regional centres as the railway. The new pattern to their design additionally reflected the government architects' growing ease and skill with nuanced and monumental form and gesture.

Monumental post offices were also constructed in regional Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century. The phase of Public Works Office rebuilding and expansion came under the direction of William Wardell and was assisted by J J Clark, Peter Kerr, C H E Blackman and others. This produced the most cohesive rebuilding program in the Australian colonies, beginning with Beechworth and Daylesford post offices in 1858-63, continuing through the purge of Wardell and his principal assistants in 1878, and culminating in George Watson, S E Bindley and J T Kelleher's Bendigo, Fitzroy and other post offices around 1881-7.

Figure 97   Sydney General Post Office, combines Venetian and Florentine Renaissance motifs (James Barnett, 1866-91).
Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/powerhouse_museum/2363524214

Figure 98   Perth General Post Office, J S Murdoch, 1914-23
Source: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-10/australia-post-considers-selling-historic-perth-gpo/7402014

All six 'final' GPOs, from Melbourne of 1859-1903, to Brisbane and Sydney, 1867, to Hobart, c.1903 and to Perth, 1914-23, sought to draw the public in through the empathetic device of long, enclosed, arcaded loggias, components that were also increasing in the regional post offices.

From imposing street fronts, the mid- to late-nineteenth century GPOs became inner city thoroughfares, permeable at most edges and assuming, internally, the character of roofed-in streets, like giant arcades. Apart from James Barnett's towered or porticoed NSW designs and the arcaded post offices of William Hanson in South Australia and Charles Tiffin in Queensland, suburban and rural post offices were naturally more basic in their accommodation, their public gesture usually just extending to shorter loggias, arcaded bays and balconies.

Riding the rails

Railways made their major inland incursions in the later 1850s and 1860s. Cobb and Co, who by that time held the Australian coaching monopoly, shrewdly co-ordinated their deliveries around the new rail heads. The power of this railway linkage was memorialised by the appearance of imposing mail exchanges near major city railway terminals in the period 1910-1920, by architects such as JS Murdoch in 1915-17 (Melbourne) and George McRae in 1913 (Sydney).[21] The capital city mail exchanges all appeared after Federation, and at the end of this period of rail consolidation. Their celebratory role was expressed in a massive cuboid architecture, partly reflecting ferro-concrete frame construction and embodying the simplification and stripping down of Renaissance and Baroque referencing that was by then occurring in other larger city buildings.

Urbanisation and increases in mail volume

Apart from the mail exchanges, the principal effect of this consolidation and improvement in mail transport was an increase in internal and overseas Australian mail. This was accompanied by a need to expand postal working space in almost all centres and an expansion in the number of assistant mail staff, all of whom had to be accommodated in post office buildings. Post office savings banks spread from the 1860s, as at Carlton in Victoria in 1867,[22] and the post offices, often placed close to government offices and courthouses as at Kyneton and Maryborough, began to take on government agency roles, becoming an initial point of contact for routine legal and bureaucratic procedures.

The other new factor in post office building was the electric telegraph, which came under post office aegis in all Australian colonies after 1854 and required new spaces for its dynamo and key equipment, for the induction of its cables and areas for transcribing. The telegraph network usually preceded the railways, connecting all the eastern colonies by 1859, South Australia by 1865, Perth in 1877 and linking overseas with a line to Port Darwin and a submarine cable to Java by 1872.[23] The volume of mail and telegraph traffic also increased with developing literacy and was a direct index of Australia's growing social sophistication.

The immediate effect of these personnel increases and telegraph proliferation was to double the volume needed in most post office buildings, and this in turn, compounded by the population growth in both colonial capitals and regional centres, meant that large numbers of post offices were reconstructed to new designs between the late 1860s and about 1920.

Telephones, horizontality and post office size

Another major change with an impact on post office buildings typology was the spread of telephone services from 1880. These were quickly subsumed by the colonial post offices, in part because of the expense in building landline services and their equipment. Telephones needed manual exchange rooms, which were large in area and required additional staff rooms. After 1890 it seemed logical to attach these to existing post and telegraph buildings altering the ground area and frontal appearance of post

offices significantly. Telephone exchanges effectively doubled the ground area occupied by a post office, and they brought even more personnel under the post office roof. This is reflected in the increasingly horizontal bearing of 1900s post offices, which relied more specifically on long street frontages and the address of crucial intersections than on the 'beacon' effect of the earlier clock towers and other vertical components. These developments coincided with the Federalising of post office building designs. The Federal Department of Works and Railways took over their design, progressively, from around 1905-11, although state government architects continued some involvement till around 1917.

Yards and annexations

This horizontal spread was compounded by the telephone's requirements for generated electric power, and the subsequent provision for transformers, substations and generator space. Telephone networks needed mobile technicians and vehicles to service them - all of which required accommodation. By the 1960s a series of purpose-built PMG telephone technical depots had appeared, as at Tally Ho in Melbourne's eastern suburbs (1965). So did purpose built telephone exchanges, which were all under the Post Master General's aegis up until the Australia Post/Telecom split in the mid-1970s.

The telephone system additionally required a physical manufacturing base, given that the PMG's department now produced everything from circuitry equipment to concrete manhole covers. Accordingly, a series of factory and storage buildings, all effectively part of the post office function, proliferated in this period. With the adoption of motor vehicles, in the early twentieth century, came the need for garages and for maintenance and servicing areas.

The other conspicuous result, and perhaps the post office's most pervasive symbol at the turn of the century, was in telephone poles carrying dozens of lines. Telephony's typological impact on individual post offices was less obvious internally, as the mail halls and telegraph offices largely remained in place as the frontal 'public' component, and the telephone exchange, bulky externally, was generally added on to one side or to the rear.

The expanding volume of mail prompted another development - the takeover of buildings near major post offices for overflow activities. The Melbourne parcels dispatch office, for example, occupied a building behind the GPO in Little Bourke Street from the 1900s on. However, many of these or annexed buildings were inexpressive of their postal function externally.[24]

Expanded duties

Besides these roles the post offices gradually accumulated other duties as well. The Commonwealth Bank used Australian Post offices as retail outlets from the Federation period on. In addition, post offices gathered a range of other public service functions, including drivers' licence issue (South Australia), radio and television licence handling, quasi-banking roles such as the provision of money orders, electoral and census recording, and a conduit for paying government authorities' bills. Interestingly, almost all post offices built in the period 1900-1930 favoured some intimacy of scale and touches of domesticity, apart from Perth's GPO (1914-23) which followed the large, simplified Baroque and Classical referencing of the mail exchanges. The suburban and rural post offices, by contrast, were linked increasingly to contemporary domestic form and detail. Many still retained a residential role, and this was not to recede until later in the twentieth century.

Off the rails

Other modes of transport were quickly co-opted into mail service, although they did not in themselves have a major effect on post office size or typology. These included tram-hauled mail services, motor trucks, vans and buses after c.1905. A radical change occurred with the spread of air transport from the

later 1920s, when regular air services were established and the increasing power of aircraft allowed the carriage of large mail sacks. Regular air mail services provided by airlines such as ANA, from the late 1920s, cut the transport time for mail to 12 hours between each capital GPO in the Adelaide-Brisbane chain. By the later 1930s, more powerful planes cut this time again to four or five hours. From this period, air transports also made rapid and scheduled overseas mail services realisable, delivering letters and parcels to the UK in five or six days, and being linked to an Empire-wide, standard tariff system radiating from Cairo and terminating (for Australia) in a dock at Sydney's Rose Bay.[25] Architecturally, the first impact of this was seen in the expansion of mail transit facilities at airports, freed from any function as postal halls and from the usual railway-era links with telegraph and telephone. These depots were usually attached to the terminal buildings but were sometimes isolated or free-standing buildings.

Air transport posed a new challenge to the rail-based mail exchanges, since no major airports were near rail transport and airmail was no longer bound by the early twentieth-century mail exchange and terminal station linkage. The suburban train networks were disconnected from mail transport in the 1930s and '40s and this gradually allowed new post offices to be built away from railway or tram lines. The rail-based mail exchanges were largely closed by the later 1980s, along with extensive tunnels and railway station linkages that served them. This in turn affected the usage of ancillary buildings around them, as with the Bourke Street sorting buildings at the Melbourne GPO, which eventually closed, along with the mail exchange.[26]

4.2.3 *Third generation post offices: 1930 to 1974*

Retail connections in the 1950s and 1960s

Motor vehicle ownership increased enormously across Australia during the twentieth century, and the motorisation of commercial and mail transport accompanied this. The traditional role of the post office as a community gathering place was immediately challenged by this development, which recast post offices increasingly as short term transit stops and aligned them to drive-in/drive-out usage. Mail centres and post offices from this period were frequently sited on street corners near off-street parking, or in the heart of angle-parking retail areas.

The first generation form, of a lightly scaled verandah, returned, while the outer walls, close to the cars and patterned with ranks of post office boxes, became appropriately abstract in surface. The logical extension of this was to put post offices into conventional shop spaces. This is seen in the regional shopping malls that appeared after were built in 1959. These could often be accessed by car or bus only, and the traditional local pedestrian access, on which most second-generation post offices were predicated, was lost in these instances. Post offices in these settings were often separated from their mail exchanges and sorting rooms, and this had significant implications in that it articulated post offices' retail areas as physically separate from their other functions.

Rise of the industrialised postal centre-functions, materials and imagery

This new division accompanied the emergence of automated and semi-automated regional mail centres, intended to supplant the old rail-based mail exchanges. These included Sydney's Redfern Mail Exchange, of c.1962, which was initially plagued by faulty processing and machinery, and later depots such as Blackburn and Dandenong in Victoria, where problems were ironed out. However, the shift to automated or key-punch mail sorting rooms in larger post offices moved slowly. At the same time, van-based parcels delivery and, in the 1990s, motorcycle-based letter services were probably an equal influence on mail centre form. This meant that a large shed or warehouse form began replacing the old sorting rooms at the rear of earlier post offices. Since this shift gathered momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, the external expression of sorting areas often became very different from that of the earlier second generation nineteenth-early twentieth century post offices.

Construction and design form changes, mostly to strict budgetary limits, shifted to utilising industrial and warehouse modes. These included, either bought or freshly built structures, often with clear span internal trussing to leave the most flexible space below. Between the 1950s and 1973, too, there was a growing use of asbestos compounds for fireproofing, lagging, sound deadening and wall lining components.

Post office designs of this period had their basis in architectural changes occurring in the 1920s and 1930s, although it is noted that relatively few Australian post offices were built in the 1930s and 1940s due to a cessation of capital works for Commonwealth agencies in those years. Designs are frequently linked by a shared debt to the juxtaposition of brick massing by Willem Dudok, a major influence on European architectural modernism in Australia during the 1930s. This approach was widely applied in early post-WWII government designs, being seen in schools, pumping houses, libraries and related projects. In typological terms, themes and arrangements were similar to those of the second generation post offices, but with modernist architecture as an intervening medium.

The later 1950s saw a move to light, airy and open forms, with extensive glass and bright, y everyday materials, in particular house bricks, steel tubing for balustrades and other elements, planter box step balustrading, tiling and linoleum. This was all fairly domestic, and monumentalism was generally out of favour at this time, in part because corporate and public service-based modern architecture was expressing itself increasingly as an industrially produced product, infinitely adaptable through volumetric adaptation and abstraction. Around the middle 1960s the light post-WWII forms favoured in public buildings began falling into disfavour. In contrast later designs favoured thick and enveloping brick or concrete, heavier massing, and presentation of the ground floor spaces as hooded undercrofts.

Changes in postal processing

The 1960s and 1970s saw the provision of more conspicuous relief or escape areas from the increasingly mechanised work: lounge areas and kitchens. New health laws prompted still further changes, as in the expansion of simple toilets into systematically allocated washrooms and rest facilities. On postal sites generally, the motorization of delivery and commuting among postal workers brought equally marked changes. Even where a post office maintained a generally second generation (1870s-1920s) form, its service yard invariably changed significantly, to allow lock-up sheds - first for the postal bicycles, then for postal motorcycles - car spaces for couriers, technicians' vehicles and commuting postal staff, fuel storage and bowsers and storage and service areas for maintenance equipment. These in turn forced security works on this yardage, primarily in the form of high, heavy duty fences and gates, external lighting, and camera surveillance. Interestingly, the mail centres were now increasingly connected to a new set of compatible institutions. These included major public service centres requiring large postal contact, as with the Australian Tax Office at Dandenong, the close linkage of new or refurbished post offices to regional administrative centres, as at Parramatta or Chatswood in NSW, or to perceived centres of office activity, as at St Kilda Road, South Melbourne (c.1970).

Style and theme changes in architecture

Street front post offices themselves changed in the 1950s and 1960s, in part under the influence of modernist architecture, where open or at least direct entry planning was stressed, cutting out the vestibules and antechambers that often marked earlier designs. The public contact areas inside post offices were shaped by conspicuously modern movement materials and usages, in particular plate glass, tiling and plastics. The plans for public areas became, generally, simple two part divisions of space on either side of a counter. This made post office interiors resemble those of contemporary banks or shops and, arguably, that was the intention.

The resemblance was not inappropriate given the post office's continuing role as Commonwealth Bank outlets and their slowly increasing role selling value added items for retail, alongside the more traditional post office merchandise of stamps. The architectural implication of this shift was huge. It rendered the sense of specifically postal place and occasion, so crucial in second generation post office design, completely redundant. A range of these post offices were built in Melbourne during the 1960s. All are marked by external grids in steel-framed plate glass, accentuating the shopfront parallel in modernist terms; the other common program was the use of administrative offices above on a first floor.

4.2.4   *Fourth generation post offices: 1975 and later*

The disappearing post office

The telephone had expanded the program in postal buildings enormously. Consequently, its separation from the post office, in the Australia Post-Telecom restructure of July 1975, had a dramatic effect on the whole post office system. This separation meant the demolition of the comprehensive PMG system, and ushered in strategies for drastically reducing and rearranging post office size and function. Post offices developed from this period, effectively the fourth generation in Australian post office design, were marked primarily by an increasing invisibility.

In 1975, the maintenance of Australia's huge and increasingly complex telecommunications network was taken out of the post offices' aegis formally. Telecom and its Telstra successor progressively separated their technical facilities, personnel, telephone exchanges, research and manufacturing sectors from the physical territory and form of the post offices. This often meant that half of all post office facilities and their yardage and open site areas became gradually redundant. Added to this were the reductions in mail and parcels custom though increasing use of private couriers.

Mail alternatives

Even more significant, from the 1970s, were the development of alternatives to mail. The telegraph function of post offices was drastically compressed in area through telephone replacements of the telegraph machinery and the decreasing cost of trunk calls. Then the telegraph function disappeared from post offices altogether, replaced by telex machines (from 1954)[27] and then fax machines in the 1980s. The great majority of these were privately operated away from post offices. Digital telephoning, variable frequency transmission and broadband web systems have further rendered the post office and its traditional spatial and physical apparatus even more isolated from this realm of communication.

Mail delivery

More recently changes in the delivery of letters have acted to reduce the usable volumes of post offices even further. Independent contractors are responsible for the delivery and distribution of some mail. Express mail is also sent through a separate distribution system, generally eliminating the need for direct sorting within post offices themselves. As a consequence, many administrative office roles have also disappeared, meaning that much office space in surviving post offices and mail centres was made redundant or used for storage.

New fusions with retail and adaptive re-use

For these general reasons the typology and public identity of post offices changed yet again. Postal counters were more limited and were coupled to a largely commercial post box function often requiring only a few square metres of sorting and allocation space. In some cases post office functions were (re) united with another retail function, returning to the old post office-general store operation. Newsagents have also joined this role. Where separate post offices have been retained, these have been increasingly moved to the same buildings as mail centres, and have been reconfigured as retail or

'shop' pattern segments of the larger mail centre building. In malls and large shopping precincts the post office is routinely settled in a shop and has often been moved from the locality's original or earlier post office building. By implication, the post office's traditional visual presence has been greatly reduced.

The strongly residential post offices have always had a potential for renewed residential use, particularly as their old domestic spaces can be seen as attractive upgraded contemporary accommodation. The rich decorative character and conspicuous street placement of numbers of former post offices lends them to single and multiple retail adaptations or restaurant functions. The semi-arcaded, roofed-street interiors of the GPOs have favoured retail conversions in all state capitals. Larger regional post offices are suited to adaptation as arts centres and office suites.

In both function and imagery, therefore, the independent post office building with a dedicated postal function has begun to recede from Australian communities. Postal services and operations remain, albeit in a constantly evolving form, but within retail centres or in shared retail premises. Society will also continue to invent new ways to communicate, inevitably leading to further changes to post office infrastructure.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO is part of the second generation of Post Office designs responding to the increased requirements for accommodation and civic presence. Opened in 1872, it was part of the first wave of 'final' GPOs, including Melbourne (1859-1903), Brisbane and Sydney (1867), Hobart (c.1903) and Perth (1914-23). The Adelaide GPO adopted a monumental form in a free Classical mode consistent in terms and its classicised expression of its presence with other GPOs of the period.

4.3   Comparative Analysis

4.3.1   *Australian GPOs*

As part of the expanding role of postal services, large GPOs were constructed in all state capitals from c.1860. These included: Melbourne GPO, 1859-1903; Brisbane and Sydney, 1867; Hobart, c.1903; and Perth, 1914-23. Each of these buildings survives and is discussed briefly below:[28]

Melbourne

Melbourne's GPO, on the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke streets, was completed in 1867, on the site of its predecessor (1852). A competition was held in two parts, for 'architectural design' and 'internal management'. Architects Crouch & Wilson won the first part of the competition but a controversy was caused when the government subsequently adopted the second-placed design of A E Johnson. As a result of over-crowding, a third storey and tower were added to the initial two storey building by 1887. In 1906/07 additions were made to the Elizabeth Street facade consisting of two storeys and a basement. The original intention to extend as far north as Little Bourke Street has never been realised. In 1919 the original sorting hall was converted to public space following designs by Walter Burley Griffin and J S Murdoch.

Melbourne GPO is large; its scale is unprecedented even in Britain. Its significance is enhanced by the architectural grandeur and location of the building at the heart of Melbourne's central activities district. Further, the unified system of the trabeated architectural orders of Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns and pilasters placed over an arcuated structure belies the construction of the building in several stages over a period of many years.

The GPO is a familiar local landmark in Melbourne. Its approach, tower and steps have been the location for public meetings, demonstrations, Armistice Day celebrations and New Year's Eve parties. The building is the point from which distances from Melbourne to other Victorian centres are measured (Figure 99).

Figure 99   Melbourne GPO, c.1894
               Source: National Library of Australia

Sydney

The earliest post office existed in Sydney from 1822 and a succession of buildings was constructed until the current building was erected in 1874. The new, permanent GPO, located in George Street, was designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet in the sixteenth century Italian Renaissance style. The building comprised six levels – a basement, ground floor, mezzanine and the first, second and third floors. It contained a lavish suite for the Postmaster-General, staff offices, and the Telegraph Operating Room. The ground floor was designed for public business transactions and the basement contained space for the handling of mail, docks and stables. The façade 'was crowned by a massive cornice which effectively unified the rhythmic pattern of the windows and colonnade below'. The GPO was officially opened on 1 September 1874. The opening ceremony was performed by the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, at a 'conversazione' attended by approximately 2,000 of Sydney's elite. The Postmaster-General, Saul Samuel, was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, declaring that he believed the buildings:

> will not be surpassed by any other similar structure in the Southern Hemisphere … combining the graceful luxuriousness of the Venetian arcades so well suited to our climate and modern wants with the vigour of the Florentine astylar examples.[29]

While supervising the building of the new GPO, Barnet was also active in negotiating through the Colonial Treasurer for the acquisition of additional lands. At the opening of the George Street section of the building in 1874, Barnet said that this part of the building completed only half the design and that it was intended to continue it to Pitt Street – at a length of 353 feet (107.5 m) and a width of seventy-eight feet (23.8 m).[30] Between 1881 and 1884, Sydney's GPO building was extended through to Pitt Street. The clock tower was added with the completion of the Pitt Street extension in 1887, although the tower with its clock, bells and cast iron staircase was not completed until 1891, the same year Melbourne's clock tower extension and bells was completed (Figure 100).

Figure 100   Sydney GPO, c.1890s
             Source: Australian Postal History

Brisbane

The first post office in Brisbane was a single-storey structure, built around 1850. The Brisbane GPO, located in Queen Street, was constructed by local builder, John Petrie, in 1871/2 at a cost of £7,450. A plaque on the site commemorates the construction of the building. It states that the original wing was erected in 1872 on the site selected by the Hon. Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior, Postmaster-General in 1863, and surveyed by M C Rawnsley in 1865. Plans for the building were prepared by architect, F G D Stanley. Freestone for the façade, arcades and Corinthian columns were quarried from Murphy's Creek and Albion Heights, Queensland. The two-storied building was completed in 1872, and the southern wing, central tower and archway were erected by Petrie from 1876-79. Locked front private boxes were installed (reportedly for the first time in the British colonies) in the original wing of the Brisbane Post Office in 1876 (Figure 101).

The GPO was first opened for business on 28 September 1872. The 1879 building extension accommodated the Electric Telegraph Department which was merged shortly afterward with the Post Office Administration. Although plans existed for the construction of a prominent clock tower, financial pressures prevailed and it was never built. The clock remained as a feature built into the pediment.

Figure 101   Brisbane GPO undated
             Source: Australian Postal History

Hobart GPO

Prior to the existing building's construction between 1901-5, the Hobart GPO had existed in five separate locations. Each building quickly outgrew the needs of the community, until, in 1892, the Tasmanian government purchased a site on the corner of Elizabeth and Macquarie Streets. The new GPO was designed by Hobart architect, Alan Walker. The foundation stone was laid by the Duke of York, later George V, in 1901. The building took four years to complete, and was officially opened on 2 September 1905. The following year a clock tower was added, the cost of which was met by public subscription, as the authorities were unwilling to bear the cost involved.[31]

Conclusion

The Adelaide GPO comprises part of a group of similar GPOs, constructed between 1859 and 1923. In each case, the design sought to address the additional needs of emerging technologies such as telegraphy and telephony and to provide a civic landmark expressing the growth and optimism of each of the colonies. While the Adelaide GPO is smaller than contemporary GPOs in Melbourne or Sydney, it is among the earliest and most refined

4.3.2   *Free Classical Architecture*

Victorian Free Classical architecture combined the design sensibilities and details of the Classical world in an innovative and original manner.[32] Used largely for civic or Institutional buildings, key examples incorporates richly-modelled facades in masonry or stucco. Florid motifs were derived or adapted from the classical language and often combined in an idiosyncratic manner. Cupolas of many kinds were common, particularly crowning towers.

From the early colonial period, Australian architecture was enriched by the revival of classical styles. Architects drew in a sober fashion from the monuments of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as post-medieval Italy, France and Britain. Designers also studied the classical principles of order, distribution and decorum, which were set out in Vitruvius', *Ten books on architecture* and reinterpreted in the writings of many authors, including Alberti, Palladio, Chambers and Gwilt.

Governor Macquarie's vision for Georgian Sydney can be discerned in the classical buildings of his architect, Francis Greenway, including the Hyde Park barracks (1817-18) and St James' Church (1819-24). Exhibiting Classical forms and underlying qualities of order and decorum, these two schemes are unique but interconnected. Buildings in London, such as John Soane's Dulwich Art Gallery (1811) and Chelsea Hospital's Stables (1814-17), contributed to Greenway's designs.

The architectural historian and theorist, Peter Kohane, writing in the *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* notes,[33]

> The principles of order and decorum underlying Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks and St James' Church remained pertinent to the subsequent construction in Australia of fully adorned classical buildings. Their design was informed by a theoretical context, which involved widespread dissatisfaction during the middle of the 19th century with the mundane architecture of London's Georgian areas, such as Bloomsbury. British theorists outlined remedies, whereby a brute and inarticulate structure had to be entirely concealed by superimposition of expressive ornament. The effect of such a formulation on Australian Architecture was manifest initially and most profoundly in the state of Victoria where money from its gold rush emboldened architects to envisage highly adorned classical buildings, especially for Melbourne.
>
> The city's aspirations to construct imposing works is evident in two designs from the 1850s: J J Clark's Treasury Building (Vic PWD [Public Works Department]

1857-62) and Peter Kerr and John George Knight's Parliament House (1855-1929) ... While these buildings were based on distinct ways of interpreting the classical past, both contributed towards the development of a decorous and magnificent city ...

The Treasury Building and Parliament House contribute to an appreciation of two classical design strategies, both of which remained vital to Australian Architecture until the middle of the twentieth century.

The first involves the continuation of a modern classical tradition, often through innovation. In Melbourne, the initial statement of Treasury Building was followed by sober schemes, such as the Royal Mint Building (J.J. Clark at the Vic. PWD, 1869-72), and the highly-charged ones from the Boom period, including the facades of the Block Arcade (Twentyman & Askew, 1890-93). The Colonial Architect of NSW, (James Barnett, combined Venetian and Florentine Renaissance motifs for Sydney's General Post Office (1866-91). His inventive powers can also be identified in the Lands Department (Sydney 1876-91), particularly the series of forms rising in a picturesque fashion above the cornice. Brisbane's impressive civic projects include the Treasury Building (J.J. Clarke, 1885-9), where projecting pavilions add to the articulation of four distinct facades, each suited to it accompanying street. Working in a free classical manner at the end of the 19th century, the Colonial Architect of WA, G.T. Poole, incorporated extraordinary bracketed colonnades in the Titles Office, Perth (1897).

The second [less free] interpretation of classicism, which depends on respect for antiquity, was most fully realised in Melbourne's Parliament House. Later examples of the design approach include Adelaide's Parliament House (Edmund Wright and Lloyd Tayler, 1874-1939), Launceston's Town Hall (Peter Mils, 1864) and Brisbane's City Hall (Hall & Prentice, 1929). In the 1920s, Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance (Hudson & Wardrop, 1927-34) was constructed with Greek forms, which exhibit the subtle curves that British antiquarians in the early 19th century discovered in the Parthenon.

Figure 102   Victorian Treasury Building, Victorian Public Works Department, 1857-62
                     Source: State Library of Victoria

4.3.3   *Victorian Free Classical Architecture in Adelaide*

Mid- to late-nineteenth century civic architecture in Adelaide was overwhelmingly realised in one of the Victorian Classical revival styles. Edmund Wright and Edward Woods were great proponents of the free and inventive use of the classical vocabulary. Their collaborations produced many notable designs; their monolithic Adelaide Town Hall and GPO designs with dominant towers on opposing sides of King William Street were a striking accomplishment at the interface between the civic precinct around Victoria Square and the CBD. Their works, along with those of their contemporaries, had, by the early 1870s, produced a remarkable civic landscape of two-storey buildings punctuated by spires and towers.

Key Adelaide buildings in a classical mode are listed below in Table 1.[34] Those identified by an asterisk are realised in a free Classical mode. The role played by Wright, Woods and Hamilton working in a free Classical mode is clear from the table.

Table 1   Key examples of Classical revival styled buildings in Adelaide

Building Name	Architect(s) and construction date	Original Purpose
Magistrates Court	Richard Lambeth (1847-1850)	Government
Institute Building*	Edward Angas Hamilton (1860-1861)	Educational
Adelaide Club*	Edward Angas Hamilton and George Ernest Hamilton (1863-1864)	Commercial
The Gallerie	Edmund Wright, Edward John Woods and Edward Angas Hamilton (1865)	Commercial
Supreme Court*	Robert George Thomas (1866-1869)	Government
General Post Office*	Edmund Wright and Edward John Woods (1867-1872)	Government
Town Hall*	Edmund Wright and Edward John Woods (1863-1873)	Government
Treasury Building*	Edward Angas Hamilton (1858-1876)	Government
Botanic Hotel*	Michael McMullen (1876-1877)	Commercial
Bank of South Australia	Lloyd Tayler and Edmund Wright (1876-1877)	Commercial
Bank of Adelaide	Edmund Wright (1878-1880)	Commercial
Ambassadors Hotel	J. H. Grainger (1880-1881)	Commercial
Torrens Building*	Michael Egan (1879-1881)	Government
Newmarket Hotel*	Daniel Garlick (1883)	Commercial

Building Name	Architect(s) and construction date	Original Purpose
State Library, Jervois Wing	Robert George Thomas (1873-1884)	Educational
Parliament House	Edmund Wright and Lloyd Tayler (1883-1889)	Government

* Denotes buildings in the free Classical revival style

Conclusion

The Adelaide GPO is a key South Australian example of work in the free Classical mode. It is a significant element in the national catalogue of buildings in this mode and is a major contributor to a broader urban landscape in central Adelaide noted for architectural works drawing on classical antecedents. Victoria Square and the associated section of King William Street incorporating the Adelaide Town Hall, Banking Chambers and other Victorian elements, is notable, even when considered at a national level.

4.3.4   *The Architects*

Edmund Wright, Edward Woods, Edward Angus Hamilton and Robert George Thomas were each instrumental in creating the streetscapes of the City of Adelaide and the institutional character of the colony more broadly. Their lives and works are discussed below.

Edmund Wright

Edmund William Wright (1824-1888) was a noted architect, engineer and businessman, who was closely associated with the development of Adelaide through his practice and his role in the design of landmark public buildings throughout the City of Adelaide.

The *Architects of South Australia* database notes that Wright was born in London on 4 April 1824. The young Wright spent time in France, which may have influenced his taste for the French Renaissance architecture, which recurs through his practise.[35] During his 39 years working in South Australia, this preference for French and Italian idioms spanned civic, ecclesiastical, commercial and domestic work.

Wright trained as an architect, surveyor and engineer with the Borough Surveyor of the London suburb Bermondsey and was appointed as Clerk of Works at Yarmouth for the British Government.[36] After working in Bermuda and Canada he sailed to South Australia to join his brother, arriving in the colony in May 1849.

When the architect Henry Stuckey died in June 1851, **Wright** took over his practice. However, in March 1852, Wright joined the exodus to the Victorian goldfields. Returning six months later, **Wright** was appointed Adelaide's City surveyor. **He** resumed private practice in February 1853, designing houses, business premises and churches, including an imposing but sombre Anglican church at Kapunda, South Australia. In 1856, he won a competition to design a building for the North Adelaide Masonic and Public Hall Association.

Wright formed a professional partnership with E J Woods (see below) in 1860. During this period, the busy practice designed a new head office for the Bank of South Australia; the chambers for the National Bank of Australasia in King William Street (1864, Figure 105, demolished); and the Congregational Church in Brougham Street, North Adelaide (1863-6, Figure 104). While realised at a relatively modest scale, the National Bank Chamber achieves a confident, yet scholarly and well-mannered, Classical Renaissance composition. In 1863, the practice gained first prize (£50) in a competition for a new Town Hall for Adelaide. Councillors demanded substantial modifications to the plan and elevations to the

extent that it became a different design. However, **Wright** accepted the changes and was paid to superintend the work.

Wright joined forces with the Melbourne architect Lloyd Tayler and the pair won a competition to design new Houses of Parliament at the intersection of North Terrace and King William Street (1873-1888, Figure 106). Designed in the most confident Academic Classical style, Wright would have been responsible for the city's third Victorian-era domed tower, had it not been deleted from the design (Figure 107). Tayler did the creative work for the Town Hall project while **Wright** oversaw construction.

The Adelaide GPO was designed during this period. It was the result of the competition-winning entry by Wright & Woods in 1865 although the building was not completed until 1872. As with the earlier Town Hall, the design for the GPO proposed a fine example of the Victorian Free Classical mode and the two projects share similarities in terms composition, proportions and detail.

In 1866, the architect Edward Angas Hamilton (see below) joined the partnership to form Wright, Woods & Hamilton, Architects. Woods reluctantly left the partnership in 1869, after a request from Bishop Short, that he devote himself exclusively to the construction of St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide. Wright subsequently continued in practice as Wright & Hamilton.

Wright was elected an alderman for the Adelaide City Council in 1857. He became Mayor in 1859 but resigned 11 months later. From the early 1860s, **Wright** was busy with non-architectural work, becoming South Australian manager of the Imperial Fire Assurance Co., chairman of the Mt Craig Mining Co. and a director of other companies. He planted a vineyard near Penfold's at Magill, purchased an adjoining cellar and winery and was a founding member and major shareholder in the South Australian United Vineyards Association. In the 1870s he became engineer for, and a shareholder in, the Adelaide & Suburban Tramways Co., which eventually built and operated the city's first horse-drawn tram services.

In 1879, J H Reed joined the partnership, which continued as Wright & Reed Architects; when J G Beaver became a partner in 1886 the name changed to Wright, Reed & Beaver, shortly before Wright's death in August 1888.

P A Howell writing in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* notes:

> During Wright's 39 years in South Australia, he created a substantial and significant body of work. Spanning civic, ecclesiastical, domestic, and commercial architecture for city and country, his preference for the architectural vocabulary of the French and Italian Renaissance is reflected in a number of his designs. His finest architectural works display a scholarly neo-classicism, which is inconsistent with much of his other work (Jensen and Jensen 1980). Influenced by childhood memories of French and Italian domestic architecture and his work in French Canadian cities prior to arriving in South Australia, Wright worked in what has been termed the 'Victorian Free Classical' style. Examples of his works in this style include the Adelaide Town Hall and the General Post Office. Demonstrating the breadth of his architectural palette, Parliament House was designed in the Victorian Academic Classical style and reveals ideas about architecture that was appropriate for late nineteenth century civic buildings …37

Figure 103   Congregational Church, Brougham Place North Adelaide, after tower added in 1871
              Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 104   Adelaide Town Hall, Adelaide, by Wright and Woods, 1863-6
              Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 105   National Bank of Australasia, King William Street, Adelaide, by Wright and Woods, 1864-5
(demolished)
Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 106   New Houses of Parliament, North Terrace, Adelaide, by Wright in association with Lloyd
Tayler, as designed 1873
Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 107   New Houses of Parliament, North Terrace, Adelaide, west wing as constructed 1889
              Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 108   Bank of South Australia, King William Street, Adelaide, 1875-78
              Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 109   Bank of Adelaide, King William Street, Adelaide, 1878-80
              Source: State Library of South Australia

Edward John Woods

Born in London in 1839, E J Woods was articled to architect Charles J Richardson, who 'himself had been a pupil of neo-classicist, Sir John Soane'.[38] Migrating to Adelaide in 1860, his architectural career began in the office of Edmund Wright, initially as architectural draughtsman, becoming a partner soon after. The partnership grew, until Woods left in 1869 to focus as a sole practitioner on the construction of St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide. It has been suggested that Woods was far more competent than he was given credit for and likely had a greater hand in many of the designs, which came from Wright's office.[39] He later formed a partnership with William McMinn, which lasted until 1877 when he moved to the public service as Architect-in-Chief.

The National Bank (Figure 105) is believed to be the first building Woods worked on in South Australia in 1864-5, followed by the Adelaide Town Hall (Figure 104) in 1866. While in practice with Wright, it is understood that he took the reins in developing the GPO design, following their successful design competition win.[40] While this might have been the case, it is uncertain who had the greatest influence, given that Wright and Woods were asked to alter their design, and that they also worked in collaboration with Edward Hamilton before the Government decided to carry out the work in-house under Government Architect, Robert George Thomas.

Woods was involved in many other of Adelaide's large buildings, both in private practice and public office as architect to the Council of Education and, later, Government Architect. As Government Architect, Woods superintended the final design and construction of many civic buildings including: the Governor's summer residence, Marble Hill (1879) and the first stage of New Parliament House (1883-89). The new Government Offices in Victoria Square (which has a remarkably similar language and proportions to the GPO but was adapted by Woods from a competition design by Melbourne architect, Michael Egan (Figure 110, 1881). At the same time, the first wing of the Public Library,

attributed to C T Light, was constructed. This adopted a far more flamboyant language of Victorian Second Empire origins (Figure 111, 1873-84).

Like Edmund Wright, Woods is considered to have played a major role in the shaping of colonial Adelaide and the GPO is one of the finest elements of his legacy.

Figure 110   Government Offices, Victoria Square, Michael Egan, 1879-81
                Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 111   Public Library, west wing, North Terrace, c.1884
                Source: State Library of South Australia

Edward Angus Hamilton

Edward Angus Hamilton (1831- date of death unknown) arrived in the Colony of South Australia in 1849. He began public service in the Assay Office in 1852, where he remained until promotion through ranks within the Colonial Architect's Office, until his appointment as Colonial Architect and Supervisor of Works in 1856. In this role, Hamilton's prolific and notable civic architectural works included: Government House extensions (1855); Redruth Gaol (1856); the Colonial Store (1857); Adelaide Lunatic Asylum (1856-9); Dry Creek Labour Prison (1857); Strathalbyn Court House and Police Station (1858); South Australian Institute Building (1858); Treasury Buildings (1858); Old Government House Belair (1858); Goolwa Court House and Police Station (1859); Agricultural and Horticultural Society Exhibition Building (1859-60); Port Adelaide Court House and Police Station (1860); and the Gawler Telegraph Station (1860). During this period, Hamilton was praised for his skilled application of the Victorian Renaissance style, which demonstrated excellent knowledge of classical form.[41]

Following his resignation from government office in 1860, Hamilton went into private practice with his brother, George Ernest Hamilton, until he joined Wright and Woods in 1866. During this time the Hamilton brothers designed a series of South Australian buildings, including the chapel at the Destitute Asylum (1861); the Burra branch of the National Bank (1861); and the Black Bull Hotel (1861); the Adelaide Club (1864); St Michael's Church at Bungaree (1864) and Karatta House at Robe.

Edward Hamilton lodged one of the 13 competition entries for the GPO competition in 1865. When the results were announced in 1866, and Wright and Woods learnt that Hamilton had also entered, they asked him to join them in its execution. During this period the firm of Wright, Woods & Hamilton, designed many large South Australian buildings, but the GPO stands as possibly their greatest achievement and the only key work involving all three.

Hamilton was member for Light in the Legislative Assembly of South Australia from April 1870 until his resignation in July 1871. He served briefly as Treasurer in May 1870. He is understood to have emigrated to America in the c. 1870s.

Robert George Thomas

Robert George Thomas (1820-1883) arrived in South Australia in 1836 as one of the first colonists. Aged only 16, he travelled with Deputy Surveyor George Strickland Kingston, with whom he was an articled student. His early years in South Australia did not produce significant architectural designs and he returned to practice in Britain from 1846 to 1861, producing a prolific body of work, mainly in the Gothic style.[42]

On his return to Adelaide, Thomas was engaged in private practice, designing a number of large public and private works including: the Gothic-styled Flinders Street Baptist Church (1861); the Italianate Alberton Baptist Church (1863); Register and Observer office and Register Chambers (1865); an impressive residence for Matthew Goode in the south-east corner of Adelaide (1865, demolished); an Italianate Gothic-styled warehouse for Thomas Johnson and the Beeby and Dunstan store (1865).[43]

From 1866 to 1870, Thomas was employed as Assistant and subsequently Government Architect, designing the Mount Gambier Hospital in an ornate Italianate Gothic Revival style (1867-9, Figure 112, demolished), the bold Supreme Court buildings (1867); and the exuberant Gothic revival-styled Parkside Lunatic Asylum (1868, Figure 114). It is of note that his earlier catalogue strikes a marked contrast with the classical design for the GPO. However, it is possible, that his role in the redesign of the GPO was limited to adopting the preferred design and the architectural language of Wright, Woods and Hamilton, working within budgetary constraints by simply reducing the height of the clock tower and reducing the extent of the building footprint by omitting the northern wing. In this regard, the GPO appears as a deviation from his regular work.

Figure 112   Mount Gambier Hospital, R G Thomas, c.1867
                Source: State Library of South Australia
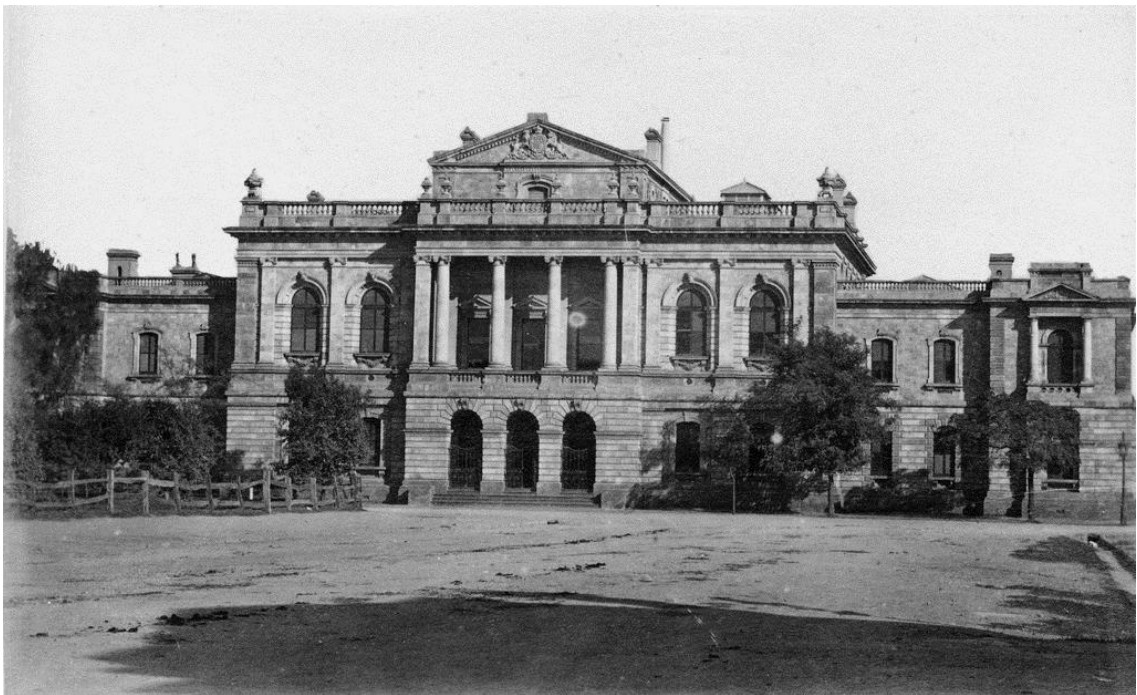

Figure 113   Supreme Court Adelaide, R G Thomas, c.1867
                Source: State Library of South Australia

Figure 114   Parkside Lunatic Asylum, R G Thomas, c.1868
               Source: State Library of South Australia

Charles Edward Owen Smyth

Writing in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Percy Dungy provides a detailed summary of the life and work of Charles Edward Owen Smyth. It is reproduced in full below, with some minor editing.

> Charles Edward Owen Smyth (1851-1925), public servant, was born on 1 January 1851 at Ferrybank, County Kilkenny, Ireland. Educated at the Erasmus Smith High School, Dublin, he travelled the world as a sailor and house-painter before arriving in Victoria in 1873 where he spent two years as foreman and manager for a builder. He settled in Adelaide an joined the civil service in May 1876. As clerk to Edward J. Woods, architect, he copied specifications and attended to correspondence; when Woods became architect-in-chief two years later, Smyth stayed with him as a virtual chief of staff.

> In 1886 Smyth was appointed to head the new Works and Buildings Department. Smyth controlled the design, construction, maintenance, letting and rent of public buildings until he retired in 1920. He supervised such major projects as the Exhibition Building, a wing of the General Post Office, the Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia buildings, Magill Home, Bedford Park Sanatorium, Thebarton Police Barracks, the South Australian School of Mines and Industries, and additions to the Adelaide Hospital (Flinders wing) and Parkside Lunatic Asylum. Although not professionally qualified, Smyth influenced the design of many of the structures which his department built, notably the School of Mines and the hospital additions. He was justifiably proud of his programme, which transformed North Terrace and created the Torrens Parade Ground and gardens from a former rubbish tip.

> He worked hard in the public interest, even against political pressure; seeking excellence and value for money. While he was admired by some for his rugged outspokenness, the 1888 civil service commission found him vindictive, 'hasty in his temper, impulsive and overbearing'. His conduct was later criticized in parliament .

Following Federation, in 1906 Smyth was South Australian delegate to a Melbourne conference which arranged the transfer of land, buildings and property to the Commonwealth. He was appointed to the Imperial Service Order in 1903 and C.M.G. in 1920. The Royal Agricultural Society of South Australia also awarded him a medal.

An ardent Imperialist and patriot, Smyth was a founder (secretary from 1908) of the Adelaide branch of the Royal Society of St George, and active in the South Australian branches of the League of the Empire and the Navy League. Smyth was a Freemason, an Anglican and a collector of walking-sticks, paintings and Aboriginal weapons who enjoyed field-shooting expeditions throughout the State. He published his reminiscences in the *Register* shortly before his death on 1 October 1925. [44]

4.3.5   *The 1922-26 addition*

The 1922-26 addition stands as a relatively undistinguished and utilitarian example of 1920s design. This appears to reflect the status of the building as an understated addition to the site which was intended to sit back from the principal facades of the Victorian post office and not impose itself physically or architecturally.

The building is of interest as the work of JS Murdoch in the Commonwealth Department of Railways, in this case working with Alfred Edward Simpson, acting superintendent of public buildings, South Australia. Equally, it is not in any sense a notable example of Murdoch's work. In a long and distinguished career in public service, Murdoch was responsible for the design of numerous major building complexes.

Murdoch's most significant building is arguably Old Parliament House (1922-27), Canberra. Other significant buildings in Canberra attributed to him include the East and West Provisional Secretariat Offices (1924-26, 1925-27), the Power House (1911-15), the Hotel Canberra (1914), the Hotel Acton (1926-27), the Hotel Kurrajong (1925-2G), Gorman House (Former Ainslie Hotel, 1924), the Molonglo Internment Camp, Fyshwick (1918), the Telopea Park High School (1923-27), the Solar Observatory, Mt Stromlo (with H M Rolland and T R Casboulte) (1926) and the residence for the Director of the Observatory (1926), the Pumping Station, Cotter Dam (1911), the Government Printing Office (1925-26) and the Commencement Column, Capital Hill (1913).

Important public buildings designed by Murdoch include the General Post Office, Perth (1923), Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Forrest Place, Perth (1933), City South Telephone Exchange, Sydney (1922) and State and Commonwealth Offices in Brisbane (1930). He also designed the Commonwealth Offices, No. 4 Treasury Place (1910-13), the Spencer Street Mail Exchange (1915-17), the former High Court of Australia, Little Bourke Street (1925), the Former Mail Exchange (also referred to as the City West Telephone Exchange), Little Bourke Street (1928) and A1 Block at Victoria Barracks, St Kilda Road (1915-18), all in Melbourne

Murdoch was also involved in the construction of a number of military bases, including RAAF Richmond (NSW), the Royal Military College, Duntroon (ACT), Enoggera (Queensland), HMAS Cerberus, Flinders (Victoria), RAFA Barracks and Depot, Maribyrnong (Victoria), RAAF Point Cook and Laverton (Victoria) and HMAS Creswell (Jervis Bay) as well, possibly, as quarantine stations at Lytton (Queensland) and Point Nepean (Victoria).

In the 1920s, Murdoch established a 'house' style for all official Commonwealth architecture in Australia which he called 'Modern Renaissance', loosely based on the principles of the Beaux Arts but considerably more streamlined. Murdoch described it as 'a style which depends on proportions and lines rather than on details.'[45]   Today, this style is more commonly referred to as 'stripped classicism'.

The use of red face bricks, and in particular the rustication of brickwork, is a readily identifiable characteristic of Murdoch's style.

The Adelaide GPO extension is not readily identifiable as a building designed by, or under the influence of, Murdoch and it does not readily demonstrate this association or any of the distinctive characteristics of his work. Compared with other Commonwealth buildings designed by Murdoch, the building is not an outstanding example, nor is it one of particular interest. It is a minor and utilitarian building both in terms of 1920s commercial and civic buildings more broadly.

One element of minor interest in the building relates to the use of the so-called 'mushroom' construction system. Andrew Ward has commented on this in his 1989 CMP:

> Both the GPO additions and the Commonwealth offices [on the adjacent site to the west] used the then new 'mushroom construction' for light loads which presumably refers to the design of the column shear heads…

Alfred Simpson, who worked on the designs with Murdoch, commented at the time:

> 'I have not had any personal experience of the mushroom system of construction. I do not think there is anything of this kind in Adelaide.'[46]

Mushroom construction had developed in the united States through the 1910s. However no evidence of this form of construction is evident on the subject site. Rather, it appears that similar benefits were achieved through the use simple shear plates at the junctions of columns and floor plates.

Comment

The additions of 1922-6 were undertaken by Department of Works and Railways under John Smith Murdock. However, the works are unremarkable in terms of their external expression or their internal planning and are not key elements within the Murdoch catalogue. They were designed as an understated and somewhat utilitarian adjunct to the earlier building along the street frontages resulting in an understated architectural expression of no particular distinction. The intention to use mushroom construction does not appear to have eventuated and there is no evidence of structural design of technological significance.

Figure 115   City West Telephone Exchange, Melbourne

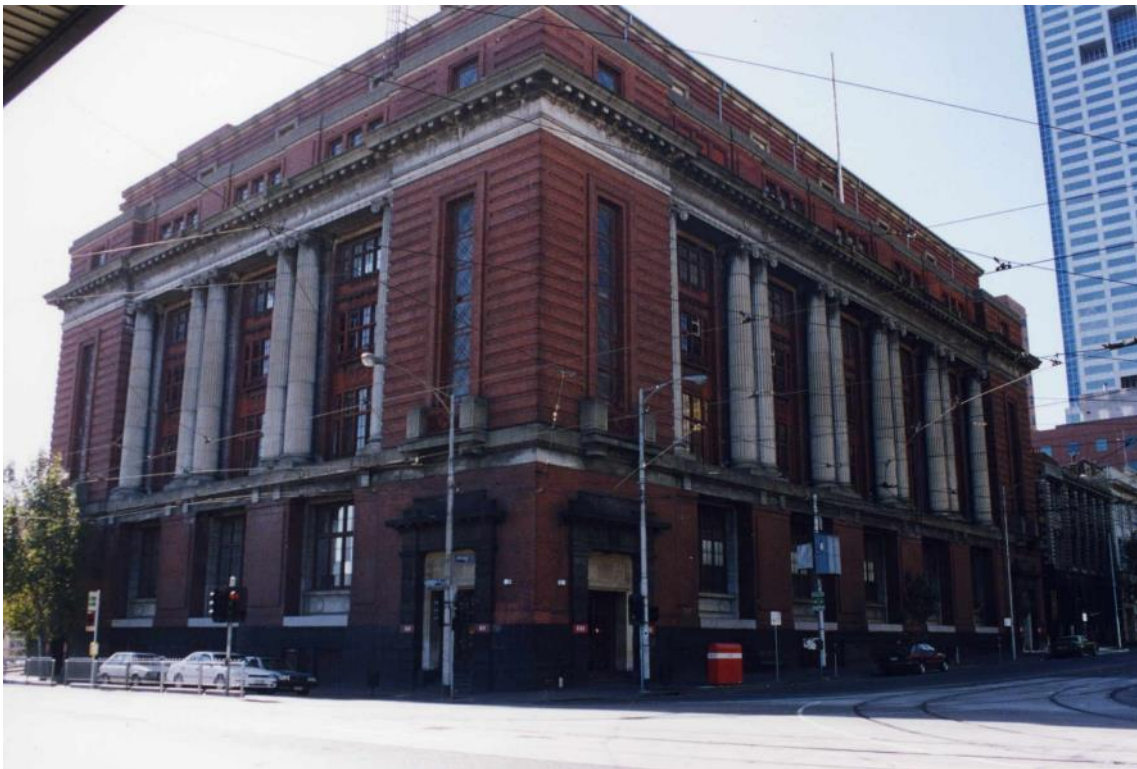Figure 116   High Court of Australia, Little Bourke Street

Figure 117   Spencer Street Mail Exchange, Bourke and Spencer streets, Melbourne

4.4 Assessment against criteria

The following assesses the Adelaide GPO against the nine Commonwealth Heritage Criteria defined by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

The assessment below in large part confirms the assessment included on the current CHL assessment, which is based on earlier work by Lovell Chen. Some alterations and editing have been made throughout. These have typically been made to increase the clarity of the earlier assessment. Where more substantial alterations have been made, these are discussed in the commentary below each criterion.

Criterion A: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history*

The Adelaide General Post Office, built in 1867-1872 and extended in 1891-1893, is significant as one of South Australia's most important public buildings.

The GPO forms an important part of Adelaide's central civic and administrative precinct, playing a critical role since 1872 in the delivery and development of postal services in Adelaide.

With its substantial dual frontage to King William and Franklin Streets and landmark tower, the GPO has a well-established relationship with the nearby Adelaide Town Hall, former Bank of South Australia, [Treasury, Government Offices], Supreme Court and Victoria Square. The building, and broader precinct, are well-known images and are often used to demonstrate the historical nature and prosperity of the city.

The GPO was the most expensive building constructed to that time by the Colonial Government in South Australia. This emphasises its importance to the colony and the city of Adelaide, further underscored by the involvement of the Duke of Edinburgh in laying the foundation stone.

The Adelaide GPO also received the first international telegraph message in Australia in October 1872 via the overland telegraph line, completed between Darwin and Adelaide in August 1872; the Darwin end of the line connected with the undersea cable from Indonesia. This technological leap made communication with the rest of the world possible in hours rather than weeks.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

Criterion B: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history*

Adelaide GPO was one of a number of post offices constructed in the mid-nineteenth century in state capital cities across the nation. Similar GPOs survive in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Hobart and Brisbane with less substantial examples surviving throughout regional Australia. While these buildings have changed over time, the broad catalogue of Victorian-era Post Offices survives, to a large extent, and the Adelaide GPO is not considered to possess uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural cultural history.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO is not considered to satisfy this criterion.

Criterion C: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history*

This criterion typically relates to archaeology or concealed evidence or fabric. It can also relate to significant research potential not yet realised. No evidence has been located that suggests there is significant potential of this kind at a level that warrants recognition.

Comment

This criterion is not considered to be relevant to the Adelaide GPO.

Criterion D: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:*

  i.   a class of Australia's natural or cultural places
  ii.   a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments

In the broader typological context of post offices in Australia, the Adelaide General Post Office (1867-1872) is a fine example of a second generation typology (1870-1929), with late nineteenth century additions (1893) which continued the style and form of the original.

Typologically, the Adelaide GPO seamlessly accommodated distinctly separate postal and telegraph functions within the one large structure. Where it differs from other GPO designs, however, is in the centralisation of a large public hall from which all transactions were carried out at counters to separate departments located around the perimeter in discrete offices, in lieu of an external arcade or loggia with service windows along its length. In this regard, Adelaide GPO can be considered an early exemplar in planning around an internal public space.

In terms of its architectural style, the Adelaide GPO is notable as a distinguished and monumental example of a substantial post office design in the Victorian Free Classical style. Stylistically, the design of the Adelaide GPO included several characteristics associated with Italian architectural mannerism from around the late 1520s and the 1530s; this is seen in the balustraded parapet usage, the recessed concentric arches, flanking columns and displaced pediments.

The 1922-26 addition stands as a relatively undistinguished and utilitarian example of 1920s design and is not considered to meet this criterion.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

As noted, this is with the exception of the 1922-26 additions to the building.

It is noted that the heritage values of the Adelaide GPO were most recently assessed by Lovell Chen as part of the National Survey and Assessment of Australia Post (owned) Heritage Properties (Lovell Chen, 2007). This took the form of a brief datasheet informed by limited physical inspection. The datasheet noted that the '1920s alterations and additions to the Adelaide GPO by Commonwealth chief architect JS Murdoch in close co-operation with superintendent of public buildings in South Australia, A E Simpson, recall the transfer of responsibilities for the design of Commonwealth buildings from the State to Commonwealth governments. To clarify, these associations exist and are documented, however the place is not considered to derive significance from them.

Criterion E: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group*

The Adelaide General Post Office (1867-1872 and 1893) is important as a major public building erected in the Victorian Free Classical revival style. It features a grand postal hall with a half-domed roof and peripheral clerestory lighting. A gallery at first floor level is supported on ornamental cast-iron trusses with matching cast iron balustrading. Constructed from Glen Osmond and Glen Ewin stone, and ornamented with Bath limestone, the building features a prominent clock tower and is a significant streetscape element on the corner of King William and Franklin Streets and a landmark within the broader environment. The GPO's Victoria Tower, in conjunction with the Town Hall's Albert Tower, forms an imposing gateway feature at the edge of Victoria Square.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

Criterion F: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*

Although the elements of the main façades were not uncommonly used in important buildings during the Victorian period, they are most skillfully deployed in this particular building. The architectural expression of the tower is unique and rests upon its distinctive flared cupola roof and upper stage consoles. The use of Glen Ewin freestone and in particular the extensive modelling and carved ornamentation is representative of the highest standards of workmanship and contribute to the style of Adelaide's Renaissance Revival architecture which stands apart even at the national level. The postal hall at the Adelaide GPO compares with other nationally-important postal halls at Melbourne and Hobart in terms of its planning and its functionality. .Where it differs from other GPO designs, however, is in the centralisation of a large public hall from which all transactions were carried out at counters to separate departments located around the perimeter in discrete offices, in place of an external arcade or loggia with service windows along its length and survives as one of Australia's finest public interiors of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Comment:

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

Criterion G*: the place has significant heritage value because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons*

While not investigated in detail, it is considered that the GPO would have contemporary social value to the Adelaide community both for its lengthy connection with postal services (including the social dimension of those services) and as a well-known known landmark in central Adelaide. The Postal Hall has been a key focus of public engagement with the building.

This value is strengthened by the awareness of the long-standing association of the site with this function since 1851. Historically, the scale of the Adelaide GPO reflects the sense of importance and civic pride in Adelaide at the time of the building's design and construction; and the role of postal, telegraph and telephone services from this site for over 160 years has also been integral to the history of South Australia and the development of its economy. It is reasonable to assume, that as for other key civic buildings, that there is a broad community value that is placed on the building as a result of these historical associations.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

Criterion H: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history*

The Adelaide General Post Office is associated with several architects of note, including Edmund Wright, Edward John Woods and Edward Angus Hamilton. These architects were central to the realisation of Adelaide's Victorian-era character that endures and continues to be valued today. The building's final design and delivery was undertaken by Robert George Thomas, Government Architect from 1866 to 1870.

The building and the broader postal and telegraph network retain associations with Charles Edward Owen Smyth an important figure in the development of telegraphy nationally.

Comment

The Adelaide GPO satisfies this criterion.

Criterion I: *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.*

No formal assessment against this criterion has been undertaken.

4.5 Statement of significance

A statement of significance for the Adelaide GPO was prepared for the National Survey and Assessment of Australia Post (owned) Heritage Properties in May 2009, and is included in the Commonwealth Heritage List citation for the property. On the basis of additional research and analysis undertaken in the preparation of this HMP, some minor additions to the statement of significance have been made. These additions have been enclosed in square brackets:

Place ID 105518

Place File No. 3/03/001/0010

> The Adelaide General Post Office forms an important part of Adelaide's central civic and administrative precinct, playing a critical role since 1872 in the delivery and development of postal services in Adelaide. The building, and broader precinct, are well-known images and are often used to illustrate the historical nature and prosperity of the city. The GPO was the most expensive building constructed to that time by the colonial government in South Australia. This emphasizes its importance to the colony and the city of Adelaide, further underscored by the involvement of the Duke of Edinburgh in laying the foundation stone (Criterion a). Typologically, the Adelaide GPO seamlessly accommodated distinctly separate postal and telegraph functions within the one large structure. Where it differs from other GPO designs, however, is in the centralisation of a large public hall from which all transactions were carried out at counters to separate departments located around the perimeter in discrete offices, in place of an external arcade or loggia with service windows along its length. In this regard, Adelaide GPO can be considered an early exemplar of planning around an internal public space. Stylistically, the design of the Adelaide GPO included several characteristics associated with Italian architectural mannerism from around the late 1520s and the 1530s; this is seen in the balustraded parapet usage, the recessed concentric arches, the arch and flanking columns, the displaced pediments and asymmetrical elevations inflecting toward a common point that brings symmetry (Criterion D). The Adelaide General Post Office is important as a major public building erected in the Victorian Free Classical Renaissance revival style. Constructed from Glen Osmond and Glen Ewin stone, and ornamented with Bath limestone, the building

features a prominent clock tower, and is a significant streetscape item on the corner of King William and Franklin Streets. In conjunction with the Town Hall, it forms an imposing gateway feature at the edge of Victoria Square (Criterion e). The architectural expression of the tower is unique and rests upon its distinctive flared cupola roof and upper stage consoles. The use of Glen Ewin freestone and in particular the extensive modelling and carved ornamentation is representative of the highest standards of workmanship and contribute to the style of Adelaide's Renaissance Revival architecture which is outstanding nationally. The postal hall at the Adelaide GPO is also one of Australia's finest public interiors of the mid-to-late nineteenth century (Criterion F). The GPO has considerable social significance for Adelaide residents owing to the building's lengthy connection with postal, [telegraph and telephone] services and is important to the community as a well-known landmark [and meeting place] (Criterion G). The Adelaide General Post Office is associated with several architects of note, including Edmund Wright, Edward John Woods, Edward Angus Hamilton, Robert George Thomas [and Charles Edward Owen Smyth] (Criterion H).

4.6 Levels of significance

In the following section the individual elements of the place are assessed for their relative significance, based on the contribution they make to the overall significance of the place, including their original or early fabric and use, and their relative levels of intactness. This assessment provides a framework for the conservation policies and recommended treatment of fabric and elements included in Chapter 6 and Appendix C.

The three levels of significance for Adelaide GPO are defined below, with the significance of the individual elements illustrated at(Figure 118, Figure 119, Figure 120, Figure 121). In this instance, the categories of 'primary', 'contributory' and 'little or no' significance have been applied.

4.6.1 *Definitions*

Primary significance

Spaces, elements and fabric of primary significance make a substantial contribution to the overall significance of the place. These elements contribute in a fundamental way to an understanding of the heritage values. They are likely to include original or early fabric (as described in the physical survey at Chapter 3), to be representative of the original or early design and use of the place and to be critical to an understanding of the historical function and operation of the place. Spaces, elements and fabric of primary significance are predominantly intact to their period of construction, although some areas have undergone limited alteration or modification.

External elements and fabric of primary significance are identified at Figures 14-17 above. They include:

- The external form and fabric of the face stone rendered and face brick elevations of the GPO (1872 and 1893). These include the Victoria Tower and cupola and the Franklin Street and King William Street facades. It also includes parts of the elevation to the accessway between the GPO and the former Telephone Exchange to the west and some early elements visible from the open space at Nos 135-139 King William Street to the north. These elements are significant to the extent of their early fabric and fenestration, molded dressings, cast and wrought iron detail, timber-framed joinery, clock elements, slate-lined light wells, but excluding modern signage, services and accretions.
- The roofscape of the GPO (1867-72 and 1893) including rendered and face brick chimneys, all original ventilators and gablet vents, the original half-domed lantern and all associated form and

fabric but excluding corrugated galvanized roof sheeting, steel eaves gutters, non-original vents, recent secondary roof over skylight, roof safety access system, lighting and services.

Internal spaces, elements and fabric of primary significance include:

- The basement, ground and first floor (mezzanine) levels of the 1872 and 1893 building to the extent of original building envelope and structure, plan form, volume, fabric and details. These comprise:
    - central basement sorting areas and associated strong rooms along with all remnant form and fabric of original walls and door openings. (Rooms B1, B5)
    - original 1867-1872 form and fabric of the Postal Hall and public entrance halls at ground floor level (Rooms G1, G7) and the former carriageway to King William Street (Room G11) along with all remnant form and fabric of original walls and door openings. Later reinstatement of an original or early paint scheme is also of primary significance.
    - mezzanine areas and surviving walls at first floor level along with all remnant form and fabric of original walls and door openings. (Room 1.1)
    - original fixtures, fittings, services and finishes, where extant (visible and concealed) throughout the three levels.

Contributory significance

Individual spaces, elements or fabric of contributory significance make a moderate (or lesser) contribution to the overall significance of the place. These elements may also be associated with the Adelaide GPO in a secondary or supporting way or provide evidence of later site development and use. They can include utilitarian elements or spaces, elements or fabric which have been modified or altered and are less intact than elements of high significance. These elements preferably should be retained, but provide greater flexibility with regard to potential removal, alteration and change, subject also to other relevant policies in this HMP.

No external elements or fabric of contributory significance are noted.

Internal elements and spaces of contributory significance are listed below. It is noted that, at various locations, internal room volumes remain legible although some internal fabric such as dividing walls, fireplaces cornices or skirtings have been removed. Generally, these spaces survive as a record of the planning rather than the character of the original GPO. As such, a degree of change may be accommodated in these spaces. Alterations to these areas should have regard to impacts on any original fabric identified at Chapter 3 of this HMP and the policies provided at Chapter 6.

Contributory areas include:

- all areas within the extent sections of the 1867-72 and 1893 building programmes apart from those identified as being of primary significance noted above: this typically comprises spaces in and around the central basement sorting area, postal hall and mezzanine
- the 1920s form and fabric of the adapted 1867-72 carriageway including the stair well to the additions of 1922-26 and the concealed 1920s detectives walk above the Postal Hall.
- The extant honour board.

Little or no significance

Spaces, elements and fabric of little or no significance at the Adelaide GPO make a limited or no contribution to the overall significance of the place. These include elements which are not original and have limited intrinsic quality or significance, as well as elements that have undergone substantial alterations and change. In some instances, these spaces, elements and fabric may limit the

understanding of the significance of the place or compromise the presentation of the place or significant elements within it.

The additions of 1922-26 have been assessed as of little or no significance. While part of the evolved complex these do not reflect on particular uses or historical associations or aspects of post-office design, other than for a requirement for additional accommodation in that period. Nor do they contribute to the aesthetic (architectural) values of the place; while associated with an important figure in the architect JS Murdoch, the building is not a good example of his work or of 1920s design more broadly.

External elements and fabric of little or no significance include:

- External fabric to the additions of 1922-6
- the form and fabric of non-original ramps, flooring, doors and canopy to west elevation loading dock
- the form and fabric of the modern secondary roof over the original half-domed lantern
- modern finishes.

Internal spaces, elements and fabric of little or no significance include:

- the form and fabric of the 1920s circulation spaces: B21, B22, G14, G15, F19, F20
- all internal alterations including: whole of Room B5 and interior spaces of basement rooms B9, B13, B17, ground floor rooms G8, G9, G12, first floor rooms F4, F6, F11, F12, and F13
- the form and fabric of 1920s and 1930s development within the nineteenth century building, including non-original internal doorways and polished timber doorsets
- all modern finishes, fittings and accretions including suspended ceilings.
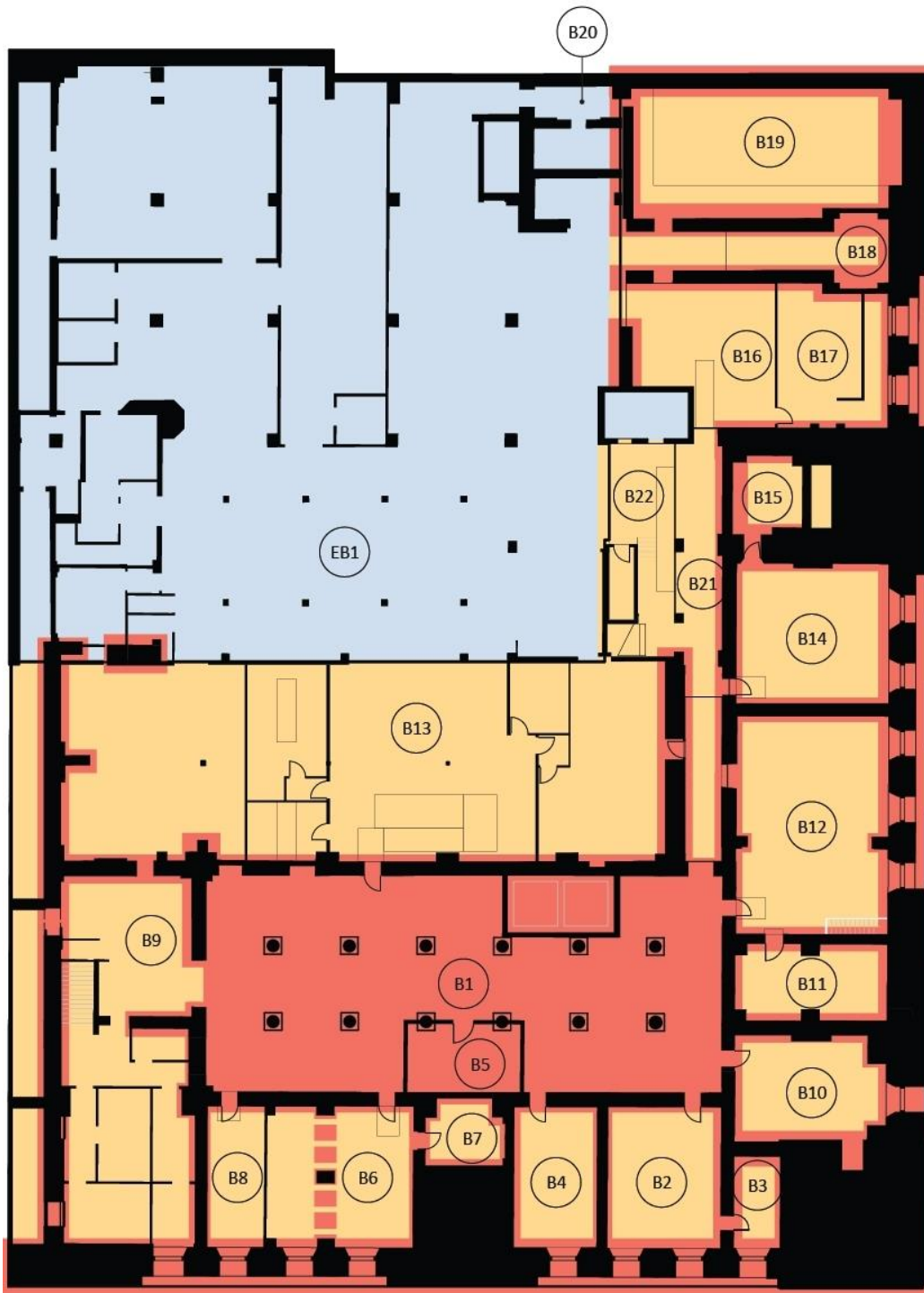
Key Levels of Significance- Basement   NOT TO SCALE

- Primary significance
- Contributory significance
- Little or no significance

Figure 118   Significance at basement level

FRANKLIN STREET (VICTORIA SQUARE)

Key
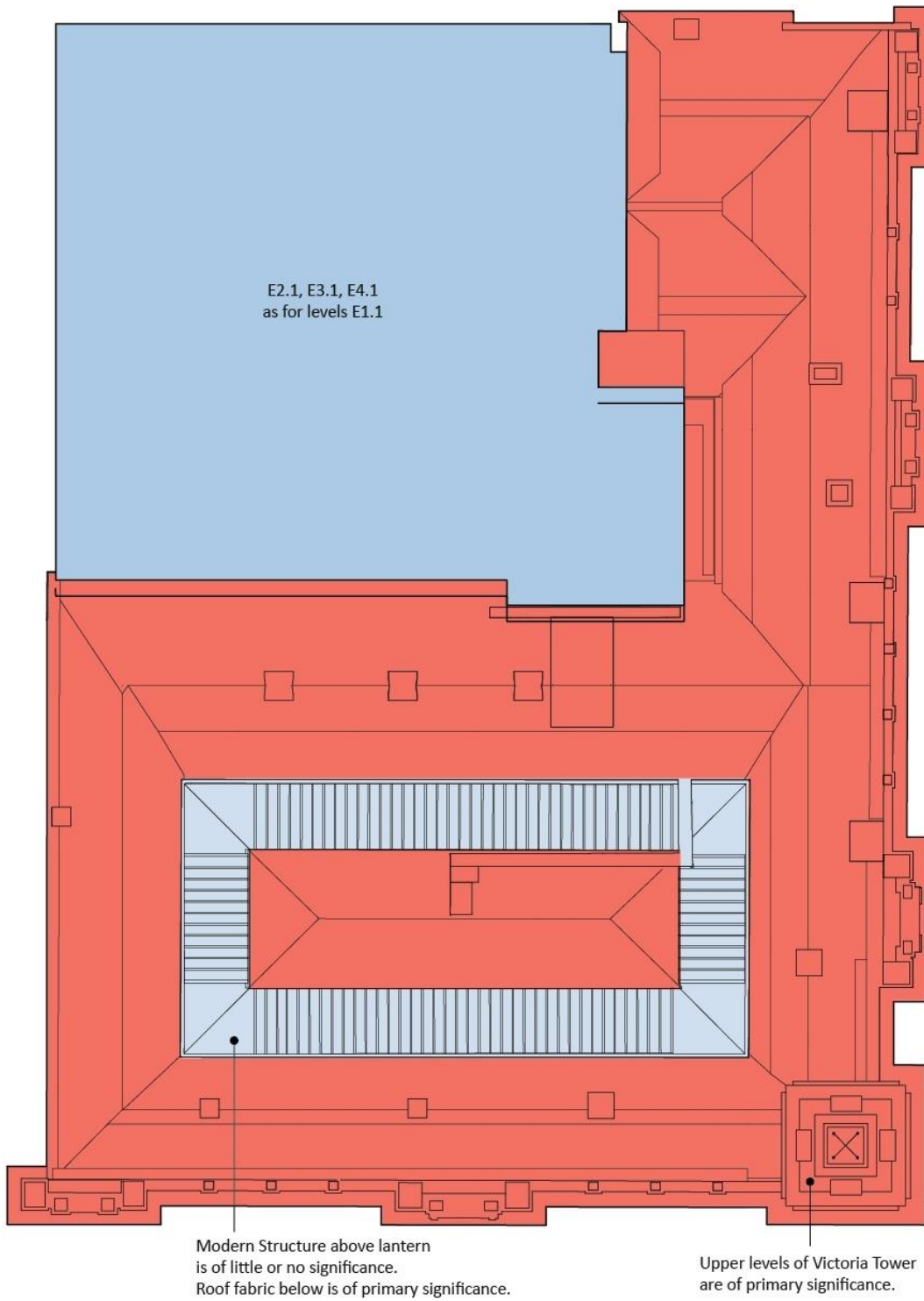
Levels of Significance - Ground floor

NOT TO SCALE

Primary significance

Contributory significance

Little or no significance

Figure 119   Significance at ground floor level

Key   Levels of Significance- First floor   NOT TO SCALE

Primary significance

Contributory significance

Little or no significance

Figure 120   Significance at first floor level

E2.1, E3.1, E4.1
as for levels E1.1

Modern Structure above lantern
is of little or no significance.
Roof fabric below is of primary significance.

Upper levels of Victoria Tower
are of primary significance.

Key   Levels of Significance- Roof plan   NOT TO SCALE

Primary significance

Contributory significance

Little or no significance

Figure 121   Significance at roof level