

**BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE
Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex**



Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex SHP 10645, 2 January 2022.

Source: Ashton 29, Wikipedia Commons

ENTRY IN THE REGISTER

Description or notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The South Australian Heritage Council may correct errors or inaccuracies in the Entry in the Register in accordance with s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME: Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex

PLACE NO.: 10645

ADDRESS: 112 Henley Beach Road, Torrensville

CT 6334/438 D138105 A903; CT 6334/438 D138105 A905; CT 6334/442 D138108 A909; CT 6334/444 D138105 A904; CT 6334/444 D138105 A906; CT 6334/446 D138108 A910 Hundred of Adelaide

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

23 September 1982

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Additional information provided as a part of the content of the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with s14(6) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993* 'hold information in association with the Register'.

KNOWN AS: Thebarton Theatre [Awning overhanging the airspace of Henley Beach Road]

ADDRESS Karna Country

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex demonstrates the aspirations and confidence of municipal bodies during the interwar period, and in particular, at the peak of the state's 1920s economic boom. Designed by Sydney theatre architects Kaberry and Chard in an eclectic style and completed in 1928, the complex is noted for its outstanding interior, including elaborate fibrous plaster decoration and a complex and sophisticated 'tumbling light' system of dimmable polychrome indirect lighting effects. The complex was built by the Corporation of the Town of Thebarton and funded through a 21-year lease agreement with commercial film exhibitor D. Clifford Theatres Limited.

INDICATIVE 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

The Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex demonstrates the prosperity and affluence of the 1920s statewide economic boom, including the phenomenal growth of cinema attendance and the construction of large, luxurious, purpose-built suburban picture theatres. Many such places were built by commercial film exhibitors in cooperation with municipal bodies. The purpose built former Thebarton Town Hall Complex was the largest such place, incorporating an 1,800-seat purpose-built picture theatre, a municipal office building, and an assembly hall. The project was funded through a 21-year lease agreement with exhibitor D. Clifford Theatres Limited. It demonstrates the aspirations and confidence of municipal bodies during the interwar period, and in particular, at the peak of the 1920s economic boom.

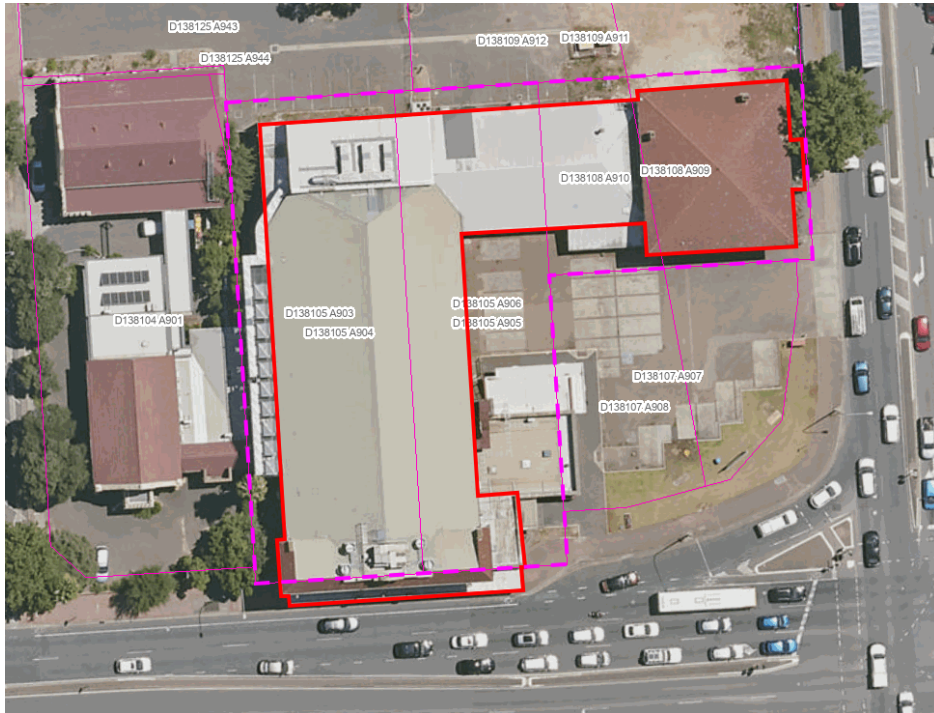
(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics

Completed in 1928, the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex represents the culmination of picture theatre architecture and technology during the silent film era, which came to an end with the introduction of 'talking' films in 1929. Sydney-based theatre specialist architects Kaberry & Chard designed the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex in an eclectic style drawing on elements of interwar Mediterranean and free classical architecture typical of 1920s picture theatres, designed to create a deliberate sense of occasion and escape for patrons. The complex is especially notable for its outstanding interior. It features elaborate fibrous plaster ceiling, proscenium and wall decoration, designed in collaboration with South Australian designer and interior specialist E. Grant Walsh, and a complex and sophisticated 'tumbling light' system of dimmable polychrome indirect lighting effects, designed by D. Clifford Theatres Limited manager, W. G. Morgan.

SITE PLAN

Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex
112 Henley Beach Road, Thebarton

PLACE NO.: 10645



Former Thebarton Theatre Complex, 112 Henley Beach Road, Thebarton (CT 6334/438 D138105 A903 A905; CT 6334/442 D138108 A909; CT 6334/444 D138105 A904 A906; CT 6334/446 D138108 A910, Awning overhanging the airspace of Henley Beach Road, Hundred of Adelaide)

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Picture theatre, municipal office and assembly hall,
- Original exterior and interior materials and material finishes including tile, terrazzo, timber and unpainted face brick,
- Fibrous plaster ceiling, proscenium and wall decoration to auditorium and assembly hall,
- Original fittings, including metal window frames, leadlight windows, steel shutters, joinery, light fittings, and gallery seating,
- Remnant fittings in roof associated with 'tumbling light' system,
- Original electrical control board including rheostats.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- 2020s extension to south-eastern corner,
- Airconditioning units and support structures,
- Partitions to assembly room,
- Bar and toilet fitouts.

N ↑

LEGEND

- Parcel boundaries
- Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

*Red outline is indicative of elements of significance, noting imperfect alignment of aerial imagery with parcel cadastre. The awning suspended from the southern elevation overhangs the airspace of Henley Beach Road.

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10645

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Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 23 September 1982
 Draft BHI SSHP for Consultation 6 August 2026 to 6 November 2026

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex is a brick, steel and reinforced concrete interwar civic complex. It comprises three main structures: a two-storey picture theatre fronting Henley Beach Road, a two-storey municipal office building fronting South Road, and a single-storey hall linking the two buildings.

External features include:

- portland cement-rendered walls to municipal office and front of picture theatre,
- pressed cement decoration to municipal office and front of picture theatre, including large corbels to eaves,
- terracotta-tiled roofs to municipal office (hipped) and front of picture theatre (mansard),
- five former shopfronts to front of picture theatre, with tiled piers and podiums,
- part parapet to picture theatre roofline, featuring electric turret clock,
- cantilevered awning to front of picture theatre,
- metal-framed windows to municipal office,
- glazed timber picture theatre entry doors,
- leadlight to awning spandrels, bio box window, and shopfront transom windows,
- flytower to picture theatre with firewall and sloping roof,
- unpainted brick walls to picture theatre eastern and western elevations and flytower,
- steel louvred shutters to picture theatre side windows.

Internal features include:

- tiered gallery to auditorium with side wings and boxes flanking proscenium,
- fibrous plaster ceilings, cornices and wall decoration, including main auditorium ceilings,
- upholstered seating to gallery,
- bio box (projection room) to rear of auditorium gallery,
- disconnected remanant fittings in roof associated with 'tumbling light' system,
- disconnected electrical control board in bio box including rheostats (dimmers),
- jarrah floors to auditorium and assembly room.

Elements of Significance:

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- Fibrous plaster ceiling, proscenium and wall decoration to auditorium and assembly hall,
- Original fittings, including metal window frames, leadlight windows, steel shutters, joinery, light fittings, and gallery seating,
- Remnant fittings in roof associated with 'tumbling light' system,
- Original electrical control board including rheostats.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- 2020s extension to south-eastern corner,
- Airconditioning units and support structures,
- Partitions to assembly room,
- Bar and toilet fitouts.

HISTORY OF THE PLACE

Interwar picture theatres

Cinema emerged as a dominant form of mass entertainment in South Australia from 1907. Cinema-going flourished during the 1920s, coinciding with a statewide economic boom, and by the end of the decade, most communities in South Australia possessed a venue for screening motion pictures.¹

'Going to the pictures' was a weekly outing for many families during the interwar period. During 1938, South Australians collectively accrued 9 million picture theatre attendances from a population of 598,000, the equivalent of 15 per person per year.² As a regular social occasion, the subject of films shown was often 'immaterial' and many families had permanent bookings in preferred seats.³ Many suburban theatres were built near public transport routes,⁴ and the length of the programme was timed to end shortly before the departure of the last train or tram.

Prior to the 1950s motion picture films, printed on a cellulose nitrate base, were highly flammable. Film fires overseas spurred Australian state governments to introduce legislation governing the exhibition of motion pictures. In South Australia, cinematograph entertainment was addressed in the *Places of Public Entertainment Act 1913*, through a series of regulations⁵ that shaped the plan, form and features of interwar picture theatre buildings.⁶

By 1930 two local family-owned companies had grown to dominate South Australian film exhibition, namely Ozone Theatres Limited and D. Clifford Theatres Limited (see below). Both expanded rapidly through the 1920s, expanded into regional South Australia by the end of the decade, and obtained large, lucrative city venues by 1940.⁷

Prior to 1929 motion pictures did not typically have a synchronised soundtrack, but were almost always accompanied by live music. Motion pictures with a synchronised soundtrack, known as 'talkies,' arrived in early 1929. Initial scepticism was replaced by acceptance as talkies rapidly displaced silent cinema. The expense of wiring for sound and the economic shock of the Depression meant that no new theatres were built in South Australia prior to economic recovery in the mid-1930s.⁸

During the interwar period, picture theatre buildings, and especially their interiors, were designed to create a deliberate sense of occasion and escape for picture theatre patrons. During the silent era, 'picture palaces' were designed in eclectic styles drawing on a diverse range of historical architectural precedents. Interiors employed fibrous plaster decoration and increasingly complex lighting schemes. Ornament was 'the tangible sign of grandeur and status, and the eclecticism seen in theatre design ... was hedonistic and self indulgent.'⁹ Later during the sound era, as the Depression eased, picture theatres were designed in streamlined styles, evoking modernity and a sense optimism for the future.

The appearance of drive-in theatres in South Australia from 1954 eroded attendance at traditional picture theatres¹⁰ while the introduction of television in South Australia in September 1959 further reduced attendance. Many suburban and country picture theatres had closed by the early 1960s.

D. Clifford Theatres Limited

With financial assistance from his mother Delia,¹¹ Adelaide newsagent Daniel (Dan) Clifford (b. 1887 – d. 1942) acquired a small film exhibition business called Star Pictures and subsequently acquired freehold the Star Theatre on Henley Beach Road at Torrensville.¹² He soon rebuilt the theatre at a cost of £7,000,¹³ followed by the Hindmarsh Town Hall, the latter in an arrangement with the Corporation of the Town of Hindmarsh which included a long-term lease.¹⁴

Clifford rapidly acquired numerous other picture theatres and in mid-1922 he gave up his newsagency business to focus on film exhibition.¹⁵ Star Pictures Limited was registered in November that year under the *Companies Act 1892*¹⁶ with a nominal capital of £70,000.¹⁷ The company name was changed to D. Clifford Theatres Limited (Clifford Theatres) on 11 April 1923.¹⁸ In May 1923, Clifford opened his first purpose-built theatre, the Norwood Star Theatre, at a cost of over £20,000.¹⁹ Further purpose-built theatres followed during the mid- to late-1920s. Clifford also negotiated agreements to build and lease large new picture theatres associated with the municipal buildings at Woodville (1927) and Thebarton (1928) (see Thebarton Town Hall Complex, below). By 1931, Clifford Theatres was the largest South Australian suburban exhibitor operating twelve theatres.²⁰

In 1928, Clifford attributed the success of his business to 'giving the public ... the best films offering with due comfort,' which he believed led them to patronise local theatres.²¹ Clifford Theatres led the introduction of numerous architectural and technological innovations, such as polychrome and indirect interior lighting effects, provision of extensive internal circulation space, stadium-style auditorium seating, double 'love seats'²² and side boxes.

During the Depression Clifford Theatres experienced financial difficulties.²³ Following economic recovery, the company built, purchased and/or renovated and/or leased numerous picture theatres (see chronology) into the 1940s.

Dan Clifford died on 10 December 1942, aged 54.²⁴ At the time of Clifford's death, Clifford Theatres operated 20 city, suburban and country theatres. In October 1946, Clifford Theatres was acquired by Sydney-based Greater Union Theatres Limited for around £300,000.²⁵ Afterwards, Greater Union Theatres traded in South Australia as the Clifford Theatre Circuit and its venues were gradually rebranded as Odeon theatres from the early 1950s.²⁶

Thebarton: establishment, development and local government

The Kaurna people²⁷ are the traditional owners of the Adelaide Plains. Prior to European contact, Kaurna people lived in extended family groups named according to their place of dwelling,²⁸ speaking dialects of what is now known as the Kaurna language. Survey and settlement of the Adelaide Plains by Europeans from 1836 led Kaurna people to become 'dispossessed fringe dwellers' on their own country. From 1912, repressive legislation empowered government agents to remove many Kaurna people from camps on the fringes of European settlements, however some Kaurna people remained.²⁹ Since the late twentieth century, Kaurna people have been engaged in a process of 'reclaiming their cultural and linguistic heritage.'³⁰

In 1839, Colonel William Light subdivided Section 1, Hundred of Adelaide, to create the Village of Thebarton, later spelled Thebarton. Industries such as brickmaking, tanning, fellmongering, and milling soon became established on the River Torrens, forming a nucleus for later industrial development. The surrounding district remained largely rural until residential subdivision intensified from the mid-1870s.³¹

West Torrens District Council, encompassing the villages of Thebarton, Hilton, Cowandilla, Richmond, Reedbeds, St Leonards, and Plympton, was proclaimed in July 1853 under the *District Councils Act 1852*. During the 1870s, Thebarton grew in industrial density and diversity relative to the rest of West Torrens. As a result, Thebarton ceded from West Torrens and the Corporation of Thebarton (the Corporation) was proclaimed on 8 February 1883.³² In 1885, the Corporation commissioned the first Thebarton Town Hall, built on Taylor's Road, now South Road, which opened on 8 October 1885.³³

The introduction of electric trams in 1909 and the opening of the South Australian Railways' Mile End Goods Yard in 1913 encouraged new subdivision and housing construction, intensification of industrial development, and commercial development along Henley Beach Road. By 1921, Thebarton had the second-highest population density in the suburbs, outside of Port Adelaide.³⁴

The Thebarton Town Hall Complex

By the early 1920s, the existing Thebarton Town Hall was no longer considered adequate to serve the needs of the community. From April 1923, the Corporation began buying land surrounding the former Thebarton Institute (now demolished) on the corner of Henley Beach and Taylor's Roads,³⁵ as a site for a potential new town hall. In August 1925, Alderman Harry Hatwell declared the existing Town Hall a 'disgrace' and complained it did not possess a parlour suitable for entertaining mayoral visitors.³⁶

Construction of a new town hall evidently proved difficult for the Corporation to fund on its own and for a while, the Corporation instead considered renovating the existing hall. However, in April 1926, Alderman James Leonard Leal warned that the existing hall could never be renovated in such a way as to bring it up-to-date, and argued that Henley Beach Road, as the town's main thoroughfare, would prove a more appropriate site, in terms of both civic pride and revenue-raising potential.³⁷

In December 1926, film exhibitor Daniel (Dan) Clifford, who owned and operated numerous picture theatres throughout South Australia,³⁸ approached the Corporation with a 'co-operative scheme' for building a new town hall. Clifford's scheme was drawn along similar lines to an agreement he had already reached with the Woodville District Council.³⁹ At Woodville, the District Council borrowed £20,000 to augment its 1903-built council premises with a new, purpose-built 1,600 seat picture theatre, built essentially to Clifford's specification. Clifford in turn entered into an agreement with the District Council to lease the theatre for a period of 21 years, easily paying off the District Council's bank loan, in turn allowing Woodville to 'gain possession of a modern hall free of cost.'⁴⁰

The Thebarton scheme was a more ambitious project than at Woodville, comprising large, two-storey civic offices, including a supper room, a purpose-built, 1,800 seat picture theatre adjoining, and five shops fronting Henley Beach Road. From Clifford's point of view, the Thebarton scheme would serve to replace his existing Torrensville Star Theatre, located a short distance west on the opposite side of Henley Beach Road. One of the oldest extant suburban theatres, the Torrensville Star Theatre was relatively small and no longer able to accommodate the film entertainment demands of the Thebarton district.

The Corporation commissioned Clifford's preferred architects, Sydney-based theatre specialists Kaberry & Chard, to design the scheme. The Corporation called tenders from 5 July 1927,⁴¹ and Woodville builder Edward Colgate's tender of £23,200 was accepted.⁴² Deductions amounting to £1,457 and extras amounting to £1,115 10/ resulted in a final contract price of £22,858 10/ not including the cost of furnishing, estimated to cost between £5,000 and £6,000.⁴³ Adelaide designer and interior decorator Ernest Grant Walsh was placed in charge of furnishing and decoration,⁴⁴ while Mile End architectural draftsman and designer Ernest Frank Choate was appointed building supervisor.⁴⁵

To finance construction, the Corporation sought a bank loan of £30,000.⁴⁶ The Corporation expected that rent from the picture theatre, shops and supper room would cover loan repayments without increasing council rates,⁴⁷ and once the loan was repaid, the new building would go on producing revenue.⁴⁸ A poll of ratepayers called on 23 April 1927 supported raising the loan, marking the first time that the citizens of Thebarton had supported a poll on a bank loan.⁴⁹

The foundation stone of the Thebarton Town Hall Complex was laid on 14 September 1927 by the Mayor of Thebarton, H. S. Hartwell,⁵⁰ and was largely complete by 22 May 1928.⁵¹ Built at a final cost of approximately £33,000, The Thebarton Town Hall Complex was officially opened by the Mayor on 11 June 1928.⁵² Upon its completion, the Adelaide News described the Complex as 'one of the finest municipal structures in the suburbs of Adelaide.'⁵³ As built, the picture theatre seated 1,028 in the downstairs stalls and 796 in the dress circle gallery,⁵⁴ a total of 1,824.

The complex was designed in an eclectic style, drawing on elements of interwar Mediterranean and free classical architecture. The picture theatre was especially notable for its elaborate fibrous plaster ceiling, proscenium and wall decoration, executed by James Bell & Company Pty Ltd.⁵⁵ The auditorium featured 1,800 concealed light bulbs in banks of red, blue and yellow, mounted in fibrous plaster troughs and controlled by rheostats (dimmers). Varying the brightness of each bank enabled the creation of a wide, shifting spectrum of indirect coloured lighting.⁵⁶ These lighting effects, sometimes referred to as 'tumbling lights', were the most complex and sophisticated yet employed in a South Australian picture theatre,⁵⁷ and such effects were widely implemented in other South Australian theatres afterwards. The lighting effects were designed by Clifford Theatres' manager W. G. Morgan and installed by the Adelaide firm Unbehaune & Johnstone Limited.

The ground floor of the civic office building fronting Taylor's Road housed an entrance vestibule, general office, strong room, public space, town clerk's office, records room, committee room, district nurse's office, and Mothers and Babies' Health Association room. Upstairs, it housed an assembly hall, council chamber, mayor's parlour, retiring room, mayoress's room, kitchenette, cloakroom and pantry.⁵⁸ The assembly hall,

capable of seating 250, possessed a polished jarrah dancing floor and a stage and anteroom at the western end.⁵⁹ Blackwood furnishings in the council chambers and mayor's parlour were designed by E. Grant Walsh and manufactured by Chittleborough & Company, Unley.⁶⁰

Clifford Theatres began screening films in the picture theatre on 12 June 1928. By the late 1940s, the picture theatre was operating several nights a week, with a matinee on Saturdays. From October 1948, Greater Union Theatres rebranded the Thebarton Town Hall as the Thebarton Odeon Theatre. Following the establishment of the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1960, the Thebarton Town Hall became a venue for the festival from 1962, managed by Bob Lott.

During the early 1960s, Greater Union screened Greek-language as well as mainstream English-language films. Competition from drive-in theatres and later television led Greater Union to permanently close the Thebarton Odeon Theatre on 3 July 1965.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the complex continued to be used as a venue for the Adelaide Festival into the following decade.

In 1970, Lott and a friend, Jerry Wesley-Smith, formed an organisation called the Central Booking Agency, which later grew into the Adelaide-based entertainment, venue management and security company Weslo Holdings Proprietary Limited. When the Corporation proposed demolition of the Thebarton Town Hall in 1979, Weslo Holdings acquired a lease over the former Thebarton Town Hall Complex, and renamed it the Thebarton Theatre.⁶² Subsequently Weslo Holdings spent more than \$1 million fitting the complex with new foyers, bars, catering and office space, toilets, carpets, seating and electrical systems.⁶³

Over the following decades, Weslo Holdings managed the Thebarton Theatre, building its reputation as an 'iconic' contemporary live music venue and hosting local, national and international acts such as Cold Chisel, Midnight Oil, INXS, Crowded House, Kylie Minogue, Bananarama, the B52s, and Nirvana.⁶⁴ The Thebarton Theatre was inducted into the SA Music Hall of Fame on 29 July 2018.⁶⁵

In 2023, the City of West Torrens developed a masterplan for the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex. Stage 1, completed on 1 October 2025 at a cost of \$8 million, comprised a new entry building on Henley Beach road, upgrades to the existing theatre bar and front-of-house amenities, and conservation work to the interior of the picture theatre. Stage 1 was funded by the City of West Torrens and the state government through the Local Government Infrastructure Partnership Program, with additional funding being provided by the Federal Government through its Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.⁶⁶

Aboriginal Cultural Considerations

The *Heritage Places Act 1993* makes provision for the identification, recording and conservation of places and objects of non-Aboriginal heritage significance. The protection and preservation of Aboriginal heritage is provided for under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*. Contact the Aboriginal Heritage Unit for listings.

CHRONOLOGY

Year Event

- 1853 July: West Torrens District Council is proclaimed under the *District Councils Act 1852*.
- 1883 8 February: the Corporation of Thebarton cedes from West Torrens District Council.
- 1885 8 October: the first Thebarton Town Hall is opened.
- 1907 Cinema emerges as a dominant form of entertainment in South Australia.
- 1909 Electric trams are introduced to the Adelaide metropolitan area.
- 1913 The Government of South Australia passes the *Places of Public Entertainment Act 1913*.
The Mile End Goods Yard is opened.
- 1917 July: Daniel (Dan) Clifford acquires the Torrensville Star Theatre.
- 1921 Dan Clifford acquires the Greater Wondergraph Company Limited's suburban picture theatres at Goodwood, Unley and Semaphore.
Thebarton has the second-highest population density in the suburbs.
- 1922 Dan Clifford gives up his newsagency to focus on film exhibition.
- 1922 November: Star Pictures Limited is registered under the *Companies Act 1892*.
April, Dan Clifford opens rebuilt Port Adelaide Star Theatre.
- 1923 Thebarton Corporation begins buying land surrounding the former Thebarton Institute.**
11 April: Star Pictures Limited becomes D. Clifford Theatres Limited.
May: D. Clifford Theatres Limited opens its first purpose-built picture theatre.
August: Dan Clifford leases his first country venue.
- 1926 December: Dan Clifford approaches the Thebarton Corporation with a co-operative scheme for building a new Thebarton Town Hall.**
- 1927 13 April: the new Woodville Town Hall opens.⁶⁷**
23 April: a poll of Thebarton ratepayers supports raising a loan to build a new town hall.

- 5 July: Thebarton Corporation calls tenders for the new Thebarton Town Hall Complex.**
- 14 September: the foundation stone of the Thebarton Town Hall Complex is laid by the mayor of Thebarton, H. S. Hartwell.**
- 1928 11 June: the new Thebarton Town Hall Complex is opened by the mayor.**
- 12 June: D. Clifford Theatres Limited begins screening films in the new Thebarton Town Hall Complex.**
- 29 June: the Adelaide Regent Theatre (SHP 13373) opens.
- 1929 Films with a synchronised soundtrack, known as 'talkies,' are first screened in South Australia.
- 1931 D. Clifford Theatres Limited is the largest South Australian suburban film exhibitor, operating twelve theatres.
- 1936 The renovated Hindmarsh Town Hall opens (SHP 11794 and SHP 26609).
- 1938 South Australians accrue 9 million theatre attendances from a population of 598,000.
- April, D. Clifford Theatres Limited acquires its first city theatre.
- 1940 23 October: the Piccadilly Theatre opens (SHP 13496).
- 1941 8 October: New Goodwood Star Theatre opens (SHP 10670).
- 1942 D. Clifford Theatres Limited operates 20 city, suburban and country picture theatres.
- 10 December: Dan Clifford dies aged 54.
- 1946 October: D. Clifford Theatres Limited is acquired by Sydney-based Greater Union Theatres Limited.
- 1948 Greater Union Theatres Limited rebrands the Thebarton Star Theatre as the Thebarton Odeon Theatre.**
- 1954 South Australia's first drive-in theatre opens.
- 1962 The Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex becomes a venue for the Adelaide Festival of Arts, managed by Bob Lott.**
- 1965 3 July, Greater Union permanently closes the Thebarton Odeon Theatre.**
- 1970 Bob Lott and Jerry Wesley-Smith create the Central Booking Agency, which later becomes Weslo Holdings Pty Ltd.
- 1979 Thebarton Corporation proposes demolition of the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex. Weslo Holdings acquires the lease over the complex and subsequently spends over \$1 million refitting the complex, which it names the Thebarton Theatre.**

1982 23 September: the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex is confirmed in the Register as Thebarton Council Chambers, Assembly Hall and Town Hall.

2009 DA 211/1369/09: repairs to roof, fascia, eaves, gutter, downpipes.

2011 DA 211/1491/10: fire system upgrade.

DA 211/149/11: upgrade and conservation works (repainting exterior including theatre façade and assembly room ceiling).

2012 DA 211/878/12: new external fire access doors.

2014 DA 211/492/14: fire safety upgrade.

2018 29 July: the Thebarton Theatre is inducted into the SA Music Hall of Fame.

DA 211/343/18: upgrade existing lighting system to existing auditorium coffer ceiling.

2020 DA 211/13/20: raised platform and air conditioning system on western elevation of picture theatre.

2023 The City of West Torrens develops a masterplan for the Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex.

DA 23010152: alterations and additions including demolition of amenities building, new building, external and internal modifications.

2024 DA 24034939: external painting to facades.

2025 DA 250232040: internal alterations including painting, sanding, revarnishing, replacement of light fittings and flooring.

1 October: Stage 1 renovations to the Former Town Hall Complex are completed at a cost of \$8 million, including conservation work to the theatre ceiling.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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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

Alison Painter, 'Entertainment: the changing scene' in Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round (eds), *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the history of South Australia, 1933-1968* (1996) Adelaide SA: Association of Professional Historians Inc.

Pauline Payne, *Thebarton Old and New* (1996) Thebarton SA: Thebarton City Council

John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory...* (1991) Goodwood SA: Theatre Organ Society of Australia, South Australian Division Incorporated

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Geoffrey Grainger, 'Cinemas of West Torrens' in *West Torrens Historian* Vol. 7 No. 1 (April 2015)

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Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' (October 1991)

Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution: Sustaining Rural Exhibition in South Australia (1897-1935)* (August 2017)

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)

Newspapers and Periodicals

Advertiser

Builder

Chronicle

Daily Herald

Daily Commercial News and Shipping List (Sydney NSW)

Eventalaide

Everyones: the Motion Picture Authority

InDaily

Mail

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News

Port Adelaide News

Register

South Australian Register

Websites

City of West Torrens, Thebarton Theatre Upgrade

<https://www.westtorrens.sa.gov.au/Community/Major-projects/Thebarton-Theatre-upgrade>

Genealogy SA, Online Database <https://www.genealogysa.org.au/>

SA Music Hall of Fame, Thebarton Theatre

<https://www.samusichalloffame.org/venues/thebartontheatre>

Thebarton Theatre, History <https://thebartontheatre.com.au/history/>

Archival

CT427/158

Corporation of the Town of Thebarton, 1980, Application for Assistance under the State Heritage Fund, DEW Files

Interviews

Pete Crowle Pers. Comm. 8 July 2010

SITE DETAILS

Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex

PLACE NO.: 10645

112 Henley Beach Road, Torrensville

FORMER NAME:	Thebarton Town Hall; Thebarton Star Theatre; Thebarton Odeon Theatre
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Brick, steel and reinforced concrete civic complex including picture theatre with suspended awning to Henley Beach Road, council chambers and assembly hall.
HISTORIC THEMES	3. Governing South Australia 3.3 Establishing and implementing federal, state and local governments 4. Building Settlements, Towns and Cities 4.3 Shaping the suburbs (including pre and post World War 2) 6. Developing Social and Cultural Life (Supporting and building communities) 6.5 Participating in sport, leisure and recreation (including eating, drinking and holidays)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1927 – 1928
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated 13 December 1978 Provisionally entered 18 March 1982 Confirmed 23 September 1982
CURRENT USE:	Theatre, 1928 – present Function complex, c.1980 – present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Civic complex, 1928 – c.1997 Picture theatre, 1928 – 1965
ARCHITECT:	Kaberry & Chard, Sydney, 1927 – 1928
BUILDER:	Edward Colgate, 1927 – 1928
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	City of West Torrens
LOCATION:	Address: 112 Henley Beach Road, Torrensville SA 5031

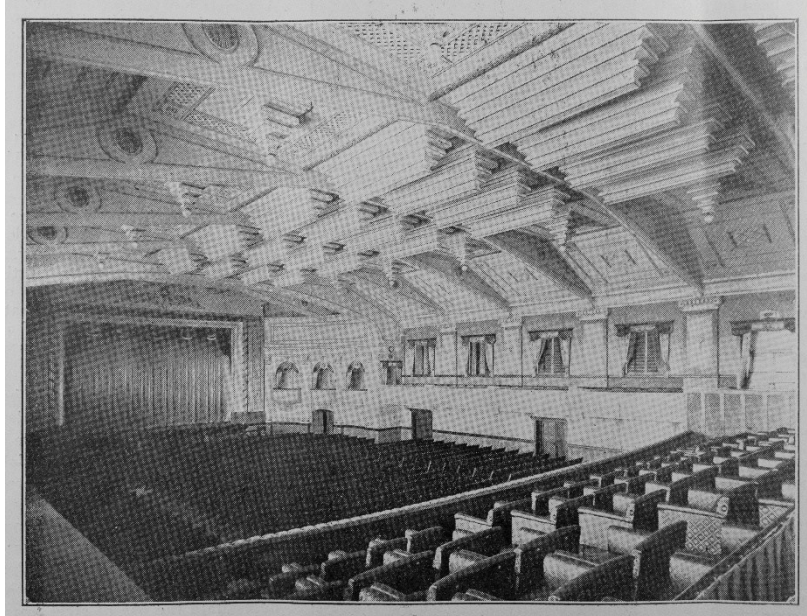
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title	CT 6334/438 D138105 A903, CT
	Reference:	6334/438 D138105 A905, CT 6334/442 D138108 A909, CT 6334/444 D138105 A904 CT 6334/444 D138105 A906, CT 6334/446 D138108 A910
	Hundred:	Adelaide

Draft for Consultation

PHOTOS

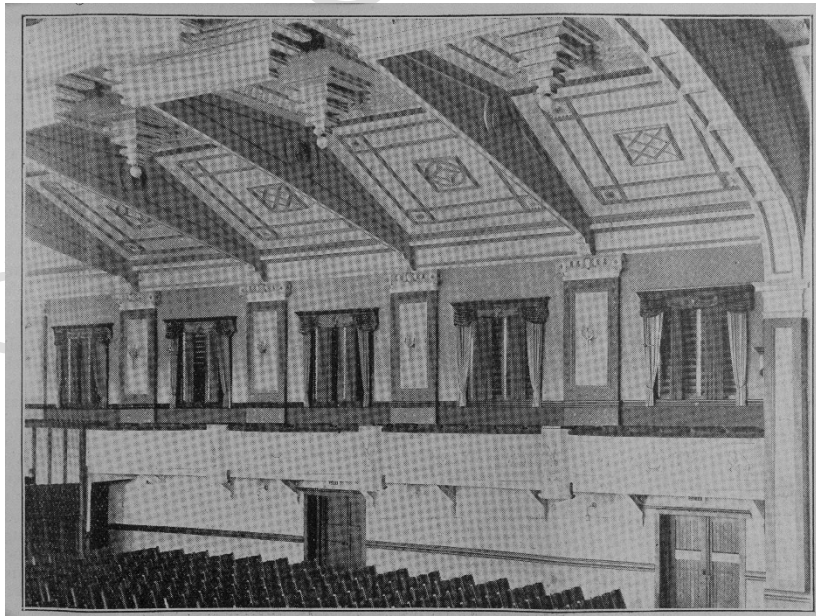
Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex
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PLACE NO.: 10645



Picture theatre auditorium looking towards stage, 1928.

Source: *Builder* 26 September 1928

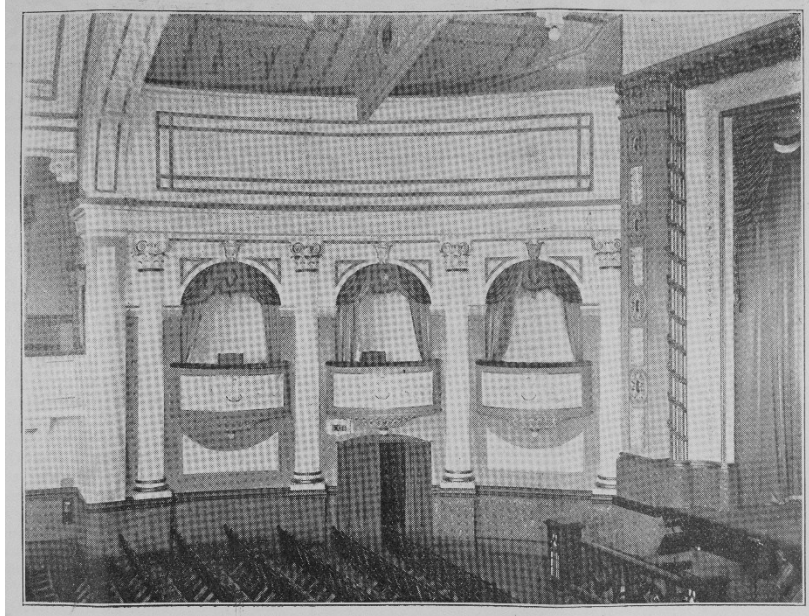


Auditorium showing side wings, 1928.

Source: *Builder* 26 September 1928

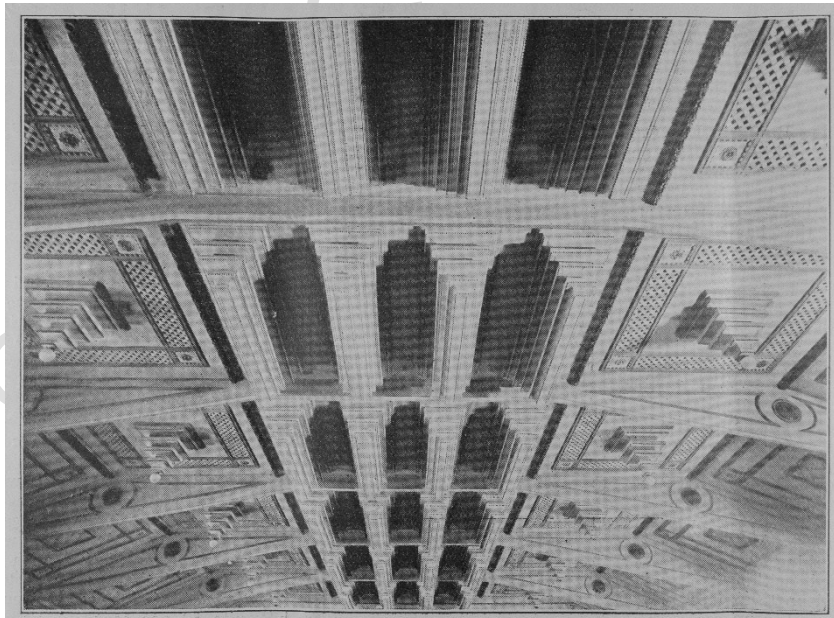
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Auditorium showing proscenium side boxes, 1928.

Source: *Builder* 26 September 1928



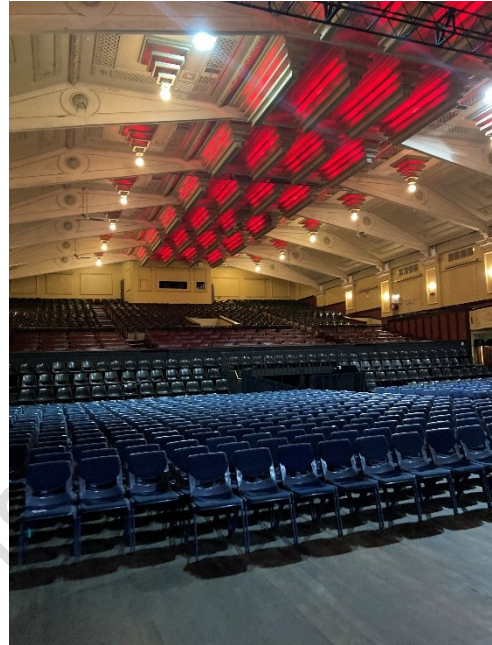
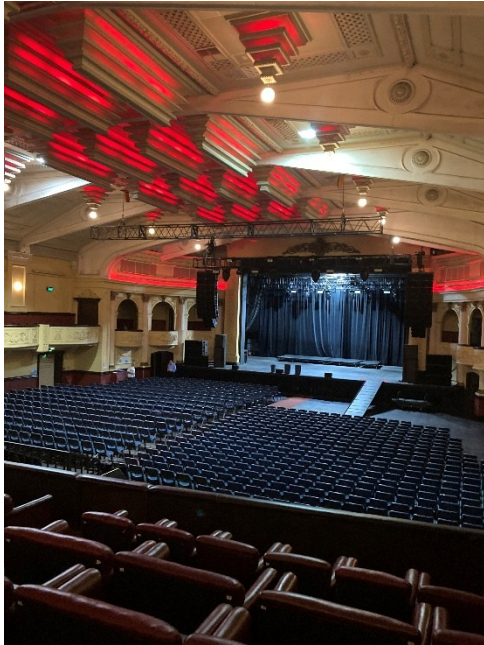
Auditorium showing coffered ceiling, 1928.

Source: *Builder* 26 September 1928

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All subsequent images in this section are from DEW Files and were taken on 21 October 2022.



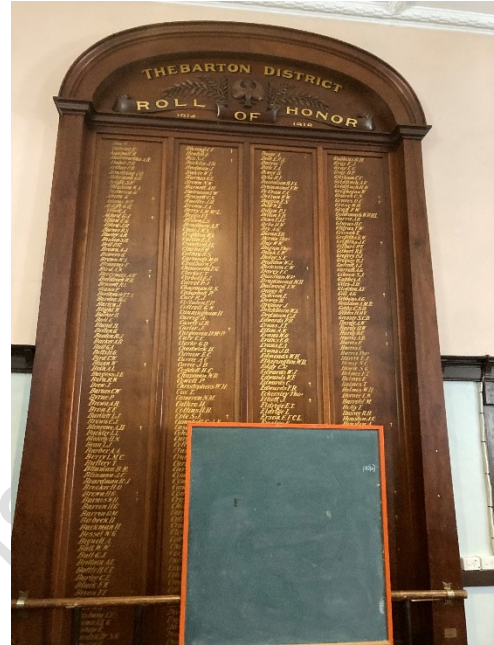
Auditorium interior view towards stage (left) and view towards gallery (right).



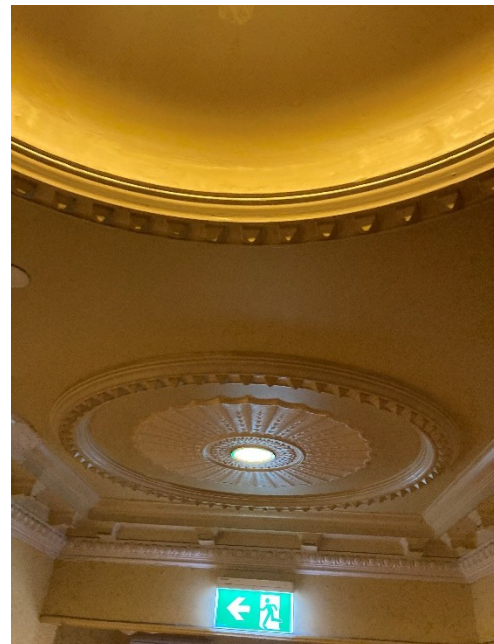
Auditorium ceiling detail (left) and foyer ticket box (right)

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Interior of assembly hall (left) and assembly hall honour roll (right).



View of stage and proscenium (left) and foyer ceiling decoration (right).

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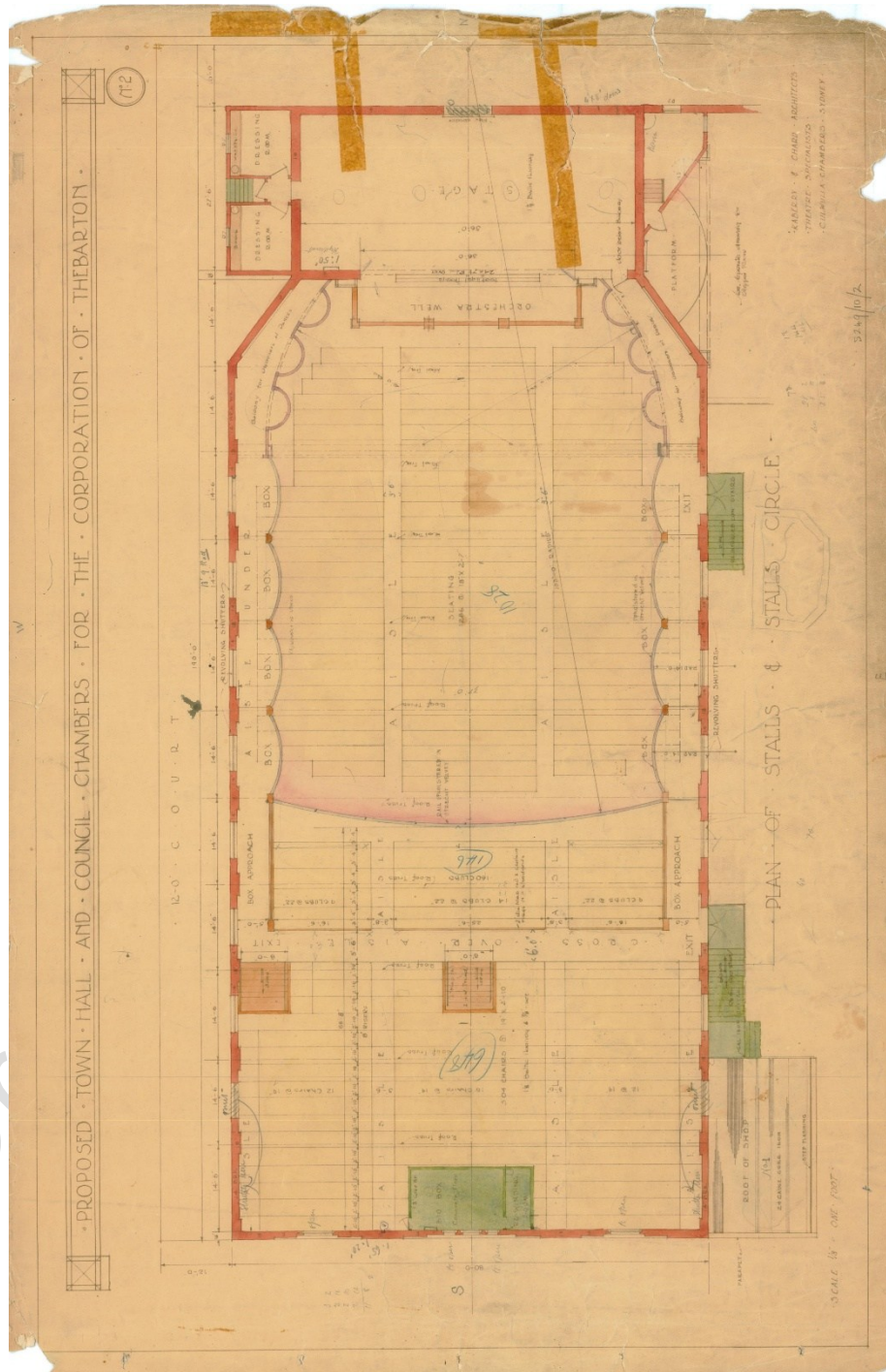


Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex, block plan, elevations and cross section, c.1927.

Source: S249/10 Adelaide University Architecture Museum

Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex
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Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex, plan, c.1927.

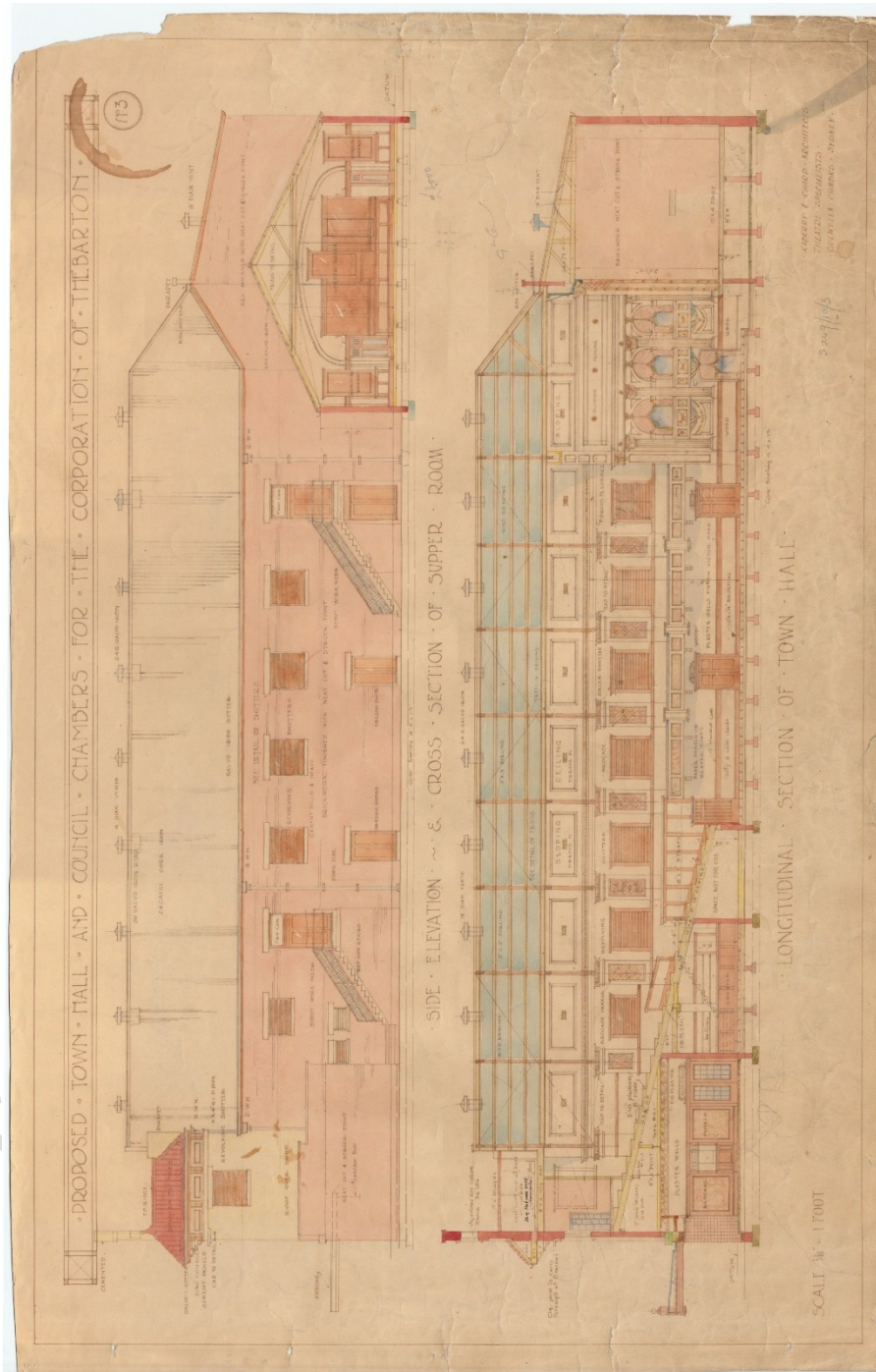
Source: S249/10 Adelaide University Architecture Museum

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Former Thebarton Town Hall Complex, elevation and long section, c.1927.

Source: S249/10 Adelaide University Architecture Museum

REVISIONS

Date	Changes

¹ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution: Sustaining Rural Exhibition in South Australia (1897-1935)* (August 2017) pp. 3, 21; Heritage Matters Pty Ltd, 'Jaffas Down the Aisles: A Survey of Cinemas in Country Victoria' (June 2008) p. 9

² Alison Painter, 'Entertainment: the changing scene' in Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round (eds), *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the history of South Australia, 1933-1968* (1996) Adelaide SA: Association of Professional Historians Inc. p. 298

³ Alison Painter, 'Entertainment' p. 298; in 1930s Renmark, the Crowle family held regular seats in the dress circle of the Arcadia Theatre adjacent to the main stairs; Pete Crowle Pers. Comm.

⁴ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* p. 64

⁵ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* pp. 41-43

⁶ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* p. 41

⁷ 'Rise of Dan Clifford, News Vendor to Theatre Owner, Twelve Years' Progress' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8; see also John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory...* (1991) Goodwood SA: Theatre Organ Society of Australia, South Australian Division Incorporated

⁸ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* pp. 81-85

⁹ Susan Marsden, Paul Stark and Patricia Sumerling (eds), *Heritage of the City of Adelaide: an illustrated guide* (1990) Adelaide: Corporation of the City of Adelaide p. 121

¹⁰ 'First Drive-In Theatre To Open Tomorrow' in *Advertiser* 27 December 1954 p. 9; Alison Painter, 'Entertainment' p. 299

¹¹ CT427/158

¹² 'Rise of Dan Clifford' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8

¹³ 'Rise of Dan Clifford' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8

¹⁴ John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory* p. 52

¹⁵ 'Mr. Dan Clifford, Energetic Entertainer, Controller of Picture Theatres.' in *Daily Herald* 25 August 1922 p. 4

¹⁶ 'Companies and Societies.' in *Register* 30 November 1922 p. 1

¹⁷ John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory* p. 52

¹⁸ 'Companies Registered ... South Australia ... Change of Name' in *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List* (Sydney NSW) 2 May 1923 p. 5

¹⁹ 'Star Theatre Enterprise. Norwood's Picture Palace.' in *Mail* 19 May 1923 p. 9

²⁰ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* p. 15

²¹ 'Rise of Dan Clifford' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8

²² John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory* p. 56

²³ Dylan Walker, *Almost an Institution* pp. 86-87

²⁴ Genealogy SA Database <https://www.genealogysa.org.au/>

²⁵ 'Clifford Theatres Ltd. Sold for About £300,000' in *Narracoorte Herald* 7 October 1946 p. 3

²⁶ John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory* p. 68

²⁷ 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

- ²⁸ 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
- ²⁹ Tom Gara, 'The Aboriginal Presence in Adelaide, 1860s-1960s: from exclusion to assimilation' in Peggy Brock and Tom Gara (eds), *Colonialism and its Aftermath* (2017) Adelaide: Wakefield Press pp. 97-101
- ³⁰ Lockwood, 'Early Encounters on the Adelaide Plains and Encounter Bay' p. 81
- ³¹ Pauline Payne, *Thebarton Old and New* (1996) Thebarton SA: Thebarton City Council p. 10-11; Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' (October 1991); John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory* p. 18; Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' p. 8
- ³² Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' pp. 22-23
- ³³ 'Opening of the Thebarton Town Hall' in *South Australian Register* 9 October 1885 p. 7; Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' (October 1991) p. 23
- ³⁴ Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey' p. 12
- ³⁵ Pauline Payne, *Thebarton Old and New* pp. 129-130
- ³⁶ 'Thebarton Town Hall.' in *Register* 20 August 1925 p. 15
- ³⁷ 'Thebarton Town Hall.' in *Advertiser* 1 April 1926 p. 16
- ³⁸ 'Rise of Dan Clifford. News Vendor to Theatre Owner, Twelve Years' Progress' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8; John Thiele and Ross Lange, *Thanks for the Memory*
- ³⁹ 'Rise of Dan Clifford. News Vendor to Theatre Owner, Twelve Years' Progress' in *News* 6 January 1928 p. 8
- ⁴⁰ 'New Corporation Hall at Woodville. Foundation Stone Laid' in *Port Adelaide News* 8 October 1926 p. 5; 'Woodville Hall. Foundation Stone Laid.' in *Register* 8 October 1926 p. 13
- ⁴¹ 'Tenders and Contracts' in *News* 5 July 1927 p. 14
- ⁴² 'Thebarton Town Hall. The Henley Beach Road Frontage.' in *Advertiser* 29 July 1927 p. 14
- ⁴³ 'Thebarton Town Hall. The Henley Beach Road Frontage.' in *Advertiser* 29 July 1927 p. 14; 'Thebarton Town Hall' in *News* 18 August 1927 p. 5
- ⁴⁴ Corporation of the Town of Thebarton, 1980, Application for Assistance under the State Heritage Fund, DEW Files
- ⁴⁵ 'Thebarton Town Hall. The Henley Beach Road Frontage.' in *Advertiser* 29 July 1927 p. 14
- ⁴⁶ 'Thebarton Town Hall. The Henley Beach Road Frontage.' in *Advertiser* 29 July 1927 p. 14
- ⁴⁷ The Council expected that dance parties hiring the supper room would prove especially lucrative; 'Thebarton Town Hall. The Henley Beach Road Frontage.' in *Advertiser* 29 July 1927 p. 14; 'Thebarton's New Hall. Official Opening.' in *Register* 12 June 1928 p. 12
- ⁴⁸ 'New Town Hall. Opened at Thebarton.' in *Advertiser* 12 June 1928 p. 8
- ⁴⁹ 'New Town Hall. Opened at Thebarton.' in *Advertiser* 12 June 1928 p. 8; 'Thebarton Town Hall Poll.' in *Advertiser* 25 April 1927 p. 9; 'Municipal Borrowings, Decision Should Rest With Ratepayers, Council Authorities Seek No Alteration' in *Mail* 9 June 1928 p. 3
- ⁵⁰ 'Thebarton Town Hall. Foundation-Stone Laid.' in *Advertiser* 15 September 1927 p. 14
- ⁵¹ 'New Thebarton Town Hall.' in *Register* 22 May 1928 p. 10 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56631348>
- ⁵² 'Thebarton's New Hall. Official Opening.' in *Register* 12 June 1928 p. 12 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56629664>
- ⁵³ 'Municipal Progress at Thebarton' in *News* 1 June 1928 p. 8 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article129130296>
- ⁵⁴ 'Thebarton's New Town Hall. Details of Construction.' in *Register* 9 June 1928 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56628031>
- ⁵⁵ 'Thebarton's New Hall. Official Opening.' in *Register* 12 June 1928 p. 12 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56629664>
- ⁵⁶ 'Thebarton Show Another for Dan Clifford Circuit.' in *Everyones: the Motion Picture Authority* 20 June 1928 p. 30 <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-565566228/>; 'Thebarton Town Hall, Opening on Monday Night, Imposing New Edifice' in *News* 8 June 1928 p. 15 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article129133257>
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⁵⁷ 'Thebarton Town Hall.' in *Chronicle* 5 May 1928 p. 49 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article90411998>; Danvers Architects, 'Thebarton Heritage Survey'

⁵⁸ 'Thebarton's New Town Hall. Details of Construction.' in *Register* 9 June 1928 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56628031>

⁵⁹ 'Thebarton's New Town Hall. Details of Construction.' in *Register* 9 June 1928 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56628031>

⁶⁰ 'Thebarton's New Town Hall. Details of Construction.' in *Register* 9 June 1928 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56628031>; 'Thebarton Town Hall. Opening Ceremony on Monday.' in *Advertiser* 9 June 1928 p. 21 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article49388008>

⁶¹ Geoffrey Grainger, 'Cinemas of West Torrens' in *West Torrens Historian* Vol. 7 No. 1 (April 2015)

⁶² Helen Karakulak, '10 Minutes with... Weslo director Bob Lott' in *InDaily* 14 October 2024 <https://www.indailysa.com.au/news/archive/2024/10/14/10-minutes-with-weslo-director-bob-lott>

⁶³ Thebarton Theatre, History <https://thebartontheatre.com.au/history/>

⁶⁴ Tony Polese, 'Thebarton Theatre's Celebration of a Lifetime and Induction into the SA Music Hall of Fame' in *Eventalaide* 25 July 2018 <https://eventalaide.com/music/thebarton-theatres-celebration-of-a-lifetime-and-induction-into-the-sa-music-hall-of-fame/>

⁶⁵ SA Music Hall of Fame, Thebarton Theatre <https://www.samusichalloffame.org/venues/thebartontheatre>

⁶⁶ City of West Torrens, Thebarton Theatre Upgrade <https://www.westtorrens.sa.gov.au/Community/Major-projects/Thebarton-Theatre-upgrade>

⁶⁷ 'Woodville Town Hall. Opening Announced.' in *Advertiser* 8 April 1927 p. 11 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73662220>