

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall

PLACE: 26593

ADDRESS: Kaurna Country
Lot 94 Harvey Road, Elizabeth Grove

This heritage assessment considers that the place meets criterion (a). Refer to Summary of State Heritage Place for final approved wording, including criteria statements.



Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall

Source: DEW Files, 28 June 2024

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Heritage Significance:

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, opened in 1956, has a strong association with postwar migration and demonstrates the important role the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) played in building communities in its planned developments in metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia. Elizabeth was developed from 1955 by the SAHT as the state's second largest city, after Adelaide, to support the industrialisation of South Australia and more than half of Elizabeth's population were migrants from Europe. The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall was built to serve Elizabeth South, the first of ten neighbourhood units and was the first church to open. Following the SAHT's intention to establish a stable social unit, the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall offered not only religious services and fellowship but was also a focal point for community-building activities.

Relevant South Australian Historical Themes

2. Peopling Places and Landscapes

2.4 Migrating to South Australia

4. Building Settlements, Towns and Cities

4.1 Shaping the suburbs (pre and post World War 2)

6. Developing Social and Cultural Life (supporting and building communities)

6.1 Supporting diverse religions and maintaining spiritual life

6.7 Continuing cultural traditions

6.8 Marking the phases of life

Comparability / Rarity / Representation:

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with the Methodist Church, late twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture, postwar places of worship, and the establishment of Elizabeth, South Australia. Each is considered in turn.

Methodism in South Australia

At least 60 Methodist churches or chapels were built in South Australia between 1945 and 1977, of which less than 50 retain a reasonable level of intactness.

There are 22 State Heritage Places in South Australia which are former Methodist churches or chapels. Only one was built after 1945:

- Nunyara Chapel, 1963, 5 Burnell Drive, Belair, criterion (e) (SHP 14785).

Examples of State Heritage Places that are former Methodist churches include:

- Former Way Memorial Bible Christian Church, 1851, 30 Sixth Street, Bowden (SHP 13682, listed 1989),
- Auburn Uniting (former Bible Christian) Church, 1861, Main North Road, Auburn (SHP 10999, listed 1986).
- Religious Building - Uniting Church, Old Marion Methodist Church, 1862, 9 Township Road, Marion (SHP 12776, listed 1989),
- Wesley Uniting Church, 1864, 31A Fullarton Road, Kent Town (SHP 10543, listed 1981),
- Moonta Mines Uniting Church, Outbuildings and Front Fence (former Wesleyan Methodist Church), 1865, 557 Milne Street Moonta Mines (SHP 13499, listed 1981),
- Religious Building - Gartrell Memorial Church and Hall, 1914, Alexandra Avenue Rose Park (SHP 13988, listed 1989),

Late twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture in South Australia

Before 1945, churches were generally designed in decorative historicist styles derived from ancient or medieval precedents. However, after the Second World War, traditional decorative styles became less prevalent for several reasons. Notably, the loss of skilled trades and the time involved in traditional construction techniques led to increased costs, making traditional styles less economical.¹ Further, architects who followed the Modern movement in architecture tended to reject the decorative nature of historical styles, deeming it to be superficial, regressive and 'dishonest'.²

Apperly, Irving and Reynolds identify two styles associated with places of worship constructed in Australia since 1945: the post-war ecclesiastical style (c.1940-1960) and the late twentieth-century ecclesiastical style (c.1960-1990). The late-twentieth century ecclesiastical style is understood to continue and extend the trends exhibited by the post-war ecclesiastical style but demonstrates a tendency towards more unusual floor plans and roof shapes.

The late twentieth-century ecclesiastical style is characterised by the following key style indicators:

- radical plan shapes, responding to liturgical change,
- steel, reinforced concrete or glulam portal frames, especially when exposed inside the building as an architectural feature,
- distinctive roof shapes, designed to set churches apart from secular buildings and connote a religious function,
- coloured glass windows,
- windows with accentuated mullions,
- windows with vertically proportioned openings, frames or panes,
- clerestory or skylight windows,
- plain wall surfaces, of undecorated face brick or concrete blockwork,
- play of light from unseen or unexpected sources to create a special mood,
- unbroken straight lines emphasising verticality,
- inverted V shapes reminiscent of Gothic pointed arches,
- elements reminiscent of Gothic flèches or spires, pointing 'heavenward',
- architectural 'distinctiveness' achieved through experimentation in space and form,
- integration into community expressed through familiar, 'humble' materials such as brick and timber, with domestic associations,
- utilisation of newly available structural materials facilitating dramatic shapes.³

In *Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945-1990*, Burns outlines a typology of nine common types associated with postwar churches in South Australia,⁴ based on typical roof shapes of such places. The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall and is associated with the 'gable' type.

The gable type is the most frequently occurring roof type associated with postwar churches in South Australia. The type is characterised by a gable roof with a pitch gentler than forty-five degrees, overhanging eaves, a level ridgeline, and a worship space located under the main gable, which is longer than it is wide.⁵



Immanuel Lutheran Church, North Adelaide, 1956 (left) and St Margaret Mary's Catholic Church, Croydon Park, 1968 (SHP 26521) (right) are both gable-roofed churches.

Source: Google Maps/DEW Files

Postwar places of worship

Fourteen post-1945 places of worship are State Heritage Places. Examples include:

- St Maximillian Kolbe Catholic Church, 1984, Agnes Street, Ottaway, criteria (f) and (g) (SHP 26473),
- Holy Cross Catholic Church, 1969, 159-165 Goodwood Road, Millswood, criteria (d), (e) and (g) (SHP 26498),
- St Alphonsus' Catholic Church, 87 George Street, Millicent, criteria (a), (d) and (e) (SHP 26544),
- Naracoorte Church of Christ, 1966, 64 Jenkins Terrace, Naracoorte, criteria (d) and (e) (SHP 26550, confirmed 23 May 2024),
- Cathedral of Angels Michael and Gabriel Greek Orthodox Church and Bell Tower, 1966, 282-288 Franklin Street, Adelaide, criterion (f) (SHP 13205),
- Shri Ganesh Temple, 1990s, 3A Dwyer Road, Oaklands Park, criterion (f) (SHP 26361).

The Australian Institute of Architects South Australian Chapter has identified four extant postwar places of worship as significant examples of twentieth century architecture in South Australia:⁶

- St David's Anglican Church, 492 Glynburn Road, Burnside, 1962 (SHP 26553),
- Nunyara Chapel, 5 Burnell Drive, Belair, 1963 (SHP 14785)
- Immanuel Lutheran College Chapel, 32 Morphett Road Novar Gardens, 1971 (subject of a future assessment),
- Jubilee Chapel, Centennial Park, 760 Goodwood Road, Pasadena, 1987.



Nunyara Chapel (SHP 14785)

Source: DEW Files

Elizabeth: establishment and early community formation

There are no State Heritage Places and six Local Heritage Places associated with the establishment of Elizabeth and early community formation within the new town:

- Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, 1956, Lot 94 Harvey Road, Elizabeth Grove (subject of this assessment); the first community building completed in Elizabeth,
- GMH Office Building, c.1958, 180 Philip Highway, Elizabeth South; part of the GMH factory complex which played an important role in the establishment and development of Elizabeth, only the front metal grille is listed, not the façade,
- Former Anglican Mission, 1959, 91-93 Elizabeth Way, Elizabeth; community centre and one of the first such buildings established in Elizabeth,
- Grandstand, Elizabeth Oval, 1959, 10 Goodman Road, Elizabeth,
- Shedley Theatre, 1965, 7 Frobisher Road, Elizabeth; remnant of two linked civic theatres, demonstrates very low integrity,
- Clock Tower, 1967, 3 Windsor Square, Elizabeth; part of the former Elizabeth Council Chambers, associated with local government in Elizabeth.

Three notable unlisted places with the same associations are:

- Ridley Reserve clubroom complex, 1957, Ridley Road, Elizabeth; built for the Elizabeth Football Club, associated with the early provision of sport and recreational facilities in Elizabeth, appears highly intact,
- Jean Flynn Presbyterian Church, 1957, 6 Goodman Road, Elizabeth South (subject of a separate assessment); associated with early community formation and provision of early social services,
- Former John Bull Association Hall, 1965, 31 Homington Road, Elizabeth North; community hall associated with British migration to Elizabeth.



Former Anglican Mission, 1959 (LHP) (left) and Ridley Reserve clubroom complex (right), note recent awning structures, 1957

Source: Google Street View

**Assessment against Criteria under Section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.
All Criteria have been assessed using the 2020 Guidelines.**

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with the historic themes Peopling Places and Landscapes and its subtheme Migrating to South Australia; Building Settlements, Towns and Cities and its subtheme Shaping the suburbs (pre and post World War 2); and Developing Social and Cultural Life (supporting and building communities) and its subthemes, Supporting diverse religions and maintaining spiritual life, Continuing cultural traditions, and Marking the phases of life.

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall demonstrates the important role the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) played in building communities in its planned developments in metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia. The SAHT developed the Elizabeth new town from 1955 to support the industrialisation of the South Australian economy, which was facilitated in large part through the postwar settlement of migrants. The SAHT, as the de facto planner for metropolitan Adelaide and instrumental in the planned expansion of industrialising regional towns in South Australia, transposed the successful planning and community-building ideas implemented and lessons learned from Elizabeth across the State.

Community and the establishment of a 'stable social unit' was considered essential to the SAHT's plan, and churches were encouraged to establish facilities at Elizabeth before or soon after residents moved in. Opened in 1956 and associated with Elizabeth South, the first of ten neighbourhood units ultimately built in Elizabeth, the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall was both the first church and the first community hall to open in the Elizabeth new town. As well as serving as a place of worship and religious fellowship, the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall was a focal point for community activities during Elizabeth's establishment phase, including community meetings, social gatherings, film entertainment, and various indoor and outdoor sporting competitions. The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall offered not only a place where new migrants could worship, but one where new migrants, including those who were non-churchgoers, could meet new people, form friendships and contribute to building a community.

It is recommended that the nominated place **fulfils** criterion (a).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with both Methodism and the Uniting Church in Australia. The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is one of many former South Australian Methodist churches now aligned with the Uniting Church. Numerous former Methodist churches have also been adapted to new uses and 22 former Methodist Churches are State Heritage Places. As such, former Methodist Churches are not considered to be rare, uncommon or endangered.

While organised Methodist worship came to an end in South Australia in 1977, when the Australian branches of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches merged to form the Uniting Church of Australia, this transition was achieved with minimal disruption. For most former Methodist congregations active today, the key characteristics of Methodist worship, such as lay leadership and ministry, including leadership and ministry by women, and the traditions of preaching, hymnody and monthly Holy Communion have continued as before within the Uniting Church.

Worship within the Uniting Church is an ongoing practice in South Australia, and while some congregations have declined in recent decades, others have grown in strength. Consequently, the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is not considered to demonstrate cultural qualities that are rare, uncommon or in danger of becoming lost.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (b).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall was built on a suburban allotment at Elizabeth which was previously open farmland. There is no evidence to suggest that the land contains any archaeological deposits beyond that which is considered commonplace in a rural context. The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is well documented by a variety of primary and secondary sources, including those held by the congregation. There is no evidence (documentary, oral history or physical) to suggest that the place may yield information that will contribute meaningfully to an understanding of the State's history beyond what is readily available.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (c).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with the class of place known as postwar churches. Postwar population growth resulting from migration and the baby boom, suburban and regional development, and the evolving role of churches in community life led to the construction of 650 new churches between 1945 and 1990 in South Australia. Churches constructed during this time played a prominent role in South Australia's physical, cultural and spiritual development.

The principal attributes of the class of place 'postwar church' comprise a range of physical elements including the setting and exterior form of the building; materials and the layout; and furnishing and decoration of the interior spaces. Outstanding representatives of the class of place will possess a range of both exterior and interior characteristics that define the class. Outstanding representatives of the class of place will also be either churches built in a single construction phase or in several stages according to a preconceived master plan, resulting in a cohesive architectural expression, and demonstrate a considered engagement with site and context.

Principal characteristics of the class include:

- distinctive roof forms employed to set the church apart from secular buildings,
- adoption of commonplace materials with domestic connotations employed to integrate the church into its community,
- adoption of newly-available materials, processes and technologies,
- expression in mid- or late twentieth-century ecclesiastical styles,
- provision of community facilities or amenities,
- a considered engagement with site and context,
- and the presence of bespoke artworks created as an integral part of the church's design.

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall demonstrates many of the principal characteristics of the class. However, unlike places such as Naracoorte Church of Christ (SHP 26550), it is not considered to demonstrate these characteristics of a higher quality, intactness or historical relevance than is typical for the class. Unlike Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church (SHP 26520), the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall does not contain physical characteristics of design, technology of materials that were copied in subsequent places of the class, and unlike St Alphonsus Catholic Church (SHP 26544), it does not encapsulate a key evolutionary phase in the development of the class. As such, Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is not considered to be an outstanding example of the class of place, postwar church.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (d).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with late twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture, demonstrating a number of attributes typical of the style, such as a steel frame selectively exposed inside the building as an architectural feature; coloured glass windows with accentuated mullions; clerestory windows; plain wall surfaces of undecorated face brick; play of light from unexpected sources to create a special mood, and integration into community expressed through familiar, 'humble' materials such as brick and timber, with domestic associations.

While a well-resolved design demonstrating a range of key attributes typical of late twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture, when compared to places such as Naracoorte Church of Christ (SHP 26550) and St Alphonsus Catholic Church (SHP 26544) (see Comparability / Rarity / Representation), the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is considered to be typical of places of worship built during the first two decades after the Second World War, rather than an outstanding representative.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (e).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

Places will not be considered if their associations are commonplace by nature, or of recent origin, or recognised by a small number of people, or not held very strongly, or held by a group not widely recognised, or cannot be demonstrated satisfactorily to others.

From 1956 until the present, the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall has been a place of worship for the Methodist and later, the Uniting Church community. The Uniting Church was created in 1977 following the amalgamation of the Methodist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian Churches in Australia, and continued the key practices and traditions of Methodist worship.

While the Uniting Church as a whole may be considered a group that resonates broadly across the state, there is no evidence to suggest this group collectively has a strong cultural or spiritual connection with the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, as it is only one of numerous Uniting churches in South Australia. Any subset of the larger group, with such a connection, would be unlikely to be considered to resonate broadly across the State as a group of significance to South Australia.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (f).

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

Criterion arguments have considered the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*:

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

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

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is associated with the Methodist Church of Australasia. The Methodist Church played an important role in South Australian history as the dominant South Australian Christian denomination during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then amalgamated with the Congregational and Presbyterian churches to form the Uniting Church of Australia in 1977. The Methodist Church experienced considerable growth during the postwar period before declining from the late 1960s. While the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is one of several former Methodist churches in South Australia there is no evidence to suggest that it has made a strong, notable or influential contribution to the history of Methodism in South Australia nor does it have associations with Methodism that would be considered to be beyond the ordinary. When compared with other such places such as the Epworth Building (SHP 13389) the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is not considered to have a special association with the Methodist Church at the State level.

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is also associated with South Australian architectural firm Brown & Davies Pty Ltd, known today as Brown Falconer. Currently, insufficiently detailed research has so far been undertaken to critically evaluate Brown & Davies' role, influence and significance within the broader context of South Australian architectural practice during the postwar period. While future research may demonstrate that Brown & Davies Pty Ltd has made a strong, notable or influential contribution to South Australian history, there is currently insufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is the case.

It is recommended that the nominated place **does not fulfil** criterion (g).

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is a single-storey, red brick, concrete blockwork, steel and reinforced concrete church complex. It comprises a chapel/hall with a high gable roof supported by a composite steel and timber structure; a narthex/vestry wing wrapped around the northern and western sides, with a reinforced concrete flat roof; a classroom and service wing to the south, with a skillion roof; and an activity hall and classroom to the east, with a clerestory roof. Additional exterior features include:

- firing-marked red brick base courses with upper string course in relief,
- corrugated steel sheet cladding to main and skillion roofs,
- open eaves to gable roof with matchboard soffit,
- brick front wall to hall/chapel and narthex/vestry with timber feature cross and marble foundation stone, both positioned asymmetrically,
- hall/chapel divided into 6 structural bays, with red brick piers relieved, including rebated front bay,
- window openings to all bays on southern side, with rendered spandrels below sills,
- clerestory windows in bays 2-6 along northern side above flat narthex/vestry roof,
- long window openings along northern side of narthex/vestry wing, with concrete blockwork walls below (now painted),
- main entrance on northern side of narthex/vestry wing, comprising double timber doors flanked by sidelights and transom window above, glazed with clear glass,
- aluminium frames to most window openings,
- rippled amber glass to hall/chapel and narthex/vestry wing windows,
- flat roof extended over main entrance, forming porch,
- brick wing wall on eastern side of entrance enclosing porch and supporting porch roof, with tubular steel column supporting other extremity,
- concrete porch steps, ramp and floor (ramp not significant fabric),
- stainless steel access railing to porch (not significant fabric),
- terrazzo doorstep,
- clerestory window in roof of classroom and service wing.

The interior of the hall/chapel comprises, from west to east, a sanctuary (bay 1), a hall (bays 2-5) and a proscenium stage (bay 6). Additional internal features of the hall/chapel include:

- timber floor,
- exposed I-beam rafters and longitudinal timber spacing struts bolted to welded brackets on the rafters, with matchboard ceiling,
- glass pendant light fittings (2) and ceiling fans (not significant fabric),
- matchboard-lined chancel arch in an inverted v-shape, with velvet draw curtains,

- lacquered face brick sanctuary wall, with timber feature cross positioned centrally,
- sanctuary floor two steps above hall floor, with solid communion rails,
- single doorway in bay 2 and hollow-core plywood quadripartite folding doors in bays 3-5, dividing chapel/hall from narthex,
- timber footlight trough to stage, matchboard-lined stage fascia, and secret hopper door providing under-stage access,
- velvet draw curtains to proscenium.

The narthex/vestry wing comprises, from east to west, an anteroom associated with the hall/chapel stage, a long narthex, and two vestry rooms. Additional internal features of the narthex/vestry wing include:

- concrete slab floor to narthex and anteroom with vinyl tile covering,
- timber floor to vestries,
- inset doormat inside main entrance,
- fluorescent light fittings (not significant fabric),
- matchboard-lined partition wall to eastern end,
- hollow-core plywood doors to anteroom and vestries.

The classroom and service wing comprises a large classroom, a kitchen on the northern side and toilets on the eastern side. Additional internal features of the narthex/vestry wing include:

- face brick to some classroom walls,
- concrete slab floor to classroom with vinyl tile floor,
- blackboard in timber frame to classroom eastern wall,
- c.2000s partition wall extending kitchen (not significant fabric),
- c.2000s kitchen fitout (not significant fabric)
- c.2010s toilet fitout (not significant fabric).

Elements of Significance:

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

- Combined hall/chapel building completed in 1956 and activity hall completed c.1960s,
- Narthex/vestry wing to the north-west and the classroom and service wing to the south,
- Original exterior and interior materials and material finishes, including face brick, clear finished timber, coloured glass and terrazzo,
- Foundation stone.

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

- Main entrance access ramp and rails,
- Security system,

- Exit signs, ceiling fans, fluorescent light fittings, data projector, screen and speakers,
- Trees and landscaping.
- Kitchen and toilet fitouts.

HISTORY

Postwar church-building in South Australia

Over 650 new places of worship were built in South Australia between 1945 and 1990. Most were churches built by Christian denominations, and most were built during an intensive church-building boom, which occurred between 1953 and c.1967. The end of building restrictions in January 1953 heralded the beginning of postwar church building. Migration and the baby boom led to suburban expansion and regional development and each denomination sought to establish footholds in newly subdivided areas by building churches.⁷ Simultaneously, the congregations of established churches swelled, leading to the replacement or augmentation of some smaller buildings with new churches.⁸

From the late 1960s, Church attendance in South Australia entered a long, steady decline,⁹ as dissatisfaction with traditional organised religion turned large numbers of young people away. Notably, the generation of children who had attended Sunday School in the 1950s did not typically transition to adult churchgoing.¹⁰

Churches that were constructed after the building boom typically resulted from, and were funded by, the rationalisation and sale of existing church properties, sometimes due to dwindling congregations, but especially resulting from denominational unions leading to a surplus of church buildings.¹¹ In many Protestant denominations, these purpose-built late twentieth-century churches responded to a shift towards more informal worship styles, which traditional church buildings did not easily accommodate.

Methodism in South Australia

Founded by Anglican clergyman John Wesley, Methodism began as a network of religious societies within the Church of England but emerged as a distinct denomination a few years after Wesley's death in 1791.¹² Divisions that proliferated within English Methodism were transplanted to South Australia, and by the mid-1870s there were four Methodist denominations in the State: the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists, the Bible Christians and the Methodist New Connexion. Methodism was the most 'potent' religious movement in nineteenth century South Australia¹³ and by 1870 most communities in South Australia contained at least one Methodist chapel, some more than one. In 1888, the South Australian branch of the Methodist New Connexion was absorbed into the Bible Christian branch of the church, and in 1900 the Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian branches of Methodism amalgamated to create the Methodist Church of Australasia.¹⁴

Methodist membership grew steadily during the interwar period, growing from 23,112 in 1920 to 27,823 in 1940. 52 churches and 49 halls were built by Methodist congregations in South Australia during the 1920s, but construction was slowed first by the Great Depression,¹⁵ and then by building controls during the Second World War.

Methodist membership continued to increase steadily after 1950.¹⁶ American Baptist evangelist Dr. Billy Graham visited Adelaide in 1959, bringing an 'influx'¹⁷ of new parishioners to the Protestant denominations and boosting the size of Methodist congregations during that year.¹⁸ Methodist membership reached its all-time peak in 1968,¹⁹ then entered a sharp decline.

The South Australian Housing Trust

The state government created the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) in 1936. In part, its creation was tied to the industrialisation of South Australia, with the SAHT to provide mass housing as a means to reduce the cost of living and increase the competitiveness of South Australia to support the Playford government's industrialisation policy.²⁰ The postwar drive to further enlarge the manufacturing sector was challenged by labour shortages. To overcome the problem, the Playford government successfully negotiated with the Commonwealth to receive a disproportionately larger share of migrants in the first two decades after the Second World War.²¹ Consequently, South Australia experienced unprecedented levels of migration which, when combined with the baby boom, exacerbated a housing shortage that had existed in South Australia since the Great Depression.

In response, the Playford Government imposed building controls after the war, designed to channel resources into housing and maximise the number of new housing units that could be built.²² In the 1940s, the SAHT developed mass housing for rent and purchase in suburban Adelaide, a process that led to strident criticism due to its perceived failure to provide requisite services and facilities. In response, the SAHT sought a large tract of undeveloped land which it could develop according to the latest planning principles.²³

The Elizabeth new town, constructed on farmland to the north of Adelaide, would become the largest project undertaken by the SAHT and resulted in the construction of what became South Australia's second-largest city.²⁴ Its planning was based on British New Towns and North American neighbourhood unit planning ideas that aimed to create functioning communities from the beginning of the development. This challenged the usual pattern of subdivision in South Australia whereby community facilities and often basic community necessities, such as playgrounds, shops, schools and churches, would only emerge over time.²⁵

The SAHT transposed its planning activities and lessons learnt at Elizabeth to other parts of the metropolitan area such as at Noarlunga and in regional South Australia, including towns such as Whyalla. In lieu of adequate planning legislation to control development, the SAHT became the State's 'de facto planning authority.'²⁶ The SAHT would go on to influence other government agencies such as the South Australian

Land Commission, which replaced the SAHT as a suburban land bank, and private developers as residents' expectations around the provision of amenities at the point of subdivision grew.

Elizabeth and the church establishment

Elizabeth was designed by a small team of in-house architects led by Harry P Smith, many with firsthand experience of the British New Town planning model, notably at Stevenage and Harlow. Elizabeth was divided into 8 neighbourhood units each with a population of around 5,000 people. Key to Elizabeth's planning was the provision of community facilities and services such as kindergartens, open spaces, schools, shops and churches.²⁷ Ten neighbourhood units were ultimately built:

- Elizabeth South, 1955
- Elizabeth North, 1956
- Elizabeth Grove, 1957
- Elizabeth City Centre, 1957
- Elizabeth East, 1958
- Elizabeth Vale, 1960
- Elizabeth Park, 1960
- Elizabeth Downs, 1961²⁸
- Elizabeth West, 1961 (not part of original plan, now part of Davoren Park)
- Elizabeth Field, 1963 (not part of original plan, now part of Davoren Park)²⁹

The SAHT 'deliberately fostered'³⁰ a sense of community at Elizabeth in an attempt to establish a 'stable social unit.'³¹ Community formation was based around each of the neighbourhood units. The SAHT was so successful at supporting community formation at this level that in later years it had to work to foster an Elizabeth-wide sense of community. Thereafter in the areas it developed across South Australia, the SAHT would focus on fostering community formation at a larger scale. For instance, at Noarlunga where it developed 6 neighbourhood units, the focus on community building was regional.

Community formation was especially important for recently-arrived migrants, most of whom did not have established social support networks. The SAHT selected individuals to move to Elizabeth, often as small business owners, who had past experience establishing sporting clubs and other community-based activities. Churches were also encouraged to establish facilities at Elizabeth as new residents arrived rather than waiting for these voluntary organisations to grow on their own.³² Sites for churches were designed into the Elizabeth plan, which the SAHT then made available for the central church at cost price.³³ The SAHT also provided access to architectural services and building materials.

In the 1950s, the SAHT became involved in migration schemes, establishing an office in London to attract people from the United Kingdom to South Australia.³⁴ The SAHT also developed the Migrant House Purchase Scheme (MHPS) specifically to channel migrants into Elizabeth to populate the city as quickly as possible.³⁵ As a result, the population of Elizabeth was comprised of nearly 50% British migrants. By 1971, more

British migrants had settled in Elizabeth than in any other South Australian local government area.³⁶ Other European migrant groups also moved to Elizabeth, but their numbers were much smaller. In 1961, Dutch people comprised the next largest migrant cohort in Elizabeth, followed by Germans, and Italians.³⁷ Most of the growth of Elizabeth occurred prior to 1961, with a downturn in migration markedly slowing growth from 1967.³⁸

The number of new churches required to serve the projected population of Elizabeth strained the financial resources of all denominations.³⁹ To avoid competition and duplication of effort, the Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians cooperated with the SAHT and each other through a Consultative Committee, to allocate sites for new churches across the six original Elizabeth neighbourhood units.⁴⁰ The Methodists were allocated Elizabeth Grove, Downs and West, the Presbyterians Elizabeth North and South, and the numerically small Congregationalists were allocated Elizabeth East.⁴¹

The first churches built at Elizabeth were simple, inexpensive, multi-purpose halls with a sanctuary that could be screened off, allowing the church to be used for social activities during the week.⁴² The churches provided pastoral care, a place to worship,⁴³ and social services to the broader community through various structured and unstructured activities, organisations and events. As occurred elsewhere in South Australia, Anglican and Protestant Sunday Schools boomed in Elizabeth, experiencing growth into the mid-1960s.

While many Christian denominations 'flourished' in Elizabeth,⁴⁴ the largest groups measured by the 1966 census were the Anglicans, followed by the Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and Lutherans. Notably, due to British migration, Elizabeth was home to substantially more Anglicans and Presbyterians than was typical elsewhere in South Australia, and notably fewer Methodists and Lutherans. Dutch migration also contributed to the Presbyterian population at Elizabeth.⁴⁵

Membership of religious denominations in Elizabeth, 1966⁴⁶

	Number	% of population in Elizabeth	% of population in South Australia
Anglicans	12,540	38	26.2
Catholics	5,724	17.3	20.2
Methodists	4,300	13	20.8
Presbyterians	1,915	5.8	3.9
Lutherans	866	2.6	5.43

Numerous denominations with small congregations also established places of worship in Elizabeth, including the Baptists, Churches of Christ, Seventh-day Adventists, Salvation Army, Assemblies of God, Christadelphians, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴⁷ By 1965, twenty different religious organisations owned more than forty sites across Elizabeth.⁴⁸ In October 1969, the Congregational, Presbyterian

and Methodist Churches in Elizabeth formed a united parish, known as the Elizabeth United Parish.⁴⁹

Regardless of denomination, most Elizabeth churches were built on generously-sized allotments, allowing for planned future expansion. However, while dedicated single-use replacement churches were foreseen, in most cases development did not proceed beyond simple extensions to the original buildings.

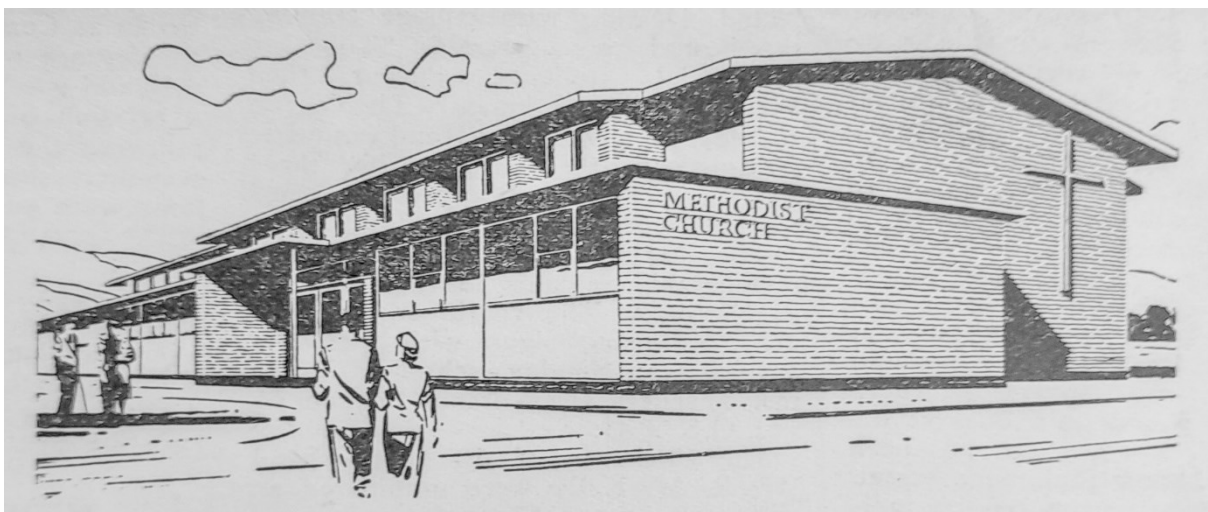
The Elizabeth churches offered secular as well as spiritual service to their local communities. For example, 'colourful'⁵⁰ and 'unconventional'⁵¹ Anglican priest Howell Witt facilitated various community activities, including dances and organised sport, and St Theodore's Anglican Church at Elizabeth South (now demolished), where Witt was based, served as 'kindergarten, youth club, old folks' home-from-home, welfare agency, bargain mart, scout hut, guide hall, theatre, gymnasium, assembly room [and] dancing academy.'⁵²

Notably, the Presbyterian Churches in Elizabeth played an important role in the creation of the Elizabeth Counselling Centre, sometimes referred to as the Elizabeth Counselling Service, a non-denominational organisation established by Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist clergy with assistance from the SAHT. The organisation provided both personal and financial counselling to the local community and was staffed by volunteers, most of whom were drawn from local churches.⁵³ Later, it became known as the Para Districts Counselling Service, offering professional counselling.⁵⁴

From the late 1960s, low attendance led to many of the Elizabeth churches closing.⁵⁵ Some were taken over by other church groups. Meanwhile rationalisation of property ownership within and/or across denominations led to the construction of a few new churches, such as Holy Cross Anglican Church, opened in 1981.

Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall

In 1954, anxious to secure early footholds in the new town ahead of residential occupation, the South Australian Methodist Conference (the Conference) created a Commission tasked with establishing places of worship in Elizabeth.⁵⁶ The Commission applied for three sites to serve the first six neighbourhood units. The SAHT offered the Commission a block of approximately two acres at Elizabeth Grove, adjacent to the eastern boundary of Elizabeth South, which became the site of the Elizabeth South Methodist Hall. This strategic location on the boundary of two neighbourhood units enabled the church to serve both emerging communities. The Commission considered the site large enough to eventually accommodate a purpose-built church, parsonage, kindergarten, and tennis and basketball courts, besides the initial church hall. The purpose-built church and parsonage were never constructed.



Perspective drawing of the proposed Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall by architects Brown & Davies Pty Ltd

Source: *South Australian Methodist* 9 November 1956 p. 1

Adelaide architects Brown & Davies Pty Ltd designed a combined church and hall for the site, with a sanctuary at one end, a proscenium stage at the other,⁵⁷ and an open, multi-purpose flat timber floor in between. The building also featured classrooms, vestries and a kitchen.⁵⁸

On 27 November 1955, South Australian Premier Thomas Playford laid the foundation stone of the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall. The *South Australian Methodist* newspaper encouraged a 'Pilgrimage of Methodists (and any other well-wishers)' to 'converge' on the site, resulting in a crowd of 5,000 witnessing the ceremony.⁵⁹

The construction of the Elizabeth South Methodist Hall, prior to the existence of an Elizabeth congregation, was considered to be a 'unique' situation in the history of South Australian Methodism.⁶⁰ When the church was blessed and officially named the following year on Saturday, 3 November 1956,⁶¹ the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall became the first church in Elizabeth and the first community hall.⁶² The total cost of the Elizabeth South Methodist Hall, including land, building and furnishings, was £12,600.⁶³

After opening, the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall was used by some of the other religious denominations in Elizabeth, while waiting for their own churches to be built. Worship began with 6 pews donated from a country church, and a quantity of stackable, tubular steel chairs.⁶⁴ Later in c.1959, a communion table was given by the Giles Corner Methodist Trust and in 1963, 22 pews were given by the Madge Memorial Methodist Church, Halifax Street, Adelaide.⁶⁵



The new Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, pictured around the time of its opening, c.1957

Source: Playford's Past

The Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall also served as a community centre for the broader neighbourhood, hosting community meetings, dinners and other events; fetes and markets; entertainment, including motion picture screenings; and indoor sporting competitions, such as basketball and volleyball.⁶⁶ The premises hosted numerous sporting clubs, including cricket, netball and tennis clubs.⁶⁷ The tennis club, operating out of the Church Hall and using the adjacent courts, was the first tennis club in Elizabeth.⁶⁸ After 1977, it was known as Elizabeth Grove Uniting Church Tennis Club.

By 1969, an activity hall, incorporating Sunday School classrooms, built in two stages, was added to the rear of the church.⁶⁹ At its peak during the 1960s, up to 600 children were reportedly enrolled in the Elizabeth South Methodist Sunday School.⁷⁰

Some years after the occupation of the first houses in Elizabeth Grove in January 1957, the name of the church was changed to Elizabeth Grove Methodist Church to avoid confusion, since the church was built on the Elizabeth Grove side of Harvey Road.⁷¹ Later, following union in 1977, Elizabeth Grove Methodist Church became known as Elizabeth Grove Uniting Church.

Chronology

Year	Event
1739	Methodist founder John Wesley establishes the first Methodist Society in England.
c.1795	Emergence of Methodism as a distinct denomination.
1870s	Four Methodist denominations exist in South Australia. Most South Australian communities possess at least one Methodist chapel.
1900	The Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian branches of Methodism amalgamated to create the Methodist Church of Australasia.
1908	South Australian architect Gordon Craig Brown is born.
1920s	52 churches and 49 halls are built by Methodist congregations in South Australia.
1928	Gordon Brown is employed by South Australian architect Eric McMichael 'as a kind of trainee draftsman.'
1945	Gordon Brown enters private practice as Gordon C. Brown.
1946	Australia signs a migration agreement with the United Kingdom, enabling British citizens to migrate for free or with assisted passage.
1947	Non-British European refugees begin arriving in Australia under the Commonwealth Mass Resettlement Scheme for Displaced Persons.
1950s	More than half of all South Australian children aged 5 to 14 attend a Protestant Sunday School.
1953	January, the end of post-Second World War building restrictions heralds the beginning of a postwar church-building boom in South Australia, driven by postwar migration and the baby boom. The Commonwealth Mass Resettlement Scheme for Displaced Persons concludes.
1954	The South Australian Methodist Conference creates a Commission tasked with establishing places of worship at Elizabeth. Formal discussions begin between the Australian Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches aimed at bringing about church union.
1955	The SAHT begins developing the Elizabeth new town on open farmland north of Adelaide. Gordon Brown enters a partnership with Donald (Don) Laurence Davies, resulting in the creation of Brown & Davies Pty Ltd. 16 November, Elizabeth is officially established. 17 November, the first houses in Elizabeth South are occupied.

27 November, South Australian Premier Thomas Playford lays the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall foundation stone. A crowd of 5,000 Methodists 'and other well-wishers' witness the ceremony.

1956 January, Elizabeth South Primary School opens.

3 November, the Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall is blessed, opened and officially named.

12 January 1957, the first houses in Elizabeth Grove are occupied.

1959 A communion table is donated to the Elizabeth South Methodist Church by the Giles Corner Methodist Trust.

American Baptist evangelist Dr. Billy Graham visits Adelaide.

c.1960s Elizabeth South Methodist Church becomes known as the Elizabeth Grove Methodist Church.

1963 22 pews are donated to Elizabeth South Methodist Church by the Madge Memorial Methodist Church in Halifax Street, Adelaide.

1965 Twenty different religious organisations own more than forty sites across Elizabeth.

c.1967 The postwar church-building boom ends in South Australia.

A downturn in migration slows the development of Elizabeth, leaving many houses vacant.

1968 Adult Methodist membership reaches its all-time peak in South Australia.

1969 October, the Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Elizabeth formed the Elizabeth United Parish.

1977 Elizabeth Grove Methodist Church becomes Elizabeth Grove Uniting Church.

2003 4 September, the former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall becomes a Local Heritage Place.

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SITE RECORD

NAME:	Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall	PLACE NO.:	26593
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FORMER NAME:	Elizabeth South Methodist Church Elizabeth Grove Methodist Church
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Single storey brick and reinforced concrete church complex
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1955 – c.1969
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated 18 August 2022 [Date of Provisional Entry]
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS:	LHP, listed 4 September 2003
CURRENT USE:	Uniting Church place of worship 1977 – present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Methodist place of worship 1956 – 1977
ARCHITECT:	Brown & Davies 1955 – 1956
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	City of Playford
LOCATION:	Street No.: Lot 94 Street Name: Harvey Road Town/Suburb: Elizabeth Grove Post Code: 5112
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title CT 5644/720 A94 D6184 Reference: Hundred: Munno Para Encumbrance: South Australian Housing Trust
MAP REFERENCE	34°44'5.42"S 138°39'56.01"E

PHOTOS

NAME: Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall **PLACE NO.:** 26593
Hall

All images in this section are from DEW Files and were taken on 28 June 2024, unless otherwise indicated.



Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, northern side showing main entrance



Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall, southern side

PHOTOS

NAME: Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church **PLACE NO.:** 26593
Hall



Interior, western end showing sanctuary



Interior, eastern end showing stage

PHOTOS

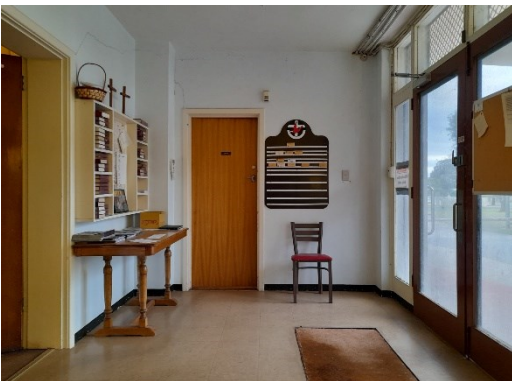
NAME: Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall **PLACE NO.:** 26593
Hall



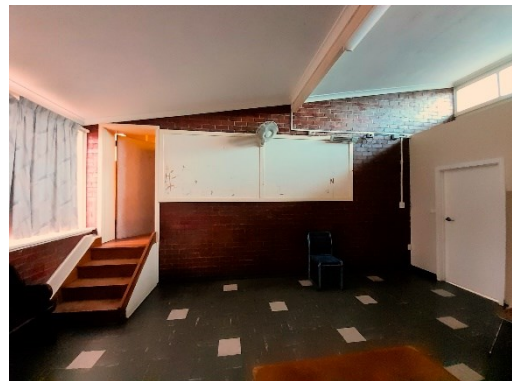
Rear view showing classroom and service wing



Interior showing narthex eastern end, with quadripartite folding doors between bays



Interior showing narthex western end



Interior showing classroom



Foundation stone



Northern side of c.1960s activity hall

SITE PLAN

NAME: Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall **PLACE NO.:** 26593
Hall



Former Elizabeth South Methodist Church Hall (CT 5644/720 A94 D6184 Hundred of Munno Para)*

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


- Combined hall/chapel building completed in 1956 and hall completed c.1960s,
- Original exterior and interior materials and material finishes, including face brick, clear finished timber, coloured glass and terrazzo,
- Foundation stone.

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

- Main entrance access ramp and rails,
- Security system,
- Exit signs, ceiling fans, fluorescent light fittings, data projector, screen and speakers,
- Trees and landscaping.
- Kitchen and toilet fitouts.

N ↑

LEGEND

 Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)

 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.

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- ¹⁶ Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*; see graph on p. 431
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- ¹⁸ Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven* p. 369
- ¹⁹ Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven* p. 376
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