

Queen Victoria Statue, 1894

Relocation: Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga 2013

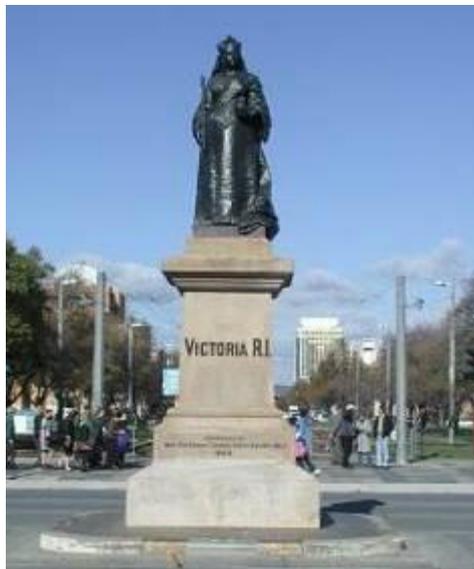
On Saturday, 14 December, 2013 the statue of Queen Victoria was repositioned 15 metres to the north of its original location, having occupied that position for nearly 120 years. It was moved as part of the contemporary Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga regeneration. The decision to relocate the statue was taken by the City of Adelaide after receiving advice from many sources and consulting with interest groups and the public.

CRED was commissioned by Council to contribute to this process by providing a report *Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga Cultural Markers; a Collaborative Bi-cultural Perspective, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal*, September 2012. The report outlined the bi-cultural significance, symbolic and otherwise, of all the Square's cultural markers, many commemorating the colonising period. Cultural markers included monuments, memorials, statues, public art, commemorative plaques and interpretive markers.

CRED supports the decision to retain the statue in Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga and to relocate it out of the east-west roadway and the central position of the Square. The new location is both a practical and symbolic decision; the statue can be much better engaged when not in the middle of a major roadway, and the centre of the Square no longer represents the colonising era.

History of the Statue and Relocations

Adelaide's main civic square was named in honour of Princess Victoria in May 1837, before she ascended to the British Throne. The placement of the Queen Victoria statue almost sixty years later in the Square, named in her honour, was appropriate and provides a strong cultural association between the two, and the colonial era. The statue was unveiled on the 11th August 1894, towards the end of Queen Victoria's sixty-four year reign (June, 1837 – January, 1901). The statue was initiated by Sir Edwin Thomas Smith, Mayor of Adelaide, 1879-82 and 1886-88, and was funded by him. It is by the sculptor Charles Bell Birch and was cast at the Thames & Dutton foundry. The statue is one of a series of eight which were located in various places in Britain and the former Empire.



Statue, Queen Victoria, Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga (2012)

The statue is the fourth major public statue in Adelaide coming after *Venere di Canova - Venus*, unveiled 3rd September, 1892, North Terrace; *Farnese Hercules*, unveiled 4th October, 1892, Victoria Square (moved June 1930 to Pennington Gardens West) and *Robert Burns*, unveiled 5th May, 1894, North Terrace.

The locations and settings of statues and other public commemorations are not fixed or static; they are first located and often re-located according to the requirements, cultural and otherwise, of the day. There are many physical practicalities and cultural sensitivities to be considered in the location, re-location and treatment of significant cultural markers.

The statue of *Col. William Light* on Montefiore Hill was originally located in the middle of the roadway at the northern junction of King William Street and Victoria Square. It was unveiled 27th November, 1906 by Governor Le Hunte. It was relocated to its present position in May 1938, one of the reasons being its hazardous location in a major roadway.



Statue, Colonel Light, Victoria Square, 1919 (SLSA PRG280.1.15.738)

Farnese Hercules was moved from Victoria Square to Pennington Gardens West in June 1930. The *War Horse Memorial Trough* (1923) was relocated from Victoria Square, adjacent to Grote Street, to the *Light Horse Memorial* on East Terrace as part of the 1960s redevelopment of the Square. The statues of the explorers Stuart and Sturt were also moved within the Square as part of the 1960s redevelopment. The statue of Charles Cameron Kingston was moved from the west to the east side of the Square to accommodate the tramline extension in 2007.

Different Days in the Life of a Statue



Floral tribute, 1906
(SLSA B34769)



Tramline tussle, c1910
(SLSA B64109)



Marooned in the middle

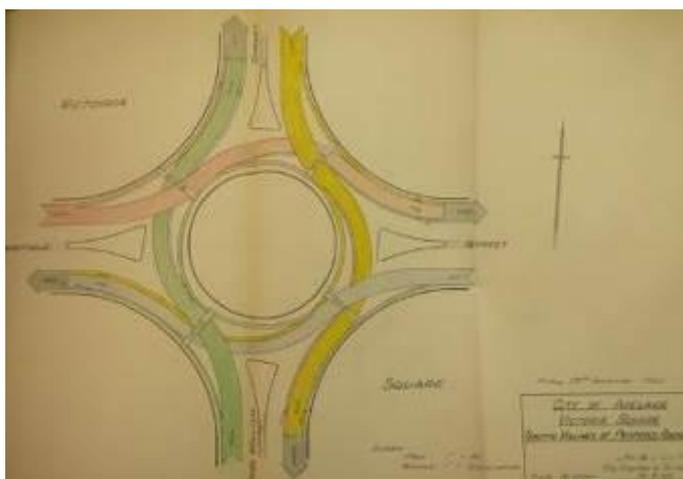


Off to the cleaners, 2005

In the 1960s the Adelaide City Council considered the relocation of Queen Victoria's statue as part of redesign considerations for the Square. This was to make the central site in the Square available for a proposed commemorative fountain to Queen Elizabeth's 1963 visit or to provide for a major traffic roundabout in the Square. One proposal from within the Council's Fountains Committee was to place the statue of Queen Victoria in a large fountain that also formed the traffic roundabout in the centre of the Square. This was publicly opposed by sculptor John Dowie 'I cannot see the idea of water splashing around the Queen's dignified statue' he said (The News, 24 July, 1963). Another proposal was to 'make the whole of Victoria Square into a roundabout' (Fountains Committee, 15 February, 1963).



Proposed Queen Victoria 'roundabout fountain', Victoria Square, 1963 (ACC Archives)



Victoria Square roundabout concept, 1962-63 (ACC Archives)

Several alternative locations were proposed for the statue; further south or north in the Square, or near to the former Treasury Building, or outside of the Square altogether at the front of Parliament House. In the Council's Fountains Committee it was stated:

Replacing the Statue of Queen Victoria

If this becomes necessary or desirable, an admirable setting exists in front of Parliament House. The western portal with its curving steps, elaborate lamps and columns provides a composition in the grand manner which would not protrude into the footpath to form any obstruction. As this is the old wing of Parliament and was erected during her reign, the setting is also appropriate.

Concept sketches for a Parliament House location were prepared by artists Allan Sierp and John Dowie, members of the Fountains Committee. Relocation was unnecessary in the final design and location of the commemorative fountain, Dowie's *Three Rivers Fountain* (now itself being relocated to the south of the Square).



Concept Sketches, Queen Victoria Statue, Parliament House (ACC Archives)

Other Forms of Commemoration; the *Three Rivers Fountain*, 1968

Statues are just one form of commemorative cultural marker and they have largely fallen out of fashion with other forms of public artworks now taking precedence. Queen Victoria's great, great granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Australia, is also commemorated in Victoria Square in the form of the *Three Rivers Fountain*, commissioned to commemorate her visit to Adelaide in 1963. This commemorative cultural marker has also been relocated in the contemporary regeneration of the Square in a far more dramatic way than the statue from its prominent position in the northern section of the Square to the southern tip. In principle the monarchist and traditionalists who opposed the statue's relocation should have opposed the relocation of the fountain but they were silent. They were opposing the potential diminution of an idea, that of a grand British Empire and colonisation, rather than moving the physical commemoration itself.



Three Rivers Fountain, 1968, Victoria Square

The monarchy continually reinvents its public persona to maintain its relevance to the community and to present itself as a contemporary monarchy, as do most institutions of State reinvent themselves whilst maintaining a continuing link to the past. The people, or subjects, also reflect their respect in changing ways thus a fountain for Queen Elizabeth rather than a statue. And the fountain also reflected a changing society, a gradual move to recognise Aboriginal Australians as in the 1967 referendum and to include them in public commemorations. *The Three Rivers Fountain* 1968, by sculptor John Dowie, is the first major civic artwork in the City of Adelaide to symbolically include Aboriginal people or culture and for that, and other reasons, it is a significant cultural marker. The fountain is included on the South Australian Heritage Register, as is the statue.

Victoria was Queen of Australia for only 22 days; Elizabeth has been Queen of Australia for over 62 years. Victoria was Queen for the Province, or colony, of South Australia for 64 years and that historical role continues to be acknowledged. But she now sits amongst the gums trees, the return of the Eucalypt as part of contemporary landscape design reflecting changing Australian attitudes towards the indigenous. Residual opposition to this idea however still surfaced. The sculptures of the fountain now sit in a redesigned pool, reflecting the contemporary design of the Square, as did the geometric shape of the pool in the 1960s.

CRED supports the decision to retain the fountain in Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga and to relocate it to the southern section of the Square. The new location again is both a practical and symbolic decision; it has enabled a new community gathering space to be formed in the northern section of the Square, the commemoration of Queen Elizabeth has been retained and the recognition of Aboriginal people and culture it represents reinforced.

Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga – A Bi-Cultural Place

An understanding of the bi-cultural nature of place in Australia is emerging, that where there is a white history there is also a black history and the two exist side by side and can converge in many ways. Victoria Square, the civic and symbolic heart of the city of Adelaide, is now well recognised as being of significance to Kurna descendants as Tarndanyungga, the ancestral Dreaming place of the Red Kangaroo. Tarndanyungga is sometimes referred to as the 'heart of the kangaroo' and Victoria Square is referred to as Adelaide's 'civic heart'.

In March 2002 Tarndanyungga/Victoria Square hosted *Kurna Palti Meyunna*, a ceremony to open the Adelaide Festival of Arts. The ceremony was co-created and directed by Karl Telfer and Waiata Telfer, brother and sister, who were the first Aboriginal Associate Directors for the Festival. The event began a new phase of ritual, which carried the essence of Aboriginal ceremony in an artistic context into the space. It was here that a new breath of cultural ritual and spiritual renewal was shared by the generations of Kurna family clan descendants in the spirit of the peace lore of the Creation Ancestor, Tjirbruki.

A water ceremony was part of the event, which symbolically cleansed the space of its negative history to open a new way of understanding the bi-cultural meaning of place. *Kurna Palti Meyunna* was a truly memorable event, even reported in the New York Times (Henly, 2002). For several days the central east-west road axis was closed which united the space. The Queen Victoria statue was surrounded by a platform stage on which Aboriginal peoples from around the world performed and shared ceremony as the Spirit Fires burned. A cleansing ceremony of the statue was conducted by generations of Kurna women. The statue was wrapped in the four colours of humanity; red, white, yellow and black, and then later smoked, before it was again revealed. This was the first gesture of conciliation by Kurna descendants towards Queen Victoria and the Crown.



Kurna Palti Meyunna, Queen Victoria Statue, 2002

During the Festival event in 2002 art activists added street name signage giving the place the name of Tarndanyungga, *place of the Red Kangaroo*. It was several days before the signs were noticed and removed. Karl now has one of the signs.



Karl with one of the signs

On 22 May 2003, under the provisions of the *Geographical Names Act 1991*, the Square was given the official dual naming of Victoria Square/Tarndanyangga. There are different spellings used, some now use the spelling Tarntanyangga.

In Concluding

Public monuments, memorials and other commemorations play a strong symbolic role in our public spaces, they help express who we are as a people, to each other and to our visitors. But their role, form and locations are not static. They evolve and change with time. Until relatively recently Aboriginal people had been excluded from these public commemorations but are now becoming a more visible part of our civic fabric. This recognises cultural traditions, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, side by side and enables the stories of both to be told.

Victoria Square/Tarndanyungga is one such place for storytelling and the relocation of the Queen Victoria statue and The Three Rivers Fountain is part of an ongoing revision of our public space narratives. As the full redevelopment of the Square is implemented more of the Kurna narrative will be presented through Mullabakka, the Kurna Centre of Culture.

December 2013
May 2014, V2