

Attachment G

**TKD Heritage Assessment – 13-17 Riley
Street, Woolloomooloo**



Phillip Park Cleansing Depot 17 Riley Street, Woolloomooloo



Heritage assessment

Prepared for City of Sydney

January 2026

TKD Architects acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and create, recognising their continuing and unbroken connection to the land, water and sky.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and express our gratitude for their sharing of knowledge and cultures.

Cover

The Depot as viewed from the south.

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Image credits

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Document issue

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- 1 Aerial location image (top) and aerial detail image of the former Cleansing Depot, Riley Street Surry Hills.
Source: NearMaps with TKD Architects overlay.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose of report

This report has been prepared on behalf of the City of Sydney to assess the heritage significance of the former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot at 13-17 Riley Street, Woolloomooloo. The property was identified as a potential heritage item in the Albert Smillie and Ilmar Berzins City Architect and City Landscape Architect Heritage Study (TKD Architects, October 2023). 13-17 Riley Street is located within the Woolloomooloo Heritage Conservation Area (C71) and in the immediate vicinity of several heritage items:

- Cook and Phillip Park including “Earth Mother” play sculpture (Item I1655).
- Former Australian Hotel, 2-4 Riley Street (Item I 2188).
- Sandstone wall remnant, 19-21 Riley Street (Item I2189)

The assessment of heritage significance has been undertaken using the heritage assessment criteria contained in the New South Wales Heritage Office Guidelines, *Assessing Heritage Significance* (2023),

1.2 Site description

The site is triangular in configuration. It is bounded by Riley Street to the east and Haig Lane to the north-west. The adjacent site to the south-west is vacant. The basketball court at the northern end of Phillip Park is to the west, while a building occupied by the Police Youth Citizens' Club Sydney is to the north on the opposite side of Haig Lane. The site is identified as Lot 1 Deposited Plan 83649.



2 17 Riley Street in 2023.

2 Historical overview

13-17 Riley Street is located on a part of 100 acres granted to commissary John Palmer in February 1793. Here Palmer built Woolloomooloo Farm, one of the colony's first permanent residences. In 1810 Palmer travelled to England with colonial administrator William Bligh as a witness against Major George Johnston, a leader of the Rum Rebellion. During 1812 he gave valuable evidence to the select committee on transportation. In June 1813 he was re-employed in the commissariat and returned to New South Wales in May 1814 but on his return found his private affairs extremely straitened. The estate at Woolloomooloo was sold to merchant and pastoralist Edward Riley in May 1822,

Riley bought up lots of small land grants in the area between Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills during the 1820s. His land, called the Riley Estate, quickly grew, becoming not just a series of small land grants, but a vast estate. In 1825 Riley committed suicide, leaving behind two conflicting wills, which led to years of legal battle between his seven heirs. The site of 13-17 Riley Street subsequently became part of Block F23 of the partitioning of the Riley Estate in the 1840s.

Historically the site consists of two separate titles that were amalgamated after resumption by the City Council. Following subdivision of Block F23 the title to the allotment(s) comprising what was to become 13-15 Riley Street were conveyed on 4 February 1853 to labourer Joseph Kena (or Kenna).¹ He evidently built a house (or houses) and was living there by the end of the 1850s. Kenna died in November 1878. Probate was granted to his widow Ruth, but she died intestate in April 1879. The following August the Curator of Intestate Estates conveyed the title of 13-15 Riley Street to shoemaker David Denley.² He and his family occupied 15 Riley Street. Denley died at the end of October 1901, his will providing for his widow Mary to occupy one of the houses. She apparently resided at 13 Riley Street until her death in July 1914, after which the house was occupied by family members until it was resumed by the Municipal Council of Sydney.

Following subdivision of Block F23 the site of 17 Riley Street was sold to brass founder James Turner. The conveyance is dated 7 June 1851.³ Turner appears to have built a house on the property where he and his family lived for a short time. He conveyed the property title to butcher Thomas Higgins on 15 August 1864. Higgins subsequently conveyed it to tanner (later builder of wagons) William Sherlock on 9 October 1872. Sherlock also acquired the adjacent allotments at 19 and 21 Riley Street. He died in December 1894 and his wife died in September 1899. The trustees of his estate sold 17 Riley Street to Joseph Lynch in August 1901. Lynch is described as a tailor in *Sands directory*.



3 Development at and near 13-17 Riley Street, circa 1865.

Source: City of Sydney Archives

Trigonometrical Survey: 1855-1865, Block 11.



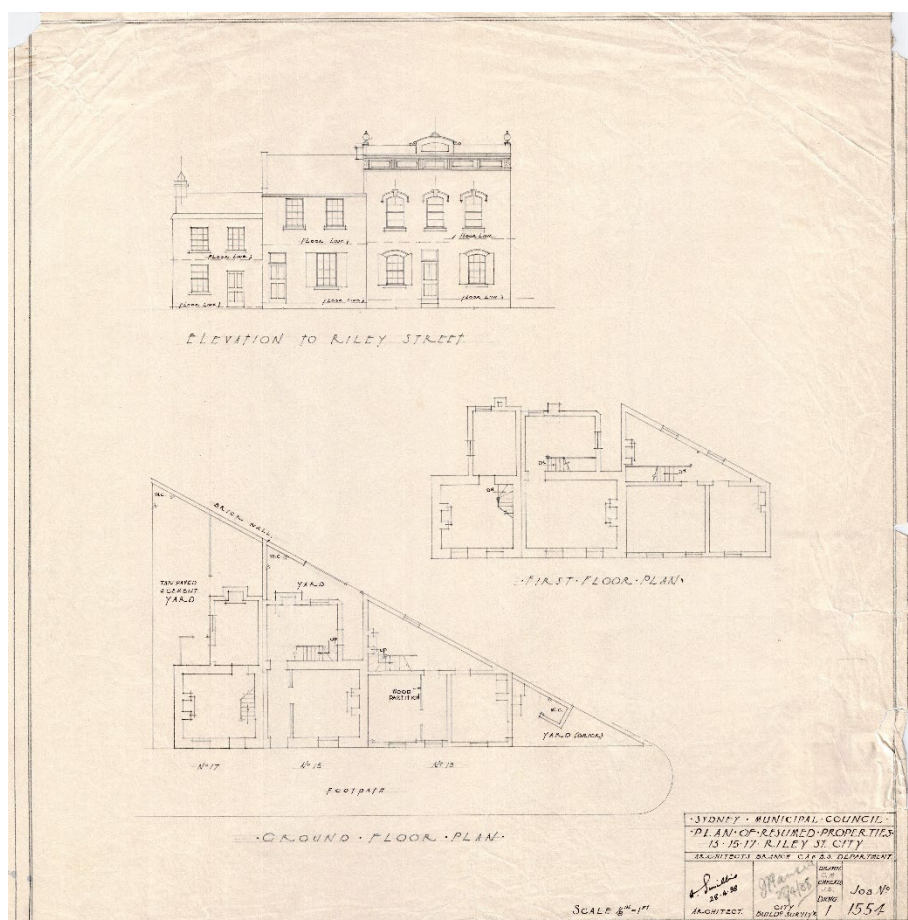
¹ HLRV NSW Old Systems Title Book 25 Number 367.

² HLRV NSW Old Systems Title Book 194 Number 329.

³ HLRV NSW Old Systems Title Book 25 Number 527.



- 4 Development at 13-17 Riley Street towards the end of the 1880s.
Source: City of Sydney Archives Rygate & West 1888, Sheet 8 with TKD overlay.

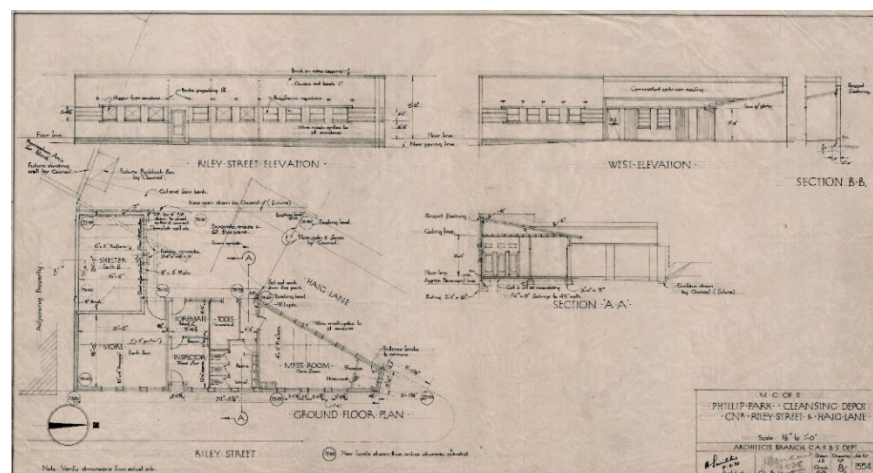


- 5 Measured drawing of the nineteenth century houses at 13-17 Riley Street. The drawing is dated 28 April 1938 and signed by Albert Smillie.
Source: City of Sydney Archives, Unique ID A-00545351.

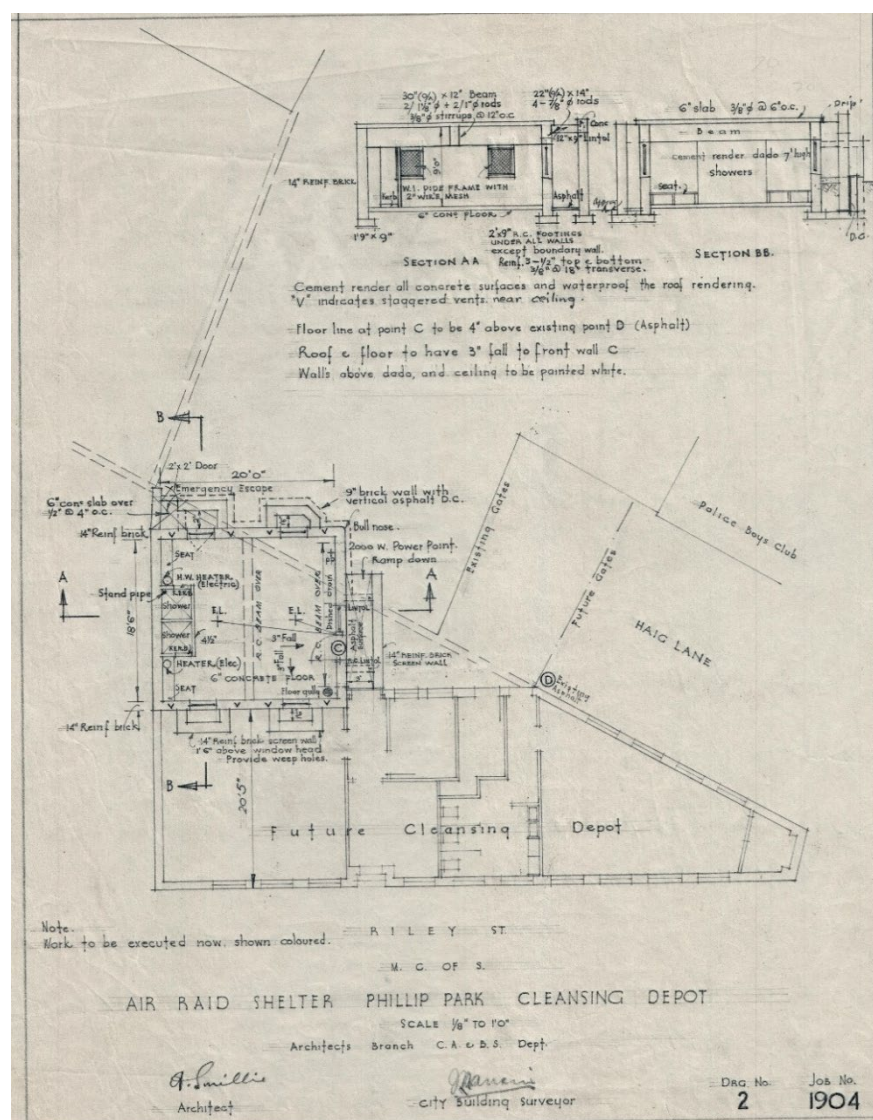
Towards the end of the 1930s the Municipal Council of Sydney resumed 13-17 Riley Street. 13-15 Riley Street was part of the estate of William Denley and 13 Riley Street was still occupied by members of the Denley family. 17 Riley Street was still the property of Joseph Lynch, although it is understood to have been tenanted. The Lieutenant-Governor of NSW approved the resumption "for the purpose of establishing thereon a Depot for use in connection with the sweeping and cleansing of public ways in the city" on 3 November 1937. The Council resolved to resume the properties on 14 February 1938. The resumption of 13-17 Riley Street was gazetted on 11 March 1938.⁴

⁴ Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales, 11 March 1938, p.1130.

Documentation describing the proposed single storey depot were prepared by the City of Sydney during 1938. The building is thought to have been designed by Albert Smillie, whose signature appears on the architectural drawing. However, construction did not commence for some time and was apparently postponed because of the outbreak of World War II. In 1942 the design was revised so that it accommodated an air raid shelter, which was constructed as the initial phase of development. In 1947 a two-storey building was documented (and subsequently constructed) that incorporated the air raid shelter while retaining the footprint of the 1938 scheme.

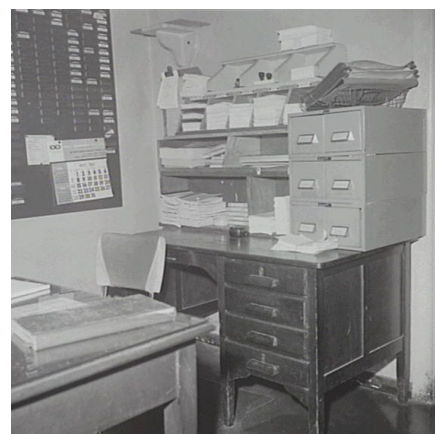
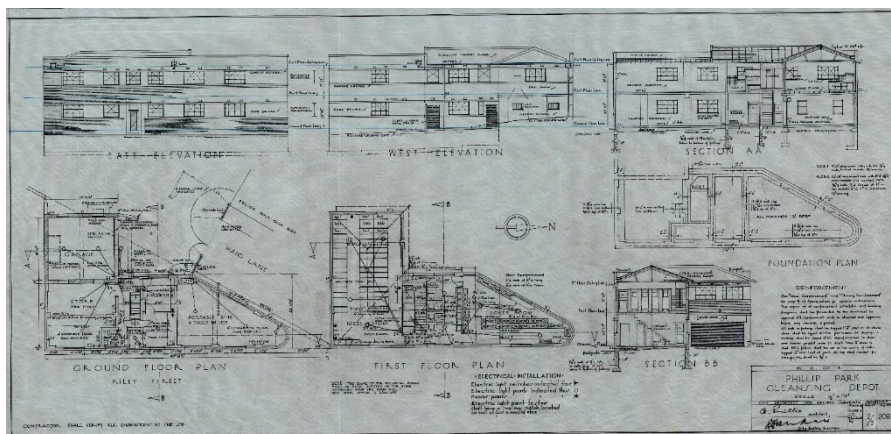


- 5 Plan, elevations and section of the original proposed Phillip Park Cleansing Depot. The drawing is dated 8 November 1938 and was signed by Albert Smillie. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545351.



- 6 Left: architectural drawing documenting the air raid shelter at the Phillip Park Cleansing Depot, which was integrated with the future depot building. The drawing was signed by Albert Smillie. Above: portion of an aerial photograph taken in 1943 showing the completed air raid shelter (outlined in red). Sources: City of Sydney Archives; SIX Maps with TKD Architects overlay.



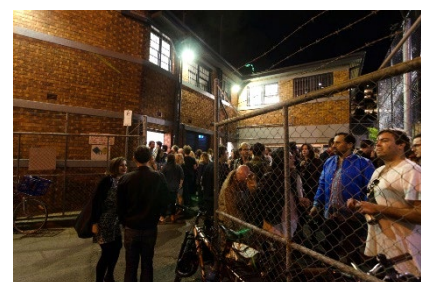


- 8 Left: undated drawing describing the Phillip Park Cleaning Depot, which shows its existing two storey form. The drawing includes Albert Smillie's signature. The building application for the project was lodged on 22 September 1947.
- Right: view of a small part of the building's interior, indicating one of the ways it was used. The photograph is dated 1 June 1967.
- Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545549 and Unique ID A-00047218.

Until the early 1990s, 13-17 Riley Street was a working base for street sweepers that looked after the locality. It then became a workshop for the City's parking meter mechanics, who serviced, built and repaired equipment in the building until early 2002. The building remained vacant for several years, although used sporadically for storage and short-term City accommodation.⁵

In November 2009 Firstdraft lodged a development application with the City of Sydney for a change of use of the building to artist studios, art gallery spaces and artist workshops for local artist residents and emerging artists.⁶ Firstdraft was established in 1986 as an artist-run initiative supporting emerging and early-career artists and bringing experimental practices to audiences, and is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOA), a national network of fifteen public, independent, non-collecting contemporary art organisations from all Australian states and territories that advocates for the small-to-medium contemporary visual arts sector in Australia.⁷ The application was approved at the beginning of 2010.

In 2014, the organisation's studio complex, which was known as the Depot, was converted into an all-encompassing facility to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice. Firstdraft's adaptive use of the building included new exhibition spaces, two studios, collaborative workspaces, and a large, private outdoor courtyard. The gallery spaces opened in March 2014.⁸



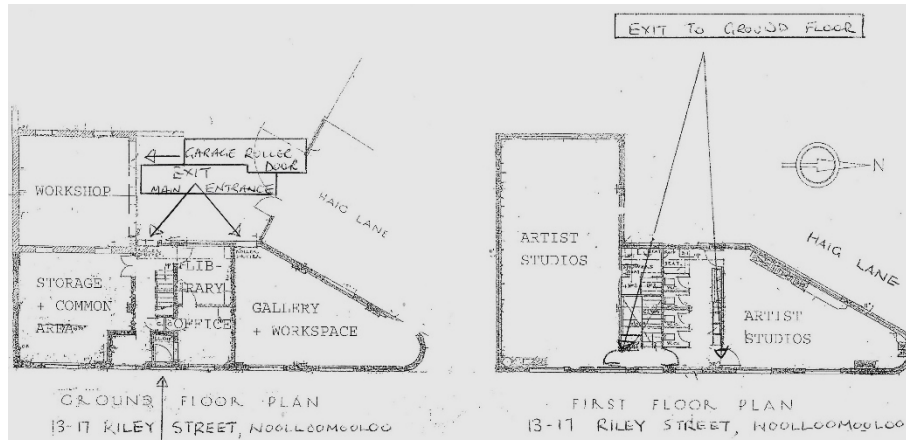
- 9 Crowd gathering in the courtyard at the rear of the building during the 2014 Firstdraft auction.
- Source:
<https://mgnsww.org.au/organisations/firstdraft-gallery/> - photograph by Lucy Parakhina.

⁵ Supporting information for D/2009/1852 at <https://eplanning.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Pages/XC.Track/SearchApplication.aspx?id=939872>, accessed 20 June 2025.

⁶ Development application D/2009/1852 lodged 5 11 2009, approved 15 01 2010.

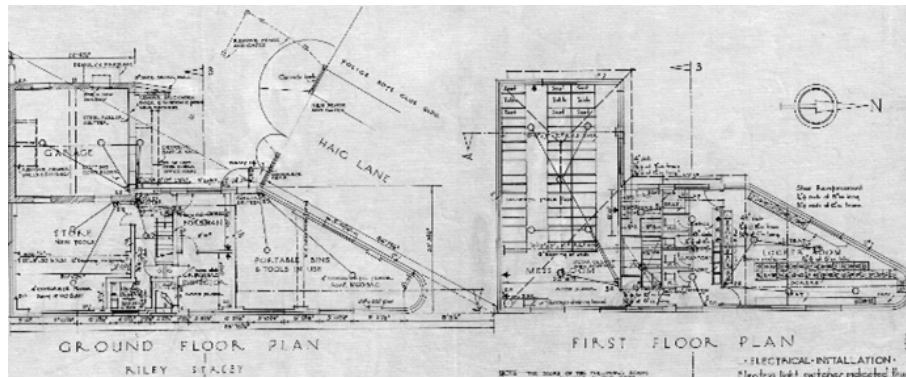
⁷ <https://firstdraft.org.au/about-us>, accessed 20 June 2025.

⁸ <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/sydney/woolloomooloo/galleries/firstdraft-gallery>; <https://www.matchboxprojects.com/ariguide/firstdraft.php>; Lucy Jones, "Firstdraft's new home", Broadsheet, 12 March 2014 at <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/sydney/art-and-design/article/firstdrafts-new-home>, accessed 20 June 2025.



- 10 Comparison of plans accompanying Firstdraft's 2009 development application (above) and the 1947 plans of the building (below). Little if any change has taken place to the building.

Sources: D/2009/1852; City of Sydney Archives Unique ID, A-00047218.



3 Physical evidence

13-17 Riley Street is a two storey building with a distinctive plan footprint that partially reflects its unusual triangular site. The northern section of the building tapers, ending with a tightly curved corner, while the southern section is L-shaped in plan. This is reflected in the configuration of the building's roof, which is flat on the northern section and hipped and gabled over the southern part. The roof is covered by profiled metal sheeting. The exterior of the building is constructed out of textured brick with horizontal rendered coursing at the window head and sill levels extending across the facades. Brickwork above and below windows is darker in hue than brickwork at the level of the windows. Windows consist of pairs of double hung timber framed sashes.

The building is a representative example of the Inter War Functionalist style which was utilised by architects from the mid-1930s through to the early 1950s. Characteristics of the style that the building demonstrates include the plain brick surfaces, a rounded corner, parapet concealing the roof and horizontal banding (in this case the rendered courses). The use of textured bricks was prevalent at the time the building was designed and constructed.

Windows are protected on ground floor by mesh and on the first floor by grilles. The roof over the southern part of the building has projecting eaves just above the rendered course over first floor windows on those elevations facing Haig Lane and the open area at the end of the lane. The eaves are lined with spaced timber battens. A portion of the ground floor in the projecting southern wing has been lined with cement render, which according to the 1947 drawings is original; the wide opening that served what was originally a garage now contains a metal framed sliding door set.



11 13-17 Riley Street viewed from the north-east.



12 13-17 Riley Street viewed from the south along Riley Street.



13 Looking south along the western side of 13-17 Riley Street fronting Haig Lane.

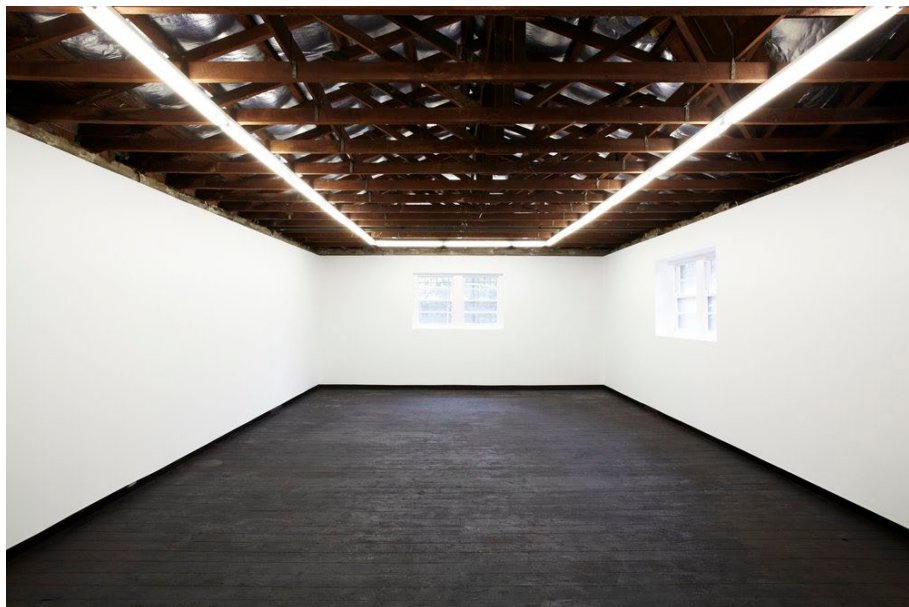


- 14 The southern section of the building viewed from Haig Lane. The open space in front of this part of the building is used by Firstdraft as a courtyard.



- 15 The southern section of 13-17 Riley Street viewed from Yurong Parkway across the Phillip Park Basketball Court.

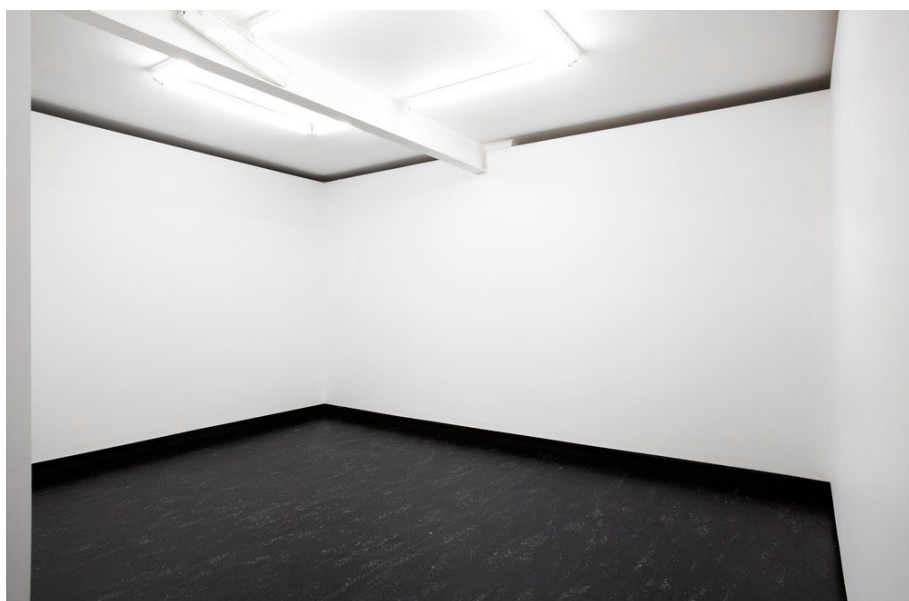
The interior of the building remains very much the same as when the building was completed. Its original plan is intact. Floors are generally constructed of concrete, some of which remains exposed. The first floor structure at the southern end is timber. The roof is also framed in timber, which in some parts of the building is exposed. Walls are lined with cement render. In some parts of the building plasterboard linings have been installed to facilitate the hanging and display of artworks.



- 16 First floor gallery space in the southern part of the building. The timber roof structure is exposed. Flooring is timber.
Source: Four Galleries
<https://firstdraft.org.au/helpful-links/about-our-space>



- 17 Gallery space in the northern part of the building. Plasterboard has been installed across part of the existing walls. Flooring is exposed concrete.
Source: Four Galleries
<https://firstdraft.org.au/helpful-links/about-our-space>



- 18 Another of the gallery spaces in the building. Plasterboard wall linings appear to have been installed over existing walls in this space.
Source: Four Galleries
<https://firstdraft.org.au/helpful-links/about-our-space>

4 Comparative analysis

4.1 Albert Smillie

Albert Smillie was born Albert Alexander Smellie, the son of Alexander and Lillie M Smellie of Balmain South, on 13 March 1904.⁹ The family appears to have been of Scottish extraction.¹⁰ Smellie joined the Sydney Municipal Council's Architectural Branch as an architectural draftsman around 1924. On 29 April 1926 he registered as an architect with the Board of Architects of New South Wales.¹¹ He subsequently became an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, established in 1930. In July 1927 Albert Smellie changed his name via deed poll to Albert Alexander Smillie.¹² About three years later he married Ivy Hazel Martin.¹³ A son was born to the couple in March 1932.¹⁴

In 1928 the commissioners who replaced the sacked Labor Council amalgamated the City Architect and Building Surveyor's Department with three others. They became the City Engineering and Building Surveyor's Department headed by engineer A H Garnsey. The City Architect lost the status of head of department. In 1936 the Department was split in two, and the City Architect and Building Surveyor's Department was re-created. In 1948 the title 'City Architect' was dropped from the department's name and it became the City Building Surveyor's Department. John Rankin was appointed City Building Surveyor in 1936, remaining in the role until 1963. In July 1936 Smillie applied unsuccessfully for the position of City Building Surveyor but by the following September 1936 he had been promoted to the position of architectural assistant and from around this time his name appears on numerous drawings prepared in the Council's architectural department as Architect. On 29 November 1949 Smillie was appointed the City of Sydney's Chief Architect and was responsible for the City's architectural branch.

In 1950 Albert Smillie and City Building Surveyor John Rankin were sent to Great Britain, Europe and the United States to study trends in building control and modern building methods relating to civic infrastructure. They travelled to England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy, America and Canada, and were away from June to November 1950.¹⁵ In June 1953 Smillie became the Council's Principal Architect. As the Chief Architect, and later Principal Architect, Smillie signed off on all the building plans but was not necessarily the designer of the buildings work. According to Edward John Merewether, a member of Smillie's architectural team in the post-war period, "The bosses were mainly one hundred per cent keeping the Department going, dealing with the Council and that sort of thing. They signed the drawings, but I don't ever remember any design criteria. I think most blokes were left to do what they wanted to do."¹⁶ Albert Smillie retired at the beginning of 1969. He died in March 1986, aged 82.



19 Albert Alexander Smillie. The photograph was taken during the 1950s.

Source: CSA Unique ID A-00016548.

9 Birth registration number 10127/1904, accessed at <https://familyhistory.bdm.nsw.gov.au/lifelink/familyhistory/search/result?4>.

10 "Obituary", *Williamstown Chronicle*, 28 June 1924, p.2.

11 *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, 31 January 1930, p.475.

12 *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, 'Private Advertisements,' Fri 29 Jul 1927 [Issue No.101], Page 3815.

13 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/births-deaths-marriages-marriage-registration-number-5904/1930>

14 "Family Notices", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1932, p.10.

15 City of Sydney Archives File 2339/50 Building Projects Visit of City Building Surveyor and Chief Architect Overseas 1950; "Tour plan for Council men," *Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 1950, Page 11.

16 Biography supplied by City of Sydney - Interview transcript with Edward John Merewether, Trim 2019/007226

4.2 Council Depots

Council depots were an essential component of the effective management, maintenance, cleaning and operation of facilities and parks under its jurisdiction, as well as an important component of street cleaning activities.

On 9 September 1899 the Council resolved to adopt a Minute by the Mayor, separating the duties of Superintendent of Street Cleansing from those of the Inspector of Nuisances. The first Superintendent of City Cleansing was William Matheson Gordon, who was appointed in October 1899. In 1901 the Department consisted of the Superintendent, 5 gangers, a clerk, 82 carters, 100 labourers, 97 block and footpath cleaners, 11 urinal cleaners and attendants, 7 night flushers and 3 horse brooms. The City Cleansing Department was responsible for the removal of all house garbage, trade refuse, street sweepings, mud, continuous cleansing of wood blocked streets and pavements, cleansing of gullies, urinals, horse troughs, fountains etc, and flushing and machine broom sweeping. In 1902 the Cleansing Department became a branch of the City Surveyor's Department.

The Council established two depots on the western side of the municipality. In March 1906, the site bounded by Bay, William Henry and Macarthur Streets at Ultimo was acquired by council as part of the Athlone Place resumption. The south-western section of the site (10-16 Bay Street) was developed as the depot from 1908 with the intention of increasing the efficiency of maintenance and cleansing works previously undertaken by private contractors. The depot centralised the cleaning service under single management and provided the facilities required for street cleansing, watering, sanding and repairing. These facilities included stables, repair and maintenance workshops and amenities for cleansing staff. The Bay Street Depot Ultimo served the northern part of the local government area.

The Wattle Street depot, on the site of Pyrmont's Hellhole Quarry was initially leased by owner Robert Saunders in 1906 for the purposes of tar distillation. It too became an important Council depot but ceased operating in 1990 and is currently due for redevelopment.

Prior to the construction of the cleansing depot at 13-17 Riley Street a depot existed at nearby Phillip Park, which catered to the requirements of park maintenance. At times depots were little more than simple sheds with ample open space to allow for manoeuvring trucks and other motor vehicles.



The City Architect's office documented numerous depots and associated buildings, which tended to be functional and pragmatic buildings. These ranged from cleansing depots to parks depots, offices buildings, amenities blocks and even glass houses at Council nurseries. Some, however, demonstrated some architectural input on the part of designers. Albert Smillie's signature appears on numerous drawings associated with these buildings.



20 Aerial photograph of the Wattle Street Depot, 1943.

Source: SIX Maps.

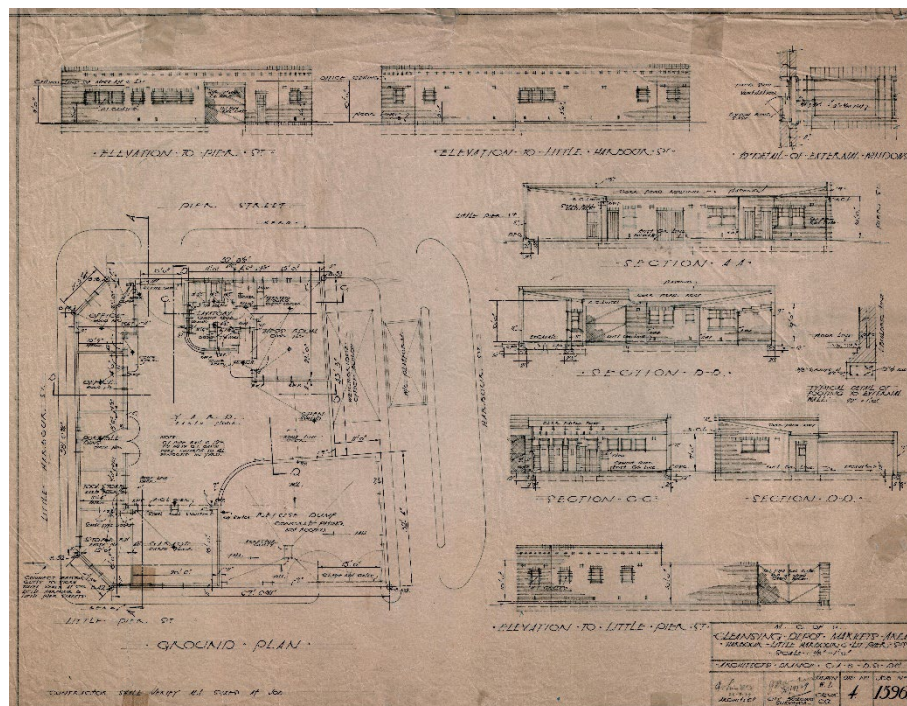


21 Left: shed-like structure associated with the park depot in Phillip Park, 1938.
Right: pragmatic structures at the Gerard Street Depot, Alexandria, 1953.
Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00007705 and Unique ID A-00042700

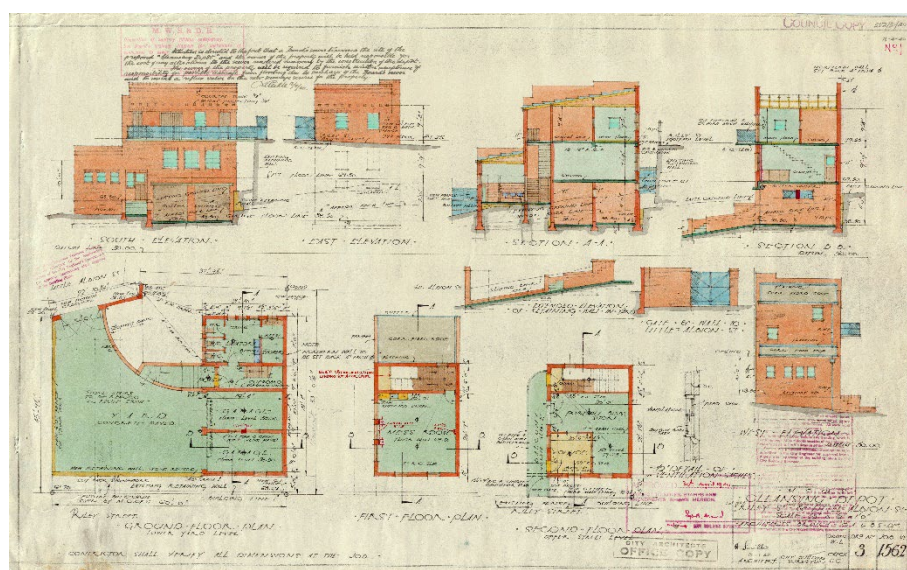
Smillie's involvement with cleansing depots extended from the late 1930s through to the late 1950s. Initially located in Central Sydney and adjoining suburbs, after the amalgamation of local government areas in the late 1940s their locations expanded to include the suburbs that were now under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council of Sydney. Locations included Alexandria, Glebe, Redfern and Waterloo.

Where more substantial buildings were constructed, they tended to be pragmatic Functionalist style buildings with little embellishment. They were generally constructed of brick and contained storage and workshop space along with office space, a garage, staff amenities such as locker rooms, lavatories and lunch or mess rooms. When compared to these buildings, 13-17 Riley Street stands out for its distinctive form and the quality of its considered architectural resolution.

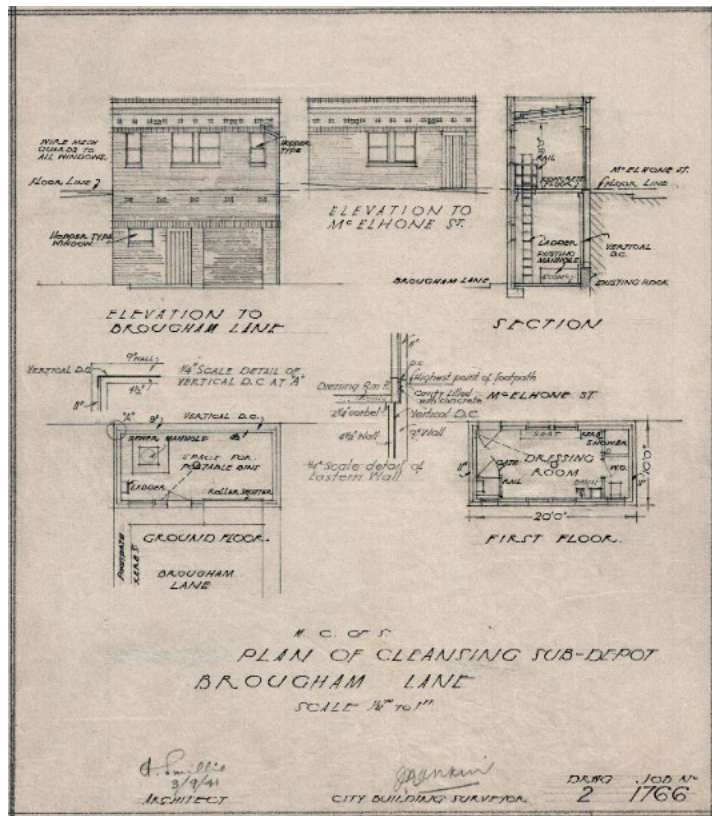
The following images summarise these cleansing depots.



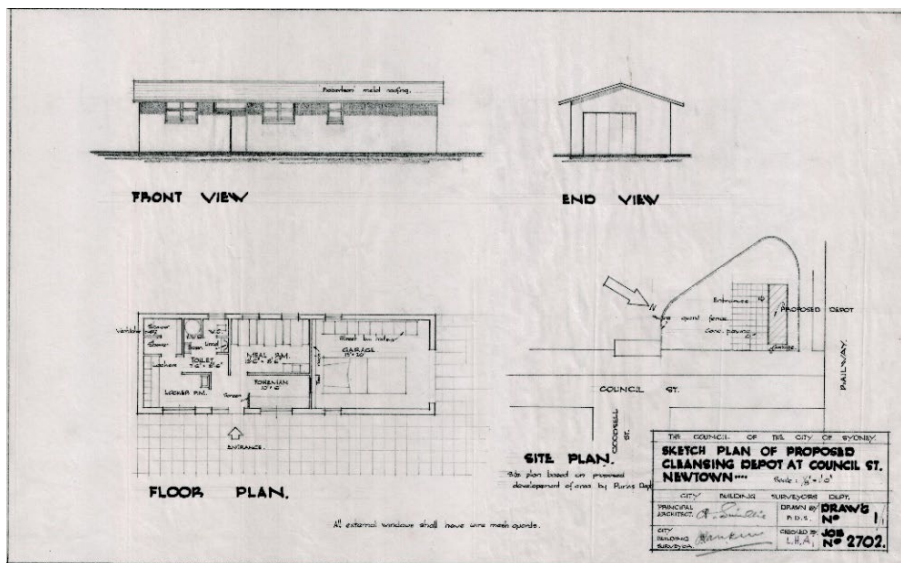
- 22 This severe Inter War Functionalist style building was designed in 1939 for the Markets Area Cleansing Depot in Pier Street, Darling Harbour. The Depot has since been demolished.
Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545367, Unique ID A-00007701.



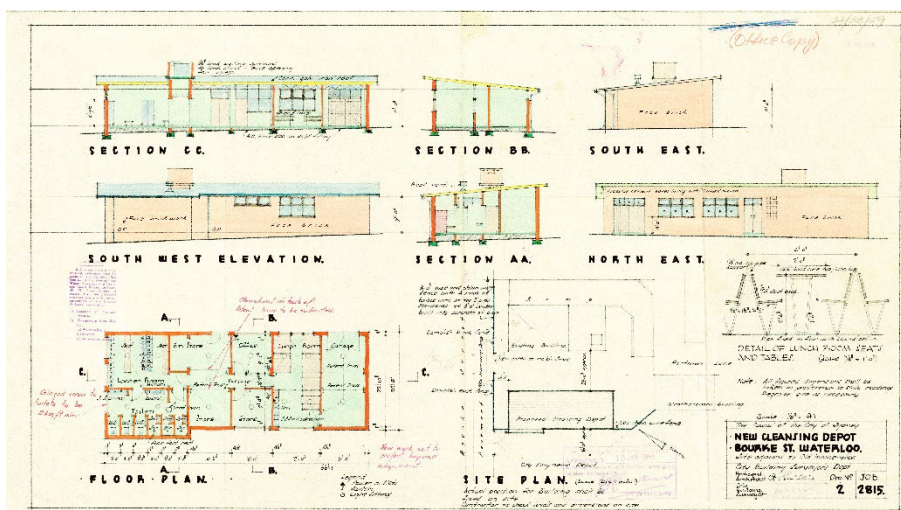
- 23 Severe Inter War Functionalist style building designed in 1940 for the Markets Area Cleansing Depot in Riley Street, Surry Hills. The building still exists.
Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545367, Unique ID A-00007701.



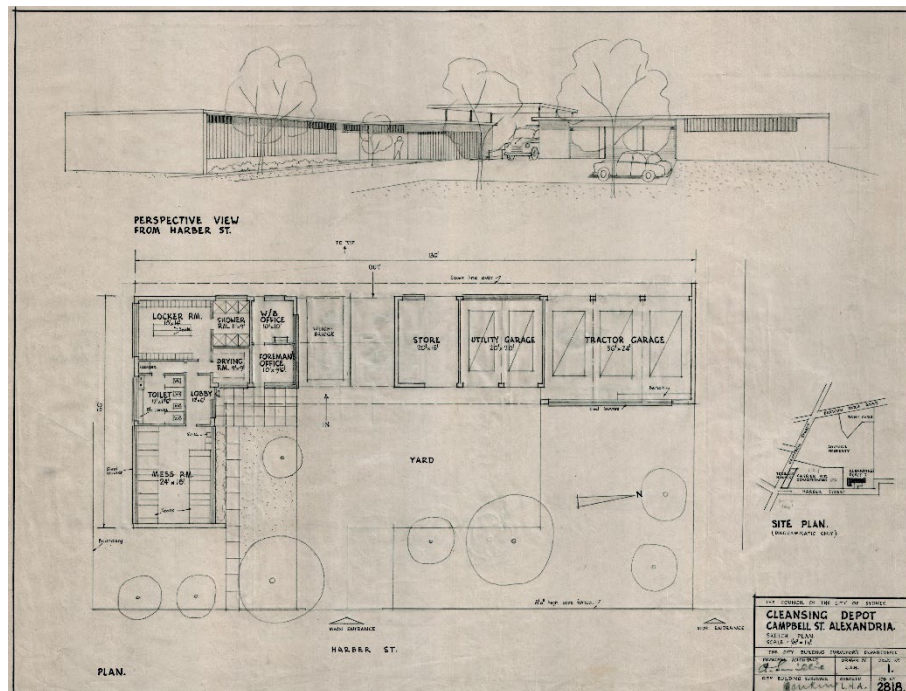
- 24 Architectural drawing of the Brougham Lane Cleansing sub-depot, 1941. It was converted to a Sydney County Council substation in the first half of the 1960s and, if still extant, has been modified since. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545448



- 25 Proposed cleansing depot in Council Street, Newtown, 1956. Archival aerial photographs suggest it was not built. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545850.

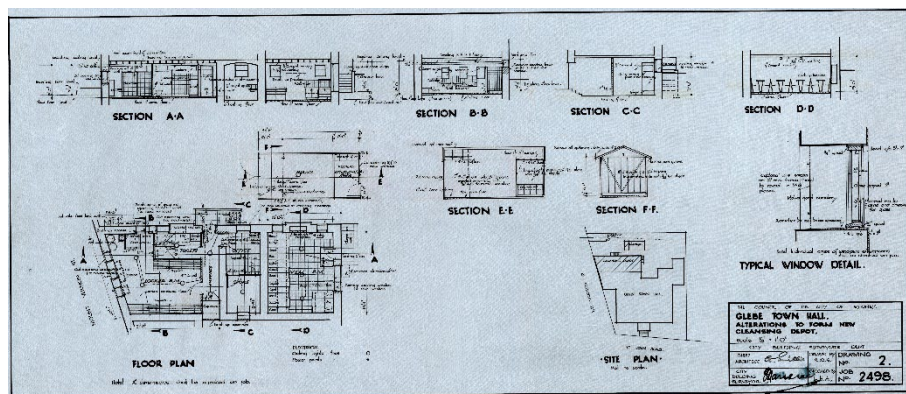


- 26 Conversion of an incinerator to a cleansing depot at Bourke Street, Waterloo, 1959. This building contained a garage, large lunchroom, an office, storage spaces, toilets/showers and a locker room. It is understood to have been demolished. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545906.



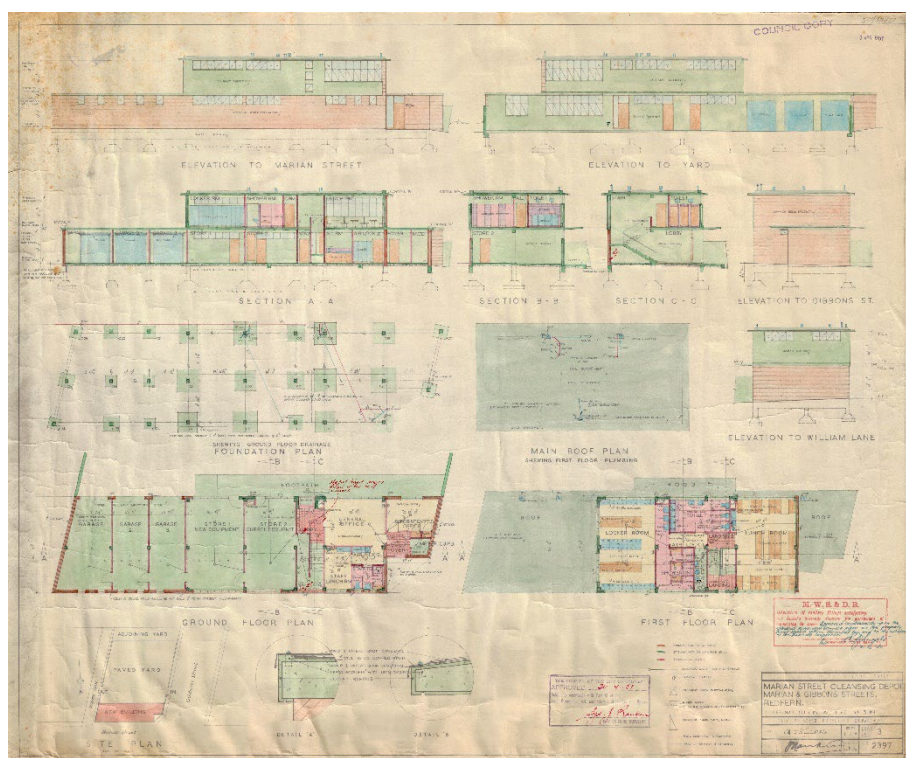
- 27 Proposed cleansing depot in Haber Street, Alexandria, which was documented around 1959. Archival aerial photographs suggest the stylish building was not constructed.

Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00545907.



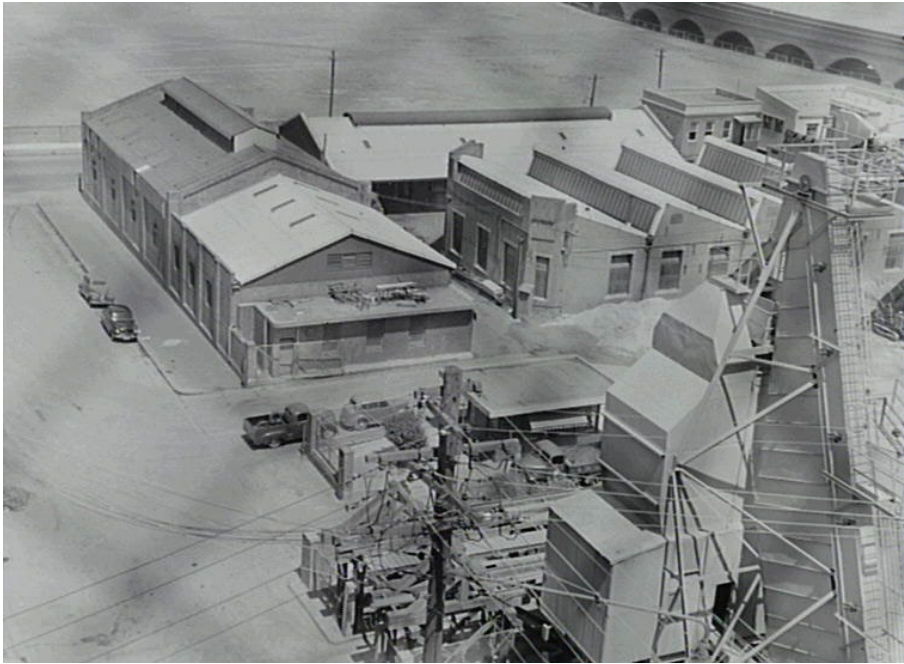
- 28 Documentation describing the conversion of a World War II air raid shelter at Glebe Town Hall into a cleansing depot, 1951.

Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-0054576.



- 29 Architectural drawing from 1951 and a photograph taken in May 1955 of the Marian Street Cleansing Depot in Redfern. The depot was demolished around the end of 2019.

Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00561699 and A-00043032.



30 Aerial view of the Wattle Street Depot taken during December 1957. Buildings and structures of various ages are shown. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00044643.



31 Functionalist style building at the Wattle Street Depot constructed circa 1953. Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00042838.

5 Assessment of heritage significance

5.1 Assessment

Historical significance

Criterion A An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

There is no evidence to suggest that the site of 13-17 Riley Street prior to its resumption by the City of Sydney is important in the course or pattern of the City of Sydney's cultural or natural history.

The former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot at 13-17 Riley Street is one of several such depots constructed by the City of Sydney from the 1930s through to the end of the 1950s. The resumption of the land on which it was constructed is one amongst many resumptions that were carried out during the first half of the twentieth century by the City of Sydney.

13-17 Riley Street does not fulfil this criterion at a Local or State level.

Historical associations

Criterion B An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance to NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

13-17 Riley Street is associated with Albert Alexander Smillie, who joined the Sydney Municipal Council's Architectural Branch as an architectural draftsman around 1924, registered as an architect in April 1926 and in September 1936 was promoted to the position of architectural assistant to the City Building Surveyor. In November 1949 Smillie was appointed the City of Sydney's Chief Architect and was responsible for the City's architectural branch. Smillie was involved with numerous Council projects, which included a number of cleansing depots. His signature appears on several architectural drawings related to the site, indicating his involvement in the building's design.

13-17 Riley Street meets the threshold for listing at a Local level.

Aesthetic significance

Criterion C An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).

13-17 Riley Street is a restrained and assured example of the Inter War Functionalist style. Its architectural form and use of dichromatic brickwork relieved by expressed horizontal coursing are significant aesthetic contributors to the locality. The building appears to have retained a high level of external and internal integrity.

The building demonstrates a high quality of architectural resolution and form when compared to other cleansing depots designed by Council between the late 1930s and late 1950s.

13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.

Social significance

Criterion D An item has strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

As the Firstdraft Gallery, 13-17 Riley may have significance to Sydney's artistic community. Firstdraft, initially established as an artist-run-initiative, has been supporting emerging and early-career artists and bringing experimental practices to audiences since 1986. It converted 13-17 Riley Street to a complex of exhibition and studio spaces and collaborative workspaces to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice.

13-17 Riley Street may meet this criterion at a State or Local level, although more research may be needed to firmly establish this.

Research potential

Criterion E An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

Because of its integrity, 13-17 Riley Street has the potential to demonstrate the functions and operations of the City of Sydney's cleansing depots, which performed an important role in the management of the sanitation and hygiene of city and suburban streets. The building has research potential because it incorporated an air raid shelter during World War II, evidence of which still survives.

13-17 Riley Street has the potential to meet this criterion at a Local level.

Rarity

Criterion F An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

13-17 Riley Street may be considered rare, as a surviving example of a purpose designed cleansing depot in the City of Sydney that demonstrates a high level of aesthetic significance. Although its use has changed, its high level of integrity allows early functions to be interpreted. Many other cleaning depots have been demolished and their sites redeveloped or turned over to other uses. The building also has rarity because it contains evidence of a World War II air raid shelter.

13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.

Representativeness

Criterion G An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's (or local area's) cultural or natural places, or cultural or natural environment.

13-17 Riley Street may be considered representative of the cleansing depots designed by the City of Sydney in the years before and after World War II, although its architectural quality was much higher than others that were designed and actually constructed.

13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.

5.2 Statement of significance

The former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot at 13-17 Riley Street, Woolloomooloo is one of several such depots constructed by the City of Sydney from the 1930s through to the end of the 1950s. The resumption of the land on which it was constructed is one amongst many resumptions that were carried out during the first half of the twentieth century by the City of Sydney. The building is associated with Albert Alexander Smillie, who was promoted to the position of architectural assistant to the City Building Surveyor from 1936 and appointed the City of Sydney's Chief Architect from November 1949. He was involved with numerous Council projects, which included 13-17 Riley Street and several other cleansing depots.

13-17 Riley Street is a restrained and assured example of the Inter War Functionalist style that contributes significantly to the locality. The building appears to have retained a high level of external and internal integrity and demonstrates a high quality of architectural resolution when compared to other cleansing depots designed by Council between the late 1930s and late 1950s. Because of its integrity, 13-17 Riley Street has the potential to demonstrate the functions and operations of the City of Sydney's cleansing depots. While the building may be considered representative of the cleansing depots designed by the City of Sydney in the years before and after World War II, it is a rare surviving example of a purpose designed cleansing depot in the City of Sydney and has rarity because it incorporates a World War II air raid shelter into its plan and fabric.

As the Firstdraft Gallery, 13-17 Riley may have significance to Sydney's artistic community through its endeavours to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice.

6 Conclusions

13-17 Riley Street fulfils the NSW Heritage Council's criteria for historical association, aesthetic significance, rarity and representativeness at a Local level. The site may also have potential social and research significance. Because of this it warrants listing as a heritage item in Schedule 5 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.