
ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING**SHP:001**

Place Name and Address: Abminga Railway Siding, Old Ghan Railway Route

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUE:**Description:**

The site contains a group of typical railway siding buildings (fettlers cottages, trolley shed, station building, foundations and inspection pits of an engine shed, a coal bin, water tank and multiple rail tracks) as well as remnant infrastructure from the Second World War (a loading or storage platform, and foundations and footings from removed buildings).

The fettlers cottages are constructed of concrete and formerly had corrugated galvanized iron (cgi) roofs (now missing/collapsed). There are two groups of four single rooms separated by a large mess with a fireplace and attached storeroom. A verandah ran the length of the east side of the building. A later mess or smoko room has been constructed of cgi to the immediate east of the old mess. The buildings are in poor condition. To the rear (west) of the cottages and reached by concrete paths is a bathroom. This is constructed of cgi with a gabled roof; it has a date marked into the concrete floor – 10/6/44. To the south of this is a small concrete floor pad with two smashed toilet pedestals. To the east of the cottages and immediately adjacent to the railway tracks is a small trolley shed. This is constructed from railway line uprights and a timber frame with cgi cladding.

A loading or storage platform made from lengths of railway line is located on the east side of the track and to the north of the trolley shed; only the frame is extant. A structure constructed from flattened 200 litre (44 gallon) drums and used as an ash bin is located approximately 200m to the north east of the storage platform. Approximately 200m to the south of the trolley shed is the former railway station building. This is a small weatherboard structure with a gabled cgi roof. To the immediate south of this is a typical elevated South Australian Railways cast iron water tank. Located nearby is a set of steel shearlegs over a small cgi shed which houses a pump and a bore casing. The foundations and floor (including inspection pits) from an engine shed lie about another 100m to the south near a small creek. This has been dammed by the construction of a small rudimentary concrete and stone reservoir. A large elevated timber coal bin (incidentally the only one noted in the entire survey) is located about 200m to the east of the water tower on a spur line.

Statement of Heritage Value:

Abminga Railway Siding is of heritage value as an intact example of a railway siding complex in the Far North region. It contains all the essential elements of a railway siding and contains several features such as the coal bin and pump shed with shearlegs which do not exist at any other railway siding along the Old Ghan Railway route. The site also has archaeological potential.

Relevant Criteria (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*):

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

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING

SHP:001

- (c) It may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history.
 - (d) It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.
-

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Abminga Railway Siding be provisionally entered in the State Heritage Register and be declared a place of archaeological significance.

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING**SHP:001**

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

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

For many years Oodnadatta was the terminus of the Great Northern Railway, and supplies were taken further north to central Australia by camel team or bullock wagon. When the Commonwealth took over administration of the Northern Territory from South Australia in 1911, a major term of the Commonwealth-State agreement was a commitment to build a Commonwealth railway north from Oodnadatta to connect with the North Australia Railway from Darwin to Pine Creek. (South Australians had ample opportunity in the following ninety years to notice that the agreement made no mention of the date when this would happen, but work to complete the line finally commenced in 2001.)

Construction of the first section of line north from Oodnadatta began in 1928. It was a relatively simple matter across flat going in dry country, with only the channels of Alberga Creek and the Hamilton River presenting significant obstacles. Commonwealth Railways' large locomotives required only three water tanks in the 120 miles between Oodnadatta and the Northern Territory border. The only fettlers cottages on the new line were spaced out about fifty miles apart at Pedirka and Abminga.

In December 1928 the line commenced operating from Oodnadatta to Rumbalara in the Northern Territory, and in August 1929 it opened all the way to Alice Springs. Abminga - the most northerly railway station in South Australia - was built about ten miles south of the border in 1928 during the first phase of construction, to serve as a cattle loading stop for Eringa, Mount Dare and other far northern runs. The siding on the north bank of Abminga Creek consisted of three parallel tracks, a triangle leading to cattle loading yards, a locomotive shed, station building, goods shed, a dam and water tower and fettlers cottages. These new Commonwealth cottages, while similar in plan to the older stone cottages built by South Australian Railways in the 1880s, were built of reinforced concrete, as were other structures along the line such as culverts and bridge abutments.

During the Second World War as military traffic increased on the line, additional goods loading platforms were added to the Abminga complex, and a fifty ton capacity coal bin was built beside the triangle. After the war ended, Commonwealth Railways drastically reduced services on the line. In 1946 Abminga ceased to be an attended station and was staffed only by the fettlers' cook. The dam was found to be inadequate to supply locomotive water, and a bore was sunk. In 1951 the loco shed was demolished and the material used to build a pumphouse beside the bore. The Central Australian Railway closed at the end of 1980, saleable assets were removed and the site was abandoned. The land has now been amalgamated with the Crown Point Pastoral Lease.

- (c) **It may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history**

Abminga is a relatively large and intact railway complex - see discussion under criterion (d) below - and also formed an isolated settlement in the arid far north of the State. It is potentially of great archaeological interest not only for its surviving variety of railway technology and the Second World War additions to its fabric, but for the information it may provide on living and working conditions for employees in government infrastructure in one of the most inhospitable environments in Australia.

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING

SHP:001

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

Of the 36 former railway sites in the survey area between Marree and the Northern Territory border, only six still have substantial remains of a building complex: Curdimurka, Coward Springs, Beresford, Edward Creek, Oodnadatta and Abminga. Of these, Abminga was the only one built by the Commonwealth, and is the most substantial surviving relic in South Australia of the Central Australian Railway. Protected by its remoteness, it retains features rarely found on railway sites in the region, and nowhere else in combination: concrete buildings, a dam, a bore, loco shed foundations, an ash bin. It has the only coal bin surviving anywhere on the line. These features make it an outstanding representative of the 'Old Ghan' railway, and easily the best representative of the section of line built by Commonwealth Railways in 1928.

REFERENCES:

Donovan & Associates, *Railway Heritage of South Australia*, 1990
Quinlan & Newland, *Australian Railway Routes*, 2000
National Archives of Australia files B300 4318; B300/2 7217; B300/2 9489

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING**SHP:001**

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME:	Known briefly as (or confused with) Bloods Creek	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Railway station complex with fettlers cottage, coal bin, water tank and bore	
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1928	
REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	n/a
	Date:	
CURRENT USE:	Description:	Grazing Land 1980-2001
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	Railway Station
	Dates:	1928-1980
ARCHITECT:	Name:	n/a
	Dates:	
BUILDER:	Name:	n/a
	Dates:	
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	Transport (Rail)
	Category:	Railway Station
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Unincorporated
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	
	Street No.:	
	Street Name:	
	Town/Suburb:	Oodnadatta
	Post Code:	5734
	Region No.:	13
	Region Name:	Far North & Far West
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	CL
	Volume:	1628
	Folio:	20
	Lot No.:	Block 1264
	Section:	
	Hundred:	Out of Hundreds

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING**SHP:001**

SITE RECORD (Cont.):**AMG REFERENCE:**

Zone: 53
Easting: 485000
Northing: 7109000
Map Sheet No.: SG 53-10
Map Scale: 1:100,000

OWNER:**Name:**

Address:
Town/Suburb:
Post Code:

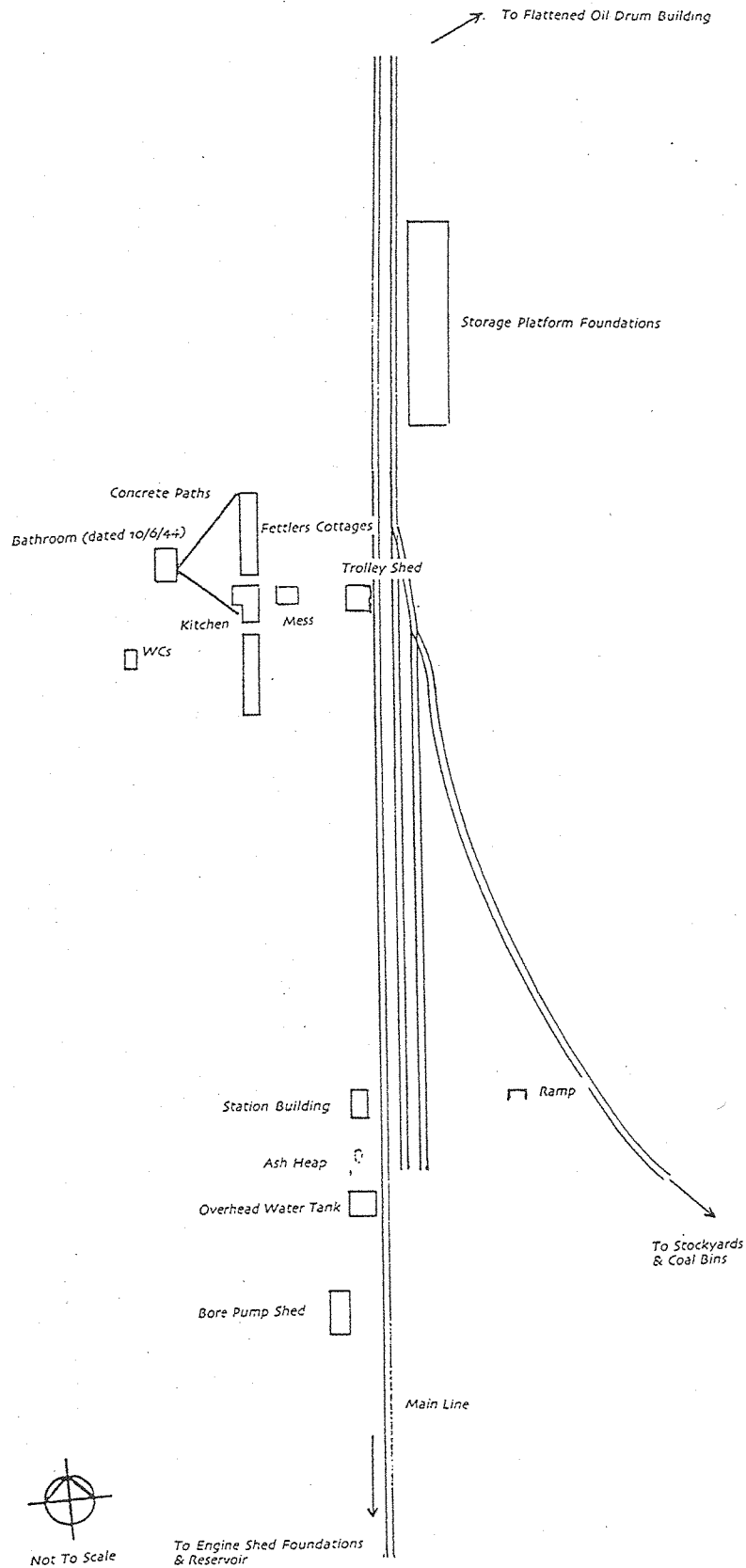
PHOTOGRAPH:

Film No.: 1 & 2
Neg. No.: 35-37, 3-10

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING

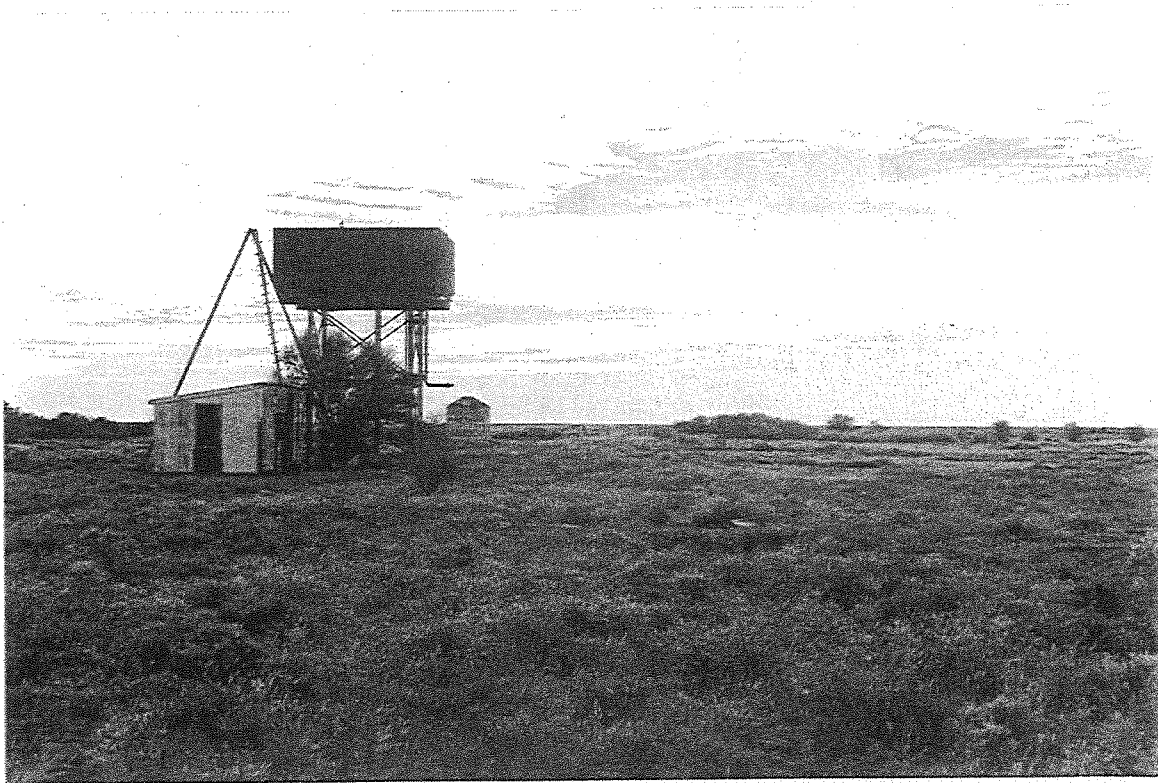
SHP:001

Site Plan

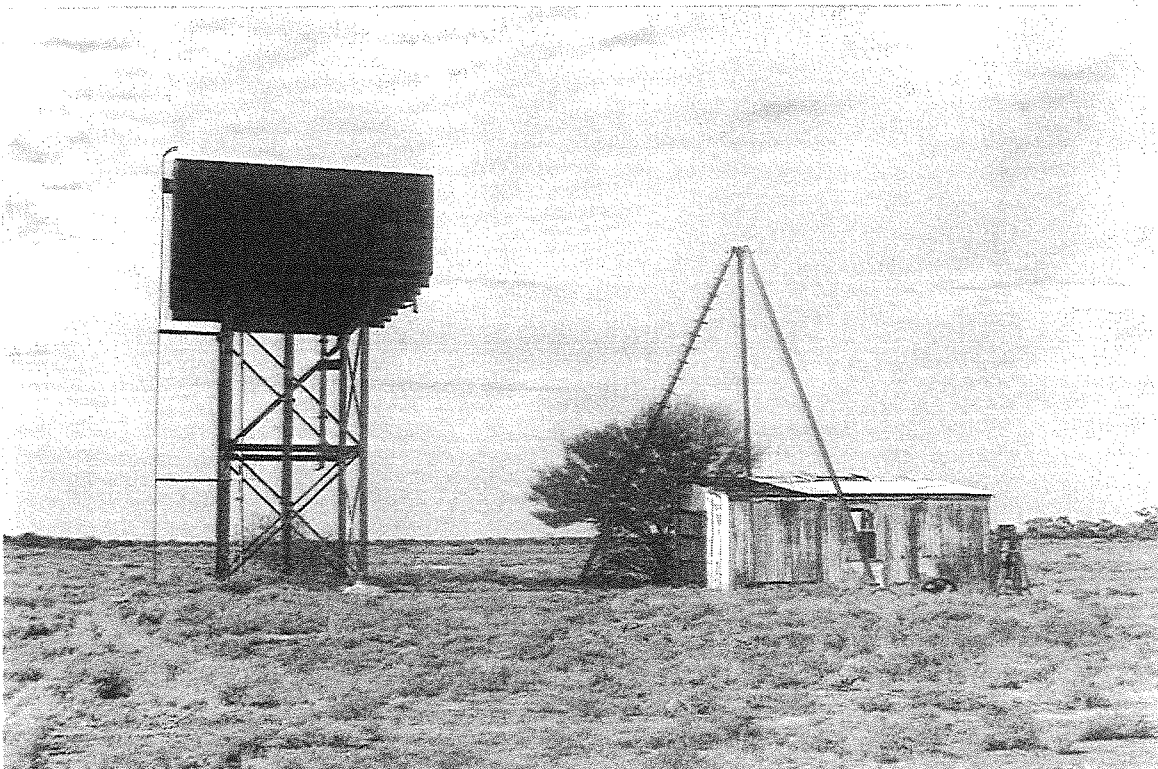


ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING

SHP:001



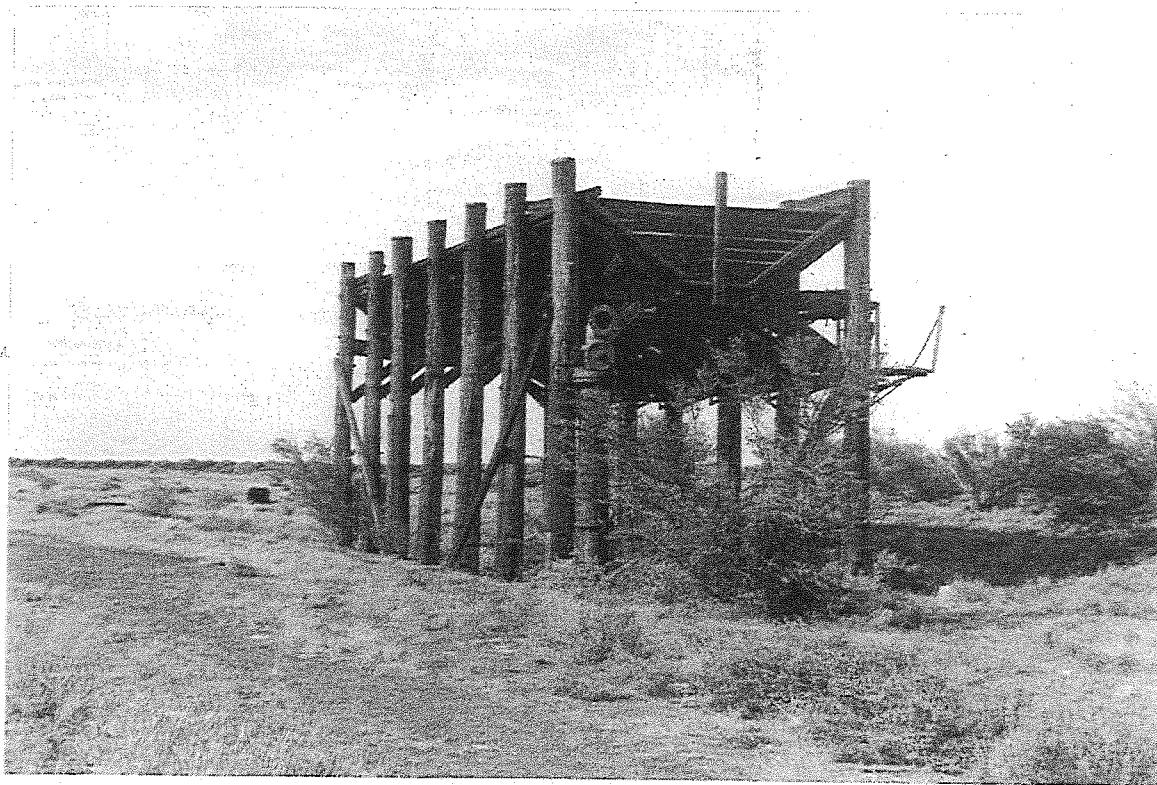
General View of Abminga



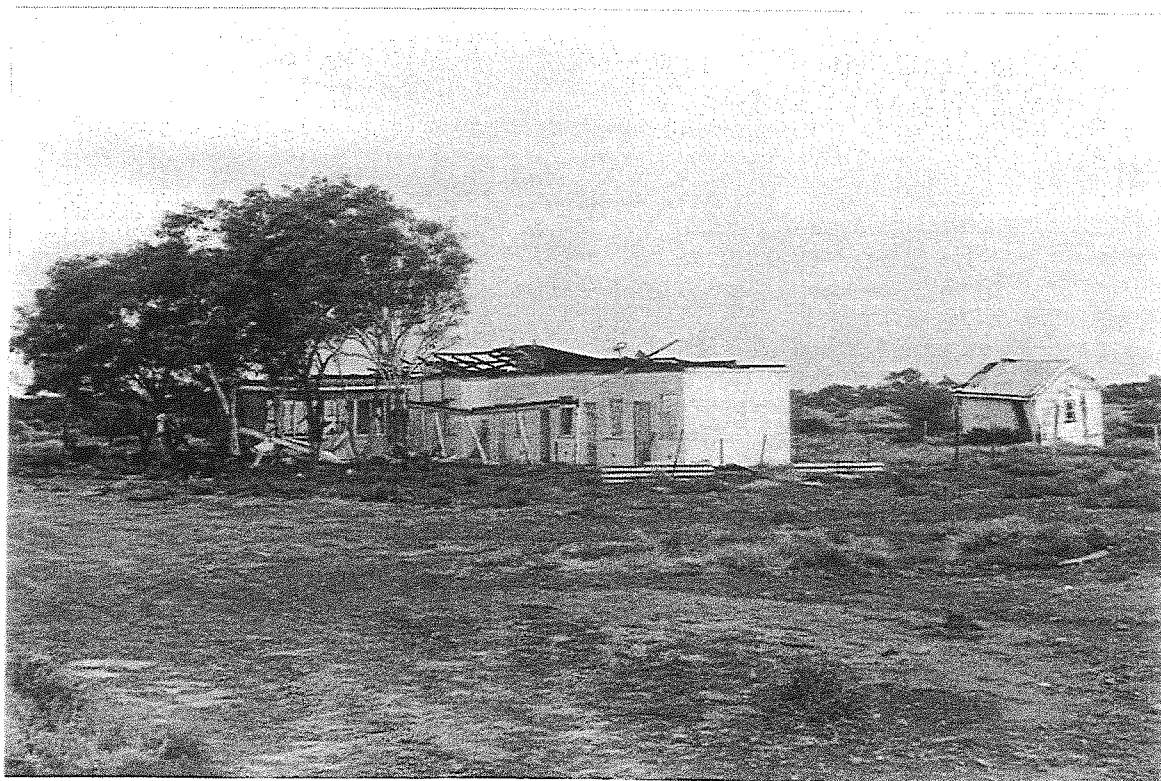
Abminga Water Tank and Pump Shed

ABMINGA RAILWAY SIDING

SHP:001



Abminga Coal Bins



Abminga Fettlers Cottages