

SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the
Heritage Places Act 1993

NAME: Abminga Railway Siding Complex - **PLACE NO.:** 19146
railway station, two fettlers cottages,
coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs,
trolley shed and storage platform foundations

ADDRESS: Old Ghan Railway Route, near Oodnadatta

CL 1628/20 Block 1264 H830400 Out of Hundreds (Abminga)

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Abminga Railway Siding Complex is of State heritage significance as the most substantial surviving relic in South Australia of the Commonwealth section of the Central Australian Railway. It represents the extension of the Ghan railway line by the Commonwealth Government north of Oodnadatta to the Northern Territory in 1928, an important milestone in the development of the state and its rail network. It also demonstrates the technology of the time: the distance between re-watering or re-coaling stops for the locomotives or transport technology available to the fettlers working the line and contains all the essential elements of a railway siding, including features not found at any other railway siding along the Old Ghan Railway route (namely a coal bin and pump shed with shearlegs). The Siding is also significant as it represents the 'pattern' of the Old Ghan Railway, through the spatial rhythm of the sidings and fettlers cottages.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

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

Of the thirty six (36) former railway sites 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. Abminga is also the most northerly railway siding in South Australia and represents the extension of the Ghan railway line by the Commonwealth Government north of Oodnadatta to the Northern Territory in 1928, an important milestone in the development of the state and its rail network.

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 the best representative of the section of line built by the Commonwealth Railways.

Abminga was built about ten miles south of the border, 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.

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

Abminga is a relatively large and intact railway complex and also formed an isolated settlement in the arid far north of the State. It is of great 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.

EXTENT OF LISTING

The extent of listing is the Abminga Railway Siding Complex – railway station, two fettlers cottages, coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs, trolley shed and storage platform foundations as generally indicated on the attached site plan.

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

The Abminga Railway Siding Complex contains a group of typical railway siding buildings including fettlers cottages 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 is located about 200m to the east of the water tower on a spur line.

The components currently identified as being intrinsic to the heritage significance of Abminga Railway Siding Complex include:

- fettlers cottages
- trolley shed
- station building
- foundations and inspection pits of an engine shed
- coal bin
- pump shed with shearlegs

- water tank
- multiple rail tracks
- remnant infrastructure from the Second World War (a loading or storage platform, and foundations and footings from removed buildings)

History of the Place

The railway line from Marree to Oodnadatta was completed by the South Australian Railways in 1891. 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.

In December 1928 the section of the Ghan railway line between Oodnadatta and Rumbalara in the Northern Territory was opened. Construction of this section of line began in 1928 and was a relatively simple matter across flat 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.

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 at Abminga was found to be inadequate to supply locomotive water, and a bore was then 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.

References

This Summary has been adapted from the assessment report in:

- Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd and Historical Research Pty Ltd, *Oodnadatta Track Heritage Survey* (2001)

SITE RECORD

PLACE NO: 19146

Abminga Railway Siding Complex - railway station, two fettlers cottages, coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs, trolley shed and storage platform foundations

Old Ghan Railway Route, near Oodnadatta

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| FORMER NAME: | Known briefly as Bloods Creek |
| DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: | 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, pump shed 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) |
| DATE OF COMPLETION: | 1928 |
| SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS: | Description: Provisionally Entered Date: 12 September 2007 |
| LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS: | N/A |
| CURRENT USE: | Description: Grazing Land Dates: 1980-2013 |
| PREVIOUS USE(S): | Description: Railway Station Dates: 1928-1980 |
| ARCHITECT: | Name: N/A Dates: |
| BUILDER: | Name: N/A Dates: |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: | Description: N/A (Unincorporated) |
| LOCATION: | Unit No.: Street No.: Street Name: Old Ghan Railway Route Town/Suburb: Near Oodnadatta Post Code: 5734 |
| LAND DESCRIPTION: | Title Type: CL Volume: 1628 Folio: 20 Lot No.: Section: Block 1264 Hundred: Out of Hundreds (Abminga) |

PHOTOS

PLACE NO: 19146

Abminga Railway Siding Complex - railway station, two fettlers cottages, coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs, trolley shed and storage platform foundations
Old Ghan Railway Route, near Oodnadatta



General view of Abminga Railway Siding Complex



Water Tank and Pump Shed, Abminga Railway Siding Complex

PHOTOS

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Abminga Railway Siding Complex - railway station, two fettlers cottages, coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs, trolley shed and storage platform foundations

Old Ghan Railway Route, near Oodnadatta



Coal Bins, Abminga Railway Siding Complex

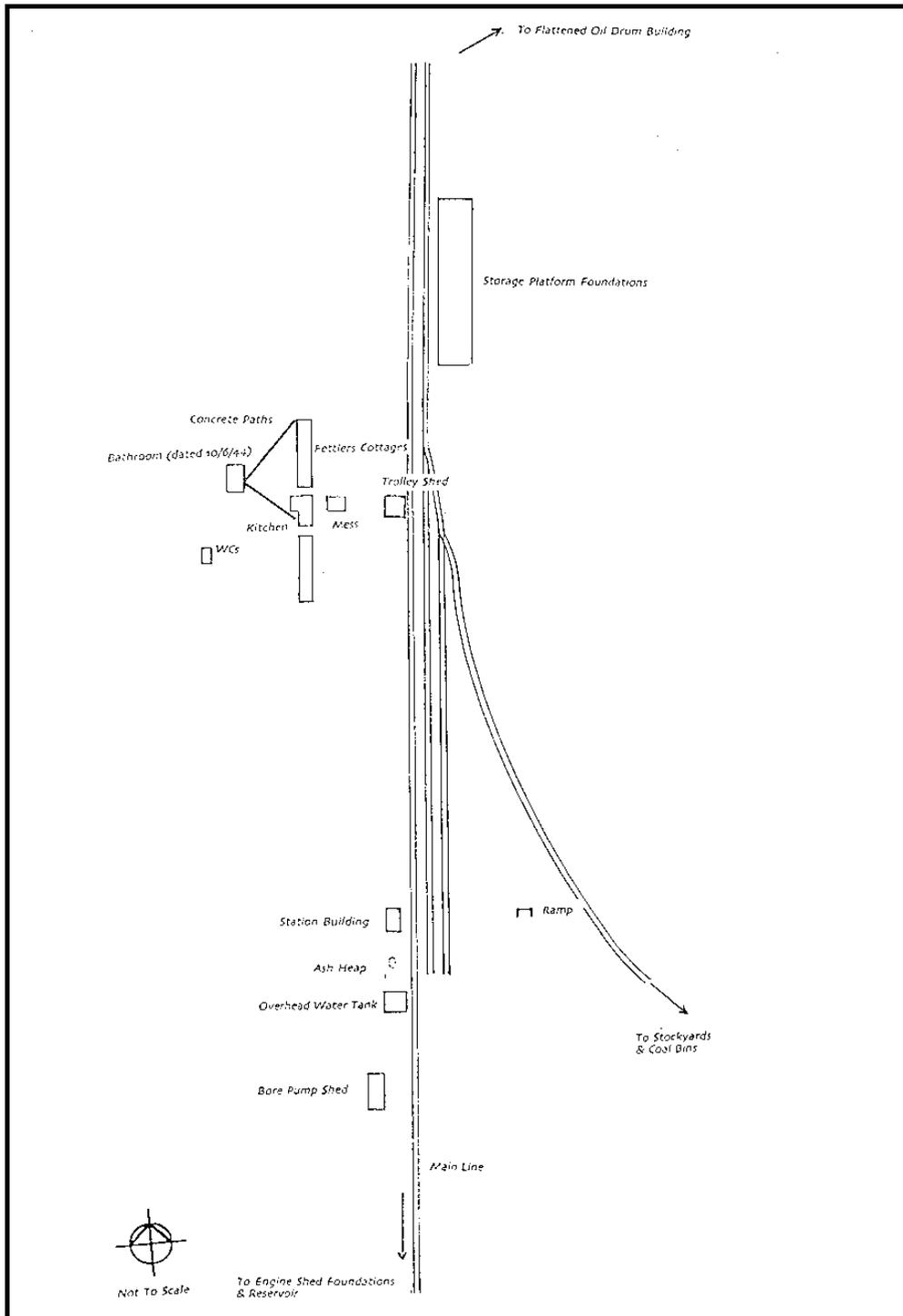


Fettlers' Cottages, Abminga Railway Siding Complex

SITE PLAN

PLACE NO: 19146

Abminga Railway Siding Complex - railway station, two fettlers cottages, coal bin, water tank, pump shed and shearlegs, trolley shed and storage platform foundations
Old Ghan Railway Route, near Oodnadatta



Site Plan showing significant features of the Abminga Railway Siding Complex