

RECORD OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

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

NAME: Time Office/Correspondence Room (Building 171) PLACE NO.:26402
Islington Railway Workshops
ADDRESS: Churchill Road, Kilburn SA 5084

Physical Description

The former Time Office / Correspondence Room comprises a single-storey red-brick building located on the eastern boundary of the former Islington Railway Workshops site, adjoining Churchill Road. Its gambrel roof is clad with corrugated iron and this material is also used for the flat-roofed verandah on its western side shading a row of six double-hung sash windows, each with six glass panes. On the wall on either side of each of these are signs with white numerals 1 to 6 and the words 'in' and 'out' painted on a black ground. The building has a modest Edwardian appearance, with a simple rectilinear form showing no decoration apart from a grey cement band at the top and bottom of the external walls. There are two brick chimneys visible on the western side. There is a later brick and iron addition to the southern end, now housing the security office for the site.

The structure was built in stages from about 1892, with the earliest section comprising a single room at the southern end still retaining evidence of its original use as the pay office for the Workshops. A section of the original stone wall is still exposed, with external door and wide sash window featuring a deep slate sill, where workers lined up to collect their pay. The building was re-roofed and extended to the north and east around 1914, to provide additional office space and staff amenities to accommodate clerks and typists in what became known as the Correspondence Room. A further major extension completed in the early 1920s included the row of pay windows along the western façade, sheltered by a verandah running the length of the building. Aside from the more recent addition to the southern end built around 1950 to house the fire engine (currently the security office), the exterior retains more or less its 1920s appearance.

Internally there are a number of timber partition walls dividing the internal space into several interconnected rooms, reflecting changes in use over the years.

Statement of Heritage Significance

The Former Time Office / Correspondence Room is historically significant for its capacity to demonstrate important social and occupational aspects of the history of the Islington Railway Workshops, the largest railway workshops, and one of the largest industrial complexes in the State.

It is representative of work practices once common in large industrial complexes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which have virtually disappeared as a result of technological changes. It is now rare to find an office building which illustrates the transaction between employer and employees so explicitly. The building is therefore it is not only significant for its associations with Islington, but also with work practices in SA in the twentieth century.

Constructed in 1892 as a single room, and progressively enlarged to its present extent, the building demonstrates the growth of the Workshops from its nineteenth century beginnings to become one of the most important industrial sites, and one of the largest employers, in South Australia. During World War II the reached its peak of 6,300 men and women employed at Islington on Commonwealth defence contracts for production of munitions and aircraft components.

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.

The former Time Office / Correspondence Room demonstrates the growth of the Islington Railway Workshops, one of the most important industrial sites, and one of the largest employers, in South Australia.

The building illustrates through its fabric historical methods of management of a large industrial workforce, and is one of the few buildings to provide physical evidence of the very large numbers of workers present on the site, and their status and economic class. All employees were paid in cash, lining up to receive their weekly wage at the numbered pay windows of the Time Office. Five covered 'races' were provided in the 1922 renovations to ensure orderly queuing under-cover. Pay packets were made up by clerks in the office, who checked each employee's hours worked and 'docked' them for any late starts or absences. For many years all new employees were issued with an identity disc which had to be checked in at the start of their shift, and collected at the end of the day. When the start whistle sounded for the commencement of the shift the shop foreman would reputedly check the discs and then lock the cabinet in which they were hung, so that anyone arriving late for work could not 'clock on' until ten minutes later and would have their pay docked.

As the Correspondence Room (1914 to 1940) the building housed an important additional administrative function, dealing with the large volume of official correspondence in and out of the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Office. This was a growing area of employment for women, after initially being the preserve of male clerks, and provided one of the early career opportunities for women as 'typistes'.

Extent of Listing

The components that are *integral* to the heritage significance of the Time Office / Correspondence Room include:

- External form and appearance including brick walls, chimneys, corrugated iron roof and verandah
- Row of 'Pay Windows' along western side including painted signage
- Remnant stone wall and early window and door openings on southern end (c1892)

The extent of listing *excludes* the later brick and iron addition to the southern end (Security / Patrol Office).

History of the Place

The Islington Railway Workshops were established in the early 1880s, and reflected the expansion of the South Australian Railways and the increasing need for maintaining and adding to the rolling stock of the railways. Their history over the next century demonstrates efforts by successive administrators to modernise and rationalise the State's railway systems and infrastructure, and to build capacity to meet engineering needs in peace and wartime.

The first locomotive workshops for South Australian Railways were located in the railway yard at North Terrace, occupying a series of stone buildings near the Adelaide Railway Station. As the SA railway system expanded from its beginnings in 1854, the demand placed on these workshops to maintain and repair the increasing numbers of locomotives and rolling stock in operation soon put pressure on the very limited site. By 1876, when young British engineer William Thow was appointed Locomotive Engineer for SA, it was becoming clear that the only sensible solution to the congestion and inefficiencies was to move the locomotive workshops to a new larger site. A suitable location at Islington was chosen for new workshops but the transfer to the new site was held up for more than a decade until funds were made available.

A running shed, and cottages for a foreman, drivers and firemen were constructed on the southern section of the government land at Islington during 1880, at a cost of £4,000, but Thow's requests for funding for new carriage works was blocked in the Parliament. The urgent need for additional wagons and carriages to service the new lines, and the high cost of purchasing them elsewhere, eventually proved to be a convincing argument. Thow proceeded to draw up plans for the new workshops, commencing with carriage works and paint shop. Construction of the first stage of

the carriage works was completed and the works transferred to Islington in December 1883.

Within the next two years a number of other buildings, including fitting shops, painting and repairing shops were constructed at Islington, but the main heavy work of locomotive repair was still carried out at Adelaide until 1891. It fell to Thow's successor T S Roberts to implement the building plans for the new locomotive workshops, drawn up by the Chief Engineer's department under Thow's direction, and it was Roberts who provided the details for fitting out and equipping them, and oversaw their construction. The new buildings were completed and transfer of all machinery and operations from the Adelaide workshops was begun in October 1891. In February 1892 a special report on the new Locomotive Workshops at Islington was published in the *Register*, in which the new buildings and equipment were described in detail. The works at that time covered an area of nearly five acres, and had a workforce approaching 1,000. It was intended that both these figures would eventually be doubled.

Though not specifically mentioned in the *Register* report, it is believed that the Time Office was also completed in that year. A plan dated 9 April 1892 indicates a well detailed but tiny single room structure, with a wide south facing enclosed 'eyelash' verandah over the external door and large 'lifting' sash window featuring a deep slate sill/ counter. Workers lined up here to sign on and off each shift, and to collect their pay. As originally built the office was a single room constructed of brick and stone with a gabled corrugated iron roof running east-west. The plan specifies that the 'masonry and brickwork [were] to be equal in quality of materials and workmanship to that of the Loco Offices'. It was to be located alongside the Workmen's Siding and Platform, and built 'with its back adjoining the galv[anised] iron fence of the Loco Offices and with the entrance verandah on the southern side' (SA Railways New Locomotive Workshops Plan 12619/450, vide LE 1595/91).

By the early 1900s the workforce at Islington, inclusive of apprentices, officers, draughtsmen and clerks, numbered just under one thousand men (*Cyclopaedia of SA*, 1907) and had grown to nearly double that to 1800 by the time William Webb took over as Railway Commissioner in 1922.

By 1907 the Islington Workshops, in addition to repair and maintenance work, were responsible for the manufacture of all new carriages, and most of the trucks, wagons and other vehicles needed for the carriage of goods and livestock in South Australia, and had recently begun to design and manufacture locomotives. 'In extent, arrangement, equipment, and general efficiency, it is claimed that this establishment is unsurpassed by any other of a similar character south of the Equator'. (*Cyclopaedia of South Australia*, vol. one, 1907).

Between 1911 and 1914 there was further expansion of the works under B F Rushton, Chief Mechanical Engineer, to meet the increase in railway traffic, and to accommodate the railway works transferred from Glanville (SAPP 47/1911-12 p. ix). An extension to the Carriage Shop was completed and equipped in 1912, along

with a rolling mill, and the erection of the new points and crossing shop was underway.

To accommodate the expanded workforce the Time Office was extended around 1914, to provide additional office space and staff amenities for clerks and typists in an attached office, later known as the Correspondence Room. The modifications also included replacement of the original verandah and addition of undercover 'gangways' to the south, and a new cantilever verandah along the eastern boundary to what is now Churchill Road (then Lower North Road). A large enclosed area known as the 'bicycle stable' was also added to the western side, extending to the fence of the CME's Office.

The intervention of World War I curtailed further development apart from upgrading some of the machinery in the metal and wood machinery shops, and provision of additional dining and locker facilities for staff. However expansion of the workforce to almost 2,000 men after the war meant the Time Office needed to be further enlarged. The bicycle stable was shifted and re-erected on the southern side of the main gates, to make way for additional office space and a storeroom. The total floor area of the building was more than doubled, and extra pay windows were provided along the western façade, sheltered by an 8 ft wide verandah running the length of the building, and the whole building was re-roofed. The new internal layout included an elevated office for the supervisor, with observation windows overlooking the general office area, and new toilet facilities for the (then all male) staff (SA Railways Islington Railway Works Time Office Plan 36524/450, dated 18 July 1919). These extensions were completed in the early 1920s.

By early 1923 a major restructure of the SA Railways and the Islington Workshops was underway, under newly appointed Chief Commissioner of SA Railways William Alfred Webb. This resulted in a complete revision of the entire layout, construction of a modern locomotive repair shop capable of handling new heavier locomotives, and transitioning from steam to electrical power for the operation of all machinery. Under Webb, and his able Chief Mechanical Engineer F J (Fred) Shea, the Workshops were reorganised completely to maximise efficiency both in repair and maintenance of locomotives and for new construction. Acquisition of thousands of pounds worth of modern machinery allowed work to be done more quickly and with fewer workers. The workforce, initially trimmed down to eliminate waste and 'dead wood', expanded to 1,900 men by mid-1927 to meet the demand for new production.

Rebuilding Islington was a huge and expensive project, costing a staggering £800,000, and it was to stand as CME Fred Shea's great achievement (Burke, 1985, p149). On completion the new works were comparable in extent and technical innovation to any other workshop in the Southern Hemisphere, and were producing the largest locomotives ever built in Australasia. It was proudly claimed that 'South Australia now possesses workshops that are the envy of all the other railway Departments in Australasia, and ... equal to anything of their size in the world' (*Advertiser*, July 5, 1927, p14).

The technological innovations of the Webb era provided a lasting legacy of well-designed and -equipped workshops and modern manufacturing methods, and generations of skilled tradesmen trained at the Islington Railway Workshops over succeeding decades.

The Islington Railway Workshops were one of the State's major employers and provided job opportunities and training for many ex-servicemen returning to civilian work after the Great War. It was one of the few industrial sites continuing to provide ongoing employment throughout the Depression years to relieve the State's massive pool of unemployed workers (Donovan, 1992, p259).

During the Depression and the lead up to World War Two the South Australian Railways continued to employ large numbers of men, and the Playford Government pursued Commonwealth and interstate contracts in order to keep the Islington Workshops going and avoid retrenchments. 'The Premier had been untiring in his efforts to get as much defence expenditure as possible for this State and for Islington in particular' (*Advertiser*, 11 October 1939, p6).

During World War II Islington Railway Workshops took on numerous Commonwealth defence contracts for munitions and aircraft components, and in 1943 the workforce swelled to an all-time high of 6,300, including many women engaged in production work for the first time (*The Public Service and the War*, 1944, p5). The Islington Workshops was one of the first organisations to take advantage of the government scheme for Dilution of Labour, where workers from other industries were brought in to be schooled by skilled artisans in order to address labour shortages for essential wartime production (*The Public Service and the War*, 1944, p6).

Expansion of the Workshops in preparation for defence production commenced in late 1939. The construction of an up-to-date well equipped Tool Room capable of producing sophisticated machine tooling was approved and commenced within weeks of Australia entering the war, and Commonwealth contracts for producing munitions, aircraft components, gun carriers and other military equipment ensured that Islington Railway Workshops remained one of the state's largest employers, with over 6,000 male and female workers engaged at the height of the war. Islington made a significant contribution to the war effort, producing 18 pounder and 25 pounder artillery shells in the purpose built Shell Annexe at the rate of 20,000 per week. It was the first Shell Annexe in the country to produce a million shells, and held the record for the highest production of any single Annexe. In early 1940 Islington commenced production of several large structural components for Beaufort Bomber aircraft under licence from the British manufacturer for supply to the RAAF and RAF. Over 600 contractors around Australia were involved in this project with final assembly of the planes taking place in Fisherman's Bend in Victoria. Islington produced a number of components for the Beauforts, including the centre-plane, front and rear spars, flaps, wings and wingtips, and fuel tanks. In all, over 600 sets of components were produced at Islington over the course of the war. Armoured vehicles were also produced in considerable numbers along with quantities of specialised tooling for manufacture of armaments and military equipment at other factories.

There was a period during World War II when the Correspondence Office was used for training (it is labelled 'School' on a c1940s plan), and after the war it became the Fire Station. The Tool Room became the focus for apprentice training at Islington, with capacity for approximately 40 apprentices. Many skilled tradesmen and engineers received their early training through the SAR at the Islington works, providing a broad skill base to other South Australian engineering industries.

The Islington Railway Workshops were also important in the history of industrial relations in this state, and were associated with the growth of the union movement and the achievement of improvements in working conditions and workplace safety for railway employees. The Workshops were the setting for a series of sensational strikes and lockouts during the Webb era and in the 1940s. Like railway workshops elsewhere in Australia, Islington played an important role in the development of the modern trade union movement and in the origins of the Australian Labor Party, and was a 'nursery' for Labor politicians. A number of prominent Labor figures, amongst them William Oliver Archibald, Ernest Leopold William Klauer, Edgar Rowland Dawes and Senator Reg Bishop were employed at Islington early in their careers.

In the decades following the war, the Workshops continued to provide employment and technical training for generations of skilled workers, as one of the State's largest industrial employers. After 1978, responsibility for the non-urban railway system passed from the South Australian Railways to the Commonwealth, and Islington Workshops was managed by Australian National Railways. During this period the Time Office/ Correspondence Room became the repository for the large collection of railway plans inherited from the SA Railways. From the late 1990s the site has been leased to rail company Genesee and Wyoming Australia Inc (GWA). The plan collection was recently transferred to the National Archives

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REFERENCES

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Archival

South Australian Railways *The Islington Railway Workshops*, Adelaide, 1929

Adelaide Advertiser newspaper – various issues

SA Register newspaper– various issues

State Records of SA

National Archives of Australia (SA Branch)

SA Parliamentary Papers

SA Railways and ANR Plans held by INPROTRANS Pty Ltd, 320 Churchill Rd, Kilburn

State Library of SA photographic collection

Index Cards from SAR Islington Railway Workshops (part of the Inprotrans collection)

Other

Notes made by David Parsons (an employee at Islington 1952-84)

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Robert Lee, *Australia: Our National Stories*, Australian Heritage Commission, 2003, accessed via the Australian Heritage Council Website: <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/index.html>

DEWNR State Heritage Unit Files

SITE RECORD

Islington Railway Workshops
Time Office / Correspondence Room (Building 171)

PLACE NO: 26402

FORMER NAME:	N/A		
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Single-storey red-brick building with cgi gambrel roof and flat-roofed verandah with row of numbered pay windows.		
DATE OF COMPLETION:	c1892-c1922		
SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:	Description:	Confirmed	
	Date:	23 August 2013	
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS	N/A		
CURRENT USE:	Description:	vacant	
	Dates:		
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description:	Office; Archive	
	Dates:	1892 -1980s?; 1980s - 2012	
ARCHITECT:	Name:		
	Dates:		
BUILDER:	Name:		
	Dates:		
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description:	Port Adelaide Enfield & Prospect	
LOCATION:	Unit No.:	N/A	
	Street No.:		
	Street Name:	Churchill Road	
	Town/Suburb:	Kilburn	
	Post Code:	5084	
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type:	CT	CT
	Volume:	6105	6105
	Folio:	583	584
	Lot No.:	Part Allot 44	Allot 44
	Section:	Closed Road	Closed Road
	Hundred:	Yatala	Yatala

PHOTOS

Islington Railway Workshops
Time Office / Correspondence Room (Building 171)

PLACE NO: 26402



Islington workers lined up in front of the Time Office on payday c1937 (SLSA photographic collection B10025).

The photograph is taken from above the verandah of the Time Office and shows the staff dining room and the Fabrication Workshop in the background.



View from south - Security / Patrol Office in foreground (DEWNR 2011)

PHOTOS

Islington Railway Workshops

PLACE NO: 26402

Time Office / Correspondence Room (Building 171)



Time Office/ Correspondence Room viewed from Churchill Rd, just north of main gates (Security Office on left) (GoogleMaps 2013)



Western façade (DEWNR 2011)



Pay Windows under western verandah (DEWNR 2011)

SITE PLAN

Islington Railway Workshops

PLACE NO: 26402

Time Office / Correspondence Room (Building 171)



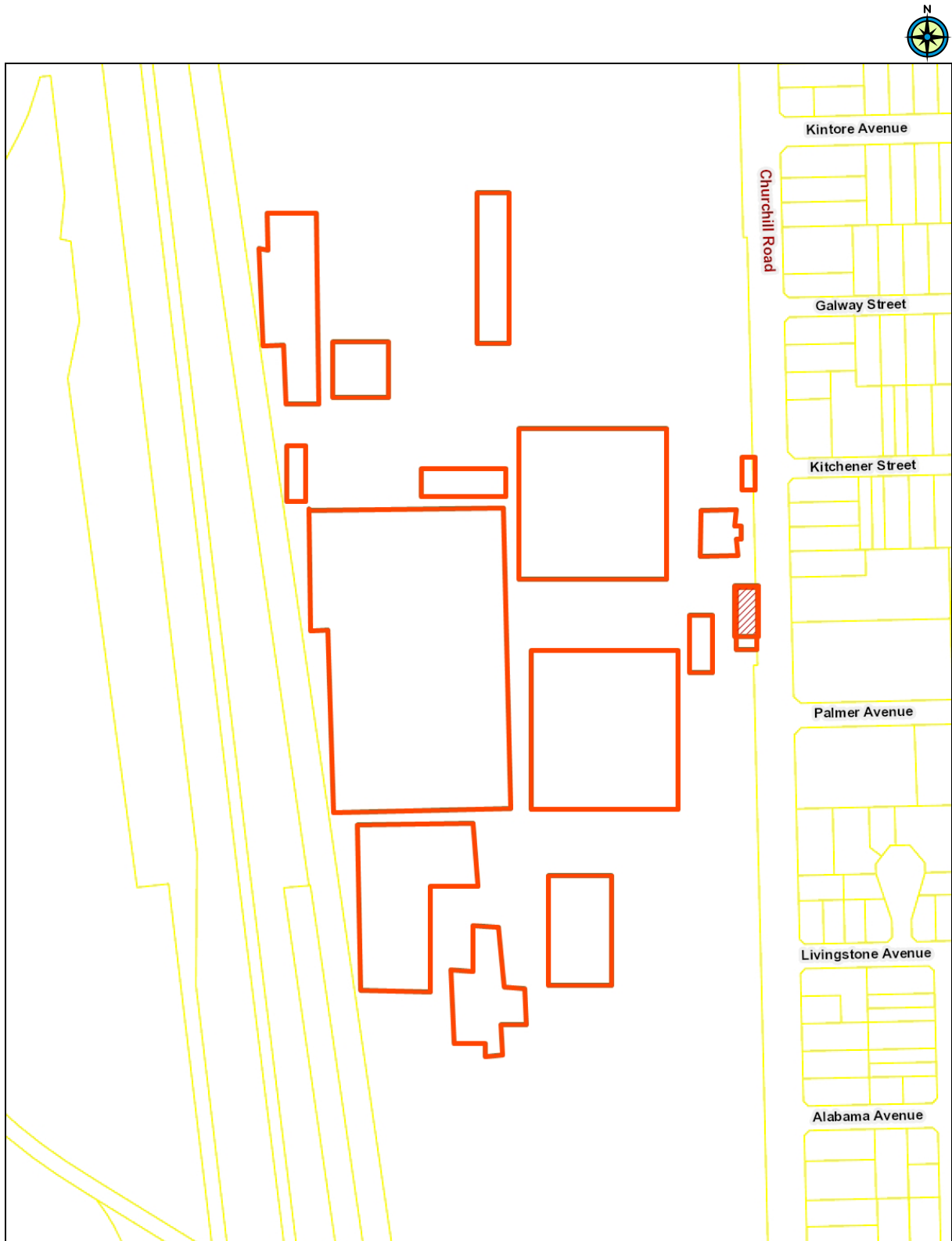
Site plan showing extent of listing outlined in red (excludes security office at southern end)

LOCATION PLAN

Islington Railway Workshops

PLACE NO: 26402

Time Office / Correspondence Room (Building 171)



Location of Time Office/ Correspondence Room (shaded) in relation to existing buildings on former Islington Railway Workshops site.