

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT

NAME: Building 136, Islington Railway Workshops

PLACE: 26424

ADDRESS: Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

HISTORY

History of Islington Railway Workshops (IRW)

The Islington Railway Workshops (IRW) comprises an extensive complex of buildings built on a large site located north of Adelaide. It played a significant role in the first railway boom of the 1880s, when many new rail lines were built into the wheat-growing areas of the South Australian interior, and the production of rolling stock grew considerably. IRW supported the state's mineral boom at that time, and also built a rail link to connect with the line from Broken Hill, situated across the border in western New South Wales, which was used to transport rich mineral yields to Port Pirie in South Australia. The great extent of rail development in this period has led it to being described as a 'rail-led boom'.

The South Australia Railway's (SAR) workshops were originally located in the Adelaide railway yard located on North Terrace. The limitations of the Adelaide yard meant that engine and rolling-stock maintenance was 'extravagantly expensive' (Anon 1892) and that insufficient space was available to upgrade the buildings and appliances required for maintenance activities. Consequently, the site at Islington was selected for new railway workshops, and the first buildings were completed and occupied in 1883. The initial development phase of IRW were undertaken in-line with the site plan devised by SAR Locomotive Engineer William Thow. William Thow was an English railway engineer who was appointed to the position of SAR Locomotive Engineer in 1876. During his twelve year tenure with the SAR, Thow attempted to modernise and rationalise the locomotive stock and was responsible for introducing the 4-6-0'R' class engine that formed the basis of continued locomotive development in South Australia until the 1920s. Thow also provided direction to the Engineer-in-Chief's department on the design of the buildings while T Roberts, Thow's replacement as Locomotive Engineer in 1888, designed the internal layouts and supervised the construction of the building extensions. During the 1890s the Islington site was recognised for its labour saving layout, modern equipment and elaborate buildings.

The IRW underwent a major redevelopment in the mid to late 1920s, under the guidance of Chief Commissioner, William Alfred Webb and his Chief Mechanical Engineer, Frederick James Shea. Webb, a North American railwayman with over thirty years experience, was appointed as Chief Commissioner in 1923. Shea, a Victorian railway engineer, was previously involved in modernising the Victorian Railways prior to accepting his appointment with SAR, also in 1923. Webb and Shea totally reorganised the IRW into a larger complex of modern, streamlined, electric-powered workshops enabling SAR to become a leading manufacturer of locomotives and other rolling stock. Track layout and buildings were rationalised to create efficient north-south workflow. Building 136 was built at that time as the Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop. As a consequence of the redevelopment, the IRW contributed greatly to the development of heavy industry in South Australia at that time.

From the 1920s to the 1950s SAR — with their largest and most important workshops at Islington — were closely integrated with the economic, industrial and social life of South Australia. Additionally, IRW also played a significant role in the development of the labour movement, and in unemployment relief during the Great Depression. IRW fabricated heavy locomotives, initially steam and later diesel. They also fabricated a great variety of carriage, freight and wagon cars, as well as speciality cars such as the Infant Welfare car in the 1950s and deluxe passenger cars for The Overland Express. IRW also built rolling stock

commissioned by other states, including Victoria, as well as many non-rail vehicles. In addition to manufacture, the workshops were also involved in repairs and maintenance. In 2017, IRW continue to be used for railway purposes, albeit with a large portion of the site to the North and South redeveloped as a retail precinct.

History of Building 136

Building 136 was built as the Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop during Webb's and Shea's substantial redevelopment of the site during the mid-1920s. By the mid-1950s the building had been extended on its north eastern side. The main building was, at that time, just the Bolt and Tube Shop. The extension was known as the Steaming Shed. Currently, an early weighbridge is housed in the extension. It is suggested that the weighbridge was not originally housed in this building and further investigation on the weighbridge needs to be carried out as a separate assessment. This building is one of several large structures built during the redevelopment of IRW and supported a range of manufacturing processes.

Chronology

- 1851: Plans to create a State-owned railway in South Australia.
- 1860s: Mining of copper ore in South Australia.
- 1878: 'Three tenders were opened on Tuesday at the office of the Engineer-in-Chief for the galvanized iron sheds to be erected at Islington for the new railway rolling-stock expected from New Zealand
- 1878: New carriage shed and workshops to be built at Islington, including workmen's cottages.
- 1882: Architectural plan for 'Carriage and Wagon Works' at Islington, stamped Chief Engineers Office, South Australia.
- 1883: New railway workshops built at Islington. Layout designed by South Australian Railways (SAR) Locomotive Engineer William Thow.
- 1888: On-going debate regarding moving all manufacture of railway stock to be moved to Islington
- 1890: The nation-wide Maritime Strike commences in Adelaide and involves transport workers
- 1891: Completion of the transfer of all machinery and workers from the North Adelaide Locomotive Workshops to new workshops at Islington
- 1922: W A Webb is appointed Chief Commissioner of the South Australian Railways. Webb introduces radical new operating practices based on modernisation and efficiency and appoints Frederick Shea as Chief Mechanical Engineer.
- 1924: Demolition of old buildings and construction commences of the new workshops at Islington
- 1926: Building 136 constructed.**
- 1927: Completion of the newly remodelled workshops at Islington.
- 1930: W A Webb resigns and returns to the United States.

- 1940-45: Islington Workshops are used as a munitions factory. One source claims that during this time, 'Islington railway workshops became possibly the finest industrial machine shop in Australia'.
- 1949: First diesel cars introduced by South Australian Railways
- 1951: New diesel engine built at Islington is part of a parade in Adelaide to celebrate the jubilee of Federation
- 1954: Centenary of the South Australian Railways
- 1962-74: The 'SAR closed approximately ninety stations and sidings to goods traffic and reduced maintenance on several lines'. (Donovan and O'Neil, *The Long Haul*, p. 34)

DESCRIPTION

Building 136

Building 136, at IRW is a large, lightweight, steel-framed structure clad with corrugated iron. It features a sawtooth roof with south-facing skylights and multi-paned windows on its eastern façade. It was built c.1926 as a multi-purpose space and incorporated the Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop. At some stage the building was extended on its south eastern façade. It is possible that a portion of the cladding and glazing from the original building was reused on the addition. The extension currently houses early locomotive weighing equipment.

At some stage, large openings were created along the eastern façade, resulting in the loss of the multi-paned glazing. Those openings are currently infilled with sheets of corrugated zincalume; some have single pedestrian doors inserted into them.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Heritage Significance:

Building 136, formerly known as the Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop, Islington Railway Workshops has been assessed in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993* section 16 and has been found to **not** fulfil any of the criteria for a State Heritage Place. Accordingly, no statement of significance can be attributed to it.

Comparability / Rarity / Representation:

Building 136

Steel-framed, metal clad, saw tooth roofed industrial buildings were commonly built in South Australia throughout the twentieth century. There are still substantial numbers of this type of structure throughout metropolitan Adelaide, including but not limited to Port Adelaide, Wingfield, Cavan, Tonsley, Edwardstown, North Plympton, Netley, Marleston, Mile End, Kilkenny, Woodville, Beverley, Hendon and Albert Park. In addition, there are a number of complexes that potentially better illustrate industrial processes, for example the Pennington Munitions Factory site located in Woodville North.

There are a number of twentieth century industrial buildings that have been listed as State Heritage Places that feature a saw tooth roof. However, they tend to be constructed from masonry or are masonry clad and include:

- **Former Goldsbrough Mort Wool Stores SHP14354**
- **DSTO (Former Salisbury Explosives Factory Site SHP26027**
- **DSTO (Former Salisbury Explosives Factory Site SHP26028**

- DSTO (Former Salisbury Explosives Factory Site SHP26029)
- Lobethal Woollen Mill SHP16192

Assessment against 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.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should be closely associated with events, developments or cultural phases which have played a significant part in South Australian history. Ideally it should demonstrate those associations in its fabric.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if they are of a class of things that are commonplace, or frequently replicated across the State, places associated with events of interest only to a small number of people, places associated with developments of little significance, or places only reputed to have been the scene of an event which has left no trace or which lacks substantial evidence.

Building 136 was built as a Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop during Webb's and Shea's substantial redevelopment of IRW. The redevelopment greatly enlarged, modernised and streamlined IRW, enabling it to become a leading manufacturer of locomotives and other rolling stock for South Australia and other states. As a consequence of the redevelopment, IRW made a substantial contribution to the manufacture of armoured vehicles and other products during World War 2. IRW contributed greatly to the development of heavy industry in South Australia throughout the twentieth century.

Building 136 is one of several structures built during the 1920s redevelopment and supported a range of manufacturing processes. It is one of only a few remaining buildings constructed at IRW at that time. However, it is not the best illustration of Webb's and Shea's improvements to create a modern streamlined industrial complex. Webb and Shea's modifications to the Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop SHP14686, Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop Annex SHP14687 and their installation of Traverser 1 and Traverser 2, both nominated for listing as state heritage places in 2013, better represent the successful application of their aims for IRW.

In addition, the physical fabric of Building 136 has been extensively altered since its construction in the mid-1920s. The building was extended at some point prior to the early 1950s and the multi-pane glazing on the eastern façade has been removed to accommodate large openings now infilled with sheets of corrugated zincalume.

This place does **not** fulfill this criteria.

(b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should demonstrate a way of life, social custom, industrial process or land use which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest. This encompasses both places which were always rare, and places which have become scarce through subsequent loss or destruction.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion if their rarity is merely local, or if they appear rare only because research has not been done elsewhere, or if their distinguishing characteristics have been degraded or

compromised, or if they are at present common and simply believed to be in danger of becoming rare in future.

Building 136 is a steel framed, metal clad, saw tooth roofed industrial building that is indicative of this type of structure built throughout the twentieth century in South Australia. It is not a rare example of this type of building. Similar buildings can be found in abundance in the metropolitan area, typically in the suburbs associated with manufacturing and other industrial operations. Further, while Building 136 was built as a part of Webb's and Shea's important redevelopment of IRW it is not the best illustration of their improvements, which created a modern, streamlined industrial complex.

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

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

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should provide, or demonstrate a likelihood of providing, information that will contribute significantly to our knowledge of the past. The information should be inherent in the fabric of the place. The place may be a standing structure, an archaeological deposit or a geological site.

Places will not normally be considered under this criterion simply because they are believed to contain archaeological or palaeontological deposits. There must be good reasons to suppose the site is of value for research, and that useful information will emerge. A place that will yield the same information as many other places, or information that could be obtained as readily from documentary sources, may not be eligible.

There is nothing visible in the physical fabric, documentary evidence or oral history of Building 136 to suggest there is any physical evidence, not currently visible that may meaningfully contribute to the State's history. The types of industrial processes carried out in Building 136 are documented in other sources.

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

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

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should be capable of providing understanding of the category of places which it represents. It should be typical of a wider range of such places, and in a good state of integrity, that is, still faithfully presenting its historical message.

Places will not be considered simply because they are members of a class, they must be both notable examples and well-preserved. Places will be excluded if their characteristics do not clearly typify the class, or if they were very like many other places, or if their representative qualities had been degraded or lost. However, places will not be excluded from the Register merely because other similar places are included.

Building 136 is a light weight, steel framed, metal clad, saw tooth roofed industrial building built in the mid-1920s. It is indicative of this type of structure that was commonly constructed during the twentieth century to accommodate a variety of industrial and manufacturing processes. There are still plentiful examples of this type of industrial

building in metropolitan Adelaide. Further, Building 136 has been extended and modified and no longer faithfully represents the original building constructed in the mid-1920s. Therefore, Building 136 can not be considered to be an outstanding or notable representative of saw tooth roofed industrial buildings.

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should show qualities of innovation or departure, beauty or formal design, or represent a new achievement of its time. Breakthroughs in technology or new developments in design would qualify, if the place clearly shows them. A high standard of design skill and originality is expected.

Places would not normally be considered under this criterion if their degree of achievement could not be demonstrated, or where their integrity was diminished so that the achievement, while documented, was no longer apparent in the place, or simply because they were the work of a designer who demonstrated innovation elsewhere.

Building 136 is a light weight, steel framed, metal clad, saw tooth roofed industrial building constructed in the mid-1920s. It is indicative of this type of structure, which was commonly built during the twentieth century to accommodate a variety of industrial and manufacturing processes. There are still many examples of this type of industrial building in metropolitan Adelaide. Building 136 is not innovative, nor is it a departure from the construction techniques or architectural style of industrial buildings built at the time of its construction. Further, Building 136 has been extended and modified and no longer faithfully represents the original building constructed in the mid-1920s. Building 136 does not demonstrate a high degree of creative, technical or aesthetic accomplishment and it is not an outstanding representative of construction techniques or design characteristics.

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

(f) it has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place should be one which the community or a significant cultural group have held in high regard for an extended period. This must be much stronger than people's normal attachment to their surroundings. The association may in some instances be in folklore rather than in reality.

Places will not be considered if their associations are commonplace by nature, or of recent origin, or recognised only by a small number of people, or not held very strongly, or held by a group not widely recognised, or cannot be demonstrated satisfactorily to others.

IRW, as a site, is held in high regard by some groups and individuals within the community, especially those who either worked at IRW or who consider themselves to be 'train buffs'. Certainly, some members of the community appreciate the importance of

Building 136, to the operation of IRW, as they have considered it worthy of nomination as a State Heritage Place. However, there is little opportunity for groups and individuals, who do not work at IRW to make direct and regular contact with Building 136, as IRW is still an operational industrial site. Further, a number of buildings listed as State Heritage Places at IRW already readily represent worker and community associations and include:

- **Islington Railway Workshops Apprentice School (SHP10708)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Chief Mechanical Engineer's Office (SHP1685)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop (SHP14686)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Electrical Shop (SHP10709)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Foundry (SHP14688)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop Annex (SHP14687)**

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

(g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.

In considering this criterion, I have had regard to the *Guidelines for State Heritage Places*, that note:

The place must have a close association with a person or group which played a significant part in past events, and that association should be demonstrated in the fabric of the place. The product of a creative person, or the workplace of a person whose contribution was in industry, would be more closely associated with the person's work than would his or her home. Most people are associated with many places in their lifetime, and it must be demonstrated why one place is more significant than others.

Places will not generally be considered under this criterion if they have only a brief, incidental or distant association, or if they are associated with persons or groups of little significance, or if they are associated with an event which has left no trace, or if a similar association could be claimed for many places, or if the association cannot be demonstrated. Generally the home or the grave of a notable person will not be entered in the Register unless it has some distinctive attribute, or there is no other physical evidence of the person's life or career in existence.

Building 136 was closely associated with the work of SAR Chief Commissioner William Alfred Webb and his Chief Mechanical Engineer Frederick James Shea. Webb and Shea totally reorganised IRW in the mid-1920s creating a large complex comprised of modern, streamlined, electric-powered workshops. This included the construction of Building 136. Building 136 is one of a few remaining structures at IRW that was built as a result of Webb's and Shea's actions. The remaining 1920s buildings include:

- **Electrical Substation**
- **Wood Car Machine Shop & General Store**
- **Traverser 1 nominated 2013**
- **Traverser 2 nomination 2013**

However, as a part of their actions to upgrade IRW, Webb and Shea also modified a number of the existing buildings. As a consequence, there are buildings at IRW already listed as State Heritage Places, which better represent Webb's and Shea's intentions to create a modern, streamlined facility. They include:

- **Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop (SHP14686)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Electrical Shop (SHP10709)**

- **Islington Railway Workshops Foundry (SHP14688)**
- **Islington Railway Workshops Fabrication Shop Annex (SHP14687)**

In addition, there are four places on the State Heritage Register that are directly associated with the work of Chief Commissioner Webb, and his efforts to improve the efficiency of SAR. They include:

- **Balaklava Railway Station Complex SHP12942**
- **Tailem Bend Turntable SHP17078**
- **Murray Bridge Transport Precinct SHP26373**
- **Former Peterborough YMCA Hostel SHP14236**

Therefore, as there are already a number of places on the State Heritage Register associated with the work of William Alfred Webb and given they better represent his aims to improve both IRW and SAR, Building 136 does not fulfill this criteria.

This place does **not** fulfil this criteria.

Extent of Listing / Significant Fabric / Curtilage:

As Building 136 fails to fulfil any of the criteria required to be listed as a State Heritage Place, there is no extent of listing, significant fabric or curtilage to consider here.

REFERENCES:

Anon, 'The Locomotive Workshops at Islington', *The Register*, 25 February 1892, p.6.

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Marshall, D, Brassil, T, Doyle, H 2012 *Heritage Assessment Of The Former Islington Railway Workshops, Front Fence & Building 171*, Report for the Heritage Policy Unit, SA Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

Morgan, D, 'Research Notes IRW Central Buildings' (Adelaide: State Heritage Unit).

'Railway Workshop Islington', January 1929.

Walker, JD (1990), 'Thow, William (1842-1926)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu/biography/thow-william-8801/text1535>, accessed 12 December 2016.

NAME: Building 136, Islington Railway Workshop **PLACE NO.:** 26424

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME: Building 136, formerly known as Tube Shop, Copper and Tinsmith's Shop and Bolt, Nut and Dogspike Shop

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: Light weight steel framed, metal clad, saw tooth roofed industrial building.

DATE OF COMPLETION: c.1926

REGISTER STATUS: **Description:** Nominated
Date: 25 June 2013

CURRENT USE: **Description:** Track Maintenance
Dates:

PREVIOUS USE(S): **Description:** Copper and tin smithing, tube, nut, bolt and dogspike manufacture.
Dates: Mid-1920s –post 1950s

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: **Name:** South Australian Railways
Dates: Mid-1920s

SUBJECT INDEXING: **Group:** Transport (Rail)
Category: Railway Workshop

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: **Description:** Port Adelaide Enfield

LOCATION: **Unit No.:**
Street No.:
Street Name: Churchill Road
Town/Suburb: Kilburn
Post Code: 5084

LAND DESCRIPTION: **Title Type:** CT
Volume: 6179
Folio: 405
Lot No.: A144
Plan No.: D95846
Hundred: Yatala

SITE PLAN

NAME: Building 136, Islington Railway Workshops **PLACE:** 26424



Building 136, Islington Railway Workshops, Churchill Road, Kilburn 5084

Legend

-  Extent of nominated place
-  State Heritage Places at Islington Railway Workshops
-  Parcel boundaries

N ↑

PHOTOS

NAME: Building 136, Islington Railway Workshops **PLACE:** 26424



Aerial View of IRW 1929, Building 136 is the smaller saw tooth roof structure in the mid-left of the image.

Source: *Railway Workshops, Islington, 1929*, p4.



Building 136 eastern façade, note the loss of the multi-pane windows, 2017.



Building 136, extension to the eastern façade showing the multi-pane windows, 2017.