

## SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

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### REGISTER ENTRY

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

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**NAME:** Traverser 1 and Traverser 2, PLACE NO.: 26427  
Islington Railway Workshops

**ADDRESS:** Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084  
CT 6179/40 D95846 A144 Hundred of Yatala

### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 were built as one of the vital improvements undertaken by South Australian Railways (SAR) Chief Commissioner, William Alfred Webb and Chief Mechanical Engineer, Frederick Shea as a part of the second major phase of development at Islington Railway Workshops (IRW). Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 demonstrate the redevelopment of IRW and South Australia's second undertaking to modernise and improve locomotive, carriage and wagon construction and maintenance. As a consequence of Webb's and Shea's activities, IRW was greatly enlarged, modernised and streamlined, enabling it to become a leading manufacturer of locomotives and other rolling stock for South Australia and other states. The redevelopment of IRW also contributed greatly to the growth of heavy industry in South Australia throughout the twentieth century and integrated SAR with the economic, industrial and social life of South Australia between mid-1920s and the 1950s.

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 played a significant role in the maintenance and construction of rolling stock by facilitating the efficient movement, and consequently workflow at IRW. They did so by enabling rolling stock to be easily and quickly moved between lines as well as between work-bays. Improvements in efficiency were critical to IRW becoming a leading manufacturer and heavy industrial site. Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 are also an outstanding example of traverser technology. The operation of traversers as a method to move locomotives and rolling stock around railway complexes was uncommon in South Australia, as roundhouses and turntables were more frequently utilised. Traverser 1 and Traverser

2 represent a significant aspect of South Australian Railway process and land use that is in danger of being lost.

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

**Include only the criteria the place meets.**

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

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 were built as a part of the second major phase of development at IRW. The important and substantial redevelopment of IRW began in the 1920s and was undertaken by Chief Commissioner, William Alfred Webb and Chief Mechanical Engineer, Frederick Shea. 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 significantly contributed to the development of heavy industry in South Australia throughout the twentieth century.

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 played a significant role in the maintenance and construction of rolling stock by facilitating the efficient movement, and consequently workflow at IRW. They did so by enabling rolling stock to be easily and quickly moved between lines as well as work-bays in the Paint Shop, Fabrication Shop SHP14686 and Fabrication Shop Annex SHP14687. Improvements in efficiency were critical to IRW becoming a leading manufacturer and heavy industrial site.

The significance of Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 is their function – the lateral movement of locomotives and rolling stock, which they do faithfully represent. Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 at IRW are the only known traversers still operating in South Australia.

# SITE PLAN

Traverser 2 and Traverser 2  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, SA 5084

PLACE NO: 26427



N ↑

N ↑

## LEGEND

-  Existing State Heritage Places at Islington Railway Workshops
-  Traverser 1 and Traverser 2
-  Parcel boundaries

## 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*

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### Physical Description

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2, located at IRW are each a diesel-powered flat-bed machine and four pairs of rail lines, oriented east-west, on which the flat-bed machines run. They were built c.1925-26 as electric-powered machines but were converted to diesel in the 1960s. When built, Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 each incorporated a metal-framed, flat-bed with eight sets of rail-wheels and a shed on their western side. The floor of the flat-beds was made from timber. The sheds were timber framed, clad with sheets of corrugated iron and had a skillion roof. Access was provided via an opening in the cladding, and windows wrapped around all facades providing the driver with 360° views. Electricity was supplied to Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 through a catenary (three cables) supported by two trussed metal pylons, one each located at the eastern and western end of the run. A pantograph attached to the roof of the shed, connected the traversers to their catenary.

It is likely that the timber frame of Traverser 1's shed is original. However, metal-mesh doors and supporting metal frame are a more recent addition. The windows appear to be sited at the same level but have been replaced. The pantograph has been removed. The wheels are now covered and the floor of the flat-bed was replaced with metal plates. While the trussed metal pylons remain at each end of the run, the catenary has been removed. The ground surface around Traverser 1's rail lines has also been replaced as needed; it is currently bitumen.

Traverser 2 has been significantly altered as a consequence of upgrades. Both the shed and pantograph have been removed. The wheels are now covered and the floor of the flat-bed was replaced with metal plates. While the trussed metal pylons remain at each end of the run, the catenary has been removed. The ground surface around Traverser 2's rail lines has also been replaced as needed; it is currently bitumen.

### History of the Place

Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 were electric powered traversers installed during the second major phase of development at IRW when Webb and Shea redeveloped the site to increase workflow efficiency. While the track layout provided movement

along the site's north-south axis Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 enabled the easy and efficient east-west movement of locomotives and rolling stock. In particular, Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 enabled efficient lateral movement between respectively the different work bays within the Paint Shop and Fabrication Shop SHP14686 and the main line and the Fabrication Shop SHP14686 and Fabrication Shop Annex SHP14687 and the main line. Electric-powered traverser technology was significantly more efficient than other alternatives including horse-drawn traversers and turntables. Traverser 1 and Traverser 2 were converted to diesel power in the 1960s and have undergone a number of upgrades during their life, the latest occurring around 2010.

## 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

- 1925-26: Construction of Traverser 1&2 at Islington Railway Workshops.**
- 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, 1992, p.34).

## References

Donovan, P and O'Neil, B (1992), *the Long Haul: Australian National 1978-1988*, (Adelaide, Focus Books).

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

Donovan and Associates, 1992 *Railway Heritage of South Australia* vols 1&2, National Trust of South Australia.

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

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.

'Visit to South Australian Railway Workshops Islington', 3 November 1956.

'Railway Workshop Islington', January 1929.

'Railway Van in Traverser Pit', *The Advertiser* 21 January 1926, p.11

'MTT Staff at the Hackney Depot', State Library of South Australia B70935/20

'South End Traverser Port Pirie Smelter', State Library of South Australia PRG1062/9/1A

## SITE DETAILS

Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshops  
Churchill Road, Kilburn 5084

PLACE NO: 26247

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<b>FORMER NAME:</b>	Traverser 1 and Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops.	
<b>DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:</b>	Flat-bed machines each with a shed and four pairs of rail lines.	
<b>DATE OF COMPLETION:</b>	Mid-1920s.	
<b>SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Nominated
	<b>Date:</b>	25 June 2013
	<b>Description:</b>	Provisionally entered
	<b>Date:</b>	17 May 2017
<b>LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS</b>	N/A	
<b>CURRENT USE:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Traverser
	<b>Dates:</b>	Mid-1920s to present
<b>PREVIOUS USE(S):</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Traverser
	<b>Dates:</b>	Mid-1920s to present
<b>ARCHITECT/BUILDER:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	South Australian Railways
	<b>Dates:</b>	Mid-1920s
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	City of Port Adelaide Enfield
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Street Name:</b>	Churchill Road
	<b>Town/Suburb:</b>	Kilburn
	<b>Post Code:</b>	5084
<b>LAND DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>Title Type:</b>	CT
	<b>Volume:</b>	6179
	<b>Folio:</b>	405
	<b>Lot No.:</b>	A144
	<b>Plan No.:</b>	D95846
	<b>Hundred:</b>	Yatala



## PHOTOS

Traverser 1  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

PLACE NO: 26427

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Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshops, extent of run, looking east, 2017.



Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshop, flat-bed machine, 2017.

## PHOTOS

Traverser 1  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

PLACE NO: 26427

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Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshop, flat-bed machine view to north-west, 2017.



Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshop, flat-bed machine, view to south, 2017.

## PHOTOS

Traverser 1  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

PLACE NO: 26427

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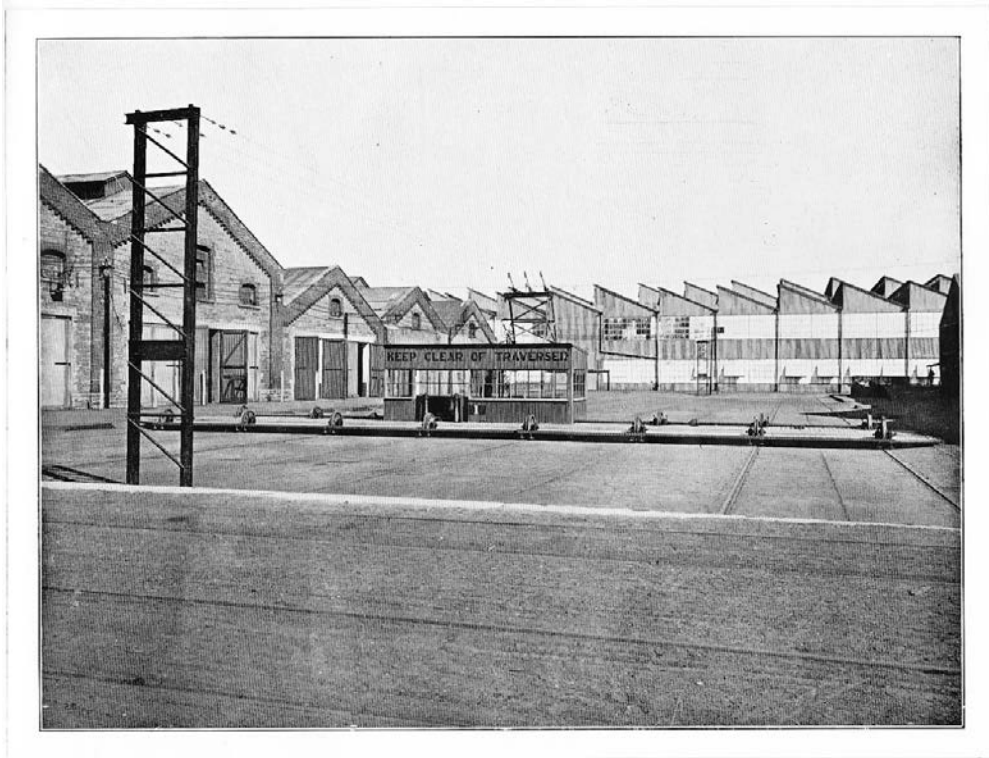


Traverser 1, Islington Railway Workshop, view inside shed of the flat-bed machine, 2017.

## PHOTOS

Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

PLACE NO: 26427



No. 1 80ft. Electric Traverser. Two of these are installed in the Car Department, for Handling Coaches and Materials between various Shops and Bays of same. (83)

**Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops, view to the west, 1929.**

Source: *Railway Workshops, Islington*, 1929, p83.



**Traverser, Islington Railway Workshops, 1951.**

Source: State Library of South Australia, B58891/281

## PHOTOS

Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops  
Churchill Road, Kilburn, 5084

PLACE NO: 26427

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Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops, extent of run, looking east, 2017.



Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshop, flat-bed machine, 2016.

## PHOTOS

Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshops  
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Traverser 2, Islington Railway Workshop, flat-bed machine view to south, 2016.