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Name: Launceston Railway Workshops

Status: Permanently Registered

Tier: State
State

THR ID Number: 4400

Municipality: Launceston City
Council

Boundary: CPR10945

Location Addresses

<u>Location Addresses</u>	<u>Title References</u>	<u>Property Id</u>
BARNARDS WAY, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	169278/100	
4 INVERMAY RD, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	156282/1	2928611
6 INVERMAY RD, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	245339/1	6564165
6 BARNARDS, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	169278/1	3389963
2 INVERMAY RD, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	189130/2	9246649
5 McGRATH WAY, INVERMAY 7248 TAS	180240/1	9298148



Launceston Railway Workshops
DPIPWE, 2019



Traverse Way
DPIPWE, 2019



Big Picture School
DPIPWE, 2019



Academy of the Arts
DPIPWE, 2019

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

The Launceston Railway Workshops is of historic cultural heritage significance as one of the state's most significant industrial complexes. Spanning over a century, the site has witnessed the evolution and advances in rail technology, technological innovation specific to the site and the employment of thousands of workers often including multiple generations of families. The Launceston Railway Workshops and adjacent Tramway buildings, are a rare example of an intact industrial site, still exhibiting internal and external characteristics of rail-related technology and operations. The site has the potential to reveal information on the operations of the workshops, including subsurface remains and cultural deposits, which may provide further information not available in the written record.

The Launceston Railway Workshops are an example of technical and creative achievement, particularly in relation to the use of diesel locomotives, pioneering employment of concrete, and war-time production of munitions. The site has meaning for the Launceston community since for over a century it provided employment, recreational and social opportunities on a scale not comparable in Tasmania. Many lifelong friendships and relationships were formed by employees and their families. The site has a special association with pioneering engineer Edward Stone (1876-1947) responsible for the main workshops building, now known as the Stone Building. The Launceston Railway Workshops is a particularly fine example of an industrial aesthetic in Tasmania, where its form, scale, setting, materials and new buildings combine to create a visually distinctive site. Other elements of the complex such as the Blacksmith Shop have a strong sensory impact from the sight, smell and sounds of a once dirty and hot workplace.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

The Launceston Railway Workshops complex comprises a range of built elements that demonstrate a number of historic themes in Tasmania and the wider evolution of industry in Tasmania. These include the ongoing dependence during the 20th century of labor intensive industry, the establishment of highly concentrated employment hubs, the development of apprenticeships for local youth, government involvement in industry, the importance of unionism, and the state's contribution to the war effort. This was all in the context of Launceston's expansion from a 19th century waterfront commercial town to a major industrial powerhouse on the national state in the 20th century.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

The Launceston Railway Workshops complex is unique in Tasmania as a large-scale railway operation. It is a highly intact and uncommon demonstration of Tasmanian industry and enterprise, and the early use of concrete in building design in the state. The Stone Building, erected in 1923, is a particularly rare early example of concrete engineering built during a period of considerable labour and materials shortages after World War One. Similarly, the Blacksmith Shop is unique in Tasmania (and possibly in Australia) in that not only the industrial building survives, but so do the contents in their original context.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

For over a century the Launceston Railway Workshops was one of the largest industrial sites in Tasmania. Operations spanned the evolution of transport technologies from steam locomotives and rolling stock to diesel power, aluminum wagons and refrigerated containers. The complex may contain fabric, subsurface remains and cultural deposits that contribute information to an understanding of operations and technological developments on the site, as well as the daily experiences of workers.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

Railways have played an important role in the economic growth of Tasmania. The Launceston Railway Workshops played a central role in the growth of the railway network that transformed urban and rural Tasmania. In doing so, the workshops became one of the largest government enterprises outside of the state capital, Hobart. The surviving eclectic mix of buildings and infrastructure are fine and intact examples of such railway buildings that would have existed, albeit on a much smaller scale, across the state, both in private and government operations.

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

The Launceston Railway Workshops comprises buildings of significant technical achievement, notably in the use of reinforced concrete as a building material. The Main Workshop, or Stone Building, named for its designer, engineer Edward Stone (1876-1947) is a particularly fine and early example of reinforced concrete. The installation of a geothermal heat exchange system during adaptation of the building for the QVMAG was the first of its kind in Tasmania.

f) **The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

The Launceston Railway Workshops has special meaning to the northern Tasmanian community as having been one of the largest employers in the state and a place renowned for hard work and comradeship. The close community association has continued with the adaptive re-use of the complex in the 1990s. The Tasmanian Government Railways were considered a progressive employer that provided apprentice, health, entertainment and recreational opportunities. The employee ethos of commitment to the community was demonstrated by staff service in overseas conflicts and volunteering for local community projects.

g) **The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

The Launceston Railway Workshops has a direct association with the Tasmanian Government Railways (TGR), a government business with its origins in the Launceston and Western Railway Company (LWR). The TGR maintained one of the most geographically dispersed workforces in the history of Tasmania, and was an institution used and recognised by many Tasmanians. The Workshops complex also has a special association with engineer Edward Giles Stone (1876-1947), whose pioneering use of reinforced concrete is reflected in the Stone Building, which bears his name.

h) **The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

The Launceston Railway Workshops is a particularly fine and intact example of an industrial complex in Tasmania where its austere utilitarian form, scale, setting and contrasting materials of timber, concrete and metal combine to create a visually distinctive site. Surviving buildings such as the Blacksmiths Shop with its intact interior have a strong sensory impact from the smell, sight and sounds of the former industrial site.

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

The Launceston Railway Workshops are located in the northern Tasmanian city of Launceston, on the flat flood plain of Inveresk, adjacent to the North Esk River near its confluence with the Tamar Estuary just north of the main city center. The area is bounded on its west side by Invermay Road, a major thoroughfare to and from the city, and on its north western side by York and Invermay parks (THR#4399) containing major sports fields and a stadium. The Railway Workshops registered area comprises approximately 16.5 hectares, containing a complex of structures dating from the 1870s to the early 21st century.

Description:

The Launceston Railway Workshops is one of Tasmania's largest industrial complexes and one of the most significant industrial heritage sites in the state.

This assessment draws largely upon Peter Freeman Pty Ltd (1997) *Tasmanian Railway Workshops: Inveresk, Launceston, Conservation Plan: Illustrated Guide* and Pearson (1999) *Launceston Railway Workshops: Conservation Plan*. Nomenclature for buildings and features where possible has remained the same as these reports.

There are three distinct precincts within the registered boundary of the railway workshops complex (Pearson, 1999):

Central Workshops Area

A large collection of industrial concrete and corrugated iron buildings that dominate the site. Much of the corrugated

iron cladding for the buildings was fabricated on site by workers using portable machinery to profile steel sheets.

The central axis of the Central Workshops Area is the **Traverser Alley (c.1885)**, which runs northwest-southeast. It was designed to move rolling stock between buildings and is shown on plans as early as 1885. A 20th century traverser vehicle, designed to move rolling stock, it is now part of the QVMAG collections, and important in demonstrating the former function/purpose of the space. Clad in corrugated iron with a control cabin, the traverser ran on rail and was used to move materials and parts between the workshops. Today Traverser Alley is a bare concrete alleyway with a single rail line, lined by the concrete, timber and iron industrial buildings of the Central Workshops area (Pearson, 1999).

The Central Workshops Area is dominated by the concrete **Main Workshop (c.1923)** also known as the Stone Building, now divided between University of Tasmania (UTas) and Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG). The original concrete saw tooth roof has been re-aligned and replaced with a steel and glass saw toothed roof (c.1940s). Exposed concrete trusses and columns feature on the interior. Two overhead cranes dominate the respective university and museum spaces, capable of lifting up to 70 tonnes. In 2000 a ground heat exchange plant was installed, with a 60-metre vertical pipe installed. Water pumped through the network was brought to a constant temperature of 12 degrees, and used to heat or cool museum galleries such as the Main Workshop. This was the first geothermal heat exchange project on this scale in Tasmania.

To the west of the main building is the **Weighbridge (c.1939)** clad in corrugated iron and containing a weighbridge mechanism made by Henry Pooley & Sons in Britain. The device was designed to measure the weight of steam locomotive wheels. The Weighbridge sits beside the main entry way for the QVMAG. The saw tooth roofed **Precision Tool Annexe (c.1940)** is located to the north of the Main Workshop, and is clad in corrugated iron. It now houses the UTas School of Arts.

The **Foundry (c.1940s)** is a saw toothed building to the south of the Main Workshop, and is now incorporated into the entrance to the QVMAG. Adjoining the Foundry building to the south is the **Carpenters' Group (c.1870s)** and **Paint Shop Group (1870s)**, some of the earliest buildings on the site. Long rectangular forms, gable roofs, continuous ridge lanterns, exposed internal frames and timber windows and doors characterise these earlier buildings. The patched and weathered corrugated iron used in the cladding are particularly indicative of the industrial vernacular character of this early portion of the complex. The Carpenters' Group contains the oldest gantry crane on site, the Cowans Sheldon & Co of Carlisle, England dating to 1884. A supervisors' office with large multi-pane windows looms large over two of these workshops. Its raised position not only enabled surveillance of operations but also provided a safe repository for valuable documents from floods. The **Battery Shed (c.1940s)** a small gable roofed stand-alone building to the south of the Carpenters' Group, is clad in corrugated iron. The interior retains electrical stations for charging batteries, and overhead fume hoods for working with acid. Nearby is the former workshop building clad in timber now used by the Don River Railway.

To the east of Traverser Alley is the Smithy Group, including the **Blacksmith Shop (1911)** perhaps the most intact 20th century industrial building in the state. The space is highly intact both internally and externally. The building retains forge workstations, furnaces, cranes, water baths, drop hammers and associated tools, which now form part of the QVMAG collection. The building has earthen floors, blackened walls and contents, and continuous ridge lanterns to provide ventilation. Fragments of World War Two blackout cloth survive on upper wall ventilation panels. The southern section of the building contains the former Sand Store and Welding Bay. Adjacent to the Blacksmith Shop is the **Amenities Building (c.1940s)** a small utilitarian building with concrete walls and corrugated iron roof.

At the far southern end of the Central Workshops area is the gable roofed **Signalman's Cabin (c.1875, extended c.1890s)**, the only surviving building on site relating to the operation, rather than construction or maintenance of locomotives and rolling stock. In contrast to other buildings on site, it is clad in weatherboard and has decorative gable timber infills with finials. The skillion roofed entrance has a different weatherboard profile, while the interior contains the levers to control both signals and points.

To the north of the Blacksmith Group also on the eastern side of the Traverser is a row of vernacular industrial buildings. The **Fibreglass Shop Group (1890s)**, are clad in weathered corrugated iron as are the **Sheet, Panel and Wheel Shop Group (1930s)**, **Substation and Compressor House (1920s)**. The latter contains two electric powered compressors, Bellis & Morcom and Kelly & Lewis, designed to place air under pressure and drive machinery. A soundproof telephone box and caricatures drawn in pencil on the internal walls are a feature of this space. In 1998 the Panel, Sheet and Wheel Shop Group were internally adapted for conservation workshops for the QVMAG.

The **Shell Annexe (c.1940s)** is a substantial saw tooth roofed building clad in a mixture of new and old corrugated iron. Some insulation survives from when the building was insulated in World War Two to absorb the sound of riveting during manufacture of artillery and mortar shells. A raised supervisor's office overlooks the floor in the eastern portion of the building.

Western Workshops Area

A collection of predominantly single-storey **Tramsheds** clad in corrugated iron erected in 1911 for the Launceston Municipal Tramways. At the western end facing Invermay Road one of the tramsheds abuts a late Victorian building with double hipped roof and parapet facade. At the eastern end is the two-storey concrete **former pay office**. To the north is the Australian Technical College housed in a recently constructed building (2008).

To the south of the tramsheds is the former location of the administration buildings and goods yards for the railway workshop. The associated buildings and features have been demolished. The brick wall of the turntable well survives. It was partially uncovered during the redevelopment of the site. It is likely the rest of the infrastructure remains buried (pers. comm., Tassell, 2018). The circular parking area with plantings to the west of the Museum entrance was established in the late 1990s. Concrete entrance gates (1950s) and fencing survive addressing Invermay Road.

Northern Area

The original **Roundhouse** with a diameter of 20.43m and capable of housing up to 44 engines, was constructed in 1922 and demolished in 1993. All buildings in this area have been demolished, with only the turntable and roundhouse foundations remaining (QVMAG, 2016 p.19). To the south of the Roundhouse was the imposing saw tooth roofed, concrete **Diesel Workshop (c.1951)** building which now houses the UTas School of Architecture. The building interior retains timber and steel roof trusses and the overhead gantry cranes. Associated buildings for the Diesel Workshops were demolished in 1994.

Sub-surface remains and cultural deposits

The area of the Railway Workshops is likely to contain surface and subsurface features and deposits that have the potential to provide information relating to associated industrial, engineering, administrative, transport and labour activities as outlined in Austral Tasmania, *Statement of Historical Archaeological Potential, Archaeological Impact Assessment and Archaeological Method Statement, Inveresk Campus, Launceston*.

Features not of state-level heritage significance:

The registered area also contains the following built features that are not of state cultural heritage significance in their own right. Major external modifications or demolition may have the potential to impact the elements of heritage significance:

*UTas accommodation buildings (2015);

*The Railway Station Offices (c.1996);

*Car park and landscaping to west of QVMAG;

*Director of Housing Building;

*The Australian Technical College (2008);

*UTas School of Fine Furniture Addition (2008);

*Modern tramway

*Modern market sheds within footprint of original roundhouse, North Workshops Area;

*Covered walkway to QVMAG entrance

York Park, Invermay Park, and the Launceston Showground buildings to the north-east of the site are excluded from this registration. The entrance gates of York Park and the re-located grandstand at Invermay Park are listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register (THR #4399).

Note on the Heritage Significance and Management of the QVMAG collections: The natural and cultural material collections of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery are of national heritage significance. Their accommodation and exhibition within the QVMAG within the historic railway workshops enhances the cultural values of the place. However, it should be noted that the collections are managed under the *Local Government Act of 1993* and are not regulated or managed in accordance with any provisions of the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

History:

The Launceston Railway Workshops, one of Tasmania's largest industrial complexes, operated beside the North Esk River for 125 years. From 1868 to 1993 it was home to one of the largest workforces in Tasmania, and was an

economic mainstay for Launceston. Initially a private enterprise, the Workshops were later owned by both the state and federal governments, and closed when Australian National Railways vacated the site. During the 1990s an ambitious rehabilitation and building conservation program was undertaken by Launceston City Council with state and commonwealth assistance. The complex is now a cultural and education hub and includes the Queen Victorian Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) and University of Tasmania (UTas).

Launceston was first settled in 1806. Early surveys of Launceston show the land on which the Launceston Railway Workshops now stand as swampland (Scott, 1832 and Smythe, 1835). By the 1850s the land had been subdivided and streets laid out. Known as 'The Swamp', various leaseholders occupied the area, and a busy port developed on the North Esk River. As the population, trade and industry increased, transport links for the growing township of Launceston became a priority.

In 1867, the Launceston and Western Railway Company (LWR) was formed. The following year the Duke of Edinburgh, the first member of the British royal family to visit the Australian colonies, turned the inaugural sod at the Inveresk site. A wide gauge line opened between Launceston and the township of Deloraine to the west in 1871. The enterprise proved a disaster and the following year the Tasmanian Government assumed ownership and continued operation of the railway. Riots ensued when the government imposed taxes to pay for the operation of the service. Those who refused to pay the tax had their possessions seized. The highly divisive issue was 'long and torturous, pitting the enthusiasm of the northern community against the resistance of the government' (Reynolds, 2012 p.194).

In concert with the growth of mining ventures on Tasmania's west coast, the rail network expanded across the state, including Devonport, the Derwent and Fingal Valleys and the Scottsdale area. The rail workshops at Inveresk grew rapidly. One of the earliest buildings on site, the timber Signal Box, dates to c.1875, although it was later extended. It remains the only building that demonstrates the operation of the early train system and was responsible for safe access to the complex, controlled by staff instruments and signals. Access to the complex was via the adjacent Black Bridge over the North Esk River. By 1890, despite its less than desirable flood prone location, the Inveresk site had become the central base for the rail network, incorporating engineering, assembly maintenance and repairs to rolling stock. The railways became one of the largest employers in Launceston, riding on the success of mining ventures across the region.

Launceston became the first city in the nation to introduce municipal tramways in 1911. Several years later the state government created a tourist bureau under the control of the Railway Department (Reynolds, 2012 p.248). Tram facilities were erected adjacent to the Railway Workshops on Invermay Road included garaging, painting and assembly workshops, fitting and machine shops, blacksmith and carpentry workshops and a power house. The First World War saw a reduction in the state's labour force and the Inveresk site was no exception. Large numbers of men left the workforce to serve overseas. Following the end of the war, the state government provided a rare opportunity for railway workers to return to their pre-war employment if they were fit and able to do so. An Honour Roll on site commemorates those who served.

The Railway Workshops site became a pioneer in the use of concrete in engineering and buildings in Tasmania. Engineer Edward Giles Stone (1876-1947) designed the Main Workshop (now often referred to as the 'Stone Building') and Round House in the Northern Area of the complex. The Main Workshops, erected in 1923, was one of the largest reinforced concrete buildings in the nation. Overhead cranes capable of lifting for the assembly and rebuilding of railway locomotives and rolling stock. The Round House was a wood framed building clad in corrugated iron (pers. comm., Tassell, 2018). It housed up to 40 locomotives, the shape of the structure enabling housing and moving of locomotives in a confined space. The eastern portion was demolished in 1968 and the western section in 1992.

A constant reminder of the workshops' location adjacent to a river were floods. The most severe, in 1929 left the site paralysed for weeks. Flood water disabled expensive machinery, and destroyed vital records, including engineering drawings (*Examiner*, 11 April 1929 p.8). A decade earlier employees had given scathing accounts to a Standing Committee on Public Works on the lack of flood preparation. The site was subject to high tides, sewerage discharge and damp and cold conditions (*Examiner*, 26 March 1919 p.6). Local lore suggests the land on which the workshops were situated was stabilised using infill, although no firm evidence has been uncovered to support this.

When the Second World War broke out the workshops became a major contributor to the nation's war effort. The Precision Tool Annexe, built in 1942, was used to manufacture precision tools and gauges, including parts for vehicles and aircraft. This work continued after the war. Reminders of this period include the remains of blackout curtains in the Blacksmiths Shop. During the second half of the 20th century, steam power was replaced by diesel, and the manufacture of rolling stock shifted from using wood framing and cladding to aluminum. Growth in forestry and agriculture required new stock, including logging wagons, refrigerated containers and aluminum passenger carriages (Merry in Alexander (ed.) 2005 pp.189-190).

At the heart of the Launceston Railway Workshops was its workforce. The Tasmanian Government Railways were considered a progressive employer that provided apprentice, health, entertainment and recreational opportunities. Local newspapers rarely passed a day without mention of the complex; be it operations, staff or participation in sporting teams and events. Generations of families worked there; some for decades. Lifelong friendships were formed. The workers were represented by several unions which contributed to improved safety, wages and conditions. The 'railways' were considered long-term and stable employment, and the place to undertake an apprenticeship. Workers often felt inordinate attachment to the Workshops, shaping and humanising the industrial landscape: perennial sweet peas and tomatoes thrived in garden beds amongst the industrial buildings, and stray cats were fed and cared for, keeping vermin at bay. Techniques peculiar to the region were tested and refined, such as using mutton bird oil as a lubricant suitable for high temperatures.

The increase in vehicle ownership was one factor in the demise of the passenger train in Tasmania: 'large losses every year dispirited the service and angered Treasury officials' (Reynolds, 2012 p.255). In 1978 the last passenger train journey took place, between Wynyard and Hobart. Freight continued to operate, driven by consumer demand for timber, cement, coal and paper (Merry, 2005). By 1994 the Australian National Railways had closed their Inveresk operation and relocated to Hobblers Bridge, in the Launceston suburb of Newstead. A massive decontamination of the Inveresk site commenced, funded by state and federal governments. Mayor John Lees and QVMAG led efforts to convert the site to an educational and recreation hub. Since 2001 the site has housed sections of the QVMAG and University of Tasmania, and a number of smaller private organisations. The industrial history is celebrated across the site, with modern facilities incorporated within and around the former Workshops buildings.

Comparative Analysis

The design of the railway workshops, particularly the arrangement of the Central Workshops Area with a central traverser corridor allowing rolling stock to be transported between the surrounding specialised workshops was directly taken from English models of railway workshops. The Launceston Railway Workshops are unique in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Government Railways constructed a small complex at Macquarie Point near the waterfront in Hobart c.1914. The complex included goods shed, coal yards, a large round house and turntable, but primarily undertook maintenance and minor repairs. The only comparable operations to the Launceston Railway Workshops in the private sector were those of the Mount Lyell mine at Queenstown, which serviced both the mine and railway line, and the Emu Bay Railway line at Burnie. These were of a much smaller scale than the Launceston operations. On the Australian mainland comparable examples to the Launceston Railway Workshops survive at Newport in Victoria, Peterborough in South Australia, Eveleigh in Sydney and Ipswich in Queensland, the latter two having comparable designs including traverser corridors.

References:

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- McLaughlin, Anne. 2005, 'Launceston' in Alexander, Alison, (ed.) *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, University of Tasmania.
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