

**PARKTOWN & WESTCLIFF HERITAGE TRUST
JOHANNESBURG HERITAGE DATABASE**

Name of Building: THE ROTUNDA	
A.K.A: SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS AIR TERMINAL ROTUNDA...	
Street Address: LEYDS STREET	
Stand No:	Previous Stand No: 2045 – 2058
Township: JOHANNESBURG	Previous Protection
Architect: KENNEDY, FURNER, IRVINE-SMITH AND JOUBERT	
Original Owner: SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS	Date of Construction: 1962/3
Legal Status:	PWHT Category: A-

The Rotunda was built as part of a far-sighted development for public transport which involved two new railway concourses, a vast increase in the number of platforms serving commuter and long distance routes, a number of administrative buildings for South African Railways and also South African Airways, and a new high speed bridge taking traffic out of the centre of town to the northern suburbs. The complex engineering was matched by a very high standard of architecture.

Architectural Description

The Rotunda has a circular plan set out on an east-west axis. The circular planning clearly responded to the envisaged circular movement of buses around the building. The Rotunda was placed at the original level of the generous plaza in front of the Johannesburg Railway Station - albeit separated from it by the Rissik Street over pass. The circular motif was repeated on the plaza in the landscaping design. The Rotunda formed a counterpoint to the tall SA Airways Administration block directly to the south.

Externally the curved building facades were defined by a series of narrow vertical steel mullions. These were arranged with a regular beat of narrow: wide : narrow: wide bays repeating around the full extent of the perimeter curtain wall. The bays were clad with full height glazing, recessed from the front face of the mullions. At eaves level each of the mullions was extended to form a right-angled radial cantilever, terminating at the angled fascia line. This device formed a broad eaves overhang accentuating the shallow saucer dome. A substantial cantilevered canopy defined the position of the entrance on the west side.

The saucer dome was clad with standing seam sheet copper roof, using tapered panels and substantial expressed seams. A total of 18 tones of copper were used - laid over a closely boarded timber substrate. A deep box gutter - also in copper - was provided around the entire perimeter of the roof at a position coinciding with the glazed facade below. The apex of the dome was closed with a single annular copper ring - forming a shallow finial to the roof.

Internally a substantial double volume was formed, with a narrow band of office and support accommodation on portions of the perimeter, at both ground and first floor. The curve of the saucer dome was expressed internally with a domed ceiling.

Plane trees were planted at regular intervals around the Rotunda in close proximity to the facade, shortly after completion, accentuating the circular planning.