Victorian Heritage Database Report

Vacuum Oil Company Ltd Depot (Former)





Location:
29 Francis Street YARRAVILLE, Maribyrnong City

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Number: HO130
Listing Authority: Hobsons Bay City

Statement of Significance:
What is Significant?
The Vacuum Oil Company Ltd Depot (now Mobil Yarraville Terminal) comprising the Refined and Lube Oil Store and Refined Oil Drum Filling and Store (formerly Refined Oil and Case Storage Buildings No 1 and No 2), Lube and Grease Packaging Hall (formerly the Lube Oil building), Garage (formerly the Mechanical building), Welders shop and one riveted oil tank all originally constructed between 1925 and 1930, at 29 Francis Street, Yarraville.

How is it Significant?

The Vacuum Oil Company Ltd Depot (former) is of local historic and technical significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?
Historically, it is significant for its strong associations with the early development of the oil industry in Melbourne as one of the earliest oil terminals in Melbourne that was established by a firm, which was a pioneer of the oil industry in Australia. The surviving brick buildings and at least one riveted storage tank demonstrate the beginnings of the bulk storage and integrated oil and fuel distribution system, which Vacuum Oil developed in the 1920s. The complexis one of a number of surviving early oil facilities that demonstrate the importance of the Newport and Spotswood area as the one of the major centres in the early development of the industry in Australia. (AHC criterion A4, B2 and D2)

Technically, it is significant as a rare example of an early complex, which comprises purpose designed building forms that demonstrate the processes used in the package and distribution of the first packaged oil and fuel products, prior to bulk filling and distribution. (AHC criterion B2 and F1).

Description

The Vacuum Oil Co. Depot is now known as the Mobil Yarraville and occupies the site at the south-east corner of Francis and Hyde Streets in Yarraville. Although many of the buildings constructed by the Vacuum Oil Co. in the 1920s have been demolished to allow for the redevelopment and modernization of the site, a number of 1920s buildings and tanks survive:

Refined and Lube Oil Store and Refined Oil Drum Filling and Store (formerly Refined Oil and Case Storage Buildings No. 1 and No. 2)

These buildings are sited on the Francis Street frontage at the eastern end of the site. Other than for a series of modifications to the openings and the like, both are externally relatively intact to their original construction (Allom Lovell 2002:10)

These essentially identical buildings are each long red brick, steel framed stores with gable roofs clad in corrugated asbestos cement. Steel stanchions along the long east and west elevations are encased in concrete and expressed externally. The gable ends feature parapets with decorative brickwork, while the location of the steel columns is also expressed externally with brick piers. (Allom Lovell 2002:10)

The eastern and most intact of the two buildings is the Refined oil Drum Filling Store, which retains its original loading doors on the west elevation. Other elevations have been altered through the introduction of later openings. New opening have also been introduced to the external walls of the adjoining building (Allom Lovell 2002:10-11) External Condition: Good. External Integrity Moderate to High.

Lube and Grease Packaging Hall (formerly the Lube Oil Building)

This building was originally designed as a complex of four single storey red brick gable roofed buildings aligned east west across the site, and a larger one and two storey gable roofed building abutting these to the south. Though its original form and layout is discernible, the exterior of this building has been substantially altered. (Allom Lovell 2002:11) External Condition: Good. External Integrity: Moderate to Low.

Garage (formerly the Mechanical building)

Externally this building is generally intact to its 1929 condition when it was extended and the gable roof added. It is of similar construction to the brick gabled stores facing Francis Street and includes similar detailing to the gable ends. (Allom Lovell 2002:13) External Condition: Good. External Integrity: Moderate to Low.

Welders Shop

The Welders Shop is a modest single storey gabled brick building of similar construction to the other buildings on the site. External Condition: Good. External Integrity: Moderate to Low

Pump House No. 2, and building to the south

This building, which is located to the south of the main gate, has had its external (originally brick?) walls removed leaving an open off-form concrete shell. External Condition: Good. External Integrity: Low

Tank Farm

The two surviving early riveted oil tanks (Nos. 4 on the Hyde Street frontage and No.5 to the east of No.4) are 500,000 gallon capacity tanks of lapped riveted steel construction. The tanks both have 5 strakes each of 12 plates. Repairs have been undertaken to both tanks, which for Tank 4 includes the replacement of the original floor. Tank 5 is apparently in better condition, although experiencing severe corrosion in some areas. (Allom Lovell 2002:16) External Condition: Good to Fair. External Integrity: Moderate

Trees

There is a mature example of a Canary Island Palm (Phoenix canariensis) located in an area of lawn to the south of the Gatehouse.

Later buildings

The remaining buildings on the site were generally constructed in the post war period and include the Boiler House, the main office and administration building (including canteen) facing Francis Street, the large warehouse and dispatch hall and other sundry buildings.

External Condition

Fair to Good - See individual descriptions above

External Integrity

Moderate to Low - Changes in fittings, equipment and building structure to accommodate modern operating techniques have impacted on the buildings' integrity. See individual descriptions above.

Context

An important contributory element within the Spotswood Industrial Precinct and one of a number of early twentieth century oil complexes established in proximity to the river ports and near major rail routes.

Utilising mineral resources, Extracting oil & gas

Associations
Vacuum Oil Company Ltd, Standard-Vacuum Refining Company, Mobil

Heritage Study / Consultant	Hobsons Bay - Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2006
Construction Date Range	1925 - 1940
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	MARIBYRNONG CITY

Other names	
Hermes number	15062
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online