CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Returned Sailors & Soldiers Woollen Mill (Former)

Location:
403 Pakington Street, NEWTOWN VIC 3220 - Property No 203847

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Individually Significant

Heritage Overlay Numbers: HO1618, HO1371
Listing Authority: Greater Geelong City

Precinct:
Woollen Mills Heritage Area

Statement of Significance:
SIGNIFICANCE - NEWTOWN URBAN CONSERVATION STUDY

A large Woollen Mill complex established in 1922 in order to provide employment to returned servicemen from the Great War as a community enterprise and still in operation, if at a reduced scale. It is architecturally significant as a characteristic office and factory of the 1920s, the former Romanesque and latter Jazz Moderne in style, with the leadlight brand symbol window ofparticular interest. It is historically significant as a surviving industrial enterprise from the 1920s still in operation, but particularly as evidence ofcommunity social enterprise in support ofmen returning from participation in an international government initiative.

INTACTNESS - Very good. Generally with minor functional alterations as required over time. The 1922 corner building have excellent intactness.

CONDITIONS AND THREATS - Very good generally, but these is a major structural crack at the south-east corner of the Pakington Street mill building.

REFERENCE - Geelong Advetiser, January 11, 1973. Article held by Weaver to Weaver shop, 3 Rutland Street.

City of Newtown and Chilwell Ratebooks.

G. Seaton - Model Borough: An Introduction to Old Newtown and Chilwell, City of Newtown, 1983.

CITY OF NEWTOWN URBAN CONSERVATION STUDY, 1991

SIGNIFICANCE

The returned Soldiers and Sailors Mill has great historical significance as a major mill in the locality and region established aster World War 1 by returned servicemen and helped by government bonds. The buildings have

associations with two prominent local identities Robert Smith and Albert Schofield. The later was the first manager of the mill and played a major role in the development of the national textile industry.

The mill specialized in woolen worsted cloth and made use of a wide range of natural and artificial fibers. Specialty products such as the Monarch Rug, with rising sun motif, are identified with this industrial site.

The Geelong area was famed for its excellence of tweed and worsted suiting and historically it stood pre-eminent as a milling location in the state, this key river site represents a significant phase in the industry's development and was a key milling enterprise regarded as a model venture using advances technologies.

The buildings were designed by notable local architects Purnell, Laird and Buchan and the foundations stone was laid in 1922 by the then Prime Minister W. M. Hughes.

The mill complex is significant as a building group representing development and technologies over the 1920s and 1930s in the textile industry in the region. Its key location and earlier aspirations to form a model suburb with the provision of workers housing are important aspects of site history and suburban development. The location of other structures such as the church hall and Sladen House are important reminders of the wide social ideal that was part of the sites evolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Existing Listings - None

Recommendations - RNE LPS Area 12 Place

REFERENCES:

G Seaton - Model Borough, City of Newtown, 1983, p.94; Geelong Advertiser, 16th February, 1922.

Ibid

Geelong Advertiser - 15th October, 1928. 1 April, 1920, 8 April, 1929,

Newtown Ratebook 1935 No. 1679.

WR (Roy) Lang, The Boss, Albert Schofield MBE "A Great Australian" - Hendan Publications P/L, Geelong 1982.

Lang, pp6, 12 Illustration shows mill's staff including Schofield and employees in 1924.

Allan Eillingham - Geelong Regional Commission Study - Sheet 336.

Lang, illustration p. 14

Description

NEWTOWN URBAN CONSERVATION STUDY - C CITATION

DESCRIPTION

A large, red brick, single and double-storied industrial complex, still operating as a woolen mill, but with reduced capacity and part occupied by other tenants and part apparently vacant.

Office, (cnr Pakington & Rutland Streets, 1922): Single storey clinker brick parapet building, with a splayed corner, a three bay symmetrical front facing Pakington Street and three bays to Rutland. Its central entrance is Romanesque, arched with archivolts, with double three panel doors with a very fine leadlight semi-circular fanlight. It is inscribed 'RETSOL' under a rising sun motif, in golden and clear glass. The parapet has render recessed panels, with raised lettering 'GEELONG R.S. & S. Est. 1920 WOOLEN MILL' and to Rutland Street, here with the Retsol symbol embossed , in foliate embellishment, It is arched over the entry, with ogee shoulders, double-hung window pairs, each side and decorative brackets. A soldier course band over heavy concrete soffit panels with headers. There are good coved rainwater heads at angles.

Mill, (fronts both Pakington & Rutland Street, 1920s): Two Jazz Moderne red brick fronts, with steel windows. There are 15 bays to Rutland Street and - bays to Pakington Street. Penultimate bays at each end are rising panels with Crystalline and slotted paparet and flag poles. Below is a herringbone panel with dentillated window-head decoration over tripartite windows. The third bay is plain. Behind is a round chimney with 'R.S. & S' vertically picked out in white bricks.

Note: The interior was not inspected and the remaining exterior was not inspected beyond assessment that it appear not to have architectural value, although it may well have historic and social value.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: Collins Bros. Woollen Mill. Ref. 83.

CITY OF NEWTOWN URBAN CONSERVATION STUDY, 1991

The mill complex at the corner of Pakington and Rutland Streets was constructed in a number of stages from c1922 and stands on a prominent escarpment location. It is located on a large site and was originally planned to include workers housing estates and a village. The earliest sections are two storey brick structures with saw tooth roofs. These early sections were designed by prominent local architects, Purnell, Laird & Buchan and feature roof support I-beam manufactured by Dorman and Long and Co. Ltd., Middleborough, England.

Later additions to the factory complex used locally produced iron and steel, Port Kembla I-Beams to support the saw-toothed roof structure. The forms are a significant feature in this factory. In the early sections (c1922) especially along the Rutland Street frontage the structure originally stood to three storeys. This section has been removed but was originally part of an ingenious wood drying area, located above the mill, under a glass roof. Cat walks are still visible which led to this mezzanine area. Other developments on the original plan include a corner office and showroom area (c1929) with 'rising-sun' stained glass features above the entrance doorway and bronze statue "The Spirit of Anzac", now removed to a site opposite.

It is a large complex with extensive interior clear-space in many sections. Parts of the structure (section along Rutland Street) still contain early cast-iron columns supporting roof trusses and later sections used steel or masonry members. Flooring is concrete throughout most of the complex but some sections, the office and part-section along Pakington Street wooden floors are still in use.

At the western end of the site these is a galvanized ??? clad shed with square stepped parapet believed to have been attached to a now demolished chapel or church on the site. This structure could date from 1930s and is shown on early plans of the site. Its location would seem appropriate given early idea of creating a model estate and village environment.

Opposite the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Mill on Pakington Street is Sladen House. Its social associations with the site are important and its retention as part of the area is warranted.

Heritage Study / Consultant	Greater Geelong - Geelong Region Historic Buildings and Objects Study, Allan Willingham, 1986; Greater Geelong - City of Newtown Urban Conservation Study, Context Pty Ltd, 1991

Construction Date Range	
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	GREATER GEELONG CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	16167
Property number	203847

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