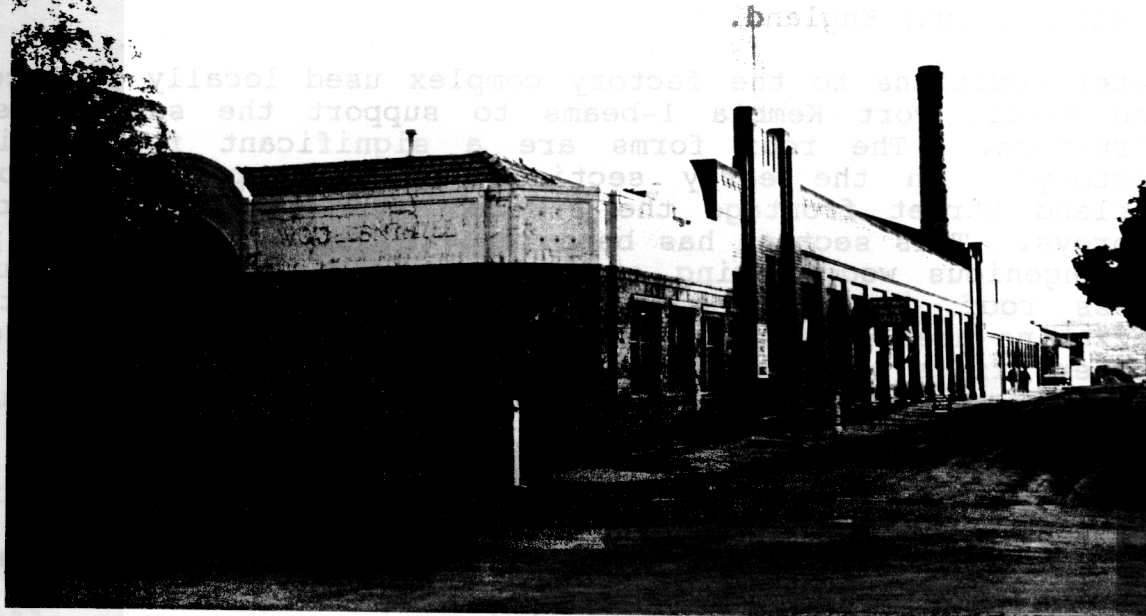


PLACE NAME Returned Sailors And Soldiers Woollen Mills (Former)
 ADDRESS 403 S W cnr Pakington & Rutland Sts LEVEL: B
 AREA 12 DATE/PERSON RE NEG:



DATES Construction: c1922, c1929, c1935

USE Present Use: Commercial/Industrial
 Original Use: Woollen Mills
 Alterations?: Minor alterations to upper storey roof form; internal alterations

FORM STYLE

Detached complex
 Single storey
 Double storey

DESCRIPTION (I = Intact A = Altered * = significant)

ROOF CORR. Iron WALLS Brick ROOF FORM

VERANDAH FENESTRATION FINISHES
 Unpainted

OTHER COMMENTS

Roof form = saw tooth

CONDITION & INTEGRITY

Condition: Good
 Integrity: Intact
 Minor modif.

THREATS

Alterations and
 demolition

DESCRIPTION

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 roof 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 feature 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 use 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 there is a galvanised ??? 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 the 1930s and is shown on early plans of the site. Its location would seem appropriate given early ideas 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.

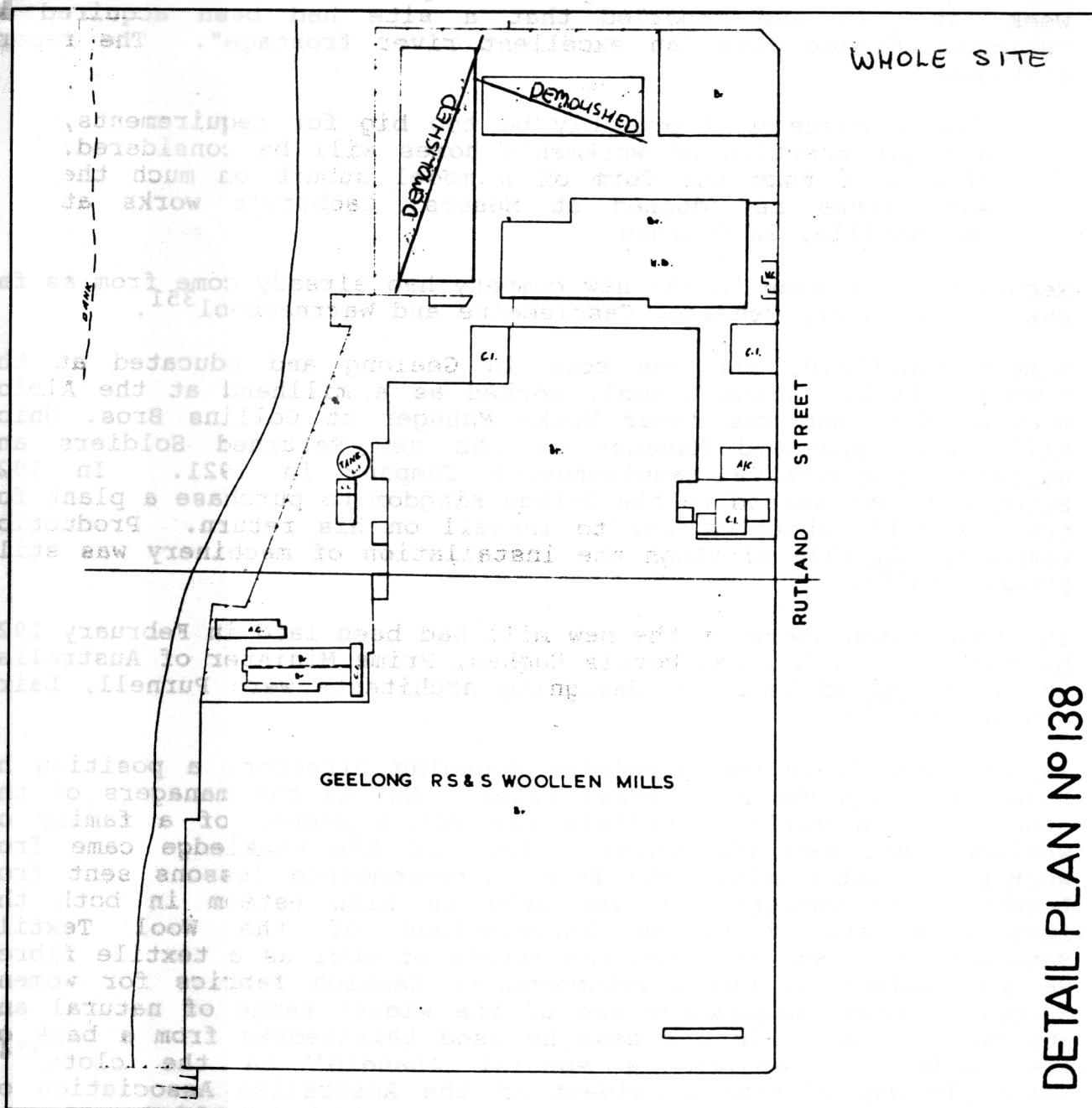
HISTORY

The Returned Soldiers Woollen Mill on the SW corner of Pakington and Rutland Streets has great historical significance as a major Geelong Woollen mill established after the First World War by returned servicemen using capital subscribed from the war gratuity bonds of about 1500 returned sailors, soldiers and nurses throughout Australia, helped by government bonds³⁴³. The mill, which was located on 13 acres of land on a prominent point of the Barwon River escarpment, was originally planned to form part of a workers' housing estate similar in design to the model suburb at the Cadbury works in Bourneville, England³⁴⁴. The earliest portion dating from 1922, a substantial two storey brick factory structure with saw-toothed roof, was designed by the notable Geelong architects,

343. Gladys Seaton, Model Borough, City of Newtown, 1983, p.94; Geelong Advertiser, 16 February, 1922.

344. Ibid 9 April, 1920.

Purnell, Laird and Buchan³⁴⁵. Additions were made in 1929 and the middle 1930s³⁴⁶.



DETAIL PLAN No 138

The buildings have associations with two prominent men, Brig.-Gen. Robert Smith, who earlier founded the extensive Newtown fellmongery, the Phoenix Wool Co. Pty Ltd,³⁴⁷ and Albert Schofield, the first manager of the Returned Soldiers Woollen Mill, who played a major role in the development of the Australian wool textile industry³⁴⁸. The Newtown mill specialised in woollen and worsted suitings.

In late March 1920 a meeting of the Returned Soldiers' Club in Geelong considered the formation of a company run for the establishment of woollen mills in the Greater Geelong area, under

345. Foundation stone, 15 February, 1922.

346. Geelong Advertiser, 8 April 1929; Newtown rate book 1935 No 1679.

347. Seaton, p.95.

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

the management of the Geelong branch of the R. S. S. I. L. A. Employees would be returned servicemen or their dependants³⁴⁹. A major speaker at this meeting was Brig.-Gen. Robert Smith³⁵⁰. A week later it was reported that a site had been acquired in Pakington Street with "an excellent river frontage". The report continued:

The 13 acres will probably be too big for requirements, and the erection of workmen's homes will be considered. This will take the form of a model suburb on much the same lines as adopted at Messrs. Cadbury's works at Bourneville, in England.

Requests for shares in the new company had already come from as far away as Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Warrnambool³⁵¹.

Albert Schofield, who was born in Geelong and educated at the Swanston Street State School, worked as a millhand at the Albion Woollen Mill and was later Works Manager at Collins Bros. Union Mill, was appointed Manager of the new Returned Soldiers and Sailors Co-operative Manufacturing Company in 1921. In 1922 Schofield went abroad to the United Kingdom to purchase a plant for the new mill, which he was to install on his return. Production commenced in 1924 although the installation of machinery was still proceeding³⁵².

The foundation stone of the new mill had been laid in February 1922 by the Rt. Hon. William Morris Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia. The stone noted that the designing architects were Purnell, Laird and Buchan³⁵³.

In 1927 Schofield was appointed Managing Director, a position he held until his death 42 years later. Unlike the managers of the other Geelong mills, Schofield was not a member of a family of woolmerchants and millowners. Much of his knowledge came from working in other mills and from correspondence lessons sent from London. As manager, he was held in high esteem in both the Australian and Victorian Associations of the Wool Textile Manufacturers, and preached the merits of wool as a textile fibre. He specialised in the development of fashion fabrics for women. Schofield made imaginative use of the widest range of natural and man made fibres. In one case he used thistledown from a bank of the Barwon to achieve a special 'handle' in the cloth³⁵⁴. Schofield was elected President of the Australian Association of Wool Textile Manufacturers in 1932-33 and, during World War II, was Assistant Controller of Woollen and Worsted Textiles for the Commonwealth. He was active in a number of local sporting clubs including the Barwon Rowing club, the Geelong Golf Club in 1937-38 and the Bareena and Corio Bowling Clubs. For a long period he was a Member of the Council of the Gordon Institute of Technology³⁵⁵, and was a leader in the successful move to establish the Textile College at the Institute. Finally, in 1953, he received the Coronation Medal for services rendered in World War II, and was

349. Geelong Advertiser, 1 April, 1920.

350. Ibid.

351. Ibid 9 April, 1920.

352. Lang, pp.6, 12. Illustration shows mill's staff including Schofield and employees in 1924.

353. Ibid, p.18.

354. Ibid pp.6 & 7.

355. Ibid.

awarded an MBE in 1959 for his outstanding contributions to the Australian textile industry³⁵⁶.

Tennis courts associated with the Returned Soldiers Mill were opened in October 1928³⁵⁷ and new offices in 1929 when a bronze statue "The Spirit of Anzac" was unveiled to mark the occasion. The designing artist was Wallace Anderson of Geelong. The statue portrayed a Digger gunner standing by the wheel of an 18 pounder Field Artillery Gun. Originally sited near the foundation stone, it was later removed to the opposite corner of the mill buildings and placed atop a basalt outcrop³⁵⁸.

In 1940 the Returned Soldiers Mill purchased Sladen House on the opposite side of Pakington Street and, after re-erection largely to original detail³⁵⁹, it was used as an Amenities Centre for employees of the mill. It was the venue for many important textile occasions as well as for weddings and other social events³⁶⁰.

The Returned Soldiers Mill specialised in woollen and worsted suitings often with a suitably military touch. The Monash Rug, for example, was a speciality product with its Rising Sun motif and John Monash signature³⁶¹.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Returned Soldiers and Sailors Mill has great historical significance as a major mill in the locality and region established after World War I 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 specialised in woollen and worsted cloth and made use of a wide range of natural and artificial fibres. Speciality 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 tweeds and worsted suitings 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 advanced technologies.

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

The mill complex is significant as a building group representing developments 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

356. Ibid pp.10 & 11.

357. Geelong Advertiser, 15 October, 1928.

358. Ibid pp.62-63; Geelong Advertiser, 8 April, 1929.

359. Allan Willingham, Geelong Regional Commission Study, Sheet 336.

360. Lang, p.15.

361. Lang, illustration p.14.

NEWTOWN URBAN CONSERVATION STUDY. - 'C' CITATIONS. Ref: 131

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1996.

NAME: Geelong R.S. & S. Woollen Mill (Retsol)

PREVIOUS NAME: Geelong R.S. & S. Woollen & Worsted Co-Operative Manufacturing Coy. Ltd. & Deakin University.

ADDRESS: Pakington Street (south-west cnr Rutland Street)

USE: Woollen Mill

PREVIOUS USE: Woollen Mill

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 15.2.1922 **SOURCE:** Foundation stone.

ALTERATIONS/ ADDITIONS: **DATE:** ??

DESIGNER: F.C. Purnell & Laird & Buchan. **BUILDER:** —

SOURCE: Foundation stone

CRITERIA: H1, H2, H3, H4; Ar1, Ar2, Ar3. **HISTORIC THEME:** 4.3

DESCRIPTION: **STYLE:** Romanesque/ Moderne **STORIES:** 1 & 2

MATERIALS: **WALLS** Brick **ROOF** Iron **STRUCTURE** Lb & frame

CONDITION: Very good. **INTACTNESS:** Very good. **THREATS:** Use?

SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:

USE. PARAPET DECORATION. CHIMNEY. WALL DECORATION. DOORS. WINDOWS.
PAINTWORK SCHEME. SIGNS. UNPAINTED FINISH. STREET FURNITURE. Kerbs.
MEMORIAL. PLANT/EQUIPMENT.

SIGNIFICANCE:

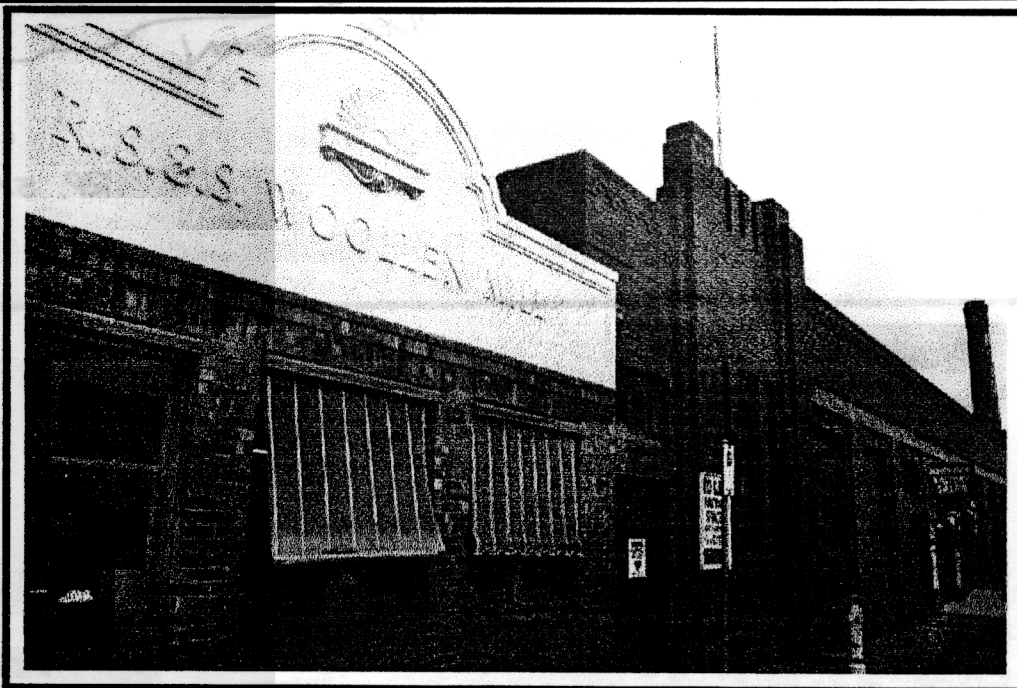
TYPE: HISTORICAL. ARCHITECTURAL. SOCIAL.

LEVEL: LOCAL.

DESIGNATION EXISTING: PLANNING SCHEME.

RECOMMENDED CONTROL: PLANNING SCHEME.

GRID REF: **SURVEY:** RP **DATE:** 23.5.96. **NEGS:** 6.12,13,14 & 15



HISTORY: In 1917, the *Geelong Advertiser* presented an appeal to process cloth woven by returning ANZACs. Sergeant A.W. Sinclair trained and supervised the men. He had been trained as a tailor in Glasgow. This began in the Brigade rooms. Every existing woollen mill in Geelong: The Albion, Unwin, Federal and Excelsior mills donated machinery, parts and wool yarn.¹

The foundation stone of the Soldiers' Mill was laid by the Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, on February 15, 1922. Subscribed from the war gratuity bonds of about 1,500 returned soldiers, sailors and nurses throughout Australia and helped by government loans, the mill specialised in woollen and worsted suitings. In 1925, the mill was renamed the Returned Soldiers' Mill. By 1930 it employed approximately 300 hands.²

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: A large, red brick, single and double-storied industrial complex, still operating as a woollen 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 parapeted 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 archivolt, 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 rendered recessed panels, with raised lettering: 'GEELONG R.S. & S. Est. 1920. WOOLLEN MILL' and to Rutland Street, here with the Retzol 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 Streets, 1920s): Two Jazz Moderne red brick fronts, with steel windows. There are 15 bays to Rutland Street and — bays to Pakington. Penultimate bays at each end are rising panels with crystalline and slotted parapet 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 appears not to have architectural value, although it may well have historical and social value.

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

¹ *Geelong Advertiser*, January 11, 1973. Article held by Weaver to Wearer shop, 3 Rutland Street.

² *City of Newtown and Chilwell Ratebooks*.

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

SIGNIFICANCE: 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 of particular interest. It is historically significant as a surviving industrial enterprise from the 1920s still in operation, but particularly as evidence of community social enterprise in support of men 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.

CONDITION & THREATS: Very good generally, but there is a major structural crack at the south-east corner of the Pakington Street mill building.

