

Identification and location

Name of Place: **Central Drawing Office, Inspection Branch**

Other Name **Buildings 71 and 72, Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong.**

Address **Ordnance Reserve**

Maribyrnong

Place Identifier **8807**

Heritage Significance **metropolitan**

Creation date(s): **1940 c.** Map (Melway) **27 J8**

Boundary description **Two buildings located at the end of Ordnance Reserve, now on a newly created street as part of the Waterford Green development.**

Local Government Area: **City of Maribyrnong**

Ownership Type **Commonwealth Department of Defence ?**

Description

Site Type: office

Physical Description

Two multi storey office buildings of brick and reinforced concrete representing slightly different periods of construction and style. The Central Drawing Office (Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong Building 71) was constructed in 1938 and has been substantially altered and enlarged. It is a three storey brick building, with corrugated asbestos sheet roof. Built in an "H" floor plan which provides even lighting from large timber framed double hung sash windows, floors are of polished hardwood on oregon bearers, interior walls are plastered, some with timber panelled dados. Ceilings are plaster or pressed metal.

The adjacent Inspection Headquarters (Building 72) is of similar scale, but in a "U" plan with the style reflecting the smoother lines of the 1940s. It also has steel casement windows and the dark manganese brickwork defines the elevated front entrance. Some smaller single storey, related buildings to the south served as ancillary stores, but it is believed these have been demolished.

Some remnants of the original landscaping surrounding the buildings survives in the form of cypress trees and other exotic species. This was once a feature of much of the Defence Department establishments.

Condition

Both buildings are in sound external condition although stripped of furniture and suffering from some vandalism.

Integrity

Some alterations are evident but externally the buildings remain generally intact.

Context

Left as isolated structures among mostly new residential areas, also adjacent to the earlier RAFA officers quarters.

Threats

Future development of the area may threaten the buildings or diminish their integrity through conversion.

History

Military activity in the Maribyrnong area dates back to the establishment of Jacks Magazine in 1878. The location of the magazine for storage of gunpowder was chosen because of its convenience to Melbourne and the docks, and protection in an isolated part of the Maribyrnong Valley.

The Colonial Ammunition Factory was built near the magazine as a private venture in the 1880s, but was supported by the Victorian colonial government, which was its major customer. With the creation of the Commonwealth Government at Federation of the colonies, responsibility for defence was transferred from the colonial militias to the Commonwealth armed forces and a Munitions Supply Board was set up to ensure the military could be self sufficient in armaments and other supplies.

The Explosives Factory Maribyrnong was established in 1910 as the first of the munitions factories, and about the same time, the Royal Australian Field Artillery training depot was located on the Maribyrnong Estate land purchased by the Defence Department. Substantial barracks, stables, messes and administrative buildings were erected on the West's Road Site in the period 1913-15.

The Inspection Branch under the Chief Inspector Lt. Col. H.B.L. Gibbs and the Central Drawing Office under the Chief Draftsman, Mr A Mealand, were transferred to the Ordnance Area in 24 September 1924, where they were initially accommodated in the RAFA barracks buildings. In the mid 1920s, the site was greatly expanded for manufacture of heavy ordnance. As a result, a large range of industrial buildings were erected west of West's Road, incorporating the existing RAFA buildings as offices and amenities.

Expansion in the pre World War 2 years saw a number of specialist buildings including a dedicated building for the Central Drawing Office (No 71) designed by Department of Works architect, Donald C. Ward who was also responsible for the large Administration Office (Building 101). (pers com, Andrew Ward)

This was followed a few years later by the Inspection Branch building (No 72) possibly also designed by Ward.

The Central Drawing Office provided a design service the the rest of the Muniton Branch, from site plans for whole new complexes (such as Mulwala and Salisbury) to individual building designs and machinery and components. It was also involved in design and development of military equipment including shells and guns.

The Inspection Branch served the munitions industry at the other end of the process, providing quality checks of all manufactured items. Both buildings continued in their respective functions until the closure of the Ordnance Factory in the late 1980s. They may currently be intended for redevelopment as offices or residential conversion.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

Cultural Significance

The Central Drawing Office and Inspection Branch are of architectural and historical significance at the Metropolitan level as an expression of the once extensive munitions industry which made Maribyrnong the 'Arsenal of Australia'. The CDO was involved in all major design and development of new military supply facilities from the 1920s and from 1938 in this building. The Inspection Office played a similar role in ensuring the standard of defence production. As all other production building relating to the Ordnance Factory have been demolished, these two buildings are an important reminder of the factory. (Criterion A4) As two of the few remaining buildings from the Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong, these represent a significant development in defence industry, and specifically the centralised design of munitions installations. (Criterion D2)

With the corporatisation/privatisation of many defence supply facilities, the centralised design, development and testing functions which were represented in these buildings has been dispersed. Likewise the creation of a distinctive public works architecture to house major national institutions is a thing of the past. (Criterion B2)

Architecturally the two buildings represent the competent International Modern style of Public Works Department Architect, D.C. Ward, (Criterion H1) and are expressive of their time in their clean lines and robust construction. (Criterion F1) The associated trees and landscaping are contributory.

Comparative Examples

Comparable examples can be found on other defence sites, including the more elaborate Administration Building 101 at OFM, also by Ward. However, recent closure and demolition of many Second World War defence facilities including OFM, EFM, AFF, Albion Explosives Factory, Salisbury, Villawood, St. Mary's, Lithgow, and others, means that they are becoming increasingly rare at a national level.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate

National Trust Register

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?

Maribyrnong Heritage Review - Industrial Places

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?

Tree Controls Apply?

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?

Recommendations

Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.
To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.
To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.
To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.
To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.
To encourage continuation of the original use of the place.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

The development of the Australian Defence forces and the munitions supply industry that served them was one of the most significant national events of the twentieth century. These structures are among the few representative of the 1930s expansion to survive.

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

With the corporatisation/privatisation of many defence supply facilities, the centralised design, development and testing functions which were represented in these buildings has been dispersed. Likewise the creation of a distinctive public works architecture to house major national institutions is a thing of the past.

D2 Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique).

As two of the few remaining buildings from the Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong, these represent a significant development in defence industry, and specifically the centralised design of munitions installations.

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

The distinctive International Moderne styling of the buildings is telling of the period and circumstances of their creation.

H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

These are fine examples of the noted Public Works Department architect D.C. Ward.

Documentation

References

Allom Lovell & Associates, *ADI Maribyrnong Facility EES*, 1990
Andrew Ward, Pers. Comm.
Les McLean, *The history of the Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong*, unpublished manuscript, copy held.

Data recording

Assessed By
Assessed Date: