



James Strong's Shoe Manufactory and Warehouse
168 Moorabool Street (rear of) also Baylie Place (now part of 142 Ryrie Street)

History

Grantee Duncan Hoyle subdivided his grant such that the two parcels comprising this site only came together in 1863, joining a third and fourth lot (142 Ryrie Street, 168 Moorabool Street), in 1879, all under James Strong's ownership (among others).¹

The Baylie Place frontage evolved under Lawrence Webster's tenure, attracting a £1500 mortgage in 1867 and another, in 1872, for £4800. The mortgages meant loss of the site to George Belcher who resold it to James and W P G Strong, in association with Walter Wiggs, in 1877.² Meanwhile Strong acquired the Moorabool and Ryrie Street allotments over the next two years, eventually consolidating his boot manufactory at 168 Moorabool Street and Baylie Place.³

Rate descriptions change from a weatherboard shop with three rooms and stable (occupied by Henry Penrose), in 1874, to a two-storey verandahed brick shop with a boot factory, shop and office, machine room and 100 feet long work room (occupied by Strong & Pierce) by early 1875. This changed again in 1878 to (apart from the two-storey brick shop) a machinery and store room, bottoming shop and 3 horse-power steam engine, presumably including the wing containing the chimney.⁴

Strong wrote in his *Victoria & Its Metropolis* autobiography of his arrival in Geelong during 1853 and commencement as a boot maker in Mercer Street three years later.⁵ After acquiring extensive 'labour-saving' plant in 1868 (to compete with imports), he bought a site in Moorabool Street for retail purposes. In 1874 he purchased this site and built 'two brick buildings, consisting of factory, warehouse and extensive show-rooms'. The *Geelong Advertiser* reported that some 1000 boots and shoes could be made there in one week.⁶ His brother was admitted as a partner in 1876 (James Strong & Bros.), the

1 RGO SN 48496

2 *ibid.*

3 D1890-1920

4 VB 1875, 8; VB 1877, 8; VB 1878, 8

5 *Victoria & Its Metropolis* p156

6 INV. 9.1974 p.78

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites

business extending as far as Colac, Ballarat, Horsham and Camperdown.¹ The discrepancy in dates between official and remembered purchases may evolve from undisclosed leaseholds established on the property prior to freehold purchase.

James Strong was a staunch Wesleyan, also Geelong councillor and mayor 1890-1. However Strong lost heavily during the bank moratorium of 1893, forcing a settlement with his creditors. His son, George was the owner of the former Clivedon, in Aberdeen Street and the South Geelong street was reputedly named after the family.² Strong, along with John Donaghy and William Humble, sought protective tariffs for his industry and identified his own fortune with that of Geelong.

Description

Sited opposite the altered but still recognizable Moorabool Street retail frontage, Strong's two-storey brick manufactory is easily evident from its tall, round decorative brick chimney, originally serving the boiler which powered the works. The closer view shows the upper-level loading door (now a window), wide segment-arched wagon entrance from Baylie Place and the decorative face brickwork synonymous with late Victoria era warehouse/factory buildings. At least two construction stages are evident in the brickwork.

Nineteenth century views of northern Geelong's skyline reveal generally around four factory chimneys, most of which were near Corio Bay, and some associated with the large Volum brewery. None of these exist today; this chimney and those at the woollen mills and the Sunnyside Works being among the few surviving 19th and early 20th Century chimneys.

External Integrity

Openings altered and new openings formed; opening details changed.

Streetscape

Flanked by more recent brick warehouses, this structure stands out because of its scale and design. It has distant links with the important Baylie Place South area and a more tenuous connection with the Moorabool Street frontage.

Significance

Historically, the oldest known Geelong factory outside of the Geelong South fellmongery and mill complexes, easily distinguished by its tall chimney; also, of the premises associated with Strong, these are the nearest to their form during his ownership and, hence, provide a built sign-post to this important Geelong figure's status. The factory is an important reminder of the period following the long slump of the 1860s in Geelong, the emergence of secondary industry across the State, and the efforts of local factors such as Strong to gain a protective tariff system on imports.

Architecturally, a near original representative of a 19th century building type - which is rare in Geelong; also related visually to the stone warehouses further south in Baylie Place.

1 ibid.

2 INV. 6.1975/42