

Identification and location

Name of Place: Barnett Glass Rubber - Bradmill

Other Name McPhersons Jute Works, Bradford Cotton Mills, Bradmill

Address 91 Moreland Street
Footscray

Place Identifier 62

Heritage Significance state

Creation date(s): 1875 1906 (Barnett)

Map (Melway) 42 D6

Boundary description Extent of the current allotment bounded by Moreland, Parker and Maribyrnong Streets.

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type Private

Description

Site Type: manufacture

Physical Description

The red brick complex is built around a courtyard and has developed in several stages. The Jute works was a single storey building facing the river on Maribyrnong St. which had a second story added by 1909. In 1926-7 the "Factory block No. 1" was extensively reconstructed according to a design of architect J. Plottel for a massive 53,399 pounds. The buildings today predominantly reflect this period of construction although the chimney with its ornate capping, may date from before 1906. The north-east three story block which occupies the site of the original jute works was constructed in 1934-5 in a style sympathetic with the site's Edwardian Character.

The c.1906 block on the corner of Parker and Moreland Streets presents a splayed corner entrance gateway at the street intersection with a pediment above (obscured by a bill board). The Moreland Street facade as two storey with brick pilasters between paired windows, a low parapet with a projecting cope, concrete lintels (or render over steel lintels and brick) and steel industrial windows, The Parker Street section, although similar is elaborated by a central segmental-arched raised entablature at the parapet, with pyramidal pinnacles topping piers at either end and punctuating the four pilaster bays as well as drawing attention to the main pedestrian entrance and office. The roof gable rises from behind the parapet and follows an angled alignment to the west at the cart entrance, where an earlier building may have stood. Timber framed windows are used in this wing, possibly in reference to the office rather than industrial function.

The brick chimney with its elaborate grown decorated with brick corbel-table and ribbing and its associated corrugated iron boiler house are probably also part of earliest additions.

At the east end the major 1934-5 three storey corner 'store' block also displays the Edwardian

stylistic traits such as the pilasters, parapet and central curved entablature, but with multi-paned steel hopper sash windows. Clearly the unity of the design took precedence over adopting the latest styles for this extension. The increase in glazed area identifies the building as advanced in store design using reinforced concrete lintels to span the considerable distance between piers. Internally the framing is of rolled steel joists and beams supported on box-section steel columns with concrete slab floors. To the south and east other one two and three storey blocks dating to the period 1928-40 complete the perimeter around a central courtyard and paved internal lanes.

Condition

In good condition although some unsympathetic alterations have occurred.

Integrity

The Moreland Street and Parker Street facades have been altered with some new aluminium windows and awnings and advertising hoardings have been affixed to one wing. A painted textured render finish over the earliest block is intrusive and a modern brick addition to the south east had been built, but as it follows the general red brick load bearing construction form of the rest of the complex, it serves to continue the visually cohesive external character.

Context

In an industrial zone by the Maribyrnong River and adjacent to the site of the former gas works. An attractive, red brick Edwardian electricity substation in Parker Street relates to the earliest parts of the complex, having evidently been erected to serve this and the contemporary (but now demolished) Maize products opposite.

Threats

Under-utilisation, and continuously planned redevelopment strategies for the Maribyrnong River frontage may threaten the site in the not to distant future.

History

Thomas McPherson established a jute factory, which was valued at 400 pounds in 1875 making it one of the dozen largest industries in Footscray at the time. The business was probably supplying many of the local dry goods manufactures with bags for the likes of flour, sugar and fertiliser, and rope and twine for ships, machinery drives and agricultural implements. The works was relatively short lived, and was occupied by Lysaght Bros wire netting store from 1888.

In August 1906 the property was purchased by Barnett Glass Rubber for £3,000, previously in Kensington from 1892 and North Melbourne, where the firm was established in 1882 having claimed to have made the colony's first rubberised clothing in Lincoln Square, Carleton.. The construction of the Maribyrnong St. loop line was a factor in the choice of the site. Barnett Glass was the instigator of rubber and rubberised clothing manufacture in Australia. Glass's factory was of bluestone and brick on a smaller block east of the diagonal Langwell Street which is indicated today by the diagonal entrance land the the Parker & Moreland Street corner. Equipment was installed principally for manufacture of large motor car tyres, cycle tyres and the established rubberised clothing trade. By 1913 the Parker Street wing had been erected in timber and three years later extended to join a brick section running to the Moreland Street corner.

Considerable expansion of the site occurred in 1926 with the erection of new factory buildings to the design of Joseph Plottel for the massive tender prize of £53,399. By 1934-5 most of the site had been rebuilt in brick and the factory reached its present form.

Bradford Cotton Mills Ltd., a New South Wales firm, took over the site in 1939 using it for spinning, weaving, dyeing and waterproofing. The firm played a significant role in the war effort when new manager T.V. Ashton arrived from England, bringing with him new machinery, and by the end of the war it had become one of the larger employers in Footscray, and was described as 'one of Australia's biggest companies' by 1959. However, by this time Bradmill's had taken over the much larger site of Davies Coop & Co. in Francis Street Spotswood.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme Manufacturing and Processing

PAHT Subtheme: Manufacturing and Processing

Local Theme Industry by the River: Early

Cultural Significance

The Barnett Glass Rubber factory is of historical and architectural significance at the state level as an extensive and thoroughly executed industrial complex which demonstrates both the commercial status of Barnett Glass Rubber and the distinctive form of early twentieth century multi-storey manufacturing building, a type of building developed in British textile mills and reaching its peak by this time. Later textile mills were of single storey saw-tooth roof and clear-span form. While the types of products of the various occupants may still be found, the form of manufacture - labour intensive and in multi-storey complexes - has changed dramatically. (Criterion B2)

With its dramatic brick chimney and densely built red brick processing buildings, the works is architecturally notable for its particularly unified design on a massive scale representing the heights of industrial developments of the early 20th century. (Criterion D2) As such the factory is possibly the best example of the multi-storey mill design perfected in Britain in the late nineteenth century to make best use of congested urban sites, but only rarely transferred to Australia. The site therefore demonstrates the diversity of industrial forms which make up the history of manufacturing in Australia. (Criterion A3)

The site has an historically significant association with several major industries including an Australian first in rubber manufacture and one of the largest cotton mills in the country. (Criterion F1) The existing building predominantly reflect the operation of Barnett Glass Rubber under whom the major part of the present works was constructed, and to a lesser extent the activities of Bradford Mills. (Criterion A4) Barnett Glass was one of Australia's more successful entrepreneurs and responsible for the introduction of rubberised clothing and early manufacture of motor tyres. (Criterion H1) Elements of the 19th century industrial complex may also be represented in the chimney and boiler.

Comparative Examples

The nearby Maize Products provided a close architectural comparison in period and multi-storey form, but with its demise, other comparison must be sought from the contemporary mills of Collingwood and Richmond such as Foy & Gibson, Yarra Falls, and AKM.

Recommendations

Maribyrnong Heritage Review - Industrial Places

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate

National Trust Register

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?

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 prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives which would inform future development and assist to return some components to its original state, eg. by removal of external awnings and paint finishes.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

Demonstrated the diversity of industrial forms which make up the history of manufacturing in Australia.

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.

Local manufacture of textiles, clothing and rubber goods was an important factor in the development and independence of Australian manufacture and commerce.

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.

While the types of products of the various occupants may still be found, the form of manufacture - labour intensive and in multi-storey complexes - has changed dramatically.

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).

The site offers an understanding of manufacturing industry in a specialised form which owes much to principles developed in earlier British industries.

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

The cohesive facade treatment and scale of the works, its Edwardian style and the land mark quality of the buildings and particularly the chimney create a dramatic and impressive composition.

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

Barnett Glass was one of Australia's more successful entrepreneurs and responsible for the introduction of rubberised clothing and early manufacture of motor tyres.

Documentation

References

Footscray's First Fifty Years,
Butler, G. Footscray Conservation Study, 1989,
Footscray's First Hundred Years,
Footscray Advertiser 27/10/06.
Milner engineers

Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: