

Identification and location

Name of Place: **Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong**

Other Name Royal Australian Field Artillery depot

Address Wests Road
Maribyrnong

Place Identifier 8832

Heritage Significance state

Creation date(s): 1923 **Map (Melway)** 27 J9

Boundary description the extent of the surviving buildings on Wests Road, within the allotment created by the new Blair Street to the west.

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type Private

Description

Site Type: Military complex

Physical Description

The surviving buildings comprise the former RAFA barracks, Ordnance Factory Administrative Office, guardhouse/gatehouse, depot buildings, stables, garage sheds and other manufacturing complex and formerly incorporating several large erection and machine shops, administration buildings, stores, and ancillary buildings. All but the head office building (no 101) of the Ordnance Factory period have been demolished. Most of the RAFA era buildings have survived. They are typically solid brick in Flemish bond, with rendered trim, slate roofs, and prominent timber joinery. The later Ordnance Factory buildings are of red brick and concrete.

The RAFA barracks (Buildings 28 and 35) comprises two substantial two-storey red brick buildings. These are in an eclectic style incorporating elements of the classical, mannerist and Arts & Crafts styles. They are T-shaped in plan and sited back to back and connected by covered walkways. They are typical of the monumental style favoured by Chief Commonwealth Architect J.S., Murdoch with their classical references such as rusticated brickwork, paired Doric columns, and stucco details such as prominent frieze mouldings, cornices and raised parapets. The wrought iron railings, wide eaves with prominent brackets and large panelled doors continue the theme.

The stables area included two separate stable wings built around a central courtyard and included feed troughs and dung pit, separate buildings were provided for the saddler, and wheelwright, forage store, hay shed, forge, shoeing shed, pharmacy and sick boxes for horses.

Of particular importance to the Ordnance Factory complex were the No 1 Forge, and gun and carriage section of the No 1 machine shop both vast classically treated brick industrial buildings.. These were, however demolished to make way for the new housing development.

Condition

In fair condition, maintenance having been neglected for years, Some restoration and adaption is underway

Integrity

Currently under redevelopment and alterations to many buildings. Some of this work is seriously effecting the building integrity.

Context

The group set on Wests Road retain a visual context in the otherwise redeveloped mock-heritage styled housing of the Waterford Green estate. Another separate group of buildings from the former Ordnance complex survives to the north - the Central Drawing Office and Inspection Department. (qv.)

Threats

The current redevelopment continues to impact on the significance of the buildings.

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 Wests Road Site in the period 1913-15.

The Ordnance Factory was established in 1923 in two converted buildings with the carriage shop built in 1925 and the tool room set up in a converted stable in the same year. The No. 1 Forge (Building 49) was erected in 1925 as the central core of the factory. Steady expansion occurred until 1939-45 when the floor area was increased to 80000 sq. m. and employment rose to 6500 people.

To administer the expanded factory a new 3 storey block was constructed in the then fashionable Dutch Modern or International Style after the influential work of Dutch Architect William Dudock. This has the hallmarks of the style with its projecting brickwork courses, contrasting bricks, continuous vertical mullions rising through the central block. It was designed by Department of Works architect, Donald C. Ward who was also responsible for the Central Drawing Office (No 71) and possibly the Inspection Branch building (No 72) . (pers com, Andrew Ward).

The manufacturing processes of the Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong were not as distinctive as for the Explosives Factory. Apart for the scale of operations and the nature of the particular products, the forging, machining and fitting tasks were typical of many heavy metalwork industries. However, the architectural solutions to providing manufacturing space, as seen in the No. 1 Forge, and the integration of production on the site gave it a special character.

The factory closed in the early 1990s and most has been demolished. Redevelopment is underway, and some of the surviving RAFA buildings are being converted for other uses.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme
PAHT Subtheme: **Local Theme**

Cultural Significance

The remaining RAFA and Ordnance Factory buildings are of State Historical, Architectural and Social significance as representative of the development of the Commonwealth defence forces and munitions industry in Maribyrnong at the beginning of last century.

The RAFA buildings are architecturally noteworthy for their eclectic style and monumental form which express the perceived importance of the original military establishment. (Criteria A3 A4) They demonstrate the beginnings of the Commonwealth Artillery forces and the significant place of Victoria and Maribyrnong in the development of a self sufficient defence force in Australia. (Criterion D2)

The loss of the No. 1 Forge and the Gun and Carriage shop, and to a lesser extent the many other buildings, is a severe loss to the heritage of munitions industry. However the PWD (D. C. Ward) designed Administration Office demonstrates the former scale of the factory in its commensurate grandeur. (Criteria F1 & H1)

Socially the factory is significant for its importance in wartime production, as a major employer in both war and peace time, and as a catalyst to other metalwork and manufacturing industries which were located in the area. The establishment of defence industries was a critical component of the Federation of the Australian Colonies and the creation of the nation, and the therefore the consequent activities of the armed forces. (Criterion C2)

Comparative Examples

The RAFA buildings compare with the other contemporary groups of Commonwealth defence installations of the period, in particular the Seamen's Barracks at HMAS Cerberus of 1914, and the A 1 Block at Victoria Barracks.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register
Register of the National Estate

Maribyrnong Heritage Review - Industrial Places

National Trust Register	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
Other Heritage Listings	<input type="text" value="WRIHS"/>
Planning Scheme Protection	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
External Paint Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Tree Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>

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 review the conservation management plan so that it embodies the above objectives and addresses the changes to the site since redevelopment.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

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

The RAFA group of buildings in particular represent a rich group of architecturally elaborate and distinctive structures.

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 RAFA buildings are associated with the beginnings of the Australian military forces and the training of artillerymen. The Admin Office represents the last fragment of the Ordnance factory which was critical to Australia's self sufficiency in defence supply.

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.

Training and keeping of horses for military purposes is rarely seen in Australia, likewise, the Ordnance factory office represents the peak of Commonwealth Government defence supply industry, now greatly reduced and privatised.

C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.

The establishment of defence industries was a critical component of the Federation of the Australian Colonies and the creation of the nation, and the therefore the consequent activities of the armed forces.

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 RAFA buildings in particular demonstrate a characteristic way of life related to the training of horse and man in artillery.

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

The architectural style is of note for the periods of construction, whether the inter war eclecticism or Second World War International Modern.

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

The Admin Office demonstrates the work of Public Works Department Architect D.C. Ward.

Documentation

References

Dept. of Defence Support
Heritage Victoria File H1097 - No 1 Forge (demolished)

RHB No H1098 Royal Australian Field Artillery Barracks, Ordnance Factory, Maribyrnong
See also National Trust File No 6681 No 1 Forge, Ordnance Factory. 5028
Allom Lovell *ADI Maribyrnong Site Redevelopment EES*. 1992
Les McLean, *The History of the Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong 1923-1993, published by the Author 1994.*

Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: