

Name	McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory	Reference in 1998 Marong Study	M8
Address	284 O'Sullivan's Road at McKenzie Road, Marong	Map reference	VicRoads 44 C6
Building type	Industrial complex	Survey date	July 2010 (external inspection only)
Date of construction	During World War II	Recommendation	Include in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay
Significance	The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is of local historical and technical significance.		



McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory looking east.



Left: East elevation of the former store (left) and the former seed extraction room (right). Right: Aerial view, 2010 (Source: City of Greater Bendigo).



Proposed Heritage Overlay map, with the subject site highlighted green (M08). Note, the extent of the overlay is indicative only.

Intactness Good ✓ Fair Poor

History

Tomato growing was once an important industry within the Bendigo region. Marong, Wilson's Hill, Huntly and Epsom in particular were major centres of production. An often overlooked facet of this industry is that of seed supply; it appears that there were very few plants operating in the area. However, the subject site was one such complex. The plant was built by Duncan McKenzie during World War II, although its origins pre-date the war. During the 1930s, German horticulturalists had developed the highly prized Grosse Lisse variety of tomato. In World War II, McKenzie obtained some Grosse Lisse seeds and, realising their commercial potential, cultivated them in close proximity to his allotment at 284 McKenzie Road, south of Marong. With a supply of seeds assured, McKenzie erected the present factory and procured the machinery. Local engineer Jim Kearney designed and made the pulping and seed extraction plant. The building itself was erected by the Eaglehawk builder, Mitchell, who hired locals Bill Elvey and Charles Grey as his assistants.¹ The plant was driven by a McDonald diesel engine until 1953 when electricity reached the district and the plant was converted to electrical power.² Following the extraction of the seeds, the tomato pulp was cooked on the site using steam produced by a boiler formerly used in mining operations. The paste was then sold to tomato sauce manufacturers. The machinery was removed from the site in 1999 and relocated to a museum at Lockwood. The date on which the factory ceased production is not known.

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes

Victoria's themes and sub-themes:

- 5.1: Processing raw materials
- 5.2: Developing a manufacturing capacity
- 5.3: Marketing and retailing

Description & Integrity

The subject site is an abandoned tomato seed extraction factory of humble construction and utilitarian character and materials usage. It is located in open countryside at the corner of McKenzie and O'Sullivan's roads, approximately four kilometres south of Marong. The complex is oriented north to south. At the south end is a single-storey gable roofed structure clad in corrugated sheet steel, fixed horizontally to the frame, with two circular vents to the roof. This may have been a store. The one and two-storey component at the centre of the site is the former seed extraction room. This is a sawn timber framed construction clad in weatherboards, with corrugated sheet steel cladding to the upper sections of the north and south elevations. This building is lined internally with asbestos cement sheeting. Both structures are built on a concrete base with vents integrated into the low concrete footings. A pole-supported barn is located at the north of the contiguous linear factory. A gable roofed shed with a bush pole frame is at the north end of the complex. A further timber-framed shed is located to the north-east of the complex.

The machinery at the complex was relocated to a museum at Lockwood in 1999. An under-fired boiler, manufactured by L B Coulsell and Brothers, North Melbourne, survives at the site, fixed in a brick base to the west of the factory building. This boiler supplied steam to the plant prior to electrification.

The abandoned factory appears to be in relatively poor condition.

Comparative Analysis

McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is a utilitarian and low-cost response to specific functional manufacturing/processing requirements. As such, it compares broadly with local eucalyptus distilleries, including Flett's at Woodvale (W7) and Hooper's at Patchy Flat (PF1), which in turn demonstrate the ingenuity of 'bush' engineers. As with the eucalyptus distilleries, the tomato factory site retains some capacity to demonstrate its original function, at least in terms of the production process as reflected in the layout and arrangement of the built components.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of the City of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory, at the corner of McKenzie and O'Sullivan's road south of the Marong, is of historical significance. The abandoned factory complex provides evidence of the once significant local tomato growing industry. It was built by Duncan McKenzie during World War II and is an example of a utilitarian industrial complex of humble proportions built of low-cost materials. Its location is relatively isolated, being in close proximity to the fields where tomatoes were previously grown and some distance from the Alternative Calder Highway to the east. Tomato seeds from the Grosse Lisse variety of tomato were extracted in the factory, and the seeds sold to tomato growers in the Bendigo region and beyond. The tomato pulp residue was also processed on site for sale to tomato sauce manufacturers.

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City the of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

N/A

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is significant for its capacity to demonstrate aspects of its original function, at least in terms of the production process as reflected in the layout and arrangement of the built components. The machinery for the seed extraction process was built locally, and included recycled mining equipment; however, with the exception of the under-fired boiler, the machinery has been relocated off-site for storage at a local museum.

N/A

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects.

N/A

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics in the context of the municipality.

N/A

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

N/A

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of the place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

N/A

Criterion H: Special association with life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Greater Bendigo's history.

N/A

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is located in open countryside at the corner of McKenzie and O'Sullivan's road south of the Marong. It is an abandoned tomato seed extraction factory of humble construction and utilitarian character and materials. The complex is oriented north to south; at the south end is a single-storey gable roofed structure clad in corrugated sheet steel, which may have been a store. The weatherboard one and two-storey component at the centre of the site is the former seed extraction room, and has corrugated sheet steel cladding to the upper sections of the north and south elevations. Both structures are built on a concrete base. A pole-supported barn is located at the north of the contiguous linear factory; a gable-roofed shed with a bush pole frame is at the north end of the complex; and a further timber-framed shed is located to the north-east of the complex. The machinery was relocated to a museum at Lockwood in 1999. An under-fired boiler, manufactured by L B Coulsell and Brothers, North Melbourne, survives at the site, fixed in a brick base to the west of the factory building.

How is it significant?

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is of local historical and technical significance.

Why is it significant?

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory, an abandoned factory complex, is of historical significance (Criterion A), for providing evidence of the once significant local tomato growing industry. It was built by Duncan McKenzie during World War II and is an example of a utilitarian industrial complex of humble proportions built of low-cost materials. Its location is relatively isolated, being in close proximity to the fields where tomatoes were previously grown, and some distance from the Alternative Calder Highway to the east. Tomato seeds from the Grosse Lisse variety of tomato were extracted in the factory, and the seeds sold to tomato growers in the Bendigo region and beyond. The tomato pulp residue was also processed on site for sale to tomato sauce manufacturers. The former factory (Criterion C) is also significant for its capacity to demonstrate aspects of its original function, at least in terms of the production process as reflected in the layout and arrangement of the built components. The machinery for the seed extraction process was built locally, and included recycled mining equipment; however, with the exception of the under-fired boiler, the machinery has been relocated off-site for storage at a local museum.

Recommendations

The former McKenzie's Tomato Seed Extraction Factory is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Greater Bendigo Heritage Overlay. The recommended extent of the Overlay is identified in the above map. The focus of significance is on the historic factory building components. Given the unusual history of the site, a form of interpretive plaque at the property, or preparation of an historical pamphlet or interpretive signage is recommended, as a means of telling the story of the property.

External Paint Colours	No
Internal Alterations Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	No
Victorian Heritage Register	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated plan	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No

Identified By

Andrew Ward, 1998.

References

Andrew Ward *et al*, City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Study (Marong) Study Area, Stage 2, 1998.

Specific:

- 1 The history derives from an interview given by Duncan McKenzie, the founder of the seed extraction factory, to historian Ray Wallace on 4 March 1999.
- 2 Kim Ross, Bendigo Steam Preservation Society, interview with Ray Wallace, 4 March 1999.