

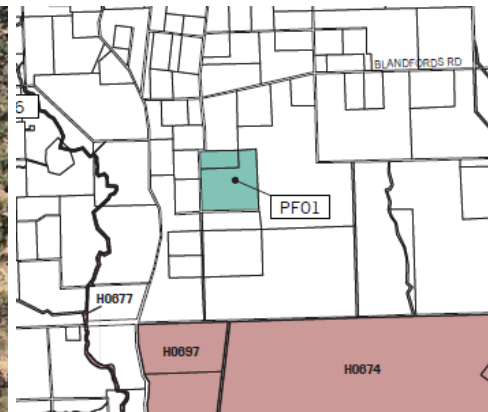
<b>Name</b>	Hooper's eucalyptus distillery	<b>Reference in 1998 Marong Study</b>	PF1
<b>Address</b>	CA 44A Welshs Road, off Blandfords Road, south of Neilborough <sup>1</sup>	<b>Proposed map reference</b>	VicRoads 44 F3
<b>Building type</b>	Industrial site	<b>Survey date</b>	August 2010
<b>Established</b>	1970s(closed 2009)	<b>Recommendation</b>	Include in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay
<b>Significance</b>	Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is of local historical and technological significance.		



From left, looking north: Metal stack; remnants of brick boiler housing; gantry for truck-mounted vat; and rail carriage (former eucalyptus cutter's hut).



Left: Brick housing for boiler, removed 2010. Right: In-ground brick vat.



Left: Aerial view, 2010, note dam to east of boiler housing and stack, and ash dump to south (Source: City of Greater Bendigo). Right: Proposed HO map, with the subject site shown as PF1.

**Intactness**                      Good      ✓ Fair                      Poor

## History

Eucalyptus oil was one of the first primary products exported from Australia; Governor Philip sent a sample to Sir Joseph Banks in 1790. In 1852, Government botanist Ferdinand Von Mueller recommended that the distillation of eucalyptus oil may have commercial potential.<sup>2</sup> Two years later Joseph Bosisto (1824-1896), a chemist, parliamentarian and friend of Von Mueller, established the first eucalyptus distillery ('still') in Victoria.<sup>3</sup> Bosisto used the oil in a variety of medicinal concoctions, including cold remedies and inhalants. The product was also regarded as a source of fuel: in 1858, the town of Kyneton was illuminated by gas from eucalyptus oil.<sup>4</sup> Eucalyptus oil has also been used as an ingredient in perfumes, disinfectants, germicides and industrial lubricants. By the mid-1880s, the eucalyptus distilling industry was established throughout Victoria.

The first eucalyptus oil producer in Bendigo was German chemist Richard Sandner. In 1876, working in partnership with his two sons, Sandner operated a plant and refinery in Bridge Street, Bendigo.<sup>5</sup> The business thrived, and Sandner later opened a branch in Chicago, run by his son Carl.<sup>6</sup> Other early producers included Albert Hartland and Matthew Hodgson at Huntly North in 1890,<sup>7</sup> and Jack Shadbolt, who operated a distillery at the base of the Flagstaff Hill, north of the Camp Hotel (W6) in the Whipstick from the 1890s.<sup>8</sup> The boom years of the local industry began in about 1900, and lasted until the 1940s. By the outbreak of World War I, the Whipstick and surrounding area was the premier eucalyptus oil-producing region in Victoria, with Whipstick species of eucalypt being particularly productive. During the Depression of the 1930s, there were an estimated 50 distilleries in operation, with the epicentre of the industry being the Whipstick.<sup>9</sup> The rise of eucalyptus distilling also coincided with the decline of mining. During the early years of the twentieth century, large tracts of land north of Bendigo were opened for selection, and the selectors (farmers) looked to 'eucy' as a source of employment and supplementary income while their blocks were cleared and prepared for agriculture in compliance with the Land Acts.<sup>10</sup>

Eucalyptus distilleries are typically improvised utilitarian constructions built of readily available materials and making use of recycled machinery and equipment. No two are exactly alike. However, there are some fundamental commonalities, including vats, a crane to lift the vat lids, a boiler, chimney stack, metal pipe work and a condensing dam. In traditional (pre-mechanisation) eucalyptus oil distillation, leaves are stacked in in-ground brick-lined vats, typically around 3.6m (12ft) deep and 2.1m (7ft) in diameter,<sup>11</sup> and steam from the boiler is released into the bottom of the vat. The oil-heavy steam is channelled through a metal pipe at the top of the vats that runs through the adjacent condensing dam, where the steam evaporates leaving the oil to be collected in a receiving pot at the side of the dam. The extraction process takes approximately four hours for green growth and two hours for dry leaves.<sup>12</sup>

Eucalyptus distilling is physically demanding and lonely work and almost exclusively male. Cutters harvest leaves and transport them to the distillery where they are processed by the distillers.<sup>13</sup> Historically, rates of pay for cutters depended on the amount of oil yielded by each vat. The industry was never unionised and even during the good times, profits were marginal.<sup>14</sup> In the Whipstick, as in other areas, the industry typically attracted itinerant or short-term workers.<sup>15</sup>

Hooper's distillery, to the south of Neilborough, was established by the Hooper brothers, Percy and Ronald Hooper in the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> It operated with traditional in-ground brick vats at that time, at least one of which survives at the site. In the post-World War II period, Percy ('Perce') and Ron Hooper introduced a mechanised system of production, where eucalyptus leaves were distilled on the tray of a truck fitted with a metal vat, whose lid was lowered by means of an overhead pulley carried on a gantry.<sup>17</sup> Hooper's was the last operational distillery in the Whipstick, closing in 2009 – the Hartland plant at Huntly operates primarily as a tourist destination. The boiler at the subject site was removed from its brick housing in 2010.<sup>18</sup> Today Spain, Portugal and Israel are among the leading international producers of eucalyptus oil.

## Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes

Victoria's themes and sub-themes:

- 4.6: Exploiting other mineral, forest and water resources
- 5.1: Processing raw materials
- 5.2: Developing a manufacturing capacity
- 5.3: Marketing and retailing
- 5.8: Working

## Description & Integrity

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is located off Blandford's Road, south of Neilborough. The site extends over a large clearing in the Mallee scrub. The disused distillery, including a dam, metal gantry, metal stack and brick boiler housing, are located to the east of the road access (see aerial view, page 1). The Hoopers' operations were dependent on leaf collected from public land and in 2001 the *Final Report for the Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodland investigation* recommended that all licenses on public land be cancelled by 2007.<sup>19</sup> The Hoopers introduced modern machinery to the industry through the use of mobile steel steaming vat that were mounted onto a truck tray. These vats were driven to the cutting site, filled by mobile harvester and driven back to the still for steaming, where the lid of the vat was sealed and steam introduced from a boiler. The condensate was cooled in pipes that passed through the adjacent dam and the oil collected in a receiver.<sup>20</sup> The spent leaves were then tipped from the truck. A large ash dump is to the south of the stack and boiler housing. To the west of the access road is a hut, used as accommodation for eucalyptus cutters, and agricultural outbuildings – the Hoopers also kept livestock.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis of the following description is on the remains of the eucalyptus distillery.

The former boiler housing is covered by an open-sided metal-framed enclosure with corrugated galvanized metal roof. In 2010, the boiler was removed from the site resulting in the partial demolition of its brick housing. The works exposed the concrete flue that connected it to the tall metal stack. The circular stack, which is presumed to be a relic of the gold mining industry, sits on a brick base, and is supported by three metal props. Adjacent to the former boiler is the metal-framed drive-through gantry, as part of the mechanisation of the plant. As noted above, eucalyptus leaves were distilled in a purpose-built metal vat carried on the tray of a truck. The lid of the container was lowered onto the vat by a pulley system carried on the gantry. The motor that powered the pulley is extant, as are timber and platforms to either side.

Associated elements at the site include the condensing dam, a timber railway carriage and an in-ground brick-lined vat. The latter provides evidence of the pre-mechanisation origins of the plant. A large ash dump is to the south of the distilling plant, demonstrated by the absence of any natural growth, a result of the acidity of the burned eucalyptus leaves. There is no evidence at the site of the large truck-mounted vat.

## Comparative Analysis

In the Whipstick, the eucalyptus distilling industry flourished from the 1890s, following the decline of gold mining, to World War II. During the Depression of the 1930s, there were approximately 50 eucalyptus distilleries in the area. By 1986, only four operational distilleries survived. Of these, Hooper's was the last to close in 2009 – as noted at the history, the Hartland distillery at Huntly remains but operates primarily as a tourist attraction.

Eucalyptus distilleries are characterised by the inventive application of available materials and equipment, typically in isolated bush settings. They necessarily include a boiler (for sites in the Whipstick, these are often gold mining-era equipment), stack, vats, a means of lifting vats lids and a dam, and often include some form of accommodation and evidence of post-World War II mechanised production processes. With the exception of the boiler, which has been removed, all of these elements are evident at Hooper's eucalyptus distillery. The Hooper's site has both elements of tradition distillation techniques (as demonstrated by the in-ground brick vat) and post-World War II industrial processes (demonstrated by the gantry), it compares with the former Jones Brothers Eucalyptus Distillery at Inglewood, Loddon Shire, established c. 1900 (VHR H0276).

## Assessment Against Criteria

### *Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria*

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

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery, located off Blandford's Road, south of Neilborough, although established in the 1970s is of historical significance for its capacity to demonstrate the continuity of an industry that played a significant role in the economy of the Whipstick, and broader areas of regional Victoria, from the 1890s to the late twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> The harvesting and distilling of eucalyptus was an important source of employment for workers following the decline of mining, and became particularly important during the Depression of the 1930s, when there were an estimated 50 distilleries in the Whipstick, the epicentre of the industry in Victoria, that produced eucalyptus oil containing very high cineole compounds. The Hooper's plant was established in the post World War II adapted to a mechanised system of production in the 1970s. It was a long-running operation, being the last distillery in the Whipstick to close, in 2009. As with the earlier years of gold mining, small-scale operators with limited capital were able to exploit a naturally occurring resource in the area.

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

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is a rare surviving example of an industrial operation which was once relatively common in the Whipstick, and in regional areas across Victoria. In the 1930s, there were an estimated 50 'stills' in the Whipstick area. By 1986, four operational distilleries survived, of which Hooper's was the last to close in 2009 – the Hartland distillery at Huntly now operates primarily as a tourist attraction. Although machinery has been removed from the site, it retains the ability to demonstrate aspects of the production process.

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

N/A

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

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is significant for its ability to demonstrate two approaches to industrial distillation through its retention of elements related to traditional and mechanised distillation.

*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.*

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is of technological significance for its capacity to demonstrate aspects of eucalyptus distilling from the pre-World War I period through to the early twenty-first century. The site, with its remnant structures and machinery, and its evocative setting within the natural environs of the Whipstick, recalls the specific technologies developed for an industry based in isolated areas of Victoria, and often run by small-scale operators with limited capital. The site retains evidence of two types of distillation, the traditional approach of in-ground brick-lined vats, and the later post-World War II truck-mounted vat distillation. These two approaches are represented by the brick-lined vat and the gantry that carried the lid of the truck-mounted vat. Other significant remnant elements at the site include the tall circular metal stack, presumed to be a relic of the gold mining industry, the dam, ash dump and remains of the brick boiler housing.

*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?*

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery, established in the 1970s south of Neilborough, extends over a large clearing in the Mallee scrub. The disused distillery, including a dam, metal gantry, metal stack and brick boiler housing, are located to the east of the road access. A large ash dump is to the south of the stack and boiler housing. To the west of the access road is a hut, which was most likely used for accommodation for eucalyptus cutters, and agricultural outbuildings, for the Hoopers' livestock.

Extant site elements include the former boiler housing, which is covered by an open-sided metal-framed enclosure with corrugated galvanized metal roof, a tall metal circular stack (presumed to be a relic of the gold mining industry) and a metal-framed drive-through gantry, as part of the mechanisation of the plant. The motor that powered the pulley is extant, as are timber and platforms to either side. Associated elements at the site include the condensing dam, a timber railway good truck/carriage and an in-ground brick-lined vat. The latter provides evidence of the pre-mechanisation origins of the plant. A large ash dump is to the south of the distilling plant, demonstrated by the absence of any natural growth, a result of the acidity of the burned eucalyptus leaves.

*How is it significant?*

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is of local historical and technological significance.

*Why is it significant?*

Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is historically significant (Criterion A) for its capacity to recall an industry that played a significant role in the economy of the Whipstick, and broader areas of regional Victoria, from the 1890s to the late twentieth century. The harvesting and distilling of eucalyptus was an important source of employment for workers following the decline of mining and became particularly important during the Depression of the 1930s, when there were an estimated 50 distilleries in the Whipstick, the epicentre of the industry in Victoria. By 1986 there were an estimated four operational distilleries in the area. Today, Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is a rare (Criterion B) surviving example of its type. The Hooper's plant was established in the 1970s and adapted to a mechanised system of production in c. the 1950s. It was a long-running operation, being the last distillery in the Whipstick to close, in 2009. Technologically (Criterion F), Hooper's eucalyptus distillery is significant for its capacity to demonstrate aspects of eucalyptus distilling from the pre-World War I period through to the early twenty-first century. The site, with its remnant structures and machinery, and its evocative setting within the natural environs of the Whipstick, recalls the specific technologies developed for an industry based in isolated areas of Victoria, and often run by small-scale operators with limited capital (Criterion D). The site retains evidence of two types of distillation, the traditional approach of in-ground brick-lined vats, and the later post-World War II truck-mounted vat distillation. These two approaches are represented by the brick-lined vat and the gantry that carried the lid of the truck-mounted vat. Other significant remnant elements at the site include the tall circular metal stack, presumed to be a relic of the gold mining industry, the dam, ash dump and remains of the brick boiler housing.

## Recommendations

The property is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Greater Bendigo Heritage Overlay. The recommended extent of the Overlay is illustrated in the above map, with the focus of significance on the dam, brick metal stack, in-ground brick vat, overhead gantry, remnants of the brick boiler housing and the open area (ash dump) to the south. The setting of the site, including the enclosing Whipstick forest, is also significant.

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

Ken Arnold, *Bendigo its Environs, The Way it Was*, Volume 1, Crown Castleton Publishers, 2003.

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

### Specific:

- <sup>1</sup> Changed address from 405900 Welsh's Road in *Heritage Policy Citations Review*, 2011. November 2011
- <sup>2</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Deirdre Morris, 'Mueller, Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von [Baron von Mueller] (1825 - 1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp 306-308.
- <sup>4</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 1
- <sup>5</sup> See, [www.land.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenfor.nsf/childdocs/489D890EF4F9EFA14A256AA40011BFEF-C744C5604A8870504A256AA40011D6A4-21B9A0AF6E36F3ACCA2574580017AEC4?open](http://www.land.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenfor.nsf/childdocs/489D890EF4F9EFA14A256AA40011BFEF-C744C5604A8870504A256AA40011D6A4-21B9A0AF6E36F3ACCA2574580017AEC4?open)
- <sup>6</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 1
- <sup>7</sup> Jan Neil, *The Golden Age Retraced*, Mullaya, Victoria, 1973, p. 58.
- <sup>8</sup> Ray Wallace, *Sydney Flat to Woodvale Green*, Woodvale Progress Association, 1984, p. 48.
- <sup>9</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 2.
- <sup>10</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Jan Neil, *The Golden Age Retraced*, Mullaya, Victoria, 1973, p. 58.
- <sup>12</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 2; and Jan Neil, *The Golden Age Retraced*, Mullaya, Victoria, 1973, pp. 58-59.
- <sup>13</sup> Eucalyptus typically takes 20 years to mature, and can be harvested once a year. While maturing, eucalyptus can be harvested every 18-2 months. Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 2.

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- <sup>14</sup> Ray Wallace notes that in the early 1920s the price for eucalyptus oil fluctuated from 1 shilling and twopence to 1 shilling and threepence per pound, and during the Depression down to 9 pence per pound. By the Second World War, the price had risen to 8 shillings per pound. See, Flett's Eucalyptus Distillery' citation, Andrew Ward *et al*, City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Study (Marong) Study Area, Stage 2, 1998.
- <sup>15</sup> Ray Wallace, *As Aussie As a Gum Leaf, A Brief History of the Eucalyptus Industry in Bendigo*, Australian Farm Management Society, Bendigo Branch, p. 2; also pers comm., Ray Wallace and Adam Mornement, Lovell Chen, 9 August 2010.
- <sup>16</sup> Tracey Pontell and Gayle Thompson, descendants of the Hoopers, email to K.Nolan, City of Greater Bendigo, Tuesday, 13 September 2011
- <sup>17</sup> Pers comm., Perce Hooper, and Ray Wallace, local historian, 17 August 1998.
- <sup>18</sup> Pers comm., Ray Wallace and Adam Mornement, Lovell Chen, 9 August 2010.
- <sup>19</sup> Shiel, D., 'Eucalyptus Oil Production around Bendigo' in Butcher and Y. Collins (ed) *Bendigo at Work*, National Trust Australia, Bendigo and District Branch, 2005, pp219-228
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.224
- <sup>21</sup> Pers comm., Ray Wallace and Adam Mornement, Lovell Chen, 9 August 2010.
- <sup>22</sup> Tracey Pontell and Gayle Thompson, descendants of the Hoopers, email to K.Nolan, City of Greater Bendigo, Tuesday, 13 September 2011