

**PLACE NAME** Collins No 2 Woollen Mill **LEVEL: B**  
 Marnock Vale Woolscouring Works (Former)  
 Robinsons Wool Scouring & Carbonising Works  
 (Original)  
**ADDRESS** 13 Bridge Street, Newtown  
**AREA** - **DATE/PERSON RE** **NEG:**



**DATES** Construction c1918  
**USE** Present Use: Industrial  
 Original Use: Industrial  
 Alterations?: Altered in mid 1930s

**FORM** Detached complex  
 Double storey  
**STYLE**  
**DESCRIPTION** (I = Intact A = Altered \* = significant)  
**ROOF** CORR. IRON  
**WALLS** Timber  
 Brick  
 Corr. Iron  
**ROOF FORM**  
**INTERIOR**  
**FENESTRATION**  
**FINISHES** Paint colours  
**GARDEN & SETTING** OTHER COMMENTS  
 Saw tooth roof form asbestos cement  
 sheet roof.

**CONDITION & INTEGRITY** **THREATS**  
 Condition: Good Deterioration  
 Integrity: Intact, Minor modif.  
 Altered

## DESCRIPTION

The site complex is made up of a number of buildings reflecting the different trends of activity and phases of development of the scouring and carbonising works. There is evidence of a building dating from c1918 - 1920s, that is the Marnock Vale Wool Scouring Works. A shed area, now incorporated into the complex has walls, truss systems and possibly roofing which dates from this period.

There is also remaining, within the complex, buildings which date from the 1930s and 1940s, that is the Collins No. 2 Woollen Mill.

In both of the above cases, some structural members remain, with later additions modifying the earlier built forms and changing use and layout patterns.

Within the main building, dating from the 1930s, is some very important industrial plant dating from c1920 remaining. The early wool scouring plant certainly pre-dates existing plant at all other sites in the area and sits alongside more modern items of five to thirty years old.

Of principal interest is an early scouring line, made up of cast-iron bowls set in linear sequence and a separate carbonising line, made up of a large, narrow wooden trough which is lead-lined. Both lines are originals from earlier site works and are complete with overhead, leather belt-driven machinery still in operation. In this case, scouring and carbonising are handled as separate activities, with their combination depending on the type of wool and required work output.

Of additional interest is the narrow width of the early processing line, almost half the size of the more recent "Phoenix" plant and about a quarter the size of the new elevated line, installed in the adjacent building in the 1980s.

This plant is the most important remaining in the area. It is currently in use, despite inefficiencies that relate to its age and size. Of importance too, is the manufacturer:-

scouring line &	-	J. Dyson and Co. Geelong
neutralising lines	-	cast-iron troughs
carbonising line	-	made up on site (50 feet long)
		large lengths of Oregon lined with
		lead to accommodate acid usage.

The overall building complex has undergone considerable modification and modernisation over time. The remains of earlier building works are minimal and altered to accommodate regular updating of the site. Of interest however, is the way it does reflect the numerous changes and site uses.

The remaining early scouring and carbonising plant is by far the most important aspect of the site from a heritage conservation perspective.

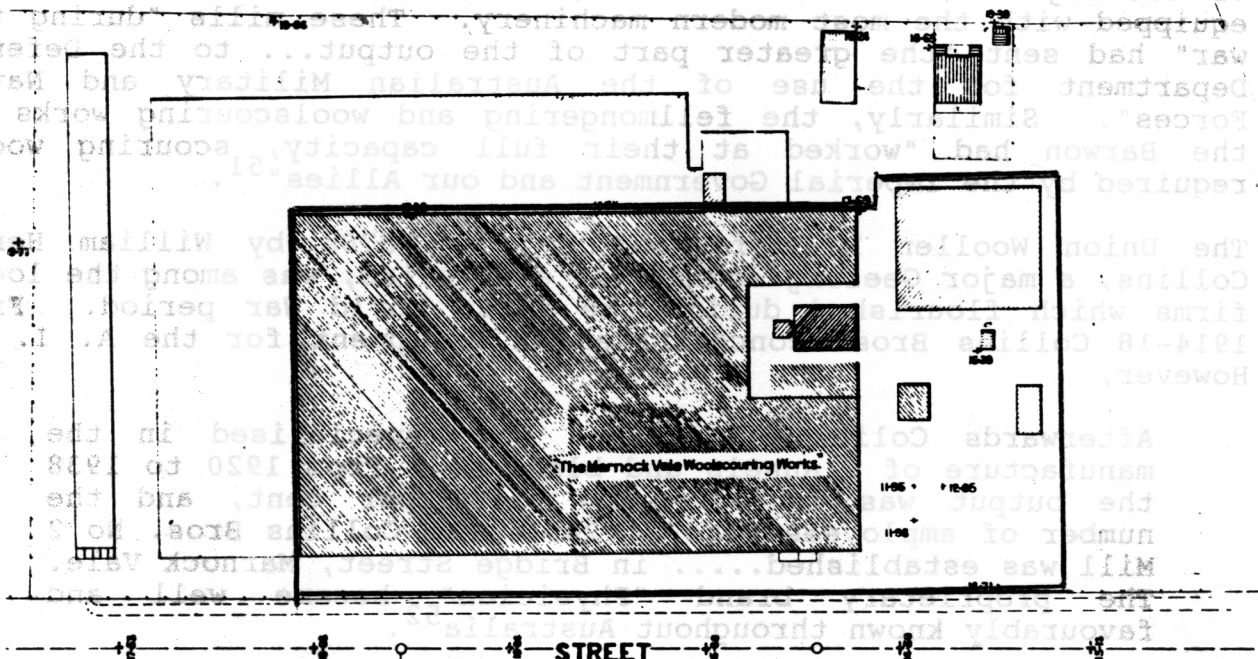
Within the region the **Sunnyside Woollen Mill** and the **Barwon Wool Scouring Works** in Gravel Pits Road has comparable scouring plant but not carbonising plant.

## DETAIL PLAN N°162

Scale 40 Feet to an Inch



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### HISTORY

This important industrial site was the location earlier of Robinson's Woollscouring Works and, it has been suggested, was also once used by a tannery<sup>47</sup>. From circa 1918 and into the 1920s Marnock Vale Woollscouring Works were there<sup>48</sup>, and in the 1930s and later, Collins No 2 Woollen Mill<sup>49</sup>. The use of the site reflects a number of major phases in the development of Geelong's woollen industry beginning with small woollscouring works; then, in the First World War with the boom in the wool trade, the establishment of larger works and, finally, in the 1930s the conversion of woollscouring works to woollen mills. A similar development took place on the former Redpath's Woollen Mills site in Gregory Avenue where, in the 1930s, Redpath's took over the Austral Woollscouring Works, which had replaced the original Austral Paper Mills of the 1890s.

47. Gladys Seaton, Model Borough, City of Newtown, 1983, p.93.

48. Newtown rate book 1918-19, South Ward, No 1211.

49. Seaton, p.90-91.



The Marnock Vale Woolscouring Works were rated for the first time in Bridge Street in 1918 with an NAV of 75 pounds<sup>50</sup>. During the First World War period both woolscouring works and woollen mills in Geelong worked at full capacity to meet the requirements of the Australian and British Governments and their allies. A number of large new woolscouring works were established in Newtown at this time including the Corio Woolscouring Works (1917) and the Phoenix Woolscouring Works (1919).

A 1918 publication titled Notes of ... Geelong's industries compiled for the members of a French Mission described Geelong at this time as a city which "handles practically all the wool from the famous Victorian Western District Plains Country, which is known in the chief wool centres of the world as 'Geelong' wool". The writer referred to the four large woollen mills there "capable of turning out the finest Tweeds, Flannels, Blankets, etc", and equipped with the most modern machinery. These mills "during the war" had sent "the greater part of the output... to the Defence Department for the use of the Australian Military and Naval Forces". Similarly, the fellmongering and woolscouring works on the Barwon had "worked at their full capacity, scouring wools required by the Imperial Government and our Allies"<sup>51</sup>.

The Union Woollen Mill founded in the 1870s by William Henry Collins, a major Geelong industrial enterprise, was among the local firms which flourished during the First World War period. From 1914-18 Collins Bros. concentrated on equipment for the A. I. F. However,

Afterwards Colins Bros. Pty. Ltd. specialised in the manufacture of flannels and blankets. From 1920 to 1938 the output was increased by fifty per cent, and the number of employees rose to 200. The Collins Bros. No 2 Mill was established..... in Bridge Street, Marnock Vale. The proprietary brand "Physician" became well and favourably known throughout Australia<sup>52</sup>.

The original Collins' Union Mill, which once stood on the west side of the Albion Mill, has now been demolished with the exception of the Union Mill office at 510 Latrobe Terrace. However, portions of the Collins No 2 Mill may survive on the Bridge Street site.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The complex of buildings on this industrial site contains structures and works which reflect a great many facets of site activity. There is evidence of the early use of the site for wool scouring with later developments still remaining. There are also aspects of more recent millinery activity still obvious and in use today. Much of what remains however, in terms of structures, is not significant and represents a typical site layout which has evolved over time with the most dominant characteristics reflecting recent decision-making and past 1960s economic planning.

The significant **cultural property** on the site is the important working remains of scouring and carbonising lines, with the associated overhead belt-drive machinery in the region, a feature

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50. Newtown rate book 1918-19, South Ward, No 1211.

51. Notes of... Geelong's Industries, compiled for the Members of the French Mission, 31 October, 1918.

52. Seaton, p.93.



of earlier works and important example of c1920 machinery and scale of operation.

This plant is currently in use and is likely to continue to be operated over the next few years. Its life after this period is doubtful and attention should be paid to ongoing conservation action.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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<b>Existing Listings</b>		NONE
<b>Recommend'ns</b>	RNE	LPS Area

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