

PLACE NAME New Breed Furniture **LEVEL:** B
 Redpath's Woollen Mills (Former)
 Austral Paper Mills (Original)
 Austral Wool Scouring works
ADDRESS Gregory Avenue Newtown
AREA 11 **DATE/PERSON RE** **NEG:**



DATES Construction: c1891
USE Present Use: Industrial
 Original Use: Paper Mills, Woollen Mills & Scouring
 Alterations?: Demolition & Alteration c1934

FORM Detached
 Single storey
 Double storey
STYLE

DESCRIPTION (I = Intact A = Altered * = significant)
ROOF Corr. Iron
WALLS Brick
 Bluestone
ROOF FORM Gable Decoration

VERANDAH
FENESTRATION Windows
FINISHES Unpainted

CONDITION & INTEGRITY **THREATS** Potential
Condition: Fair Sale
Integrity: Minor modif. Altered Demolition
 Deterioration

Property No 57.60

DESCRIPTION

This site contains evidence of three major buildings and two types of industrial activity.

The earliest building, the original double storey brick structure of the Austral Paper Mills, dates from c1891 and is substantially intact externally. Prominently sited, overlooking the river valley, the former paper mill is a substantial structure in red brick with polychrome brick surrounding window and door openings, with decoration of corbelled brickwork accentuating the line of the gabled elevation to the river. It is a simple gable roofed structure otherwise with significant historical associations with prominent local individuals and families. It represents an attempt to establish a paper-making industry in Geelong. Economic conditions at the time ensured that it never commenced production unfortunately.

An adjacent addition in brick is the only surviving evidence of later wool scouring activity. Evidence of Redpath's Woollen Mills and any scouring/milling activity associated with post c1934 operations is almost completely destroyed. A floor area with some surface modelling and a part-wall elevation is all that remains above ground of this part of the site's history. The activities of Redpath's on the site are arguably the most important in terms of site use and development and the fact that little remains of this aspect makes any assessment of site remains difficult.

Some important outbuildings/structures remain, the most notable being the brick chimney (minus the flue) and the boiler room.

HISTORY

This important industrial site, which contains double storey unpainted brick buildings in good condition, has significance for its associations with Austral Paper Mills, an 1891 attempt to establish a paper-making industry in Geelong¹²⁶; with Robert Smith's Austral Wool Scouring Works¹²⁷; and with Redpath's Woollen Mills, which took over the site and buildings in 1934¹²⁸. The men who founded these enterprises, William Daniel Hughes, papermaker in 1891; Brig-Gen. Robert Smith, fellmonger; and William R. Redpath, woollen manufacturer, were all notable Geelong citizens.

William Daniel Hughes (1853-1916) was the son of Robert Hughes, an English papermaker, and one of a long line of papermakers. Hughes entered the paper making industry with his father in the firm of Robert Hughes and Sons. In 1876 William married Caroline Rothwell, a paper bag and envelope maker. After his father's death in 1878 William continued the family business. About 1888 the family came to Australia where William became the first manager of the recently formed Victorian Paper Manufacturing Co. Ltd.'s mill at Geelong, later known as the Barwon Paper Mill. This was sold in 1890. William purchased the estate and, with his family, moved into the associated house, "Barwon Bank". At this time he commenced the construction of the Austral Paper Mill. According to a family history by Ian A. Hughes,

While this was underway he started a paper bag factory and printing works in McKillop Street, Geelong. By the

126. Newtown rate book 1891-92 Smith Ward No 898.

127. Geelong Advertiser, 15 March, 1934.

128. *Ibid* and 13 November, 1934.

time that the Austral Mill was completed he had about 30 girls making bags for him. He then transferred the McKillop works to the Austral Mill and had a bus for conveying his employees to the new premises¹²⁹.

Although all the new papermaking machinery arrived from Britain, the Austral Paper Mills never commenced production. It was a period of unfavourable economic conditions and William was forced to sell. The family moved to Adelaide but returned to Melbourne about 1903 and commenced the Empire Printing and Manufacturing Co. at 551 Elizabeth Street. In 1915 they moved to Prahran, where Hughes died in 1916¹³⁰. The new owners in 1894 of the paper mills, house and eight acres were J. C. Ware, a grazier, James Cook and J. M. White, paper merchants; and Robert Scott, ironmonger¹³¹.

The former Austral Paper Mills later operated as the Austral Wool Scouring Works run by Brig-Gen. Robert Smith¹³², who established the Phoenix Wool Scouring Works at Marnockvale in 1919. After Smith's death, W. R. Redpath, a Geelong merchant, purchased the works from the trustees of the estate in order to found a woollen and worsted mill there with his sons. His elder son, G. R. Redpath had served an apprenticeship at the Returned Soldiers Mill "which is only a few hundred yards from the Austral works" and the younger son, R. W. Redpath, was a student at Geelong Grammar¹³³.

W. R. Redpath had a lifetime experience in the textile industry and came from a family involved with the industry. For many years W. R. Redpath was connected with Onkaparinga Woollen Mills in South Australia, started by his father, Robert, a pioneer of the textile industry. Robert helped to break down the early prejudice against woollens and worsteds of colonial manufacture and the fine quality garments he produced helped to build up the Australian industry.

After leaving South Australia W. R. Redpath was appointed director and general manager of Myer Woollen Mills at Ballarat, established by Myer Emporium, Melbourne. For eight years he was general manager of Godfrey Hirst and Co.'s Excelsior Mills at Geelong. In May 1933 Redpath took a world tour to study the latest developments in the textile industry in U. S. A., Great Britain and on the Continent. On his return to Australia in December he decided to start a mill of his own and so purchased the Austral Works¹³⁴. It was pointed out in an article in the Geelong Advertiser of March 1934 that Redpath had chosen a building "eminently suited for the purpose to which it will be put" and that it was possible "that the new firm will also utilise the up-to-date plant which is already installed at the premises for wool scouring purposes"¹³⁵. Redpath chose Geelong because he believed it was "the home of the textile trade in Australia" and because "good employees were available, and that, as in the Old Country, it was now becoming traditional for Geelong families to be associated with the textile industry through generations"¹³⁶.

129. Ian A. Hughes, "Hughes - A Family of Papermakers", unpublished family history, unpaginated.

130. Ibid.

131. Newtown rate book 1894-95 South Ward No 926.

132. Geelong Advertiser, 15 March 1934.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid.

Modern plant was to be shipped from England for the manufacture of medium to high-grade woollens and worsteds¹³⁷. When the new mill was opened in November 1934 it was announced that the machinery was brand new and that each machine was "individually driven by an electric motor". The range of manufactures would include worsted suitings, dressing gown materials, women's dress goods and mantlings. The writer concluded that the new mill "again brings into usefulness a fine building on an excellent site on the north bank of the Barwon River"¹³⁸.

The former mill, now owned by New Breed Furniture Industries, is currently in use as a furniture construction and assembly factory.

SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of this site relates to extant c1891 structure associated originally with the Austral Paper Mills that is prominent on the site and the associations with later wool scouring and milling activities on the site by Redpath's company.

The original structure represents an unsuccessful paper works, which later became part of a complex of works and plant that represented an important woollen industry in the area.

The site has important historical associations in terms of pioneering individuals and families in the locality. Links with Robert Smith, William Hughes, W. R. & R. W. Redpath and their associations with nearby sites and other woollen mills combine to enrich the sites important evolution over time and add to its qualities for interpretation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Existing listings NONE

Recommend'ns RNE LPS
 Place
 Area 11

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid, 13 November, 1934.