

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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WC Thomas & Sons Flour Mill (Former)



WC Thomas & Sons Flour Mill (former),
Hobsons Bay Heritage Study 2006

Location

1 McRobert Street NEWPORT, Hobsons Bay City

Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO186

Heritage Listing

Hobsons Bay City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The WC Thomas & Sons Flour Mill (Former), comprising the two storey brick storage and dispatch building

constructed c.1903, three early concrete silos constructed c.1908 and associated buildings from the Interwar period, at 1 McRobert Street, Newport.

How is it Significant?

The WC Thomas & Sons Flour Mill (Former) at 1 McRobert Street, Newport is of local historic and technical significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, it is significant for its strong associations with the firm of WC Thomas & Sons, which was one of the major milling companies during the mid-twentieth century in Victoria. It is also significant as one of the few surviving early twentieth century flour mills in Melbourne still used for its original purpose, falling between the late nineteenth century mills of Kimpton and Brunton and the 1920s Albion mill at Sunshine of John Darling, in technology and date, which illustrates an important transitional period after roller plants became the norm when the increasingly competitive market meant that constant improvements to efficiency were required to stay in business. As a major industrial complex, it demonstrates the development of Newport and Spotswood as important industrial areas during the first half of the twentieth century and the influence of the railways upon the location of industry in this area. (AHC criteria A4, B2 and H1)

Technically, it is significant as one of the earliest intact mill complexes in Melbourne with others such as Kimpton's having been drastically modified and for the documented use of new milling technology in this complex, using new power sources as soon as they had proved themselves to be viable and quickly adopting bulk storage and handling methods. It is especially notable for the riveted iron bulk wheat silos, which are possibly some of the earliest of their type in Melbourne. (AHC criteria B2 and F1)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Hobsons Bay - Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2006;
Hermes Number	15119
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

This is a two storey bichrome brick storage and dispatch building with timber verandah along the rail siding. There are later brick office buildings and the corrugated iron clad sheds constructed about 1934 are in a style sympathetic with that of the mill.

The early section of this complex includes a multi-level red brick mill structure, with a gabled roof line, punched window openings and cream brick headers, and a long timber-post verandah over a railway siding next to the main Williamstown to Melbourne Railway. Gabled roofs project above the verandah to accommodate two external sack hoists. A partition wall projects above the roof marking the re-proof division between the milling and wheat cleaning. Two separate structures are noticeable by their different roof heights, the track side loading, wheat cleaning and store building being on three levels and the main mill building being four storeys. On the west of this building are three early silos and north of these is a group of more modern concrete silos.

A photograph in the 1934 *The History of Williamstown* shows this building and the three silos. Four gabled bays with circular vents in each gable end are evident on the south, and a larger gabled structure is to the north. The three silos are shown with a corrugated iron clad tower on the east of the southernmost tank. A metal framed gantry attaches to the top of the silos, similar to, but in a less elaborate form to the existing gantry.

The verandah along the siding had segment-arched corrugated iron valances in place of today's horizontal lines, and a large 'WC THOMAS & SONS P/L FLOUR MILLERS' as a banner sign repeating along the valance. Two of

the silos also had the business name attached.

Integrity

External Condition

Good

External Integrity

Moderate

Historical Australian Themes

Context

Contributory part of Spotswood Industrial Precinct, next to railway.

Manufacturing and Processing

Physical Description 2

Associations

WC Thomas & Sons, John Monash, Defiance Milling

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 1995. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>