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# Former Tottenham Bulk Stores Site

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## Location

Beachley Street BRAYBROOK, Maribyrnong City

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

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## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO189

## Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### What is Significant?

The buildings of primary significance to the Tottenham MST depot are the four c.1944 Munitions Stores buildings.

The elements, which are of contributory significance in terms of their ability to assist in understanding and interpreting the original use and function of the complex, include:

- . The surviving sections of railway lines.
- . The surviving contemporary landscaping and road layout and construction.
- . Some early equipment currently stored in GI Building No.2 (there may be other examples elsewhere)

The other buildings and elements described in this report are not significant.

### How is it Significant?

The former Tottenham MST depot is of local historical significance to the City of Maribyrnong and the western region of Melbourne.

### Why is it Significant?

The former Tottenham MST depot is significant for the following reasons:

. The former Tottenham MST depot is one of a number of major defence or defence-related facilities that had a significant influence upon the development of Maribyrnong and the western region of Melbourne during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

The influence of the former Tottenham MST depot is considered to be relatively minor because of the nature and period of the use compared to other sites within the City and region.

As part of the larger stores and supply complex at Tottenham (that is with RAAF No.1 Stores), the whole complex would have been a significant employer and centre of defence-related activity; however, the demolition of the RAAF No.1 Store has reduced the integrity of the whole and diminished its ability to demonstrate the role of the stores and supply operation. (AHC criterion A.4) . The former Tottenham MST depot is a representative example of a World War Two munitions stores complex, a functional type that is now relatively rare within metropolitan Melbourne, but relatively common throughout the whole of Australia.

Comparable World War Two complexes within the metropolitan area once included the now demolished Kensington Stores, and the former RAAF No 1 Stores complex on an adjacent site (presently being redeveloped including the demolition of most of the World War Two buildings). (AHC criterion B.2)

. The former Tottenham MST depot is significant as a relatively intact surviving example of a purpose-built complex that expresses its specific function as a transfer and distribution point between road and rail transport through the design and layout of the buildings, roads and remnant rail track on the site. (AHC criterion D.2)

. The former Tottenham MST depot has potential social value as one of a number of major defence industries that were significant employers in the western suburbs during World War Two and the immediate post-war period. (AHC criterion G.1) However, compared to other defence industries, the former Tottenham MST depot would have had a smaller workforce over a shorter period compared to places such as Maribyrnong Explosives Factory

. The former Tottenham MST depot has strong associations with the defence functions of the Commonwealth Government during World War Two and in the immediate post-war era. (AHC criterion H1)

Heritage Assessment Information:

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a brief description of the history of the subject property, in the context of the broader history of defence in Victoria and Australia. It includes:

- . An overview of the impact of the Second World War upon Australia.
- . The influence of defence and related industries upon the development of the western region of Melbourne.
- . A site history for the subject property.

### **World War Two**

The outbreak of the Second World War had a significant impact upon the historic development of Australia as described by Miller (1997): *The war was a unique experience in Australian history because for the first time all activity was subordinated to the war effort. In this war the armed forces were not just infantry but all arms of a modern mechanised military. The capacity for the establishment or redirection of munitions manufacturing capability during this period is simply astonishing for a country which until that time had relied almost exclusively on primary industry.*

*The period of the Second World War saw the biggest program of defence related property acquisition in Victoria . As well as direct acquisition of sites for camps, factories, airfields, stores, hospitals, headquarters and so on, land was leased or occupied by regulation and proclamation.*

*A systematic expansion of defence sites and upgrading of building was underway at the start of the war in 1939, and in general terms the style and construction followed the building types established in the mid-1930s, which were usually constructed of red brick. However, after the entry of the Japanese into the war in December 1941 a new sense of urgency arose and red brick was discarded in favour of timber framed buildings clad with corrugated galvanised iron or asbestos sheet.*

Within Victoria, major stores depots were established during World War Two at the subject site, as well as at Bandiana, Broadmeadows, Kensington, Mangalore, Port Melbourne, Seymour (Dysart Siding) and Somerton.

In a national context, the adjoining RMF No. 1 Stores depot was one of several major RMF stores established in capital cities and regional centres throughout the country.

### **Defence in the western region of Melbourne**

Defence-related facilities and industries have played an important role in the development of the western region of Melbourne. The City of Maribyrnong *Environmental History* notes that: *The City of Maribyrnong 's most Significant contribution to the defence of the Commonwealth is probably its long-running role as a centre of explosives, ordnance and ammunition development and manufacture, which goes back to the establishment of the Colonial Ammunition Company in Footscray in 1899.*

*The availability of river transport down to the port, large areas of open space, the proximity of a growing chemical industry and the presence nearby of a reliable workforce were some of the reasons why explosives and ammunition complexes were sited in Footscray and Maribyrnong late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth.[1]*

Major defence industries established within the region included:

#### **Footscray Ammunition Factory (ADI)**

This facility, also known as the Colonial Ammunitions Company (CAC), was located close to the Maribyrnong River on the site of what later became known as the Australian Defence Industries, Footscray or the Footscray Ammunition Factory. Although privately owned, CAC was established as an attempt to decrease Australia's dependence on imported ammunition. It was Australia's first ammunition factory and was, by 1890, making ammunition for the Victorian Government. By 1901 the company had expanded its area to produce .303 cartridge cases and bullets.[2 ]

#### **Maribyrnong Explosives Factory**

The complex that became the Maribyrnong Explosives Factory began as a Cordite Factory, which was originally established between 1909-12. It was expanded during World War One and during the interwar period, and it is said that by the early 1930s that the complex was 'the centre of the chemical engineering industry in Australia'. From 1922, the Munitions Supply laboratories was located at this site, which helped secondary industries develop new technologies which could help them produce materials for wartime use by government factories.

As the Government worked toward war readiness after 1933, a significant building program was carried out and the factory expanded its manufacture of explosives. The factory expanded even more during World War Two when it employed up to 8,000 people and also played the part of training school for staff from explosives factories over Australia.

The factory continued to make explosives for the Armed Forces until the 1960s. It closed in 1994, although some defence activities remain on the site.[3]

#### **Maribyrnong Ordnance Factory (ADI Maribyrnong)**

The Maribyrnong Ordnance factory was located on part of the site acquired by the Commonwealth for a Cordite factory and part of its area was used, at first, by the Royal Australian Field Artillery. It was not until 1922 that the buildings erected for the RAFA were turned over to the Department of Munitions to be used as an Ordnance Factory. As with other local defence factories, a significant building program was carried out in the 1930s to provide for wartime production, and by 1943 over 6,000 people were employed. The factory continued making munitions up to the 1970s, but was gradually closed from 1989.[4]

Other defence facilities

In a broader context, other major defence facilities in the western region of Melbourne included the RAAF base at Point Cook and at Laverton.

## **Site history**

### **World War Two**

The subject property forms part of the former Munitions Stores and Transport Depot in Ashley Street, Tottenham, which was opened in 7 June 1944 after the Commonwealth Government acquired the land from the Victorian Railways in 1943.[5].

The actual reason for the choice of this particular site for the depot is not known, however, Vines (1999) suggests that the location of the RAAF No.1 Stores (which was established on an adjacent site by 1944): *took advantage of the adjacent Tottenham Yards which included sever&J roads for shunting trains and a direct siding into the depot.*[6]

Presumably, this factor as well as the availability of a large area of vacant land, the relative remoteness from urban areas, and proximity to related defence facilities in the wider Maribyrnong area, was also influential in the selection of this site.

While the history is not completely clear, the Munitions Stores and Transport Depot and the RAAF No.1 Store complex appear to have been co-located at Tottenham to provide increased capacity in the supply of stores to the fighting troops. The two complexes were, however, separated by a 'man-proof fence' and may have operated as separate facilities.

The National Archives of Australia hold the original plans for the site, which were prepared in April 1942 by the Department of Interior (Victoria). Site layout plans for the 'Bulk Store Area, Tottenham', plus elevation plans were prepared by a 'F Hines', while a 'CM Teague' prepared plans of the internal structural details. The plans were approved by WJ Cole, NC Works Director, Victoria. [7] They show the complex as originally planned included the following buildings:

- . Four 'bulk stores' of identical design and layout situated to the west of the main internal north-south access road leading off Darnley (now Beachley) Street. Two 'Future Stores' are shown to the west, along with a 'Future Garage'.
- . A small guard house adjacent to the main entrance off Darnley Street.
- . Two small lavatory buildings between the two southern stores.
- . A single railway line entering the site from the south east, which split into two branches that ran alongside the south sides of the four stores to the west of the internal access road.
- . A 'manproof' fence, which enclosed the whole complex (separating it from RAAF No.1 Stores).

A landscaping plan showing an indicative layout of trees and shrubs throughout the site was prepared in 1944 by L Holzer and approved by WJ Cole. This shows the general location of the areas set aside for trees and shrubs, but does not specifically the type and species of plants to be used. [B]

The research undertaken for this assessment indicates that the facility was used primarily for the transfer of bulk goods between road and rail based transport, and for the storage of materials for brief periods. The design and layout of the buildings demonstrate this with road access on one site and rail on the other.

Patrick Miller advises that the term "munitions" during the First World War originally referred more specifically to explosive materials such as guns and ammunition, however, by the Second World War it applied more generally to all types of goods used by the defence forces including clothing.

### **Post-war 1945-1970**

The complex was expanded considerably in the immediate post-war period. An aerial photograph from 1945 shows the 6 stores buildings in the 1942 plans, as well as a number of other smaller buildings and structures.

These buildings are described in a detailed plan entitled 'General Plan. Munitions Siding' originally prepared in 1955 (with later amendments in 1958 and 1966), which shows a complex of over 30 buildings.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the six original stores shown in the 1942 plans, it also includes:

- . Ten small (approximately 70'x25') storage buildings at the eastern end of the site.
- . A canteen and peace officers quarters near the centre of the site.
- . A number of small ancillary buildings such as lavatories, pump buildings etc.

- . A residence just outside the front entrance on the east side of Darnley Street (now Beachley Street).
- . A change room and guardroom just within and to either side of the main entrance from Darnley Street.
- . A weighbridge in the access road between Building 1 and 5 opposite the main entrance..
- . An enclosed storage area adjacent to one of the railway sidings, with access to a loading ramp to the railway.
- . An additional railway siding providing a direct connection to GI Building 4. Two different rail gauges are shown and it appears that standard gauge rail connections were provided at some time in the postwar period.

A 'man-proof' fence encloses the whole site. The 'Explosives Siding' indicated on the 1942 plans does not appear on this plan; in its place is a 'Loading Shed', which apparently allowed for transfers between trains travelling on the two different rail gauges.

### 1970-present day

It is believed that the use of this site for its original purpose ended sometime during this period. Buildings added during this phase of development include:

- . The small Foreman's building on the east side of GI Building 1, which was constructed in 1972. This building may have been associated with the original Defence use of the site.
- In about 1990, the part of the subject property to the east of the internal access road was sold and the original stores and other buildings in this area were subsequently demolished. This land is currently being developed for housing. Warehouse 5, which was constructed in two stages in 1977 and 1991. This building was unrelated to the former Defence use of the site
- . The Administration building adjacent to the front entrance, which was constructed in 1991. This building was unrelated to the former Defence use of the site.
- . The Halon Bank administration, office, and warehouse/factory, which was constructed in 1996 for Environment Australia. This complex is used to recycle CFC material from fire extinguishers and other equipment. It continues to be used for this purpose until the present day.
- . The date of the fire tanks and pumping houses is riot known, however, it is probable that they were constructed during the same period that the above buildings were added between 1972 and 1996.

In about 1990, the part of the subject property to the east of the internal access road was sold and the original stores and other buildings in this area were subsequently demolished. This land is currently being developed for housing.

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### References

- [1] Barnard et al (2000) *Environmental History City of Maribyrnong* p.22
- [2] *ibid* p.22
- [3] *ibid* pp.22-23
- [4] *ibid* p.24
- [5] National Archives of Australia Series *MP1038/2 Dr 2/42*
- [6] Vines, G *Maribyrnong Heritage Review Industrial Places* Volume 3 Appendix 1 p.10
- [7] National Archives of Australia Series *B37112/0 Item Dr 125/4 Plan Nos. M2606-2609*
- [8] NAA Series *B37112/0 Item Dr 125/4 Plan No. VicM.4060*
- [9] NAA Series *B3711210 Item Dr 125/4 Plan No. V-94155*

Construction dates 1944,

Other Names Former DAS site,

Hermes Number 125638

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

### Site Layout

The subject property as it exists today is smaller than when the MST depot was originally established. Land to the east of the main entry (Refer Image 18) and internal north-south access road (Image 19) leading from Beachley Street was sold after 1990 and the buildings on that part of the site were subsequently demolished. This area is now being redeveloped for housing. The study area therefore now only includes the north-south access road and the land and buildings to the west of this road.

Image 20 and 21 show two of the east-west access roads; one to the north of Stores Buildings 1 and 2, and the other between the four buildings.

### Second World War

The buildings and elements associated with the original use of the subject property by the Commonwealth Government as a MST depot during and immediately after World War Two are described below.

### GI Building 1

This is one of four originally identical gabled corrugated iron store buildings that were constructed to the west of the internal north-south access road as part of the first phase of development of the subject property in 1942-44. (Refer Images 1-4) The building is timber-framed with the roof supported on timber columns set in concrete pedestals at regular 20' intervals. The columns are bolted to the roof beams and are further secured by timber braces in a simple 'Y' formation that are also bolted to the beams. (Images 31 & 32) The floor is reinforced concrete. There are regular openings along the main north and south elevations, which were originally enclosed by pairs of timber sliding doors. (Images 28 & 29) Other original wall openings include highlight windows between the doorways to the north and south elevations of the building - the windows to the south elevations appear to be original (Image 27), while the ones to the north elevation appear to have been replaced with 'laserlight' (see below). The original plans noted that hinged hardboard blackout screens were to be provided to the windows, however, these do not appear to exist today and the windows now contain opaque glass.

The low-pitched gabled roof has ridge ventilation (Image 26) and, on the south side, extends beyond the wall to create a canopy over a reinforced concrete platform elevated above the ground that allowed for direct loading onto trains, which used the siding that originally ran along the south side of the building.

The original plan notated that the building was clad in 'corrugated black iron'. The term 'black iron' possibly refers to 'malleable cast-iron', which was a nineteenth century building material. However, it would seem unlikely that, in 1942, actual cast-iron would have been used for roof sheeting, as mild steel had been in production for many years and was vastly easier to work with. Lysaghts produced huge quantities of galvanised corrugated steel sheeting for the war effort. It is therefore possible that the corrugated iron was a special type to that was used to help camouflage the building so that would be less visible when viewed from the air.

This building has a moderate to high degree of integrity and is in good condition. The modifications made to this building include:

- . The additions of roof skylights by the replacement of the corrugated steel with clear corrugated sheets.
  - . The replacement of some of the original timber sliding doors with steel roller doors, along the north elevation (Image 1), presumably as they were more exposed to the weather - this is also the side that is currently most used for access to the building.
  - . The closing up of windows (perhaps they were never constructed originally?) or replacement of the original highlight windows with clear corrugated sheeting, particularly in the north elevations of buildings.
- Given the good condition of the corrugated iron cladding, it is also possible that the building has been re-clad since it was originally built.

### GI Building 2

See description for GI Building 1. (Refer Images 5-7) This building has a moderate to high degree of integrity and is in good condition. Similar modifications have been made to this building.

### **GI Building 3**

See description for GI Building 1. (Refer Images 8-11) This building has a moderate to high degree of integrity and is in good condition. Similar modifications have been made to this building. In addition:

- . Raised roof vents/skylights have been added to the roof.
- . The ground level on the south side of the building has been raised to be level with the height of the former railway platform.

### **GI Building 4**

See description for GI Building 1. (Refer Image 12-15) Compared with the other stores, this building has a relatively high degree of integrity as it is the most intact and is in good condition. Modifications made to this building include:

- . The replacement of some of the original timber sliding doors with steel roller doors, particularly along the north elevation (presumably where they were more exposed to the weather - this is also the side that is most used for access to the building).
- . The ground level on the south side of building has been raised to be level with the height of the former railway platform.

Given the good condition of the cladding, it is also possible that the building has been re-clad since it was originally built.

plaque mounted on a low pole that commemorates the opening of the facility by Environment Australia in 1996.

### **Water tanks and Pumping house**

This includes two 454,600 lt. concrete tanks and a steel framed and metal clad pump house, which are situated immediately to the west of GI Building 2.

### **Railway tracks**

Most of the railway tracks associated with the subject property, including the connecting spur to the main line have been removed. Remnants survive in the following locations:

- . Between GI Buildings 1 and 2 at the eastern end (Refer Image 2)
- . In the south west corner, adjacent to the GI Building 5. (Refer Image 16)
- . In the south east corner of the subject property crossing the access road. (Refer Image 17)

It is possible that the tracks that formerly ran adjacent to the south sides of GI Buildings 3 and 4 are buried beneath the raised ground levels in this area. Evidence of the removed railway tracks can be seen in the rails that are stored on the vacant land to the south of the subject property.

### **Landscaping and site layout**

Surviving remnants of the original landscaping and site layout shown on original plans includes: . The remnant lava rock landscaping along the northern boundary of the access road on the northern side of GI Buildings 1 and 2. (Image 22)

. The remnant mature trees (Eucalyptus sp.) between GI Buildings 2 and 3, which appear to within an area shown as set aside for trees (not specified) in the original landscaping plan prepared for the subject property in 1944. (Image 24 + 25)

. The remnant bluestone kerbing along some the internal access roads, particularly along the eastern boundary of the site. This has been modified by the replacement/repair of the original 'butt-jointed' (ie. constructed without mortar) blocks with sections using concrete mortar. (Image 23)

. The original road layout has been disrupted by the placement of later buildings such as the Halon Bank.

### **1970 - present day**

The buildings and elements constructed after 1970 are:

The Foreman's building This is a single storey brick veneer building adjacent to the east end of GI Building 1. (Image 19)

The Admin building This is a single storey brick veneer building facing Beachley Street at the entrance to the subject property.

GI Building 5 This is a large steel framed warehouse-type building with brick cladding to the lower walls and colourbond to the upper walls. It is situated in the south west corner of the site adjacent to some surviving sections of rail track - it is possible that the rail track may have once provided access to this building.

Halon Bank office and warehouse/factory This is a steel framed single storey building with cement sheet and metal cladding to the walls and roof. It is situated just to the south of GI Building 3. It includes a tank enclosure surrounded by a high cyclone wire fence. Adjacent to the western entrance to the building

## **Veterans Description for Public**

The former Tottenham MST depot, on Beachley Street, is one of a number of major defence or defence-related facilities that had a significant influence upon the development of Maribyrnong and the western region of Melbourne during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. As part of the larger stores and supply complex at Tottenham (that is with RAAF No.1 Stores), the whole complex would have been a significant employer and centre of defence-related activity. The former depot is a representative example of a Second World War munitions stores complex, a functional type that is now relatively rare within metropolitan Melbourne, but relatively common throughout the whole of Australia.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

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