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# FORMER FREEZER WORKS

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## Location

AKUNA DRIVE, WILLIAMSTOWN NORTH VIC 3016

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2390

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 3, 2020

The site is of local historical significance as an early example of the Victorian meat processing industry and its subsequent development throughout the 20th century. Potential archaeological remains within the site may be of scientific significance. The site is of moderate significance at a local level as it represents the development of the meat processing industry from the late 19th to the late 20th century.

### Interpretation of Site

Phases of occupation: • Late 19th – late 20th century (1882-1983) – Industrial meat processing. The site went through various phases of development as the facilities were upgraded and extended. The fire in 1926 appears to have caused significant damage and likely required reconstruction works. • 21st Century -Industrial estate/ vacant land. Industrial development to the north eastern portion of the site is believed to have begun in the late 1990s or early 2000s. The remainder of the site appears to have been predominantly vacant since the demolition of the Freezing Works facility in 1989.

### Hermes Number

206922

## History

Construction of the Former Freezing Works began in 1882 (The Leader 1886). The works operated from 1883 until 1983 when operations ceased under H.W. Greenham & Sons Pty Ltd (The Leader 1886, O'Leary 2008). When the Australian Frozen Meat Export Co. began operating out of the site in 1883, they were Victoria's first successful meat freezing works (Vines 1993). The Freezing Works provided employment for many local residents (Argus 1892). The Freezing Works facilities were substantial and consisted of grazing paddocks, killing pens, stone tanks, channelling, a tramway, an engine room, freezing chambers and a railway siding along the Geelong Railway line (The Leader 1886). The facility operated in a production-line process known as the chain, in which each stage of slaughtering and dressing of the animal were carried out as a separate operation (Vines 1993). The early freezing machinery was operated by boilers (The Leader 1886). The machinery shed and the chilling chamber were constructed of carefully overlapped corrugated iron, with double doors and 'India rubber' door seals to allow a close seal (The Leader 1886). The main building was approximately 100 feet square, with a wide verandah and earth banked at either end to maintain the cold temperatures inside (The Leader 1886). The Freezing Works were inspected by the Premier of Victoria, James Patterson, in November 1893 (The Williamstown Chronicle 1893). An illustration of the facilities of the Newport Freezing Works was produced by David Syme & Co in March of the same year. The Freezing Works facilities continued to be extended and updated throughout the 20th century. The central part of the main refrigerating works building was depicted as constructed of masonry in the 1912 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, Williamstown, Plan No.13. The remainder of the buildings in the complex were depicted as weatherboard. In June 1926 a fire at the Freezing Works caused an estimated £5000 damage (Herald 1926, p.2). Aerial imagery from 1945 demonstrates further expansions to the Freezing Works facilities. The Freezing Works were operated by various companies throughout its 100 year history, including The Australian Frozen Meat Export Co. 1882-1886, Melbourne Refrigerating and Agency Company (Messrs Hotson and Whitley) ca. 1886, Messrs. Turnbull, Hotson and Co. ca. 1893, Austral Freezing Works, Newport (John Cooke and Co.) ca. 1906, Sims Cooper and Co ca. 1926, R. J. Gilbertson Pty Ltd 1971-1979 and H.W. Greenham & Sons Pty. Ltd 1979-1983 (O'Leary 2008, The Herald 1906, Vines 1993). The Freezing Works facilities were demolished by 1989 (Anaed 1997). An environmental audit of the western and central (south of the new industrial buildings) portions of the Former Freezing Works site from 1997 notes significant ground disturbances to areas of the site and other areas which have been built up with fill (Anaed 1997). The report also notes asbestos sheeting fragments were identified across most of the site, particularly in the western and south-western portions (Anaed 1997). Despite these disturbances it is possible that archaeological evidence of the Former Freezing Works remains, particularly in the form of cesspits. *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/>