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# FORMER BALLAN FLOUR MILL

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## Location

'MILL PARK' CORNER OF SIMPSON ST AND MILL PARK ROAD BALLAN, MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Municipality

MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7722-0082

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 27, 2022

### What is significant?

The Ballan mill site is of archaeological significance for its potential to reveal information on the technology, design and operation of mid nineteenth century rural four milling in Victoria and the activities of the people who worked on the site. There are likely to be substantial archaeological remains of the structures including the water wheel pit, boiler settings and flues, as well as footings for the buildings themselves and internal framework for supporting the machinery.

The site is of local historical significance as evidence of the former importance of grain growing and flour milling in the district, demonstrating the former extent of the grain belt, and in its demise, the transition to harder dryland wheat and the shift to other forms of agriculture.

### How is it significant?

### Why is it significant?

Interpretation of Site	The mill was formerly a substantial three storey stone and brick building with an attic and landmark chimney stack. The water race ran from a dammed lagoon near the 13th green of the golf course. A timber flume ran for the final 50 metres. The chimney was in the south east corner of the building, the boiler house in a single storey gabled section on the east end, and the water wheel presumably along the north wall, although photos suggest it was enclosed within the structure.
Hermes Number	208868
Property Number	

## History

The Werribee flour mills at Millbrook, Ballan were commenced by James Young (1818-1908), and his brothers Angus and Nathaniel in 1856 (Ballan Shire Historical Society 2016 Information board at site – note Jones suggests it was built in 1862). James Young was born in Flodden Northumberland, and arrive in Australia in 1841 in charge of a consignment of cattle. Young was a carpenter and moved to Bacchus Marsh, where, with John Lyle, he opened a steam flour mill on 7 March 1853. Young sold the Bacchus Marsh mill in 1869 due to financial difficulties (Jones p.106).

James, Andrew and Nathaniel Young purchased crown allotment 10, Section 9, Township of Ballan on 31 December 1856 (Land Application No. 9793). The Young brothers had also acquired allotments 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. A few months earlier they had purchased allotments 4- 6 of Section 2 to the north of Simpson Street.

James Young had travelled to England to purchase machinery and on 10 July 1856, The Argus reported that:

*We are glad to learn that Mr. James Young, the spirited and enterprising proprietor of the Border Flour Mills, Bacchus Marsh, has, in company with Messrs. A. and N. Young, entered into arrangements for the erection of a steam flour mill at Ballan. An engine and mill machinery, embracing the very latest improvements, have already been ordered and the whole will be completed and ready for the ensuing crop. This will indeed be a boon to the people of Ballan and the neighborhood. There are many thousands of acres of rich and fertile land in this district, where the want of a mill has hitherto been a great drawback. Now, however, that desideratum is about being supplied, and it is to be hoped the farmers will put in a large breadth of wheat to be ready for the starting of the mill in 1857 (The Argus, 10 July 1856, p.3).*

The Ballan mill was operated by steam and water, with a 650 metre long earth cut water race running from the Werribee River and a prominent masonry chimney in the south east corner. There is an extensive contemporary description in The Ballarat Star 17 September 1858:

*To Millers, Capitalists, and those In search of an excellent investment THE WERRIBEE FLOUR HILLS, BALLAN, FOR SALE. Driven by water seven months in the year. J& T. ODDIE are instructed by Messrs. Young & Co., Ballan, to offer for sale by private contract, the whole of those excellent premises known as the WERRIBEE FLOUR MILLS, Ballan, Consisting of a Three-storey Freestone Hill, Engine-house, Wheel-house, &c., Situated on Lots 4, 5, and 6, section 2, Town- ship, Ballan. The mill is at present working three pairs of French burr stones, but has all fittings for four pairs, metal columns, and gird irons, with bedstones lying on metal bed frames, screw and elevator attached for carrying the flour away from the stones ; also, a patent crane for lifting millstones; patent dressing machine, with metal framing, capable of dressing six teen bags an hour with ease ; patent smut machine, with blast and drake screens, and elevator for hoisting wheat; hoisting tackle, and everything very complete for a first-class flour mill. The null machinery is driven seven months in the year by a water wheel. 6 feet broad by 20 feet in diameter, being sufficiently powerful to drive four pairs of stones with ease. The Ewer Werribee runs past the mill, from whence an immense supply of water can be obtained day and night. There is connected with the mill a ten-horse engine, by Langlands & Co., Melbourne, which is used when the water fails. The whole of the machinery, except the engine, is by the well-known millwrights, William Law & Co., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was ordered by Mr Young himself when in England, and has not been in work quite a year. As an*

*evidence of the completeness of the mill in all its branches, it may simply be remarked that from the time the wheat enters the mill to the time it comes out ground the flour, it is handled wholly by machinery, only one miller and a boy being engaged to manage the entire works. Besides the mill there is a Three-roomed Cottage of weatherboard, also an Eight-stalled Stone Stable, measuring 50 ft x 18 ft, a Two-roomed Weatherboard Cottage, and an excellent Stone Dwelling House, containing five large rooms. Surrounding the dwelling is a large garden well and securely fenced; The dwelling house, &c, stands out Lots 5, 6, and 7, section 9; the whole extent of the land being three acres. There are all necessary outbuildings, including calves' house, fowl house, &c In drawing attention to this fine property it may be mentioned that the mill is situated in the centre of a splendid agricultural property, a constant and large supply of wheat being always obtainable from the celebrated Pentland Hills, and markets in abundance easily accessible for an unlimited supply of flour. The mill is only six miles from the Gordon diggings, where several quartz crushing mills are now in course of erection-one of them being in full work at present. The demand for flour for Gordon alone has recently been as much as the mill could supply, although 45 tons of flour can be turned out of the mill weekly when in full work. The distance from Mount Egerton is seven miles, from Mount Blackwood 12 miles, from Jim Crow 20 miles, from Ballarat 25 miles. The main road from Melbourne to Ballarat passes the mill, also the main road to Black wood. The mill being so very complete is naturally easily worked, and at a trifling cost: the working expenses at present being only £10 per week. The books are open for inspection. Storage for 10,000 Bushels of Wheat. The above property is offered for sale because of a dissolution of partnership, two of the partners wishing to devote themselves to fanning. Fuller particulars, together with price and terms, may be obtained from J. & T. ODDIE, Auctioneers and Commission Agents, Dana street, Ballarat.*

In 1866 the mill was operated by (old) Nathaniel Young and Walter Duncan. In February 1869, James Young's share of the business was transferred to his brothers, Nathaniel and Andrew and in 1873 Duncan left the partnership, moving to Lallat in the Wimmera. Nathaniel Young went insolvent in 1870 and in 1873 allotments 7-10 were under the sole ownership of Andrew Young.

The flour mill, along with a dwelling-house 'and premises' were advertised for sale in 1870. The business was acquired by Bennett and Co and by 1873 the 'Werribee Flour Mills' as it was called, was leased to Andrew Young. He continued the flour milling business there until the lease was taken over by William Edwards White in 1880, who worked the mill for a year before subletting it. He later purchased the mill and by the early 20th century, White carried out a highly successful chaff milling business at the Werribee Mill, which operated 24 hours a day. Jones notes that Boddingtons, the mill engineering firm, undertook repairs at the mill in 1883 when it was already under the name of White & Co, Ballan. In 1909, it was announced that the "Werribee Flour Mills" owned by W E White, had been destroyed by fire on 29 September (Jones p.230). Initially, the Ballan mill was one of the few large buildings in the town, and so became the venue for many social gatherings including Presbyterian services.

*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/>*