
Pilkington Australia Factory and No 1 Furnace

Location

265 Melbourne Road, NORTH GEELONG VIC 3215 - Property No 313881

Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO1722

Heritage Listing

Greater Geelong City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

AListed - State Significance

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significant parts of the Pilkington complex at North Geelong are the 1936 and 1945 sections only, particularly the three dimensional appearance of the exterior of the building and facades of the Melbourne and Mackey Roads. The interior has been greatly altered and has low significance. The No. 1 furnace is significant but may be moved to a new site if necessary. Recommendation: A conservation management plan is recommended for this site.

The Pilkington complex on the Melbourne Road at North Geelong is aesthetically significant at a STATE level. It demonstrates an early use of original design qualities of the interwar Functionalist style in Australia. These qualities on the original 1936 south and west elevations and 1945 architectural extension to the facade, include the large white painted brick wall planes broken into three horizontally oriented sections, behind which the flat roof is not visible behind the plain brick parapet. Between the brickwork is a fenestration of extensive metal framed glass windows. The curved reveals of the doorways and curved short columns between the windows on the first floor are integral to the design. The off-centre entrance with a transparent glass stairwell formed with metal window frames and cantilevered staircase is particularly important. Other intact qualities include the sparse use of plain but bright blue tiles.

The Pilkington complex on the Melbourne Road at North Geelong is historically significant at a STATE level. It is associated with the development of the British based company in Australia, as a major contributor of employment and economic development on a national scale. The complex has associations with the important Geelong firm of architects, Laird and Buchan, who were established in 1890 by Angus Laird and influenced the built environment in Geelong for one hundred years. The firm, now called the Buchan Group, has clients and offices Australia wide. The son of Angus Laird, Ewen, was responsible for bringing his firm and Geelong into the realm of the modern movement after his study and working tour of Europe and the USA in the depression.

The Pilkington complex on the Melbourne Road at North Geelong is socially significant at a REGIONAL level. It is recognised and valued by the Geelong community as a major employer and as a substantial industrial manufacturer.

The No.1 Furnace is scientifically significant on a STATE level as an illustration of an outstanding technical achievement in the manufacture of glass in the State of Victoria.

Overall, the Pilkington complex at 307 Melbourne Road at North Geelong is of STATE significance.

REFERENCES

1. Shire of Corio Rate Books
2. Sands & McDougall's Directory of Victoria
3. Wynd, So Fine A Country: A History of the Shire of Corio, p.103-5
4. Land Sales & Subdivisional Maps, G.H.R.C.
5. Geelong Waterworks and Sewerage Trust records.
6. Eric Vigar, 'North Geelong Memories', Investigator, Dec 1988, p155
7. Ruth Hill, ' St. Helen's Through the Years' Investigator, Sept, 1987 p98
8. Lynch, 'History of Pilkington Brothers (Australia) Pty Ltd Geelong Pla.
9. Laird & Buchan Drawings, G.H.R.C.
10. Interview: Lorraine Huddle with Ewen Laird, 1990.
11. Plaque on the machine inside the Pilkington plant.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Greater Geelong - Greater Geelong Outer Areas Heritage Study Volumes 1, 2 & 4, Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd, 2000;
Hermes Number	22050
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

DESCRIPTION

This building, erected in c.1936 was designed by the eminent local architectural firm of Laird and Buchan. In particular, it was the design of the Director and architect Ewen Laird, who had recently travelled to Europe during the depression, to work in London and to visit the works of Dutch architect Dudok. This design was concurrent

with a design Laird was working on for his brother George's home in Newtown, Geelong. It was a radical, progressive style which was ahead of the trend in Australia and never adopted as a common style in the conservative provincial city of Geelong. It was freestanding with a dominant facade, painted white. It was designed to give the message that Pilkington's was a dynamic international commercial organisation dominating the streetscape of the main Geelong-Melbourne Road. The three-dimensional massing of the freestanding, white painted and radical design exploited the corner site.

The brick massing, deep horizontal mortar lines, and metal windows recall the work of Dutch modernist Willem Dudok. The strong horizontality of the design is achieved by the use of long horizontal expanses of ribbon windows on both the ground and first floors, as well as a flat roof behind the long, simple lines of the parapet and the deep struck mortar joints while the vertical ones are flush with the face of the bricks. The asymmetrical massing and simple geometric shapes were balanced with solid and void. The transparent glass stairwell projected forward of the main wall, prominently displaying the cantilevered staircase. Streamlining the entry points of the service doorways was achieved by deep reveals of curved brickwork and these are balanced by the short and relatively shallow short curved columns between the windows above.

A skirting of plain but bright blue tiles was the only concession to any decorative features of the functionalist design. These tiles were also used on the window sills of the Newtown house. (Many of these tiles have been overpainted.)

The No. 1 Flat Toughening Furnace has a capacity of 32"x32" and was the first machine to produce toughened "Armourplate" in September 1938. The machine was made in Kings Norton, UK.

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/>