

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name MERINO BUTTER FACTORY (FORMER)
Address COLERAINE-MERINO ROAD (1 & 2 TP21804), MERINO
Place Type Buttery
Citation Date 2006



Map 1 - Extent of Registration, Merino Butter Factory

Recommended Heritage Protection VHR - HI - PS -

History and Historical Context

The first Butter Factory in Merino was located at the south end of High Street, on the corner of Burke Street. The complex of buildings changed ownership, and was sold to a Mr. Handbury, afterwards known as 'Handbury's Butter Factory'. Originally this was the site of an old shingle building the 'Pig and Whistle' built by James Tait. The building housed a store, which was later used as the offices of transport carrier John Lillie. A blacksmith's shop was also located on the premises, which later became the stables for Handbury and Sons (Back to Committee, 1937, p. 36). Up to 40 horses were housed at the stables at the peak of the industry (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22).

James Tait, was born in Watten, Scotiand in 1831 and came to Australia on 'Priam' in 1852. After travelling to the goldfields, Tait arrived in Merino in 1862 and worked at a store owned by a Mr. Ford. He became a licensed auctioneer in 1874 and had a store. He was instrumental in such projects as the Merino Court House and securing the land for the Mechanics Institute. The public park in Merino was dedicated to him (Back to Committee, 1937, p. 36).

The factory began in timber buildings on the same site in around 1885 (Back to Committee, November 1937, p. 36). The double storey weatherboard buildings had gabled roofs with king post and decorated verandahs. An early photo shows two horse wagons in front of a very large double storey building with two smaller outbuildings and a brick smokestack. The factory was fanned as a co-operative of local dairy farmers to make products for the local

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

industry. A leading figure of the co-operative company was Mr. Alexander Magnus McLeod (1846-1910), of nearby pastoral property, Talisker.

Talisker was part of the property of Francis Henty, settler and pastoralist (1815-1889), and the youngest son of Thomas Henty. The original property was divided into three parts for his daughters on Francis Henty's death in 1889. In 1890, after her father's death, Caroline Henty married Alexander Magnus McLeod. He was the son of John Norman McLeod (1816-1886), Scottish pastoralist and parliamentarian, who owned Castlemaddie Station at Tyrendarra from 1855 to 1873 (See Talisker and Castlemaddie datasheets). The Talisker Estate was named after a McLeod family property on the Isle of Skye in Scotland. Alexander Magnus McLeod became the first manager of the Talisker Estate (Henderson, p. 392; Back to Merino, 1937, p. 14).

Milk was carted from farms on two-horse and later four-horse teams along rough roads to the butter factory to be processed. The site was chosen as it had a good water supply and because it was the centre of dairy suppliers and close to the 'Talisker' property (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22).

In 1910, before the death of MacLeod, directors of the Merino Co-Operative Butter Factory Co. Ltd approached Mr J. E. Handbury and Sons to take over the business as it was not proving successful. Handbury & Sons leased the butter factory from 1910 and modernised the factory equipment. They took up ownership of the Merino Butter Factory around 1916 (Back to Committee, 1937, p. 36).

Dairy production) in the Merino area increased after the First World War and alterations were made to the original tinter buildings. The production was changed to "Batch Pasteurising" at this time (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22). 'Merino Downs' Butter was the brand name of the factory (Back to Committee, 1937, p.36). In 1924, Merino Butter Factory won all of the prizes available at the Royal Melbourne show and won the "Championship of Australia" (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22).

By 1931, Mr H. E. Handbury succeed his father as Managing Director of the company and the business was expanded with new equipment and new factory buildings, located at the current site on the Coleraine-Merino Road, at a cost of £6000 (Back to Merino Committee, 1937, p. 36). The factory was a "new first class brick building" and refitted with new "Murray Vacreators and large aluminium type Box Chums" (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22). The Factory was officially opened at a large event in 1933 (Back to Committee, 1977, p. 114). Early production under Handbury & Sons was around 4 tons however by 1937, the company had produced 12,722 tons of butter (Back to Merino Committee, 1937, p. 36). By 1949 Handbury and Sons were managing production at Merino, Toora, Casterton and Euroa Butter Factories. As roads improved transport became lorries with solid tyres by the early 1920s and then 5 to 8 ton trucks came in by 1953 (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22).

A number of company-owned houses for employees were built on land adjoining the factory and in the township of Merino. An office was established in Merino with a Grain, Oil, Fuel and Hardware store attached (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22).

In 1949, J.E. Handbury and Sons merged with British United Dairies of England to manufacture "Full Cream Powdered

Milk and Skim Powder", remaining under H.E. Handbury as Director (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22). Again alterations were made to the factory's production equipment to allow modern processing techniques. British United Dairies Pty Ltd (B.U.D.) was one of the largest dairy producers in the world at the time (Burrell, F.W., in Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association, 1953, p. 22). Murray Goulburn Co-Op took over B.U.D. and built a large factory at Koroit which transferred production from Merino and other smaller butter factories, forcing the closure of the factories. Before 1977, Murray Goulburn built a supermarket and petrol station outlet on the corner of the site, where the stables and garages for the factory had been. This affected the viability of local businesses in Merino, "unable to compete with the huge resources and

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

buying power" of the chain (Back to Merino Committee, 1977, p. 115). The butter factory has since closed and fallen into ruin.

References

Back to Committee (1937) Historic Souvenir of the Back to Merino and Henty Centenary Celebrations, November 11th to 15th, 1937.

Merino Branch of the Country Women's Association (1953) *The History of Merino and District*, Self-published.

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.12 Feeding People

3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce

3.12.4 Preserving food and beverages

3.13 Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity

Description

Physical Description

The former Merino Butter Factory is an industrial complex situated on the Coleraine-Merino Road, about five kilometres north east of the township of Merino. It is the second Butter Factory complex constructed for Merino and District, the first being located on the corner of Burke and High Streets, Merino. The main factory building on the current site is constructed of brick, with a series of gabled corrugated iron roofs, most with clerestory windows along the ridge line. The brick factory complex was constructed in 1931, after the influx of Soldier Settlers from World War One increased the dairy production of the area. A Mr. Handbury owned and ran the first factory, in the town of Merino from 1910, and moved to this site as the need for more modern, larger facilities became apparent. To the west of the main buildings is a hedgerow of mature *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress) which probably date from the 1930s. The factory buildings are in fair condition, with most of the windows broken and several areas patched with corrugated iron. It is interesting to note the differences and similarities between the nearby former Butter Factory in Coleraine, in Southern Grampians Shire. The Merino Butter Factory retains a high degree of integrity.

Physical Condition

The buildings are in fair condition with most windows and doors broken or missing.

The brick buildings of the Merino Butter Factory remain unused on the site, however it is not known how much fabric of former buildings exists.

Usage / Former Usage

Currently used as a hay shed?

Recommended Management

Maintain generally as existing. Make watertight and secure. Develop CMP and attempt to have the building used in some way.

Comparative Analysis

584 BUTTER FACTORY HERITAGE PRECINCT CASTERTON

664 BUTTER FACTORY SCOTTS ROAD & CAVE HILL ROAD HEYWOOD

958 BUTTER FACTORY RUIN OFF KNIGHTS & PARKER RD- TARRAGAL RD CAPE BRIDGEWATER

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

847 BUTTER FACTORY SITE Winnup-Nelson Road DRIK DRIK
526 BUTTERY Coleraine-Merino Road MERINO
680 CONDAH SWAMP BUTTER FACTORY BUTTER FACTORY ROAD CONDAH
527 CREAM SHED & BUTTER FACTORY HIGH STREET MERINO

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Merino Butter Factory is an industrial complex situated on the Coleraine-Merino Road, about five kilometres north east of the township of Merino. It is the second Butter Factory complex constructed for Merino and District, the first being located on the corner of Burke and High Streets, Merino. The main factory building on the current site is constructed of brick, with a series of gabled corrugated iron roofs, most with clerestory windows along ridge line. The brick factory complex was constructed in 1931, after the influx of Soldier Settlers from World War One increased the dairy production of the area. A Mr. Handbury owned and ran the first factory, in the town of Merino from 1910, and moved to this site as the need for more modern larger facilities became apparent. To the west of the main buildings is a hedgerow of mature Cupressus macrocarpa (Monterey Cypress) which probably date from the 1930s. The factory buildings are in fair condition, with most of the windows broken and several areas patched with corrugated iron. It is interesting to note the differences and similarities between the nearby former Butter Factory in Coleraine, in Southern Grampians Shire. The Merino Butter Factory retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The former Merino Butter Factory is of historical significance to the township of Merino and the surrounding district as a representation of a dairy industry which started in the area in the later part of thenineteenth century. It is of historical significance as a physical reminder of a previous industry within the township, associated with two phases; first closer settlement around the turn of the century; and then soldier settlement from the First World War, post 1919. It is also important for showing us a way of life which is no longer supported. The Merino Butter Factory is of architectural significance as one of the few surviving industrial complexes around the township of Merino, and for its unusual roof line, which demonstrates the quick growth of the industry in the interwar period, and emphasis on fast construction, rather than fine architecture.

Recommendations 2006

External Paint Controls

-

Internal Alteration Controls

-

Tree Controls

-

Fences & Outbuildings

-

Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

-

Incorporated Plan

-

Aboriginal Heritage Place

-

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.