

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: PENSURST AND DISTRICT BUTTER AND CHEESE CO. LTD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Chesswas & French Streets PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 267

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Penshurst

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 11 **SECTION:** 36 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475J D10; VicRoads 233 P0; located in the triangular area bounded by French, Chesswas and Factory Streets, immediately to the east of the Penshurst Botanical Gardens.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Butter Factory (Former), Chesswas & French Sts, Penshurst

Image Date: 29/04/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the building, excluding the interior, and all of the land within a twenty metre radius of any edge of the building.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The butter factory was located in the triangular area bounded by French, Chesswas and Factory Streets, immediately to the east of the Penshurst Botanical Gardens and close to the former railway line. It has changed in its appearance over the years with section being added and demolished. The present building is single storey, built of red brick and with a gabled corrugated iron roof, which includes a large monitor roof for ventilation. There is an elevated loading platform sheltered by a cantilevered verandah at the southern end with a small room at one end under the same roof. The front wall of this room, possibly intended as an office, includes a large cement render sign with the name of the company. The double door leading onto the platform and the surrounding brickwork have been altered.

HISTORY:

Butter and cheese had been produced at a very small scale since the beginning of settlement in the Western District. "Government assistance and the development of refrigeration in the 1890s [which] enabled dairying to grow in distant parts of Victoria and yet supply both Melbourne and Britain with fresh butter" (Garden, 134). The railways were already in place, for the most part, to provide transport and factories were usually sited close to railway stations and their yards. The new industry was important because, along with the refrigeration of meat such as rabbit and lamb, it provided labour during the 1890s depression. Garden states that "The first positive step was the establishment of a private creamery on the Meadowlands property at Buckley's Swamp in 1891." In mid-1892, a group of local farmers and Hamilton businessmen floated a Hamilton Butter Factory Company. Garden states that "The company established creameries in the Victoria Valley and at Penshurst, Croxton, Byaduk and at the butter factory which was erected on the Mill Road in Hamilton." The Penshurst Parish Plan shows the land on which the Penshurst Butter Factory stands was sold to the Hamilton and District Butter Factory Co. Ltd. on 17th June 1896. It comprised just over two acres.

The Penshurst and District Butter and Cheese Co. Ltd. was established in 1898 with a paid-up capital of 1,913 pounds. Mr. W. J. Smith was the first manager. In the ten years to June 1934 it produced nearly 2,000 tons of butter with a turnover in the same decade of nearly 322 million pounds. During that period "the company has installed new machinery valued at 2,870 pounds, and erected new factory buildings valued at 2,894 pounds and new residence valued at 800 pounds." The present brick factory was opened by Mr. A Hughes MLA in 1929 (Mt Rouse Historical Society file).

The year 1929 appears to have been a peak year for production across the Western District with nearly 32 million pounds of butter produced in the year 1931-32 with about one third being manufactured in the counties now making up the Southern Grampians Shire. The principal products were butter and cheese made from fresh milk but, by 1934, "Condensed milk and dried milk powder are prepared and marketed in large quantities, and other important products are cocoa and milk, casein, milk sugar, baby foods, and calf food" (WD Centenary History).

A merger offer by Murray Goulburn was made and accepted in 1966 (Mt Rouse Historical Society file). The closure of this small factory is typical of the late twentieth century movement to rationalise food processing at a few very large plants.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.12 Feeding People

3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce

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3.12.4 Preserving food and beverages

3.13 Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity

CONDITION:

Ruinous

INTEGRITY:

Fair degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Penshurst and District Butter and Cheese Co. Ltd. was established in 1898. It was located close to the former railway station on land in Chesswas and French Streets. The move was typical of the many butter factories established across the Western District at the time. The principal products were butter and cheese made from fresh milk but, by 1934, condensed milk and dried milk powder were prepared and marketed in large quantities, and other important products included cocoa and milk, casein, milk sugar, baby foods, and calf food. Mr. A. Hughes MLA opened the present brick factory in 1929. It is a single storey red brick building with a loading platform and office at the southern end. The other buildings have been demolished. The company merged with the conglomerate Murray Goulbourn in 1966 after which the factory closed. The surviving building is in fair condition and has been altered unsympathetically.

How is it significant?

The Penshurst and District Butter and Cheese Co. factory is of historical and architectural significance to the township of Penshurst and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The former Butter factory is of historical significance to the township of Penshurst as a representation of the dairying industry, which started in the area around the turn of the century, and as one of the major employers in the town. It is of historical significance for the physical reminder of a previous industry within the township associated with closer settlement, and a way of life, which is no longer supported. The Penshurst butter factory is historically important as one of two such factories in the study area. It is of architectural significance as one of the few surviving industrial complexes within the township of Penshurst.

COMPARISON:

146 Coleraine and District Butter Factory, 26 Robertson Street, Coleraine

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

16/12/2003

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
	Western District Centenary Souvenir	1934	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst, County of Villiers	1957	

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Don Garden

Hamilton, a Western District History

1984 pp.
118,
134-
5,
146,
165,
237,
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