

Heritage Citation

Metal Products Ltd (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 39 Sandgate Road, Albion, Queensland 4010
Type of place	Factory
Period	World War II 1939-1945
Style	Art Deco
Lot plan	L5_RP151558
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 December 2017 Date of Citation — February 2012
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (F) Technical

39 Sandgate Road was constructed in 1940-41 for Metal Products Pty. Ltd. It was one of several extensions to the original 1938 factory building. The company is historically important as the first private company in Brisbane to mass produce metal components for munitions in the Second World War. The factory was designed with a highly fashionable Art Deco frontage in the same design as the earlier factory building. The factory at the rear was constructed with timber frames and a saw-toothed roof. Metal Products Pty. Ltd. is an important reminder of Albion's industrial development as well as a reminder of the role Brisbane industry played in the Second World War.

History

In the 1860s John Petrie, Brisbane's first mayor, established a quarry at the base of what is now known as Bartley's Hill. This was Albion's first industry and although it was not a success it opened up the area for industrial growth and residential settlement. In 1889 the new Breakfast Creek bridge was completed, making travel into the Albion district easier. With the increase in industry, wharf activities at Hamilton and the

establishment of the racecourse at Albion, the Breakfast Creek Hotel was constructed in 1889 to cater for this growing market.

The interwar period heralded further residential, commercial and industrial growth in Albion. As part of a program of relief work during the Great Depression the banks of Breakfast Creek were levelled to help mitigate flooding. This in turn promoted the development of industry along the creek. This industrial development was highlighted in a 1938 article featured in the *Courier Mail*. It stated that several important factories had been built in the Breakfast Creek area with a determined focus on modern design and aesthetic quality, "Breakfast Creek has lived down most of the deserved reproaches of the past. Though its locality is yet far from ideal, there are signs that it will yet become a place of dignity and beauty. Builders of factory premises are setting a new standard."¹

In 1938 Metal Products Pty. Ltd constructed a factory beside Breakfast Creek in Albion. The company manufactured automotive parts. The new factory was constructed along Sandgate Road to a modern design that incorporated Art Deco features. A photograph taken at the time of the opening shows the newly built factory building with masonry façade, rounded corners, emphatic vertical piers and glass brick windows. It was reported "Beyond the bridge, but facing the creek, on the way to Clayfield, are the new premises of Metal Products. Pty. Ltd., carried out in the modern manner. All these new buildings, while being eminently practical for their purpose, are sightly structures...Metal Products Pty. Ltd...typify the modern spirit in factory construction. Modern factory areas have their points of beauty".² Behind the decorative façade a large timber framed industrial building with saw-toothed roof made up the main factory.

In the late 1930s, just prior to Britain declaring war with Germany, the Australian Government began to implement a three-year plan to boost the country's defences. The then prime minister, Joseph Lyons (1932-39), defined the purpose of the plan, "to secure the free passage of our sea-borne trade, both coastal and overseas, and the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Commonwealth against aggression"³. As well an increased budget for the expansion of the army, navy and air force, the manufacture of ordnance was also addressed. Contracts were awarded to several private firms for the manufacture of various parts for ordnance: Metal Products Pty. Ltd. was one of six firms Australia wide and the first in Queensland to be given a contract. The £5312 contract was for the manufacture of plugs and fuseholes. This was the first of several large government contracts given to Metal Products Pty. Ltd...

The need to expand the factory was quickly apparent and in June 1940 building approval was given for the construction of an extra annexe. In the same year the company purchased an extra one rood and four perches of adjacent land east of the original factory. The new extension had a Sandgate Road frontage. In an article featured in the *Courier Mail*, the new extension was described as "Brick, coated with concrete, is used in the front elevation of the new building, and it is identical in design with the original premises at the side of which it is erected...synthetic glass is used in the saw-toothed roof. Timber frame construction is employed in the remainder of the building"⁴. The new annexe that was constructed was 39 Sandgate Road.

Metal Products Pty. Ltd. continued to manufacture parts throughout the Second World War. Several important wartime industries were also established in Albion during the war. The US Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) established the Chemical Warfare Impregnation Facility in Crosby Park. Several large igloo warehouses were built in the Breakfast Creek/Albion area. Within one of these igloos the overhaul and assembly plant for the Allison aircraft engines was established, these engines were used in several of the important military aircraft during the war, for example the Kittyhawk. Metal Products Pty. Ltd. (former) is the only remaining evidence of this intensive war-time industry in the Albion/Breakfast Creek area.

Metal Products Pty. Ltd. continued to manufacture metal parts until the 1970s. The 1938 original part of the

factory has been demolished. As mentioned, the 1940 annexe used an identical design to the original and this has been retained.

Description

Metal Products Ltd. is a one-storey industrial building fronting Sandgate Road. A decorative showroom with interwar architectural elements fronts the factory which has a pronounced saw-tooth roof.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as an industrial building constructed in 1940-41 as part of Metal Products Pty. Ltd. it demonstrates the development of industry along Breakfast Creek in this period.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as an industrial building designed with an Art Deco façade it is uncommon in Brisbane's industrial areas.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular

period

as the first private industry in Queensland to manufacture ordnance parts during the Second World War it is important in demonstrating the Commonwealth Government's three year plan to expand Australia's defences.

References

1. *The Courier Mail*, Tuesday 20 December 1938, p8
2. *The Courier Mail*, Tuesday 20 December 1938, p8
3. *The Australian Quarterly*, December 1939
4. *The Courier Mail*, 22 April 1941, p15
5. Brisbane City Council Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Detail Plans
6. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
7. *Certificates of Title*, Department of Environment and Resource Management
8. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
9. Queensland Post Office Directories
10. Queensland Electoral Rolls
11. Brisbane City Council Register of New Buildings, 1940
12. *The Courier Mail*, Monday 21 April 1941, p6
13. *The Courier Mail*, Friday 1 March 1940, p2
14. *The Courier Mail*, Friday 6 December 1940, p1
15. *The Courier Mail*, Thursday 10 March 1938, p3

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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