

Heritage Citation



Wunderlich site (former) Gateposts & one set Gates

Key details

Addresses	At 51 Prospect Road, Gaythorne, Queensland 4051
Type of place	Factory
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Stripped Classical
Lot plan	L4_RP18784; L41_RP18783; L40_RP18783; L39_RP18783; L38_RP18783; L37_RP18783
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2005 Date of Citation — September 2015

Construction

Structure: Masonry

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical

This set of three gate posts and gates were part of the former Wunderlich Factory site which was established in Gaythorne in 1936. The factory manufactured asbestos products including 'Durabestos'. The factory was important in the local area as it provided many jobs. Due to the harmful nature of asbestos only the gates have been heritage listed, providing evidence of a once thriving industry in Gaythorne.

History

In July 1885 Ernest H C Wunderlich (1859 - 1945) arrived in Sydney to establish a business as an agent for various European manufacturers.

In 1887 Alfred Wunderlich came to Australia to join his brother in business. The brothers imported stamped zinc ceilings and other stamped architectural metal work from F Peters of Berlin but they were keen to enter into the manufacturing side of the business. During 1887 Ernest travelled to Europe to recruit a team of metal workers capable of producing stamped metal items and also of training Australian workers.

The first patent for their designs was taken out in April 1888. During 1888 they installed stamped metal ceilings in smaller businesses such as Beale's piano showroom in George Street, Sydney and Adams' Café, also in George Street. The following year they completed a large contract with the Sydney City Council to install a metal ceiling in the concert hall at the Sydney Town Hall (then called the Centennial Hall). Other contracts followed in both Sydney and Melbourne. It is uncertain when they established their own manufacturing business but in the 1890 Sands Directory it is listed as being at 492 Kent Street, Sydney.

In December 1889 the brothers sold their patents for stamped metal ceilings to the Melbourne furniture firm of W H Rocke & Company. The economic depression of the early 1890s significantly impacted upon Rocke & Co and in late 1892 the Sydney branch became insolvent. Ernest relinquished his position with the company and re-joined his brother in business in Sydney. The Wunderlich brothers bought back their patents from Rocke & Company and in 1893 established a limited liability company with capital of 10,000 pounds under the name Wunderlich Patent Ceiling and Roofing Company Limited with their factory being at Rocke's former site on Baptist St, Redfern.

The roofing section of the Wunderlich business began by chance. In 1892 a consignment of terracotta roof tiles arrived in Sydney from Marseille, France but the consignee, the Wunderlich brothers' former employers W H Rocke & Company, was unable to proceed with the contract.

In 1893 the Wunderlich brothers took over Rocke's entire terracotta department. The French manufacturers, The United Tileries of Marseille, commenced regular shipments to Australia and by 1897 the Wunderlichs were advertising themselves as the sole Australian agent for imported "Marseilles Tiles".

In 1904 the company was incorporated with a paid-up capital of 25,000 pounds. During that year a Melbourne branch was also opened at 243 Collins Street. An export trade was also developed around this time.

During World War 1 the Wunderlich brothers had to contend with anti-German hysteria and successfully sued a magazine which accused them of being born in Germany. The First World War also caused a major disruption to the importation of steel, Marseilles tiles as well as raw materials. Wunderlich Limited saw these challenges as a business opportunity.

In 1915 a subsidiary company was formed to manufacture asbestos cement sheets at a factory at Cabarita. The product was named "Durabestos" and used asbestos fibres from the company's mines in Beaconsfield, Tasmania, and Barraba, New South Wales. Wunderlich's Redfern factory manufactured non-metal ceilings in other materials including plaster and wood. Tile Works were built at Rosehill in Sydney and Brunswick in Melbourne and commenced production in 1916. Later similar works would be built at Edwardstown in Adelaide (1919) and Ferny Grove in Brisbane (1928).

In 1936 the manufacture of durabestos began at a factory at Gaythorne in Brisbane.

In 1938 Wunderlich Limited combined its interests in Western Australia with H L Brisbane and Company Limited to form H L Brisbane and Wunderlich Limited. Between 1940 and 1944 Wunderlich owned the mining company Asbestos Mines Pty Ltd which was formed with the intention of mining asbestos at Baryulgil in northern New South Wales.

In 1944 Wunderlich formed a joint venture with a subsidiary of James Hardie and commenced mining and crushing asbestos fibre at Baryulgil. This arrangement continued until 1954 when Wunderlich sold its interest in the mine. During World War II the company's tileries and asbestos works were shut down and the metal works turned over.

In 1960 in partnership with Humes Ltd, Wunderlich formed a new company called Wunderlich Humes Asbestos Pipes Pty Ltd. In 1964 James Hardie (Asbestos) Ltd bought Wunderlich Humes. In 1969 Wunderlich Limited was taken over by The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited (CSR) and delisted on the Australian Stock Exchange of 1 April 1970.¹

The Wunderlich/James Hardie factory at Gaythorne was closed in 1983.

A public meeting of residents in 2014 at the Gaythorne RSL raised concerns about old asbestos sheets being found in a creek that led into Kedron Brook. In 2014 Queensland Health confirmed that 8 men who lived within 1.5 km of the asbestos factory had been diagnosed with the asbestos-related disease mesothelioma since 1982.²

Description

Due to the asbestos none of the factory buildings are included. The entry relates to the gateposts to two vehicular entries, and one combined vehicular and pedestrian access dates fronting Bellevue Avenue.

1. Two brick posts, painted, one with brick/concrete coping, other missing this detail. Cyclone fence gates
 2. Brick gateposts painted. Projecting brick coping detail to southern post, missing on northern post, damaged. Pair of cyclone fence gate posts with barbed wire on top.
 3. Two vehicular gate posts and pedestrian gateposts, brick painted. Projecting brick coping detail, damage to middle posts. Original gates.
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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 physical markers of the 1936 Wunderlich, later James Hardie factory, which played a significant role in the expansion of the suburb of Gaythorne.

References

1. <http://images.powerhousemuseum.com/images/pdfs/321349.pdf>
2. <http://queenslandplaces.com.au/gaythorne>

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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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