

Heritage Citation

Colmslie Beach Reserve

Key details

Also known as	Brisbane Abattoir (from 1930)
Addresses	At 152 Colmslie Road, Murarrie, Queensland 4172
Type of place	Factory, Reserve, Tree/s
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Lot plan	L2_RP201432
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 November 2012 Date of Citation — August 2011
People/associations	Brisbane Abattoir (Association)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

The Colmslie Beach Reserve was originally the site of the Brisbane Abattoir. Originally known as Swifts Meat Works, the abattoir was first established in 1913 as a private enterprise. Following a bill passed in the Legislative Assembly in 1930, all private abattoirs in the metropolitan area of Brisbane were to be run by the State; Swifts Meat Works became the Brisbane Abattoir. The abattoir played a large role in both the history of Cannon Hill and Brisbane as one of the largest employers in the city. Swifts Meat Works planted an avenue of trees consisting of Jacaranda and African Tulip trees at the entrance to the works and leading down towards the river. These trees are now mature plantings and are significant as a reminder of the important industry that had once been on the site.

History

In the late nineteenth century the suburb of Cannon Hill was a rural outpost, with large farms and limited transportation into and out of the area. With the coming of the railway line to Cleveland in 1889, Cannon Hill

became more accessible and suburban development escalated with increased land subdivision and sale.

In 1913 the Swifts Meat Works Company, an American company, purchased large amounts of land beside the Brisbane River at Cannon Hill with the intention of building an abattoir. As a result of the establishment of this industry Cannon Hill's development intensified. Many of the employees moved to Cannon Hill and a small village community developed.

Prior to the construction of the abattoir buildings in 1913 the land beside the river was quarried away to remove a large hill. Once constructed, the abattoir exported large quantities of frozen meat throughout the world. The industrial facility was one of the largest in Queensland in this period. A wharf was established along the river front of the abattoir providing a convenient means of shipping the export meat and for stock delivery. In 1913 a large siding was constructed from the Cannon Hill Railway Station down to the Brisbane River to the abattoir. The livestock was transported through the Cannon Hill station toward Lytton Road where it was unloaded into holding yards. In 1915 this siding was further extended to reach the abattoir wharf. The siding also provided transport for the meat workers. The meat works was credited with providing the only passenger rail service for its workers in Brisbane.

From 1930 the Queensland State Government introduced a bill to de-privatize abattoirs in the Brisbane metropolitan area. The Queensland Meat Industry Board was created with the purpose of controlling the industry. The role of the board was outlined in the provisions of the bill:

The powers of the board are to establish, maintain, and conduct abattoirs or saleyards for the sale of cattle in any metropolitan abattoir area; to establish, maintain, and conduct works for canning, preserving, chilling, or freezing meat....to make such arrangements as it thinks fit as to regard to the purchase, collection, and disposal of meat, offal, or other matter, and apply any manufacturing process thereto....All slaughtering in the metropolitan area is prohibited except with the consent of the board¹.

This was undertaken as concerns were raised in relation to the disintegrating hygiene standards at some of the slaughterhouses around Brisbane and the perceived danger posed to those consuming the meat products. In 1931 Swifts Meat Works was taken over by the Queensland Meat Industry Board with the intent of providing safe meat to the public as well as continuing the export trade.

Under an agreement between Swifts and the Queensland Meat Industry Board, improvements to the plant were planned, "The most important development in the building industry last week was the announcement that extensive alterations and additions were to be made at Messrs. Swift (Australian) Co.'s works"². Between November 1930 and February 1931 a series of Tender notices were published in the Queensland A&B Journal (Queensland Architect and Builders' Journal) for these improvements to the Swifts Meat Works. Part of this agreement included the construction of the Cannon Hill saleyards on land adjacent to the abattoir. The architect engaged for the project was Richard Gailey jnr, son of one of Queensland's most important architects, Richard Gailey. Gailey jnr was a prominent architect in his own right having been a partner in his father's firm since 1896 and credited with designing several important Brisbane buildings in the interwar period, including the Brisbane Arcade on Queen Street.

The newly improved industrial facility was officially opened by the Premier, Mr. A.E. Moore and the chairman of the Queensland Meat Industry Board on the 24 November 1931. In the 1980s the industry moved to a new site further up the hill away from the river where it continues operations. In 1998 the land on which the original abattoir was situated was acquired by the Brisbane City Council to be used as public parkland.

Throughout the abattoir's history its gardens were a source of pride. Lines of flowers were planted along the railway siding and entrance drive into the abattoir and included roses, poppies and sweet peas. A Bougainvillea hedge was planted along the river wall. An avenue of Jacaranda and African Tulip trees were planted by Swift Meat Works along the front drive of the site; this avenue still exists in the park. The trees are mature and contribute to the aesthetics of the park. The avenue of trees is significant as an important reminder of one of Queensland's most important industrial sites throughout the twentieth century.

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 the remnants of the once extensive gardens planted at the Brisbane Abattoir, the avenue of trees are evidence of the importance of the industry to the development of the Cannon Hill area as well as the importance of the meat industry in Brisbane.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as an avenue of mature Jacaranda and African Tulip trees that line the entrance to what was the Brisbane Abattoir, they are a remnant of the extensive gardens planted at the industrial site and as such are uncommon.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an avenue of mature Jacaranda and African Tulip trees that once lined the entrance to the Brisbane Abattoir they contribute to the parkland setting.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a reminder of one of Queensland's most important industries that employed thousands of Queenslanders throughout the twentieth century.

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, Saturday, 13 September 1930, p17
2. *The Brisbane Courier*, Tuesday 4 November 1930, p3
3. Historic Titles, Department of Environment and Resource Management
4. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Survey Map
5. Richard Apperly (et al), *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian architecture* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
6. University of Queensland, 'Queensland Places: Cannon Hill'
7. Cannon Hill School of Arts: 75th Anniversary 1923-1998, Cannon Hill Community Association, 1998
8. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
9. John Kerr, "The Evolving Railways of Brisbane", *Public, Practical, Personal, Brisbane History Group Papers*, 1981
10. Bruce Buchannan Architects *A Heritage Management Survey*, Queensland Railways, 2002
11. Pullar, Margaret, A History of Colmslie Beach Reserve, A Report for the Brisbane City Council, May 1998
12. *The Brisbane Courier*, Friday 3 September 1909, p2
13. *The Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday 7 January 1914, p4
14. *Morning Bulletin*, Friday 16 January 1914

15. *The Brisbane Courier*, Tuesday 8 September 1914, p6
 16. *The Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday 8 July 1914, p4
 17. *The Brisbane Courier*, Saturday 3 May 1913, p4
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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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