Heritage Item 3

Ashburton Glassworks



Location	
Address:	8 Glassworks Road, Ashburton
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5701468, Fasting 2411679
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 9084
Owner:	Malteurop New Zealand Ltd.

Purpose	
Current Use:	Grain storage
Original/Past Uses:	Glassworks; Plywood factory; Soldiers barracks; Grain storage

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic			
Heritage NZ:	Historic Place Category 1	List # 7707	Date Listed:	22 June 2007
Ashburton DC:	Category A			

Site Assessment	
Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	27 November 2014

Detail		
Description:	The extent of the Heritage New Zealand listing includes: The entire brick glassworks complex, concrete brick lined chimney and adjoining corrugated iron building; the part of the land on Lot 1 DP 9084, Certificate of Title 413/165 on which these structures stand, with a curtilage extending to the Glassworks and Bremners Road frontages.	
	The former Ashburton Glassworks, also known as the International Malting Co. Ltd. and the Southern former Cross Glass Company Building, is one of Ashburton's most imposing and distinctive industrial buildings.	
	The large double brick factory building has a high, steeply pitched roof crowned by a tall glazed clerestory (high windows between two roofs) – in earlier pictures you could see that the glass in these windows was broken and these have now been covered over with clear plastic. It has an attractive symmetrical façade with detailed brickwork and lower wings on each side. A 38.4 metre high concrete brick lined chimney is the dominant feature of the factory complex. There are many windows around the building, most are small-paned windows with round arch brickwork above, apart from the long elevations of the lower wing to the north-east of the group, which has rectangular windows. There is an adjoining corrugated iron building, which hides much of the rear of the brick building.	
	The machinery related to the technological production of glass has all been removed except for the original crane mechanism in the roof of the main building. This is an interesting feature as it pre-dates the more common electric cranes. The subterranean channels that were constructed to conduct smoke from the furnaces to the chimney remain beneath the floor of the main building. Elements of the railway siding remain apparent at the eastern side of the building as an indication of the important transporting facility that served the factory.	
History:	During the early 1920s Australian born William Tate of Christchurch started the process of developing a glass manufacturing factory. With silica rich sand available from nearby Mt Somers and an estimated potential market for glass products in New Zealand valued at £700,000 a year, a group of business men, led by Tate, saw their opportunity to establish a successful secondary industry. On March 12, 1926 the 'Southern Cross Glass Company' was formally established.	
	Tate engaged an advisor, Mr H Schnurpfeil, a Czechoslovakian authority on glass manufacture. Schnurpfeil organised the supply of plant and machinery from Europe. The building was designed by local architect E.M. Gabites, in 1926. Gabites designed a variety of both residential and commercial buildings, including the Parish Hall for St Stephens Anglican Church and the Plunket Rooms.	
	Clay for brick making was readily available in the Ashburton region so a number of brickworks were located there. At one time Ashburton had the highest per capita use of bricks in New Zealand.	
	Work began on clearing the trees from the factory site using gelignite on 19 March, 1926 and by May construction of the factory buildings was underway. Schnurpfeil brought with him a group of skilled English workers with the expertise to operate the plant and instruct locals who would join the firm. Approval was given for the company to incorporate a private railway siding into their building complex. Schnurpfeil designed the glass manufacturing plant that was planned to eventually consist of three main furnaces producing plate and window glass, glass hollow ware and 'high class' crystal ware.	

Detail
All the materials for the plant were imported except red brick. The main brick building and wing to the west, the adjoining iron building to the south and the brick and concrete chimney were all completed by March 1928. The construction of the railway siding, the laying of tracks off the main line and construction of a wing to the east of the main brick building (incorporating the railway siding) were completed around November 1928.
By the end of 1928 the factory was completed and ready to operate, however a further 15 months passed before operation began. The exact reasons for this delay remain a mystery although according to some sources the directors had become distrustful of William Tate and of the involvement of Schnurpfeil. The factory eventually began operation on 1 March 1930 in a spirit of high optimism.
Despite the intensive planning, expertise and financial input (a total of £87,714) the glass making plant was destined for failure. Shortly after opening, the specially imported firebricks in the main furnace failed and it was destroyed, resulting in molten glass being spilt over the factory floor. Rumours persisted about what was behind the problems with more than a few accusations pointed in the direction of Schnurpfeil and his German friend, a Mr Giese. Following this disaster new directors were appointed and the factory resumed production with another furnace producing bottles and hollow ware. However this incident placed a burden on the company, heightened by low order numbers. The directors closed down the factory on 26 March 1931.
The building remained empty until 1940 when it was used as a military training facility. The high ceilinged, partially partitioned building was warmed with coke braziers in an attempt to bring some warmth to the cold interior. Soldiers called it "Crystal Palace' and were reported to have written their names in chalk on the walls.
Following the war years, the glassworks building was used as a navy storage facility.
Eventually in 1947, the Southern Cross Glass Company gave up on the possibility of ever reopening and sold their factory to the New Zealand Plywood Company Ltd. The plywood project fell through and the building was subsequently sold to Dominion Industries Ltd. in 1948 who used it for linseed storage and as a grain storage facility. The building was sold to Fletcher Industries Ltd. in 1959 and to the Canterbury Malting Company Ltd. in 1966, New Zealand's main producer of lager malt.
From the late 1960s onwards, the wider site on which the glassworks building stands was developed in a number of ways including: the erection of a weighbridge and pit office in 1968; construction of silos, towers and walkways in 1973-1977; erection of a bulk store in 1977; erection of a grain elevator and new silos in 1999-2000; construction and update of telecommunications facilities mounted on the original factory chimney (1991-2002); and the construction and installation of equipment and fittings for a rail load-out system for grain transportation (1999).
Only minor alterations have been made to the original brick glassworks building. These include the removal of the original rail tracks; alteration to the main entry door in the external north wall; the opening of a door way in the external south wall; the resealing of worn patches in the concrete floor; and a small block work addition to an internal wall to create a narrower door space (1978). An original traveling crane mechanism in the roof of the main room of the brick building still remains in place.
Today, part of the building complex continues to be used primarily as a storage facility, while a significant proportion of the building remains vacant.

	Detail
Notable Features:	Brick façade of the main building; clerestory windows; chimney; original crane mechanism in the roof of the building; subterranean channels.
Condition:	Most elements of the building are still in good condition. The brickwork appears to be almost totally intact. The clerestory windows have been covered over and/or replaced with clear plastic. Many of the arched and rectangular windows to the front of the building have been filled in, whereas ones to the rear remain clear. Roof all appears to be in good condition.
Setting:	The building is set in a large yard, with other industrial buildings to two sides and the road to the other two sides. The setting is of high importance as being the location of one of the only purpose built glassworks complexes in New Zealand.

















