DAIRY & MILK BAR (FORMER), 136A NICHOLSON STREET, BRUNSWICK EAST

Dairy and Milk Bar, 136 Nicholson Street

VHR - HI - PS Yes
Recommended Heritage Protection

Architectural Style  Interwar Period (c.1919-c.1940)
Moderne

History

Thematic context
This place is associated with the following theme/s identified by the City of Moreland Thematic History (2010):

*Theme Nine: Shopping and retailing in Moreland*

*Shopping is a necessary part of the daily life of a community and shops give their customers a sense of continuity and tradition. They are a very visible attribute of Moreland's streetscapes, particularly the major thoroughfares of Sydney Road and Lygon Street. The municipality has a proud and colourful retail heritage that spans from the earliest days of settlement - from small stores to specialist shops, banks, markets, emporiums, and shopping malls and plazas. All of these retail outlets have grown to meet and create shoppers' needs and are a significant part of Moreland's history and*
heritage, lending character and distinctiveness to its streets (Historica 2010:97).

The historic shops built during Moreland's periods of economic prosperity in the late nineteenth century and 1920s and 1930s continue to line the Sydney Road corridor, many with facades still intact. More intact shops stand on street corners tucked away from main thoroughfares, providing clues to former centres of high activity, such as brickyards and other industries that once sustained them. There is also the occasional corner milk bar, a fading phenomenon of the 1950s and earlier, some still with original shop windows, doors and vestiges of original signage (Historica 2010:103)

Suburban development of Brunswick

Brunswick was surveyed in 1839 to provide 16 farming allotments ranging in size from 100 to 300 acres. The allotments each had a frontage to either the Moonee Ponds or Merri Creeks and to a north-south track (now Sydney Road). They were quickly sold in three auctions, mostly to speculators, and re-subdivision began almost immediately. On the west side of Sydney Road James Simpson subdivided his allotment creating Albert (then Carmarthen) and Victoria (then Llandillo) streets. When Thomas Wilkinson purchased the allotment on the opposite side of Sydney Road he extended Albert and Victoria streets. This pattern was repeated many times, and each time the land was divided into smaller and smaller allotments (Context v.1, 1990:10).

The colony of Victoria was expanding rapidly during the 1850s in the wake of the gold rushes and in the twenty years between 1846 and 1865 Brunswick's population grew from 146 to 3000 creating a demand for housing. The sequence of subdivision generally followed transport and access routes. The opening of the railway to Coburg in 1884 and the cable tram along Sydney Road in 1887 providing direct access to the centre of city encouraged the subdivision and development of land along these routes. This process accelerated during the 1880s a time of economic prosperity accompanied by a boom in land prices and in the twenty years from 1865 to the 1880s the population of Brunswick more than tripled to 14,000. Many of the houses built during the boom were cottages and small villas to accommodate the growing number of workers employed in the expanding industries. However, all development was brought to a halt by the economic depression of the 1890s and many of the new estates offered for sale toward the end of the boom remained undeveloped until the early twentieth century (Historica 2010:59-62).

Development recommenced during the early twentieth when houses began to be built on the vacant nineteenth century subdivisions. The development was slow at first, but another boom followed World War I. In 1905 the population had reached 24,000 and by 1928 it had more than doubled to 55,799 (Barnes 1987:64). The rapid growth of Brunswick during the early twentieth century was once again driven by expansion of employment opportunities and improvements to public transport. In the early twentieth century the introduction of duties on imported goods led to a boom in local manufacturing and by 1930 there were 300 factories in Brunswick employing over 6,000 workers (Historica 2010:32).

During this time the nineteenth century subdivisions were re-offered for sale whilst the remaining areas of farming land and large estates in the east and west of Brunswick were carved up to meet the unprecedented demand for housing. By the end of the 1930s the suburban development of Brunswick was almost complete (Context v.1, 1990:12).
Suburban dairies in Melbourne

The following is an edited extract of the contextual history of dairies contained in


Milk, being a perishable commodity, was sourced as close to the consumer as possible before the advent of refrigerated transport, so most of Melbourne's fresh milk supplies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from farms close to the metropolis - areas that now form Melbourne's middle and outer suburbs. As metropolitan Melbourne expanded, swallowing up urban farms, milk was increasingly sourced from further afield. By 1944 over half of Melbourne's daily milk was sent from South Gippsland by train. However, farming persisted on Melbourne's northern outskirts. An area that included the Shires of Whittlesea and Eltham still provided 20.15% of Melbourne's daily milk, and was the second largest supplier. A further 5.33% was provided by 108 farms still operating in the metropolitan area.

Establishing distribution dairies

Early in the twentieth century the supply of pure milk was a public health issue. Suppliers of town milk were required to be registered cow-keepers under the Milk and Dairy Supervision Act 1905, and their farms had to be correctly run. By 1911 some of the larger dairies around Melbourne were installing refrigeration plants. Some farmers on the urban fringe distributed their milk directly to customers, while others sent their milk to distribution dairies. The Milk Supply Act 1922 required Melbourne dairymen to cool their milk, and most dairies used brine cooling plants, which were more effective in keeping milk fresh than the water coolers used on farms.

Dairies delivered milk in bulk to customers residing in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The milk was carried in a large can in a horse-drawn cart, and was ladled into customers' billy cans at the front gate. This was the main system for suburban delivery before pasteurisation and bottling were fully implemented in the 1950s. The perishable nature of milk and the slowness of delivery meant that milk rounds were quite small, probably only a few streets in the vicinity of the dairy, as most dairies had only one or two carts. This meant that small dairies proliferated through Melbourne suburbs.

It seems that some suburban distribution dairies were initially extensions of the activities of dairy farms situated close to the metropolis. Woodmason's Dairy in Malvern was an extension of the farming enterprises of the Woodmason family, who were early settlers in the Malvern district. They still farmed in East Malvern until the mid twentieth century, and presumably supplied milk to their own distribution plant. Dairies such as Woodmason's were known in the trade as producer retailers.

Prior to the 1930s each dairy acted independently, with no regulation of prices or areas of distribution. This apparently disadvantaged farmers, who were at the mercy of retail dairymen. The Milk Board, established in 1932, regulated metropolitan milk supplies and defined areas of milk rounds for each dairy. The Board subsequently cancelled many dairy licences, reducing the number of dairies by about half.

Pasteurisation was introduced to Melbourne in the late 1930s. The Milk Pasteurizing Act 1943 required milk sold in any defined pasteurization area to be obtained from the pasteurisation depot allotted to such area, however, the Act was never fully implemented.
In 1944 the Milk Pasteurization Committee inquired into the situation and recommended a scheme that involved the setting up of a few large regional pasteurisation depots to operate as wholesale distributors of bottled milk. This scheme was opposed by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Milk Distributors Association, which supported the existing system of small dairies, whereby dairymen relied on direct contact with local farms for the quality their supplies. The Association did support the pasteurisation and bottling of all milk supplies, believing this could be done by the small local dairies. However, probably due to the war, it was another decade before any major change was made to the system.

In 1944 Melbourne still had 29 producer retailers, but they were very much in a minority. About half of Melbourne's milk was sourced by the dairies direct from farmers, under Milk Board contracts, the rest came from large country milk depots, most of which were in South Gippsland. The only depot in the vicinity of Melbourne's northern suburbs was at Sunbury. In 1951 the Milk Board broke the nexus between farmer and dairymen, and began purchasing milk from the farmers for resale to the dairies, making dairies, in effect agents of the Milk Board.

In 1944 about 50% of Melbourne's milk was bottled and increasingly was sold direct from milk shops or 'milk bars'. As pasteurization districts were declared across Melbourne the proportion of bottled milk sold gradually increased leading to the closure of most of the small distribution dairies in Melbourne. By the 1970s almost all had gone as milk in bottles and, later, in cartons was sold from milk bars (some of them former dairies) and supermarkets.

**Place history**

Suburban development in the north east of Brunswick commenced during the 'Land Boom' of the late nineteenth century. Following the cessation of development due to the Depression of the 1890s a second wave of building began in the early 1900s, which was followed by another development boom after World War I. The MMBW plans of the early 1900s show the limited development of the area. At that time, there were only four houses in Nicholson Street between Blyth Street and Stewart Street, and very few houses in nearby streets such as Hickford Street. Most of these vacant lots would be built upon in the development booms of the Edwardian and interwar periods and by the early 1930s most of the streets to the west of Nicholson Street were filled with houses (MMBW, SM).

A dairy was established on this site by 1930. The owner was Mrs C. Lazarus, who lived in the adjoining residence with John E. Lazarus, presumably her husband. This was a retail or 'house trade' dairy, where milk that had been processed and bottled elsewhere was available for purchase directly from the owner. As such it was a precursor to the 'milk bars' that would eventually replace all delivery dairies by the post-war period (GG, SM).

A member of the Lazarus still managed the dairy in 1955. However, the dairy use ceased sometime afterward and by 1970 it was the 'Carol Ann Child Minding Centre' (SM).

**Sources**

Barnes, Les (1987)
'Street Names of...
This is a small interwar building of cubic form with a parapet that conceals the hipped roof. The building is very austere and decoration is limited to the incised bands that wrap around the wall corners and the incised panels at the front that contain 'Dairy & Milk Bar' in stylised Art Deco style lettering. There is also a soldier course of thin bricks above the front window and door that wraps around the south side elevation, and a stepped reveal to the front door.

Visible alterations include overpainting of the face brickwork, the replacement of the front window and door, the construction of a front fence.

### Comparative Analysis

Due to increasing regulation in the twentieth century the design and form of dairies evolved from quite simple structures to more substantial (and sometimes, architect-designed) buildings, particularly after the establishment of the Milk Board in 1932 when many dairy licences were cancelled and the number of dairies was reduced by half. Many new 'model' dairies were built in the 1930s as a consequence. This process of rationalization and modernization of premises was not unlike the changes to liquor licensing that resulted in the closure or rebuilding/replacement of hotels at around the same time. Like hotels, the new 'model' dairies often were in the Moderne style, which was viewed as smart and progressive.

Whilst a dairy was established on this site by 1930 the design of the current building suggests that it dates from the mid or later 1930s, as the taut rectilinear form and lack of applied decoration (apart from the signage) all indicate the influence of the Streamlined Moderne style. Although this emerged in the early 1930s, it did not gain widespread application in Melbourne until later in the 1930s (and it would be very surprising if a humble dairy in Brunswick East would be at the vanguard of the emergence of this style in Melbourne). In this building the only concessions to decoration are the incised horizontal bands (a typical element of the style) and the integral signage in distinctive Art Deco style lettering, while the stepped doorway reveal is also characteristic of the style. Surviving signs of this type are rare - this is the only known example in Brunswick. Examples elsewhere include the lettering on the Army Medical Corps Drill Hall in A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, the Sun Theatre in Yarraville, and the former Melbourne Butter Supply Co. at 176-188 Bank Street, South Melbourne.

This is the only known dairy/milk bar in the Streamlined Moderne style in Brunswick.
There is a former corner shop in the Moderne style at 25 Daly Street, Brunswick West (Contributory within HO56 Daly Street precinct). The decorative brickwork to the parapet of this shop demonstrates the influence of Jazz Moderne style, which is far more decorative and characterised by highly stylised geometric details such as zig zags and fountains.

Other comparisons within Brunswick of other types of buildings in the Streamlined Moderne or International style include the Brunswick Fire Station & Flats, 24 Blyth Street (HO26, VHR H0916), the Baby Health Centre at 320 Lygon Street (Individual HO106), and the 'Robin Lodge' flats at 126 Moreland Road (HO331).

Dairies or milk bars as a place type are also very rare in Moreland. Only two examples, both in Coburg, are currently included within the Heritage Overlay. One at 20 O'Hea Street (HO343) is described as a '1920s dairy', but the Hermes record contains no images and the building is not visible from the street. Aerial photographs suggest it is a simple gabled building. The other example at 1 Audley Street (HO115) is an interwar rendered brick building with a parapet, built to the footpath. It retains what appears to be one original shop window, but has otherwise been stripped of most of its original details.

**Statement of Significance**

**What is significant?**

The former Dairy & Milk Bar, constructed c.1935 for Mrs. C. Lazarus, at 136A Nicholson Street, Brunswick East is significant. This is a small interwar building of cubic form with a parapet that conceals the hipped roof. The building is very austere and decoration is limited to the incised bands that wrap around the wall corners and the panels at the front that contain 'Dairy & Milk Bar' in stylised Art Deco style lettering. There is also a soldier course of thin bricks above the front window and door that wraps around the south side elevation, and a stepped reveal to the front door.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

**How is it significant?**

The former Dairy & Milk Bar at 136A Nicholson Street, Brunswick East is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Moreland.

**Why is it significant?**

It is significant as a representative example of the modern dairies/milk bars that emerged in the 1930s after the establishment of the Milk Board in 1932 when many dairy licences were cancelled and the number of dairies was reduced by half and demonstrates the transition from traditional distribution dairies to retail dairies or milk bars. (Criteria A & D)

It has aesthetic significance as a fine example of a late 1930s commercial building in the Streamlined Moderne style. The taut rectilinear form, incised horizontal bands and stepped doorway opening are all typical of this style and the building is especially notable for the fine example of integrated original signage in the Art Deco style. (Criterion E)

**Assessment Against Criteria**
This has been assessed in accordance with the <!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01//EN""http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/strict.dtd"> Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) and the guidelines in the VPP Practice Note Applying the Heritage Overlay using the Hercon criteria.

**Recommendations**

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**Other Recommendations**

Recommended for inclusion in the HO as an individual place. Apply External Paint controls.