

# TOMLINS SIMMIE & CO FLOUR MILL



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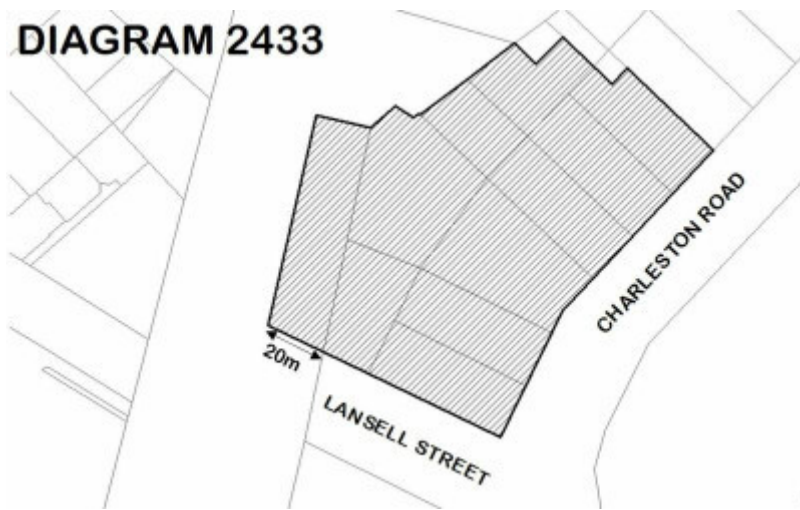


DIAGRAM 2433

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### Location

87 CHARLESTON ROAD BENDIGO, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

### Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2433

### VHR Registration

December 8, 2022

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 5, 2022

#### What is significant?

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill, a five-storey red brick flour mill designed by John Beebe and constructed by George Davey in 1912 with objects integral, an adjoining gas suction room and engine room (c.1929), and a timber stables and lorry shed (1912). The mill building retains significant early features including grain elevators, chutes, hoppers, flywheels, rotating shafts, fireproof doors, internal timber-clad silos, roller mills and an electric

motor.

### How is it significant?

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

## Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

## Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

### Why is it significant?

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill is historically significant for its association with the flour milling industry in Victoria. From the 1830s until the mid-twentieth century, flour milling played a vital role in the health and economy of towns across Victoria. By the 1950s, Victoria was a major international exporter of flour to nations including South Africa, India, and China. Through the retention of key fixtures and machinery, the Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill clearly demonstrates the processes of storing, cleaning, and milling grain. It allows the wheat milling process of the early twentieth century to be better understood than other comparable places in Victoria. It has the additional distinction of being the first electric powered flour mill in Victoria. [Criterion A]

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill is architecturally significant as a fine and highly intact example of a twentieth-century flour mill, built in an advantageous setting on the Bendigo-Swan Hill/Echuca railway line. The flour mill building (constructed in 1912) exhibits one of the most intact mill interiors in Victoria, having retained a wide array of fixtures and objects integral including grain elevators, chutes, hoppers, flywheels, rotating shafts, fireproof doors, internal timber-clad silos, early roller mills and electric motor. The internal layout of the flour mill also reflects the early milling process, with the storage silos concealed behind the windowless portions of the building; grain distribution and cleaning undertaken in the department adjacent to the railway; and the flour milling undertaken in the southern section of the building. Later additions, including the gas suction room and engine room (built c.1929) demonstrate the expanding capabilities of the mill during the early twentieth century. [Criterion D]

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a

determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

## **Permit Exemptions**

The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill.

### **General (includes the 1912 flour mill building, stables and lorry shed, and the 1920s gas suction room and engine room)**

1. Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
2. Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing external services such as plumbing, electrical cabling, surveillance systems, pipes or fire services which does not involve changes in location or scale.
3. Repair to, or removal of items such as antennae; aerials; and air conditioners and associated pipe work, ducting and wiring.
4. Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. The Executive Director must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.
5. Painting of previously painted external and internal surfaces in the same colour, finish and product type provided that preparation or painting does not remove all evidence of earlier paint finishes or schemes. This exemption does not apply to areas where there are specialist paint techniques such as graining, marbling, stencilling, hand-painting, murals or signwriting, or to wallpapered surfaces, or to unpainted, oiled or varnished surfaces.
6. Cleaning including the removal of surface deposits by the use of low-pressure water (to maximum of 300 psi at the surface being cleaned) and neutral detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing with plastic (not wire) brushes.

### **1912 Flour mill building (interior)**

7. Replacement of fire extinguishers in existing locations.

### **1920s Gas suction room**

8. All works contained within the footprint of the gas suction room, providing these works do not impact upon the fabric of the 1912 mill building.

### **Public places and events**

9. The installation and/or erection of temporary elements associated with short term events, providing these temporary elements are not affixed to the fabric of the 1912 mill building or the timber stables. This includes:
- o Temporary (lightweight) structures such as shelters, marquees, tents, stages and the like.
  - o Temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or to secure public safety.
  - o Temporary built or mobile structures, vendor and toilet vans.
  - o Temporary infrastructure, including wayfinding/directional signage, lighting, public address systems, furniture and the like in support of events.
10. Non-structural alterations to all existing promotional elements including flagpoles.

## **Landscape/ outdoor areas**

### **Hard landscaping and services**

11. Subsurface works to existing watering and drainage systems and underground services.
12. Like for like repair and maintenance of existing hard landscaping including carparks, paving, footpaths, and driveways.
13. Removal or replacement of external directional signage provided the size, location and material remains the same.
14. Installation of physical barriers or traps to enable vegetation protection and management of vermin such as rats, mice and possums.
15. Repair, removal and/or replacement of the property boundary wire fence.

### **Gardening, trees and plants**

16. The processes of gardening including mowing, pruning, mulching, fertilising, removal of existing vegetation, replanting of existing garden beds, disease and weed control and maintenance to care for existing plants.
17. Removal of tree seedlings and suckers without the use of herbicides.
18. Removal of environmental and noxious weeds.

### **1912 Stables and lorry shed**

19. All works to the interiors of the stables and lorry shed building.

### **Northern warehouse and late 20th century extension**

20. All works to the interiors of the northern warehouse and its 20th century extension.

### **Administration block (1977), weighbridge (1977), truck wash bay (c.1980s), southern warehouse (c.2005)**

21. All works to the interiors of the above structures.
22. Demolition of the above structures.

### **Ancillary railway land**

23. All permit exemptions listed above.
24. Routine maintenance, repair and access works to service the rail corridor which allow for the safe operation of rail services to occur. This exemption includes the repair, alteration, and replacement of the associated boundary fence.

## Theme

### 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce

Construction dates 1912,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,

Other Names BENDIGO FLOUR MILL, TOMLINS AND SIMMIE'S FLOUR MILL, TOMLINS FLOUR MILL, TOMLINS MILL, FLOUR MILL,

Hermes Number 207162

Property Number

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## History

# Flour mills in Victoria

The earliest flour mills were established in the Port Phillip District (Victoria) shortly after the advent of permanent European settlement in the late 1830s. Most of these early mills were local ('village') establishments, constructed to sell flour within the immediate district as a lack of infrastructure in the young colony prevented the transport of grain over large distances.[\[1\]](#)

Between 1840 and 1900, over 400 flour mills were established across Victoria. Most of these were powered by steam and initially processed grain using millstones, which had been used in the global production of flour for centuries. From the late 1870s, major technological developments in flour milling were introduced to Victoria, including the roller mill and state-of-the-art wheat cleaning machinery. The concurrent expansion of Victoria's railways allowed some of the colony's larger and more conveniently located flour mills to mobilise their product with greater efficiency. Unable to compete in this more capital-intensive environment, many of Victoria's smaller 'village' mills closed.[\[2\]](#)

Although electricity had been used to operate flour mills in America from 1887, most flour mills constructed in Victoria during the early twentieth century continued to be powered by steam.[\[3\]](#) In the years following the First World War, it was common for a large flour mill to be run on combined power sources. Such examples included the WC Thomas and Co. Flour Mill in Newport, which commenced operation in 1903 powered by an Austral-Otis coal-fired steam engine. After extensive remodelling in 1924, the mill replaced its steam engine with a 250-horsepower electric motor.[\[4\]](#) In the Bendigo region, the Water Mill Company at Bridgewater transitioned from water to diesel power in c.1920, before introducing their first electric motor in 1946.[\[5\]](#)

The more adaptable flour mills thrived during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly when grain production peaked in the 1950s. Victoria became a major international exporter of flour at this time, and some of the state's most efficient mills were sending over 60 per cent of their output to nations including the United Kingdom, Indonesia, China and India.[\[6\]](#)

In the 1960s, the loss of these international export markets and a downturn in domestic flour consumption heightened competition between Victoria's remaining flour mills. Through the Flour Millers' Council's 'rehabilitation' scheme, struggling mills were purchased and refitted for other industrial purposes such as stock feed manufacturing. Original milling equipment was typically sold for scrap. By 1986, only five flour mills were operating in Victoria.[\[7\]](#)



# Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill is located on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung clans. The site was developed from 1911 following the purchase of four Crown Allotments on Charleston Road, Bendigo, by the miller Jesse Tomlins and farmers and grain buyers George and John Simmie.<sup>[1]</sup> The future mill site was selected for its convenient location on the primary railway line connected to the wheat belt regions of northern Victoria.

In 1912, the Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill comprised a five and four-storey brick mill building; a single-storey brick office and galvanised iron wheat stores adjoining the northern elevation of the mill building; a free-standing bag room to the south; and a timber structure in the north-east of the site containing stables and a lorry shed. The mill building was designed by the Bendigo architect John Beebe and constructed by George Davey at a cost of £4,954. After its opening, the *Bendigo Independent* noted that the surrounding land was 'tastefully laid out in garden plots with a nice gravelled carriage way', in a similar vein to mills found in England.<sup>[2]</sup> An early plan also shows two residences, enclosed by picket fences, to the north-east of the site on Charleston Road.

Internally, the mill building was organised into three departments: the milling department, facing south; the four-storey wheat cleaning department overlooking the railway line; and a row of timber-clad silo bins facing north, with a capacity of approximately 900 tonnes of wheat. Throughout the mill building, various state-of-the-art electric-powered machinery assisted with the wheat milling process. Much of the primary equipment was manufactured by Messrs Thomas Robinson and Son of Rochdale, England, including a series of double diagonal roller mills and two cyclo-pneumatic separators on the fifth storey of the mill. The latter were lauded by *The Bendigo Advertiser* as a key feature of the mill, representing the latest developments in flour milling. The cyclo-pneumatic separators were also noted as the first of their kind to be installed in the Commonwealth. A 100-horsepower electric motor provided by the Union Electric Supply Co. supplied the entire building, rendering Tomlins Simmie and Co. the first completely electrically-driven mill in Victoria.<sup>[3]</sup> The establishment of a railway siding allowed the mill to compete with metropolitan producers.<sup>[4]</sup>

In its first year of operation, the mill ran for eighteen hours a day and processed up to 1,100 bags (approximately 75 tonnes) of wheat in an eight-hour period, surpassing the capabilities of most other flour mills in Victoria.<sup>[5]</sup> By 1918, the company expanded its operations to metropolitan Melbourne with the acquisition of a second flour mill site in Bridge Road, Richmond.<sup>[6]</sup> A third flour mill, the former premises of Webb and Co (Queen and Williamson Streets, Bendigo) was purchased in 1920.<sup>[7]</sup> Alterations to the Bendigo site at this time included the construction of a property boundary wall adjacent to the railway corridor and the reconfiguration of the mill building's adjoining grain stores.

The site underwent a period of expansion in 1928-29 with the company's acquisition of adjoining Crown Allotments to the north and south, and the construction of more facilities. A vast corrugated iron store was built to the north of the 1912 grain stores. A 1929 oblique aerial also shows a third warehouse to the south of the site bearing the company name, and three dwellings nearby on Charleston Road. During this period of expansion, the mill also began to diversify its power supply. The 100-horsepower electric motor was replaced by a new 200-horsepower Crompton and Parkinson electric motor, and a suction gas engine was installed as a second power source.<sup>[8]</sup> Additional engine rooms were constructed adjoining the eastern and southern elevations of the mill building to accommodate this new technology.

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill produced flour until the company went into voluntary liquidation in 1944. The mill site was hereafter subdivided, and the northernmost portions of the site sold off.<sup>[9]</sup> Under a new name, Tomlins and Simmie Pty Ltd, production temporarily focused on chicken feed and dog de-worming tablets. A brick amenities block was constructed intersecting the northern elevation of the 1912 timber stables at this time.

Following the site's acquisition by the Flour Millers' Council in 1960, the 1912 galvanised iron grain stores were demolished and replaced in the 1970s with a substantial stockfeed mill. Further developments from the 1970s included the construction of an electric substation, a freestanding administration building on Charleston Road, and a weighbridge in the south of the site. Use of the rail siding was discontinued in c.1985. More recent developments included the construction of a truck wash bay (c.1980s) and the construction of a new warehouse to the south of the mill building (2005).

- [1] Jones, L. & P., *The flour mills of Victoria 1840-1990: an historical record*, Flour Millers' Council of Victoria, 1990, p.331.
- [2] *Ibid.*
- [3] Gage, F., 'Wheat into Flour: A Story of Milling', *Gastronomica*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2006, pp.84-92.
- [4] Jones, 1990, p.138.
- [5] *Ibid*, pp.281-288.
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] Ballinger, R., 'Tomlins Simmie & Co Flour Mill History', History Making Pty Ltd, 24 November 2021.
- [1] *Ibid.*
- [2] 'Bendigo Industries', *Bendigo Independent*, 25 October 1913, p.7; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 18 June 1912, p.3.
- [3] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 18 June 1912, p.3.
- [4] Ballinger, 2021.
- [5] 'Bendigo Industries', *Bendigo Independent*, 25 October 1913, p.7.
- [6] *The Argus*, 20 March 1918, p.9.
- [7] Jones, 1990, p.278.
- [8] Ballinger, 2021.
- [9] *The Argus*, 16 February 1944, p.14.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2433

Category: Registered Place, Registered Objects Integral to a Registered Place

Place: Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill

Location: 87 Charleston Road, Bendigo

Municipality: Greater Bendigo City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2433 encompassing all of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 on Title Plan 379219, and part of Allotment 125C Section O at Bendigo, Parish of Sandhurst; and all the registered objects integral to the place which are listed in the inventory held by the Executive Director, being three roller mills, the grain sifting machine, the Crompton-Parkinson electric motor, and the circuit breaker.

8 December 2022

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*