

Richmond N.S Brewing Co. Pty Ltd., 654 Church Street, East Richmond / Melbourne

Background information on the brewery in Richmond/Melbourne where **Mr H W Haengg** was involved as Chief Engineer to the **Nathan Institute**, Zurich, in setting up the brewery between August, 1927 and October, 1930 and at the request of the brewery owners acting as Brewery Manager for a further period, until the Nathan Institute, Zurich, required his services again, as from the end of December, 1930.

Richmond N.S. Brewing Co. Pty Ltd

1928–62

654 Church Street, Richmond

The Kentdale Hop Estate was one of the finest properties in Tasmania. It was located 50 km from Hobart, and the owners, Coulson, Hay & Co., harvested about 30 hectares of finest-quality hops. During 1927 there was a business disagreement with their largest customer, a Melbourne brewery, which cancelled their business and purchased their substantial requirements of hops elsewhere. This was a disastrous loss of business. Resentful of the attitude of the executive authority of big business, Peter Grant Hay announced his intention of starting his own brewery. It was no idle threat. Hay managed to offload his surplus stock of hops to breweries in other states, and with much courage and purpose went about the task of starting a brewery.

To embark on such a programme would surely have been courting disaster, as he had to compete with the powerful Carlton & United Breweries, with its vast resources, popular beers, price-fixing policy and huge chain of tied hotels. Many said that Grant Hay was foolhardy, that he didn't recognise the risks, and they predicted his financial ruin. Hay brushed aside the warnings and went ahead regardless. He contacted Dr Leopold Nathan in Europe, and purchased the right to use, in Victoria, Nathan's world-famous brewing system. Then followed the building and equipping of the Richmond Brewery, a strenuous and nerve-wracking effort that took almost two years, extending from 1927 to 1928.

Land had been acquired in East Richmond, having a frontage to Church Street and adjacent to the Yarra River. Hay was ready to begin construction when the problems started. Neighbourhood residents objected to the development — they didn't want a smelly brewery nearby. That difficulty took time to settle, and at length a contract was let for the excavation of foundations and cellars. After two weeks the contractor complained that the rock was entirely honeycomb, and refused to continue without a price increase. He was promptly released from his contract, and Hay arranged and supervised the excavation himself. More problems followed when Hay started blasting. The properties of surrounding residents were bombarded with rock shrapnel, and the local council threatened to close the works.



With dogged determination and a lot of capital, Grant Hay finally began brewing Richmond Lager and Bitter Beer in 1928. In its infancy, beer output was a meagre 88 dozen bottles per week. But the quality of the beer, and the fact that it had been produced free of any combine, commended the beverage to public taste. Within three years output of beer had grown to 1000 hogsheads per week, and Richmond beer couldn't be produced fast enough.

The Melbourne *Sporting Globe* of 4 March 1931, had favourable comments:

Wherever it goes, Richmond beer receives an enthusiastic welcome and in no instance has the demand been known to abate. Absolute purity, wholesomeness and delicious flavour commend the beverage to a discerning public who 'know a good thing when they taste it'.

The brewery's hops were still grown in Tasmania, with a yield of 875 bales in 1930. Kentish hops, with the characteristic Kent (England) flavour, were in constant demand by the breweries.

The Richmond Brewery was a remarkable success. By 1930 shipments of Richmond Lager were eagerly consumed in Sydney and Brisbane. Exports to India followed, with the bottle labels of Richmond Pilsener, Lager Bitter and Stout showing an elephant's head. Most of the product labels for the domestic market were illustrated with a tiger's head.

The company established sales offices at 86 King Street, Perth (Shaws Ltd, 1931–34); 5 Cliff Street, Fremantle (1935–60); 26 Hunter Street, Sydney (1933–35); and at Sussex Street, Sydney (1935–60).

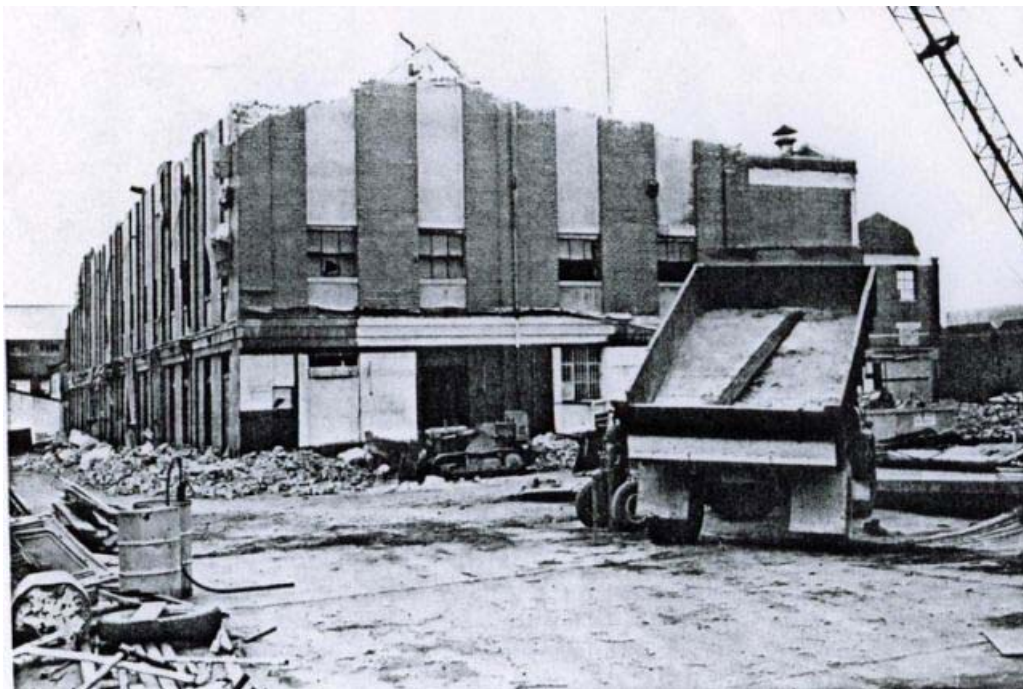
At the time of Grant Hay's death in 1961 the Richmond Brewery held about 6 per cent of the Victorian market, and sales were on the increase.

After negotiation with the heirs to his estate, Carlton & United Breweries purchased the brewery, and closed it on 13 April 1962. Saddened ex-brewery workers received half an hour's free beer at the brewery-owned Prince Alfred Hotel, opposite.

The brewery has since been demolished, but for many long years there were legions of drinkers who would chat with fond memories about the flavour of Richmond beer.

Richmond N.S Brewing Co. Pty Ltd., Melbourne, Australia

Other images and data provided by
Richmond Library Yarra Libraries, 415 Church St, Richmond, 3121 VIC, and the
The Richmond and Burnley Historical Society



The brewery was closed in 1962 and demolished some years later.

References:

http://www.haenggi-basel.ch/PDFs/HWH_NathanInstitute.PDF
http://www.haenggi-basel.ch/PDFs/HWH_1927-1967.pdf

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