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**Old Dandenong**

5 March 2016 · 🌐

Ordish Brick Works, Stud Road, Dandenong, Early 1930s.

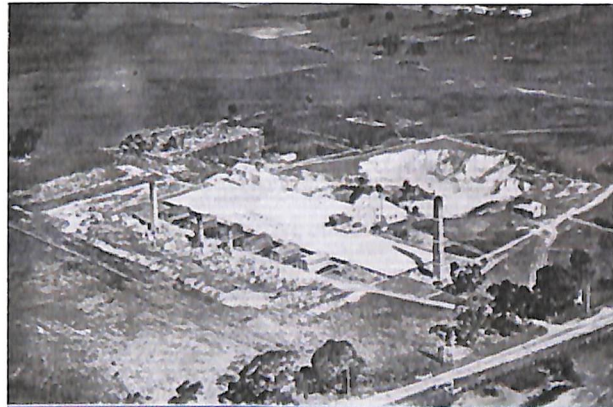
Established by W. P. Ordish, in the early 1890s, and carried on by him successfully for many years. Located east of Stud Road, north of David Street. The fire clay was of the type required for furnaces, at a time when a great many furnaces were being built. However, better clays, capable of withstanding higher temperatures, were later in demand and the Ordish Firebrick Company began importing clay from other areas.

The business was acquired in 1922 by the Ordish Fire Brick Co. Pty. Ltd, having been established in 1894, and under the new management turned into one of the four largest industries giving employment at the time, employing up to thirty men and sending its products to every state and New Zealand.

Possessing what was at the time the largest known deposit of fireclay in the world, covering some 20 acres. . In 1930, the Ordish Firebrick works were described as:

One of Dandenong's valuable assets ... situated in Stud Road, about a mile and a quarter from the town, on 52 acres. The six kilns have each a capacity of 37,000 bricks, and the weekly output is 50,000 bricks and tiles, keeping 30 hands engaged (Weekly Times 12 July 1930).

In 1930 the Ordish company was supplying firebricks to Newport Railway Workshops, the SEC at Yallourn, and gas works and factories in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, according to their own designs. Later there was a demand for firebricks of a different kind of clay and the firm began importing clays from elsewhere, including overseas. The company name changed to Newbold Refractories, which finally ceased operation in 1975.



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### Quarrying of local stone

The Greater Dandenong area was never a major stone quarrying area. However, there were a number of stone quarries in the early days, including one in Wedge Street, one in Yarraman Park (the area bounded by Heatherton, Kirkham and Melbourne Roads), one in the Police Paddocks, behind the Stud Depot. Many local buildings were built of stone quarried locally ('G. F. R.' 1935: 74). A local granite quarry provided the stone for the bridge over the Dandenong Creek, built in 1867.

### Clay pits and brick-making

The Dandenong district, and the Berwick area beyond, were found to have plentiful supplies of clay. Brick-making became one of the main industries of the area, using the local clay. In fact, Dandenong was once, it was said, 'famous for brick making' (quoted Jarvis, 1971:54). Although most of the early buildings were of timber, bricks were used to build the chimneys. One of the early chroniclers has described one instance of local brick making:

*The first bricks, I believe, were made from clay dug out of a hole where now runs the Mile Creek. It was when Mr Lyall was building the homestead at Yarraman Park, in the early '50s... The bricks were needed for the chimneys. This hole was gradually extended by rains, and ... there soon was a succession of holes and deep cracks, until the creek was formed ('G. F. R.' 1935: 78-79).*

The hole referred to was probably where Heatherton Road now crosses the Princess Highway. Other clay holes used for brick-making were along the Princess Highway (Mr Northay); off Pultney Street (Charles Hobb); off McCrae Street (Walter and

William Handley); on the corner of Hutton and Robinson Streets; and a large site near the present railway station (Jarvis, 1971: 53). The site near the railway station was used by the Centennial Brick Works, 1881-1901 (see later section on manufacturing, 3. 3). An important and distinctive source of clay, to the north of Dandenong, exploited by the Ordish Firebrick Company, from about 1900, was described in the *Weekly Times*, 12 July 1930:

With a proved deposit of fire clay covering 20 acres which is now being worked on a face 1300 feet long and 60 feet high. The quantity of clay known to exist without further testing is stated by the State Geological Department to be the largest known deposit of fire clay in the world.

The Ordish company was located east of Stud Road, north of David Street. The fire clay was of the type required for furnaces, at a time when a great many furnaces were being built. However, better clays, capable of withstanding higher temperatures, were later in demand and the Ordish Firebrick Company began importing clay from other areas (Brennan, 1973: 125-126).

Eventually Dandenong's clay pits were used up or no longer needed. Over time, they were filled and recycled for other purposes. However, some of the products of the clay pits and brick works survive, as part of the fabric of Dandenong's oldest buildings.

### Sand pits

The coarse sands of the Springvale-Clayton area proved to be a very suitable ingredient in the making of concrete and eventually the area became one of Victoria's major sources of

concrete sand. This in turn came to create huge environmental problems, with large and dangerous holes and damage to roads.

The quarrying of sand began in the Springvale area in the 1930s, in the vicinity of Clarke Road. Two small companies were operating during the 1940s, but after 1945 found that there was a huge demand for concrete sand and expanded the existing pits. There were five sand pits operating in 1953 along Clarke Road, and further pits in Rowan and Spring Roads. In 1976, 76% of Melbourne's sand requirements

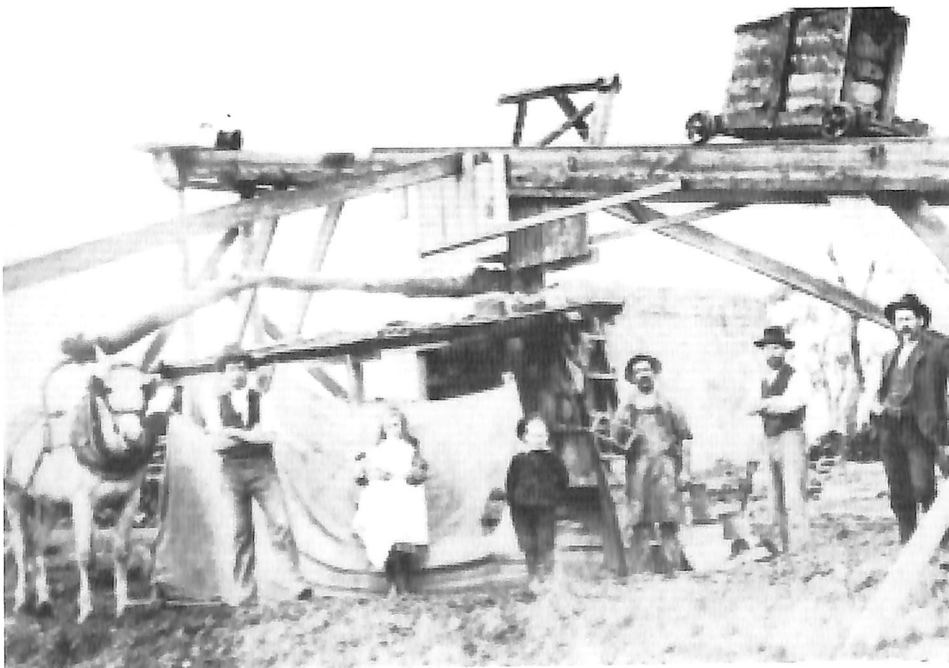


Figure 2. Ordish Firebrick Co 1904 (Brennan)

1915