



National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Bendigo and Region Branch

June 2019 Newsletter

BENDIGO & REGION BRANCH MEETING

MONDAY 24TH JUNE 7.30 PM

BAXTER ROOM SHAMROCK HOTEL

9-23 WILLIAMSON ST BENDIGO

GUEST SPEAKER: LINDSAY JACKSON ON

THE SANDHURST MECHANICS INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY

ALL WELCOME



The Bendigo Mechanics Institute, W H Robinson, 1890, Museums Victoria Collections

Some words from the Branch President

I hope you find some interesting reading in the June newsletter. The June Branch meeting will feature the Sandhurst Mechanics Institute and Free Library, a building that the TAFE College has decided to be surplus to its needs. Along with the Bendigo Law Courts these are two iconic buildings that will need careful consideration for future use. The Branch needs to develop a position. Do you have a view?

The annual Australian Heritage Festival was an outstanding success with over 30 events in our region and hundreds throughout Victoria. I thank all those who worked hard on these events. It was the first public opening of the Ravenswood Shearing Shed. On that visit the Ravenswood Cottages were also viewed and it was very disappointing to see them in such ruin and must be an issue that the Branch will take up with the state government.

The opening of an 1874 miners cottage in Long Gully was a step back in time with a lovely garden and demonstrated how well a weatherboard cottage can survive 145 years. Our thanks go to its owner, Marg Hogan, who graciously welcomed people into her home.

Marg said "I would recommend to anyone looking to buy a home to consider these highly liveable and unique cottages. Affordability was the reason I chose my house initially. But 42 years later I have to say, I have enjoyed the challenges of creating and renovating both my home and garden and would be very sad to leave here."

James Lerk, Darren Wright, Rita Hull, Leigh McKinnon and Jim Evans entertained us at the Shamrock on their favourite historical topics on the Oracle night and Jane Cleary gave us an insightful tour of the Bendigo Botanical Gardens at White Hills. Again thanks to all involved in events. **Feedback and ideas for next year's festival would be most welcomed.**

The following pages explain a few of the issues the Branch is working on.

The Branch needs volunteers to tackle a wide range of heritage issues. It takes time to research issues and advocate to all levels of government. The Branch is only as strong as its participation level. You don't have to be a member of the National Trust to be involved so if you have some time please let me know.

If you are interested in visiting historical homes you are welcome to visit 'Hard Hill', my home in California Gully. I can show you around and fill you in about Branch activities. I am only a phone call away.

Peter Cox,

Branch President, 0447473674

**CONGRATULATIONS TO BENDIGO HISTORIAN JAMES LERK ON BEING
AWARDED THE OAM IN THE QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST**

At the Heritage Festival



A good crowd at "The Oracle"



Committee member Kay tells the history of the Ravenswood Shearing Shed



Near the Ravenswood cottages

Our heritage in danger-Amazing Observatory Comes To Light

An observatory known as the Back Creek/East Bendigo Observatory operated by John Beebe has come to light, as the land it is located on at 55 Condon St Kennington is up for sale with the words “Developers Dream.” Darren Wright says that it is thought the observatory was built around 1880, as the equipment was purchased from James Nelson Jones, who had an observatory located at his business, the Adelaide Brewery, on the corner of Arnold and Lucas Streets, which he disposed of in 1878. Beebe ceased using his observatory in 1914, before he moved to Brisbane.

This building is an important survivor and is representative of the city’s early endeavours into scientific research, and the National Trust believes it should be preserved. It is currently zoned General Residential, with no heritage protection overlay. The existing house on the block was also John Beebe’s. The advertisement for the block makes no mention of the observatory, or the history of the block.

<https://www.domain.com.au/property-profile/55-condon-street-kennington-vic-3550>

A booklet entitled *The Historic Bendigo Observatories of J. Nelson Jones and John Beebe* by Daryl Martin and Wayne Orchiston was published in 1987 by the Astronomical Society of Victoria. It gives further information on the observatory and Beebe’s astronomical work. In their conclusion the authors note that “This building still survives, and could be restored and converted into a small museum commemorating the evolution of astronomy in Bendigo.”

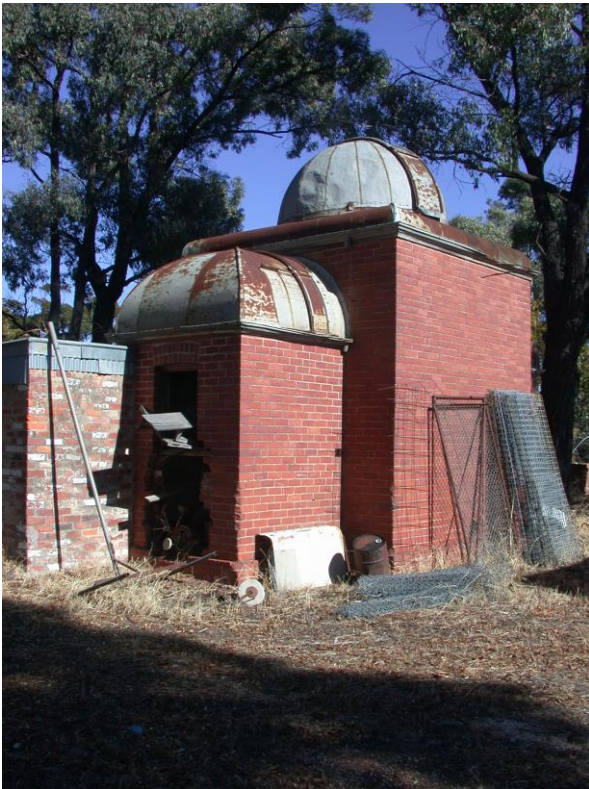
Well known local historian and author Mike Butcher has kindly supplied the following article and images:

JOHN BEEBE’S OBSERVATORY IN CONDON STREET UNDER THREAT OF DEMOLITION

by Mike Butcher



The Observatory at 55 Condon St East Bendigo in 2004



The Observatory at 55 Condon St East Bendigo in 2004



Inside view in 2004

One of Bendigo's less well-known architects of the first part of the 20th century was John Beebe. His brother, William Beebe, was far better known as an architect and was Mayor on two occasions.

Originally stonemasons, John remained in the business of designing and making monuments until he qualified as an architect in 1900. He joined in partnership with Henry Vahland, but that partnership ended with the untimely death of Henry in 1902.

Henry's father, William Vahland, had retired in 1900, but after his son's death, he took Henry's place in the partnership with John Beebe, possibly to support Henry's young widow and family.

By 1910, John Beebe was in sole practice in Bendigo, when he was appointed as architect for the Anglican Diocese. His churches from this period include St Paul's bluestone church in Axedale and St John's in North Bendigo.

John Beebe appears to have had some health problems which took him to Queensland in 1916, where he was offered a job with the Public Works

Department in Brisbane. His wife and family remained in Bendigo. Later, when in private practice, he was responsible for some substantial buildings and the portals of the Hornibrook causeway.

He died on 15 December 1936 and is buried in the Lutwyche cemetery in Brisbane, in an unmarked grave.

One of John Beebe's other interests was astronomy, and he is believed to have purchased the telescope of James Nelson Jones, an early pioneer, who had an observatory at his brewery in Lucan Street, and wrote occasionally about astronomy in the Bendigo Advertiser.

John Beebe was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1917, just after his move to Brisbane. He was a fine mathematician and had no trouble calculating the orbits of comets.



John Beebe in his study, possibly at 55 Condon St.

Just when Jones sold his telescope is not known, but Beebe built this brick observatory to house it. Some bricks have been removed in one place, revealing the cavity construction of the walls, which are otherwise in perfect condition after more than a century. The brick pier on which the telescope was mounted is still in place. Gerard House, when a neighbourhood boy, can remember rotating the sheet-metal dome by winding a handle.

This building is a very rare survivor and an important relic of late 19th century scientific endeavour in Bendigo and should be placed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

The Branch is Heard at Bendigo Council Budget Hearing.

The Branch acknowledged proposed capital works on Council's owned heritage buildings and Council advocating for the expansion of the Bendigo Tramways Workshop and heritage artefacts storage at the Bendigo Regional Archive Centre in Nolan St North Bendigo.

It expressed concern about

- The urgent need for Heritage Studies to protect sites and the review of the Bendigo & Eaglehawk Heritage Study (1993) which is out of date.
- The need for the City to have a Heritage Strategy to support the Council goal of "Embracing our culture and heritage."
- As the state government has refused Amendment C217 to the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme being the Big Hill & Mandurang Valley Landscape Assessment, further action is required to protect this very sensitive environment.
- The Greater Bendigo's Significant Tree Register needs to be incorporated into the Planning Scheme if it is to protect trees.
- The need to better support volunteer groups who hold community historical artefacts.
- Extend the Council's Heritage Advisory Service to encourage new home buyers to consider purchasing homes older than 100 years by providing structural advice as part of the service.

The Council will reply to these issues and their response will be in the next newsletter.

Ravenswood Cottages

As mentioned above those who attended the tour of the Ravenswood Shearing Shed also saw these cottages which are located on Crown Land and in the care of the State Government. The Branch is following up on a course of action which will protect and maintain them. Back about 8 years ago the Heritage Advisory Committee had a tour to the cottages which were then in reasonable condition and protected from the elements of weather. The photograph will shock you that these buildings can be so neglected. The Branch will be interested to hear from people living in the Ravenswood area or others who might be interested in following up on this issue.



Ravenswood cottage in 2012



The same cottage in 2019

Spring Gully Bridge/Culvert

The Branch had a very constructive meeting with Parks Victoria to discuss the protection, restoration and maintenance of this bridge. Alarminglly it is not listed for protection.

It was pleasing to hear that Parks are keen to see the restoration of the bridge and it has welcomed the involvement of the National Trust. Other Park Users are also encouraged to get involved including the many mountain bike riders who use the area. There is a need to organise the different users to contribute to this campaign. Campaigns are often successful when there is a strong partnership between government, community organisations and Park users. The Bendigo Branch of the National Trust is keen to be a member of this partnership. Are you able to contribute.?



The Stone Bridge at Spring Gully

Bannerman Street Heritage Precinct

Over the past ten years a group of residents have been working on issues to protect their neighbourhood heritage. Recently they appeared at VCAT to protect a miner's cottage at 10 Hill St Bendigo.



10 Hill St. Image : Real Estate.com

Why we would like to have a say.

“We were all invited to care about Bendigo mining heritage as far back as 2011 by council. We live in, what is referred to by the Bendigo City Council as the “Bannerman Street Heritage Precinct”, which was one of four precincts declared under the Ironbark Heritage Planning Scheme Amendment C120 in May 2011 and adopted by Council. Before this happened there was a very long period of consultation with community input that we were involved in.”

The Branch is very impressed with the work of this group as it demonstrates that local communities can protect their local heritage as they have challenged inappropriate development applications and have been successful. They are currently waiting on the decision of VCAT on 10 Hill Street.

If you would like to read their submission you can see it here

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-04-Bannerman-Street-Residents-VCAT.pdf>

It is a great guide for others who see the need to object to Council or VCAT. A good read!

Just in- Bannerman Street Residents have been successful at VCAT.

If you have any feedback on any topics in this newsletter we would love to hear from you. Please send your comments or suggestions to

natrustbendigo@gmail.com

Here is an article supplied by our next guest speaker, Lindsay Jackson

Friends of the School of Mines – Who are we?

By Lindsay Jackson

Many readers will know that the Bendigo School of Mines was established in April 1873 evolving from the Sandhurst Mechanics Institute & Free Library. In 1883, a name change saw it become the Bendigo School of Mines and Industries.

Recent times have seen further changes, not only in the name, but also in function and courses offered. Some examples: Bendigo Technical College (BTC) from 1959 and then Bendigo Institute of Technology (BIT), from 1966 until 1976, Bendigo College of Advanced Education (BCAE) from 1976 to 1991 when the institution was named La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria (LTUCNV) From 1994 the affiliation with La Trobe University was formalized the name changed yet again to La Trobe University Bendigo until 2004. Due to further changes from 2004 onwards through to the present day it is the Bendigo Campus of La Trobe University¹.

In 2010 I retired back to Bendigo after 54 years living in Melbourne and in number of overseas locations, and in 2011 attended a past students reunion here in Bendigo - one of a number I had enjoyed over the years. All were memorable but one stands out - the 1973 centenary commemorative dinner, celebrating the 1873 commencement of the School of Mines.

At the 2011 dinner I had the opportunity to speak to a previous RMIT colleague Prof. Robin Williams, who at that point held the position of Director of Alumni and Advancement, operating from the main La Trobe campus at Bundoora. Our main conversation topic was the history of the Bendigo School of Mines, its successor organizations and their ongoing recognition. I felt that this recognition should not only be established/re-established with past students/alumni, but also with citizens at large, sympathetic to tertiary education in Bendigo.

After a meeting with Prof. Williams and his staff at the main La Trobe campus, Bundoora in 2012, the Friends of the School of Mines (FSOM) was established and an executive committee formed, original members being –

Dennis O'Hoy AM, Gerry Noonan (Geotech Founder), Graham Macdonald,

Trevor Phillips, and Lindsay Jackson as Chair.

La Trobe Bundoora provided an additional member as the secretariat.

Soon after the formation of this original group, Dr. Penny Davies was warmly welcomed as an additional committee member.

In recent times Trevor Phillips has served a 2-year term as Chair and additional members added; BRIG (Ret'd) Steven Lee AM and Chris Reid, the current Chair.

Three important aspects of my original concept for the FSOM were –

- (a) To raise funds through the La Trobe Foundation to assist the Bendigo campus by way of equipment purchase and student scholarships/bursaries. To this end three separate funds were established at the outset – The McGillivray fund for equipment and separate funds for the JRV Anderson Scholarship and ET Thompson Bursary respectively. Each of these names honouring greats in the school's history.

Since our commencement in 2012, in excess of \$55,000, mainly by donations, has been raised for these purposes.

- (b) To make known some of the achievements of our members/ past students from BSM and its successors. These have generally been graduates in technical areas and art; obvious historical strengths.
- (c) Provide a means of communication between the university and FSOM members; to this end the original quarterly newsletter, "Quartz Chippings" should be re-established with distribution being electronic (via email) and emanating from the secretariat at the main campus, Bundoora. With Quartz Chippings as the medium, member's stories and professional activities can be easily disseminated. It should be noted that up until the early 1970's, the Graduates Association of the Bendigo Institute of Technology² (GABIT) was active and published a quarterly newsletter, "Quartz Chippings", the last issue under the auspices of GABIT appearing in 1974.

The first issue of the 'new' Quartz Chippings appeared in September 2012; the next issue March 2019 will be edition number 21 in the new format.

A recent, notable occasion for the FSOM was in April, 2013 when we were involved in the 140 years foundation celebrations. I organized a carving of a plaque depicting the well-known Bendigo School of Mines 'Coat of Arms', originally designed by Frederick Tayler in the period 1874 – 1879 while he was employed by the School of Mines as head of the 'School of Design'³.

We presented the plaque to the University with an unveiling ceremony on Sunday 21 April 2013. The photograph shows the late Dr. Ralph Birrell⁴ formally unveiling the plaque in the Heyward Library on the Bendigo Campus.

The weekend of 19, 20, and 21 April 2013 was indeed auspicious with the formal dinner on the Friday evening at the Art gallery, so ably organized by Penny Davies, being a great occasion. This was followed by a Saturday luncheon at Restaurant 1887 (the original octagonal library) and the plaque unveiling on Sunday April 21, the exact anniversary date.

We happily co-exist with the Bendigo Chapter of the La Trobe Alumni. They are known for organizing the excellent series of 'Down Town' lectures at the La Trobe Art Institute in View Street each year.

It may be that with our ageing membership base we will eventually cease to exist, perhaps being subsumed into more general alumni groups. However in the meantime we trust our fundraising and assistance to the university can continue. In particular we have set our sights on celebrating the 150 years birthday in 2023!

Post 2023??????

References

Ref. 1 For an excellent overview of the evolution of the School of Mines into an important university campus, see the book – “FROM THE PADDOCK TO THE AGORA – FIFTY YEARS OF LA TROBE UNIVERSITY” La Trobe University Press, 2017. In particular the chapter by Dr. Penny Davies – ‘AND MORE PADDOCKS a regional perspective’ page 139 et al.

Ref. 2 Prior to GABIT, the past students were represented by the BSMPSA, the Bendigo School of Mines Past Student Association.

Ref. 3 The School of Design, headed by Tayler, was established in 1871 as part of the Sandhurst Mechanics Institute and Free Library.

Ref. 4. Dr. Birrell was the head of the Bendigo Institute of Technology and an important member of the FSOM

Photographs

1. Dr. Ralph Birrell unveiling the Plaque on 21 April. 2013
2. Detail for the Plaque
3. Setting for the Dinner at the Art Gallery, 19 April, 2013
4. A reunion group at the Keech Foundry (photo courtesy James Lerk)





PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR CONCERNS!

Don't forget The National Trust has an interest in industrial and mining heritage, trees, landscapes and gardens as well as buildings! And we don't just concentrate on the Bendigo town area—we include the following areas—Castlemaine Kyneton Maldon Heathcote Maryborough Goornong and Rochester, and we would love to hear from you!

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THE BRANCH'S NEWSLETTER!

We welcome your ideas, contributions and images to the Newsletter. Please let us know of your concerns on heritage issues. We would really welcome "Letters to the Editor". And keep up with the current advocacy issues at the Trust Advocate Blog at

<http://www.trustadvocate.org.au/>

EBAY SHOP STILL NEEDED

The Branch has copies of 'Bendigo at Work,' 'R A Love Goldfields Architect' and 'Post War Portrait' for sale and would like to sell them on line. Is there a member who has an eBay shop that the books could be sold through? Contact Peter 0447473674

Our publications, *Bendigo at Work: an industrial history*, *Post War Portrait: photographs by Allan Doney* and *R A Love: Goldfields Architect* are available at the Tourist Information Centre, Old Post Office, Pall Mall.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past, present and future.

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