

Ballarat Branch of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

In 2020, the Ballarat Branch marked the 60th Anniversary of its formation. The first regional Branch outside Melbourne.

In September 2021 we will recognise this occasion and reflect on the achievements of dedicated members over that time.

The first meeting was on September 22 1960 with 10 members present. Concern was soon expressed regarding the destruction of historical assets with more buildings to be classified and verandahs to be saved. In 1966 a report on cast iron verandahs was published by the Branch.

Move forward to 2015 when Wendy Jacobs led teams of members who photographed all cast iron verandahs, fences etc in the Heritage Overlays of Ballarat. The photos have been indexed and will form a future publication on cast iron designs.

In 1969 the National Trust acquired the Hepburn Graves and in 2010 a conservation Management Plan was initiated. In 2013, the 175th Anniversary of settlement by Captain John Hepburn was recognised by the Branch. In recent years many hours have been spent by a small group of members, with support from the National Trust, developing safe access to the site for the public, clearing debris, and keeping the graves in good condition.

In 1973 a Junior Group was formed for the under 35's who were part of the group who ensured Bakery Hill buildings were adapted to suit the needs of McDonald's and not destroyed. In 1977 the two groups amalgamated.

From 1993-95, the saga of saving the railway gates ended with a win for their retention. 2014 saw a plan for the development of the railway precinct which still raises many concerns for the Branch and the Ballarat community. In 2020, an accident occurred when a train destroyed sections of the gates. Subsequent petitions and strong representations to re-instate the gates may still not save them as the latest decision as of May 2021 is to install boom gates.

In 2009 after much research the Branch produced a small book titled "The Corner Shops of Ballarat." 200 copies were printed and it was thought that if they all sold that would be an amazing achievement. Fast forward to 2021 and approximately 3,000 copies have been sold! Our president Dianne Gow gave many public talks to local service clubs to promote sales.

In April 2010, the inaugural Heritage Awards presentations took place at the Ballarat Mechanics Institute. Up until 2020 they were supported by the City of Ballarat with representation from the National Trust. It is hoped that this event can continue in the future to support sympathetic restoration of Ballarat's Heritage.

2012 saw the re-launch of the 'Bluestone Booklet' which explains the mason's craft and also takes people on a guided walking tour of Bluestone in the Ballarat city area.

Car, bus and walking tours have been a much enjoyed Branch activity for all of the 60 years.

Our life members

An oral history of Branch member Greg Binns was produced in 2009. Greg became an Honorary Life member in 2000 for his outstanding community contribution to Heritage having joined the National Trust in 1966.

2010 Pat Hope received life membership for his lifetime commitment to the preservation of built, environmental and cultural heritage.

In 2016, Anne and Andrew Smail were granted life membership for their services to the National Trust.

In 2020, Gerald Jenzen was the fifth member to receive honorary life membership for his long time commitment to the Branch, especially for his advocacy regarding the railway precinct and the Hepburn Graves.

The Branch is represented on the Avenue of Honour Committee, the Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee, and the Ballarat Botanical Gardens Advisory Committee.

The Branch is proud of its achievements over 60 years and hope that Ballarat's Heritage can be protected and valued for generations to come.