

# History & Heritage



A publication of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)  
Bendigo & Region Branch  
July 2023

Cover story  
Councils Caught in Heritage Conundrum

Next Branch meeting Tuesday 25 July 5.30pm  
Bendigo Library



## Cover Story: Councils Caught in Heritage Conundrum

Over the past 10 years the Victorian State Government has withdrawn funds that in the past supported local councils to employ Heritage Advisors, undertake heritage studies and provide training for planners to better understand the role heritage plays in the life of a community. Now statutory and strategic planners have little understanding of preserving our built environment and many believe that having one example of a particular type of building is enough. They do not understand that each heritage site has particular architectural merit and a different story to tell which builds a picture of our social history. Now other factors are emerging such as a critical demand for housing, population growth and economic development.



Above and right: Some of the great variety of residential styles in Bendigo today. Each home has particular architectural merit and a different story to tell. Image sources given on last page.



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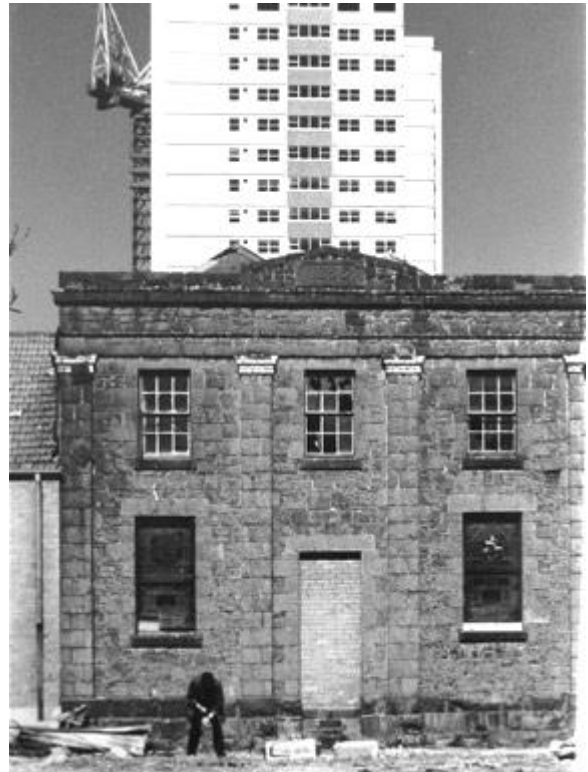
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Cover photograph: Aerial view of Bendigo, c.1934, by Charles Daniel Pratt. Image: State Library of Victoria.

## Councils Caught in Heritage Conundrum cont.

Here is an editorial from *The Age* newspaper on July 1 which further raises the discussion and hopefully stimulates thinking about our past and future:

'As property prices and rent costs rise across greater Melbourne, the neighbourhoods in which we live have become battlegrounds for competing demands. Often the disputes are about development sizes: how big apartment projects should be, and the problems when bulky buildings dominate streetscapes or impinge on existing residents' privacy. Sometimes the demands are about reserving green spaces or providing more parking. But as the housing affordability crisis worsens, one of the most difficult and passionate debates flaring through Melbourne's inner and middle-ring suburbs is about heritage overlays. At its heart are questions about which sites are worth preserving for future generations and what can be redeveloped or demolished to better utilise limited space close to the CBD. The pressures are enormous. Greater Melbourne's population has ballooned almost 50 per cent in the past 20 years to about 5.1 million, forcing successive state governments and local councils to rethink how our cities and neighbourhoods are constructed and connected. Planning Victoria forecasts the city's population will be close to 6.9 million by 2036, putting more pressure on where and how people might live. While the state government's ambitious goal is to add a million more dwellings by 2050, it concedes it has not met its own target of ensuring 70 per cent of housing growth is focused on existing suburbs. Heritage arguments have raged for decades in Melbourne. Sixty years ago, the Bolte government's "slum reclamation" project demolished hundreds of tiny terrace houses in Carlton, Fitzroy and Collingwood to build massive blocks of high-rise Housing Commission apartments. Even those buildings have recently been proposed for heritage listing for the sense of place they offer.



Wesleyan Mission Hall, demolished to make way for Fitzroy's housing commission flats 1960s. Image: Chris Lermanis (*ABC News* report on his exhibition of historic photographs of Fitzroy 10/6/2015)

Debates over heritage have reverberated through the leafy, established suburbs of Camberwell, Hawthorn, Toorak and Armadale, where Boroondara and Stonnington councils have struggled to balance the competing demands of residents, profit-driven developers and state government-imposed planning goals and guidelines. Countless Victorian and Edwardian houses have been bulldozed and replaced with quasi-luxury apartment complexes.

High property prices and more than a decade of near-stagnant wages growth have made it increasingly difficult for young people to afford a property in the inner or middle ring of Melbourne. And many property owners who need to expand living space see benefits in renovating rather than relocating to outer suburbs. But grand renovating ideas can sometimes be problematic and expensive if a property is subject to a heritage overlay. And some councils are finding that imposing heritage overlays, with all the restrictions on expansion and configuration that brings, can generate strident resistance from residents.

To that end, while residents of the south-east might bemoan the loss of their traditional streetscapes, the heritage debate has taken a quite different turn on the other side of the city. After encountering overwhelming opposition, Maribyrnong City Council, recently U-turned on its longstanding plan to impose overlays on about 900 properties in West Footscray that it considered of value for their interwar and post-World War II characteristics. Separately, heritage changes in Hobson's Bay could mean almost 200 properties in Spotswood are subject to restrictions.



## Councils Caught in Heritage Conundrum cont.

Local heritage protection is generally the responsibility of local councils operating under the Planning and Environment Act, but there is no consistency in application across Victoria's 79 councils. In a 2020 report detailing the findings of a two-year review, the state's Heritage Council said many councils lack a proper understanding of their obligations to identify and protect sites of heritage significance. It found heritage matters were "not always a primary consideration or priority" for councils and were often "seen as something 'extra'" to the planning process.

The Heritage Council called for more direction from the state government to help councils understand and comply with their duties – a call echoed by the Legislative Council's environment and planning committee in its interim report on planning protections, tabled last year.

The committee pointed to a lack of funding, expertise and training about heritage inside local councils. It said owners of property protected by a heritage ruling "are unfairly disadvantaged and not adequately supported in relation to heritage obligations and restrictions".

Our great city is constantly evolving. There are those who want to preserve existing properties and traditional streetscapes, and those who see the need to redevelop neighbourhoods. There is danger in sacrificing too much of the character of this city for the sake of development, progress and profit, but halting the renovation plans of large parts of suburbs goes too far in its attempt to do that. The state government must produce a clear outline of Victoria's heritage priorities to give clarity to buyers and councils. Only then can we be confident that the progress we need will not come at the expense of the cityscapes we cherish.'



Left: 'Austerity' style post-war home in West Footscray c1947 - then and now. Example of the economical use of building materials in short supply after WWII. Images: Maribyrnong City Council *West Footscray Inter-war and Post-war Heritage Precinct Study 2021*.

An interesting article by James Lesh, historian, heritage specialist and academic, was published in *The Age* on July 2 - 'People key to heritage fight. Innovative planning could have gone a long way towards protecting our history.' [Click here](#) to read the article.

### Depleting housing stock

*H&H* in its April edition raised the issue that too many period homes are being taken over to be used solely for business activity further depleting housing stock. Councils continue to issue permits for this activity when there are many vacant commercial and retail premises in central business districts everywhere.

What do you think about *The Age* editorial, do people visit and like living in Bendigo because of its historical streetscapes, architecture and stories about its past?

In the 1960s and 70s a similar debate was held and many towns and suburbs were changed for ever. For better or worse? [Email us](#) to let *H&H* know your view.



Example of a once residential dwelling in Hargreaves Street Bendigo, now used as commercial premises. Image: Google maps

## Survey of Branch members and supporters

The Branch last carried out a review of its activities in 2019. During Covid the newsletter, *History & Heritage*, became the main focus of the Branch with raising issues of concern including 'Demolition by Neglect', protecting sites such as *Nanga Gnulle*, the East Bendigo Observatory, the Joss House and Temple etc. *H&H* also looked to the future in raising the Bendigo School of Mines, the Pall Mall Precinct and the Bendigo City Centre Plan. The third task has been to respond to planning applications, making submissions on heritage studies and generally being a voice for heritage.

Your response to the survey will assist the Branch in determining its future and perhaps provide an opportunity for the workload to be shared, new issues to be highlighted and a more invigorated effort to protect our heritage be made in the region.

[Click here](#) to fill in the survey

## A Branch view on 'Demolition by Neglect'

Over the past two years the Branch has been requesting Greater Bendigo Council to intervene where a heritage property is left unsecured and is falling into a state of disrepair. The state government enacted new legislation to give councils more power to protect such properties but the council obtained legal advice which indicated the legislation was only a deterrent and did not give them more power to intervene. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) commissioned the Muratore Report in 2013 on Demolition by Neglect to explore the issue and policy on places in the heritage overlay. The report aims to produce a model methodology and policies for local governments to deal with locally significant properties threatened by neglect.

A key recommendation from this report urged local councils to enact and strengthen their Local Amenity Laws – Enact & Strengthen across all municipalities to govern maintenance of derelict or dilapidated buildings, including maintenance criteria. Combine with greater enforcement powers and sufficient penalties to provide a disincentive. [Click here](#) to read the full report.

Council does have Community Local Laws which could be strengthened to protect properties with a heritage overlay.

Existing Law: Dangerous or unsightly land.

Unless otherwise permitted by a permit issued pursuant to the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme, an owner or occupier of land must ensure that the land in the opinion of an Authorised Officer:- (a) does not constitute a danger to health or property, (b) does not constitute a fire hazard, (c) is not unsightly or detrimental to and does not adversely affect the general amenity of the adjoining land or the neighbourhood by the appearance of (including but not limited to):- (i) stored unregistered motor vehicles; (ii) machinery or any parts thereof; (iii) scrap metal; (iv) second hand timber and or building materials; (v) waste paper; (vi) rags; (vii) bottles; (viii) soil or similar materials; (ix) overgrown vegetation. (d) is not used in any manner that may cause a nuisance or become detrimental to the amenity of the immediate area. PENALTY: Five penalty units, and one penalty unit for each day after a finding of guilt by any Court during which the breach continues.

### An example - 92 Victoria Street Eaglehawk.

This home is in a local heritage overlay and is known locally as Eaglehawk's first built house as Specimen Cottage is known as Bendigo's first built house. It has been vacant for many years; it has been left unsecured and therefore has been vandalised and subject to severe weather conditions. It has lost part of its roof, fittings, walls, windows and the flooring have all been damaged. It is unsafe to enter, a fire hazard and sits in the shopping centre beside the Post Office.



## Branch view on Demolition by Neglect cont.

But still council has not acted. If the above local law was strengthened to include properties in a heritage overlay with clear direction for action, it would provide statutory obligation for council to act.

### Council approves demolition - 49 Napier Street Eaglehawk

At the June Greater Bendigo Council meeting the demolition of 49 Napier Street and a permit for a new medical centre on the site was approved. The house, while in a heritage precinct like 92 Victoria St above, was not individually listed and therefore did not have a citation detailing its history and architectural merit.



Cr Dave Fagg speaking at the meeting said that the decision to demolish was dependent on the 1993 Eaglehawk Bendigo Heritage Study and as the Study was so old and definitions had changed since it was written it was not serving us well. It demonstrates that an update of our heritage studies was needed in this area.

### Bendigo cottage demolition



Doubts over the heritage significance of this brick cottage on the govhub construction site, have allowed for its recent demolition. Doherty's Garage nearby on the same site has unquestioned heritage protection and will be retained. See Tom O'Callaghan's article in the *Bendigo Advertiser* April 20 this year.

The Bendigo cottage at the govhub building site, prior to demolition. Image: *Bendigo Advertiser* 20/4/2023

## Updates

### Pall Mall has many stories to tell

Bendigo has had 123 years' service from Myer with its founder, Sydney Myer, opening the store in Bendigo in 1900. Greater Bendigo Council acknowledged his service and innovative ways of doing business by naming the location beside the Former Bendigo Post Office building 'Sydney Myer Place' off Pall Mall and leading to Rosalind Park.

At the other end of the precinct the Council named a similar location, William Vahland Place, Bendigo's most famous architect and leading citizen who was also a founding member of what is now known as the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank.



The Vahland Fountain has had the graffiti removed but interpretation panels remain blank. Images: Bendigo Branch 2023

Unfortunately, the Myer building is in need of some care and the Vahland Water Fountain, vandalised over 12 months ago, has not been restored to tell its story.



Updates cont.



Above: Myer's store, Pall Mall, Bendigo in 1911, a reminder of the important role the store played in the development of Bendigo. Image source: Darren Wright. Left: The same building today. Image: Bendigo Branch.

Just down the road at the MacGillivray Hall, where the entrance gates and historic fence were hit by a truck during the construction of the new Law Courts, repairs have also have not been completed.

Preserving heritage symbolises respect for past achievements and these places all have wonderful stories to tell.

Fence and gates at the TAFE on McCrae Street only partly restored. Image: Bendigo Branch 2023



### Interpretation Plan for Bendigo Gas Works

As reported in the June issue of *History & Heritage*, a Heritage Permit (P37106) has been issued by Heritage Victoria approving the works requested in a Heritage Protection Plan. Part of that permit includes a requirement for a Heritage Interpretation Plan which includes proposals for the appropriate interpretation of the history of the site.



The Branch has shown a keen interest in the consolidation and restoration works as well as any future uses of the Gas Works site for many years. The most recent was in May this year when the Branch took tours over two weekends of the site. Those tours were very successful with many people turned away due to restriction of numbers allowed on the site – due to OHS concerns.



Industrial beauty of the Gas Works. Images: Bendigo Branch 2023

A formal Interpretation Plan is a big step forward in determining how the site is developed into the future. Interpretation Plans can take a number of forms. However, some fundamental objectives are usually set out that guide decision making and to benchmark progress. The objectives could be a response to the following: physical - creating a destination, engagement – providing a deeper experience for visitors, conceptual – introducing a stronger narrative, commercial – create a

Updates cont.

proposition that is attractive to commercial partners, collaborative – engage with stakeholders and community. The Branch will be available to Council, and any consultant they may engage to undertake the Interpretation Plan. For example, if we conducted tours in the future, we could ask for family members of people who worked at the site to share stories that could inform the Interpretation Plan.

## Where are the National Trust Plaques to be found?

At the June Branch meeting a member asked a question: what is the significance of the National Trust Plaques on historic buildings and where are they located?

Not a lot of information is known about them so a follow up article is required. If you have information or know where some are located, let *H&H* know.

Fun fact:

In New South Wales, if you own a house or building that is heritage listed by the National Trust (NSW), you can apply for a discreet plaque to denote your home's heritage status – at your own cost.



National Trust plaque at Specimen Cottage, Hargreaves Street, Bendigo.  
Image: Bendigo Branch 2023

## Branch Meeting Report

Tuesday June 27 at the Bendigo Library

- Update on Heritage Victoria permit for works at the **Former Bendigo Gas Works**. Condition 10 requires an Options Analysis for the Gas Works to be submitted within two years from the commencement of works. It must present options that are appropriate and sympathetic for the site and ensure its ongoing protection and conservation. Branch to write to Greater Bendigo Council to include the Options Analysis, Success of tours, request that the branch be able to work with council in writing an interpretation of the site, include the social history of the place. The Branch decided to request two more days of tours being in September and November. It was decided to write a brief brochure on the Gas Works and include stories of people who were associated with the Gas Works. The Branch will need to recruit additional guides to share the work load and to investigate ways to manage bookings. There have also been several requests for organisations to attend tours.
- Letter written to Mount Alexander Shire Council expressing the Branch's interest in the redevelopment of the **Castlemaine Camp Reserve**. The Mayor has responded by saying she will circulate the letter to councillors and staff.
- It has now been 12 months since the Branch wrote to Heritage Victoria expressing concern that **Sampson's Cottage** which is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register has fallen into disrepair. At the time of writing, Heritage Victoria reported that it was working on 168 non-compliance reports. It is now dealing with 250 breaches of the Heritage Act and only has two staff members working on compliance. No progress has been made with Sampson's Cottage.
- **Members and supporters survey**. In progress of being formulated with aim of circulating during July. There is a need to increase participation of more people in advocating for heritage places.
- **National Trust Plaques**. It was decided to make a list of buildings displaying the plaques in Greater Bendigo and to obtain the story behind why they were introduced and to further explore the blue plaques which are seen on many buildings throughout the region.



## Branch Meeting Report cont.

- **Yes Referendum.** A letter will be written to the National Trust Victorian headquarters asking if the NT will be taking a position on the national referendum and if branches can be involved in the campaign. NT head office has responded that consultation is currently underway with the NTV's Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Board on how the NTV will address the Voice Referendum, and what guidance can be provided to the Branches in line with the NTV Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Demolition of house with heritage overlay at **49 Napier St Eaglehawk** was granted at Bendigo's recent Council meeting. A new medical centre will be built on the site. There were calls from councillors that the 1993 Eaglehawk Bendigo Heritage Study be updated to reassess sites and write meaningful citations.
- It was requested that an update on the works and ownership of **Specimen Cottage** be reported in *H&H*.
- Helen to follow up on the former **Methodist Church** in Chewton to see if it is protected.
- July *History & Heritage* committee to meet on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 10am at Corner Store Café in View Street
- Next Branch meeting **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July**, 5.30pm, at Bendigo Library (Enter via Hargreaves St). Heritage Conundrum or a Return to 1960s demolitions? Meetings are open to all interested in heritage issues.

## Noel Ridge Remembered



Noel Ridge with harness racing memorabilia  
Image: [The Trots](#)

At last Monday's Heritage Rep Group Meeting news of Noel Ridge's death was shared.

This has come as a shock for many of us and I wanted to acknowledge the amazing work he has done in caring for the Bendigo Harness Racing Memorabilia collection. His passion for harness racing was truly inspiring and on several visits to the collection I was impressed by his vision to create a museum space and share the collection with the broader public. The collection has a great presence on [Victorian Collections](#).

Simone Ewenson, Heritage Collections Officer, Bendigo Art Gallery

The Branch's condolences are extended to Heather and family.

## August Branch Meeting Speaker

James Reade from Bendigo Heritage Attractions has accepted an invitation to speak at the August meeting. He will report on the redevelopment of the Tramways site, what the future of the Bendigo Joss House and Temple might look like, and the operation of the Central Deborah Mine. BHA is the custodian of much of Bendigo's past on behalf of Greater Bendigo Council and its citizens.

## **History & Heritage Branch newsletter - receive, contribute, read past issues**

Everyone has a story that, when combined with others, provides a record of the social history of our region and draws attention to the significance of local built heritage.

The Branch welcomes your ideas, contributions and photographs for the newsletter which is published monthly. The contribution deadline for the August *History & Heritage* will be **Tuesday 1 August 2023**. For previous issues of *History & Heritage* [Click here](#)

To help increase circulation send it to your friends and family or sign up your organisation to receive it. To join the editorial group, contact the Branch President, Peter Cox on 0447 473 674

Email: National Trust of Australia (Vic) Bendigo & Region Branch [Click here](#)

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The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is the state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing 40,000 members across Victoria. [Click here](#) to join.

You can keep up with the current advocacy issues at the Trust Advocate blog [click here](#)

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognize 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.

Images page 2 from: DCK Real Estate; flickr.com; realestate.com; Stayz.com.au; Peter Brown Custom Homes; Urban.com.au

