

History & Heritage

Circulating throughout Bendigo, Eaglehawk, Heathcote, Castlemaine,
Maldon and Kyneton areas

A publication of the National Trust
Bendigo & District Branch. April 2024



**Cover Story: Heritage Permit
conditionally approved for
Bendigo Art Gallery
Redevelopment**



**Next Branch Meeting - Tuesday 23 April 5.30pm Bendigo Library
(enter via Hargreaves Street entrance)
Open to all who are interested in history and heritage**

In this issue:

P 2 & 3. Cover story: Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment

P 4 Revamping heritage post boxes

P 5. Proposed development at Sacred Heart site

P 6. Castlemaine landmark in danger

P 7. Illegal mountain bike tracks

P 8. Correspondence - Bendigo Creek, Vahland Drinking Fountain, Old Law Courts

P 9. Branch Meeting News

P 10. Australian Heritage Festival

P 11. Membership

P 11 Acknowledgement of country; links to past newsletters and contacts

Cover images: Bendigo Art Gallery over the years, including proposed redevelopment. This page: proposed foyer design. Images: Bendigo Art Gallery and Branch.



Cover Story: Heritage Permit conditionally approved for Bendigo Art Gallery Redevelopment - Peter Cox

Heritage Victoria has approved a permit for the redevelopment of the Bendigo Art Gallery but has added a range of conditions which it believes will protect the heritage significance of the site. The permit can be summarised as allowing for the redevelopment to be undertaken together with works approved to Rosalind Park and the Masonic Hall. Works include demolition of the contemporary additions and landscape including tree removal, construction of new additions, implementation of a new landscape scheme and conservation works to the Art Gallery. The project is based on the Architectural Drawing Set by Jackson, Clements Burrows.

Permit conditions include:

- Works to start within two years,
- The engagement of a Heritage Consultant
- Staged works including a Staging Plan with conservation works having to be completed concurrently with the redevelopment.
- Each stage must have a Heritage Protection Plan and an historical archaeological assessment.

The full permit can be [read here](#).

“An important factor in the success of new work is the quality and sensitivity of the design response. New work should respect the context, strength, scale, and character of the original, and should not overpower it. The key to success is carefully considered design that respects and supports the significance of the place.” (Burra Charter Article 22)

The National Trust objected to the proposed redevelopment as it had major concerns including:

- The overwhelming nature of the new development, in size, scale and style, which is inappropriate in the context of the heritage-listed buildings and parklands.
- The necessary conservation works to existing significant buildings are not prioritised as part of this redevelopment.
- The reasonable economic use argument is difficult to justify if this level of spending does not include investment into the existing state-listed heritage places and spaces that give the gallery its prominent site and context.

The permit does reflect changes to some of these issues. However, at this stage, objectors have no detail of the final drawings, and the new plans should be released by Council to allow for public consultation. The National Trust has a role to scrutinize development applications and evaluate the impact they might have on the City's sense of place.

The Branch submits that the proposed new gallery in size, style and scale, would detract from the landmark qualities of the earliest Bendigo Art Gallery building on the site (Bendigo Volunteer Rifles' Orderly Rooms), including important views from View Street and Rosalind Park. Artist impressions of the proposed design indicate that the new development, a monumental concrete style building with minimal articulation, will overwhelm the site, dominating views in the surrounds of State listed heritage buildings, open space and parkland.

View Street provides the Victorian public with one of the finest precincts of 19th century buildings in Victoria. New buildings in this precinct need to be respectful in scale and style, to the existing significant buildings, not compete for attention. The full National Trust submission can be read [here](#).

It needs to be recognised that Heritage Victoria restricts itself to the heritage issues in relation to the redevelopment. The discussion will now widen to other issues. Very few Greater Bendigo residents are aware of the proposed redevelopment and the cost of \$54 million which will be Bendigo's biggest ever capital project. Only about 20% of residents visit the gallery annually. In hindsight the entrance and reception to the gallery could have been better designed in 2014 but more compromises could have been made to reduce the impact in the current plan.

While the Branch appreciates and supports the Council's need to make changes at the site to address operational and capacity issues, the proposed significant growth and change to the gallery is not necessary to fulfil its goals, including the increase for capacity and the claims of diminishing visitor satisfaction.

The 2014 additions to the gallery doubled the exhibition spaces and have served the business and community well, with recognition of the Bendigo Art Gallery as one of the most important galleries in Victoria and Australia. The change towards a large exhibition space, a public lobby and stairwell, increased administration areas, shops and cafes contradicts the current strategies that have been so successful in making the gallery a destination place for tourists and a boon for local hospitality providers and retailers.

The Council can take heart that the Gallery's recent *Elvis Exhibition* was the largest attended, with over 219,000 visitors, 86% of whom came from outside Bendigo. This increase in tourism provided a huge boost to local businesses. The Gallery was able to achieve this success with the spaces currently available, rather than requiring a significantly larger, and more obtrusive construction that impedes the heritage sites surrounding it. The plan now is to demolish much of what was constructed in 2014.

Do you have a view on the redevelopment of the Art Gallery?
[Email](#) it to *H&H*.

Some questions- Are you aware of the proposed plans? How many other projects will miss out on funding as so much is going into one big project? Have you visited major exhibitions in the past and what was your experience of the facility? In your view will the new build impact on the View Street streetscape? Are there other alternatives that the Council could look at? Your comments will be most welcomed.

Artist's impression of the main entrance on View Street. Image: Bendigo Art Gallery



Meet the 'Bushwacker'-turned-restorer revamping heritage post boxes.

Bendigo Advertiser



Mick Slocum at work Image: Bendigo Branch

In the 1970s, [Mick Slocum](#) travelled the world playing music as part of the band The Bushwackers. These days, he travels Victoria to restore heritage post boxes. Mr Slocum, now 75, visited Bendigo on Thursday, March 28 to clean and paint the iconic *Australia Post* pillar box outside the historic 1800s post office at Pall Mall.

"We are lifting a veil on our old heritage," he said. "It's nice to have these things, they're beautifully made and they're 140 years old. There's not a person that's alive today that was around when these things were put up, so they've endured for a very long time."

The project to restore 127 post boxes started 12 months ago in Melbourne, when Mr Slocum noticed a pillar box covered in graffiti and decided to paint it up. *Australia Post* got behind the project, he said, and so he hit the road to travel around regional Victoria and "do up" the boxes.

"I go up to the country, have a bit of lunch, talk to the locals and complete these boxes," he said. "It takes about a day to finish and it's a very worthwhile project. As I do this work, I look up and down the streets and I think what it used to be like say, when Dame Nelly Melba's carriage pulled up here and she sashayed into the *Shamrock Hotel* prior to a show she was doing."

Restored pillar boxes can also be found in Castlemaine, Daylesford and Chewton and about 30 have been done across the state so far. The work has pleased heritage advocates, including National Trust of Australia Bendigo Branch president Peter Cox.

"We love people treasuring history and heritage and doing something about it," Mr Cox said. "It was Mick's initial initiative, but it was good to see *Australia Post* come on board. We need all the big commercial companies to treasure our heritage."

The Bendigo Post Office was built between 1883 and 1887 and was used until 1997. It houses the Visitor Information Centre, which has won numerous tourism awards. The building was listed on the Victorian Heritage Register due to its architectural and aesthetic significance.

Comments:

It's all coming back to me now. There's one behind the Eaglehawk Town Hall. Don't forget the one at Williamson and Galvin too.

Tim.

There is a beautiful letter box on the corner of Mackenzie Street and Short Street that needs some love and attention.

Dorothy.

One of Mick's beautifully finished products. Image: Bendigo Branch



Major build flagged: this \$30m project could grace cathedral grounds.

Bendigo Advertiser

The Catholic Church wants to transform one of Bendigo's most prominent slices of land into a \$30 million tourist landmark and public space. The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst has approached Greater Bendigo's council with plans for the corner of High Street and Short Street, in the shadow of Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The idea includes a new building and landscaping for public open space, the diocese has revealed. It would also include a retail space whose flagship tenant will be the Bendigo Chocolaterie and Ice-Creamery. The company's owners already run similar tourist sites in the Yarra Valley, the surf coast and the Mornington Peninsula, diocese business manager Cameron Fraser said. "They've got a really good understanding of how to make these types of businesses successful so they are a good fit for the site," he said. Others expected to move in include office workers connected with both the diocese and Catholic Education Sandhurst.

Artist impressions released by the diocese show a complex that will be four storeys high at the corner of Short Street and the highway, but stepped down to give clearer views of the Cathedral from other vantage points. Bishop of Sandhurst Shane Mackinlay said the development would enhance the cathedral's status as a cultural lynchpin of the city. "We believe that we've got the right mix, with commercial tenants that support the project and improve the entrance to Bendigo, as well as providing additional services and amenities to the many people who visit the Cathedral each year," he said.

Some consultation sessions have already taken place with the community and more are expected now that the council is considering the plans.



Artist's impressions of the proposed build on the corner of Short and High Streets Image: <https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/>

Editorial comment.

What do you think of this development?

The Branch in the past has advocated for this area along High Street to Golden Square to be prime residential land. It is currently full of empty blocks, car sale yards and poorly designed commercial and retail outlets. With the current housing shortage and the need to boost people living close to the Bendigo CBD, public transport and other services, is there a case that Council should be considering the whole area rather than just one project? Is the survival of the Bendigo CBD important? Recently there has been a series of businesses closing in the CBD that have traded for many years including *Colliers Shoes*, *Sportfirst* and *Thomas Jewellers* among others.

Does Council have the planning policies in place to develop the CBD while at the same time increasing residential development around it?

Castlemaine landmark in danger of being lost

A stone cairn on the western side of the Camp Reserve in Castlemaine, is in danger of losing its significance. According to a plan that has been recently adopted by Mount Alexander Shire Council, the cairn and two concrete seats erected in 1934-5 (pictured) are set to be overwhelmed by a proposed new sports pavilion and netball courts. The cairn marks the site of the commissioners' camp headquarters, where official government in this area began in 1853.



On the east face of the cairn which is built from local granite, a plaque is inscribed as follows:

CENTENARY OF VICTORIA

This cairn marks the site of the Commissioners' Camp Headquarters where official government in this district began. From here, during 1852-3, Chief Commissioner W.H. Wright administered the Goldfields of Victoria. Near here, various government offices were then situated.

Erected 1934-5 C.E. Fleay, Mayor

The words on the plaque not only mark the position of the camp headquarters, they also note the important date when local governance of the Goldfields began. The cairn also records the date when gold was first discovered in Forest Creek as 4th October, 1851. Also, on another plaque on the north side of the cairn are the names of the first municipal councillors, elected on 22nd January, 1856.

On a plaque on the west face of the cairn (adjacent to Gingell Street, Castlemaine) are recorded the names of the citizens of Castlemaine who held important positions at the time. It reads as follows:

First Commissioner
First Warden
First Police Magistrate
Postmaster: 1-4-52
Robert O'Hara Burke

F.A. Powlett
J.E.N. Bull
John Fletcher
F. Fryer
Supt. of Police 1858-60

The house belonging to Robert Burke is across the road, almost opposite, in Gingell Street. This inscription and the words on the Burke and Wills monument on the other side of the valley, in Wills Street, above the end of Mostyn Street, are the only two places in the town which bear the name of the well-known explorer.

This makes this cairn (pictured) almost as important as the well-known 1862 Burke and Wills monument on the eastern side of the town which was paid for by public subscription. Burke's name is inscribed on the monument as one of the famous explorers who died at Coopers Creek in 1861, near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Only one of the men in the expedition party survived. His name was John King. Trevor Scott (Architect)

On April 27 as part of the Australian Heritage Festival (see p.10) you can tour this historic site. [Click here](#) for details and booking.



Illegal mountain bike track building and use in Greater Bendigo National Park and Bendigo Regional Park – impacts on heritage sites - Norm Stimson

According to the “TrailForks” website, there are over 170km of unsanctioned mountain bike tracks developed in the Bendigo area. And, according to the Victorian Mountain Bike Strategy, Bendigo has by far the most in the state. Most of Bendigo’s mountain bike tracks are located in either the Greater Bendigo National Park or Bendigo Regional Park – both under Parks Victoria management.

Many sections of these tracks are themselves illegal. For example, many of the tracks have had native vegetation removal without a planning permit, and without offsets. Many of these tracks also go through and disturb protected heritage sites including historic mining sites. If the sites are on the Victorian Heritage Register a Heritage Victoria permit is required to disturb, or if on the Victorian Heritage Inventory or if considered an archaeological site, a Heritage Victoria “consent” is required.

Parks Victoria as the responsible Public Land Manager appears to be doing very little to address the mountain bike tracks development and use issues. No *apparent* protection is being afforded to any sites. Indeed, Parks Victoria in recent years issued permits for mountain bike events (such as the Bendigo Golden Triangle Epic) on these unauthorized/illegal tracks, without apparently any legal authority to disturb any heritage sites that were traversed.

[Click here](#) to read Norm's full article.



Above: Illegal mountain bike tracks over and through an historic goldfields mining dam wall. Greater Bendigo National Park. Image: Norm Stimson



Left: Illegal mountain bike tracks over historic mining mullock heaps and other disturbances and impacts. Image: Norm Stimson

Correspondence

Bendigo Creek damage: follow up with Council.

Councillor request 2418981 - Bendigo Creek

City of Greater Bendigo: Thank you for your email regarding the damage that has occurred to Bendigo Creek's heritage features. Please see below a response to your queries:

Branch: Is the council aware of both flooding and graffiti damage to the Creek's infrastructure?

COGB: Yes, we are aware of damage to the creek floor at two locations and we are arranging repair works accordingly. The City has not received any recent reports regarding graffiti along Bendigo Creek. We would appreciate if you could please provide details of the location of the graffiti so this matter can be followed up.

Branch: Who has responsibility for the heritage maintenance of the creek's infrastructure as the creek has both state and local heritage overlays?

COGB: Council is responsible for maintaining the creek, including its heritage features.

Branch: Is there a coordinating committee or organisation that is responsible for the whole creek heritage protection and maintenance?

COGB: No, maintenance of the creek's heritage features is Council's responsibility.

Branch: The Branch notes that Council has a 'Reimagining the Bendigo Creek' Project. At what stage is this project at and will it focus on the current state of the infrastructure maintenance?

COGB: Progressive implementation of Reimagining Bendigo Creek will occur over the coming years as these works are largely reliant on external funding. At this stage the focus is on restoring natural and cultural values in key locations in collaboration with DJAARA.



Bendigo creek bed bluestone blocks broken away and washed downstream. 9 Jan 2024. Image: Norm Stimson

Vahland Fountain repairs and cleaning

The Branch wrote to council back in June 2022 about the vandalism of the Vahland Fountain in Pall Mall. While some of the damage has been repaired and cleaning of the fountain has taken place, it has been reported to the Branch that the story in pictures and words has not been reinstalled. The response from the council was that the story was to be re-installed by October 2022.

The re-erection of the monument was undertaken through funding that also included public subscriptions. The fund-raising event occurred in 2015/16, so members are concerned that the vandalism has not been repaired. Is this the case and when can repairs be finalised? A quick response will be much appreciated.



Cleaning has occurred but the historic photos and story has not been reinstalled. Image: Branch 2022

Greater Bendigo Council response:

Council has agreed to check with the Property Services Unit and respond to the Branch as soon as possible.

Bendigo Law Courts

The Branch has been in contact with Courts Victoria about possible use of the building during the Australian Heritage Festival. The response said that it won't be possible for the old court house to be used for any 2024 Festival events. The CV spokesperson said they were committed to finding out who would be an appropriate person for you to discuss the future of the court with and will update the Branch as soon as possible.

It is disappointing not to gain access to the iconic building in Pall Mall for the Festival, but just as significantly, the future of the building is very much unknown, at least to Bendigonians. The Branch took a few pictures recently that begin to show how the building could fall into neglect and disrepair relatively quickly. With the building in such a prominent location, more attention should be given to maintenance.



Evidence of neglect at the Bendigo disused Law Courts on Pall Mall. Images: Branch.

Branch Meeting News - Meeting held 26 March 2024

- Met with owners of Rocky Vale Villa in preparation for Heritage Festival.
- Permit granted for Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment by Heritage Victoria.
- Refurbishment of pillar post boxes will commence in Bendigo on Thursday.
- Letter from Greater Bendigo Council re Bendigo Creek.
- No plan or consultation from Courts Victoria for Former Bendigo Court House.
- Stories for April copy of *History & Heritage*.
- Concern on redevelopment of Castlemaine Camp Reserve and alternative proposals.
- Vahland Fountain still not repaired.
- Volunteers still required for Australian Heritage Festival.

Next meeting Tuesday 23 April 5.30pm Bendigo Library. Enter via Hargreaves Street

You do not have to be a member of the National Trust to attend. Supporters are welcome.



NATIONAL TRUST
AUSTRALIAN
HERITAGE
FESTIVAL

Bendigo and Castlemaine Events

18 April to 18 May

Bookings: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/ahf/vic/>



- April 20 & 28 Bendigo Gas Works Tours
- April 27 Castlemaine Government Camp Tours
- May 5 Open House and Gardens
 - 1876 miner's cottage
 - 1874 miner's cottage
- May 11 Former Bendigo Post Office Tours
- May 12 Rocky Vale Villa



Join the National Trust

Advocate for Preservation! Support! Explore! Enjoy! A National Trust Membership is your ticket to the world, with over 1000 destinations to explore.

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](#)

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 May *History & Heritage* will be **5 May 2024**. 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

Editorial group next meeting. **Wednesday 8 May** 10am Corner Store Café, View Street

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

Telephone: President, Peter Cox 0447 473 674 or mail: c/- 57 Green St. California Gully 3556.

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

To unsubscribe:

You are receiving this email because you are a member of the National Trust of Australia (Vic) or have asked us to send you the newsletter. If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please [email](#) the Bendigo Branch with unsubscribe in the subject line

