

History & Heritage

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

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



**Next Branch Meeting - Tuesday 28 May 5.30pm Bendigo Library
(enter via Hargreaves Street entrance)**

Open to all who are interested in history and heritage

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Cover image: View of Pall Mall from Bridge Street showing Court House and Vahland Drinking Fountain on the right. Shamrock Hotel on left. 1906 postcard Image: State Library Victoria

The National Trust Branch worked closely with Courts Victoria with the construction of the new courts which included the restoration of Specimen Cottage. In fact, since 2018, the Branch has always been told that a community consultation process will be held to determine a use for the Former Courts and this was confirmed again last week in a statement to ABC Central Victorian radio.

The Greater Bendigo Council said this week *"The City of Greater Bendigo will not purchase the heritage building, however remains in discussion with the State Government about ensuring that a positive re-use of the building can be found, so it does not eventually fall into disrepair. The City is interested in and keen to resolve ownership of the whole precinct, which also includes the former Telstra Exchange building and the old post office building."*

Heritage Victoria has also confirmed that it has followed up with the Department of Justice and Community Safety to understand the condition and management of the building, so that we can understand compliance or otherwise with the Heritage Act 2017. The Branch has also requested a response from the Law Institute of Victoria.

Cover Story: Former Bendigo Law Courts

Courts Victoria is challenged by the task of consulting with the Bendigo community over long term options that may be considered for the future use of the Former Bendigo Law Courts building. Alarm bells started ringing for the National Trust when its request to conduct an 'Open Day' during the current Australian Heritage Festival was refused. No one would make a decision with administration staff saying they didn't know who was in charge, indicating that the building was handed back from Courts Victoria to Treasury.

"Bendigo City has one of the highest concentrations of Victorian Heritage Registered properties in the State, and two of Australia's most architecturally distinguished boulevards in Pall Mall and View Street." (Bendigo City Centre Plan 2020) The Former Law Courts play a pivotal role in the precinct.



Court House interiors showing stairwell and a courtroom. Images: Flickr

The Branch acknowledges that the Former Courts building is one that will be difficult to transform. About one third of it is staircases, it has poor access and temperature control will be a challenge. However, there is strength in collaborative partnerships and these challenges can be overcome through consultation with all parts of the community. Governments achieve the best outcomes when they consult and partner with communities. Importantly, it needs to be kept simple in these days of rising cost of living issues. Bendigo has had experience with the transformation of the Bendigo Gaol into the Ulumbarra Theatre.

The depth and richness of Bendigo's history is celebrated through the presence of grand heritage buildings, their settings and streetscapes, and the variety of buildings and activities. The architecture of Bendigo is distinctive and recognisable, reflecting its unique place in the history of Victoria. The "Bendigo style" of architecture manifested itself in the thirty years leading up to World War 1. While the rest of Victoria was suffering through the economic depression of the 1890s, Bendigo continued to prosper and its architecture expressed this in an unrestrained "boom style" built form and street geometry. These complement each other and combine to create a set piece, "city beautiful" or "beaux arts" effect. Australian cities rarely set out to achieve this, and hardly ever deliver. It is what attracts so many visitors to the City.



Court House from Pall Mall. Image: Creative Commons

Bendigo's Former Law Courts are culturally significant as one of Australia's finest nineteenth century public buildings and one of the masterpieces of the Public Works Department of Victoria. Constructed in 1896, the building is an important example of the Second Empire style and the most sophisticated element in a distinctive group of public buildings in Bendigo that are united by their common adoption of this style. It contains a significant collection of historic furniture and fittings, much of which is original to the building. (Cultural Significance Bendigo Law Courts Conservation Plan 1996)

For these reasons the Bendigo community deserves better leadership and urgency in deciding a future for the Former Law Courts.

And further, an ABC report

National Trust says historic Bendigo Law Courts building needs saving from disrepair (ABC Central Victoria by Tyrone Dalton)

- **In short:** Bendigo's old law court is falling into disrepair after Court Services Victoria vacated the building and moved to a new courthouse.
- Court Services Victoria is responsible for maintaining and preserving the historical building.

What's next? The Attorney-General says engagement will take place over the future of the building. The National Trust says a bureaucratic muddle is causing one of Australia's most significant 19th century buildings to fall into disrepair, with no-one in charge of a plan for its future. Community members are finding it difficult to ascertain who is responsible for the historic Bendigo Law Courts buildings, which are 130 years old. Debris, rubbish, and pigeon droppings litter the doorways of the bluestone building, and weeds grow out of cracks.

The 1896 gold rush-era building was retired from court duty last year when a modern court precinct was built. "Slightly sad to say the least," historian James Lerk said. "It has that sort of abandoned look." Mr Lerk took a broom and bucket to the court building to sweep away rubbish, and also pulled out some weeds. He said he had noticed a large number of pigeons gathering on the historic window ledges. "Unfortunately, the defecation from pigeons causes severe damage to the fabric of the building," he said.



James Lerk works at the entrance to courtrooms at the old Bendigo Law Courts. (ABC Central Victoria: Tyrone Dalton)

Editor's comment: James has worked for many years on saving Bendigo's heritage and is at it again.

And from Parliament

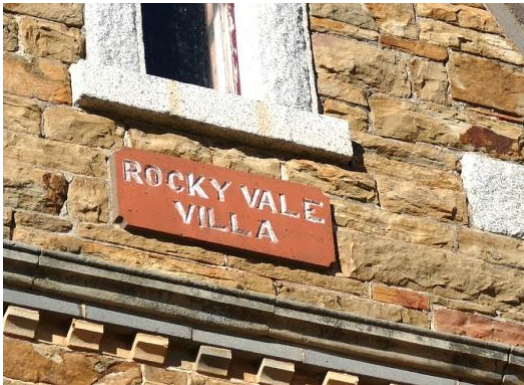
Gaelle Broad, MLC, Northern Victoria — Question, 29th Nov 2023 to the Attorney-General: (593) My question is to the Attorney-General regarding the proposed use of the old Bendigo law courts, which are currently empty. This stunning heritage building was built in the 1890s and is located in the heart of Bendigo. Since the new Bendigo law courts opened, the old law courts have remained vacant, and constituents have raised concerns that this stunning state-owned asset is just wasting away. The state government has been working on designs for the new \$152 million law courts for over three years, but there is still no plan for the old law courts. Locals have suggested a history museum, five-star accommodation and a restaurant, a filming location for a courtroom drama and an extension of Bendigo Senior Secondary College or use by La Trobe University. What is the state government doing to engage with the local community and to ensure that this historic and stunning building is utilised and maintained?

Answer; Answered: 27 February 2024. Courts Services Victoria (CSV) is responsible for the management of the historic Bendigo Magistrates' Court and will continue to manage and maintain the historic building through a staged transition process. The transition process will include the necessary acquittal of heritage requirements to ensure conservation and preservation works are identified, and to inform a consultation process on the future use of the building. The government and CSV are committed to open, collaborative and meaningful engagement with the community to ensure the future use of the historic building is respectful of its contribution to the City of Bendigo and provides value back to the community it served. Thank you for raising these suggestions made by the community. All suggestions from the community are welcomed and will help inform the future use of this historic building.

Jaclyn Symes
MP, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services.



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A good crowd gathered at Rocky Vale Villa - a rare local example of a two-storey Gothic Revival stone house (1870s -1891) by William Beebe snr. Below: Peter Cox (Branch President) and historian Mike Butcher discuss the issues surrounding the building's survival. Images: Bendigo Branch.



Volunteers from the Tourist Information Centre gave guided tours of the Old Post Office (1880s by G W Watson) bringing to life the history of this Bendigo landmark. Images: Bendigo Branch.



Heritage Festival cont. Miners' Cottages

The miners' cottages were a big hit at the festival. Left: The 1874 cottage. Our host opened his beautiful cottage and extensive garden as well as providing a lovely morning tea. Heritage expert Elaine Doling (below) gave an excellent illustrated talk explaining typical characteristics of miners' cottages, materials, styles, locations and occupants. Images: Bendigo Branch



Below right: Host of the 1876 cottage (shown left) Marg Hogan, with historian Dr. Charles Fahey who gave a wonderful talk on Bendigo miners' cottage history. Images: Bendigo Branch

Above: Marg Hogan's 1876 miner's cottage. Thank you so much to Marg who presented us with her beautiful garden and cottage that has been modernised (including solar panels) with sensitivity to its history. It has been lived in continuously for almost 150 years. Right: Thanks to the many volunteers, such as Don and Mary Leversha (pictured) and others, who enabled these events to be run. Images: Bendigo Branch



Vahland Drinking Fountain

The Branch has written to the City regarding the loss of interpretation on the fountain. When the restored fountain was opened in October 2016, it featured images relating to Bendigo's history. These images have been missing for a number of years with no mention from the City as to when or if they will be re-installed. The City may have a reason for not replacing the interpretation panels, perhaps a representative could let the Branch know. This issue was raised in 2020.

For those who aren't familiar with the history of the fountain, here are a few notes:



Vahland fountain pictures. Image: Tripadvisor.com.au



Restored fountain opening, 2016. Image: City of Greater Bendigo facebook.com

The drinking fountain is of historical significance because it was designed by prominent Bendigo architect, William C. Vahland. Vahland and his firm designed and directed the building of many of Bendigo's finest buildings.

The drinking fountain holds further historical significance as William Beebe junior, another prominent Bendigo architect, manufactured the various stone elements of the fountain at the Beebe family stone monumental works in Mitchell Street, Bendigo. The drinking fountain is an early masonry work of Beebe, who had commenced his career as a monumental stonemason in the late 1870s. In addition to this, Thomas James Connelly, a leading

ironmonger with a business located on the corner of Forest Street and High Street in 1853, supplied and fitted the Sugden Pattern Gasolier that provided the lighting.

The drinking fountain was designed to provide water for both humans and animals, is of historical significance as it was erected in Howard Place in 1881 and used until 1906 when the *Discovery of Gold* statue was erected in its place. Parts of the fountain were used elsewhere and in later years stored by the Bendigo council. The drinking fountain is the one of only three nineteenth century Bendigo water features designed by Bendigo architect William C. Vahland; the others are the Cascades in Rosalind Park and the Alexandra Fountain at Charing Cross.

Council responds to Vahland Drinking Foundation request for works

Thank you for taking the time to make an enquiry regarding the story boards and pictures describing the Vahland Fountain. I have been in discussions with other COGB departments regarding reinstating pictures and stories boards that will be more resilient than the previous ones. They were part vandalised from skateboarders and there was an issue of moisture under the Perspex. We have allocated budget and resources for this to occur 24/25. Currently there are some large-scale heritage projects to commence, and our Heritage Advisor is heavily committed to these.

Editorial note: In the April *H&H* the Branch stated it wrote to council in March 2022 with a response that the works will be completed by September 2022.

'All Saints' site development fails at council.

This site is on the corner of MacKenzie and Forest Streets Bendigo, and together with the Former Court House in Pall Mall, appear to be the most talked about heritage sites in the Bendigo CBD. The Branch has printed several stories about the future of All Saints and now with the Bendigo Historical Society almost across the road, and having opened a community museum recently, locals and visitors constantly ask *'what is happening on the All Saints site'*. While the Branch is not saying that this type of proposed development will produce housing stock that might relieve the housing crisis, the marquee site in MacKenzie Street has been an eyesore for too long.

The latest application for a planning permit was submitted to Bendigo Council on 22 April 2024. The application was recommended by Council officers and rejected by Council. One of the key reasons for rejecting the application was *'the proposed development will adversely impact on the heritage significance of the place as it will not provide for an appropriate setting for the significant buildings.'*

Readers of the Branch magazine History & Heritage might note the recent stories regarding the appropriateness of the proposed Bendigo Art Galley development. A key objection from the Branch is around the design of the proposed redevelopment and its impact on the significant buildings in View Street. The main objection to the 'All Saints' development focusses on *the 'adverse impact on the historical significance of the place...'* appears to be very similar to the overall effect of the Art Gallery development on the adjacent significant buildings.

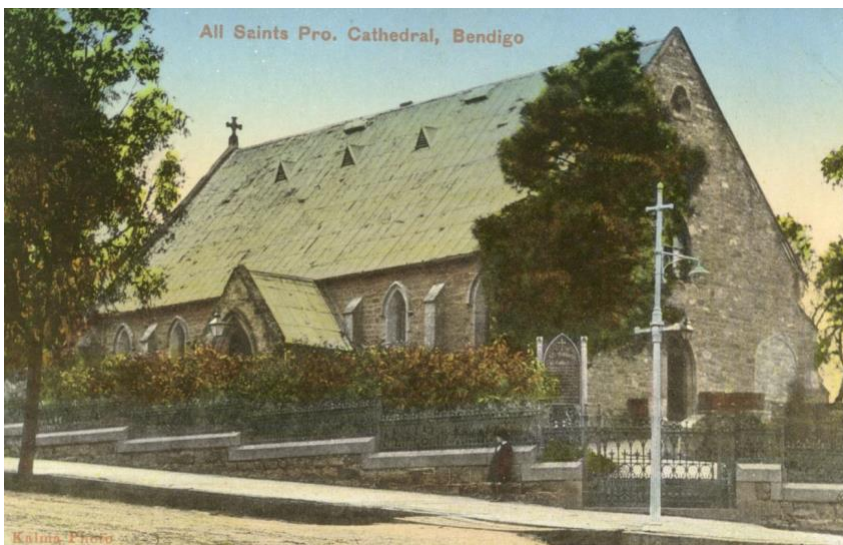
Do you have an opinion on this development application or the broad nature of development in heritage precincts in general? The Branch would love to hear from you.



Artist's impression of the latest development proposal.
Image: *Bendigo Advertiser* 23/04/ 2024



All Saints today, creates an eyesore on the corner of Mackenzie and Forest Streets: Image: Bendigo Branch



All Saints' Pro Cathedral, c1910.
Kalma Photo. Bendigo, Postcard.
Image: courtesy Mike Butcher

Correspondence

Post-war Thematic Environmental History Study - Richie Dean City of Greater Bendigo

New heritage study on Post-war history

The City of Greater Bendigo is undertaking a Post-war Thematic Environmental History and recently engaged Extent Heritage Consultants on the project. Several Post-war sites have come under threat in recent years due to a combination of development pressures and a lack of background information.

The study will focus on the history of development in Greater Bendigo from 1945 to 1980, with less emphasis on development after 1980. The study will help build our understanding of the period's significance in Greater Bendigo and act as an extension of the City's Thematic Environmental History from 2013.



Nanga-Nulle (prior to site redevelopment) is an example of an interesting 1970s mud-brick residence. Architect: Alastair Knox. Image: City of Greater Bendigo

We invite you to attend our in-person Post-war heritage workshop for local historical organisations on Tuesday May 21st at the Bendigo Regional Tennis Centre function rooms at 21-26 Nolan Street between 10am-12pm. We will also be running a workshop for the general public on the same day from 1-3pm.

A media release with the details of the project will go out on Tuesday 30 April 2024 in conjunction with the launch of a 'Post-war Heritage Background Study' page on our [Let's Talk engagement platform](#) where the community is invited

to provide feedback and will be able to identify places on a map for sites that they think are of value or significant examples of the Post-war era. Public engagement opens from Tuesday April 30 to Monday May 27. Feel free to contact me via the details below if you have any questions.

Richie Dean, City of Greater Bendigo

For more information: [Click here](#)

To book a place at the Post-war Heritage Workshop [Click here](#)

Response to Mountain Bike Trails April story - Rimmon Martin

I am writing in response to the article regarding illegal mountain bike trails in the April Newsletter by Norm Stimpson. Please don't take this correspondence as just criticism – rather I am trying to highlight some of the context around the issue and clarifying some of the information presented.

The article is very brief (see Norm Stimpson's [full article here](#)) and as such, leaves out some important context about why there are so many illegal trails around Bendigo. I would like to thank Mr Stimpson in raising the issue of these trails from a heritage perspective but I have some additional information that may assist in any further discussions with Parks Victoria if the National Trust Bendigo is planning to do so.

As way of introduction, my interest in this subject is both as a keen mountain biker (past president of the Bendigo Mountain Bike Club) and as a registered architect that has appreciation of both heritage values through experience in dealing with adaptive reuse and conservation of buildings and an interest in

sustainability – environmental and cultural. I thoroughly enjoy riding my bike in nature either on my own, with friends or with my family for recreation, mental health and for physical fitness.

Proliferation of trails

I am not disputing the proliferation of trails in Bendigo and I find it very frustrating that they keep appearing. These trails are made by individuals and small groups with no regard for the environment and are usually very poorly designed from both a user experience and sustainability point of view. It is possible to create trails that are environmentally sustainable and culturally sensitive.

Trailforks, although somewhat useful is not necessarily accurate in terms of determining how many trails are in a particular area. It is often out of date and I suspect there could be even more trails in the Bendigo Regional and National Parks. The location of the trails is not what makes them illegal as there are mechanisms through the Parks Victoria policies to allow mountain bike trails in both Regional and National Parks. What makes them illegal is that they were put in without permission from the land managers. One of the biggest reasons that there so many illegal trails around Bendigo is the lack of legal, professionally built trails. The Municipality of Bendigo has a single 5km legal mountain bike trail and a significant riding population. This lack of formalised infrastructure is creating the circumstances where a minority feel they need to build their own trails.

Spring Gully Master Plan

The references made to the map on page 6 of the article (see Norm Stimson's [full article here](#)) are disappointing. The map is not just about illegal trails and was produced by World Trail, an internationally recognized trail design company that were engaged to prepare a Master Plan for the Spring Gully area. This master plan was jointly funded by the City of Greater Bendigo and the Bendigo Mountain Bike Club in an effort to address the ongoing issue of illegal trail building and to improve the alignments and the sustainability of the existing illegal trails through a formalization process. The key idea was to reuse existing trail alignments as much as possible to limit the need for further vegetation removal. Significantly, the master plan proposed the closure of a number of existing illegal trails, included a flora and fauna study and a biodiversity assessment which informed the initial trail alignments. Parks Victoria were a key stakeholder involved throughout the master plan process. Both the City and Parks Victoria decided not to endorse the master plan which has stifled any further development of the trails and the illegal trail building continues. I think it's important to include the context of the map, and its original intended purpose when using it in an article like this.

Parks Victoria's responsibility

I strongly agree that Parks Victoria are doing little to manage this issue. Historically, Bendigo Mountain Bike Club has organized working bees to close down some of the illegal trails. This rarely works with most being reopened within a week or two of the working bees. There has been a constant failure to address the issue of the lack of infrastructure and recognition that this will lead to the continuation of illegal trail building in the area. There has been no assessment on the “if we do nothing” scenario by Parks Victoria. I also need to acknowledge that the Golden Triangle Epic has not been held since 2018, largely due to the unreasonable requirements placed in the permit conditions by Parks Victoria regarding trail closures post event. All club events are now hosted on combinations of the 5km legal trail and nearby fire roads.

Gold mining heritage protection?

With regard to the protection of heritage sites, I have to question why we should protect so many examples of historic damage to the environment. Yes, some examples should be protected but I can't help feeling a better approach would be to rehabilitate many of these areas of bush back to their natural state. The ongoing erosion and degradation some of these historic mining sites are causing is not necessarily something I am interested in protecting. This is a complex issue and not one that I want to delve into in this correspondence but I hope it is something that the National Trust is seriously considering.

I encourage the National Trust Bendigo to ask more questions of both Parks Victoria and City of Greater Bendigo regarding how they are addressing the issue of illegal mountain bike trails in the municipality. Personally, I have spent over 10 years advocating for improved infrastructure and do not believe illegal trail building will be reduced in a meaningful way without it. I am more than happy to be contacted for further discussions on the subject.

Rimmon Martin

Rosalind Park Fernery - Brian Westley, City of Greater Bendigo

Thanks for your enquiry on 30th April 2024 regarding the Rosalind Park Fernery.

The three replacement gates cost \$15,000. Our aspiration is to undertake maintenance and renewal works within the Fernery to enable the Fernery to be re-opened to the community.

Unfortunately, at this stage I am unable to provide a timeline. Management of the Fernery is a complex situation, as the City must balance competing legislative

obligations. Both the Grey-Headed Flying Fox and Ibis are protected species and disturbance to their camp is strictly regulated. We are currently working with subject matter experts and State agencies to develop a Site Management Plan for the site.

Brian Westley, City of Greater Bendigo



Rosalind Park Fernery. Image: <https://walkingmaps.com.au/walk/252>

Editor's note: The gates have only recently been installed.

Branch Meeting News - Meeting held 23rd April 2024

- Gas Works tour guides, Elaine & Gary doing a fantastic job with much positive feedback.
- Festival continues with volunteers agreeing to assist.
- That the Branch contribute a donation of \$250 to assist the printing of a self-guided tour map of the Castlemaine Camp Precinct as part of a campaign to save the precinct and keep it intact.
- Contact to be made with the Victorian Law Institute, Council and local people working in the court system re the future of the Former Bendigo Law Courts.
- Progressing heritage issues. Possibility of forming small campaign groups to develop strategies.
- Letter to be written to council raising the issue of signage and how important it is to inform people. Explain Bendigo Creek smell in Rosalind Park as coming from the underground mines and not the creek itself. Explain the sculpture located on the corner of Mitchell St & Bath Lane. Others can be raised.
- Old Law Courts to be cover story in May *H&H*.
- NT Winter Magazine article to be on the Former Law Courts.
- Next Branch meeting is 25th June. Editorial group coffee 5th June.

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 June *History & Heritage* will be **June 3rd 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 5th June** 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

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