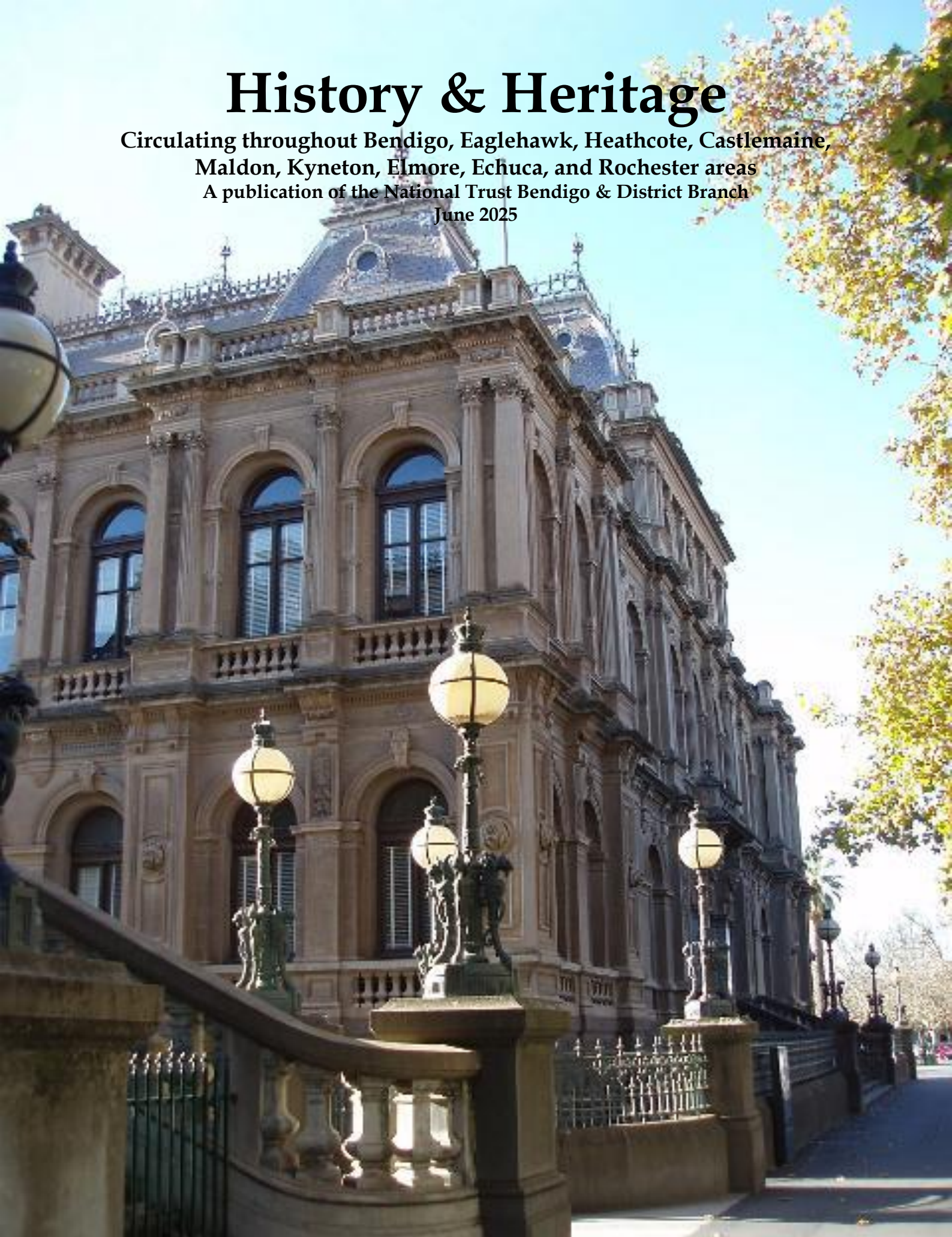


History & Heritage

Circulating throughout Bendigo, Eaglehawk, Heathcote, Castlemaine,
Maldon, Kyneton, Elmore, Echuca, and Rochester areas

A publication of the National Trust Bendigo & District Branch

June 2025



Next Branch Meeting Tuesday 24th June 5.30pm Bendigo Library (enter via Hargreaves Street door)
Members and supporters welcome.

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Cover image: Former Bendigo Law Courts
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Cover Story

Comments on future use of Former Bendigo Law Courts

During the 2025 Australian Heritage Festival the Branch conducted tour events and a play reading at the Former Bendigo Law Courts in preparation to undertake a much wider community survey. 400 people participated in the events and while not all filled in a response, it has given the Branch an idea of some questions to ask the wider community. Most were very impressed with the architecture of the building and felt it must be preserved as a priority.

See the next page for survey results.

The tour experience

A general comment - "It is really hard to believe that we have to campaign to protect such a masterpiece."

Visitors expressed gratitude for seeing such a building which symbolises an important aspect of our history, its wonderful architecture, an artisan approach for depicting power and authority.

They visited the three major courts, the stairwells and some smaller rooms of which there are many. The building retains most of its original furniture with elaborate plaster mouldings in the French and Italian tradition, former unique gas light fittings, all the architraves, doors and furniture are made from highly polished Australian Cedar, stain glass windows depicting images and notable names. The fireplaces were designed and executed by prominent Australian artist Walter Withers. Everywhere you looked there was workmanship of immense beauty.

It appears that about a third of the building consists of outstanding staircases and huge ceiling spaces but present the problem of modern temperature control, easy movement and entry. With so many rooms it provides an opportunity for many uses. However, the tours have opened the doors for discussion with the next step for the Branch, along with other interested organisations, to conduct regular tours and to conduct a survey to widen the discussion and perhaps start a 'Friend's Group'.

Any proposal at this stage needs to be modest with regular public access. It is of concern that the State Government has committed to a \$21 million contribution to the redevelopment to the Bendigo Art Gallery as it leaves many urgent projects to rejuvenate other historical sites unfunded.

What do you think? Would you be interested in joining a 'Friends' group to support the Former Bendigo Law Courts? Contribute your ideas to H & H. nattrustbendigo@gmail.com

Public responses regarding possible uses for Bendigo's Former Law Courts

Suggested Use	Response	Types of uses
Cultural and History Museum with variety of exhibition spaces.	48%	History tours, exhibition spaces for art, photography and artifacts, artist work spaces, Australian Museum of Justice, Legal History of Victoria, open days, self-guided tours, multi-use arts centre, expand History House (Bendigo Historical Society) into building, display artifacts of Bendigo history, research areas, reference area on gold, study areas, study of architecture, science and geology, Trade Museum, local artist areas.
Theatre and Performances	16%	Theatre performances in courts, plays on historical cases, book launches and authors, guest speakers, debates, musical events and concerts, mock trials for young offenders, how the legal system works, legal services.
Hospitality	16%	The building needs food, drinks, relaxing space, private hire facilities for special events, a café, high teas speciality venue.
Hire out spaces	15%	Weddings birthdays and other celebrations, co-working spaces, lecture theatres, ballroom formals, training rooms, visitor information centre, film and TV productions, a Bendigo Orienteers sprint, bookshop, creative art spaces, photographic studio, indoor plant studio.
Apartments or hotel	5%	Boutique hotel experience, housing options.
Summary/6 options	100%	Conduct community survey with incentive to participate such as holiday accommodation package.

Former Law Courts building in new exhibition - July 2025

The next exhibition by the Bendigo Historical Society at *History House*, 11 MacKenzie Street Bendigo, is called ***Legal Eagles on the Goldfields***. The exhibition will highlight practitioners such as Joseph Panton, Lachlan McLachlan, John Quick, Anna Brennan, Alice Jones and many others, using objects, images and multimedia. Significant records include the Sandhurst Police Court record of 1857, which show 'crimes and punishment' of the time, including some uneven treatment of Chinese miners. The exhibition will also highlight Bendigo's significant Former Law Courts building in Pall Mall. This building, such a key element in Bendigo history and heritage, is undergoing renewed interest regarding its future use and this exhibition intends to promote more community discussion about a satisfactory outcome for one of our architectural gems.



**BottledSnail Production's
rehearsed play reading of
Shakespeare's "Winter's
Tale" at Former Bendigo
Law Courts**



BottledSnail Productions is a not for profit performing arts company providing a creative outlet to Melbourne's legal profession. One of the company's ongoing projects is "Shakespeare in the Supreme" where members of the community perform rehearsed readings of Shakespeare's plays in the Law Library in the Supreme Court of Victoria.

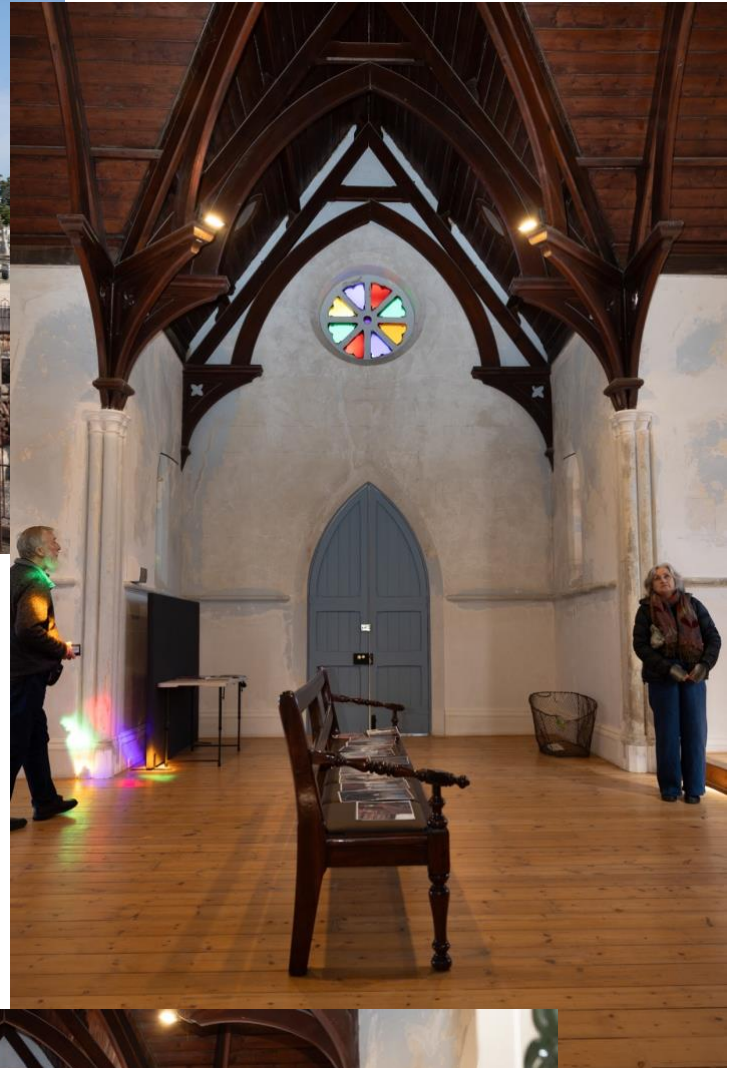
On Saturday May 17th they performed here in Bendigo in our beautiful Former Law Courts.



**Bendigo Cemetery Chapel -
an 1870s Gothic Revival
mortuary chapel**

The Chapel was originally built as a mortuary chapel and was constructed using rock-faced granite from Harcourt. In the past, Mortuary Chapels were often located in a cemetery where confined bodies briefly lay before burial.....Restoration of the chapel, in consultation with Dr. Gary Hill from [Minerva Heritage](#), included re-pointing, step repairs, reinstatement of decorative render, roof repairs, removal of salt deposits, restoration of interior render, entrance doors and ceiling restoration. ([Remembrance Parks Central Victoria](#))

It was a real treat to be able to step inside this beautiful little chapel opened for the Heritage Festival. Thanks Gary.



Do you have a significant heritage site in your town or suburb?

Readers of *History & Heritage* are encouraged to seek out heritage buildings in their town or suburb, perhaps take a photo on your phone and to make a comment on its general condition and send it *H&H*. You could also search the address of the site to seek further information. Send to natrustbendigo@gmail.com

What do you know about the Tomlins Simmie & Co Flour Mill?



Tomlins Simmie & Co Flour Mill, 87 Charlston Rd Bendigo. Photo: City of Greater Bendigo

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill, a five-storey red brick flour mill designed by John Beebe and constructed by George Davey in 1912 with objects integral, an adjoining gas suction room and engine room (c.1929), and a timber stables and lorry shed (1912). The mill building retains significant early features including grain elevators, chutes, hoppers, flywheels, rotating shafts, fireproof doors, internal timber-clad silos, roller mills and an electric motor. (Victorian Heritage Register H2433)

The July edition will feature the flour mill and its current story.

Update on the Bendigo Art Gallery Redevelopment

Bendigo Branch letter to Council

I write on behalf of the National Trust Bendigo Branch to further raise the issue of the Bendigo Art Gallery Redevelopment. The Branch has been told on a number of occasions over the past fifteen months that there would be a community event explaining the redevelopment, its plans, financing and future program. Branch members look forward to attending but have no indication of when it will be held.

As you are aware the Branch is very concerned that the size, bulk and location of the newbuild will severely impact the existing 19th Century Victorian State listed heritage buildings and the View Street heritage streetscape. It could also adversely influence the final decision to be made by UNESCO in determining whether Greater Bendigo has the credentials to be listed as part of a Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Site. The cultural and economic outcomes were highlighted as reasons for the need for the redevelopment in the media release from Council on 22nd May 2025.

The Gallery Director said: “The redevelopment will establish the Gallery as an international, world-class cultural facility for future generations. ‘The People’s Gallery’ – a place that empowers the Bendigo and broader Victorian community through accessibility, education, shared economic benefit and celebrating Traditional Owners.”

The City’s Chief Executive Officer said: “This news is also expected to encourage greater private sector investment in our city centre. Business owners can now be confident about the project’s future, factoring this into their current operations or potentially plan for other complementary business ventures.”

These are a few questions raised at the most recent Branch meeting:

1. Is there a publicly available written Business Case to support the above statements?
2. With an expanded gallery operation, will more recurrent expenditure from CoGB be required in its annual budget?
3. What other types of businesses have been highlighted in the business case that might benefit from the development?

The Branch has found it difficult to source information on the annual visitor numbers attending the Gallery over the past ten years and the City’s financial contribution to its operating costs for the same period. There also seems to be some contradicting numbers of general visitors to Greater Bendigo. On the one hand recent figures released by Council show some 2.5 million people visit Greater Bendigo annually while the Gallery attracts between 130,000 to 150,000. Could these figures be explained along with a copy of the Business Case?

It was most disappointing to receive an email from the Director, Strategy & Growth, dated May 22nd 2025 after the Branch had raised concerns about the lack of transparency as there was no information on the Council website in March 2024 informing Greater Bendigo of the plans:

“During a review of the online materials late yesterday, we identified the uploaded plans were the original town planning application set rather than the version developed during the planning process and subsequently advertised.

I apologise for the confusion this may have inadvertently caused, and the webpage has been amended. The updated set (dated 11/08/23) confirms the 2014 buildings will be retained.”

In looking at the updated plans, the Branch still believes that some works completed in 2014 are being demolished. The Branch requests a walk-thru of the Gallery with the architects so the plans can be explained in full to members. Given the error, members would appreciate some support in better understanding the plans which it has requested over the past 15 months. The Branch believes that transparency through public consultation is vital for a project that will be Greater Bendigo’s largest capital works ever.

Thank you for considering the above requests. A prompt response will be much appreciated.



Trainees restore Broken Hill's *Pirie Building* to learn heritage conservation skills

Could a similar project happen in Bendigo?

([Original article on ABC news](#) by Katherine Spackman and Oliver Brown)



The restored Pirie Building in Broken Hill. Photo: ABC news

Remote and regional communities are upskilling residents in heritage trades to help make over key buildings. A project that restored a Broken Hill landmark while teaching people building conservation has won a prestigious state heritage award. Heritage advisor Liz Vines says the project could be used as a model for other conservation works.

Kamilaroi man Mark Curry vowed to turn his life around six years ago and made a fresh start in Wilcannia, in far west New South Wales. Mr Curry, 42, had spent several years in and out of jail and said moving to the far west was the best decision. Last year, he attended a Heritage Training Program in Broken Hill to learn practical conservation and restoration skills on one of the city's key heritage buildings, the *Pirie Building*. "In those two weeks I was taught a lot of beautiful aspects of how to do [it] and partake in skills of stonemasonry and other work," he said. "Anything I was unsure of, they were quite understanding of having a person with not much knowledge and understanding."



Keith McAllister's company worked on restoring buildings in Wilcannia, such as the post office. (Supplied: Bernadette Drabsch)

Mr Curry was one of 15 people who attended the training in Broken Hill delivered by leading stonemason trainer Keith McAllister. Although based in Adelaide, Mr McAllister's company has restored many buildings in the far west, including sandstone buildings in Wilcannia. "We worked on the Wilcannia Post Office, Council Chambers, and the Bond Store all along the [Darling] River," he said.

Since establishing his registered training organisation 15 years ago, Mr McAllister said he had trained more than 2,000 participants in NSW, South Australia and Western Australia. He said he was approached by Broken Hill's heritage advisor Liz Vines to run a training program to restore the *Pirie Building* in Argent Street. The rich mining history is expressed in the many substantial heritage buildings like the 1891 Pirie Building, which was a key part of the early development of commercial businesses.

"The first stage was to tackle the facades of the building ... [which required] scaffolding and that was undertaking all the stone restoration work, the rendering and timber conservation of the windows," Mr McAllister said.



The Trades Hall in Broken Hill has not changed much since it was first built nearly 120 years ago. (ABC Broken Hill: Oliver Brown)



Liz Vines is passionate about preserving outback heritage. (ABC Broken Hill: Bill Ormonde)

Trainees helped restore the *Pirie Building* in Broken Hill. Stage one was completed in a week, and stage two in two weeks. "Although I delivered the technical know-how in the teaching program, the physical conservation and restoration works were largely undertaken by the participants" he said.

As the city's heritage advisor, Ms Vines had long wanted to restore the *Pirie Building*, but costs were prohibitive and skills in the outback unobtainable. She knew of Mr McAllister's experience and success in running training programs.



Trainees helped restore the Pirie Building on Argent Street in Broken Hill. (Supplied: Liz Vines)

"These building projects, particularly in regional and outback towns, cost a lot of money, and we proposed a training program to conserve the building. The use of participants' labour made it affordable," she said.

Ms Vines said the project would have cost between \$850,000 to \$900,000, but by running a training program, it was only a third of the cost. The project received \$231,000 from a National Heritage Federal Government Grant and \$66,000 from the owner of the building.



The construction of the new verandah takes place on the Pirie Building. (Supplied: Liz Vines)

Can a similar project be achieved in Bendigo?

City of Greater Bendigo Built Heritage Advisor (and Building Designer) Janita Norman recently presented a talk sponsored by COGB at the recent Heritage Festival. A meeting with Janita to discuss the Broken Hill project could be beneficial in getting something happening for one of our neglected heritage buildings in Bendigo. I'm sure there are still local trades who know the techniques to restore these buildings.

The Former Gillies Factory - idle for many years. What is to be done?

A comment from Phil



The Former Gillies Factory close to the Bendigo Railway Station. Photo: Bendigo Branch

The old Gillies Factory site is in an appallingly dilapidated state and apart from the front and two side walls would be almost impossible to restore to a reasonably functional structure. The old factory along with some other equally dilapidated buildings sit on a very large parcel of land within the Bendigo CBD and are within easy walking distance from the Bendigo railway station and as such make an ideal infill housing site something the Bendigo council is keen to promote. The obstacle to this suggestion is the heritage listing of the Gillies factory and it may be worth pursuing the idea of reviewing the site to allow development of the site. As it stands now the buildings will only deteriorate further leading to demolition in the future and the heritage listing is a deterrent to possible developers.

What do you think?

Sidney Myer's grandson urges retail giant to refurbish Bendigo store

By Emile Pavlich, Anna McGuinness and Sarah Lawrence (ABC Central Victoria)

Sidney Myer's grandson has urged the Myer Group to refurbish its original store in Bendigo. Residents say the exterior of Myer's 125-year-old Bendigo store is crumbling. The city's chamber of commerce is also lobbying for the store to be renovated. As the Myer retail chain faces a major shake-up under businessman Solomon Lew, residents in the regional city where Myer was born have called on the company to give its original store some love.

Australia's first Myer department store opened in Bendigo's Pall Mall 125 years ago, in 1900, 11 years before the doors swung open at its flagship Melbourne Bourke Street base. It was the launch pad for what has become one of Australia's most recognised brands, with 56 stores across the country. But step inside the Bendigo Myer store and it is easy to see why rumours about its future are circling around town.

You can read the full story [here](#).



Myers in the '60s, seen in the background of an Easter Parade float. Look closely and you can see spectators looking down from the Myers windows. Photo: Bendigo Historical Society

Branch May Meeting Report

- All Branch volunteers and the many other organisations were thanked for their work during the Australian Heritage Festival.
- **Redevelopment of the Bendigo Art Gallery**
Members provided a range of views of issues about the redevelopment: the bulk and size of the building in an important heritage precinct is still the major issue; concern that the new build could adversely affect the Bid for World Heritage was acknowledged; the demolition of the 2014 redevelopment is of concern.
The 'Business Case' has not been released to the public: no breakdown of construction costs and increased operating costs which is an ongoing cost in the council budget; no information on the risk of cost overruns which is currently occurring with most public projects.
Further letter to be written to Council raising these concerns.
- **Review of Australian Heritage Festival**
Star Cinema looking at 'publicity packages' with other organisations after successful events; tours of Former Law Courts and Former Gas Works very successful; it was decided to contact Court Services Victoria and Council to arrange quarterly tours at both sites and to work with other organisations on this request.
Gary reported that the festival generated \$4200 with expenses of \$2500.
Feedback from all involved will be canvased.
- **General Business**
NT Winter Magazine article forwarded to Melbourne.
CoGB selling properties worth millions of dollars. Could sale be used to fund restoring heritage sites?

Discussion for June Meeting to be held Tuesday 24th June 5.30pm Bendigo Library

The Branch has been discussing the many heritage buildings that are left unsecured and open to weather and vandalism. These buildings are usually vacant and often constitute a health and safety risk. Phil and Terry have reviewed two reports on the issue being the Muratore National Trust Report and the Greater Geelong Report relating to dilapidated buildings. Councils spend millions of dollars on Heritage Studies over the years to protect heritage sites but then do very little to protect their investment. It is recommended to conduct a forum at a Branch meeting or hold a separate event on this topic. Council Planners and industry representatives be invited to attend to evaluate the Greater Geelong Strategy to create a Local Law to stop what is known as 'Demolition by Neglect'.

Coming Up In Heritage at the Bendigo Regional Archive Centre

While these details are current at time of issue, please check with organisers for any changes:

MON 16 JUN - 10:00AM Researching With Find My Past, presented by Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street, FREE

WED 18 JUN - 11:00AM TROVE - A valuable free resource, presented by the Bendigo Family History Group, Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street Bendigo, FREE

SUN 6 JUL - 10:00AM A Walk Into History: Meet the Neighbours - Wine Bank, presented by Mark Coffey of Wine Bank on View, by the Bendigo Historical Society, Wine Bank, 54 View Street, from \$7.50

SAT 19 JUL- 2:00PM Sandhurst & Gold with Geoff Hocking, presented by the Bendigo Family History Group, Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street Bendigo, FREE

THU 31 JUL - 5:30PM Discovering History: The Sandhurst Mechanics Institute & Lives of Poets, presented by Claire Knowles & Alexis Harley, La Trobe University & BRAC, Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street, FREE

MON 28 JUL - 11:00AM Researching South African Family History, presented by Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street, FREE

SAT 2 AUG - 10:00AM Rates, Ratbags & Rebels: Finding forebears in the archives, presented by BRAC, Eaglehawk Library, 1 Sailors Gully Road, FREE

SUN 3 AUG - 10:00AM A Walk Into History: St Killian's Precinct From tent to hut to chapel, presented by the Bendigo Historical Society, St Killian's Catholic Church, 161 McCrae Street, from \$7.50

FRI 8 AUG - 11:30AM Rates, Ratbags & Rebels: Finding forebears in the archives, presented by BRAC, Elmore Library, 62 Michie Street, FREE

FRI 8 AUG - 2:00PM Public History Talk: What's in the Box?, presented by the Bendigo Historical Society, La Trobe Art Institute, 121 View Street, from \$7.50

FRI 15 AUG - 11:00AM Introduction to Family Search, presented by Castlemaine Library, 212 Barker Street, FREE

EVERY SUNDAY & TUESDAY - 11:00AM Bendigo Town Hall Tour, presented by Tourism Bendigo, Hargreaves Street, bookings essential, tickets from \$10

SOME TUESDAYS - 2:00PM Sandhurst Gaol Tour, presented by Tourism Bendigo, Gaol Road, bookings essential, tickets from \$10

If your group has a heritage event coming up in the next quarter, please [email us](#) with details. BRAC provides this listing for information only, listing is not an endorsement. Please check with providers to ensure details are correct.

Sharing Our History

BRAC's vision is to collect, protect and share the history of Central and Northern Victoria, through researchers, historians, academics using the documents in our collection. Help us share what we hold in our archive by forwarding this email to friends, colleagues or groups that you think might have an interest in our collective history.

Did a friend forward you this email? Click here to subscribe to BRAC news and updates direct to your own inbox.

Want to know how to access any of the records mentioned in this Spring newsletter? Come and see us at the Reading Rooms or take a look at the very comprehensive [PROV website](#).

Bendigo Regional Archives Centre

Bendigo Library 1st Floor
251-259 Hargreaves Street BENDIGO VIC 3550
03 5449 2700

Reading Room Hours

Every Wednesday & Thursday
10:00AM - 12:30PM & 1:00PM - 4:00PM - bookings preferred - see [HERE](#) for details
(Please check current advice on our website or Facebook page in case of unexpected changes)

 [Facebook](#)

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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](#)

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 *History & Heritage* is the first day of each month. 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

Next Branch Committee Meeting Thursday 3rd July at Bendigo Library at 10am

Next Editorial Group meeting Thursday 3rd July at Bendigo Library at 11am

Next Branch meeting, Tuesday 24th June at Bendigo Library at 5.30pm

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

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

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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

