

# History & Heritage

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

A publication of the National Trust Bendigo & District Branch

July 2025



Cover story:

**Tomlins Simmie & Co. Flour Mill**



**Next Branch Meeting Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 5.30pm Bendigo Library** (enter via Hargreaves Street door)  
Members and supporters all welcome.

## **Cover Story: Tomlins Simmie & Co. Flour Mill - a short history and the proposed redevelopment** by Michael Lake, Bendigo Branch member and heritage enthusiast

### **In this issue:**

- P 2. Cover Story: Tomlins Simmie & Co. Flour Mill
- P 4. Forum to protect properties from 'Demolition by Neglect'
- P 5. A fine sensitivity - The Allan Doney photographic collection
- P 6. Former Law Court tours continue
- P 6. Castlemaine Camp Reserve Master Plan
- P 7. Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid - The Alchemy of Gold event
- P 8. The Star Cinema Eaglehawk
- P 9. Branch meeting report
- P 9. Central Goldfields Art Gallery exhibition
- P 10. Membership, newsletter contacts, acknowledgement of country

Cover image: Tomlins Simmie & Co Flour Mill, Bendigo. Photo: Bendigo Branch

The Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill is located on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung clans. The site was developed from 1911 following the purchase of four Crown Allotments on Charleston Road, Bendigo, by the miller Jesse Tomlins and farmers and grain buyers George and John Simmie. The future mill site was selected for its convenient location on the primary railway line connected to the wheat belt regions of northern Victoria.



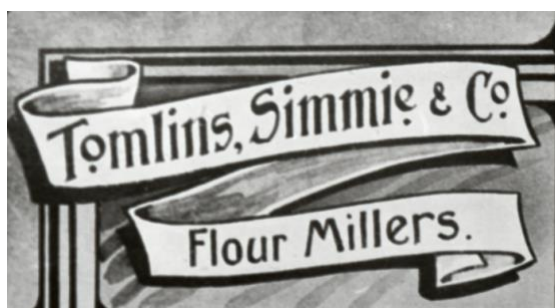
Tomlins Simmie & Co Flour Mill, rear view, adjacent to railway line. Photo: Bendigo Historical Society

In 1912, the Tomlins Simmie and Co Flour Mill comprised a five and four-storey brick mill building; a single-storey brick office and galvanised iron wheat stores adjoining the northern elevation of the mill building; a free-standing bag room to the south; and a timber structure in the north-east of the site containing stables and a lorry shed. The mill building was designed by the Bendigo architect John Beebe and constructed by George Davey at a cost of £4,954. After its opening, the *Bendigo Independent* noted that the surrounding land was 'tastefully laid out in garden plots with a nice, gravelled carriageway', in a similar vein to mills found in England. An early plan also shows two residences, enclosed by picket fences, to the north-east of the site on Charleston Road.

Internally, the mill building was organised into three departments: the milling department, facing south; the four-storey wheat cleaning department overlooking the railway line; and a row of timber-clad silo bins facing north, with a capacity of approximately 900 tonnes of wheat. Throughout the mill building, various state-of-the-art electric-powered machinery assisted with the wheat milling process. A 100-horsepower electric motor provided by the Union Electric Supply Co. supplied the entire building, rendering Tomlins Simmie and Co. the first completely electrically driven mill in Victoria. The establishment of a railway siding allowed the mill to compete with metropolitan producers. An aerial photograph of the site in the 1930s is shown next page.



Bolton's Office Supplies, one of Bendigo's oldest businesses, will be relocating from their Williamson Street premises to one of the tenancies 87 Charleston Road in 2026, following the completion of the proposed redevelopment. David Bolton, director of Boltons, is a descendant of architect John Beebe and has strong links to the flour mill. David said the new Boltons building, adjacent to the flour mill, would complement the architectural legacy of his great grandfather. Some perspective renderings of the proposed development are shown below. It can be seen from the renderings that the proposed buildings will complement the built form of the flour mill building and enable a clear line of sight from all directions. The proposal should be approved by Council later this year.



Left: Images from an advertising feature showing the Grain Stores that were later demolished. Photos: Bendigo Historical Society

See also the [Victorian Heritage Database](#) for a statement of significance.

I drove past the site on Thursday July 3<sup>rd</sup> and noticed some tradespersons doing some work inside the building. The exterior of the building seems to be in reasonable condition, with most windows now intact and the doors seemed to be secure. It was reported in the *Bendigo Advertiser* that there had been a fire and some vandalism in the building recently, but it seems steps have been taken to minimise the chance of this happening.

### Branch decides on forum to protect properties from 'Demolition by Neglect'

At its June meeting the Branch decided to conduct a Forum to protect properties from what is commonly termed 'Demolition by Neglect'. Run down, badly maintained or neglected structures can fall into disrepair, reduce neighbouring property values, encourage unauthorised occupation, attract anti-social or criminal behaviour, and reduce community perceptions of amenity and safety. These buildings can also become a haven for vermin. Consequently, Councils require owners and occupiers to maintain their buildings to avoid these problems. The Branch also wants to better understand why Councils spend many hundreds of thousands of dollars on Heritage Studies over many years yet do not protect this investment when owners do not maintain their properties.



92 Victoria Street Eaglehawk has been left vacant for many years and is one of the many homes that has been left to the elements for survival. Photo: Bendigo Branch

The Branch plans to conduct the Forum in mid-September inviting representatives from Governments, Real Estate, the Building Industry, developers and investors. It is also interested to hear from neighbourhoods where such buildings exist. With the growing demand for more housing a solution needs to be found to overcome these problems. If you have ideas, *History & Heritage* would like to hear from you. [Email us here.](#)



## A fine sensitivity - a remarkable local photo collection with universal appeal

by Euan McGillivray Branch member and President of the Bendigo Historical Society

Over the past fifty years, the Bendigo community has had an affinity with Allan Doney and his remarkable collection of images. Doney images have been used widely, including by, historians, publishers, heritage consultants, journalists, architects and so on. Allan's photographs were used in the campaign by the local branch of the National Trust to prevent demolition of many significant buildings and verandas with decorative cast iron in the late 1960s. Can you imagine the Shamrock Hotel without its veranda?

Consisting of about 14,000 film negatives and approximately 3000 paper prints, made between the early 1950s and the mid 1970s, the photographic collection is owned by the National Trust of Australia (Vic). A preservation survey was made of the negatives in 2022 and found that most of the storage sheets and bags were poor quality. While they have not contributed to severe deterioration, the sheets were degraded, frayed and torn. Some negative strips had slid out from the protection of the sheets and scuffing has occurred due to transport, handling and age of bags. Under a project funded by NTAV but managed and undertaken by Bendigo Historical Society, the collection of film negatives has been re-housed into archival quality materials. This was an important project and will ensure the long-term preservation of the negatives. The Bendigo Historical Society has been operating for over 60 years with the support of the Bendigo community. Today, BHS has a large collection and strong online presence through *Victorian Collections*.



Allan Doney was a tailor and a prolific amateur photographer. Using the critical aspects of great photography, light and composition, he created a delightful time-capsule of Bendigo and the surrounding small towns, mine sites and farms. Doney also left us images that can be studied for their significant content in a time of great change to some central Victorian natural and built environments.

The Doney style was 'documentary' - he was said to have 'recorded what happened in front of him'. In the time after WW2 and particularly throughout

the 1960s, documentary photography was an expanding field in Australia. There were a number of photographers in Australia, and other parts of the world, that advocated the use of 'straight' or unmanipulated photography as a means of expression. There is little evidence that he used heavy filters or elaborate lens selection to capture his subjects. Documentary photography, especially in the volume contained in this collection, forms a vital role as evidence regarding the rhythms of everyday life in a time of social change in Bendigo and the region. The significance of the collection is not limited to its historical content. Many of the pictures demonstrate an artistic flair with dramatic use of backlight and powerful composition. He also intentionally included people as often as possible. Bendigonians simply crossing the street or pausing for a chat under a shop veranda in the morning sunshine were carefully composed and captured using a Praktica or Rollicord camera for us to enjoy today. The content in Allan's images captured over a period of more than twenty years provides us with more than a nostalgic journey into the 1950s and 1960s. Bendigo was emerging from the impacts of WWII and Allan was there to capture how we did things and went about everyday life.

[Click here for link to National Trust \(Vic\) Winter magazine, with 3 pieces about Bendigo!](#)

## Former Law Court tours to continue

The Branch has been notified by Courts Services Victoria that tours will be able to be held over the next twelve months. The Branch applied to conduct quarterly tours similar to those conducted during the recent Australian Heritage Festival. The Branch is currently working out a timetable, organising volunteers and will have a schedule of events released soon.

## Former Law Courts building in new exhibition - August 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.

## Camp Reserve Master Plan: application for Planning Permit submitted

by Alice Matthiesson

A further step towards the desecration of the heritage landscape of Castlemaine's Camp Reserve has been taken with the submission of a planning permit application for the construction of a new sporting pavilion and netball courts in accord with the Council-approved 2020 Camp Reserve Master Plan.

This Master Plan relocates these facilities from the northern end of the Reserve, which has little historic significance, to the south-western corner of the Reserve. The latter is the original natural viewing platform, in front of the original District Police Inspector's residence 'Broadoaks' (Robert O'Hara Burke's Cottage), that overlooked the former Military Parade Ground and remains a favoured viewing point for football spectators watching games from the comfort of their cars. Government Camp buildings, including police barracks, stables and the Treasury building were originally located here. Although subdivision of the area for sale was planned following removal of these buildings in the early 1860s, this was overturned at the behest of Captain J.E. Bull who advocated for the Camp Reserve to be gazetted as a permanent reserve for public recreation, which finally happened in 1895. The two stately River Red gums, the remnants of a cluster of gums retained from the 1860s until the first decade of this century, are also slated for removal under the Master Plan, along with historic Agricultural Show infrastructure dating back to the 1930s. Camp Reserve is an integral part of the Camp Reserve & Environs Heritage Overlay (HO668) which encompasses the area of Castlemaine's Government Camp that was established here in 1851.



Image: <https://goldcampcastlemaine.com.au/>





Artist's impression of the proposed changes released by Mount Alexander Shire Council

To support the Master Plan proposal, Mount Alexander Shire Council recently released an artist's impression (above) of the futuristic appearance of the facilities with established trees and other greenery added to 'beautify' the suburban sportsground design of the new facilities. Similar beautification would just as easily be part of any development on the site of the existing pavilion and netball courts, as previously proposed in the Camp Reserve Master Plan approved by MASC in 2011 with community support.

The plans for the construction of the sports pavilion and netball courts are expected to be advertised by MASC in coming weeks, and this will be the opportunity to lodge objections. The Gold Camp Castlemaine group, see this as the remaining opportunity to convince the current councillors that this plan should not proceed. Should we fail, that leaves a costly appeal to VCAT as the final option. For more information [click here](#).

## Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid – Update

*The Alchemy of Gold – The Golden Transformation of Victoria* event was an inspiring and thought-provoking program designed to illuminate the Victorian goldfields rich gold history and its transformative impact on the state. Co-Patron, The Hon John Brumby AO spoke at the launch of the special forum with over 200 people attending this two-day event.



The Hon John Brumby AO, Co-Patron, Victorian Goldfields World Heritage bid, speaking at the launch of the Alchemy of Gold, Castlemaine Art Museum. Photo: supplied

Participants got to hear from a diverse line-up of speakers including Trevor Budge who spoke about the 'Demographics of Women and Children on The Goldfields' and Rodney Carter, Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO who spoke about Kara Kara (gold) and its negative and positive effect to Djaara and Djandak, alongside Craig Sandy, Surveyor-General and Eddie Cichocki – Deputy Surveyor-General, on 'The history of surveying in the Goldfields'.

Congratulations go out to the organisers for putting together such a wonderful event.

To subscribe to updates [Click here](#).

## The Star Cinema at Eaglehawk Town Hall

from Christine Shiel

Eaglehawk Town Hall is the resplendent home of the Star Cinema, a not-for-profit social enterprise that supports community fund-raising and offers a boutique film experience including five annual film festivals.

Eaglehawk Town Hall enjoys the notable location of Brassey Square and is flanked by two cannons recovered from one of the colony's earliest warships. A central clock tower commands attention. Imagine the curiosity of the first-time cinema patron ascending the stone steps, slightly bowed by thousands of feet for well over a century. Envisage the hidden spaces in this sumptuous and substantial Federation building. Take a left turn before you reach the nostalgic ticket box staffed by one of the many gracious Star Cinema volunteers and ascend the stairs to discover the ultimate hidden space. Your first indication on reaching the landing is a grand honour board inscribed with the gilt-edged names of former Eaglehawk mayors dating from John Thomas Caldwell (1862-63) to Mrs M. Weston (1993-94) when the proud Borough of Eaglehawk merged with the City of Greater Bendigo.



Former Town Hall and Council Chambers now the Star Cinema. Photos: Star Cinema

Enter a series of three rooms which once constituted Council Chambers, grand beyond expectations for what was once a modest mining township. Council Chambers is no longer cold, dusty and musty, a disused space populated only by memories of debates, decisions and deals. The walls of Chambers still showcase the portraits of former mayors and the ceremonial trowel that turned the first sod. The historic mayoral and councillor chairs are still pulled up to the four-metre-long council table. Leather chesterfield sofas still invite you to rest awhile in front of the fireplace.

These days, since its launch in February 2022, you may find Council Chambers buzzing with vitality in the guise of Chambers Wine Bar or hosting a 'thank you dinner' for the Star volunteers. In May, Star Cinema threw the doors open for the 2025 National Trust Heritage Festival 'Unearthed'. For a series of five evenings, special guests unearthed some fascinating anecdotes about historical artefacts, heritage architecture, local stories and insider tales about Council dealings.

The lasting impression garnered from folk interested in heritage architecture, local history and hidden spaces, is the degree to which people experience passionate ownership for Chambers. There was common ground that the value of a hidden space like Council Chambers lies in enjoying the space and regenerating a sense of functional vitality, a future as well as a past. In 1943, Winston Churchill pronounced that, "We shape our buildings and afterwards they shape us." During the National Trust "Unearthed" Heritage Festival, Chambers bore witness to many individual stories about debutante balls, dahlia festivals, Council triumphs and a myriad other ways in which the Eaglehawk Town Hall and Council Chambers have impacted positively on people's lives. [Click here](#) for bookings and more photos.



## June Branch Meeting report


- Branch meeting well attended with a range of actions decided
- A positive response received from Court Services Victoria for future tours of the Former Law Courts to be held quarterly. Volunteers required to assist with these events. Net income to be donated to the Bendigo Historical Society for their new Exhibition 'Legal Eagles on the Goldfields'
- Sub-committee formed to conduct Public Forum on Demolition by Neglect. Jan, Gail and Peter to organise. Others welcome to assist.
- Concern raised about the works at the Bendigo Town Hall. More information required from Council.
- Permit has been issued for the development of the All-Saints Church site. Future article for newsletter.
- Keys of Gold concerts being held during July
- Council did not report on works and opening of Fernery as scheduled. Follow up needed.
- Branch AGM to be held at the November Branch meeting with a public talk.
- Next Branch meeting, Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 5.30pm Bendigo Library. All welcome

**27 June 2024 to 28 June 2026**

# *The Art of Gold*

**Treasures from the National Gallery of Australia**

unknown silversmith  
Locket  
c.1860, Australia  
gold, engraved, gold-bearing  
quartz nuggets, printed paper




The golden treasures in this exhibition relate strongly to Maryborough and surrounds. Some of the artworks date from the mid-19th century goldrush in Central Victoria. Also on display is a necklace and two rings by one of the most accomplished contemporary jewellers in Australia, Maryborough born Rowena Gough.

These works of art are on long term loan from the National Gallery of Australia with support from the Australian Government as part of Sharing the National Collection #artacrossaustralia

**CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS ART GALLERY**  
Old Fire Station, 1 Neill Street, Maryborough, Victoria 3465  
Open: 10am–4pm Thursday to Sunday, **FREE ENTRY**.  
Tel: 03 5461 6600 • [www.centralgoldfieldsartgallery.com.au](http://www.centralgoldfieldsartgallery.com.au)

PRESENTED BY  
**NGA**  
An Australian Government Initiative

SUPPORTED BY  
  
CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS  
**ART GALLERY**  
CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS  
SHIRE COUNCIL

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS  
**ART  
GALLERY**

1 Neill Street  
Maryborough

located in the historic  
former Fire Station  
built in 1861

## 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 *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 meeting, Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July at Bendigo Library at 5.30pm**

**Next Branch Committee Meeting Thursday August 7<sup>th</sup> at Bendigo Library at 10am**

**Next Editorial Group meeting Thursday August 7<sup>th</sup> at Bendigo Library at 11am**

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.

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. Add 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

**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.**

