

History & Heritage

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

A publication of the National Trust Bendigo & District Branch

May 2026



Next Branch Meeting

Tuesday May 26th 5.30pm

Bendigo Library (enter via Lyttleton Terrace)

All members and supporters are welcome

Contributions for each month's *History and Heritage* must be [emailed to the Branch](#) by the 1st of every month.

Distribution is approximately 2 - 3 weeks after that.

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Cover and image below: Recent pictures of demolition work on the View Street Bendigo site.
Photos: Bendigo Branch




The Cover: Construction started for \$45m Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment

Over Easter 2026 locals and visitors to Bendigo saw that construction has begun on the Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment.

The Branch is very interested to see this work started. Readers of *History & Heritage* will be aware that several stories were published regarding both public and private attitudes to the redevelopment.

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**Rethink Bendigo Art Gallery
Redevelopment?**



Cover Story: The Art Gallery Redevelopment - the need for a petition

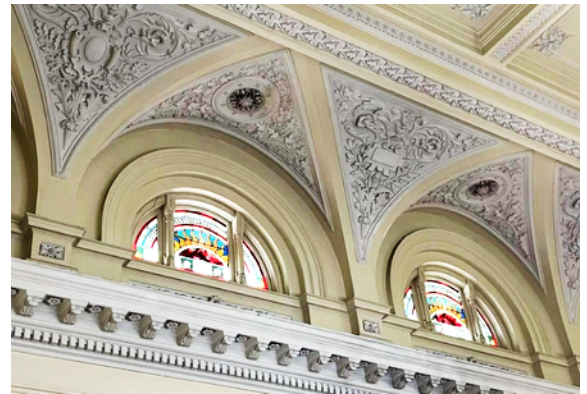
The National Trust submits that the proposed works in size, style and scale will detract from the 19th century streetscape, the landmark qualities of the earlier Art Gallery buildings, and the Capital Theatre.

The City has said that the project will be delivered in two stages. Stage one includes a second-level blockbuster exhibition space, an innovative learning centre, theatre and Traditional Owner Place of Keeping for Dja Dja Wurrung cultural materials.

Subject to funding, stage two includes a dedicated gallery for Australian art and an elevated hospitality offering, featuring an improved café/restaurant incorporated into a redesigned sculpture annex and second-floor function facility and terrace. Stage two is subject to securing a Federal Government grant of \$15M. An application was made to the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program in late 2024 and the Gallery and City are awaiting the outcome of the application.

Former Bendigo Law Courts - Philip Howe

At the halfway point of his year's Heritage Festival, and despite the "cost of living crisis", the Festival has been a great success. We've had many tours of the former Bendigo Law Courts sold out and we'll be close to sold out for the remainder. As usual visitors have been greatly impressed with this magnificent building but not so with the state it is in and that it remains closed most of the time. We have handed out a large number of survey forms on behalf of University of Melbourne undergraduate, Chelsea Pentland with 70 returned completed. We hope to gather a lot more and to have a better idea of what people think should happen with the building. It is interesting to note the majority of visitors are locals.

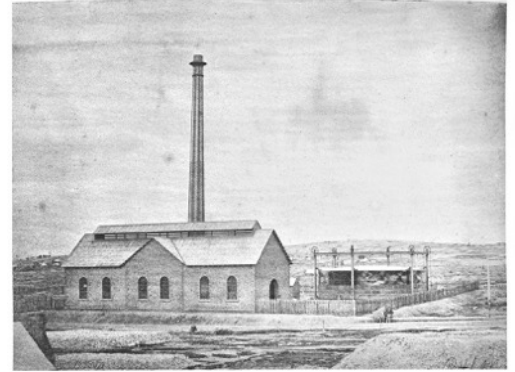


Tour leader Dennis Johanson discusses the beautiful Victorian architecture of the law courts interior and takes tourists through the various parts and functions of the building. Photos: Trevor Sharpe

As part of the Heritage Festival we saw a return of the Melbourne based [Bottled Snail Productions](#) performing a reading of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the Supreme Court at the Former Law Courts. The group is a not-for-profit incorporated association and registered charity run by and for legal professionals.

Bendigo Gas Works Tours - Gary Hill

Once again tours of the former Bendigo Gas Works were well supported, with the upcoming tours booked out. Visitors were amazed by the site and its history with much interest and positive feedback amid concerns about its future. Bendigo is fortunate to have one of three intact provincial gas works in the world, the others being in the British Isles.



Right: visitors on a National Trust tour. Photo: Bendigo Branch. Far right: The Gas Works in 1860. Photo: Benjamin Pierce Batchelder. SLV collection.

Operetta at Langley Estate, White Hills - Philip Howe

A highlight of this year's Festival was the performance of the operetta, "The Operatic Servant Girl" at Langley Estate in front of a sell-out audience. This was written during the gold rush but never performed in Bendigo... until now.



Soprano Matilda Wilby, baritone Peter Hunt, pianist Peter Butler and Director Merlyn Quaife AM performing Charles Robert Thatcher's *The Operatic Servant Girl* (written in 1861) in the 1873 Lauriston Chapel, Langley Estate. Photos: Langley Estate facebook

Exhibition at Castlemaine's Buda - *In the Company of Small Things*

A series of exhibitions and installations that invite audiences to slow down and look closer. New works by local artists Dianne Longley (Trentham) and Clayton Tremlett (Castlemaine), interpreting Buda's House and Garden are on display, as well as treasures from Buda's historical collection: 19th century botanical specimens, nature studies, sketchbooks and flora-inspired items hand-crafted by members of the Leviny family who once lived at Buda.

Visitors to the Heritage Festival admiring the artwork on display at Buda. Photo: Buda Historic Home and Garden



The Story of Bridge Street's Chinatown - Golden Dragon Museum

At the Latrobe Art Institute, the Golden Dragon Museum's Research Officer, Leigh McKinnon, gave a special talk on the owners, occupants, and businesses of the old Bridge Street Chinatown in Bendigo. Leigh also covered how the streetscape and community have changed from the 1850s to the present day and the wonderful contribution the Chinese community has made to Bendigo's cultural history. The topic was so popular that the event had to be moved from the Golden Dragon Museum to the lecture theatre at LAI on View Street (below).



Above and right: Leigh McKinnon discusses the history of Bendigo's Chinese community through photographs and artifacts. Photos: Golden Dragon Museum

Historic Church Organs Walk with Thomas Heywood - Bendigo Historical Society

This was a lecture tour with a difference! Bendigo's internationally acclaimed organ virtuoso Thomas Heywood took visitors on a tour of three of our historic churches and their pipe organs. At each church, with practical demonstrations, Thomas told the story of each instrument's specific qualities, their enterprising manufacturers, and each organ's history with its church. Both young and old were enthralled by the power and mechanics of these unique instruments, and encouraged to get up close. The churches visited included St Killian's Catholic Church (1871 German organ), St Andrew's Uniting Church (1882 Alfred Fuller organ), and St Paul's Anglican Cathedral (1904 organ built by British firm Bishop & Son).



Thomas demonstrating at St Killian's and St Andrew's churches on the Historic Organs Walk. He encourages everyone to get up close. Photos: Trevor Sharpe

Castlemaine to Maldon and back - Victorian Goldfields Railway

Victorian Colonial Express - On May 2nd visitors travelled in Victoria's oldest railway carriages on an early branch line, experiencing rail travel of the 1880s. The journey also featured a re-enactment of the loading and unloading of "van" goods by guards and station porters at each of the three stations: Castlemaine, Muckleford and Maldon.



Photo: Rob Lee

Chewton: The Garfield Water Wheel - Gary Hill

On Sunday 3rd May people were invited to visit a rare industrial relic — the Garfield Water Wheel, built in 1887. Set within the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park near Chewton, it once operated the Garfield Mine crushing battery and was a huge 72 feet in diameter. Although the wheel itself and the crushing battery are gone, the remaining foundations and the ruins and relics of mining activity nearby are of great interest to visitors. Archaeologists David Bannear and Gary Hill were on-site from 10am to 1pm for people to chat with them about why the wheel was built, how it worked and the people and industry who relied on it. Visitors could see a display of historic photos and use them to bring to life this fascinating relic and its surrounds. Despite the rainy weather over 20 visitors came along, including three from Melbourne whose ancestor built the wheel. This tour was arranged by Parks Victoria and Goldfields Track.



Top left: the water wheel when operating. Photo: Goldfield Guide.
Top right and above left: Remains of the water wheel today.
Photos: National Trust and Parks Victoria. Right: Archaeology at the site explained to visitors by Gary Hill. Photo: David Bannear.

Feedback wanted

We are proposing the introduction of a feedback page in future editions of *History & Heritage* for all readers to submit their thoughts and ideas initially about the Heritage Festival, what events did you take part in, how were the events, what were the most interesting, etc. This will be expanded to include all comments about heritage in general in following editions. Please email your thoughts to [the Branch](#) by the 1st of each month.

From the Branch Archive

Flashback to 2010 - Our First Branch Newsletter and First Heritage Day - Elaine Doling

Way back in 2010 I had the idea that we should celebrate ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) World Heritage Day in Bendigo. Everyone I contacted greeted the idea with enthusiasm and a diverse range of items were soon on the agenda. Victoria Hill was chosen as the site, with the cooperation of the City of Greater Bendigo Council and the Gold Mines Hotel.

Council cleaned up the Victoria Hill Historic Mining Site and assisted with funding for a large marquee to be set up in the Albert Richardson Reserve opposite the Gold Mines Hotel. The Mayor at the time, the late Cr. Rod Campbell opened the festival.

Local organisations were happy to set up stalls within the marquee, The Veteran, Vintage and Classic Club had a number of cars on display, and the City of Greater Bendigo had the Ironbark Heritage Study on public display for the first time. Bendigo Historical Society ran a BBQ. Walking tours of the area were well patronised and talks held at the Gold Mines Hotel were also popular. The late Peter Ellis entertained with music from the Goldfields.

The National Trust headquarters at Tasma Terrace in Melbourne were most supportive, and designed the poster, using our text and photos, overnight with no time to spare, as their designer was going on holidays the next day. Posters and flyers were placed all over town, and articles appeared in the local newspapers. Support for the event was so enthusiastic that it only took six weeks from start to finish for the organisation of the event to occur.

During the organising stages we discovered that ICOMOS had changed the name from 'ICOMOS World Heritage Day' to the 'ICOMOS International Day of Monuments and Sites'. We stuck with World Heritage Day for the occasion to avoid confusion.

First Branch newsletter

Our first Branch Newsletter came out soon after the event at the instigation of Mike Butcher, who was Branch president at the time. Below is the front page, featuring the Heritage Day at Victoria Hill.

NATIONAL TRUST
Every moment an amazing story

VICTORIA HILL HISTORIC RESERVE, Marong Rd Bendigo (Opposite the Gold Mines Hotel)

VICTORIA HILL

Heritage Day

SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2010
10AM - 4PM
WELCOME BY MAYOR
CR ROD CAMPBELL 10.45AM

Victoria Quartz Poppel Head, Victoria Hill
Photo Richard Hill

Coath Cottage 2010
Photo E. Doling

The Geology of Victoria Hill and Bendigo
11AM ROD FRASER
Geology Manager, Bendigo Mining Ltd. will give a presentation about the fascinating geology of the area.

Victoria Hill Guided Tours
10AM JAMES LERK
Bendigo Historical Society
12PM GEORGE ELLIS
Bendigo Cornish Association
1PM JAMES LERK
Bendigo Historical Society
2PM ROD ORR
Bendigo Field Naturalists Club
3PM DAVID BANNEAR
Heritage Victoria

Displays in the Marquee by local Heritage Groups

- City of Greater Bendigo Heritage
- National Trust
- Heritage Victoria
- Eaglehawk Heritage Group
- Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc
- Veteran, Vintage and Classic Car Club Bendigo Inc
- The Ironbark Heritage Study will be on public display for the first time

Public Talks HELD IN THE GOLD MINES HOTEL'S COURTYARD
12PM KURT WALDER
German Heritage
Miners from the Hartz Mountains - crushing battery - Ballerstedts
12.30PM ROD ORR
Bendigo Field Naturalists Club
Mining and the Environment in Bendigo
1PM DR MICHELE MATTHEWS
BRAC
Sir John Quick - Forgotten Father of Federation (who spent his youth in the shadow of Victoria Hill).
1.30PM DAVID BANNEAR
Heritage Victoria
"Things Forgotten - The Archaeology of Bendigo"
2PM CAROL HOLSORTH
Bendigo Historical Society
The Chinese and the Victoria Hill area
2.30PM JOHN KELLY
Bendigo Historical Society
Inquests held at the Gold Mines Hotel

3PM GEORGE ELLIS
Bendigo Cornish Association
The Cornish miners of the Ironbark Long Gully area
3.30PM AMANDA JEAN
CoGB Heritage Adviser
The Ironbark Heritage Study

Coath Cottage Open Day
HAPPY VALLEY RD (OPPOSITE VICTORIA HILL)
Owner Andrew Ward and Restorer Gary Hill will be on hand to explain the history and restoration of the 1860s cottage after the Black Saturday fire. Restoration was made possible by Heritage Restoration Loans from the City of Greater Bendigo. Entry by donation.

BBQ
Bendigo Historical Society will operate a BBQ

ICOMOS International Day of Monuments and Sites
Sunday 18 April
Celebrating the Heritage of Agriculture worldwide

BENDIGO MINING

The flyer for the 2010 Heritage Day.



Secretary: Elaine Doling Phone: 5446 7409 E-mail: emdoling@gmail.com Mail: PO Box 121 Strathdale 3550

NEWSLETTER MAY 2010

Victoria Hill Heritage Day 18 April 2010



Rod Fraser, Geology Manager with Bendigo Mining gave a presentation to sixty visitors on Victoria Hill. Photos by Jo Printz.

The Bendigo Branch of the National Trust joined with a number of other heritage groups and organisations to celebrate our heritage on the ICOMOS International Day of Monuments and Sites, 18 April.

The Victoria Hill Historic Reserve was chosen as it contains the site of several early open cut and tunnel gold mines as well as the sites of several deep quartz mines, including the Victoria Quartz Mine, which was the deepest gold mine in the world (over 4600 feet) during its time of operation. Guided tours of the Hill were held during the day, along with public talks in the courtyard of the historic Gold Mines Hotel.

The event was opened by the Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, Cr Rod Campbell, and was attended by several hundred people.

Displays mounted in the marquee and Albert Richardson reserve included the Bendigo Branch of the National Trust, City of Greater Bendigo Heritage and PROV, Heritage Victoria, the Genealogical Society, Field Naturalists, Eaglehawk Heritage Group, Bendigo Historical Society and the newly formed Friends of Victoria Hill. The Bendigo Veteran, Vintage and Classic Club provided a display of veteran cars and nearby Coath Cottage, built in the 1860s and gutted in the Black Saturday fire, was open for inspection on the day so that its restoration could be viewed. Thanks go to the City of Greater Bendigo for their assistance and support in allowing use of and cleaning up the reserves and assisting with publicity, NT head office at Tasma for their support and assistance, the



The cost of hiring the marquee was generously donated by Bendigo Mining, the City of Greater Bendigo and the National Trust.

Gold Mines Hotel, and Bendigo Mining for supplying their Geology Manager for a public presentation on the geology of Bendigo. Financial assistance was provided by NT Head Office, Bendigo Mining and City of Greater Bendigo.

Our first newsletter May 2010

By 2013 the festival events were crammed into two days, and included the City of Greater Bendigo's Heritage awards, of which more in a later edition.....

Forum on 'Demolition by Neglect'- Elaine Doling

Due to the unexpected loss of our president Peter Cox in 2025, this Forum did not go ahead. It is now time to revisit the idea and organise it. We invite your response. Please email your thoughts to [the Branch](#) by the 1st of each month.

For more information on 'Demolition by Neglect' visit the NTAV website: www.nationaltrust.org.au/initiatives/demolition-by-neglect

From Peter Cox, July 2025 *History & Heritage*:

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.

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.](#)



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

Vahland drinking fountain flowing again

A member recently photographed the restored Vahland drinking fountain and lamp in Vahland Place Bendigo. The water had not been running for many years, and it was their delight to see it gurgling again.



In 1881 an elegant drinking fountain designed by Wilhelm Vahland was installed in Pall Mall in Bendigo, in order to service horses, dogs and people. It was made of granite and featured four gas lights on top of a central column and was part of a 'triangle' of fountains in Bendigo, together with the Alexandra Fountain and the Cascades Fountain in Rosalind Park. All three of these water features were designed by Vahland. ([German Australia](#))

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.



***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.

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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.

Next Branch meeting, Tuesday May 26th at Bendigo Library 5.30pm

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

You can see the current Victorian advocacy issues at the Trust Advocate blog: [Click here](#)

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