

# BURKE MUSEUM



Large banner reverse



BURKE MUSEUM SOHE  
2008



h00345 1 burke museum loch  
st beechworth elevation loch  
street she project 2003



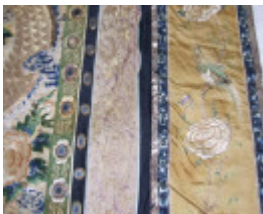
burke museum loch street  
beechworth front view july  
1999



burke museum loch st  
beechworth view 1976  
addition she project 2003



Chinese Banner Detail



Chinese banner detail 3



Chinese banner detail 4



Chines banner detail 2



Banner- Full detail



Large banner- detail

## Location

28 LOCH STREET BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

## **Municipality**

INDIGO SHIRE

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0345

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO63

## **VHR Registration**

October 9, 1974

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - May 26, 2005

### **What is significant?**

The first section of the Burke Museum was constructed in Loch Street, Beechworth in 1857 by the Young Men's Association, which had been formed the previous year with the aim of promoting study to improve the minds of its largely Wesleyan members. The hall, containing a lecture and reading room, became the Beechworth Athenaeum the following year. In 1860, financial difficulties resulted in the purchasing of the hall by the municipal council and its subsequent use as a public library.

Gold was discovered at Beechworth in 1852 and the following year it was declared a town. In 1853 the initial survey of the town was undertaken and the grid arrangement of streets in the town centre was laid out. The gold rush peaked in Beechworth in 1857 and this resulted in the construction of many buildings, such as the hall for the Young Men's Association, in the late 1850s. Due to its position on the main overland route between Melbourne and Sydney, Beechworth became an administrative and legal centre for the north-east region of Victoria and it became a municipality in 1863.

Robert O'Hara Burke, the police superintendent at Beechworth from 1854 to 1858, died in 1861, while on the Burke and Wills expedition from Melbourne to northern Australia. A decision was made by the residents of Beechworth to build a memorial to him and this resulted in the extension of the existing library building in 1863. This became known as the O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum. In 1874 a memorial stained glass window by the Melbourne firm, Ferguson and Urie, was installed in the rear wall of the building.

In 1868 the museum purchased an aboriginal collection of 96 artifacts, assembled by Reynell Eveleigh Johns, who was a major collector of both native and foreign material in the late nineteenth century. In the 1880s an acquaintance of his, Robert Hurlock Jenkyns, became curator of the Burke Museum and donations from Johns continued. Such donations and shrewd purchasing through the 1880s and 1890s resulted in a museum collection that gained a reputation as one of the best outside Melbourne. This includes rare books and manuscripts that formed part of the original library collection.

The original building, which remains largely intact despite later additions, is a single storey classical building of rendered brick on a granite plinth. A low parapet, with central pediment, conceals a hipped roof, and a frieze with raised lettering describes the building's use. Pilasters divide the main facade into five bays, each containing arched openings with vermiculated keystones and moulded render architraves, and the central bay projects forward to form a small enclosed porch. The main internal spaces remain largely intact in plan form and fabric. The rectangular main hall, originally the library reading room, retains its timber lined high canted ceiling and the natural history room, originally the museum added in 1863, retains its timber lined high raked ceiling and large oval stained glass window.

Extensive verandahed additions, designed by Perrot Lyon Timlock Kesa, were made to the west, south and north of the museum building in the 1970s, largely engulfing the nineteenth century building. Despite this, the main facade and the interior of the original building, remain largely intact.

### **How is it significant?**

The Burke Museum, Beechworth is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

The Burke Museum is of historical significance as an important provincial museum which gained a fine reputation after its establishment in the nineteenth century. Despite some temporary closures, the museum has continued to operate and remains as one of the most important regional museums in Victoria. The building, first as a library and later as a museum, is testimony to the cultural aspirations of the early citizens of Beechworth. It is also of historical significance for its Aboriginal collection, which remains as one of the finest collections of South Eastern Australian aboriginal artefacts in Australia.

The Burke Museum is of historical significance due to its association with the gold rush period and the subsequent development of the colony. It is illustrative of the substantial civic development that took place in the town after the peak of the gold rush and after Beechworth had emerged as the administrative centre of the north east of Victoria. Cultural institutions, such as athenaeums and mechanics institutes, were particularly prevalent during the 1860s and the increase in their construction corresponded with the consolidation of towns founded on Victorian goldfields.

The Burke Museum is of architectural significance as an example of an intact conservative classical building, first designed as a hall, and then adapted for use as a library and then a museum. This classical character is evident in both the Loch Street facade and the interior spaces, and this reinforces the nineteenth century character of the museum. Such features as distinctive exposed roof framing, ruled ashlar walls, stained glass window, fireplaces and mantelpieces and timber display cases have been retained internally.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2005]

## **Permit Exemptions**

### **General Exemptions:**

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1857, 1863,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	ATHENAEUM, MECHANICS INSTITUTE,
Hermes Number	116
Property Number	

---

## **History**

The first section of the Burke Museum was constructed in Loch Street, Beechworth in 1857 by the Young Men's Association, which had been formed the previous year with the aim of promoting study to improve the minds of its largely Wesleyan members. The hall, containing a lecture and reading room, became the Beechworth Athenaeum the following year. In 1860, financial difficulties resulted in the purchasing of the hall by the municipal council and its subsequent use as a public library.

Gold was discovered at Beechworth in 1852 and the following year it was declared a town. In 1853 the initial survey of the town was undertaken and the grid arrangement of streets in the town centre was laid out. The gold rush peaked in Beechworth in 1857 and this resulted in the construction of many buildings, such as the hall for

the Young Men's Association, in the late 1850s. Due to its position on the main overland route between Melbourne and Sydney, Beechworth became an administrative and legal centre for the north-east region of Victoria and it became a municipality in 1863.

Robert O'Hara Burke, the police superintendent at Beechworth from 1854 to 1858, died in 1861, while on the Burke and Wills expedition from Melbourne to northern Australia. A decision was made by the residents of Beechworth to build a memorial to him and this resulted in the extension of the existing library building in 1863. This became known as the O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum. In 1874 a memorial stained glass window by the Melbourne firm, Ferguson and Urie, was installed in the rear wall of the building.

In 1868 the museum purchased an aboriginal collection of 96 artifacts, assembled by Reynell Eveleigh Johns, who was a major collector of both native and foreign material in the late nineteenth century. In the 1880s an acquaintance of his, Robert Hurlock Jenkyns, became curator of the Burke Museum and donations from Johns continued. Such donations and shrewd purchasing through the 1880s and 1890s resulted in a museum collection that gained a reputation as one of the best outside Melbourne. This includes rare books and manuscripts that formed part of the original library collection.

**The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2005. Sources were as follows:**

Allom Lovell and Associates. *Historic Towns Cultural Precinct Beechworth Conservation Management Plan*. 1999 (revised 2000)

R. C. Harvey. *Background to Beechworth from 1852*. Beechworth 1972 (1952)

C. Woods. *Beechworth. A Titan's Field*. Melbourne 1985

T. Griffiths. *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*. Melbourne 1996

C. Cooper. "Reynell Eveleigh Johns" in *La Trobe Library Journal*. Vol 5 no. 20 October 1977

## **Extent of Registration**

*United Shire of Beechworth*. No.345. Burke Museum, Loch Street, Beechworth.  
[*Victoria Government Gazette* No 100 Wednesday, October 9 1974 p.3650]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*