
Soldiers Hill Precinct



SOLDIERS HILL HERITAGE
PRECINCT

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO170

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria A.4 and H.1).

(a) the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;

(a.4) importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community;

(h) the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history.

The Precinct is a broad historical townscape founded in 1850s, associated with the expansion of military presence on the Ballarat gold fields following the Eureka uprising in 1854, when the original Police Camp, located in Lydiard Street, was reinforced by the establishment of a large military and police encampment nearby, on Soldiers Hill.

The Soldiers Hill Precinct was laid out under neoclassical auspices of hierarchy and axial ordering. It was surveyed by the colonial Government Surveyor W.S. Urquhart in late 1851, and the first lands sales took place in 1859 to the late 1860s. The area is historically important as it is an early example of a highly desirable mid 19th century goldfields residential area. Its popularity was due to its elevated position away from nearby gold mining activities and noxious industries. The early phase of development with its rectilinear street layout pattern reflects typical 19th century geometric neoclassical planning style based on public order with scattered clusters of commercial activities sited on major road intersections, interspersed with a range of denominational landmark ecclesiastical buildings and schools and uniform residential allotments. There was a significant phase of re-building and architectural consolidation during the late 19th century together with urban beautification schemes associated with major avenue re-planting of gums and pines with elms and plane trees, and infrastructure development identified by the extensive network of significantly intact bluestone channel drains, gutters and kerbs. The area remains predominately residential although later architectural development and infill became more eclectic in style. Through this process of consolidation and infill over the past 120 years, the urban fabric has been extended on the same pattern as the first mid 19th century layout and the harmony of the overall townscape has been retained.

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is **architecturally** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria D.2, E.1).

(d) the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments; (e) the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

The Precinct is a significant 19th and early 20th century example of residential area representing the development of modern urbanism, initiated by the 1850s gold rush in rural Victoria. The economic success of the town due to gold mining allowed for the development of a city that responded to the needs of a rising middle class. The new ideas that underpinned the urban plan of Soldiers Hill Precinct, resulting from concern of the civic role of public spaces and the need for natural light and ventilation to foster public hygiene, is also reflected by its collection of architectural buildings. The buildings demonstrates many original and intact design qualities associated with a diverse range of small scale predominately single-storey residential Victorian, Federation, and later Inter-War and early Post-War era buildings as well as a notable ensemble of commercial, cultural/community and educational development constructed between the 1860s and 1940s, and into the early 1950s. Many of the churches were designed by leading Victorian architects such as those designed by architects, J. A Doane (Weslyan Church), Leonard Terry (St. John's Anglican Church) and Figgis & Molloy (Scots Church). In contrast to the dominant elements of the churches other landmark structures in the precinct include examples of former industrial buildings such as the galvanised corrugated iron walling of the former Chaff Mill. Of particular significance in the hierarchical ordering of space and elements in the precinct is the adaptation of the urban plan to the introduction of the motor vehicle in the early 20th century and resulting design response to private garages which are sited at the rear of dwellings. The success of a unifying aesthetic ideal derived from overseas 19th century and early 20th century architectural and planning ideas adapted to a provincial Australian model is evidenced by the diverse array of often eclectic building styles in the precinct which collectively contribute to a

visually unified townscape of beauty.

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is **aesthetically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria D.2, E.1).

(d) the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments; (e) the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

The Precinct demonstrates important visual qualities that reflect the historical, cultural and architectural development of the precinct, and contribute to its 19th century urban plan and townscape setting. The 19th century neo-classical town planning concepts based on a regular grid with wide streets and absolute regularity of its grid gives way in the west and south to a number of crescents in response to abrupt changes in topography and introduction of the railway reserve. These features provide its special visual qualities, including complex views across and through the Precinct to other parts of Ballarat as well as east to Black Hill and further south-east to Mount Warrenheip. Despite a considerable variation in allotment sizes and topography, important internal urban and architectural views are created by the harmonious collection of a diverse range of residential architectural styles of similar scale, setback, orientation and construction material set within in a rigid geometric layout of tree lined avenues. Also of importance are the views of highly significant 19th century engineering infrastructure, including the Gnarr Creek Channel, which transects the residential area in the west part of the Precinct.

Further important aesthetic qualities of the Precinct include the variety of significant urban landmarks, a number of which can be seen from outside of the Precinct. These comprise each of the churches and their associated buildings, but particularly the Scots Presbyterian Church in Lydiard Street North with its dominant spire, and the St. Columba's Catholic Church with its notable campanile-like tower; each of the schools and their associated buildings, but particularly the dominant two-storey Macarthur Street

State School No.2022; the numerous corner shops and hotels (both present and former), as well as the small shops visible along various residential streetscapes, which provide focal points of interest to the long streets and particularly help to define many of the street intersections to the extent that many have become local landmarks; and the open landscape of the Walter Jones Reserve and the associated stand of mature cypress trees, which provide a scenic garden focus within the dominant residential area of this part of the Precinct. The important visual qualities of the Precinct are also enhanced by the mature and juvenile street tree plantings that are a significant component of many of the streetscapes; by the gravel/grass road shoulders and turf nature strips or footpaths; by areas of grassed and variously landscaped public and private open spaces such as the Walter Jones Reserve, school grounds, and the many private gardens with their mature canopy trees. These landscaped and treed areas provide the Precinct with a garden setting of considerable variety. Furthermore, the visual qualities of the Precinct are specially enhanced by the substantial integrity of the original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of bluestone spoon or channel drains, and bluestone inverted channel gutters with bluestone pitcher kerbs, and by the wrought iron drain guards.

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria C.2 and F1).

(c) the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.

(f) the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

The substantial integrity of the original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of bluestone drains is of importance for demonstrating the modern concepts of urban planning based on new order, hygiene and services. The use of bluestone pitchers as the principal material to form this type of engineering infrastructure also demonstrates an early, and now rarely used construction technology and the excellence of traditional craftsmanship.

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criterion G.1).

(g) the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

The Precinct is recognized and highly valued by the local community for its early and ongoing residential, commercial, social, educational, and recreational associations. It is furthermore recognized and highly valued by the local community for its past industrial associations.

Hermes Number 140657

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The Soldiers Hill Precinct is located directly to the north of the Ballarat City centre, within urban Ballarat. It is characterised by a heterogeneous combination of substantially intact residential buildings, which were constructed from the early 1860s (or possibly earlier) to the 1940s, and into the early 1950s. They are interspersed with a notable collection of cultural/community, commercial and educational buildings constructed from the early 1860s onwards. The precinct is also characterised by the formal grid layout of nearly all of its streets, many of which feature avenues of mature to semi-mature trees; by scattered areas of grassed and treed public and private open space including the Walter Jones Memorial Reserve, the lawns of the Ballarat North Bowling Club, and school grounds; and by numerous well-maintained private gardens, some of which contain notable mature tree specimens. Furthermore, the precinct is specially distinguished by the substantial integrity of its original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of bluestone spoon drains and gutters that can be seen along almost every road in the precinct, generally in conjunction with wide gravel/grass shoulders.

The precinct is predominantly bounded on the north by a short stretch of Howitt Street. The east boundary begins at the south-east corner of the intersection of Howitt Street with Ligar Street and runs in a staggered line in a south-east direction. It is generally formed by the rear boundaries of allotments located on the east or north sides (alternately) of part of Ligar Street, Howard/Sweeney Streets, Havelock Street, Napier Street, and Nicholson Street, and finishes at the Yarrowee River Channel.

The south boundary is partly formed by the edge of this Channel, which takes a curvilinear line to Nolan Street, and then by the fenced reserve of the Melbourne to Ballarat railway line and associated land alongside Lydiard Street North. This irregularly shaped edge then turns to curve in a north-west direction along the edge of the fenced reserve of the Ballarat to Ararat railway line, which forms the west boundary of the precinct from Lydiard Street North to Macarthur Street. North of Macarthur Street, the west boundary generally runs along the rear boundaries of allotments located on the west side of Crompton Street before turning just north of Howard Street to run along the east side of the Gnarr Creek Channel to Howitt Street.

The Ballarat North precinct generally includes land bounded by Ligar, Howard, Havelock, Napier and Nicholson Streets and the Yarrowee River Channel. The area became known as Soldiers Hill as it housed a second military camp for additional police and military at the height of the goldrush.

Land at Soldiers Hill was first sold in 1859. By 1862 the high land around Seymour Crescent had been developed residentially. The area was attractive for residential use as it was elevated above the city and away from much of the major industrial activity.

The local population was catered for by local shops in Macarthur Street and hotels scattered throughout the precinct. The Macarthur Street School was constructed in 1877 and the local churches in the mid 1860's. The St Johns Anglican Church is of particular interest for its west window, chancel and the Fincham and Hobday pipe organ.

Many of the buildings and street plantings were completed by the late 1890's and early 1900's. The precinct still retains some of the early evidence of the commercial and light industry such as the Macarthur Street shops, the North Star Hotel, the former chaff mill on the corner of Doveton and Brougham Street and the former Boot factory

in Nolan Street. The precinct also retains essentially the same street pattern as subdivided in the 1860's and the allotments are based on the 19th century government survey.

The precinct is architecturally important for its original and intact Victorian, Federation and Interwar and early Post War era residential buildings. Typically these are single storey (although some 1 ½ and 2 storey residences exist), roofs are hipped and/or gabled and clad with corrugated galvanised iron, slate or Marseilles tile terra cotta tiles. The buildings are either weatherboard or brick construction with unpainted brick chimneys, include eaves and verandahs, decorative detailing, timber doors and double hung or casement windows.

The precinct also includes original and intact Victorian, Federation and Interwar commercial, educational and cultural/community buildings. These buildings display similar characteristics to the residential buildings but have parapets, predominantly brick. Commercial buildings also have recessed entries and display early signage painted on sidewalls and complex and individual detailing and decoration. The cultural/community and educational buildings have steeper roofs and complex and individual detailing and decoration.

The important visual qualities of the precinct include the views toward the city centre, to Black Hill, the surrounding residential areas in the east, west and south of the Soldiers Hill. Also important are the views towards the former Myer Woollen Mills and Selkirk Bricks and the Railway Station.

Key landmarks in the precinct are the Scots and Presbyterian Church with its spire, the St Columba's Church with its campanile tower, the schools and associated buildings. The shops provide a focal interest in the streetscape and help to define many of the street intersections. The open landscape of Walter Reserve and the stand of mature cypress trees provide a scenic garden focus in a residential setting.

The precinct also includes mature and juvenile street tree plantings and private gardens with mature canopy trees, private and public open space, grass/gravel road shoulders and turf footpaths and nature strips. These create a varied garden setting for the precinct. The substantial integrity of the original engineering infrastructure shows an early and now rarely used construction technology and the excellence of traditional craftsmanship. This is displayed in the extensive network of bluestone spoon or channel drains and bluestone inverted gutters with bluestone pitcher kerbs and wrought iron guards.

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/>