
South Ballarat Precinct



SOUTH BALLARAT
HERITAGE PRECINCT

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO168

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The South Ballarat 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 important for its association with William S. Urquhart, the Assistant Governor Surveyor at the time in 1851, and is an excellent example of the lasting influence of his work.

It is also historically significant as an example where intensive gold mining operations co-existed alongside residential development over a long period of time within a neoclassical urban framework of hierarchy and axial ordering, on which the official policies of urban planning in Australia were founded. It provides a strong contrast with the unplanned chaotic road system of East Ballarat. Three important factors contributed to the retention of the historic urban layout in this area. These include; a) the large open grid plan of the original Urquhart survey, b) the late arrival of quartz mining in the area which was mined extensively within the formal rectangular gridded streets, c) the particular nature of underground quartz mining of the area that led to much larger undertakings, and in consequence left the surface area relatively undisturbed. This is best illustrated by the contrasting street layout of the western and eastern section of the precinct. In the eastern area, Golden Point Lead with its branches of Malakoff, Milkmaids and Nightingale Leads was mined in the early 1850s prior to the town survey and consequently the street pattern is notably irregular. While in the western section of the precinct, the rectilinear street pattern has emerged intact from history and the great 1870-90s quartz gold rush. The only indications of the former mines are the names of local streets and lanes. The Precinct is historically important for its ability to illustrate the story of how a very heterogeneous early residential mining area has developed through major transitional stages of development that were marked by significant phases of rebuilding, up-grading and architectural consolidation during the late 19th century and early to mid 20th century. The resulting pattern of various mix of domestic architectural styles sharply juxtaposed is historically important. Through this process of consolidation and infill over the past 160 years, the original 1851 town plan characterized by its open grid pattern has been infilled, and the harmony of the overall townscape has been retained.

The Precinct is also associated with the establishment and development of several institutions including a number of historic schools and churches as well as the Queen Elizabeth Home, and with early residential settlement in Ballarat. The present Trekardo Park is also of historical significance as the site of an early and long-serving quarry.

The South Ballarat 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 urban plan of South Ballarat is important as Ballarat was the first large goldfields town that W.S. Urquhart surveyed. It was also the project which he regarded as his favourite and most successful amongst all other many major mid 19th century goldfields town plans in Victoria for which he was responsible. The area is particularly significant because it has preserved its historic street pattern and urban fabric to a high degree.

The Precinct is architecturally noteworthy for its high quality of substantially intact buildings with examples of development from all periods ranging from 1860s-1950s. This together with 19th century urban beautification schemes associated with major street tree planting, construction of tar footpaths and engineering infrastructure program has created an area of great diversification contained within a unified urban plan.

Despite the diversity in architectural styles, the residences have similar orientation, and are of similar scale, although there are examples of larger villas as well as very small 19th century cottages scattered throughout the precinct. Although the majority of residences are single storey and detached, there are individual non-conforming examples dispersed throughout the precinct. These include houses with attic dormer windows and two storey Victorian residences to the north, some semidetached residences and terraces. Sometimes there is a range of

different front and side setbacks to dwellings and in addition various frontage widths to allotments within one street. However, these variations are small the slight randomness does not create strong contrasts in the urban context rather they add richness and variety to the streetscape. The residences are usually set within well maintained private gardens, some of which contain notable mature tree specimens. There are a number of intact small corner shops, predominately erected in the Victorian era, and larger commercial buildings and hotels that are local landmarks. Predominantly located on corner sites, they define street intersections. Interspersed within the Precinct are a notable collection of architecturally important churches and educational buildings constructed from the 1850s.

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

(d) its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's Cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's cultural environments (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique);

(e) its 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 visual setting. The Precinct is visually important as the grid pattern of its urban plan, laid out across the relatively flat topography of the grassy basalt plains of West Ballarat, is most fully appreciated here. The flat topography and constancy of scale of buildings, width and length of most streets combined with prominent display of intact blue stone gutters and mature elm, oak or plane tree planted in rows on both sides of the street within gravel/grass shoulders provide the precinct with gracious historic internal viewscape that is unbroken by intrusive elements. The long views of tree lined avenues extend across and through the Precinct to other parts of Ballarat, including east or south-east (respectively) to Mount Warrenheip and Mount Buninyong in the far distance. Also of importance are the views to and along the highly significant engineering infrastructure of the Redan Creek Channel, which transects part of 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; each of the schools and their associated buildings; the various shops and hotels (both present and former), which are predominantly located on corner sites and particularly help to define the street intersections to the extent that many have become local landmarks; and the open landscape of the Western Oval Reserve and the associated stands of mature trees, which provide a scenic focus within the dominant residential area of this part of the Precinct.

The appropriate front and side setbacks of the residences within their allotments, relative to the size of the residence, the allotment on which they sit, and the streetscape in which they are located also contribute to the aesthetic significance of the precinct, as the use of the appropriate type, style and height of fence in relation to the era and style of the corresponding buildings is another feature that contributes to the aesthetic significance of the Precinct.

The important visual qualities of the Precinct are also enhanced by absence of front garages and carports that provides consistency to the views of houses, which are clearly visible beneath the mature and semi-mature street tree plantings. The combination of deep landscaped grassy verges, extensive avenues of street trees, and variously landscaped public and private open spaces such as the Western Oval Reserve, school grounds, and the many private gardens with their mature canopy trees 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, by the small expanse of early flagstone and by the wrought iron drain guards. Other street furniture such as early square post boxes and intact concrete horse troughs donated by the George and Annis Bills Estate in the early 20th century contribute to the aesthetically significant qualities of the Precinct.

The South Ballarat 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 Precinct is of especially importance for contributing to a history of the infrastructure development of this area of the former municipality of Ballarat West, as identified by the substantially intact extensive network of original engineering infrastructure, in particular, the bluestone spoon drains and gutters that are readily visible alongside almost every road and rear lane in the Precinct. 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, as well as the excellence of traditional craftsmanship.

The South Ballarat 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.

Hermes Number 140659

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The South Ballarat Precinct is located directly to the south-west 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 1850s onwards. The precinct is also characterised by the formal grid layout of nearly all of its streets, most of which feature avenues of mature to semi-mature trees; by scattered areas of grassed and treed public and private open space including the Western Oval Reserve, the lawns of the City Bowling Club, and Trekardo Park; 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 north boundary of the Central Ballarat precinct is generally formed by the south boundary of the Sturt Street Central Heritage Precinct. It predominantly runs along the rear of the allotments on the south side of Sturt Street between Pleasant Street South and Lyons Street South, then along the southern boundary of much of the land and buildings associated with the St Patricks Cathedral, and finally along the north side of Dana Street between Dawson Street North and Doveton Street North. The east boundary begins at the north-west corner of the intersection of Doveton Street North with Dana Street and runs in a staggered line to the south boundary. It is generally formed by the east side of Doveton Street North (to Eyre Street), the north side of Eyre Street (to Armstrong Street North) and then by the rear boundaries of allotments located on the east side of Armstrong Street North (to Sebastopol Street), before turning to run along the rear of the allotments on the north side of Sebastopol Street (between Armstrong Street North and Hickman Street) and effectively ends where Sebastopol Street abuts the Yarrowee River Channel Reserve.

The south boundary begins at this same point and is characterised by an irregular edge that runs in a western direction to Skipton Street, and takes in allotments on the south side of Sebastopol Street, the east side of the last section of Dawson Street South, and the east side of Hill Street. At the intersection of Sebastopol Street with Skipton Street, the south boundary turns to run along the south-east side of Skipton Street to the intersection with Darling Street, and turns again to run along the south side of Darling Street to the point where it crosses the

Redan Creek Channel. The west boundary is firstly formed by the east edge of this bluestone lined channel (between Darling Street and Latrobe Street), then by part of the north side of Latrobe Street and finally by the west side of Pleasant Street South. The west boundary ends at Sturt Street.

The South Ballarat precinct is generally bounded by Pleasant Street, Darling Street, Skipton Street, Hill Street, east of Armstrong Street and adjoins the Lydiard and Sturt Street and West Ballarat heritage precincts. William Urquhart the government surveyor first surveyed the precinct in 1851. By 1861, formal surveying of allotments within the township blocks in a dominant grid pattern seems to have extended through most of the precinct. However the blocks south of Eyre Street, particularly between Ripon and Drummond Streets and as far south as Sebastopol Street, were yet to be divided into formal allotments. By the mid 1870s a tree planting program had commenced to beautify the residential areas and construction of tar footpaths began.

Mining occurred throughout this precinct with greatest concentration of activity in the eastern portion of the precinct. There was also a major quarry in the location of the present Trekardo Park.

The precinct is important as it shows many original and early examples of Victorian, Federation, Inter War and early Post War era residential, commercial, cultural/community and educational buildings.

Typically, the residential buildings are mainly single storey, with hipped or gabled roofs clad with corrugated iron, slate or terracotta tiles. They were generally constructed from horizontal weatherboard or brick, and sometimes bluestone, with mostly unpainted chimneys. Houses display eaves, projecting verandahs, porches and timber doors and timber casement or double hung windows.

The commercial, educational and community/cultural buildings are either one or two storey and generally have the same characteristics as the residential buildings with the exception of the pitch of roofs, parapets, and the type of individual decorative detailing.

Key landmark buildings include the Churches and their associated buildings, the schools particularly the former Urquhart Street State School No. 2103, and the corner shops and hotels (both former and current). The Western Oval Reserve is also an important recreational landmark in the area.

The important visual qualities of the precinct include the view across and through the precinct, the uniform location of buildings in relation to the size of the allotment and consistent building setback, the positioning of garages towards the rear of properties and the style of fencing suited to the architectural style of the building.

Other features of importance are mature and semi mature street and private garden trees, the grass verges, the open space landscaped areas of the reserves and school grounds. These combine to form a garden setting for the precinct. The early square post boxes and concrete horse troughs are notable structures that contribute to the precinct.

Also important is the network of bluestone spoon drains which are an example of early construction technology and show an excellence in craftsmanship. The network also shows the history of infrastructure development in this area of the former West Ballarat municipality.

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/>