

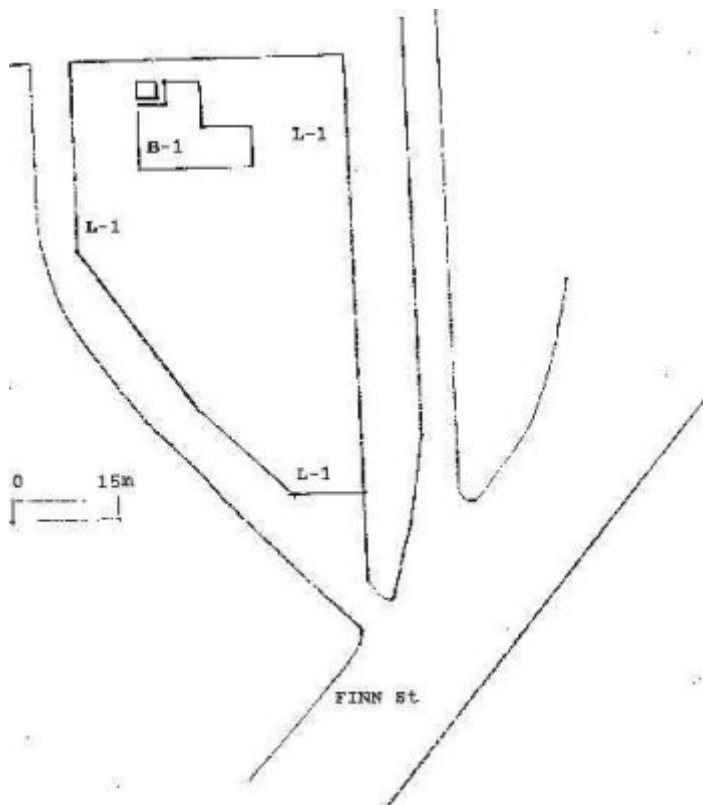
# BENDIGO CHINESE TEMPLE



BENDIGO CHINESE TEMPLE SOHE 2008



1 bendigo chinese temple finn street bendigo front



bendigo chinese temple registration plan

## Location

3 FINN STREET NORTH BENDIGO , GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1791

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO581

## VHR Registration

April 22, 1999

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 1, 1999

What is significant?

The Bendigo Chinese Masonic Temple is reputed to have been constructed in the 1860s by immigrant Chinese who had come to seek their fortunes as miners on the Victorian goldfields. The temple was one of a number whose construction was reported by contemporary newspapers but is the only temple surviving from the goldrush period in country Victoria. The temple was dedicated to the deity Chit Kung Tang but the inscription above the door reads 'Chinese Masonic Hall'. The temple fell into disrepair after being abandoned by the declining Chinese mining population. The site was subsequently incorporated into land held by the Commonwealth for defence production purposes during the Second World War. In the 1960s and 1970s the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) carried out a campaign to repair the building and to interpret its use and subsequently leased the site of the Temple from the Commonwealth Department of Defence. The complex is composed of an ancestral hall to the right and the temple in the centre. A caretaker's residence originally occupied the adjacent hall to the left and is now used as an interpretation centre. The temple and ancestral hall are brick while the residence is timber with a brick facade; floors are either brick or asphalt. The contents of the interior were imported from China in the early 1970s to display the traditional arrangement of a hall and temple. In 1999 the place was sold to the City of Greater Bendigo.

How it is significant?

The Bendigo Chinese Masonic Temple is of architectural and historical importance to the State of Victoria.

Why it is significant?

The Bendigo Chinese Masonic Temple is of architectural importance as an extremely rare form of religious building constructed in the Chinese tradition of temple building.

The Bendigo Chinese Masonic Temple is of historical importance to the state of Victoria in its ability to act as a tangible link to the lives and religious practices of the Chinese immigrants who came in large numbers to the Victorian goldfields during the second half of the 19th century. The temple is rare as a surviving structural artefact of that culture and period when so little else remains. The ephemeral nature of the way of life on the goldfields has meant an almost total loss of evidence of this cultural group and the survival of this building makes it unique in Victoria.

## 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.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations 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 alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Exterior

- \* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- \* Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.
- \* Installation or repair of damp-proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method.
- \* Regular garden maintenance.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering systems.
- \* Laying, removal or replacement of paving.
- \* Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- \* All works to the toilet block but not including enlargement of the structure.

Interior

- \* Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- \* Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled joinery, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative strapping.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and

other wall mounted artworks.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors.

Construction dates	1860,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BENDIGO JOSS HOUSE,
Hermes Number	2027
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

The discovery of gold in California in 1849 and Victoria in 1851 caused mass world migration on a scale unheard of in world history.

The declining returns on the Californian fields had the effect of re-focussing migration to Victoria after the gold discoveries here.

In the ten years between 1850 and 1861 the Australian population doubled from some 405,000 to 1,168,000.

Victoria in particular was swamped with migrants with its population rising from 77,000 to 540,000 in the same period. While the population remained strongly British, there was also an influx of Americans, Germans and Polish Jews and other Europeans. A substantial number of migrants were Chinese seeking the new gold mountain.

Most gold seekers arrived directly by sea but many Chinese were disembarked in South Australia from where they made the overland journey to the fields by foot. Official statistics show an influx of approximately 43,000 arrivals by sea between 1850 and 1890 and some 20,000 overland arrivals between 1855 and 1862 . The overland arrivals were mostly Chinese avoiding the £10 poll tax levied by the Victorian colonial administration specifically on them and collected from the port of landing. Hence many elected to disembark outside the reaches of the Victorian government.

Many of the goldfields divided into workings based on ethnic origins such as Long Gully in Bendigo worked by the Cornish miners. Unlike other gold seekers, the Chinese worked as a group enterprise and kept mostly to themselves in their encampments with one of the largest being near Guildford.

Many of the Chinese who arrived here came from Kwangtung south of Canton and west of Hong Kong. Hong Kong was their main port of embarkation. The Chinese were mainly male peasants or farmers with a few merchants and mechanics also migrating. Many were sojourners who came with the intention of returning home within a few years. Very few women made the journey and remained behind to care for family while their husbands sought fortunes in the hope of returning as wealthy men. The highest return rate from Victoria was in 1857 when 3,660 returned. Others stayed on and followed the gold strikes to New South Wales and North Queensland.

The migration of Chinese workers was often sponsored by Chinese and European enterprises. The miners worked as indentured labour hence they worked collectively, often in areas already worked over by others rather than moving to new unworked areas. The Chinese reworked tailings, reused previously worked shafts and with their collective efforts they reaped a collective but often meagre reward. The Chinese often made a living from areas thought to have been worked out, a fact that riled the European miners.

History of Place:

The Bendigo Temple is reputed to have been erected in the 1860s and dedicated to Chit Kung Tang. No primary source material has been found to authenticate this date. The Bendigo Advertiser reports that a Joss House was in existence in 1856 in Long Gully . A report by Rev. W. Young on the Condition of The Chinese Population in

Victoria does not mention a joss house in this vicinity. At this time the population of Chinese in the Sandhurst district was 3,500 with 1,000 living at Epsom. Given the large population at Epsom and generally in the area it is likely that a temple would have been eventually erected. One of the largest Chinese populations documented by Young was to be found at Beechworth numbering in excess of 7,000.

In 1870 the Bendigo Advertiser mentions the "erection" of a Chinese Joss House and then the razing by fire of the Emu Point Camp in 1887. The next mention is of a Chinese Joss House being "opened" in 1893 by the Advertiser. Of all the dates proposed this appears to be the most likely.

A letter from W. Sou San of Brisbane to the National Trust of Victoria, clearly makes the point that the inscription above the door reads 'Chinese Masonic Hall'. This is later reinforced by a second letter to the Trust by the Caretaker of the Brisbane Chinese Temple who adds to this comment by stating that the Bendigo Temple was masonic rather than a public temple such as the one in Brisbane where-in a number of deities are installed rather than the singular deity in Bendigo.

In 19 the National Trust of Victoria took lease possession of the temple for the purposes of restoring the building. The site was at that time in the possession of the Department of the Interior and stood on land which the Commonwealth acquired for the development of the Bendigo armaments factory during World War II. The Department acceded to a lease of the land to the Trust for a 25 year period starting in June 1978. the Trust raised funds for the repair work to the building and this was commenced in 19 . Funds also allowed the fitting out of the Temple with interior furnishings, altars, wall-hangings and the like. These items were purchased in China with the local Chinese community also supplying some of the artifacts. These were subsequently withdrawn in a much publicised dispute with the Trust over entry fees in 19 . More recently the Commonwealth transferred the surrounding armaments site title to Australian Defence Industries in 1989 but retained this land in the control of the Department of Defence. The Department sold the site to the City of Greater Bendigo in 1999.

Other Chinese Temple Houses are to be found in South Melbourne for the See Yup society (this two storey building being the largest known to exist), a Chinese society temple for Num Pon Soon in Lt Bourke St Melbourne, a temple House in Sydney, and temple houses in Brisbane, Innisfail and Atherton Queensland. The most comparable building is probably at Atherton Qld where the layout and style are similar although the exterior building material in Atherton is almost solely corrugated iron. The Temples in Brisbane, and Innisfail are single storey and brick. The Innisfail building is circa 1940s and is a public temple. The Brisbane Temple is fully imported from China and also a public place of worship. The Bendigo Temple is unlikely to have been imported given its locality and the transitional nature of the encampment.

#### TEMPLE TYPE SIZE DATE

South Melbourne See Yup society large 2 storey masonry and possibly the largest in Australia 1866 by George Wharton

Lt Bourke St Num Pon Soon society 2 storey slender building with upper storey worship room 1861 by Architect Peter Kerr

Bendigo Masonic Hall 3 single storey blds assoc with goldfields late 19th C

Sydney (Glebe) Sze Yup society 3 single storey brick buildings ?

Sydney (Alexandria) unknown ?

Brisbane public (5 clan) single storey masonry, roof fully imported from China, 1885-86

Innisfail public one single storey masonry bld 1940s

Atherton single deity Hou Wang 2 single storey timber and tin blds assoc with tin fields 1903

Darwin public single storey 1976

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1791 in the category described as a Heritage Place:

Bendigo Chinese Masonic Temple, Finn Street, Bendigo, City of Greater Bendigo.

EXTENT:

1. All of the building being the Ancestral Hall, Temple and Caretaker's Hall marked B 1 on diagram 601148 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L 1 being certificate of Title Volume 6654 Folio 616 as shown on Diagram No. 601148 held by the Executive Director.

Dated 13 April 1999.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 16 22 April 1999 pp.934-935]

*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/>*