

# BEECHWORTH CEMETERY



PROV H2215 Beechworth Cemetery chinese towers & altar



PROV H2215 Beechworth Cemetery main entrance gates



PROV H2215 Beechworth Cemetery fountain



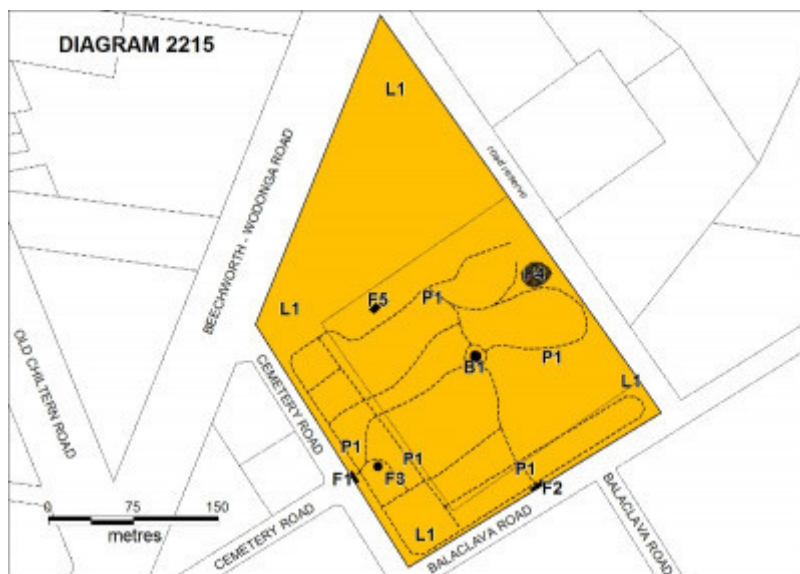
PROV H2215 Beechworth Cemetery rotunda



PROV H2215 Beechworth Cemetery Blue atlas cedar



PROV H2215 beechworth Cemetery rare viburnum obovatum



PROV H2215 beechworth cemetery plan

## Location

CEMETERY ROAD BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

## **Municipality**

INDIGO SHIRE

## **Level of significance**

Registered

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

H2215

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO11

## **VHR Registration**

October 8, 2009

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Beechworth Cemetery extends over a sloping site of approximately 20 acres (8.5 hectares) with the main entrance gates located at the intersection of Cemetery Road and Balaclava Road. It is bounded by the Beechworth-Wodonga Road to the north-west, English Lane to the north-east and Balaclava Road to the south-east, where a secondary entrance is located. The northern triangular tip of the site is currently unused.

Beechworth Cemetery was surveyed in February 1854 by the Government Surveyor under the supervision of James Ingram, and divided into rectangular denominational compartments. In 1856 a Cemetery Trust was formed and the cemetery was in operation in January the same year. The site was first gazetted as a public cemetery on 4 November 1861. Some early burials in the new cemetery were of bodies exhumed in 1857 from the earlier cemetery which had operated in Loch Street from 1853-55, now commemorated in a memorial garden to the pioneers situated at the rear of the cemetery on the north-eastern boundary.

The north-western sector is occupied mostly by the Chinese burials, where it is estimated two thousand Chinese are buried, some in communal graves, and it has two burning towers, an altar and numerous footstones. The two rare hexagonal towers built c1860 each have a burning chamber where paper prayers and offerings to the dead were burned, indicating that the original Chinese community probably came from southern China, where such towers and funeral practices were common. A separate rendered altar with inscription stone was constructed in 1883 and is set back from the two towers, which are positioned in front of and to either side of the altar.

Major structures include the iron entrance gates with gate posts of local granite erected in 1888, a 1900 Turkish-style fountain located just within the entrance, and a large octagonal rotunda constructed in 1897 in the centre of the cemetery.

Many examples of monuments and headstones, ranging from simple stone markers to elaborate carved tombs are found within the cemetery, including a columbarium in the form of a Besser brick wall which is located near the fountain. In June 1992 a Nursery Garden for infant burials was established to the south-east of the main entrance gates by the Beechworth Progress Association.

The path layout is a complex network of grid and curved paths with the main path leading from the entrance gates to the rotunda which is the central focal point of the cemetery. It contains over one hundred exotic and native plant species. The eastern windbreak at the back of the cemetery is largely of Eucalyptus species and blocks any external views to adjacent farmland. A hawthorn hedge on either side of the entrance gates forms the western boundary, and in the north there is a hedge of mixed species including acacias, photinia, and hawthorn.

Scattered evergreen shrubs and small trees through out the cemetery give it much of its landscape character and include species such as Laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*), Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Chinese Hawthorn (*Photinia serratifolia*) and other flowering plants, bulbs and native grasses. Important trees include conifers, palms, evergreen and deciduous trees. Trees of outstanding value are the Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica f. glauca*), two Funeral Cypress (*Chamaecyparis funebris*), Giant Redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), an Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), a Hoop Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) and a very rare Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*).

How is it significant?

Beechworth Cemetery is of historical, scientific (botanical) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Beechworth Cemetery is of historical significance as a substantially intact example of a mid-nineteenth century goldfields cemetery still in use. The cemetery has strong associations with Beechworth from its early development during the gold rush era in the 1850s and with the Chinese community, demonstrated by the large number of footstones.

It is of historical significance for its collection of buildings and structures which include typical cemetery features such as entrance gates, rotunda and headstones as well as highly distinctive and unusual features such as the Turkish fountain and rare twin Chinese burning towers built c1860 and altar constructed in 1883. The graves are important for the information they provide about burial customs and patterns of death in Victoria.

Beechworth Cemetery is of scientific (botanical) significance for its large collection of landscape plantings comprising hawthorn, photinia and rosemary hedges, conifers, palms, evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs, bulbs and native grasses. Of outstanding value are the Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica f. glauca*), two Funeral Cypress (*Chamaecyparis funebris*), Giant Redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), an Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), a Hoop Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) and a very rare Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*) one of only two examples in Victoria, the other a small shrub in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Beechworth Cemetery is of aesthetic significance as an early example of a cemetery influenced by the Romantic and Picturesque ideals which gained worldwide popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, with curved paths enclosing denominational compartments, carefully placed landscape plantings, hedges and windbreaks giving a sense of enclosure, vistas within the site and strong architectural focal features. The cemetery is extensively planted with a variety of plants, from bulbs to large trees and is the best example of a garden cemetery 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

**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 endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of 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 may 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

### Landscape

\* Repairs, conservation, and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, fountains and monuments, steps, paths, paths and gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, edging, fences and gates.

\* The process of gardening; mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety garden works.

\* New or replacement planting which conserves the historic landscape character including specimen trees, avenues, rows, shrubberies, beds, and lawns.

\* In the event of loss of any tree or palm specified in the Extent of Registration, replanting with the same species of tree as that removed.

\* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems outside the canopy edge of significant trees.

\* Vegetation protection and management of the pests and diseases.

\* Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

## General

\* Interments, burials and erection of monuments, re-use of graves, burial of cremated remains, and exhumation of remains in accordance with the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003.

\* Stabilisation, restoration and repair of monuments.

\* Emergency and safety works to secure the site and prevent damage and injury to property and the public.

\* Monument works undertaken in accordance with Australian Standard AS4204 Headstones and Cemetery Monuments

\* Painting of previously painted structures provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.

Construction dates 1854,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Hermes Number 112040

Property Number

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## History

### HISTORY:

*Indigo Shire Heritage Study* Volumes 1 and 2 by Peter Freeman Pty Ltd et al, 2000

*Beechworth Cemetery : a landscape study* by Spencer, RD, Worboys, W., Royal Botanic Gardens (Melbourne, Vic.) Victoria. Dept. of Crown Lands and Survey Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne: Department of Crown Lands & Survey, [Melbourne], 1981.

National Trust classification Beechworth Cemetery Number: G13062

Brochure '*Tour of Historic Graves at Beechworth Cemetery*' by Ian Hyndman for the Beechworth Cemetery Trust, nd.

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY:

#### Development of the Cemetery

One of the oldest established and most influential cemeteries of Europe is that of Pere-la-Chaise, Paris. It had previously been a large garden and was laid out as a cemetery in 1804. This development was the prototype for cemeteries in western Europe, especially in London and other English cities. Such cemetery designs broke with the tradition of churchyard burial grounds which eventually began to fall out of favour as offensive and unsanitary places. In England churchyard burial was attacked by sanitary reformers in the 1840s, and an act of parliament in 1855 finally closed churchyards and led to the development of the extramural cemetery. The great horticultural and architectural chronicler of the early nineteenth century, J. C. Loudon (1783-1843) no doubt exerted a strong influence on this development with his treatise on cemetery management and design (1843). New burial grounds began to be located on the outskirts of settled areas and regulations prevented overcrowding.

Many of the cemeteries of this period introduced curved pathways, chapels, rest pavilions, majestic evergreen trees and shrubberies, and rivalled the botanical gardens for their aesthetic and recreational qualities. Quite often these cemeteries were vast, sprawling and characterised by an amazing variety of monuments, many of which were mass produced for the consumer market. In mid-Victorian Britain fashionable cemetery designs were either based on formal geometry, often broken by a circular garden bed or plantings. Other cemeteries were Romantic

and naturalistic in style with freer patterns to their layout. American cemeteries developed as a progression from the English model by integrating monuments with the landscape.

## Cemeteries in Victoria

In Victoria the separation of church and state and the rapid development of the colony spurred by the gold rushes led to the creation of a large number of small cemeteries throughout the state. These were usually divided into denominational compartments, and many were laid out with complex meandering paths and incorporated plans for elaborate plantings. In the 1855-1860 period winding paths tended to be more popular than the grid system of arrangement and no fewer than eighteen designs from this period are known.

## Early History of Beechworth

In February 1852 early settler David Reid discovered gold while grazing his stock in the area. By November 1852 1500 miners had arrived in the area, and by January 1853, the population had increased to approximately 8000 with miners arriving from Europe, Great Britain, North America and over 4000 from China. During this time the area was known as Mayday Hills named by Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe in May 1852.

By 1853 a township began to form and the name Beechworth was bestowed by George D. Smythe, the Government Surveyor who planned the first streets and public areas for the town. Beechworth's early administrators had the vision to realise gold would not last forever and in the 1850s and 1860s made substantial investment in constructing public amenities such as a hospital for the aged, jail, general hospital, mental asylum, town hall and post office. Most of these major buildings stand today as evidence of the great economic prosperity of the region at that time

## HISTORY OF PLACE

The first burial ground in Beechworth was in Albert Street and the second burial ground was located in Loch Street and operated from 1852-1856.

The present site of Beechworth cemetery was surveyed in February 1854 by the Government Surveyor and the square site was divided into rectangular denominational compartments. Early in 1856 a Cemetery Trust was formed and the first to be interred in September 1857 were those that had been previously buried in the town's graveyard formerly situated on Asylum Hill and then on land in Loch/Camp Street. When the new cemetery opened in 1857 sixty-four bodies were exhumed and on 1 September 1857 they were escorted in a formal procession headed by the clergy and the Chairman of the Town Council and other Councillors. They were reburied in a designated area of the Pioneer's Memorial Garden which has recently been landscaped.

The ten-acre site was more than doubled in October 1861 although only a small portion of the extension was utilised for burials. When first surveyed the cemetery reserve was covered with huge trees that were grubbed and removed. During 1862 the Trustees erected a three-roomed weatherboard cottage within the grounds in lieu of the temporary calico arrangement hitherto used. At this time the Board of Health Inspector noted that some additional planting had also been done and further work undertaken on the paths. Iron gates with local granite posts were designed by Donald Fiddes and erected by William Fiddes in 1888, with the granite balls added in 1903. An office in the form of an octagonal rotunda was also designed by Donald Fiddes and constructed by JA Scovell in 1897. An ornamental fountain manufactured by Messrs Danks and Company of Melbourne was installed in 1900 at a cost of £100.

In 1906 a reporter from the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* observed that,

"the Trustees have persevered in a policy of perpetual improvement, with the result that the Beechworth Cemetery can now with justice claim to be one of the best cared for and most picturesque burial grounds in the provinces'. The well trimmed quick-set hedge, trimmed with its neat outer wire fence; the magnificent row of pines and the palatial granite gateway, form a fitting and attractive entrance to the clean, well-gravelled walks and monuments within. The fine ornamental fountain and the central rotunda add grace to the many other features of aesthetic interest".

## The Chinese

In the 1850's significant gold deposits were discovered in the Buckland Valley and a large number of miners moved into the area. The large and shifting population attracted to the area over a long period included many

Chinese, whom by 1857 outnumbered Europeans on the Buckland River by at least three to one. Racial tensions developed, coming to a head on 4 July 1857 in a notorious anti-Chinese uprising, known as the Buckland Riot. This resulted in many of them fleeing to Beechworth thereby swelling the numbers of Chinese in the area.

The Chinese formed their own community within the town, and "Chinatown" was located along the lower Stanley Road on the high side of where Lake Sambell is now situated. The community had its own shops, market garden, Joss House and temple. The Chinese took an active interest in town affairs and were generous donors to the appeal to build the Ovens District Hospital in 1856-57. They formed a colourful part of the annual procession through Beechworth's main streets.

The burning towers were built c 1860 and used for burning paper prayers and meals for the dead. The towers were not used for cremation. This indicates that it is likely that the Chinese were from southern China as in northern China it was the custom to burn paper prayers and meals at the graveside. Although there are thought to be about 2000 Chinese buried at the Beechworth Cemetery, it was the wish of all Chinese people to be buried in China. For this reason it was relatively common for bodies to be exhumed and sent back to China where reburial would take place. The separate altar was constructed in 1883 and is set back from the symmetrical towers which are positioned in front of and to either side of the altar.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA:

a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

*Beechworth Cemetery is important as a substantially intact example of a mid nineteenth century Victorian goldfields cemetery.*

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

*Beechworth Cemetery is important as a source of information about burial customs and patterns of death in the colony of Victoria.*

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Beechworth Cemetery is an important early example of mid nineteenth century Romantic and Picturesque landscape design principles which gained world wide popularity through design, layout and plantings.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Beechworth Cemetery is important for its strong links with Chinese migration to Victoria, their presence in the gold fields and burial practices.

## **Plaque Citation**

This goldfields cemetery, with an important collection of old plants, has operated since 1856. About two thousand Chinese miners are buried here and it has rare Chinese burning towers from c1860 and an 1883 altar.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2215 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Rotunda

2. All the features marked as follows on Diagram 2215 held by the Executive Director.

F1 Main entrance gates

F2 Side entrance gates

F3 Fountain

F4 Pioneers' Memorial Garden

F5 Chinese altar, towers and footstones in the Chinese section

3. All of the paths, cemetery markers and signs shown as P1 on Diagram 2215 held by the Executive Director.

4. All the landscape plantings comprising hawthorn, photinia and rosemary hedges, conifers, palms, evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. Of outstanding value are the Blue Atlas Cedar, two Funeral Cypress, Giant Redwood avenue, Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), a Hoop Pine and a *Viburnum obovatum*.

4. All of the land shown as L1 on Diagram 2215 held by the Executive Director being all of the land described as Crown Allotments 2 & 3, Section K Parish of Beechworth.

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*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/>*