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## The Botanic Gardens Precinct



Borough of Queenscliffe  
Heritage Overlay map



"A Charming Avenue in the  
Park" c.1920



Victoria Park



Royal Hotel, c. 1966. Source: Botanic Gardens  
State Library Victoria  
(b19651)



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### Location

King street and Mercer Street QUEENSCLIFF, QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

### Municipality

QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO9

### Heritage Listing

Queenscliffe Borough

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 1, 2009

Statement of Significance as recorded under the Queenscliff Heritage Study 2009

### *What is significant?*

The Botanic Gardens precinct dates from the early development of Queenscliff in the 1850s with the park apparently established around ten years later. The garden retains a series of mature specimen trees, while King and Mercer Streets contain a number of significant residences which date from the early development of Queenscliff. In addition the precinct includes the Royal Hotel, a late nineteenth century building which demonstrates the importance of the town during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a fashionable holiday resort.

Specific significant and contributory buildings within the precinct are identified in the attached schedule.

### How is it significant?

This precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the Borough of Queenscliffe.

### Why is it significant?

The Botanic Gardens Precinct is of local historical significance as a group of early residences in Queenscliff, all sited to face onto the Botanic Gardens which was laid out and planted from the 1860s. Several of these residences are associated with persons of both local and state historic significance. The Royal Hotel on the corner of King and Mercer Streets of 1881-2, while later, was also sited and designed to look over the Gardens and towards the sea and there is also a strong historical and visual link between the hotel and the Gardens. While not a particularly intact landscape, the remnant mature plantings (specimen trees) in the former Botanic Gardens are of local historical significance in demonstrating the efforts in the nineteenth century to create a Botanic Garden in Queenscliff, as had occurred in many other Victorian towns and regional centres.

The key early residences in the group are all of historical interest for their associations with particular individuals and families. The houses along King Street have particular associations with early pilots and the houses along Mercer Street have associations with two prominent Victorian gentlemen, W B Wright and Justice Thomas Fellows.

The Botanic Gardens precinct is of local aesthetic significance for its combination of nineteenth century buildings and garden setting with mature specimen trees. The buildings in King Street and Mercer Street are specifically oriented to face the garden, and the two streets are linked by the prominent Royal Hotel as the key corner building. The precinct contains individual buildings of aesthetic (architectural) interest and significance, including a series of relatively modest and austere mid-Victorian residences, contrasting with the more architecturally flamboyant Royal Hotel. The street layout of this part of Mercer Street is unusual in Queenscliff being a gentle crescent shape which is followed by the setback of the buildings along this street.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Queenscliffe - Queenscliffe Urban Conservation Study, Allom Lovell & Associates P/L, Architects, 1982; Queenscliffe - Queenscliffe Heritage Study, Lovell Chen, 2009;
Hermes Number	120956
Property Number	

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## Usage/Former Usage

The land along King Street and Mercer Street that fronts onto the gardens was substantially sold off in land sales between 1853 and 1857. By 1865, seven buildings had been built in the area, six of which remain today. The houses along King Street have particular associations with the early pilot service and the houses along Mercer Street have associations with two prominent Victorian gentlemen, LB. Wright and Justice Thomas Fellows. The area of the precinct taken up by the present gardens and caravan park was originally proposed for sale as Section IX but by 1865 had been incorporated into a Cricket and Public Recreation Reserve extending from Mercer Street to Gellibrand Street and bounded by King Street on the north side. Little is known about the planting or development of these gardens except that by 1866 the newly formed Borough Council were requesting plants from Mr. Bruce of the Botanical Gardens in Geelong. It appears from what remains of them today that they were always of an informal nature or else have been massively altered from their original concept.

## Physical Description 1

### Streetscape

The nineteenth century appearance of Mercer and King Streets appears to have been a central carriageway with gravel and grass verges running up to gravel footpaths. There does not appear to have been substantial tree planting in either street. The present appearance of King Street is a narrow bitumen carriageway with wide gravel verges, concrete footpaths and kerbs and a mown naturestrip. In the case of Mercer Street the west side of the road has a concrete footpath, kerb and channel and nature strip and on the east side the roadway merges into the edge of the park. In both streets the grassed and gravelled verges should be maintained and a program of street tree planting implemented on both sides of the street. In the case of King Street, this should be continued along the full length of the street.

## Physical Description 2

### Extract from the 2009 study

This precinct includes properties on the west side of Mercer Street between Flinders and King Streets; those on the south side of King Street between number 34-38, including the Royal Hotel at the corner of King and Mercer Streets; the Botanic Gardens (north-west corner of Victoria Park); and two properties on the north side of Flinders Street. The area is generally residential in nature; but also includes an important public park, Victoria Park (former Botanic Gardens) as well as a major nineteenth century hotel, the Royal Hotel.

The Royal Hotel is located on the north-west corner of the precinct and is one of Queenscliffe's key nineteenth century hotels (the others being located in Gellibrand and Hesse Streets). The large two storey rendered brick Victorian Italianate hotel faces south to King Street where it features central tower and prominent entry element, arcaded loggia and balcony with decorative cast iron balustrading and flanking canted bays. The Royal is architecturally and socially significant as one of the town's late nineteenth century boom era resorts. Although remote from its contemporaries, the Royal Hotel occupies a prominent position and is one of the first substantial Victorian buildings seen when entering the town.

To its east, the properties along King Street are single-storey residences of varying ages set back slightly from the street behind modest front gardens. This row includes three single-storey former pilots residences of the late 1850s (Sefton, Alikum and Rosenfield (22-26 King Street) all of which have survived relatively intact.

Along the western edge of the precinct, this section of Mercer Street is unusual in Queenscliffe, its gentle crescent shape in contrast with the strict grid system of the majority of the town. In their siting the properties on the west side of the street broadly follow the curve (with the exception of no. 74 which is set further into its site). Another three very early Queenscliff residences are found here, these are The Ridge 9 (68 Mercer Street, c.1862), Bungalow Cottage (7 Mercer Street, c. 1859-60) and Warringah (formerly El Tambo, 80 Mercer Street, c. 1860). These are interspersed with other residences of the Victorian period and later which make varying contributions to the precinct.

The buildings around the perimeter of the gardens in this area are of diverse characteristics although there is a predominance in the earlier buildings of rendered brick and pitched slate roofs.

The former Botanic Gardens (north-west section of Victoria Park) was set aside for the purpose of public recreation soon after the Borough's formation. Victoria Park was planted by c.1870, prior to either Princess or Citizens Parks under advice provided by Dr. Mueller. The remnant Moonahs are the only trees to date from this period; with the possible exception of the large Aleppo Pine. The cypress within the reserve are unlikely to be more than 110 years old (c. 1900). Other features of the original park such as the ferns and maze have been lost. It is unknown whether the current path configuration is original, or the extent to which it may have been modified to accommodate campers.

In the height of summer this precinct is transformed into a busy caravan park. A hipped roof brick former Baby Health Centre of the c. 1940s is located on the King Street frontage of the park; this has been converted for use as a Neighbourhood House.

*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/>*