
Central Ballarat Heritage Precinct



CENTRAL BALLARAT
HERITAGE PRECINCT

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO166

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Central Ballarat Precinct is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level. (AHC criteria A.3, 4 and H.1).

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

(a3) importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of built landscapes and cultural features;

(a4) & (h1) importance for association with events, developments, cultural phases and individuals which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the region.

The urban development and character of the Precinct has historic significance for its association with a number of significant activities that links together some of the main themes in the historical, social and architectural development of Ballarat.

Aspects that contribute to the historic significance of the Precinct include its associations with underground quartz mining, particularly the main Inkerman Lead that wound its way through the precinct to the south.

The Precinct is historically important as an example of a highly desirable mid 19th century goldfields residential area, as evidenced by the physical fabric from the period 1870s-1890s. It is also associated with an unusually high incidence of home ownership in this period helped along by a policy of establishing residential areas with deep lead mining areas that has shaped the subsequent development of the area.

Its close proximity to the central business district of Ballarat made it a prime location for a number of educational, religious and medical institutions built from the early 1870s. Today, the Precinct still houses the Aquinas campus of the Australian Catholic University, a campus of Ballarat and Clarendon College and St. John of God Hospital. The western section of Mair Street, particularly from Talbot Street to Doveton Street has become a medical precinct due to the large campus of St. John of God Hospital and the neighbouring Ballarat Base Hospital. Medical practitioners now occupy many of the contributory timber Victorian and Edwardian cottages in the immediate vicinity of the hospitals.

The Precinct is historically important as the location for several early commercial and industrial enterprises that operated throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Two flour mills took advantage of the ready water supply of Lake Wendouree and located along Wendouree Parade. The Hassell and Monckton Mill included a substantial brick chimney and other buildings designed by architect Henry Caselli. In 1904, it became the site of the new powerhouse for the Electric Supply Company of Victoria. Hotels and breweries sprung up throughout the 1860s, hoping to take advantage of the many miners in the immediate vicinity working the 'mini-rush' along Webster Street.

The Central Ballarat Precinct is **aesthetically and architecturally** significant at a **LOCAL** level. (AHC criteria D, E and F).

(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;

(f) its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative design or artistic excellence, or technical achievement at a particular period.

The Precinct is architecturally significant for its many substantially intact residential, commercial, cultural/community and educational buildings and important early industrial buildings dating from the 1860s and 1940s, and into the early 1950s. Generally there is a good retention of original housing stock throughout the precinct with scattered examples of larger villas, terraces as well as small cottages (the latter predominantly erected in the Victorian era).

The historic urban design context of the Precinct is important for the harmony of the overall townscape derived from its rectilinear street layout pattern that reflects typical 19th century neoclassical planning ideals, the outstanding engineering infrastructure, in particular the bluestone drains, public street furniture, the landscape treatment of the streets, inclusive of European tree lined avenues and wide gravel/grass road shoulders. 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 building styles in the Precinct which collectively contribute to a visually unified townscape of beauty.

The residential architecture of the area is aesthetically significant for its high degree of integrity and condition, and forms an important collection of Victorian, Federation, Inter- War and early Post-War buildings. While there is considerable variety across the area due in part to different allotment sizes, within the same street or sections of streetscapes, groups of houses are quite similar in size, scale, set back, with a unity of materials as well as design characteristics. The roofline throughout the Precinct, is characteristically dominated by a forest of brick chimneys, some with complex brick patterning or render detailing, others have notable features including cement rendered caps and chimney pots.

The Precinct is architecturally important for the significant numbers of quality houses that date to 1880s. The area experienced a period of brisk development between 1861 and 1871, when a number of lucrative deep leads were mined. The reputation of the area as a fashionable town address, especially within the vicinity of Webster Street after the mid 1860s attracted a number of local mining magnates to the area. Houses along Webster Street were characterized by their large allotments and emphasis on formally designed private gardens with plantings of exotic trees. This street character, along with sections of neighbouring Drummond Street, remains largely intact and reflects the prosperity of Ballarat in the 1870s-1880s. Baileys's Mansion' (1883), on the corner of Mair and Drummond Streets and now part of St. John of God Hospital, is a visual reminder of the prosperity of this section of West Ballarat in the late 1870s-1880s. While it is a fairly typical example of a 'boom-time' mansion, complete with tower, it is a rare style for Ballarat and more common to Melbourne.

The Precinct is architecturally important for the number of terrace rows, or pairs of semi-detached residences scattered throughout the Precinct. The most notable of which is the three storey terrace at the east end of Webster Street. At the same time as these substantial residences were being erected, canvas dwellings had almost disappeared and almost ninety per cent of houses were wooden with between three and four rooms. The existing houses in this precinct still tend to be timber with some fine examples of boom style Victorian villas and Edwardian and Federation style houses.

Wood was the chosen material for much of the housing in the Precinct and neighbouring precincts because it was cheap, plentiful and available locally through a thriving timber industry. Apart from the cost, miners often preferred timber residences because of the ease with which the house could be relocated if necessary. This was a fairly common occurrence throughout the 1870s, particularly if the house had been erected on a miner's right. Numerous small cottages had appeared along the southern sections of the Precinct. While housing in the northern sections of the precinct, are often later examples of typical timber framed workman's cottage. This can be partly attributed to the changing status of miners and the general decline in the mining industry at the beginning of the 20th century. The emphasis on affordable rental accommodation may have continued in the northern section of this precinct when the Railway Workshops opened at North Ballarat in 1914.

The western section of the Precinct including Wendouree Parade is architecturally significant for the collection of Inter-War houses that exhibit a great variety of individual architectural styles. These examples are aesthetically important as within a small locality it is possible to view a range of designs that illustrate the personal tastes and creative inspiration of a provincial mid 20th century Australian city.

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. The variety of framed and panoramic views, within the Precinct can be experienced in numerous directions and along streets as well as narrow rear access laneways or rights-of-way. The important visual qualities of the Precinct are also enhanced by the mature street tree plantings that are a significant component of many of the streetscapes; the soft landscaping of wider streets; landscaped public and private open spaces and the many private gardens with their mature canopy trees.

The residential gardens in the Precinct show a high degree of variety. Many gardens are well planted with native and exotic plants, expansive lawns and mature canopy trees which are often complemented by large, well-maintained front hedges. Some of the gardens are listed on the Register of the National Estate, and/or by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). These varied residential gardens, along with the pockets of highly visible

landscaped and treed grounds belonging to religious and educational institutions complement the treed lined avenues and contribute to an informal garden setting of the precinct.

The Precinct is also transected in the northern part of the precinct (from the northwest area to the south-east area) by the historic brick-lined Wendouree Creek Channel, parts of which are covered while other parts are open and visible from various local streets.

The Central Ballarat Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria C and F).

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

(f) importance for its technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

It is of importance for contributing to a history of the infrastructure development of this area of the former municipality of Ballarat West, particularly as identified by the extensive network of significantly intact bluestone spoon or channel drains, and bluestone inverted channel gutters with bluestone pitcher kerbs, and by the brick Wendouree Creek Channel and some bluestone lined stormwater drains. The use of bluestone pitchers as the principal material to form much of this engineering infrastructure also demonstrates an early, and now rarely used construction technology, as well as the excellence of traditional craftsmanship. Many buildings and associated structures also demonstrate high standards of construction and craftsmanship.

The Central Ballarat Precinct is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level. (AHC criteria G).

(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, religious, and educational associations.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Ballarat - Ballarat Heritage Precincts Study, Dr David Rowe and Wendy Jacobs, 2006;
Hermes Number	140651
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Central Ballarat Precinct is located directly to the north-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 (and possibly earlier) to the 1940s, and into the early 1950s. They are interspersed with a number of notable cultural/community, commercial, educational and industrial buildings constructed from the early 1860s onwards. The precinct is also characterised by the irregularly spaced 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 grounds of various schools and other institutions, the small park within the Duncan Street road reserve west of Drummond Street North, and the lawns of the Servicemen's Memorial Bowling Club; 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 most roads in the precinct, sometimes in conjunction with wide gravel/grass shoulders. Other important engineering infrastructure:

The north boundary of the Central Ballarat Precinct is effectively the narrowest part of the precinct and is generally formed along the north side of Cardigan Street (between Wendouree Parade and Burnbank Street) and

along the rear boundaries of the allotments on the north side of Cardigan Street (between Burnbank Street and Lexton Street and including two allotments facing Lexton Street). The east boundary begins at the north-east corner of the intersection of Lexton Street with Pisgah Street and runs in a staggered line in a south-east direction. It is generally formed by the east side of Lexton Street, the north side of Macarthur Street (between Lexton Street and Creswick Road), the west side of Creswick Road to Webster Street, the east side of Yuille Street (including some allotments), the rear boundaries of the allotments on the south side of Mair Street (between Dawson Street North and Lyons Street North), and by the east side of Lyons Street North (between Mair Street and Sturt Street).

The south boundary is generally formed by the north boundary of the Sturt Street Central Heritage Precinct, which predominantly runs along the rear of the allotments on the north side of Sturt Street but also encompasses all of the Ballarat Base Hospital site. The west boundary runs along the west side of Pleasant Street North to Wendouree Parade, before turning to run along the east side of Wendouree Parade (the east boundary of the Lake Wendouree Heritage Precinct) up to the north-east intersection of Wendouree Parade and Cardigan Street.

The Central Ballarat precinct covers an area north of Sturt Street, south west of Lake Wendouree. The area was first surveyed in 1851 and 1852 with a formal grid layout and the first land sales occurred in 1852.

Residential and commercial development occurred amidst significant mining activity, although building development had not spread beyond Mair Street and the southern side of Webster Street. People were attracted by the close proximity to the commercial centre around Lydiard and Sturt Streets, the railway station, the recreational pursuits at Lake Wendouree. The residences reflected the prosperity of 1870-1880's Ballarat.

Small cottages appeared along the southern sections of Mair Street extending from central Ballarat to Pleasant Street. Most of the cottages were weatherboard and were predominantly owner occupied, again reflecting the prosperity of the town. Timber was preferred as it was plentiful and could be easily relocated if necessary. Housing in the northern sections of the precinct while still timber were more characteristic of workers cottages. The more modest homes can be attributed to the decline of mining from the 1870's, leading to a substantial increase in rented homes. The establishment of the railway workshops in 1914 may have been an added influence for the provision of affordable housing, within walking distance of the workshops. Some commercial businesses were also located in the precinct, including two flourmills and an electricity supply company on Wendouree Parade, taking advantage of the water supply. Hotels and breweries sprang up serving the miners working in the vicinity of Webster Street.

The precincts close proximity to the city centre made it a prime location for educational, religious and medical institutions such as the Australian Catholic University, St John of God and Ballarat Base Hospitals and Ballarat and Clarendon College.

The precinct is architecturally important as it contains many original and early examples of Victorian, Federation, Inter War and early Post War era residential, commercial and industrial buildings. These include key landmark buildings such as Nazareth House, the Ballarat Christian Fellowship Church and Hall especially the dominant spire, the educational buildings, shops, the three-storey terrace in Webster Street and the former William Bailey mansion in Drummond Street.

Typically, residential buildings in the precinct are single storey (although some are 1 ½ to 2 and rarely 3 storey), with hipped and/or gabled roofs clad in either galvanised corrugated iron, slate or terra cotta tiles.

Buildings were constructed of weatherboard, brick or bluestone and include verandahs or porches, eaves, unpainted chimneys, decorative detailing, timber framed doors and double hung or casement windows.

The commercial, educational, cultural/community buildings also show similar features as the residential buildings. However, they also have complex and individual detailing and decoration. Roofs are generally steeper and clad in slate or tiles. The buildings are one, two or three storey and constructed from brick with contrasting cement rendered details.

The important visual qualities of the precinct include views to Lake Wendouree and the City Oval, the Old Ballarat Cemetery, Mount Buninyong, Black Hill and the Soldiers Hill residential area. The precinct also features views of the highly significant Wendouree Creek Channel engineering infrastructure such as the extensive network of bluestone spoon or channel drains, bluestone inverted channel gutters, bluestone pitcher kerbs and deeper brick and bluestone storm water drains and wrought iron guard rails.

Other features of the precinct are the mature street plantings, grass/gravel shoulders, early tram shelters, the landscaped private and public open space, fences, private gardens and mature canopy trees.

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/>