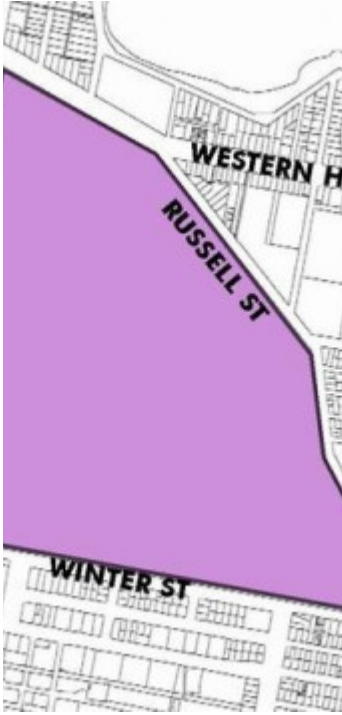

Victoria Park Precinct



VICTORIA PARK HERITAGE
PRECINCT

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO165

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Victoria Park Precinct is **aesthetically and historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria A, D, E, F).

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

(d) the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments; D.2 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique);

(e) the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

(f) the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

The area has important heritage values for its association with gold mining in the 1860s, which has been central to the development of Ballarat. An unusual feature of the park is the large mullock heap, which marks site of the former quartz mine, and is one of the few visible signs of the former presence of extensive gold mining activities in this area of Ballarat. The place is important for its association with early military manoeuvres in the late 19th century, and the use of the site as an army base to house United States servicemen during World War 2.

Victoria Park is significant as a landmark cultural landscape in the city of Ballarat. It a fine picturesque 19th century recreational park, that covers an area of 130 hectares at the corner of Sturt and Gillies Streets in the western area of Ballarat. It has both aesthetic and historic value as a substantially intact late 19th century parkland that has retained its original design layout and plantings that were established between 1890 and 1910. The designed parkland was modeled on popular English country estates and London Parks. In the fashionable picturesque landscape style, the park is designed with typically graceful curvilinear tree-lined avenues of different European exotic trees that create formal vistas offering glimpses of distant open landscape views of open grasslands, feature trees and densely planted woodland groves.

Like the Ballarat Botanic Gardens to the north, the area is significant as a fine example of late 19th century man-made cultural landscape that visually defines the limits of 19th century urban growth of West Ballarat and remains well preserved with a high degree of integrity without later intrusive development.

The Victoria Park Precinct is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC Criteria G.1)

(g) the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The Victoria Park Precinct is important for its ability to demonstrate the civic pride of Ballarat citizens, whose gold riches were transformed into civic and cultural enhancement projects funded by both public and private benefactors. It is important as it illustrates the determination of the local community to transform the remnant eyesores of the mining era into fine public facilities, clearly continuing the tradition of civic beautification projects initiated by local authorities and community groups.

The parkland is significant to the local community as it has been continuously used as an open space for passive and active recreation with specific connections to equine pursuits, dog obedience, cricket, walking, jogging, cycling and motor sports since its development as a park.

The Victoria Park Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC Criteria F.1)

(f) the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

It is significant for its collection of exotic and early planted native trees including the three unusual specimens recorded on the Register of Significant Trees, as well as significant areas of native grasslands which have re-generated.

Hermes Number 156828

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The precinct is all the land within the boundaries of Sturt Street West, Russell Street formerly known as Victoria Parade) Winter Street and Gillies Street.

Historical Overview

Victoria Park covers an area of 130 hectares at the corner of Sturt and Gillies Streets in Ballarat. The present day layout of the Park is historically significant, as it has remained substantially intact from the time it was first designed and planted between 1890 and 1910.

The citizens and public authorities of Ballarat appear to have considered the land a necessary public reserve within the first decade of the establishment of the city. In 1861, the Chairman of the Ballarat Council appealed to the President of Crown Lands and Survey to have the area 'specifically reserved for a Park and Gazetted as such.'¹ The Council was concerned because the parkland was wrongly included in a 6000 acres parcel of land Gazetted for a Town Common at Ballarat West and the Council wished it to be protected under a separate reservation. As part of the process, Council agreed to compensate the owners of the small tenements located within the park area and the land was temporarily reserved by gazettal on 12 August 1861.'² In this period the land was known and referred to locally as 'Royal Park'.

While the land was intended primarily as a public recreation facility, exceptions were made for mining interests here as they were in almost all areas of Ballarat. Approximately eight different companies had an interest in gold exploration at Victoria Park and the surrounding area, the largest being the United Hand-in-Hand and Band of Hope, Park, Ballarat Freehold, Western Freehold, Newington and Inkerman Companies. In October 1866, the United Hand-in-Hand and Band of Hope Company sunk a shaft within the Park as part of its exploration of the Inkerman Lead.'³ The value of gold obtained from this venture totalled £4517. In November 1867, this shaft and the portion of their claim within the Public Park was transferred from the United Hand-in-Hand and Band of Hope Company to the newly formed Park Company.'⁴

The most distinctive element remaining within Victoria Park from the mining period is the large mullock heap at the southern end, formed from debris from the workings of the Park Company. After 1898 the mullock heap became known locally as 'Mount Holled-Smith', named in honour of Major General Sir Charles Holled-Smith, British commander of the Victorian Defence Force. Major General Holled-Smith supervised military exercises involving some 3000 men at Victoria Park during Easter 1898. An objective of one of the exercises was the defence of the mullock heap.'⁵

The Governor in Council approved the Crown Grant for permanent reservation of the park on 6 August 1888. The land took the official name Victoria (Royal) Park and covered 325 acres 2 roods 8 perches. The Crown Grant was vested in "the Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of the City of Ballarat and to their successors... for the purpose of a public park and offices and convenience connected therewith and for no other purpose whatsoever".'⁶ The specific wording of the Crown Grant has proved contentious over the years, as successive Councils, property developers and various recreational interest groups have eyed the large parcel of vacant land and sought a proprietary interest. However the terms of the Grant have succeeded in protecting the size and nature of the Park and ensured that it remains a resource for the entire community.

On 23 May 1890, two years after the Crown Grant was issued, Arbor Day was celebrated at Victoria Park with a mass tree planting ceremony. This is believed to be the first Arbor Day planting in Victoria. The Mayor of Ballarat, William Little, initiated the event and invited citizens to share in the simultaneous planting of some 3000 trees. The aim was to transform the barren former mining site into a graceful park of tree-lined avenues, similar to the large parks of London. Elm, plane, cedar, oak and poplar were the trees of choice and were provided by the Council from local nursery stock. Minor plantings of various species of eucalypt and other indigenous trees also

took place. Each of the avenues was then named after the appropriate species. The open spaces of the park were planted with small groves of these species, planted and sponsored by various community groups, businesses and institutions. Prominent among the community groups and institutions who participated in Arbor Day were the Old Colonists Association, the Australian Natives Association, the Trades and Labour Council, the Mining Board, the School of Mines, the Agricultural Society and the Horticultural Society. ⁷

The trees were carefully planted according to a plan drawn up by Messrs Clegg and Nicholls and modified by the respected curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne, William Guilfoyle.⁸ During the ceremony, the Mayor planted trees on behalf of Lord Hopetoun, the Governor of Victoria, while Mrs Little planted a tree for Lady Hopetoun. The entire task of the first planting was accomplished within ten minutes and followed by a picnic and an official banquet hosted by the Mayor in honour of Queen Victoria.

The local printing company F W Niven & Co. produced a souvenir plan of Victoria Park to commemorate Arbor Day 1890. ⁹ This shows in detail the species of tree planted and the location, as well as the various groves of trees and the sponsor group. Comparing this plan with the present day layout of Victoria Park shows that the area has maintained a high level of integrity. The plan was also used in a 1983 study ¹⁰ that identified original trees and groves which have survived to the present day. Planting continued according to the layout plan over several years. The events of the first Arbor Day 1890 were repeated 100 years later, when representatives of schools, community organisations and surrounding municipalities planted 100 Plane trees to mark the original ceremony and to re-establish Plane Avenue. ¹¹

In keeping with the pro-British patriotism of nineteenth century Australia, an avenue of evergreen oaks was planted during 1901 to commemorate the visit to Ballarat of Their Royal Highnesses, The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. It was named 'York Avenue' but has not survived to the present day. By 1914, considerable public works and improvements had been carried out within the northern sections of Victoria Park. This area sported established tree-lined avenues interspersed with flowers. Paths and roadways provided public access through the Park and to the cleared playing fields. There were three grounds for both cricket and football, two shelter houses including a rustic summer house in Cedar drive constructed in 1909 ¹², fences, hedges and a curator's residence. ¹³ The southern portions of Victoria Park were given over to commercial plantations of *pinus radiata* between 1917 and 1929. ¹⁴

During the Second World war part of Victoria park was occupied by "Military Authorities" facing Sturt Street and extending south towards Eyre Street. This was an army base to house United States servicemen. From February 1942 until May 1943, it was home to some 8,000 US troops. A military hospital was also established. The remains of a concrete settling pond can still be seen in the park which was constructed as part of the military occupation.

In 1950, the Ballarat City Council tested the terms of the Crown Grant under which Victoria Park was reserved. Council sought to alienate 12 acres of the reserve for use by the Military, in exchange for a neighbouring parcel of land owned by the Department of Defence on the corner of Russell and Alfred Streets. At the time, substantial brick residences were being erected in a new subdivision along Sturt Street West and Council viewed the Russell Street land as suitable for the same purpose. After extensive correspondence between Council and the Lands Department, the proposal was dropped. The specific terms of the Crown Grant successfully prevented any portion of the Park being excised. This proved to be the outcome when successive councils raised similar proposals in 1968 and again in 1986-1987.

Recent additions to the built fabric of Victoria Park include picnic and barbecue facilities, children's play areas, a toilet block, pavilions for the sports grounds, clubrooms and a BMX track. The area is used for many recreational activities such as cricket, dog obedience lessons, dog walking, jogging, cycling and occasional events involving running, cycling and motor sport. The area is occasionally used for major events such as the 16th Australian Scout Jamboree in 1992 which echoed its use as a military camp. In the following years the City council erected arched metal name signs on posts with stone bases to mark the park at the corner of Sturt and Gillies Street. The first of these was donated by the Australian Scout Jamboree.

In the present day, Victoria Park remains a fine example of a recreation facility, located close to the heart of the city, modelled on a popular European design prominent in the late nineteenth century. It reflects the preoccupation of Ballarat's founding citizens to create a substantial provincial city with all the appropriate visual symbols and amenities consistent with stability and prosperity. It complements the street plantings along adjoining Sturt Street, also initiated in this period. Along with Black Hill Reserve, Victoria Park reflects a

determination to transform the remnant eyesores of the mining era into peaceful and useful public facilities.

Bibliography

Maps

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- Record Plan B147, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

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- . Kentish, B & Westbrooke, M *Victoria Park. A Report to the Ballarat City Council on Community Use and Attitudes with Recommendations for Future Management*, Environmental Biology and Resource Management, Ballarat University College, May 1990.
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Urban Design & Engineering Infrastructure

Victoria Park today retains the form of the main roads set out in the original plan: Elm Avenue, Plane Avenue, Poplar Avenue, Cedar Avenue, Oak Avenue and Quercus Avenue which was laid out on the original plan but planted later. The present day roads including Caretakers Drive, Military Drive and an un-named road linking Quercus and Plane Avenue have been added to the original road layout and there has been some realignment of roads - the major changes being the removal of two triangular planting areas near the east and west entries to the park and the termination of Quercus Avenue before it meets Russell Street.

The original avenues have retained their curvilinear natures with the added roads being straighter in nature. Caretakers Drive is the only rigidly straight road in the park and Military drive has a bend as opposed to a curved layout.

Most of the roads are sealed with black bitumen and have gravel verges. The only unmade sections are casual roads which have been formed by users, Plane Avenue between Cedar and Poplar Avenues, and Quercus Avenue south of Plane avenue.

The park also contains a network of gravel/crushed quartz walking tracks which generally follow the line of the main roads.

Areas of the park are fenced with low treated pine post and round rail fences to prevent vehicular access to grassed areas.

Landscaping (Public & Private)

The precinct is a landscape area. It retains the form of the main roads and tree avenues generally as set out in the original plan: Elm Avenue, Plane Avenue, Poplar Avenue, Cedar Avenue, and Oak Avenue. Remnants of the commercial pine plantations still remain in the southern section of the park. Some of the original avenues have

not flourished and so the area is not uniform with regard to height and development of the trees and there have been some removals and additional planting over the years. Military Drive is the only road to not have avenue tree planting.

The former mullock heap Mount Hotted Smith provides an important focus in the vicinity and also provides for views through the tree line and around the park. Its earlier development as a viewing place is now compromised by the tree growth.

The original design of densely planted curving avenues separating grassed areas with clumps of mature trees and single specimen trees is generally retained. Some Avenues are striking such as Cedar, Caretakers, Oak and Quercus - they form a dense avenue with in some cases an overarching tree canopy producing a tunnel effect. Other plantings such as in Plane, parts of Poplar and Elm Avenue have been less successful partly due the selection of tree species which has failed to thrive. There has been replanting over the years to remedy breaks in the avenues with varying success. Other species have been interplanted in some area.

Two ornamental lakes have been introduced into the design.

The park planting has been strengthened by the avenue planting on the nature strips in Russell and Sturt Streets.

There are also two areas of significant native grasslands which have re-established themselves in the park.

Buildings & Significant Details

Two planned lodges, one at the Sturt Street entry and one at the Eyre Street entry, as shown on the early lithograph were either never built or have since been removed. The rustic summer house on Cedar Drive, near the intersection with Plane Avenue, appears to be the building constructed in 1909. The building has a wall of approximately 1100mm high of volcanic rocks set in cement with square timber posts rising though the walls to support a ten-sided timber roof structure clad in corrugated steel. A finial appears to be missing from the apex of the roof. One side is open to allow access. The shelter has a dirt floor.

There are two cannons near the Sturt Street/Russell Street vehicular entrance on the intersection of Cedar and Plane Avenue. They are English canons dated 1862 and 1853 respectively.

Across the road from the cannons is a specimen tree planted in memory of W.O. Allen curator who faithfully served the Ballarat community for 60 years marking his death in 1944 and erected by the Victorian Tree Planters Association.

There is a house on the southern edge facing Winter street on the corner of Cedar Avenue. It appears to have been constructed in the 1920s and is of horizontal weatherboards with a tiled gable roof and brick chimneys. The building appears in good condition and substantially intact.

At the intersections of Sturt Street with Gillies and Russell Street two signs were erected in the 1990s to indicate the parks pedestrian entries. These have volcanic rock bases, similar to the rustic summer house with circular painted metal posts with raised bands of decoration and shaped cappings which support two arched circular metal beams with flat metal lettering "Victoria Park".

In the south west area of the park is large area devoted to equestrian pursuits with utilitarian modern sheds, shelters and horse jumps.

In the south west corner are fenced animal pens currently unused.

On military drive is a collection of modern gable roofed brick buildings of varying detailing which provide toilet and changing facilities and rooms for the Dog Obedience Club. These have a large gravel car park adjacent.

On Sturt Street, mid way between Russell and Gillies Street is a picnic area and toilet block. The picnic and barbecue shelters were erected and the toilet block refurbished in 2000 to a design by Morton Dunn Pty Ltd Architects. The shelters are supported on square metal posts with a metal-framed roof clad in corrugated Colorbond with decorative metal "blade" rafters. The shelters have plywood screens for part of each side section. The toilet block is rendered masonry and dark glazed bricks with a skillion roof form.

The park includes two significant areas of native grasslands and three trees recorded on the Significant Tree register. These are:

- . *Pinus Contorta* (Beach or Shore Pine)
- . *Quercus robar 'Fastigiata'* (Fastigated Oak)
- . *Podocarpus dacrydioides* (White Pine)

Significant Landmark Features and Views

The Park itself is a significant landmark feature terminating vistas when travelling west along Sturt Street, west along Eyre Street and south along Hamilton Avenue. There are also views into the park from the boundary roads. The avenue planting provides a defining strong edge to these roads.

Within the park there are views across the open grassed area from the shelter of the avenues and views from the open grasslands through the strong borders of the avenue planting to adjacent avenues and open grasslands.

The former mullock heap Mount Holled Smith provides an important focus in the vicinity and also provides for views through the tree line and around the park.

The three dense avenues along Cedar, Caretakers, Oak and Quercus Avenues are significant landmark features within the park.

'1 Letter from William Smith, Chairman Ballarat Council to The Honourable The President of Crown Lands and Survey, 3 May 1861. Reserve File 654, Department Natural Resources and Environment, Ballarat Office.

'2 Reserve File 654, Department Natural Resources and Environment, Ballarat Office.

'3 R Brough Smyth, *The Gold Fields and Mineral Districts of Victoria*, 1980 edition, p489.

'4 Ibid, p489.

'5 M Harris & J Burrell, *Panoramas of Ballaarat*, 1998, p78 and *The Ballarat Courier*, 25 September 1987.

'6 Copy of Crown Grant, Volume 2110, Folio 421926 in Reserve File 654, Department Natural Resources and Environment, Ballarat Office.

'7 Plan, F W Niven & Co., 'Arbor Day Victoria Park 1890'. The Ballarat City Council holds the original of this plan.

A

reproduction can be found in M Harris & J Burrell, *Panoramas of Ballaarat*, 1998.

'8 *Ballarat Courier*, May 24 1890 quoted in M Harris & J Burrell, *Panoramas of Ballaarat*, 1998, p79.

'9 The Ballarat City Council holds the original of this plan. A reproduction can be found in M Harris & J Burrell, *Panoramas of Ballaarat*, 1998.

'10 For further details see the study completed by Peter Lumley, John Dyke, Roger Spencer and Eve Almond and is published as *Ballarat Historic Landscapes, Trees and Gardens*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne & Department of Crown Lands & Survey, 1983.

'11 M Harris & J Burrell, *Panoramas of Ballaarat*, 1998, p79.

'12 City of Ballaraat Mayor's Annual report 1909.

'13 Reserve File 654, Department Natural Resources and Environment, Ballarat Office.

'14 Peter Lumley, John Dyke, Roger Spencer and Eve Almond and is published as *Ballarat Historic Landscapes, Trees and Gardens*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne & Department of Crown Lands & Survey, 1983, p88.

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.

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