

# BENALLA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND ART GALLERY



Benalla Botanical Gardens and Art Gallery



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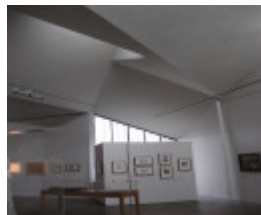
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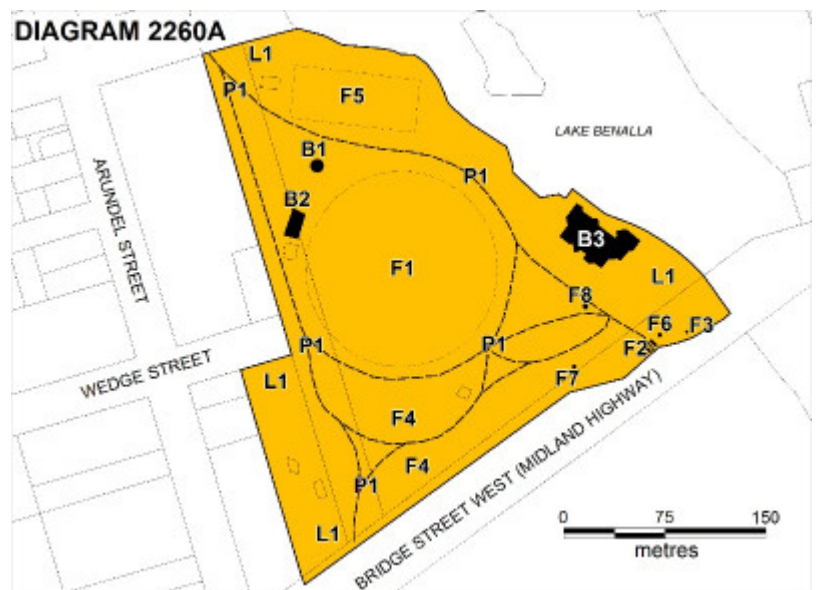
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Benalla Art Gallery Interior May 2012.JPG



Benalla Art Gallery Interior May 2012.JPG



benalla botanic gardens revised plan.jpg

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## Location

BRIDGE STREET WEST BENALLA, BENALLA RURAL CITY

## Municipality

BENALLA RURAL CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2260

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO12

## VHR Registration

December 9, 2010

## Amendment to Registration

September 13, 2012

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 25, 2010

### *What is significant?*

The Benalla Botanical Gardens occupy a triangular site of approximately 5.1 hectares bounded by the shore of Lake Benalla to the north-east, Bridge Street to the south-east and the row of buildings fronting Arundel Street to the north-west. The Benalla Art Gallery was constructed in the Gardens in 1975, on the shore of Lake Benalla.

In 1859 land was set aside for 'cricketing and other purposes of public recreation' with the cricket ground and recreation reserve temporarily reserved on 6 October 1873. From 1882 the Council started to gradually develop the reserve by constructing footpaths and planting trees, but after community agitation for better facilities, Alfred Sangwell was appointed as the first curator to design and layout the gardens in 1886-7. Sangwell's plan shows a large central oval, separated from ornamental beds on the north western and south-eastern aspects by serpentine paths, sweeping lawns, shrubs and flower beds typical of the gardensque style popular at the time.

Some of the planting and path layout has been altered and several elements associated with the early development of the area for recreational purposes such as the croquet lawn and bowling club (1897) have been relocated or removed. Remaining structures include the grandstand (1963, replacing 1896 grandstand), tennis

courts (c1880s) and clubhouse occupying the northern area, an octagonal band rotunda (1911), war memorial (1922), entrance gates (1911, with timber gates reconstructed in 1989) on the eastern side. More recent additions include the cannon, a large rose garden (1959) with substantial renovations in 2004 and 2009, the rocket playground (relocated c1962), and the Weary Dunlop Memorial statue (1996), a relocated Avenue of Honour memorial and adjacent Hec Waller Memorial (2010).

Besides the passive recreation normally associated with botanical gardens, sport has been played continuously on the central oval since the 1860s, together with tennis courts, a feature of the gardens since c1880, and the former bowls and croquet clubs. Cultural events have been held at the band rotunda since 1911. Since 1966 the Benalla Botanic Garden's rose beds, established in 1959, have been a major feature of the annual Benalla Rose Festival which attracts many visitors and has led to Benalla being known as the Rose City.

A major landscape feature was created in 1972 with the damming of the flood-prone Broken River to form Lake Benalla which provides the background for the Benalla Art Gallery, constructed in 1975, and a board walk installed in 2001. The location of the Gardens adjacent to Lake Benalla provides significant views from the Gardens across the lake, the 'Monash' Bridge (H1043) and surrounding town streetscape.

After overwhelming local support for its establishment in a referendum in 1967, the Benalla Art Gallery was temporarily housed in the memorial hall, until the present purpose-built gallery was constructed. This was made possible by local resident, Laurence Ledger, who offered to donate his collection of Australian art to Benalla and contribute \$75,000 towards the cost of a new building, contingent on it being built on the present site across Lake Benalla from his residence. Ledger also selected the architects, Munro and Sargeant. The Council agreed to this proposal, committing \$85,000 towards its construction and the State Government provided funding of \$170,000.

Opened in 1975 by the Victorian Premier, Rupert Hamer, the building contains two gallery spaces, one to house the Ledger Collection and another larger, versatile and extensible space. To address the site, the building is designed on north-east and north-west axes with a linking foyer facing the lake and service facilities located to the south. The complex steel framed structure, clad with ribbed concrete block, is raised above the flood line of the lake. Distinctive tetrahedral roof monitors allow the diagonal penetration of desirable southern lighting to the gallery spaces, and non-rectangular planning aids interior circulation and display.

The current Gardens retain some of the original layout and mature plantings such as the avenue of alternating Dutch Elms (*Ulmus x hollandica*), purple-leaved Dutch Elms (*Ulmus x hollandica* 'Purpurascens') and English Elms (*Ulmus procera*) around the oval, with two inner sections of London Plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*). Besides the important rose gardens, Benalla Botanical Gardens has a collection of New Zealand plants, salvias and asteraceae. Significant trees include a Crow's Ash (*Flindersia australis*), three rare hybrid elms (*Ulmus* 'Viminalis') the only known examples in Australia, and two Yellow Gums (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*). A Dutch Elm Disease-resistant elm *Ulmus* 'Urban' was planted by the Hon. Mark Birrell on 29 April 1995. Other significant trees include a Crow's Ash (*Flindersia australis*) one of only three known specimens to be planted in Victoria; three specimens of a rare elm (*Ulmus* 'Viminalis'), the only known examples in Australia; and two Yellow Gums (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*). Other outstanding trees include a Bunya Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*), Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*), Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), Canary Island Pine (*Pinus canariensis*) and Mexican Cypress (*Cupressus lusitanica*).

This site is part of the traditional land of the Yorta Yorta people.

#### *How is it significant?*

The Benalla Art Gallery and Botanical Gardens are of historical, aesthetic, scientific (botanical) and architectural significance to the state of Victoria.

#### *Why is it significant?*

Benalla Botanic Gardens are of historical significance as an important example of a regional botanical garden, established in the nineteenth century in response to the increased wealth of Victoria with the discovery of gold and the desire to provide a place for recreation and education in keeping with European trends.

The Benalla Botanical Gardens are of historical significance for the retention of much of the original gardenesque layout designed by Alfred Sangwell in 1886-7, and are the only known example of his work in Victoria. The design is unusual as it successfully combines a recreation oval with a nineteenth century ornamental garden featuring typical characteristics such as a formal entrance and gates, curved paths, open lawns area planted with specimen trees and beds of more intensive horticulture and a band rotunda.

The Benalla Art Gallery is of historical significance as a demonstration of the development of regional galleries in

Victoria, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s when state government funding fuelled growth in new public art galleries. It is of significance as an outstanding display of community support with residents voting overwhelmingly for the establishment of a gallery at Benalla at referendum in 1967, and the resident Laurence Ledger donating his valuable art works and money to fund the building.

The Benalla Botanical Gardens are of aesthetic significance due to their park-like character and vistas across the lake, and for the design elements such as serpentine paths meandering through gardens beds of flowers and shrubberies of various colours and textures set into lawn against a backdrop of trees and built elements. The Art Gallery, on the shores of the lake, adds to the picturesque qualities of the place.

The Benalla Botanical Gardens are of scientific (botanical) significance for the collection of rare and unusual plants including conifers and palms which provide a contrast to the numerous deciduous species. These include a Crow's Ash (*Flindersia australis*), one of only three known specimens to be planted in Victoria and three specimens of a rare elm (*Ulmus 'Viminalis'*), the only known examples in Australia.

The Benalla Art Gallery is of architectural significance as an outstanding example of a mid-1970s modernist building, located in regional Victoria. Architects Munro and Sargeant received a Victorian Architecture Award Citation for this Regional Gallery for North Eastern Victoria in 1975 and its unique character continues to provide the region with a distinctive identity.

## 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. 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](https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/permits-and-approvals/heritage-permit-exemptions).

**Specific Exemptions:**

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 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.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: 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.
4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
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 must 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:**

The process of gardening, mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants and weed control, emergency and safety work and landscaping in accordance with the original concept.

The planting of plant species to conserve the landscape character, rare and unusual species, exotic and native plants, planted in beds, shrubberies and as specimen trees in lawns.

Management and maintenance of trees including formative and remedial pruning, removal of deadwood, pest and disease control, cabling, mowing, weed control and mulching.

In the event of loss or removal of trees, replanting with the same species to maintain the landscape character identified in the statement of significance. Removal of tree seedlings and suckers but excluding herbicide use.

Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard: Pruning of amenity trees AS 4373.

Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard: Protection of trees on development sites AS

4970.<br /> Removal of plants listed as Prohibited and Controlled Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.<br /> Repairs, conservation and maintenance to structures and hard landscape elements, memorial plaques, asphalt and gravel roads and paths, stone and concrete edging, fences and gates.<br /> Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems beyond the canopy edge of mature trees.</p>
<p class="c1">Exterior:<br /> \*Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good in a sensitive manner.<br /> \*Minor repairs and maintenance to buildings, structures and services within the registered land.<br /> <br /> Interior of Art Gallery:<br /> \*Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.<br /> \*Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of paintings and other wall mounted art.</p>
<p class="c1">\*Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring.<br /> \*Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.<br /> \*Removal or replacement of electric clocks, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.</p>
<p class="c1">General:<br /> Maintenance, repair and replacement of public infrastructure for recreation, seating, refuse and amenity providing that such works are reversible and consistent with AS4970.The lakeside walking path is exempt from permit requirements providing that the location of the path is not changed and that like for like surface materials are used.<br /> Provision of temporary (no more than seven (7) calendar days in duration) facilities, infrastructure or works to promote public safety, education and cultural activities<b>.</b></p>

## Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1874,
Architect/Designer	Public Works Department,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BENALLA ART GALLERY, BENALLA BOTANIC GARDENS, BENALLA GARDENS,
Hermes Number	1772
Property Number	

## History

<p class="c1">HISTORY:</p>
<p class="c1">Detailed Histories can be found in the following references:</p>
<p class="c2"><i>The Benalla Gardens,</i> Benalla Art Gallery 1988</p>
<p class="c2"><i>Benalla</i> <i>Gardens Strategy Plan</i>, City of Benalla, 1993</p>
<p class="c2"><i>Benalla Botanical Gardens Conservation Plan</i>, Delatite Shire Council, 2001</p>
<p class="c2"><i>Benalla</i> <i>Gardens</i> Australian Heritage Database (former Register of the National Estate)</p>
<p class="c2">DSE Heritage Place Report on Hermes - Benalla Botanic Gardens</p>
<p class="c1">CONTEXTUAL HISTORY</p>
<p class="c2">From the mid nineteenth century, fuelled by the gold rush and colonial government policies, Victoria developed a tradition of regional botanic gardens in many country towns of any size. This resulted in Victoria having the finest collection of regional botanical gardens of all Australian states. The earliest was Melbourne Botanic Gardens established in 1846</p>
<p class="c2">Most of the regional botanic gardens developed as landscaped gardens, although there was a sharp contrast between these sites and the various municipal parks and gardens where an emphasis on floral displays and ornamentation tended to dominate, especially in the twentieth century.</p>
<p class="c1">HISTORY OF PLACE</p>
<p class="c1">Taken from: DSE Heritage Place Report on Hermes 81322 - Benalla Botanic Gardens</p>
<p class="c3">Land was set aside for public recreation near the Broken River from as early as 1859, and gazetted for, cricketing and other purposes of public recreation. The cricket ground and recreation reserve were temporarily reserved on 6 October 1873 as a site for recreation purposes and in 1882 the reserve was gradually developed by the Council. Improvements included footpaths and tree-planting. However, the community agitated for better facilities.<br /> <br /> In 1886 the Council gazetted about twenty acres for the gardens and sixty acres along Broken River and appointed Alfred Sangwell, a landscape gardener,

to prepare plans for the reserve. Sangwell's plans emphasised facilities for sports and also included ornamental features with walkways. By 1889, 270 trees had been planted and agricultural and pastoral shows were held on the site. Later additions included fencing, well-developed paths, lawns and borders (including plantings featuring mesembryanthemums, marguerites, lilacs and camellias), date palms, a bowling green, tennis courts and croquet ground. A band rotunda, designed by Mr Jeffrey the Shire Engineer and Charles Summers, was officially opened on 14 March 1911. Other features to be added were two statues erected in 1914, representing the Arts and Sciences and Music, new entrance gates and a soldiers' memorial constructed in 1922. The rose garden was funded by the Apex Club in 1959. Substantial alterations to the gardens occurred in 1972-73, when flood-prone land along Broken River was formed into a lake to provide the setting for the Benalla Art Gallery, built in 1975.

The Major Mitchell Memorial was raised as a memorial to the explorers Sturt and Major Mitchell by Sir James Barrett. Official opening on 9 January 1930. (Graham Jones On this Day in the North East.p.7)

Band rotunda March 14 1911. (Graham Jones On this Day in the North East. p. 55)

Avenue of Honour Memorial : The Avenue of Honour Monument was relocated to the Gardens c. 1996 because the former Avenue of Honour was destroyed during the redevelopment of the Dunlop Campus of Benalla College.

**REFERENCES**

*Architecture in Australia*, February 1972, p 69

*Herald*, 9 May 1972, p 21

Benalla Art Gallery:regional gallery for North East Victoria. Report to Annual Conference of the Regional Galleries Association of Victoria. 1973

*The Australian Women's Weekly*, 20 August 1975, p 33

*Architecture Australia*, February/March 1976, pp 66-67

*The Age*, 26 August 1980, p 8

John Jones. Collection The Benalla Art Gallery. 2002

Obituary Philip Harold Robinson Sargeant in 'Great Scot', newsletter of Scotch College, Hawthorn, May 2008

Margaret Rich. 'The development of regional galleries. Understanding Museums - Art Museums'; [http://www.nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/MRich\\_2011.html](http://www.nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/MRich_2011.html)

## Assessment Against Criteria

### ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

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

Benalla Botanic Gardens are an important example of a regional botanical garden, established in the nineteenth century in response to the increased wealth of Victoria with the discovery of gold and the desire to provide a place for recreation and education in keeping with European trends.

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

Benalla Botanic Gardens are important for the rare collection of plants and trees characteristic of late nineteenth century gardens including several uncommon species only found in historic gardens. The gardens are also significant for remnant original plantings of Dutch elm and London plane which encircled the cricket oval from 1887.

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

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

Benalla Botanic Gardens display the typical characteristics of the regional botanic gardens with design elements such as serpentine paths meandering through gardens beds of flowers and shrubberies of various colours and textures set into lawn against a backdrop of specimen trees and built elements.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

The Benalla Botanic Gardens are of aesthetic significance due to the largely intact pathway design which includes the unusual avenue of elms and plane trees surrounding the sports oval, other mature and significant trees which contrast with open lawn areas and elliptical and triangular ornamental beds. The location of the Gardens adjacent to Lake Benalla provides significant views from the Gardens across the lake and the surrounding town streetscape

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.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The Benalla Botanical Gardens are of historical significance for the retention of much of the original gardenesque layout designed by Alfred Sangwell in 1886-7, and are the only known example of his work in Victoria.

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Benalla Art Gallery is significant as an important demonstration of the development of regional galleries in Victoria, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s when state government funding fuelled immense growth in new public art galleries. It is of significance as an outstanding display of community support with residents voting overwhelmingly for the establishment of a gallery at Benalla at referendum in 1967, and the resident Laurence Ledger donating his valuable art works and money to fund the building

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Benalla Art Gallery is an outstanding example of a mid-1970s modernist building, located in regional Victoria. Architects Munro and Sargeant received a Victorian Architecture Award Citation for this Regional Gallery for North Eastern Victoria in 1975 and its unique character continues to provide the region with a distinctive identity.

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## Plaque Citation

Alfred Sangwell was appointed as the first curator to design and lay out the site in 1886-7, combining a recreation oval with an ornamental garden featuring a formal entrance, curved paths, open lawns and specimen trees.

Designed and laid out by Alfred Sangwell in 1886-67, the site combined an oval and ornamental garden. A distinctive modern gallery, designed by Sargeant & Munro, was added to the gardens in 1975.

## Extent of Registration

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2260 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Band Rotunda  
B2 Grandstand  
B3 Art Gallery

2. All the features marked as follows on Diagram 2260 held by the Executive Director.

F1 Sports oval  
F2 Main entrance gates  
F3 War memorial  
F4 Rose gardens  
F5 Tennis courts and club house facilities  
F6 Cannon  
F7 Weary Dunlop memorial  
F8 Avenue of honour memorial

3. All the paths marked P1 on Diagram 2260 held by the Executive Director.

4. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2260 held by the Executive Director being part of Crown Allotment 14 and all of Crown Allotment 15, Section 7A, Township of Benalla, and all of Crown Allotments 4, 5 & 6, Section K1, Township of Benalla and part of the road reserve of the Midland Highway

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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/>*