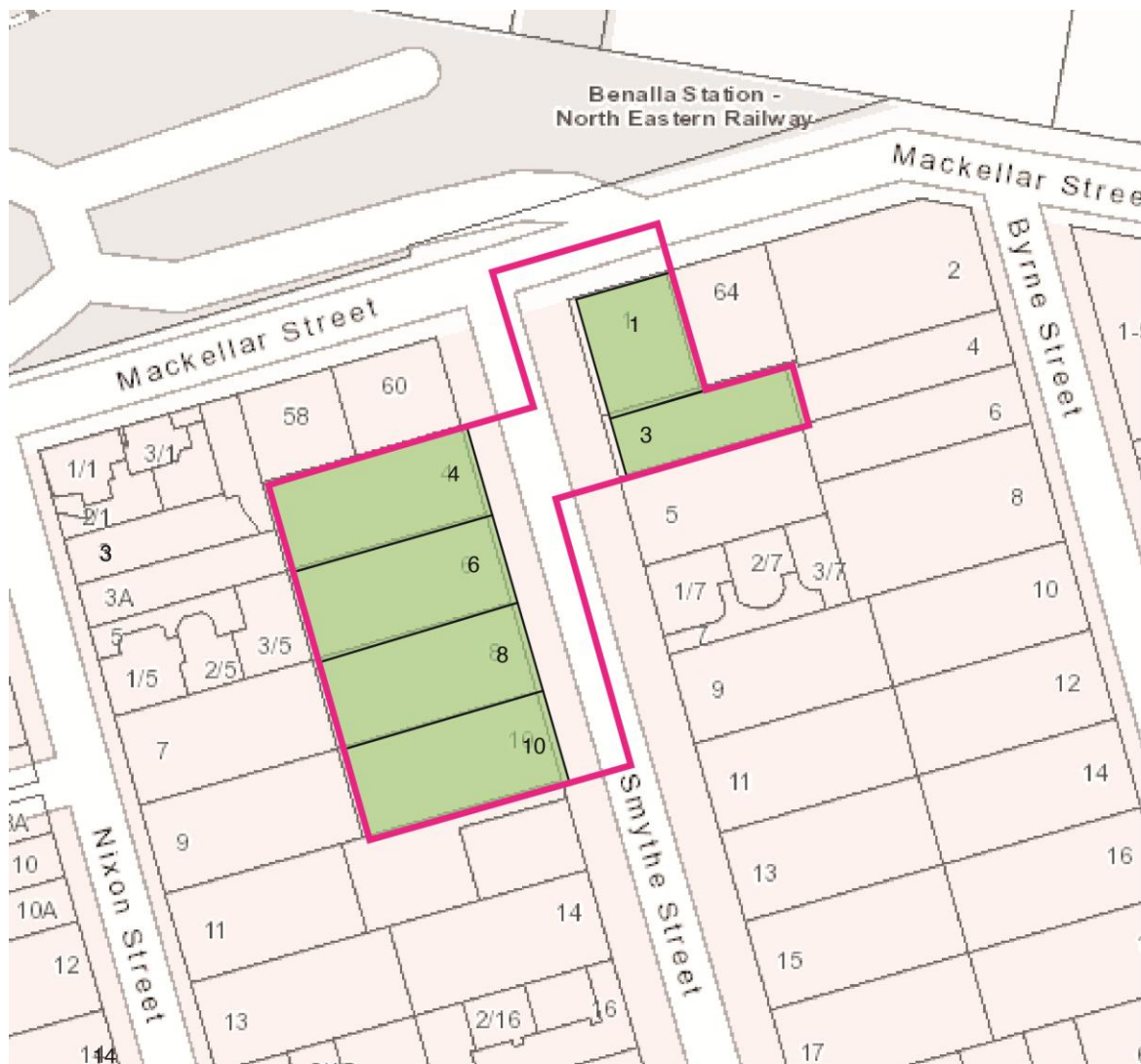

Heritage Place	Smythe Street Residential Precinct
Heritage Overlay	HOXXX
Significance	Local
Dates	c1860s - 1940
Address	Smythe Street
Subsumed Heritage Overlays	1 & 3 Smythe Street Benalla Both places are contributory places to HO26 Benalla Central Urban Conservation Precinct.
Victorian Registered places included in the precinct	None
Recommendations	Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay
Survey Date	March 2024



Smythe Street Residential Precinct

	Individual
	Contributory
	Non- Contributory

Assessment against criteria

The following analysis is based on Victorian Government Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Criterion 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 (social significance).

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

The following Statement of Significance has been prepared according to the provisions of the Planning Practice Note 01: Applying the Heritage Overlay, (2018)

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is significant. The precinct area includes six residential properties in Smythe Street, Benalla. The character of the precinct is informed by its single storey character and the nineteenth and early twentieth century residential development.

The following features contribute to the precinct:

- The overall layout of the precinct area as evidence of the 1848 town survey.
- The streetscape character of the Smythe Street Precinct area arising from the wide street with large street trees (*ulmus* sp) in conjunction with garden settings provided by the residential development within this precinct.
- The extent to which the key development period is appreciable.
- The intactness of the precinct area which is characterised by its integrity and lack of infill.
- The relatively unaltered built fabric of the significant places.
- The free-standing built form of the residences with largely unaltered facades and garden settings.
- The general absence of vehicle accommodation in front setbacks
- The design of the front fences to the residential places, these are low and sympathetic to the historic character of the buildings.
- The extent of original finishes found in the precinct that include: corrugated galvanized metal roofing, face red brick, rendered dressings and finishes, timber detailing; brick chimneys and

original finishes to the front and sides of buildings and this includes unpainted face brickwork, and nineteenth and early twentieth century decorative features.

- The street trees which include *Ulmus* sp (elm trees).

Places that contribute to the precinct include:

Smythe Street: 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10

Alterations and additions after c1970 are not significant.

How is it Significant?

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is of local historical, representative, and aesthetic cultural heritage significance to the Benalla Rural City.

Why is it Significant?

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is of local historical significance as it provides evidence of the economic impact that the opening of the North Eastern railway in 1873 had on the residential areas of Benalla East, and in particular areas close to the railway station. The growth during the 1880s was driven by a land boom which saw property prices increase rapidly and this was encouraged by readily available finance. The integrity of this precinct and the diversity of the late nineteenth century buildings contributes to the historical significance. (Criterion A)

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is of representative significance for its nineteenth century residential development. 1, 3, 4 & 6 are of representative significance for their nineteenth century vernacular architecture. This includes features such as the: rectangular form with a gable roof (1,3 & 4) or a hipped roof (6) and clad with corrugated metal, brick chimneys and the symmetrical façades with a central door flanked on either side by sash windows. (Criterion D)

The following buildings are of aesthetic significance:

8 Smythe Street is of aesthetic significance for its late Victorian architecture. Significant features include the: asymmetrical façade with a canted bay and recessed verandah defined by a straight profile verandah with decorative cast iron verandah posts, decorative cast iron frieze and brackets; polychromatic brickwork which includes red brick walling with cream brick quoining, cream brick relieving arches to the windows and door surrounds; timber entry door with side lights and highlights flanked by a timber framed sash window with side lights. The garden setting contributes to the significance of this place.

10 Smythe Street is of aesthetic significance for its late Victorian architecture, the later alterations which include a gable fronted porch in the interwar bungalow style are not significant. Significant features include the symmetrical façade with a central door with side lights and high lights flanked on either side by sash windows, the red face brickwork with cream brick quoining to the sash windows and central door (overpainted). The garden setting contributes to the significance of this place. (Criterion E)

The Smythe Street Precinct is of aesthetic significance for the integrity and intactness of the streetscape which is distinctive for its nineteenth/turn of the twentieth century residential development. The freestanding single storey housing, the setbacks and consistent range of materials and finishes contribute to the aesthetic significance. (Criterion E)

Grading table for the Smythe Street Residential Precinct

Number	Address	Significance
Smythe Street		
1	Smythe Street	Contributory
3	Smythe Street	Contributory
4	Smythe Street	Contributory
6	Smythe Street	Contributory
8	Smythe Street	Individual Significance
10	Smythe Street	Individual Significance

Additional Controls

External paint controls apply	Yes
Internal alteration controls apply	No
Tree controls apply: to the following species of trees found within the precinct. Ulmis sp (elm trees)	Yes
Outbuildings or fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-4	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017	No
Prohibited uses permitted	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No
Solar energy system controls apply	Yes

Physical Analysis

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is characterised by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential development. Smythe street (1 – 10) is wide and lined with elm trees (*ulmus* sp) and this substantive public space is characteristic of the Wedge Survey and provides a generous visual setting for the residential places. The residential development demonstrates typical nineteenth and turn of the century vernacular residential development. All of which are freestanding and have a relatively uniform scale and form. The residences share a similar palette of buildings materials: timber, corrugated metal, brick and timber. They have a relatively uniform scale and form. The residence at 8 Smythe Street is representative of a late Victorian aesthetic and this is found in the asymmetry, the canted bay and its recessed verandah. The decorative cast iron detailing and polychromatic brickwork contributes to this stylistic expression.

General History

The route between Sydney and Port Philip during the 1830s was marked with informal small settlements that grew around river crossing points. Benalla by the late 1830s was a small settlement and there was a

police post and barracks on the east bank of the Broken River. A surveyed plan for a township was prepared in 1848 by Assistant Surveyor Thomas Wedge¹

In laying out Benalla's township allotments, Wedge created three grids: one grid on the east side of the Broken River, and two grids on the west, which were intended as the main part of the town, being situated on higher ground. The streets within each grid were 150 links (30 metres) wide, and each town block originally designed to contain 20 allotments of a half acre each (.2ha).



Figure 1 'Survey of the ground near the crossing place, Broken River, 1848', surveyed by Thomas Wedge, map held in a sub collection of VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office of Victoria.

The township grids were in turn bordered by a belt of suburban allotments of five acres (2ha) each. This was designed to create a transition between the town allotments and pastoral lands. The suburban allotment belt was laid out to form a complete square containing the township grids. This square was

¹ 'Survey of the ground near the crossing place, Broken River, 1848', surveyed by Thomas Wedge, map held in a sub collection of VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office of Victoria.

arranged on a magnetic north-south axis, and bordered on each side by thoroughfares which were 100 links (20 metres) wide. **[Figure 2]** (In Benalla East, the inner thoroughfares comprise Salisbury Street to the east, and, to the north, the section of McKellar Street that was originally continuous with Hannah Street, prior to its interruption by the North East Railway in 1873).



Figure 2 Figure 2 'Township and Suburban Lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road,' catalogued as 'SALE616 D BENALLA', A sub collection from VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office Victoria.

Wedge's survey was derived from a series of directives to designing towns which were initiated 1829, when Governor Darling decided that it was necessary to formulate instructions on the layout of towns, resulting in a Government and General Order, issued on 27 May, 1829. This directive initiated the right-angled grid system with standard blocks of 20 half acre (.2ha) allotments, with streets general around 125 links (25 metres) wide. Surveyors were, however, given some liberty to adjust their plans according to topography. In addition, the creation of small farms, or 'suburban allotments', on the edge of towns, was a concept advocated by both Governors Bourke and Gipps, and were incorporated into town plans in New South Wales from the 1830s.² The introduction of streets of 150 links (30 metres) in width — wider than the

² Helen Proudfoot, *Town Plans and their Impact on the Settlement Process in Australia, 1788-1849, Volume 1*, doctoral thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1995.

1829 directive, was introduced by surveyor Robert Hoddle, when he laid-out Melbourne in 1837.³ Wedge's survey combined all of these elements, and remains one of the finer examples of these design principals and characteristics of the period. The broadness of the streets and the simplicity of the street grid is no more apparent than in Benalla East.

Wedge named many of the early streets.⁴ In Benalla East, Smythe Street was named for the first resident Commissioner of Crown Land, Henry Wilson Hutchinson Smythe; and Nunn Street after Major Nunn, who led one of the police investigations of the Faithfull Massacre of 1838.⁵ McKellar Street was named for squatter William McKellar, who held Lima Station.⁶

Just prior to the Victoria gold rush in 1851, Benalla population was just over 100 people.⁷ By 1854, the population had trebled to 300 permanent residents,⁸ and by 1855, all of the property on the north side of the main Sydney to Melbourne Road (Bridge Street) had been purchased.⁹ Land in close proximity to what would become the main business area meant that it would always be sought after, and generally attract higher levels of investment.

In 1857,¹⁰ Assistant surveyor J. E. Wilmot surveyed new allotments in the town block (Section A1) bounded by Bridge, Smythe and Barkly Streets — Barkly Street named after Henry Barkly, who had been appointed the Governor of Victoria in 1856. These allotments conformed to the standard two roods (half an acre/.2ha).

However, Wilmot recognised that, in terms of planning, Benalla suffered the same problem as inner Melbourne: that the town blocks, comprising 20 half acre allotments per block, was an overly large scale. Consequently, Wilmot decided to run a narrow street (100 links, or 2/3 of a regular street) through the centre of some of the existing town blocks, which would create 20 blocks, but with two street frontages, with allotments being of a third of an acre (.13ha) each (1 rood, 32 perches) each. With the double street frontages, these could be easily subdivided to make 40 allotments.

In 1864, Wilmot took this approach with Section B, and Sections 11 and 12, creating the southern end of what would become Nixon Street and northern end of Byrne Street respectively.¹¹ **[Figure 3]** However, Wilmot's plan did not match the immediate demand for land: the allotments had been drawn onto a plan for the future, but they were not actually made available for purchase.

³ Andrew Brown-May, *Melbourne Street Life*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998.

⁴ Judith Bassett suggested that Thomas Townsend's 1839 survey, which has an early pencil sketch of two street grids with some names, was done by Townsend. I think it is also possible that Wedge used Townsend's map to make a preliminary sketch, and that the pencilled parts are a later annotation.

⁵ John Conner, *The Australian frontier wars, 1788-1838*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002 p.119.

⁶ *ibid*, p.88.

⁷ 'Benalla's History', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 12 March 1935 - Page 6.

⁸ *ibid*.

⁹ 'Township and suburban lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road', J. E. Wilmot, Assistant Surveyor; Crown Lands Office, Melbourne, Victoria; 1865, Public Records Office Victoria; 'Benalla Township plan, Imperial measure 5066', A Parish plan from VPRS 16171, Dept Crown Lands and survey, 1954, Public Records Office Victoria.

¹⁰ 'Township and suburban lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road' by J. E. Wilmot, Asst. Surveyor, Crown Lands Office Melbourne, 1857, Public Records Office Victoria.

¹¹ *ibid*.



Figure 3 'Township and suburban lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road' by J. E. Wilmot, Asst. Surveyor, Crown Lands Office Melbourne, 1857, Public Records Office Victoria.

Although Benalla West was originally designated the official part of the town, with the east side as its lesser side, eventually, Benalla East came to be considered the main part of the town. The origins of this switch in fortune began in 1857, when Irishman George Sharpe purchased a prominent block of land on the corner of Bridge and Mair Streets in a position diagonally across the Broken River from the Royal Hotel,¹² where he built the Commercial Hotel.¹³ Gradually, Sharpe acquired dozens of town Allotments on the East side of the town.

Between 1843 – 1860 whole of Sections E & F extending to Mackellar Street were sold and in Section G. Later subdivisions occurred during the 1860s and 1870s with the last of Section 16 facing the Railway Place

¹² 'Benalla Township plan, Imperial measure 5066', A Parish plan from VPRS 16171, Dept Crown Lands and survey, 1954, Public Records Office Victoria.

¹³ A. J. Dunlop, *Benalla Cavalcade, a history of Benalla and district*, Mullaya Publications, Canterbury, Vic., 1973, p.38 dates the construction as 1856; Judith Bassett, *City of Benalla Conservation Study Volume 2: Benalla 1836-1991, An Environmental History*, Trevor Budge and Associated, Bendigo, 1992; dates the building as 1860.

sold in 1880. By the time of the first Shire rate book (10.2.1869)¹⁴ the development within the commercial area of Bridge Street East and Nunn Street (to the extent of Benalla Street) included Sharpe's Commercial Hotel, John Byrne's hotel, the Colonial Bank of Australasia and a number of shops and stores.

The construction of the North Eastern rail line in 1873 consolidated Benalla East as the primary commercial area. In 1928, Councillor Guppy reflected that it was principally George Sharpe, along with 'other influential citizens' who at the time of the North Eastern Railway being surveyed, had exerted pressure 'to have the station located on the east side, where they owned property.'¹⁵ In 1873, the Benalla Council had 'agreed' (presumably after considerable lobbying) with the Commissioner of Railways that the Railway Station would be situated in Benalla East,¹⁶ and this had become 'the principal factor in relegating the west side to second place.'¹⁷ The arrival of the North East Railway saw increased demand for land in Benalla East and allotments put up for sale at this time sold almost immediately.

The railway area was substantial and is an important feature within central Benalla. It was also a significant employer as it was a railway workshop and employed a number of people. Originally it included the railway station water tower; signal boxes (A & B) coaling depot; engine depot; turntable, workshops; marshalling yards; goods sheds and gate houses. Later works included additions to the station building and offices.

The impact of the railway was important for the immediate development of the town as it employed a number of people. It also provided services and was an important transport vehicle for agricultural produce and equipment. The construction of the railway largely coincided with land selection in the north east of Victoria and the most successful of the Land Acts - the Grant Land Act of 1869. This act opened up all of the Victorian colony, with the exception of a few reserves, to free selection before survey; this had been a demand of land reformers since in the early 1850s. Under the 1869 Act a selector could rent while making the requisite improvements and the now, rents paid were credited to the selector as part payment for the holding. Its success was pronounced in the north east which saw swathes of land selected. The economic impact from this period through the growth of a local agricultural industry provided an economic stimulus that saw the township expand. Agricultural produce included beef, mutton, butter, cheese and timber for fuel for Melbourne.

The 1880s was a significant period for Benalla as not only did the railway arrive in town, Australia was also in the grip of a land boom, in which property prices skyrocketed and banking credit was easily won.¹⁸ In Benalla, the population had grown to around 2000 people by the mid-1880s.¹⁹ A substantial new post office had opened in 1882;²⁰ the goods yard at the railway station was expanded to handle extra traffic from the new Oaklands branch line in 1885, and the Railway Station was extended with the

¹⁴Trevor Budge And Associates, *City of Benalla Conservation Study*, Vol 3 p 22

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ 'Benalla Railway Station.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 2 May 1873 - Page 2.

¹⁷ 'Victoria's Country Towns. Their Rise and Development No. 13. -- History of Benalla.' *op cit.*

¹⁸ Bryan Fitz-Gibbon and Marianne Gizycki, *A History of Last-Resort Lending And Other Support For Troubled Financial Institutions In Australia*, Research Discussion Paper 2001-07, 2001, System Stability Department, Reserve Bank of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p.21.

¹⁹ 'Picturesque Victoria. Around Benalla.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Thursday 24 July 1884 - Page 1.

²⁰ 'An Historical Picture--Official Opening of Benalla Post Office', *Benalla Standard*, Friday 27 January 1939 - Page 5.

addition of dining and refreshment room facilities and administrative offices in 1888.²¹ Aside from commercial and government investment, there was also renewed interest in residential property. In January 1882, the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser's* Benalla correspondent wrote that, '... we do not recollect a year that has seen Benalla in a more prosperous state.'²² By the end of that same year, *The North East Ensign* was reporting that 'New residences have sprung up in all parts of the town, these of that well-to-do class points to prosperity.'²³

By the 1880s Bridge Street East and the southern end of Nunn Street were well established as the main commercial streets with a number of commercial premises. There was a range of service industrial establishments including: hotels, dining rooms, coach builder, *Ensign* office, banks, livery stables, blacksmith shops, Reillys' flour mill (extant) on the corner of Nunn Street and Church Streets, grain and chaff stores. The Benalla Butter Factory had premises at the west end of Church Street. Moodie and Son's timber yard and machine works, sale yards and a bazaar run by Robert Headland were in Carrier Street. This also included three Coffee Palaces located in Nunn Street, Carrier Street and Bridge Street (the Federal).²⁴

Further municipal improvements during this period include:

- 1881 Benalla Water Trust was founded by 1883 reticulated water was available in many parts of Benalla.
- 1882 Recreation Reserve – with cricket and football grounds.
- 1887 Alfred Sangwell prepared a design for the Botanical Gardens
- 1886 a coal gas works was established for lighting town

Mackellar and Commercial Road had significant development c 1870s as a result of railway. Hotels such as the former Carrier Arms now the North Eastern Hotel (1-3 Nunn and corner of Mackellar); the Victoria Hotel (2- 4 Carrier Street) and the Shamrock (1 Carrier Street) (demolished) largely serviced travellers. The Commercial Road hotels - Farmer's Arms, Wheatsheaf (demolished) and the Newmarket) were located on the north side of the railway where the stock yards and other agricultural industries were found and generally serviced the rural community.

Residential development also occurred in the areas near to the railway station with late nineteenth and turn of the century residential development occurring at 5 and 5 A Nunn Street, Smythe Street and 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10 Smythe Street (modified in the twentieth century with the addition of a projecting gable) but the earlier fabric is clearly evident.

The east had triumphed in terms of economic importance but at a social cost. By 1884, journalist Julian Thomas, a.k.a 'The Vagabond', wrote of Benalla, 'For years there was a bitter controversy and feud between East and West. A large proprietor [George Sharpe] was chief on the one side — a police magistrate [William Piper] on the other. They headed the two factions, and waged social war. The victory as yet has

²¹ Keith Turton, Keith, *Six and a Half Inches From Destiny*, Australian Railway Historical Society, 1973.

²² 'Benalla.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Saturday 7 January 1882 - Page 8.

²³ 'THE North-Eastern Ensign. Published on Tuesdays and Fridays. Friday, December 22, 1882.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 22 December 1882 - Page 2.

²⁴ Trevor Budge And Associates, *City of Benalla Conservation Study*, Vol 3 p 22

been with the East.²⁵ The animosity between the two sides even spread throughout the general populace: 'The west side was known colloquially Derby Town, and the lads maintained a permanent state of warfare with the lads on the eastern side of the river, who were contemptuously referred to as 'Yorkies'.²⁶

The 1890s Depression halted development in Benalla as building ceased and unemployment grew and many insolvencies were declared. The depression lasted until the turn of the twentieth century but by 1903, the population of Benalla was 3000,²⁷ and across Benalla East, the town was entering a new era of subdivision.

Relevant Historic Themes as identified in the *Benalla Rural City Gaps Heritage Study: Thematic History*

Prepared by Dr Robyn Ballinger

2. Peopling Benalla Rural City's places and landscapes

2.2 Exploring, surveying and mapping

3. Connecting Benalla Rural City by transport and communications

3.2 Linking Benalla Rural City by rail

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state

6.1 Making regional centres

6.3 Making homes in Benalla Rural City

Comparative Analysis

The Smythe Street Residential Precinct is of note for its integrity and for its representation of the character of residential development that was occurring in Benalla East in response to the construction of the railway line in 1873. Its proximity to the railway station contributes to the legibility of the historical and aesthetic cultural values. There is not a comparable residential area with a similar integrity or intactness that best represents these values.

²⁵ 'Picturesque Victoria. Around Benalla. By "The Vagabond," in the "Argus."' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Thursday 24 July 1884 - Page 1. (It is very apparent that 'The Vagabond' confused his East and West sides of Benalla, and I have revised these in the text for clarity.)

²⁶ 'Victoria's Country Towns. Their Rise and Development No. 13. -- History of Benalla', *Weekly Times*, Saturday 1 September 1928 - Page 5.

²⁷ *Australian Handbook*, Gordon and Gotch, Sydney, 1903.