

**BENALLA WEST RESIDENTIAL PRECINCT 1**

Heritage Precinct Citation

April 202

---

|                                       |                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Heritage Place</b>                 | Benalla West Residential Precinct 1               |
| <b>Heritage Overlay</b>               | HOXXX                                             |
| <b>Significance</b>                   | Local                                             |
| <b>Dates</b>                          | c1860s – c1960s                                   |
| <b>Address</b>                        | Benson Street<br>Cecil Street<br>Garden Street    |
| <b>Subsumed Heritage<br/>Overlays</b> | None                                              |
| <b>Recommendations</b>                | Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay |
| <b>Survey Date</b>                    | March 2024                                        |



Benalla West Residential Precinct 1

|                                                                                                                           |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span>   | Individual       |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span> | Contributory     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: grey; border: 1px solid black;"></span>  | 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).

### **Statement of Significance**

#### **What is Significant?**

The Benalla West Residential Precinct 1 is significant. The precinct lies in Benalla West and includes places in Benson, Cecil and Garden Streets. It provides evidence of some of the earliest residential settlement in Benalla. However, it is characterised by its residential Federation-era character, featuring a mixture of houses mainly spanning the era 1895-1915, with some from 1920s and 1930s and post war period. The precinct demonstrates stylistic transitions that include the mid through to late Victorian, Federation, the Interwar with its many variations which include bungalows and English styles – Stockbroker Tudor and modernist residential architecture from the 1950s/60s.

Places that contribute to the precinct include:

Benson Street: 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, Taungurong Park, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28-30, 44, 47, 49, 51, 53-55, 54

Cecil Street: 3, 6-8, 7, 9, 10-12, 11, 16, 17-19, 18 – 20, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30A, 31, 32, 33, 37 - 39

Garden Street: 21

The following buildings and features contribute to the significance of the precinct:

- The layout of the precinct area as evidence of the original 1848 town survey and later subdivisions undertaken in response to an intensification of development.
- The streetscape character of the area arising from the wide streets with gravel verges, brick gutters and large European trees.
- The diversity and mix of buildings that date from the 1870s to c1960s.
- The extent to which the key development periods are apparent.
- The overall consistency of form and scale of the residential development which is largely single storey which includes symmetrical or asymmetrical composition and pitched roofs, brick chimneys and verandahs.
- The general absence of vehicle accommodation in front setbacks.
- The front fences to residential places, most of which are low and sympathetic to the historic character of the residential buildings.

- 
- The extent of original finishes found in the precinct that include: corrugated galvanised metal roofing, terracotta tiled roofing, slate 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; timber weatherboard cladding; timber detailing to windows and doorways and nineteenth and twentieth century decorative features

The integrity and intactness of the precinct which is characterised by the low proportion of infill development contributes to the significance of the precinct.

Alterations and additions after c1970 are not significant.

**How is it Significant?**

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

**Why is it Significant?**

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of historical significance as it demonstrates early colonial survey practices, which include regular blocks and wide streets designed to the standards as set out by the colonial government. The precinct demonstrates the particular settlement pattern that occurred in response to Thomas Wedge's (Assistant Surveyor), township Survey of 1848 in Benalla West. (Criterion A)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the earliest residential settlement in Benalla as the first residential land sales occurred in this precinct. 7 Cecil Street Benalla located on one of the earliest surveyed allotments may date from this early period and 17-19 Cecil Street retains its complete original half-acre allotment. (Criterion A)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of historical significance as it provides evidence of one of the earliest government policies which provided freehold land for sale in Victoria. In 1858 the government surveyed two sections of 'Garden Allotments' on each side of the river. These allotments were intended for use as small market gardens that were positioned with access to water. 21 Garden Street, may be the only remaining house that provides evidence of the settlement of the Garden Allotments. (Criterion A)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the substantial residential developments that were constructed in Benalla West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This precinct area was a preferred area for the more wealthy residents and was popular with graziers who retired to the town from their rural properties. (Criterion A)

---

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the impact post war industrial development as supported by the factories Latoof and Callil, both of which opened during the war in 1943 and the Renold Chains factory which opened in 1950. These new factories supported existing businesses such as Terrett and Co timber factory. Evidence is found in the marked increase in post war infill development in Benson and Cecil Streets and the consolidation of these residential areas. This includes places: 28 – 30 Benson Street, 54 Benson Street, 16 Cecil Street, 18 – 20 Cecil Street, 27 Cecil Street, 29 Cecil Street, 31 Cecil Street, 37 Cecil Street and 39 Cecil Street. (Criterion A)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of representative significance for the commonality found in the scale of development, similar form, fabric and finishes. This includes a regular subdivision pattern that supports a consistency of setbacks and garden settings with street trees located on the verges of the wide streets. (Criterion D)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of aesthetic significance for its Interwar development with a number of villas designed by the prominent architect John Hanlon and these include 5, 11, 13, 15 Benson Street. (Criterion E)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of aesthetic significance for the following buildings:

**5 Benson Street Benalla** is of aesthetic significance for its interwar architecture. Significant features include: the steeply pitched gable roof with a transverse gable front; tiled roofing; brick chimney; the porch with steeply pitched roof and arched entry; the fine brickwork which includes a variety of brick bonds such as soldier coursing and basket brick patterns and the timber framed sash windows.

**8 Benson Street Benalla** is of aesthetic significance for its late Victorian architecture. Significant features include: the hipped roof clad with corrugated galvanised iron (overpainted); brick chimneys with rendered banding; the polychromatic face brick work with overpainted cream brick features and overpainted render banding; the symmetrical façade with side lights and highlights, the timber framed sash windows with side lights and the timber posted verandah with cast iron frieze and brackets; the breakfront with cast iron finials and wrought iron decorations to the apex and decorative cast iron frieze and brackets.

**54 Benson Street Benalla** is of aesthetic significance for its restrained mid twentieth century architecture. Significant features include: the low pitched gable roof; the timber framed windows that follow the pitch of the roof and the brickwork (overpainted).

**7 Cecil Street Benalla** is of aesthetic significance for its mid -Victorian architecture. Significant features include: the steeply pitched gable roof and the projecting gable roof clad with corrugated galvanised metal; the weatherboard cladding; the brick chimney; the timber framed doors, timber sash windows, the timber posted return verandah with its decorative breakfront which includes unusual barge details and decorative timber fretwork and the timber valance. The garden setting contributes to the significance of the place.

**17 – 19 Cecil Street Benalla** is of aesthetic significance for its early twentieth century architecture. Significant features include the: face brick walling; steeply pitched tiled roof with multi gables; the banks of triple timber framed windows with multi paned upper sashes; the return verandah with paired timber posts, the shingled gable ends with rectangular vents and the chimneys. The garden setting contributes to the significance of the place.

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of aesthetic significance for its streetscape values. This is found in the wide streets, large deciduous trees, brick gutters, generous garden setbacks and large gardens and for its generally high quality architecture with examples from all of the key periods including: large Victorian villas; Federation era housing; Interwar housing and mid twentieth century development. (Criterion E)

The Benalla West Residential Precinct is of aesthetic significance for the number fine residential Federation-era houses. The overall architectural character of the precinct is informed by these houses, which although varied in style are united by a standard of architectural materials and detailing. (Criterion E)

**Grading table for Benalla West Residential Precinct 1**

| Number               | Address       | Significance |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Benson Street</b> |               |              |
| 1                    | Benson Street | Contributory |
| 5                    | Benson Street | Individual   |
| 6                    | Benson Street | Contributory |
| 7                    | Benson Street | Contributory |
| 8                    | Benson Street | Individual   |
| 10                   | Benson Street | Contributory |

**BENALLA WEST RESIDENTIAL PRECINCT 1**

Heritage Precinct Citation

April 202

|                     |               |                   |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 11                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 12                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 13                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 14                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 15                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| Taungurong Park     | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 16                  | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 1/16                | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 2/16                | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 3/16                | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 18                  | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 20                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 22                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 24                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 26                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 27                  | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 28 – 30             | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 36                  | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 44                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 45                  | Benson Street | Non-contributory  |
| 47                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 49                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 51                  | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 51A                 | Benson Street | Non -contributory |
| 53 – 55             | Benson Street | Contributory      |
| 54                  | Benson Street | Individual        |
|                     |               |                   |
| <b>Cecil Street</b> |               |                   |
| 3                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory      |
| 5                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory  |
| 6 – 8               | Cecil Street  | Contributory      |
| 7                   | Cecil Street  | Individual        |
| 9                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory      |

**BENALLA WEST RESIDENTIAL PRECINCT 1**

Heritage Precinct Citation

April 202

|                      |               |                  |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 10 – 12              | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 11                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 13                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 14                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 14A                  | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 15                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 16                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 17 – 19              | Cecil Street  | Individual       |
| 18 – 20              | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 25                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 26                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 27                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 28                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 29                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 30                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 30A                  | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 31                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 32                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 33                   | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
| 35                   | Cecil Street  | Non-contributory |
| 37- 39               | Cecil Street  | Contributory     |
|                      |               |                  |
| <b>Garden Street</b> |               |                  |
| 21                   | Garden Street | Contributory     |
|                      |               |                  |
| <b>Maude Street</b>  |               |                  |
| 23                   | Maude Street  | Non-contributory |
| <b>Market Street</b> |               |                  |
| 19                   | Market Street | Non-contributory |

**Additional Controls**

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| External paint controls apply      | Yes |
| Internal alteration controls apply | No  |
| Tree controls apply                | No  |

## BENALLA WEST RESIDENTIAL PRECINCT 1

Heritage Precinct Citation

April 202

---

|                                                                         |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Street trees – Ulmis sp (elm trees) Quercus sp (oak trees)              |     |
| 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 |

### HISTORY

#### Early Benalla and Wedge's 1848 Survey

In 1848, Assistant Surveyor Thomas Wedge laid out the town of Benalla.<sup>1</sup> Wedge created three street grids: east, north-west and south-west. The first two street grids took in the path of the Sydney to Port Phillip (Sydney-Melbourne) Road, and therefore were open to commerce associated with passing trade. The third grid (Precinct 4), located on the left bank of the Broken River to the south of the Sydney-Melbourne Road, was the only street grid that would remain predominantly residential.

---

<sup>1</sup> '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.

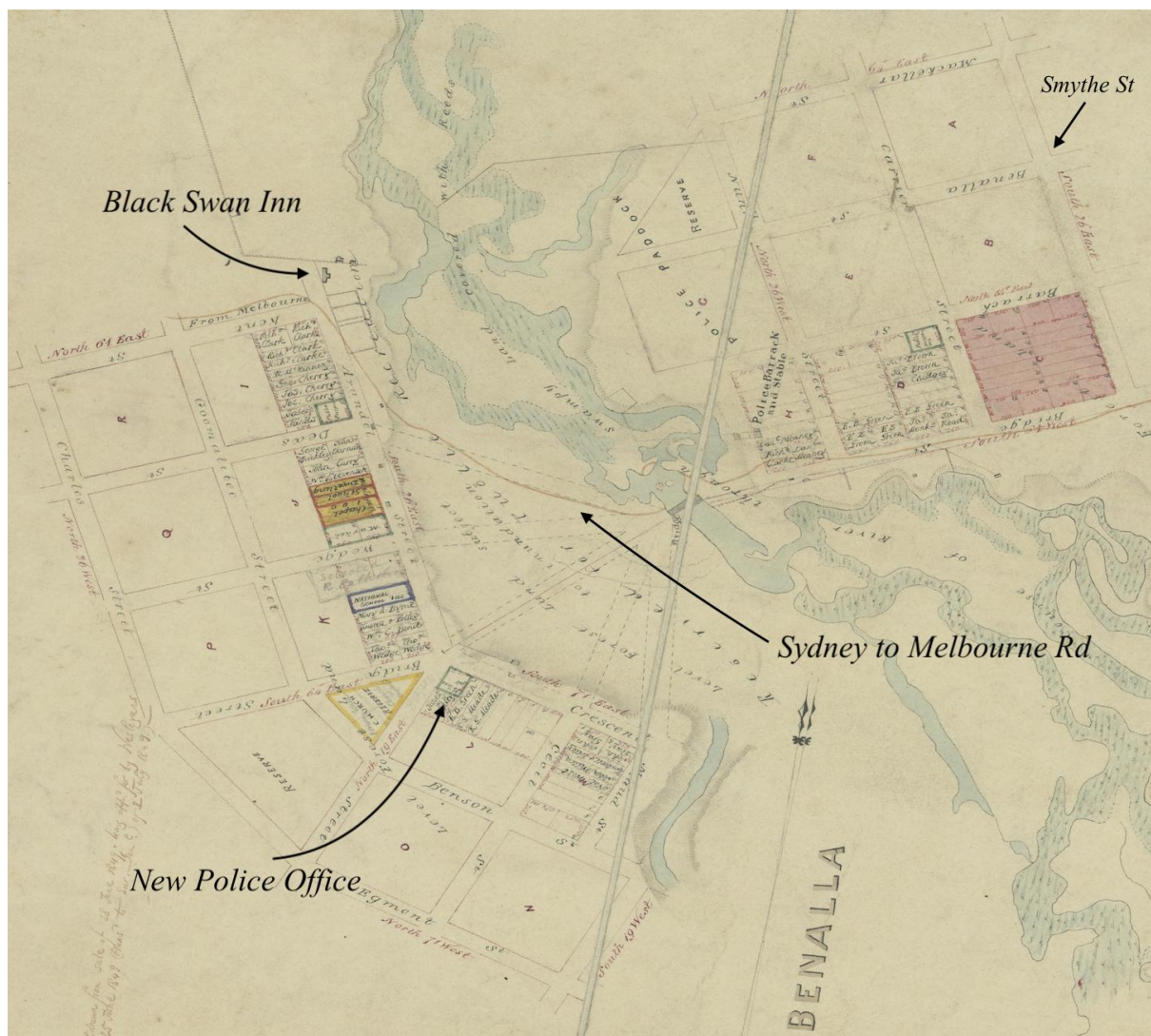


**Figure 1: Excerpt from ‘Survey of the ground near the crossing place, Broken River, 1848’, surveyed by Thomas Wedge, illustrating the residential nature of the Cecil and Benson Streets precinct, away from the main Sydney to Melbourne Road.**

The two grids on the west side of Benalla were aligned to wrap around the lower-lying banks of the Broken River which were subject to inundation. As they do not share the same axis, these were linked by a triangular area (where the current Benalla Police Station is situated).

Whereas the north-west grid (Precinct 5) was mercantile, the south-west grid was designated as a seat of government-administrative and ecclesiastical functions from the earliest days of European occupation. At the time of Wedge’s survey, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Henry Wilson Hutchison Smythe (appointed in 1846<sup>2</sup>), recommended a church reserve in the triangular area. And despite the fact that a

<sup>2</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 47, Date: Thursday, November 26th 1846, p.301.

police post and barracks already existed on the east bank of the Broken River, and had done so since 1839, Smythe also situated a 'police office' on the corner Thomas and Arundel Streets. From this point onwards, it was envisaged that Smythe's west-bank police station would supersede the existing police post; a concept which can be seen in Wedge's 1848 'Survey of the Broken River, Tributaries and the Sydney Road' in which the new police office is labelled, whereas the existing police post is only marked as an existing structure with no name.

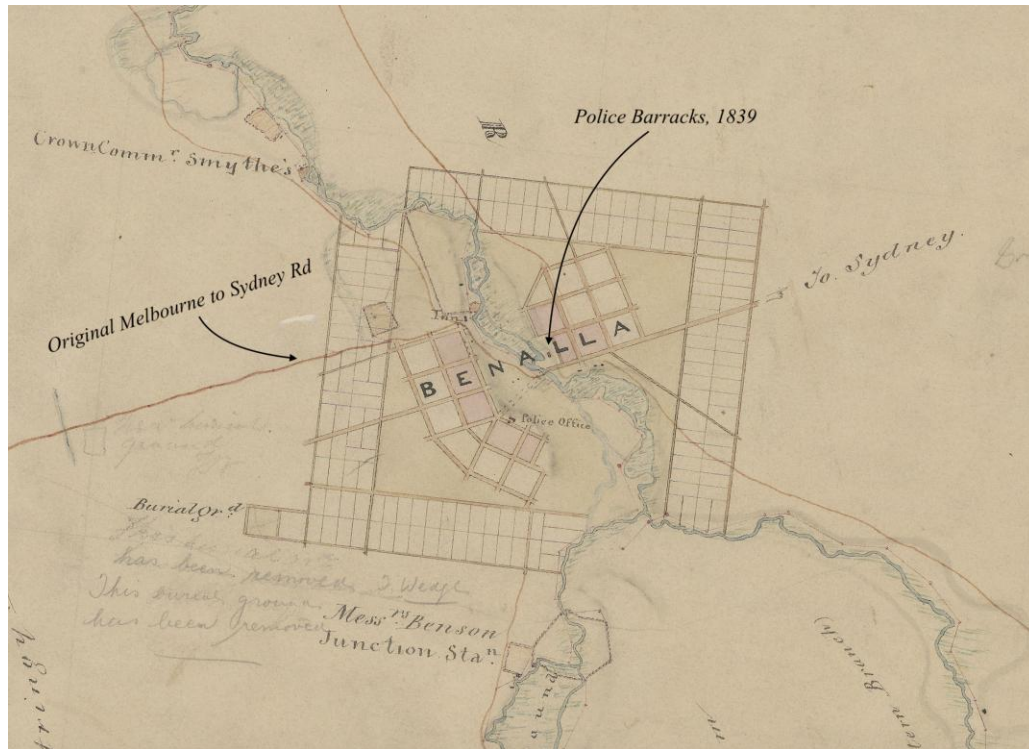


**Figure 2: Excerpt from 'Survey of Broken River, Tributaries and Sydney Road,' 1848, surveyed by Thomas Wedge, illustrating the layout of Benalla with three town grids girded by a belt of suburban lands.**

Henry Wilson Hutchison Smythe lived on the western side of the Broken River (at the property which became known as 'Marangan'<sup>3</sup>), and this fact also had an early impact on the character of Benalla West. Smythe's title, 'Commissioner of Crown Lands' (CCL), was more than just a position description: he literally held a commission that came from the Queen; and as such, he was the highest-ranked person in Benalla. Smythe also eventually served as the local Police Magistrate.<sup>4</sup> These associations further entrenched the

<sup>3</sup> Wedge marked Smythe's house on the map 'Survey of the Broken River, Tributaries and the Sydney Road,' 1848, catalogued as 'GOULB65 BROKEN RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES', A sub collection of VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>4</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 7, Date: Wednesday, February 09th 1853, p.188.

---

west side of the Broken River as the higher-status section of the town. Smythe drowned in the Broken River in 1853,<sup>5</sup> and squatter William Piper was appointed in his stead, also taking up residence at Marangan,<sup>6</sup> thus maintaining the social and political status of the West.

By 1855, the police station had been fully relocated to Arundel Street South, with the site for a Police Court (ie: Court of Petty Sessions) being situated opposite (located where the Drill Hall is today). A court house was built in 1857;<sup>7</sup> the post office (situated near The Black Swan Inn in Arundel Street North) was shifted to the same location,<sup>8</sup> and a telegraph station was added.<sup>9</sup> Next to the court precinct, the Church of England was granted a reserve<sup>10</sup> — Protestantism being the religion favoured by the colonial elites. (Tellingly, no reserve was allocated for the Catholic Church in 1848, and one was not provided until 1863.<sup>11</sup>) Therefore, by the mid-1850s, the left bank of the Broken River, and more particularly, the south-west street grid, was solidified not only as non-mercantile; but also as the seat of authority — where the governmental, legal and religious matters of the district were dealt with and communicated.

---

<sup>5</sup> 'Scraps From The Ovens. (From Our Own Correspondent.) Spring Creek, 14th May, 1853.' *The Argus*, Wednesday 18 May 1853 - Page 8.

<sup>6</sup> For appointment: *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 30, Date: Saturday, May 28th 1853, p.702.

<sup>7</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 137, Date: Tuesday, November 24th 1857, p.2267.

<sup>8</sup> 'An Historical Picture--Official Opening Of Benalla Post Office', *Benalla Standard*, Friday 27 January 1939 - Page 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 135, Date: Tuesday, November 17th 1857, p.2205.

<sup>10</sup> '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.

<sup>11</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 1, Date: Friday, January 02nd 1863, p.7.

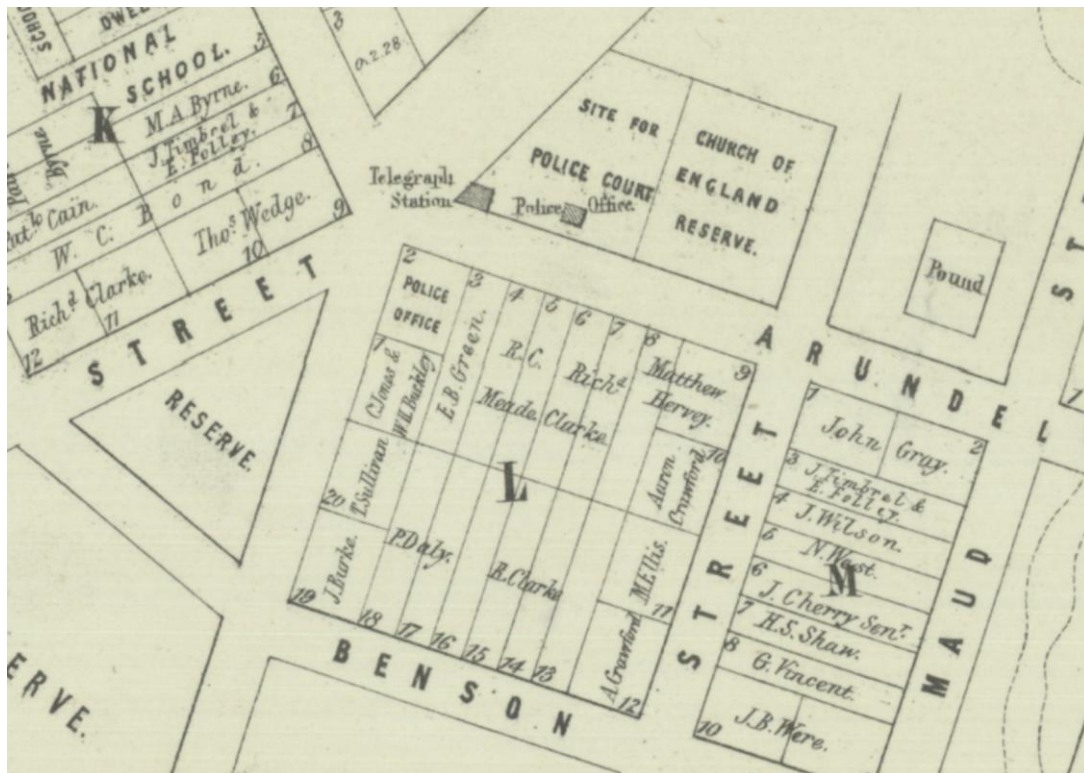


**Figure 3: ‘Township and suburban lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road’ by J. E. Wilmot, Asst. Surveyor, Crown Lands Office Melbourne, 1857, illustrating the early concentration of government and ecclesiastical functions in Arundel Street South.**

This phase in the historical development of the precinct was significant in terms of establishing its elevated social status and overall gentility, which in the long term, led to higher social statements and material investments in the houses that would be constructed there.

### Residential occupancy in 1849

In Wedge’s survey of 1848, all of the township allotments were sized at 2 roods (half an acre) each, with the expectation that each town block would have twenty allotments. In the long-term, the large size of the blocks would facilitate subdivision. These town blocks were situated on exceptionally broad streets which are 150 links (30 metres) wide: streets as wide as any main street in the inner city grid of Melbourne. Both aspects — large blocks and wide streets — were to become instrumental in the development of the character of this precinct.

However, the very first allotments to be surveyed and sold, which occurred in the same year that Benalla (appearing in the Government Gazette as 'Benalta') was declared a township,<sup>12</sup> took place in 1849.<sup>13</sup> These included five allotments along the south side of Cecil Street between Arundel and Benson Streets, and five allotments on the corner of Arundel and Thomas Streets.



**Figure 4: Excerpt from Excerpt from 'Survey of the ground near the crossing place, Broken River, 1848', surveyed by Thomas Wedge, with annotations made in 1849, illustrating the pre-gold rush residential area of Cecil and Arundel Streets.**

Included in this first land sale was allotment, now **7 Cecil Street**, purchased by carrier John Wilson. The core of the house on this allotment today is most likely the oldest remaining structure in Benalla, and may even date from this early period, signifying that this section of Cecil Street is one of the earliest residential areas. Meanwhile, **17-19 Cecil Street** is the only property to retain a complete original half-acre allotment.

By 1855, the town block bounded by Arundel, Thomas, Nixon and Cecil was entirely surveyed and sold, as was the whole east side of the adjoining block fronting Cecil Street, thus forming the early core of this residential precinct.

<sup>12</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 20, Date: Wednesday, May 02nd 1849, p.291.

<sup>13</sup> 'GOVERNMENT LAND SALE. Detailed Lists, Results, Guides,' *The Argus*, Saturday 30 June 1849 - Page 2.

---

A final aspect of Wedge's survey which is worthy of mention is that he named some of the streets in this precinct.<sup>14</sup> Two streets were named for squatters who held pastoral runs upstream of Benalla on the Broken River: Arundel Street was named for William Francis Hunter Arundel, the holder of Barjarg Station, and heir to Barjarg Tower and Baronetcy in Scotland; while Benson Street was named for George Benson, the holder of Junction Station,<sup>15</sup> who with his brother, were personal friends of the then Lt. Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe.<sup>16</sup> The social standing of these individuals, transferred to street names, would not have been lost on the early occupants of Benalla.

### **Garden Allotments, 1858**

The first flush of the gold rush of 1851-52 saw thousands of gold seekers making their way through Benalla *en route* from Melbourne to the 'Ovens diggings' (Beechworth); also passing through when travelling from the Ovens diggings to Melbourne and Bendigo. Benalla maybe have only had a population of 117 in the township at the outbreak of the gold rush,<sup>17</sup> but after gold was found, the local population was growing, and demand for produce from passing traffic was likewise growing. To encourage the production of fresh local produce, in 1858, the government surveyed two sections of 'Garden Allotments' (one on each side of the River). Intended for use as small market gardens, positioned with ready access to water, these mainly 2 acre lots were sold in 1859,<sup>18</sup> leading to the naming of Market and Garden Streets.

---

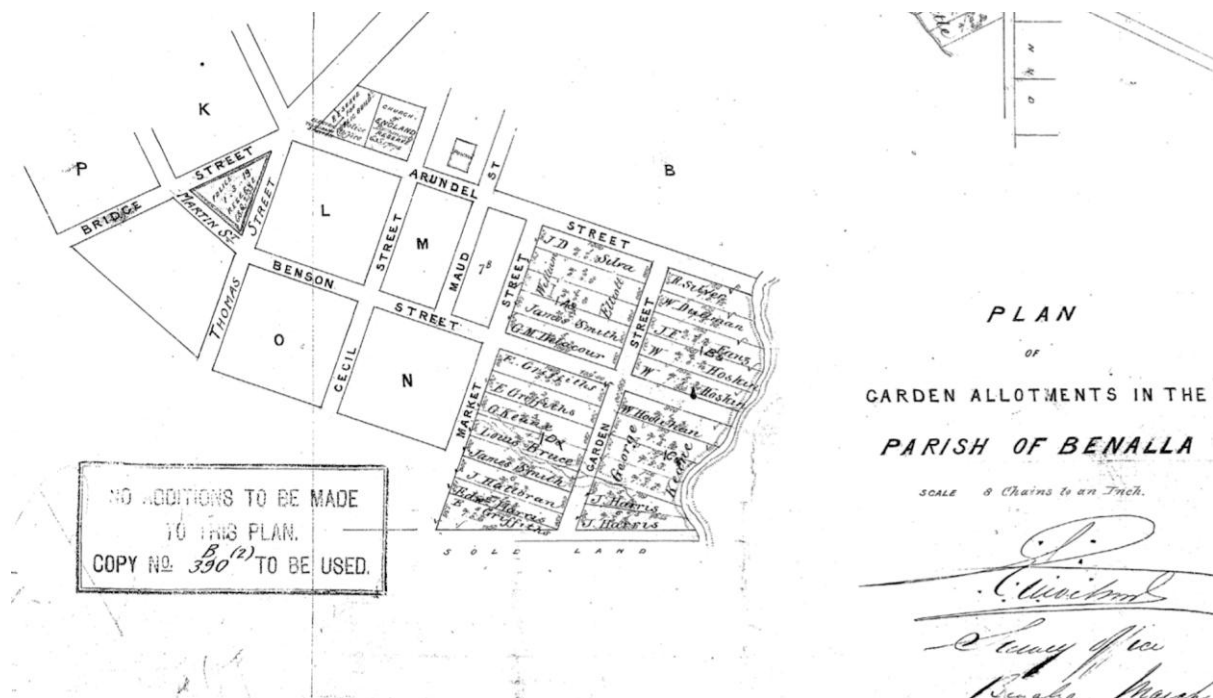
<sup>14</sup> Judith Bassett suggested that Thomas Townsend's 1839 survey, which has an early pencil sketch of two street grids with some names, was done by Townsend. I think it is also possible that Wedge used Townsend's map to make a preliminary sketch, and that the pencilled parts are a later annotation. (see: Judith Bassett, *City of Benalla Conservation Study Volume 2: Benalla 1836-1991, An Environmental History*, Trevor Budge and Associated, Bendigo, 1992.)

<sup>15</sup> His pre-emptive right is marked on 'Survey of Broken River, Tributaries and Sydney Road,' 1848, surveyed by Thomas Wedge, map held in a sub collection of VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office of Victoria.

<sup>16</sup> R. V. Billis, and A. S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Macmillan & Company Ltd., Melbourne, 1932, p.15.

<sup>17</sup> 'Benalla's History,' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 12 March 1935 - Page 6.

<sup>18</sup> 'Plan of Garden Allotments in the Parish of Benalla, Put-away plan B391, 1858. Also Parish plan



[Figure 5] Excerpt from 'Plan of Garden Allotments in the Parish of Benalla', Put-away plan B391, 1858, illustrating the creation of garden allotments and Market and Garden Streets.

Today, the house at **21 Garden Street**, which was the residence of James Hair,<sup>19</sup> may be the only remaining house that signifies the original presence of one of these Garden Allotments (parents John Hair [blacksmith] and Catherine,<sup>20</sup> owned a number of adjoining Garden Allotments in Garden Street). As late as 1941, the allotment of which 21 Garden Street was a part, was still in its original format, as were all of the blocks which ran along Garden Street to the water's edge.

### The 1870s, and the Land Boom of the 1880s

In the late 1860s, there commenced an exodus of investment from Benalla West in favour of Benalla East, so much so that by 1870, *The Benalla Ensign* wrote that although the West 'for a time held the majority of population, as you find many buildings erected on that side, some of them are entirely deserted. One of them [The Black Swan Inn] was a huge hotel, built at the old crossing, and is now a perfect forlorn hope.'<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> pers comm, Chick Walker to Jacqui Durrant, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Electoral roll, District of Moira, Polling place Benalla, 1905.

<sup>21</sup> 'Glimpses Of North-Eastern Victoria.' *The Benalla Ensign and Farmer's and Squatter's Journal*, Friday 10 June 1870 - Page 2.

---

When the North-Eastern Railway came through Benalla in 1873, the decision to put the Railway Station on the East side became 'the principal factor in relegating the west side to second place.'<sup>22</sup>

However, during the 1880s, Australia was in the grip of a land boom, in which property prices skyrocketed and banking credit was easily won.<sup>23</sup> In Benalla, there was renewed interest in property, particularly around the south end of Arundel Street, close to churches and amenities. In 1882, Bridge Street West was described as 'a long stretch of road extending to a distance of about a quarter of a mile, without the presence of a single habitation on either side...' The agricultural reserve (show grounds) were in place; and while the Post Office — 'a mean-looking shanty not worthy the name of building' — was about to be replaced by a huge edifice in Benalla East, the 'court-house, State-school, lands office and police-station' were still present, and Arundel Street was described as 'one of the prettiest streets in the town, on account of its adornment by tree-planting.'<sup>24</sup>

When visiting in 1884, Julian Thomas, 'The Vagabond', agreed that in Benalla West, 'there is as pretty a bit of quiet scenery as a painter would wish to copy. The red brick of the homes and the tall trees by the roadside give it quite an English appearance.' Thomas also noted the ready access to a cricket ground and lawn tennis courts,<sup>25</sup> writing,

'There are plenty of undeveloped opportunities in Benalla, which possesses the great advantage of being at such a distance from the metropolis that local industries will flourish. Thus, there are three flour mills, a brewery which at one time returned a member of Parliament, and a foundry employing, I am told, from 50 to 60 hands. Benalla also supports five lawyers.'

As the land boom hit Benalla, blocks of land were being traded around Arundel Street South and Cecil Streets, still as original half-acres; and in 1884, local solicitor F. Trenerry Brown<sup>26</sup> bought an allotment at the Church of England-end of Cecil Street for £14.<sup>27</sup> In 1886, Shire Secretary James Knox bought a half acre

---

<sup>22</sup> 'Victoria's Country Towns Their Rise and Development No. 13. -- History of Benalla,' *Weekly Times*, Saturday 1 September 1928 - Page 5.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 'Impressions Gf Benalla.' *Ovens And Murray Advertiser*, Tuesday 2 May 1882 - Page 5.

<sup>25</sup> 'Picturesque Victoria. Around Benalla.' *The Australasian*, Saturday 2 August 1884 - Page 1.

<sup>26</sup> 'Benalla County Court.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 12 August 1884 - Page 2.

<sup>27</sup> 'THE North-eastern Ensign Published on Tuesdays & Fridays. TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1884. CURRENT TOPICS.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 10 June 1884 - Page 2

at the junction of Cecil and Benson Streets for £18.<sup>28</sup> The same year, the executors of J. B. Were, head of the financial advisory firm, sold a half acre at the corner of Maud and Benson Streets.<sup>29</sup>

W. O'Brien, a railway section repairer, who had purchased a number of allotments in Cecil Street between 1866 and 1881,<sup>30</sup> was quick off the mark to develop his land. By 1883 he was advertising quarter-acre house lots in Cecil Street, the result of undertaking two-lot subdivisions of his original purchases.<sup>31</sup> His impulse to subdivide eventually would be duplicated all over town.

Although surveyed in 1848, the Church-end of Cecil Street was only fully cleared of stumps and trees, with a footpath formed on one side, in 1883.<sup>32</sup> The clearing encouraged the construction of new homes. In 1885, Allotment 10, Section L, Cecil Street was sold as a vacant allotment,<sup>33</sup> and its new owner built a deep Victorian weatherboard house — its facade decorated with iron lace along the verandah, and fine joinery detailing elsewhere, at what would become **6-8 Cecil Street**.

Aside from the Church-end of Cecil Street, the Bridge Road-end of Benson Street was also popular at this time. Two red brick Victorian homes, both highly symmetrical, were built side-by-side: **8 Benson Street**, which was built by 1872,<sup>34</sup> has a facade of tuck-pointed red brick, with iron lace detailing along an elaborate bull-nosed front verandah; and **10 Benson Street**, has exactly the same architectural form, but its facade has a stucco finish which is further distinguished from its neighbour by contrasting quoining. These homes were fine companions in the streetscape, expressing both the architecture of the period, as well as the taste of its individual owners who sought to differentiate their houses. **12 Benson Street** is yet another double fronted Victorian 'double pile,' but this time in timber with mock-ashlar weatherboards cladding its facade.

## **The Federation era**

---

<sup>28</sup> 'The north-eastern Ensign Published on Tuesdays & Fridays. FRIDAY. 21ST MAY, 1886.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 21 May 1886 - Page 2.

<sup>29</sup> 'Advertising,' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 7 May 1886 - Page 2.

<sup>30</sup> 'Benalla Township plan, Imperial measure 5066', A Parish plan from VPRS 16171, Dept Crown Lands and survey, 1954, Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>31</sup> 'Advertising', *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 9 March 1883 - Page 3.

<sup>32</sup> 'Benalla Shire Council. Friday, July 6, 1883.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 10 July 1883 - Page 2.

<sup>33</sup> 'Advertising', *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 24 March 1885 - Page 3.

<sup>34</sup> As researched in the Benalla Rate books by Chick Walker.

In 1889, the land boom came to an abrupt end. The economy had seen an overextension in investments on property, and when property prices collapsed, this led to a spate of building society and bank failures. What followed was an abrupt collapse of private investment in the pastoral industry and urban development, as well as 'a sharp pullback in public infrastructure investment.' Across Australia, the resulting economic depression 'saw real GDP fall 17 per cent over 1892 and 1893, and the accompanying financial crisis, which reached a peak in 1893, was the most severe in Australia's history.' A drought in 1895 only accentuated and prolonged the depression.<sup>35</sup>

Benalla's experience of depression at this time is difficult to discern. Everyone in town was made aware of the situation when the government declared a colony-wide five day bank holiday to stop the run on banks, after the National Bank of Australasia had been suspended in May 1893.<sup>36</sup> However, many of the households in the neighbourhood of Benson and Cecil Streets were better insulated from economic crisis than most. In 1894, journalist Julian Thomas, a.k.a 'The Vagabond', wrote that 'Benalla West is, in the London sense, the west end of the town',<sup>37</sup> by which he meant, *fashionable*. This was his second journalistic visit to Benalla, and he wrote,

'The streets in Benalla West are broad, lined with trees, and have good footpaths. It must cost the shire council a considerable amount to keep these in good order. The villas here are handsome, and stand in old fashioned gardens, where the modern chrysanthemum blooms at this season of the year. Mr. Nixon [surveyor] enjoys his pension and ease... Mr Beard, whom I see with Mr Nixon, is another old pioneer to be respected.'<sup>38</sup>

Historian A. J. Dunlop also suggests that during this period, 'many retired farmers and others desired to spend their declining years in familiar surrounds in the town.'<sup>39</sup> In 1912, the *Weekly Times* noted that 'dairying is a lucrative industry is attested by the two large butter factories in the town, besides others further out in the country. Cattle-raising, agriculture and poultry are among the industries. The passing of large holdings or estates has begun, and this means that what was once farmed in an indifferent way by

---

<sup>35</sup> 'Census Returns.' *The Yarrowonga Mercury and Mulwala (N.S.W.) News*, Thursday 30 April 1891 - Page 3.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Financial Crisis.' *The Yackandandah Times*, Saturday 6 May 1893 - Page 2.

<sup>37</sup> 'Reminiscences Of Benalla. By The Vagabond,' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 18 May 1894 - Page 3.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> A. J. Dunlop, *Benalla Cavalcade, a history of Benalla and district*, Mullaya Publications, Canterbury, Vic., 1973, p.151.

one man will be cut up for holdings amongst a score or more. The inevitable result will be greater prosperity for the individuals and the district, and the gradual growth of Benalla, its trading centre.’<sup>40</sup>

The rural origins of many of Benalla’s residents — farmers and graziers coming to town, having sold of their holdings — is expressed in the style of some of Benalla’s houses at this time. Given large allotments on which to build, residents of this era sometimes opted for the kind of town-house that expressed a relaxed rural version of the standard Federation-era house, with a gabled elevation (decorated with batons) that addresses the street, combined with breezy verandahs and high pitched hipped roofs vented at their peak by gablets — elements more attuned to a country homestead. **32 Cecil Street** and **20 Benson Street** provide ready illustrations of such houses (as do **18 Grey Street**, **30 Nixon Street** and **32 Barkly Street** across the River), but **120 Arundel Street**, home of T. F. Harrison,<sup>41</sup> provides one of the most magnificent examples of this architectural form which is so characteristically a Federation-styled ‘Benalla country house’.

Another characteristic aspect of Benalla was, quite literally, the subdivision. Well-to-do landholders who had purchased land around town in the 1850s and 1860s, were beginning to ‘cash in their chips’ by subdividing their holdings into smaller house lots: at half an acre, the original allotments were large enough that even the owner of a single allotment could afford to subdivide. The owners of Allotment 10 in Section L on Cecil Street, with its charming late Victorian weather board home (**6-8 Cecil Street**), was subdivided around the time of Federation, and an a second weatherboard house was added to the streetscape (**10 Cecil Street**). The *ad hoc* approach to subdividing land around existing houses meant that the house blocks in this part Cecil Street had street frontages of varying widths.

Some of the land-holders who left the land for a ‘town house’ in Benalla were very well-to-do indeed. In 1906, ‘Mr Alfred Guppy (a grazier and vigneron<sup>42</sup> at ‘Moore Park’) had erected a nice brick residence next door to that of Mr J. G. O’Shea (at **7 Cecil Street**)... the contractor in this case being Mr J. C. Brockie.’<sup>43</sup> This was **11 Cecil Street**, with exterior embellishments such as ornate pressed tin detailing, and art nouveau lead lighting.

---

<sup>40</sup> ‘Benalla’, *Weekly Times*, Saturday 12 October 1912 - Page 33.

<sup>41</sup> pers comm. Daniel Claridge, to Jacqui Durrant 22 February 2024.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Benalla Licensing Court. Tuesday, December 10th, 1901. (Before Maura Burrowes, Morrison, and Greene). Transfer.’ *Benalla Standard*, Friday 13 December 1901 - Page 3.

<sup>43</sup> ‘North-Eastern Ensign Published At Benalla. Friday, March 2, 1906. Railway Accommodation.’ *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 2 March 1906 - Page 2.

By 1913, Guppy also had built a 'handsome seven-roomed (exclusive of bath room and kitchen) Queen Anne weather board cottage in Cecil-street, on the block of land adjoining his own residence.'<sup>44</sup> This was **13 Cecil Street**. Both of Guppy's houses share the same distinctive verandah bracket which is most likely unique to Benalla (as does **32 Cecil Street**, and across town, **16 Grey Street**).

In 1907, Mrs Carige, a widow aged in her 90s, who was the daughter of plantation owners from Barbados, had come to Benalla with her husband in the 1857,<sup>45</sup> sold seven house lots in Benson Street between Market and Garden Street.<sup>46</sup> She and her husband had started buying up land in Benalla West the 1860s, and now that almost 50 years had passed, it was time to sell. One of her allotments was purchased by grazier J. H. Inglis of Tatong Station. In 1909 John Inglis and his wife Violet had 'Yering' built for them by contractors Messrs. A. and H. Peters (the home now called, 'Sunningdale' at **48-52 Benson Street**). The *Benalla Standard* reported on the house in detail:

'In design it is more of the bungalow than anything else, and the building is a very handsome addition to the residences of the town. Its dimensions are 80ft. x 40ft., with a handsome verandah round the front and east sides. The entrance door is on the east side, and leads into a spacious hall, 28 feet long by 8 foot wide, and this in turn leads into a passage 35 feet by 5 feet, which leads into a skillion at the back. The drawing room is the first apartment on the right of the hall, measuring 18ft. by 16ft, with metal ceiling, tiled grate, and glass panel door. It may here be mentioned that the doors to all the principal rooms are of the same description. On the opposite side of the hall is a magnificent dining room, 25ft. x 18ft., with projecting casement windows, and leaded fanlights facing the east, and, like the hall, the ceiling is panelled stained kauri. The front bedroom, which is next to the drawingroom, is 15ft. x 16ft., with metal ceilings, and is handsomely finished. Along the passage on the west side are two more bedrooms, each 14ft. x 16ft., and a bathroom, 14ft. x 8ft., fitted with a heater, and containing a clothes press. Adjoining this is a spacious breakfast room, 22ft. x 16ft., while at the back is a pantry, 10ft. x 8ft, with cellar underneath. There is also a large kitchen, servants' room, wash-house, etc., fitted with all the necessary requisites. The building lighted throughout with gas, and electric bells are fitted to four rooms and the hall. The building, which is of brick, is splendidly finished, and reflects great credit upon the contractors.'<sup>47</sup>

This grand Federation-styled tuck-pointed red brick house, with a high-pitched roof, deeply set back into an expansive allotment, greatly raised the tone and social status of Benson Street and the profile of the

---

<sup>44</sup> 'New Buildings' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 28 February 1913 - Page 3.

<sup>45</sup> 'Obituary Mrs. Carige.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 26 September 1911 - Page 3.

<sup>46</sup> 'Advertising,' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 26 April 1907 - Page 2.

<sup>47</sup> 'New Residences', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 8 June 1909 - Page 3.

neighbourhood overall. A half acre on the corner of Benson Street was advertised for sale in 1911 as 'opposite Mr J. Inglis... A splendid building site.'<sup>48</sup> (This is probably the site of **49 Benson Street**, which had a Federation-era weatherboard home built on it.)

Also, the London plane trees planted along this section of Benson Street, as well as those in nearby Market and Garden Streets, were planted in 1909 at the behest of J. H. Inglis.<sup>49</sup>

Yering also influenced architectural tastes. Two years later, in 1911, Mr. W. T. Crimmins built another red brick residence at the corner of Benson and Cecil streets<sup>50</sup> (**22 Benson Street**), which though more modest in scale than Yering, echoed its style, having being built with excellent attention to detail, featuring tuck-pointed brickwork, distinctive Queen Anne styled iron lace veranda detailing, casement windows,<sup>51</sup> and magnificent Wunderlich pressed tin ceilings throughout.

At the time, Guppy and Inglis was not the only well-to-do graziers to live in the neighbourhood: there was also John Ryan, and Bernard and Catherine Doyle who had come off the land and were now 'of independent means'. In addition, the Police Superintendent, William Davidson lived in Benson Street, while the owner and editor of *The Benalla Ensign*, John Guare O'Shae, lived at **7 Cecil Street**.<sup>52</sup> (When journalist Julian Thomas revisited Benalla again in 1894, he had noted that O'Shae was 'a liberal of the sound type' who had a 'pleasant home' in Cecil Street.<sup>53</sup>) 'Highmoor', at **3 Cecil Street**, built on the corner of Cecil and Arundel, was the residence of Michael McNamara who had an auctioneering business in town, but who died in 1913, after which time the residence was kept-up by his wife Mary.<sup>54</sup>

While the neighbourhood attracted the wealthy and professional classes, it also still had its share of labourers, gardeners, a laundress, a grocer and wood-cutter.<sup>55</sup> At Yering, the servants' rooms were utilised: in 1911, within two years of the house being built, Mrs Violet Inglis was advertising for a 'nursery housemaid';<sup>56</sup> and in Cecil Street, Alice Jane Beaton was recorded as a 'ladies maid' on the 1913 electoral roll.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> 'Advertising,' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 24 March 1911 - Page 2.

<sup>49</sup> 'benalla shire council.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 27 July 1909 - Page 3.

<sup>50</sup> 'New Buildings', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 18 July 1911 - Page 2.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> 'Reminiscences Of Benalla. By The Vagabond,' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 18 May 1894 - Page 3.

<sup>54</sup> 'Obituary. Mr. Jos. M'namara.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 16 September 1930 - Page 3;

'Family Notices' *The Argus*, Wednesday 20 August 1913 - Page 1.

<sup>55</sup> Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1913.

<sup>56</sup> 'Advertising,' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 8 August 1911 - Page 2.

<sup>57</sup> Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1913.

---

In 1913, it was commented that 'At the present time there is a scarcity of dwelling accommodation [in Benalla], and this is likely very soon to be accentuated in view of the early completion of the new railway workshops, when a number of additional men will be permanently engaged there. The construction of the Benalla to Tatong railway will also mean an eager demand for house accommodation by those who will necessarily be engaged thereon.'<sup>58</sup> However, despite the demand, the pace of building development in Benalla would be interrupted the following year by the outbreak of The Great War in 1914.

### **The 1920s**

In April 1923, the *Benalla Standard* reported that Benalla was in the midst of a 'mild building boom.'<sup>59</sup> Building hit a peak in 1927, when a total of 53 houses were built in town in one year.<sup>60</sup> However, very few of these new home-builders were attracted to Cecil and Benson Streets, unless they were aiming to build the style of home that required a large allotment. Such was the case in 1923 with the new residence of thirty-five year old 'land salesman' Seymour Rodda Roe,<sup>61</sup> who was employed by stock and station agents Watts, Turnbull & Co.<sup>62</sup> Roe's sprawling Arts and Crafts-styled bungalow (built by Thomas Armstrong Hair<sup>63</sup>), 'Merriolia',<sup>64</sup> set in half an acre at the corner of Benson and Cecil Streets (**17-19 Cecil Street**), might have single-handedly raised the profile of the neighbourhood once again (as Yering had over a decade earlier), adding a taste of British architectural glamour, eventually secreted behind a voguish cypress hedge. Little expense was spared in the detailing of this property, from the profuse amount of decorative lead-lighting right down to the diaper-patterned glass panels on its interior doors, to the garden lighting which matched the external light fittings of the house. The house was intended to have a staircase with a second storey, but Roe apparently almost went bust building the house, and plans were curtailed.<sup>65</sup>

Few other residents in town at this time seemed to possess either the desire or the capital to match Roe's house — only W. H. Carter's new residence in Mitchell Street, 'Wooleen' came close. Barely anyone else locally would match the attention to architectural detail expressed at 'Merriolia' until the end of the

---

<sup>58</sup> 'New Buildings' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 28 February 1913 - Page 3.

<sup>59</sup> 'Progress Of Benalla,' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 20 April 1923, Page 5.

<sup>60</sup> 'Victoria's Country Towns Their Rise And Development No. 13. -- History Of Benalla,' *Weekly Times*, Saturday 1 September 1928 - Page 5.

<sup>61</sup> 'Progress Of Benalla,' Op Cit.

<sup>62</sup> 'Litigation Over A Clearing Sale. Fortune V. Watts, Turn Bull & Co.' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 10 July 1914 - Page 4; 'Insolvent Applies For Certificate Creditor Strongly Opposes Judgment Reserved,' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 13 February 1920 - Page 4.

<sup>63</sup> Per comm. Chic Walker to Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

<sup>64</sup> 'Family Notices', *The Argus*, Saturday 23 October 1926 - Page 13.

<sup>65</sup> Pers comm. Chick Walker to Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

decade; and even then, the comparable ‘modern villas’ — one designed by local architect Harold Hanlon, built at the corner of Carrier and McKellar Streets in 1929,<sup>66</sup> and another built in the Arts and Crafts style on the corner of Barkley and Grey Streets for J. Doherty the same year — were within easy reach of the centre of town. For much of the 1920s, this area of Benalla West was considered just a little remote from the business centre; until such time as the popularity of motor cars changed the sentiment.

### **The Great Depression and the 1930s**

Building in Benalla had continued through the early 1930s despite the on-set of the Great Depression; and surprisingly, it began to substantially pick up pace by the mid-1930s: unlike elsewhere in Australia, the town had a comparatively swift recovery from the Depression, having had enough government employees in town at one end of the spectrum (there were, for example, over 100 railway employees on the electoral roll in 1931<sup>67</sup>), and enough high-wealth individuals at the other end, to see it through. In 1936, the *Benalla Standard* noted once again that building in Benalla was steadily progressing, ‘due partly to the coming to the town of postal officials and others engaged in semi-Governmental activities.’<sup>68</sup> In June of that year it wrote, ‘As soon as residences have been completed they have been occupied, and the demand for additional accommodation persists. Quite a new appearance has been given to sections of both east and west by the erection of numerous modern-style dwellings...’<sup>69</sup>

In the short window between the end of Great Depression in the mid 1930s, and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, a group of houses were built at the Bridge Street end of Benson Street, near the police station. This end of Benson Street had long possessed a relative social cache, and now another set of people with means, whose family wealth and professional situations had sustained them through tough times — built new homes with architectural aspirations to sophistication and modernity. Three of these homes — **11, 13 and 15 Benson Street** — were all designed by local architect Harold Hanlon.

All of Hanlon’s houses in Benson Street make lavish use of architectural materials and construction: for the well-to-do the period, materials were not so expensive, and labour was quite cheap<sup>70</sup>: these houses are brick, have tiled roofs, and feature conspicuously clean architectural lines accentuated by exterior wall finishes that are either stucco, have raked brick joints, or use both in combination (as seen at **15 Benson**

---

<sup>66</sup> ‘A Modern Villa,’ *Benalla Standard*, Friday 8 February 1929 - Page 5.

<sup>67</sup> Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1931.

<sup>68</sup> ‘More Buildings Benalla’s Steady Progress,’ *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 11 August 1936, P.1.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Building Activities High School To Be Remodelled New Shops To Be Erected,’ *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 9 June 1936 - Page 1.

<sup>70</sup> Pers Comm. John Hanlon To Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

**Street**). They were also set well-back from the streetm providing leisured ‘boundaries [to] allow for the growth of good shade trees, ornamental shrubs and specimens.’<sup>71</sup>

In 1934, Hanlon had made a trip to New Zealand, where he visited Napier — which, having been levelled by an earthquake in 1931 — was in the process of being rebuilt in the Art Deco style. On his return, Hanlon had chosen to adopt Art Deco, utilising clean architectural lines, making decorative use of geometric patterns and arches, restricting decorative detail to verandahs, porches and chimneys. At **11 Benson Street**, the deep front ‘terrace’ has a porch supported by substantial brick piers. At **13 Benson Street**, designed and built in 1935-7 for Thomas Vaughan and Miriam Cowan, graziers at Emu Plains station,<sup>72</sup> the front porch takes the form of an arched colonnade — the arches, a signature of Hanlon’s architectural style; the house design also inspired by Australian’s colonial heritage as well as Mediterranean and Californian architecture. Meanwhile, **15 Benson Street**, ‘Taieri,’ which was built for the Cowan’s daughter and her husband, Mary and Eric Stephens,<sup>73</sup> has a ‘streamlined’ front porch and cantilevered window awnings, both in concrete.

Another home in Benson Street was designed by architect J. Carlisle ‘Carl’ Robinson for his father Mr George Robinson, of Robinson & Monds, auctioneers in Benalla.<sup>74</sup> Carlisle Robinson would later give away architecture to join his father’s business.<sup>75</sup> However, in 1937, both the *Benalla Standard* and the *Benalla Ensign* sent journalists to report on Robinson’s new house being built at the corner of Benson and Thomas Street (‘Benson Lodge’, **1 Benson Street**).<sup>76</sup> The *Benalla Standard* noted the use of ‘Benalla bricks, from Carter’s kiln<sup>77</sup>... of a deep biscuit shade, and, set with a deep recessed joint... A dark black-red, terracotta tile [on the roof]... [and] hardwood timber for the floors and other work is being obtained from district sawmills. The front door will be fully glazed, and will open from the terra cotta tile-paved terrace into a hall.’ The interior featured modern functionalist concepts (of great interest to Robinson<sup>78</sup>) such as semi-gloss paint finishes for the kitchen, built-in wardrobes and linen press, and a bathroom with ‘pale green wall tiles and ceramic floor tiles to match’. Even the interior colour palette and finishes were novel for

---

<sup>71</sup> ‘A Modern Form Of Georgian Architecture,’ *Benalla Ensign*, Friday 18 February 1938 - Page 1.

<sup>72</sup> Electoral Roll, Division Of Indi, Subdivision Of Benalla, 1937; For Report Of The House Design, See: ‘Local And General’, *Benalla Standard*, Friday 6 December 1935 - Page 5.

<sup>73</sup> Pers Comm. Marie And John Hanlon To Jacqui Durrant, 13 February, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Robinson & Monds’, *Benalla Ensign*, Friday 11 October 1946 - Page 4.

<sup>75</sup> Pers Comm. John Hanlon To Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Attractive New Home Addition To Benalla West,’ *Benalla Standard*, Friday 30 July 1937 - Page 5.

<sup>77</sup> The Carters Has A Clay Hole Were They Sourced Clay To Make The Bricks, Which Was Defunct By 1950. (See: ‘Carter’s Clay Hole As Rubbish Tip?’ *Benalla Ensign*, Thursday 30 Mar 1950, Page 5.) They Had A Brick Kiln In Benalla West, West Side Of Margaret Between Waller And Bond Street. (MR. EDWIN SIMS, *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 1 February 1938 - Page 5).

<sup>78</sup> See: ‘Architecture and Property BUILT-IN HOME COMFORT Modern Planning Saves Housework, Illustrated’, *The Argus*, Thursday 27 August 1936 - Page 4.

Benalla: The large open fireplace in the living room was 'built up of 2in. pale pink heeler bricks' and 'all the main rooms will have sand-finished walls. Jade green and pale pink will be the colour finish of the two bedrooms, and the living-rooms and hall will be in ivory.'<sup>79</sup> The *Benalla Ensign* described the house as 'A Modern Form of Georgian Architecture' stating that it was 'plain, and almost severe, but simple'. Their journalist also noted the use of solar passive design, writing of 'the corner windows which are used extensively to pick up all the available winter sun, and during the hot weather the large eaves and use of blinds give internal protection.'<sup>80</sup>

At the end of the decade in 1939, at **5 Benson Street**, Harold Hanlon designed and oversaw the construction of 'Nelgle'<sup>81</sup>— this time, a fashionable 'stock-broker's Tudor' styled home in clicker brick — for the local socialite and golfer Miss Linda Wann,<sup>82</sup> the sister of Herbert Ledger's wife Florence (Florrie), and daughter of grazier (and stock and station agent with Herbert Ledger<sup>83</sup>), Alexander Wann.<sup>84</sup>

## **Post World War II**

The World War II stopped residential building in its tracks, but the post war period brought a with it renewed growth of Benalla's residential precincts, with the area around Arundel Street South, Benson and Cecil Streets falling back into favour. The less fashionable end of Cecil Street between Benson and Egmont Streets was filled in with modest light-weight weatherboard homes at **27, 29, and 31 Cecil Street** after 1941.<sup>85</sup>

The 1950s was a prosperous time for Benalla: J. A. Terrett & Co, founded in 1932<sup>86</sup> — millers of building timbers and manufacturers of fibrous plaster — continued to trade well. The company had floated in 1952,<sup>87</sup> and had made record profits in 1954.<sup>88</sup> In addition to Terrett & Co, the town had also gained two new factories: Latoof and Callil clothing factory opened during the war in 1943,<sup>89</sup> and continued to operate;

---

<sup>79</sup> 'Attractive New Home Addition To Benalla West', Op Cit.

<sup>80</sup> 'A Modern Form Of Georgian Architecture,' *Benalla Ensign*, Friday 18 February 1938 - Page 1.

<sup>81</sup> 'Personal,' *Morwell Advertiser*, Thursday 5 August 1943 - Page 7.

<sup>82</sup> Pers Comm. Marie And John Hanlon, And Chick Walker, To Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

<sup>83</sup> 'North-Eastern Property Sales £230,000 For The Year 1928. A Further £52,000 In 7 Weeks Since January 1, 1929.' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 1 March 1929 - Page 5.

<sup>84</sup> 'Mr. Alexander Wann.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 29 March 1927 - Page 3.

<sup>85</sup> 'Violet\_Town\_800b2', Aerial Photo Map, 1941, Historical Photo-Maps Index, Department Of Energy, Environment And Climate Action.

<sup>86</sup> A. J. Dunlop, op cit. p.155; 'A "LIVE" INDUSTRY Terrett & Co.'s Works.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 31 October 1933 - Page 4.

<sup>87</sup> 'Prospectus Issued J. A. Terrett & Co Ltd Float' *Benalla Ensign*, Thursday 22 May 1952 - Page 1.

<sup>88</sup> J. A. Terrett & Co. Report Record, *Benalla Ensign*, Thursday 4 November 1954 - Page 10.

<sup>89</sup> 'Clothing Factory Commences Operations,' *Benalla Ensign*, Friday 1 October 1943 - Page 2.

---

and the Renold Chains factory opened in 1950.<sup>90</sup> The optimism in the community, as well as the capacity to invest in well-built, honest houses, was seen all over town, including in this precinct.

In Benson Street, a weatherboard house was demolished<sup>91</sup> to make way for a triple-fronted brick residence with a tiled roof and matching garage at the corner of Benson and Maud Streets (**28-30 Benson Street**), heralding a new fashion for a new style of house. The period was leading up to a time when the 'cream brick veneer' would become the ubiquitous house of the Victorian suburbs in the 1950s, and in this precinct, examples of this vernacular architectural form were built to high standards. A soft blonde brick home with a base-course of dark-brown brick at **16 Cecil Street** is well-proportioned on its allotment, and features a lovely entrance porch, supported at the corner by a heavy stucco pillar, and enclosed by mild wrought iron gates. Its neighbour, situated on a corner allotment at **18-20 Cecil Street**, is a more expansive triple-fronted blonde brick residence, with an elaborate roof form. Meanwhile, the cream brick veneer home at **37 to 39 Cecil Street** is heavier on decorative mild iron and brick detailing, and includes a matching brick fence which shows off the brick-layer's art. All of these are charming homes, well-made to stand the test of time.

However, the cream brick veneer was not the only housing type seen in Victoria in the 1950s. In 1947, the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects had started a 'Small Homes Service' which provided modernist architect-design house plans and working drawings to the public, initially under the directorship of Robin Boyd. Architect Neil Clerehan designed over one hundred such homes, including the 'Age Dream Home' of 1954, featuring a low-pitched gabled roofline. These modernist home designs were readily adopted in various parts of Melbourne, however **54 Benson Street** remains one of the few examples of this house type in Benalla.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Within the study area there are no comparable residential areas as this precinct reflects the prestige of this early settled area with large allotments many of which have been subdivided. The housing stock up to mid twentieth century largely reflects this historic character. The early to mid twentieth century saw a more mixed development with some examples perpetuating the prestige of this area but a number of the residences at the fringe of the precinct are more vernacular and typical for the suburban residential character from this period. Other areas in Benalla have Victorian and late Victorian and post-war infill. What distinguishes the residential character of this area are the larger allotments that reflect the early

---

<sup>90</sup> 'Start Being Made On Factory,' *Benalla Ensign*, Thursday 16 February 1950 - Page 7.

<sup>91</sup> 'Important Property Sale' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 15 March 1912 - Page 3.

---

subdivision pattern, the scale and quality of a number of the large residential buildings and their architectural character.

**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

**6. Building towns, cities and the garden state**

6.1 Making regional centres

6.3 Making homes in Benalla Rural City

**Physical Description**

The Benalla West Residential Precinct 1 is characterised by its residential Federation-era character, featuring a mixture of houses mainly spanning the era 1895-1915, with some from 1920s and 1930s and post war period. The precinct demonstrates stylistic transitions that include the mid through to late Victorian, Federation, the Interwar with its many variations which include bungalows and English styles – Stockbroker Tudor and modernist residential architecture from the 1950s/60s.

The character of the precinct is derived in large part from these houses, which although varied in style are united by uniformly high investments in architectural materials and detailing. However, the precinct also gains much of its character from the deep set-back of these houses which allows for substantial gardens, which in turn are matched by the shady park-like setting of the streets themselves, which at their finest, feature wide grassy verges, charming brick gutters and magnificent street trees (English elms and London planes). The atmosphere of the precinct is also underpinned by its long-standing history as a seat of government administration and justice within the town.