

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1

Heritage Precinct Citation

April 2025

Heritage Place	Benalla East Residential Precinct 1
Heritage Overlay	HOXXX
Significance	Local
Dates	c1870s – c1960s
Address	Barkly Street Byrne Street Smythe Street
Subsumed Heritage Overlays	None
Recommendations	Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay
Survey Date	March 2024



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■	Individual
■	Contributory
■	Non-Contributory

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

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 East Residential Precinct 1 is significant. It includes places in Smythe Street, Byrne Street and Barkly Street. It is representative of the typical built character associated with the inner Benalla East township area and it is distinguished by its wide streets with street trees to both sides of the street.

The following features contribute to the precinct:

- The layout of the precinct area as evidence of the original 1848 town survey and the later subdivision patterns in response to the intensification of settlement in Benalla East.
- The extent to which the key development periods are apparent.
- The diversity and mix of buildings that date from the 1870s to c1960s.
- 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 wide streets, lined with trees and the surviving brick lined gutters.

- The street trees which include all *Ulmus* sp (elm trees), *Grevillea robusta* and *Platanus* sp (plane trees) and brick lined gutters.

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.

Places that contribute to the cultural heritage significance of the precinct:

Barkly Street 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 24a, 1/25, 2/25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 32a, 36, 37

Byrne Street 32, 35, 36, 37, 38

Smythe Street 24, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 35a, 36, 37, 37a, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52

Alterations and additions after c1970 are not significant.

How is it Significant?

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of local historical, representative and aesthetic cultural heritage significance to the Benalla Rural City.

Why is it Significant?

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of historical significance as it provides evidence of Thomas Wedge's 1848 survey and early colonial town planning. The 1848 survey plan for the township of Benalla, is one of the finer examples of colonial government town planning principals from this period. The broadness of the streets and the simplicity of the street grid are appreciable features in this precinct. (Criterion A)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the intensification of settlement within Benalla East that occurred from the 1880s in response to the arrival of the railway line in Benalla and the subsequent increase in economic activity. The later subdivision and intensification of development is evidence of the growing importance of Benalla East as the commercial and residential centre of Benalla. (Criterion A)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the impact of the land boom of the late nineteenth century which was underpinned by a growth in investment in commercial and government services. Development that demonstrates this historic period can be found in the brick housing at 39 Smythe Street, 36, 37, 39 Byrne Street and in neighbouring Barkly Street 25, 27 and 30 Barkley Street, and the fine timber weatherboard houses at 32 Byrne Street, 24 and 26 Smythe Street and 18, 20 and 22 Barkly Street. (Criterion A)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the growth of the town after the 1890s depression. There was a marked reduction in township growth during the depression and it was not until the 1900s that the township started to grow with further subdivision and the representative built form changed from the Victorian period house to the full expression of the Federation era. Allotments with dual frontages were subdivided allowing Federation houses such as 35A Smythe Street and 40 Byrne Street to be constructed. Other examples include 33, 35a, 41 and 48 Smythe Street

and 16, 19, 23 and 36 Barkly Street and 30 Nixon Street with its generous setting and setbacks is notable. Growth continued into the 1920s and houses such as 15 and 17 Barkly Street and 20 Smythe Street provide evidence of the development that occurred during this period. (Criterion A)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the growth and development of Benalla East during the 1920s and 1930s and the immediate post war period. Development slowed, but the government services including the railway workshops continued to underpin economic growth. This period saw a change in style with the Californian Bungalow and other Interwar housing constructed in the precinct area. 34 and 42 Smythe Street provide evidence from this period. By 1941 the precinct had few vacant allotments and the post war saw limited development with 35 and 39 Byrne Street providing evidence from this period. (Criterion A)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 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)

Benalla East Residential Precinct 1 is of aesthetic significance for its relatively intact nineteenth century and early twentieth century streetscapes. This distinctive aesthetic character is complemented by the wide streets, brick gutters, street trees, consistent fence heights and garden settings. The general visual absence of garages and carports from when viewed from the streetscape contributes to the aesthetic character. (Criterion E)

The following building is of aesthetic significance:

44 Smythe Street Benalla is of aesthetic significance for its modernist ecclesiastical architecture. Significant features include: the steeply pitched gable roof; the large glazed area with multi coloured glass panes; the cream brick walling and its front setbacks.

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Number	Address	Significance
Barkly Street		
14	Barkly Street	Contributory
15	Barkly Street	Contributory
16	Barkly Street	Contributory
17	Barkly Street	Contributory
18	Barkly Street	Contributory
19	Barkly Street	Contributory
20	Barkly Street	Contributory
21	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
22	Barkly Street	Contributory
23	Barkly Street	Contributory
24	Barkly Street	Contributory
24a	Barkly Street	Contributory

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25	Barkly Street	Contributory
1/26	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
26	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
27	Barkly Street	Contributory
28	Barkly Street	Contributory
29	Barkly Street	Contributory
30	Barkly Street	Contributory
31	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
2/31	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
32	Barkly Street	Contributory
32A	Barkly Street	Contributory
33	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
35	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
35A	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
34	Barkly Street	Non- contributory
36	Barkly Street	Contributory
37	Barkly Street	Contributory
Byrne Street		
32	Byrne Street	Contributory
34	Byrne Street	Non-contributory
35	Byrne Street	Contributory
36	Byrne Street	Contributory
37	Byrne Street	Contributory
38	Byrne Street	Contributory
Smythe Street		
24	Smythe Street	Contributory
26	Smythe Street	Contributory
28	Smythe Street	Non-contributory
30	Smythe Street	Contributory
31	Smythe Street	Contributory
32	Smythe Street	Contributory
33	Smythe Street	Contributory
34	Smythe Street	Contributory
35	Smythe Street	Contributory
35a	Smythe Street	Contributory
36	Smythe Street	Contributory
37	Smythe Street	Contributory
37a	Smythe Street	Contributory
38	Smythe Street	Non-contributory
39	Smythe Street	Contributory
40	Smythe Street	Non-contributory
1/40	Smythe Street	Non-contributory
41	Smythe Street	Contributory

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42	Smythe Street	Contributory
43	Smythe Street	Contributory
44	Smythe Street	Individual
45	Smythe Street	Contributory
46	Smythe Street	Contributory
47	Smythe Street	Contributory
48	Smythe Street	Contributory
50	Smythe Street	Contributory
52	Smythe Street	Contributory

Additional Controls

External paint controls apply	Yes
Internal alteration controls apply	No
Tree controls apply Street trees – all Ulmis sp (elm trees) , Quercus sp (oak trees) and Grevillea Robusta	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 Description

Benalla East Residential Precinct is distinguished by its wide streets with street trees to both sides of the street. It is representative of the typical built character associated with the inner Benalla East township area. However, the lots are generally slightly smaller and the built form typically representative of the late Victorian. Its association with the adjacent railway precinct has provided the precinct with its largely late Victorian (mainly 1880s onwards) built character. Later infill is characterised by the significant number of Federation-era homes — often in the Queen Anne style, which was popular in Benalla in the first decade of the 20th century. The Federation era houses provide a diversity of expression within their styling and this contrasts with the representative Victorian buildings with symmetrical facades and a well ordered architectural language.

History

In 1848, Assistant Surveyor Thomas Wedge laid out the town of Benalla.¹ 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 was originally designed to contain 20 allotments of a half-acre each.

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.



Figure 1: Excerpt from 'Survey of the ground near the crossing place, Broken River, 1848', surveyed by Thomas Wedge, illustrating the layout of Benalla with three town grids girded by a belt of suburban lands.

Source: the map is held in a sub collection of VPRS 8168 Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office of Victoria.

Wedge named many of the early streets.² 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 1838.³ McKellar Street was named for squatter William McKellar, who held Lima Station.⁴

² 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.

³ John Conner, *The Australian frontier wars, 1788-1838*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002 p.119.

⁴ John Conner, *The Australian frontier wars, 1788-1838*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, p.88.

The township grids were in turn bordered by a belt of suburban allotments of five acres 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 arranged on a magnetic north-south axis, and bordered on each side by thoroughfares which were 100 (20 metres) links 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] Excerpt from 'Survey of Broken River, Tributaries and Sydney Road,' 1848, surveyed by Thomas Wedge, illustrating the extent of the town grids of Benalla in 1848, which only extended as far east as Smyth Street.

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 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.⁵ The introduction of streets of 150 links in width — wider than the 1829 directive, was introduced by surveyor Robert Hoddle, when he laid-out Melbourne in 1837.⁶ 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.

⁵ Helen Proudfoot, *Town Plans and their Impact on the Settlement Process in Australia, 1788-1849, Volume 1*, doctoral thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1995.

⁶ Andrew Brown-May, *Melbourne Street Life*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998.

In many ways, Benalla can be seen as an ideal reflection of Robert Hoddle's original design for Melbourne of 1837: like Benalla, Melbourne has a grid plan which is slightly off-axis so as to align with a stretch of river: the Yarra. Benalla's streets are the same width as Melbourne's, and Benalla's triangular reserved area, containing the courthouse and police station, echoes the triangular area in Melbourne forming parliament reserve, linking Melbourne to the East Melbourne grid. Benalla's 'suburban lands', which run on a magnetic axis, also mirror Melbourne's near suburbs (North Melbourne, Carlton, Fitzroy, East Melbourne, etc), which likewise run on a north-south axis that varies from the inner grid. However, Benalla's flatter topography has allowed for a more complete expression of the concept of a uniform suburban belt which surrounds the town on all four sides; a pattern which was curtailed in Melbourne by the swampy area which is now Docklands.

Interestingly, in 1894, journalist Julian Thomas, a.k.a 'The Vagabong' noted that '*The Benalla of to day occupies a larger space than the city of Melbourne.*'⁷ His comment is a reminder that throughout the nineteenth century, Benalla was perceived as a regional centre, and treated as such by government in Melbourne.

Wilmot's expended surveys of 1857 and 1864

Just prior to the Victoria gold rush in 1851, Benalla population was just over 100 people.⁸ By 1854, the population had trebled to 300 permanent residents,⁹ and by 1855, all of the property on the north side of the main Sydney to Melbourne Road (Bridge Street) had been purchased.¹⁰ 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 1857,¹¹ 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).

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 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.¹² **[Figure 3]** However,

⁷ 'Reminiscences Of Benalla. By The Vagabond,' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 22 May 1894 - Page 3.

⁸ 'Benalla's History', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 12 March 1935 - Page 6.

⁹ 'Benalla's History', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 12 March 1935 - Page 6.

¹⁰ '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.

¹¹ '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.

¹² '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.

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.



Excerpt from 'Township and suburban lands at Benalla on the Sydney Road', J. E. Wilmot, Assistant Surveyor; Crown Lands Office, Melbourne, Victoria; 1865, illustrating extensions to the town grids, and the introduction of narrower streets (Nixon, Byrne) to divide town blocks.

'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.

The battle between West and East 1870s

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,¹³ where

¹³ 'Benalla Township plan, Imperial measure 5066', A Parish plan from VPRS 16171, Dept Crown Lands and survey, 1954, Public Records Office Victoria.

he built the Commercial Hotel.¹⁴ Gradually, Sharpe acquired dozens of town allotments on the East side of the town.

In October 1868, shortly before the retirement of Crown Lands Commissioner William Piper,¹⁵ Sharpe had been elected to the head of the Benalla District Roads Board (the forerunner to the Shire Council) by a good margin,¹⁶ at which time he was described by *The Benalla Ensign* as 'a nocturnal incubus, a monster nightmare', and a would-be 'Coriolanus' whose 'overweening pride might one day drive him to seek the leader of the Volscian host at Mount Battery'. This was a complex classical metaphor alluding to the fact that Sharpe was a consummate politician, apparently intent on destroying Benalla West's cultural and political supremacy. However, as much as *The Ensign's* proprietor and editor John Liston was prepared to publish such commentary, the pre-eminence of the West was not to last. Even *The Benalla Ensign* office moved to the East in 1869.¹⁷

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 been with the East.'¹⁸ 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'.¹⁹

In 1905 during a visit to Benalla, Premier Thomas Bent visited Benalla. A journalist present recorded Bent's address to the welcoming crowd, during which he jokingly recalled his first visit to Benalla in 1873, at which time '*he found that everything in the place belonged to Sharp. (Laughter). Sharp was the member [of parliament]; Sharp belonged to the clerk of courts; and last, but not least, owned the fishes in the river. (Laughter). There was also Brown and his donkey, and they belonged to Sharp.*'²⁰

By 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.'²¹ In 1873, the Benalla Council had 'agreed' (presumably after considerable lobbying) with the Commissioner of Railways that the Railway Station

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 'Presentation Of A Testimonial.', *The Benalla Ensign and Farmer's and Squatter's Journal*, Friday 6 August 1869 - Page 2.

¹⁶ 'Telegraphic Despatches. Victoria. Benalla, Monday. Road Board Election.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Tuesday 20 October 1868 - Page 2'

¹⁷ 'Advertising,' *The Benalla Ensign and Farmer's and Squatter's Journal*, Friday 23 July 1869 - Page 1.

¹⁸ '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.)

¹⁹ 'Victoria's Country Towns Their Rise and Development No. 13. -- History of Benalla', *Weekly Times*, Saturday 1 September 1928 - Page 5.

²⁰ 'Visit Of The State Premier. His Early Reminiscences Of Benalla.' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 6 October 1905 - Page 1.

²¹ *ibid.*

would be situated in Benalla East,²² and this had become 'the principal factor in relegating the west side to second place.'²³

The announcement of the coming for the North East Railway was presumably the impetus for some of Wilmot's surveyed allotments in Section B being put up for sale in 1871,²⁴ and 1873.²⁵ The remainder of Nixon Street was surveyed in 1872, and also put up for sale.²⁶ Allotments in Sections 11 and 12 at the railway end of Byrne Street were put up for sale in 1874.²⁷ It was at this point that Nixon Street was named for District Surveyor and town resident Thomas Nixon.²⁸ The demand for land in Benalla East was now such that of the allotments put up for sale at this time sold almost immediately.

A selection of houses which probably date from the mid-1870s includes **3 Nixon Street** (Pt 2, allotment 12, Section A): a basic Victorian tuck-pointed red brick house with a hipped roof, which was owned (and probably built by) by the Victorian Railways for their staff.²⁹ The Lot on which this 'railway house' was built also represents an early subdivision. Other houses which represent this period include **16 Nixon Street**, a house that is a 'miner's cottage' in form with a high gabled roof, and iron lace detailing on its verandah. **14 Nixon Street** is a Victorian red brick double fronted villa with a tuck-pointed front, very similar to **10 Smythe Street**. **1 Smythe Street** is also a 'miner's cottage' in form, and was reportedly originally clad with pit sawn weatherboards. Its neighbour at **3 Smythe Street** has a similar gable-roofed cottage form. Both houses have original multi-pane sash windows to the front.

A second concentration of substantial, symmetrical Victorian-era brick houses with hipped roofs, some of which may date from the 1870s, and others from the 1880s, are found at the 'commercial end' of Smythe Street, at numbers **50, 46 and 43, Smythe Street**. The allotments on which numbers **50** and **46** were built were originally purchased by John Pascoe Fawkner as an investment,³⁰ but were not built on, nor sold again, until after his death, when they were sold by his executor in 1875.³¹ Consequently, this pocket of houses did not begin to be built until during or after 1875. Certainly, **46 Smythe Street** is similar to **8 Benson Street**, which was built in the 1870s. That F. Jordan and 15 other ratepayers in Smythe Street approached the Benalla Water Trust to have the water mains extended to this street in 1884,³² also suggests a general timeframe for the arrival of these houses: 1875-1884.

The 1880s Land Boom

²² 'Benalla Railway Station.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 2 May 1873 - Page 2.

²³ 'Victoria's Country Towns: Their Rise and Development No. 13. -- History of Benalla.' op cit.

²⁴ *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 51, Date: Friday, July 21st 1871p.1163.

²⁵ *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 3, Date: Friday, January 10th 1873, p.52.

²⁶ Plan of Allotment, Township of Benalla, S. K. Vickery, 1872, cutaway plan B392D(1), Landata website, State Of Victoria.

²⁷ *Victorian Government Gazette*, Gazette 25, Date: Friday, April 17th 1874, p.738.

²⁸ 'Early Benalla. Reminiscences Of Thirty Years Ago. An Old Identity.' *Weekly Times*, Saturday 16 March 1895 - Page 27.

²⁹ Per comm. Research from Benalla Rates Books by Chick Walker, to Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

³⁰ '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.

³¹ 'Benalla Shire Council. Wednesday, April 28.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 30 April 1875 - Page 2.

³² 'Benalla Water Trust. Friday, 17th January.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 22 January 1884 - Page 2.

Of all the historical decades that were important to the development of Benalla East, the 1880s stands out. Australia was in the grip of a land boom, in which property prices skyrocketed and banking credit was easily won.³³ In Benalla, the population had grown to around 2000 people by the mid-1880s.³⁴ A substantial new post office had opened in 1882;³⁵ 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 addition of dining and refreshment room facilities and administrative offices in 1888.³⁶ 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, '*Than the present, we do not recollect a year that has seen Benalla in a more prosperous state.*'³⁷ And 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.*'³⁸

Most existing households were already concentrated around the commercial precinct of Bridge, Nunn and Carrier Streets, but Benalla East was expanding, and this expansion called for even more land to be made available for sale. The entire length of the west side of Smythe Street, as well as both the 'railway ends' and 'business ends' of Byrne and Barkly Streets, had been sold in the 1870s. However, the 'middle blocks' — town Sections 14A, 15, and 19 — running from the east side of Smythe Street, through to Byrne Street and both sides of Barkley Street, had sat vacant for over a decade. These were finally surveyed and sold in 1884 and 1885, along with the east side of the railway end of Byrne Street; gradually filling in the patchwork of residential ownership in Benalla East, which would eventually reach East Boundary Road (Sailsbury Street).

In order to understand the pattern of surviving houses from this period — quite a few of which are built in brick — one must consider the houses which existed in the past but did not survive into the present. When Julian Thomas, 'The Vagabond', re-visited Benalla in 1894, he wrote of Benalla East that, '*Midst all the new buildings, the post-office, the railway station, the shire hall, the banks (products of the boom) and many handsome stores, there are romantic bits for a painter in old weatherboard houses, with moss-grown shingle roofs. These are a great relief to the artistic eye after the ugly glare from galvanised iron roofs which one sees in most parts of Australia.*'³⁹ Thomas's comment regarding the 'moss-grown shingle roofs' of the 'old' houses, which he found so charming, suggests that a proportion of the housing stock in Benalla at the end of the Victorian period was of a relatively rudimentary construction, and has since been demolished.

In the 1880s and 1890s, a number of brick houses appeared mainly the southern sections around Byrne and Barkly Streets, and the middle block of Smythe Street's eastern side, on allotments which were released for sale between 1884 and 1886. It can be assumed that this pocket of houses appeared in this location because it was the closest vacant land available in proximity to the commercial area, and because

³³ 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.

³⁴ 'Picturesque Victoria. Around Benalla.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Thursday 24 July 1884 - Page 1.

³⁵ 'An Historical Picture--Official Opening Of Benalla Post Office', *Benalla Standard*, Friday 27 January 1939 - Page 5.

³⁶ Keith Turton, Keith, *Six and a Half Inches From Destiny*, Australian Railway Historical Society, 1973.

³⁷ 'Benalla.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Saturday 7 January 1882 - Page 8.

³⁸ 'THE North-Eastern Ensign. Published on Tuesdays and Fridays. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1882.' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 22 December 1882 - Page 2.

³⁹ 'Reminiscences Of Benalla. By The Vagabond,' *The North Eastern Ensign*, Tuesday 22 May 1894 - Page 3.

the mid-to-late 1880s was an economically buoyant period — not just for Benalla, but for Victoria overall. These houses are fairly uniform in style, includes three large red brick Victorian homes, mainly with tuck-pointed fronts and bull-nosed verandahs decorated with iron lace at, **39 Smythe Street** (dating post-1884), **36 Byrne Street**, at **38 Byrne Street**, and at **37 Byrne Street** — the latter which remains a particularly tidy example for a Victorian-era home, not only with iron lace but also cast iron verandah posts with Corinthian tops. In neighbouring Barkley Street, there are another three of this style of home at **30 Barkley Street**, **25 Barkley Street**, and at ‘Carinya,’ **27 Barkley Street**, the latter having the highest level of investment in decorative elements. According to anecdotal evidence numbers **25 and 27 Barkly** were the first homes built ‘in the street.’ The former would have Castle’s Barkley Street Dairy operating from its rear for a number of years.⁴⁰

These homes in red brick are surrounded by a slew of substantial Victorian-era weatherboard houses of the same symmetrical architectural form (for example, at **32 Byrne Street**, **24 and 26 Smythe Street**, and **18, 20 and 22 Barkly Street**), which help give the precinct its overall late Victorian character.

The other way in which more residential land could be made available during the prosperous 1880s was to subdivide suburban lands adjoining existing residential areas.

Houses at **83 McKellar Street** and **85 McKellar Street** are built on what were originally ‘suburban lands’, and represents an early expansion of the town beyond its original boundaries.

A row of three homes at the ‘railway end’ of Smythe Street are also worthy of discussion. **6 Smythe Street** is a large Victorian weatherboard home, nicely detailed with iron lace, window and door frames with side-lights, and ornate chimney caps. **8 Smythe Street** is a large asymmetrical Victorian villa with polychromatic brick work (c.1880s); and **10 Smythe Street** is yet another Victorian-era brick home (which has had its facade ‘modernised’ at a later stage with the addition of a 1920s-styled gable). These three houses represent an architectural investment in a location adjacent to the railway line, demonstrating that proximity to the railway was not regarded as disadvantageous during the 1870s and 1880s.

The Federation era

By 1903, the population of Benalla was 3000,⁴¹ and across Benalla East, the town was entering a new era of subdivision. In this precinct, some landholders who had purchased land in the 1870s and 1880s, took advantage of their dual street frontages and subdivided their holdings. The south end of **Section 14A**, bounded by Church, Smythe and Byrne Streets, was originally granted to the Wesleyan Church in 1884.⁴² This parcel was the equivalent of three town blocks, however, it was eventually subdivided into what would become ten house lots. **36 Byrne Street** and **39 Smythe Street** were built during the Victorian era — probably on long long allotments with two street frontages; however, the back gardens with secondary street frontage were cut off during the Federation era, allowing for houses such as the Queen Anne styled home at **35A Smythe Street** and the substantial art nouveau-inspired bungalow ‘Ravenshurst’ at **40 Byrne Street** to be built.

⁴⁰ This was owned by the Castle family, but in the 1940s, was run by a Mugford (‘Advertising’ - *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 23 April 1940 - Page 2.)

⁴¹ *Australian Handbook*, Gordon and Gotch, Sydney, 1903.

⁴² ‘Benalla Township plan, Imperial measure 5066’, A Parish plan from VPRS 16171, Dept Crown Lands and survey, 1954, Public Records Office Victoria.

After the turn of the century, a craze for the Federation 'Queen Anne' styled houses swept through Benalla. In 1906, visiting writer Trixie Gascoigne reported for *The Australasian*, 'The town is about as large as most of the country towns, and is at present making headway. The buildings, both public, and private, are very nice, the newest private residences being mostly built in the Queen Anne style.'⁴³ She was almost certainly referring to houses built in Smythe Street around the time of her visit. At **41 Smythe Street** James Tomkins had a 'handsome Queen Anne styled villa' built by Mr Smith in 1906.⁴⁴ The same year, local builder James Conn Brockie built a new house in the same style (almost certainly **48 Smythe Street**) on land which he recently purchased from the trustees of the Fawcner estate,⁴⁵ (a block of land the trustees had forgotten about when other allotments were sold in 1875⁴⁶). Many more houses of the period, including **35A** and **33 Smythe Street**, and **16 Barkly Street**, have architectural detailing which refers to the Federation-era Queen Anne architecture, but within the Benalla East precinct, **23 Barkley Street** remains the most beautiful example of the style: A weatherboard house which addresses the front of the street and the side of the allotment with an L-shaped verandah which has a 'front door' at each end; in the past, this residence has been divided and used as a dual-occupancy home — and it may well have been designed as such. The house has fine architectural detailing, including heavy cast iron lace on the verandah, roughcast detailing on the gables, bay windows and tall, slender chimney stacks.

Other notable Federation era houses can be found at **16**, **19** and **36 Barkly Street**, the latter featuring a huge, high-pitched hipped roof in the classic 'Benalla country house' form.

Historian A. J. Dunlop suggests that during the Federation period, 'many retired farmers and others desired to spend their declining years in familiar surrounds in the town.'⁴⁷ The rural origins of many of Benalla's residents — farmers and graziers coming to town — is expressed in the style of some of its 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 Federation form, 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. No discussion of such Federation-era houses in Benalla can go without mentioning the sprawling 'Benalla country house' at **30 Nixon Street**. This was 'Romoura', that was said to be 'the fine residence of Mr. W. H. Carter, having a large frontage to Nixon Street by a good depth' which the Carters sold in 1921,⁴⁸ just before young architect Harold Hanlon was about to build a new house, 'Wooleen', for them in Mitchell Street in 1923.⁴⁹

1920s

Wooleen was completed a little before Christmas Day in 1923, and upon its completion, this large Californian bungalow-styled home with sweeping shingled gables, was held up as '*by long chalks the most*

⁴³ 'Benalla.' *The Australasian*, Saturday 7 July 1906 - Page 53.

⁴⁴ 'District Biographies. Mr. James Tomkins. No. 1.' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 11 June 1907 - Page 3; 'New Buildings', *Benalla Standard*, Friday 25 May 1906 - Page 2.

⁴⁵ 'New Buildings', *ibid*.

⁴⁶ 'John Pascoe Fawcner. Distribution From Estate. Money Court.' *The Argus*, Friday 11 November 1927 - Page 13.

⁴⁷ A. J. Dunlop, *Benalla Cavalcade, a history of Benalla and district*, Mullaya Publications, Canterbury, Vic., 1973, p.151.

⁴⁸ 'Benalla Courts.' *Benalla Standard*, Friday 10 December 1920 - Page 2; 'Property sale,' *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 5 April 1921 - Page 3.

⁴⁹ per comm. Marie and John Hanlon, to Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

perfect home in Benalla’, and a sign of architectural advancement in the town.⁵⁰ Although not everyone could afford to build in solid brick with a tiled roof, nor have a river-side location, Hanlon’s version of the craftsman’s bungalow architectural style did catch on, and can be seen on a smaller scale in timber at **15** and **17 Barkly Street** and on a corner allotment at **20 Smythe Street**.

The Great Depression and the 1930s

By 1934, it had been well over a decade years since the end of The Great War; and as the town was emerging from the Great Depression, its citizens looked the unfinished business of honouring the fallen. In 1918, an avenue of honour had been started in Barkly street.⁵¹ In 1928, on the eve of the Great Depression, Benalla Progress Association reported that an inspection had been made of Barkly street; with a view to its beautification and renaming it Anzac Avenue.⁵² Finally, in 1934, the commemorative avenue of 106 Silky Oaks (*Grevillea robusta*) was completed, planted along both sides of Barkly Street from Grey Street to McKellar Street, forming an unbroken avenue.

Building in Benalla had continued through the early 1930s despite the on-set of the Great Depression; and 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 at one end of the spectrum (there were, for example, over 100 railway employees on the electoral roll in 1931⁵³), and a substantial number of wealthy 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.’⁵⁴ 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...’⁵⁵

In 1932, the *Benalla Standard* wrote that ‘Several additional new houses [were] are being erected [and the] remodelling of several shops is also proceeding,’⁵⁶ and in 1933 it reported, ‘It is satisfactory to note that new houses are being built at both extremities of the town.’⁵⁷ Architect Harold Hanlon had more than enough commercial work in town to keep him going, including a new department store for Miller & Co (1933-34),⁵⁸ but he still had time to design and oversee the building of ‘Kelvin Lodge’ on the corner of Smythe and Church Streets, at **42 Smythe Street** in 1934.⁵⁹ Kelvin Lodge took the popular architectural

⁵⁰ ‘The Building Industry. Progress In Benalla. A Model Of Architecture.’ *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 11 January 1924 - Page 2.

⁵¹ ‘Benalla. Honor Avenue Planted.’ *The Ballarat Courier*, Monday 5 August 1918 - Page 6.

⁵² ‘Benalla Progress Association.’ *Benalla Standard*, Friday 1 June 1928 - Page 2; ‘AVENUE OF HONOUR Official Ceremony On Saturday.’ *The North Eastern Ensign*, Friday 28 September 1934 - Page 1.

⁵³ Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1931.

⁵⁴ *ibid*.

⁵⁵ ‘Building Activities High School to be Remodelled New Shops to be Erected,’ *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 9 June 1936 - Page 1.

⁵⁶ ‘Around The Town’, *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 8 November 1932 - Page 3.

⁵⁷ ‘Around The Town’, *Benalla Standard*, Friday 17 February 1933 - Page 6.

⁵⁸ ‘Property And Architecture, Benalla Buildings On Corner Sites’, *The Herald*, Wednesday 11 July 1934 - Page 18.

⁵⁹ Per comm. Marie and John Hanlon to Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

form of a Californian bungalow, as had Hanlon's 'Wooleen' (18-20 Mitchell Street) more than a decade earlier. Other houses of this era included light-weight Australian bungalows such as the home at **34 Smythe Street**, in a style also being built by the dozen in Benalla West.

Post World War II

By 1941, this precinct had very few vacant building allotments remaining. Street trees were not uniform across all streets, but Smythe Street had well-established street trees along its entire length, as did the southern section of Byrne Street; and Barkly Street had its new Avenue of Honour. Blocks at 35 and 39 Byrne Street were notably vacant. In the post-war period, **35 Byrne Street** was the first to be occupied by a well-formed house built in red brick with decorative brick accents and a tiled roof (c.1950). This was later followed **39 Byrne Street**; built for Frederick and Dulcie Terrett,⁶⁰ of J. A. Terrett & Co timber merchants — a successful company which was floated in 1952 with the promise of 10% on dividends.⁶¹ The Terrett's house is a substantial triple-fronted cream brick veneer home with waterfall chimneys addressing both street elevations, representing the high watermark of this particularly Victorian vernacular architectural style in Benalla.

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

8. Building community life

8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

⁶⁰ Electoral roll, Division of Indi, Subdivision of Benalla, 1963.

⁶¹ 'Prospectus Issued J. A. Terrett & Co Ltd Float' *Benalla Ensign*, Thursday 22 May 1952 - Page 1.