

# WHITE HILLS CEMETERY



H2136 White Hills Cemetery  
9 Feb 200 mz 001



H2136 White Hills Cemetery  
9 Feb 200 mz 022



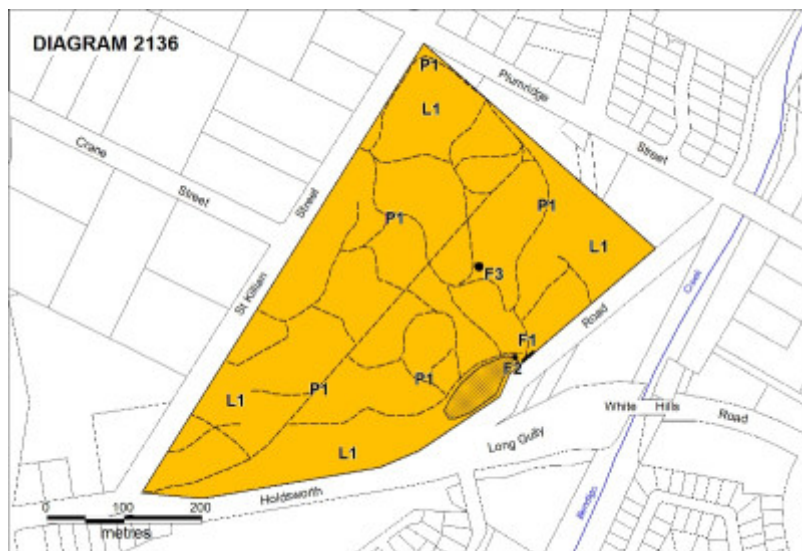
H2136 White Hills Cemetery  
9 Feb 200 mz 025



H2136 White Hills Cemetery 9  
Feb 200 mz 048



H2136 White Hills Cemetery 9  
Feb 200 mz 041



H2136 white hills cemetery plan

## Location

261-351 HOLDSWORTH ROAD WHITE HILLS, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2136

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO678

## VHR Registration

February 12, 2009

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The earliest burials at White Hills Cemetery which was formerly known as Lower Bendigo Cemetery or Junction Cemetery, took place in November 1853 in an unconsecrated non-denominational burial ground close to the Bendigo Creek. The site of approximately 10 acres was shown on a government survey as 'burial ground' in 1854 and an undated layout plan of 'Cemetery Reserve Near The Mouth of Iron Gully' appears to show the same site. A later plan dated 1857 shows a much larger cemetery which allowed for further expansion to the south-west and north-west. The cemetery is roughly triangular and is bounded by Holdsworth Road, St Killian and Plumridge Streets, and slopes from the high point on St Killian Street down to lower land along Holdsworth Road.

The entrance to the cemetery was originally located at a point which is now deep within the grounds, and a sexton's cottage (demolished 1950s) was situated here. The cemetery was divided into denominational sections including Independents, Society of Friends, Wesleyan, Church of England, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. The Chinese and 'Other Denominations' occupied the rear sections. The wide, triangular-shaped grounds were ornamentally laid out with a sinuous path system with individual loops, and the paths and brick gutters delineating the denominational boundaries of the cemetery. It is estimated that up to 1000 Chinese burials took place here, and about 260 footstones survive dating from 1854. A brick hexagonal funeral tower built 1877-78 stands within the Chinese section. This funeral tower is still used by the Chinese Association at Ching Ming (sweeping of the graves around April 5th). The main entrance is from Holdsworth Road where the gates and cast iron and brick winged fences designed by Vahland in c1881 are erected. The cemetery features an octagonal rotunda built in 1898 and there are many fine headstones and monuments. The cemetery is planted with a variety of specimen trees including two Long-leaved Indian Pines, a large Canary Island Pine and an avenue of Canary Island Pines, Stone Pines, Aleppo Pines, a Monterey Pine avenue, Irish Strawberry Tree and a *Phillyrea latifolia*. The eastern boundary is screened by a row of Pepper Trees and framing the main entrance are a pair of very large Moreton Bay Figs and next to these a pair of Carob trees. To the north and south the boundaries are more open and permit long views into the cemetery, and the western side retains remnant bushland, including a few fine *Eucalyptus tricarpa* (Ironwood) trees.

How is it significant?

The White Hills Cemetery is of historical, aesthetic, scientific (botanical), and architectural importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

White Hills Cemetery is historically significant as a substantially intact example of a mid nineteenth century goldfields cemetery. The cemetery has associations with Victoria's rich goldfields from 1853, particularly with Bendigo and the gold diggings to the north of the city. The cemetery has significance for its links with Chinese migration to Victoria in the 1850s and the presence of the Chinese on the Bendigo goldfields which is demonstrated by the large number of burials. The cemetery holds the largest number of footstones in Victoria and a rare 1877-78 funerary tower. The cemetery graves are important for the information they provide about burial customs and patterns of deaths in the colony.

White Hills Cemetery is aesthetically important as an early example in Victoria of a cemetery influenced by Romantic and Picturesque ideals which gained worldwide popularity in the early to mid nineteenth century, which are demonstrated in the layout and design with straight and broad sweeping roads framed by trees enclosing denominational compartments, brick lined gutters, and focal architectural features, tree, shrub and bulb plantings in the large triangular site. The aesthetic quality of the cemetery is further derived from the undulating landscape, avenues and specimen trees, remnant bushland and the vistas within the site.

White Hills Cemetery is scientifically significant for the collection of conifers including two rare and outstanding Long-leaved Indian Pines, a rare small coned Canary Island Pine and a rare *Phillyrea latifolia*. Other valuable trees typical of nineteenth century cemetery planting in Victoria include Aleppo Pines, Stone Pines, Canary Island Pine avenue, Monterey Pine avenue, Moreton Bay Figs, Carobs, Pepper Trees, Kurrajongs, and an Irish Strawberry Tree.

White Hills Cemetery is architecturally important for its collection of structures which include representative examples of typical nineteenth century cemetery features such as entrance gates and fence designed by Bendigo architect W C Vahland in 1881, a 1898 rotunda, and headstones. The funerary burner reflects Chinese religious customs and building traditions practised in the colony, and is an outstanding example of a rare building type. The cemetery memorials, headstones, footstones and funerary art are collectively important for their design characteristics and craftsmanship.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

### Landscape

- \* Repairs, conservation, and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, fountains and monuments, steps, paths, paths and gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, edging, fences and gates.
- \* The process of gardening; mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety garden works.
- \* New or replacement planting which conserves the historic landscape character including specimen trees, avenues, rows, shrubberies, beds, and lawns.
- \* In the event of loss of any tree or palm specified in the Extent of Registration, replanting with the same species of tree as that removed.
- \* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems outside the canopy edge of significant trees.
- \* Vegetation protection and management of the possum and rabbit population.
- \* Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

### General

- \* Interments, burials and erection of monuments, re-use of graves, burial of cremated remains, and exhumation of remains in accordance with the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003.
- \* Stabilisation, restoration and repair of monuments.
- \* Emergency and safety works to secure the site and prevent damage and injury to property and the public.
- \* Monument works undertaken in accordance with Australian Standard AS4204 Headstones and Cemetery Monuments
- \* Painting of previously painted structures provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.

Construction dates    1860,

Heritage Act  
Categories                      Registered place,

Other Names	CHINESE FUNERAL OVENS, JUNCTION CEMETERY, LOWER BENDIGO CEMETERY, WHITEHILLS CEMETERY,
Hermes Number	1641
Property Number	

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY:

#### Development of the Cemetery

One of the oldest established and most influential cemeteries of Europe is that of Pere-la-Chaise, Paris. It had previously been a large garden and was laid out as a cemetery in 1804. This development was the prototype for cemeteries in western Europe, especially in London and other English cities. Such cemetery designs broke with the tradition of churchyard burial grounds which eventually began to fall out of favour as offensive and unsanitary places. In England churchyard burial was attacked by sanitary reformers in the 1840s, and an act of parliament in 1855 finally closed churchyards and led to the development of the extramural cemetery. The great horticultural and architectural chronicler of the early nineteenth century, J. C. Loudon (1783-1843) no doubt exerted a strong influence on this development with his treatise and cemetery management and design (1843). New burial grounds began to be located on the outskirts of settled areas and regulations prevented overcrowding.

Many of the cemeteries of this period introduced curved pathways, chapels, rest pavilions, majestic evergreen trees and shrubberies, and rivalled the botanical gardens for their aesthetic and recreational qualities. Quite often these cemeteries were vast, sprawling and characterised by an amazing variety of monuments, many of which were mass produced for the consumer market. In mid-Victorian Britain fashionable cemetery designs were either based on formal geometry, often broken by a circular garden bed or plantings. Other cemeteries were Romantic and naturalistic in style with freer patterns to their layout. American cemeteries developed as a progression from the English model by integrating monuments with the landscape.

#### Cemeteries in Victoria

In Victoria the separation of church and state and the rapid development of the colony spurred by the goldrushes led to the creation of a large number of small cemeteries throughout the state. These were usually divided into denominational compartments, and many were laid out with complex meandering paths and incorporated plans for elaborate plantings. In the 1855-1860 period, winding plans tended to be more popular than the grid system of arrangement and no fewer than eighteen designs from this period are known. The layout of White Hills appears to date from at least 1857, possibly earlier, and its precursor was the Melbourne General Cemetery planned by architect, Albert Purchas in the early 1850s. The best known interstate example is Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney. Similar plans were used in the layout of contemporary gardens, with those at Williamstown (1856-1860) and Wombat Hill (Daylesford) (1884-1885) being intact reminders of this style.

#### Bendigo Cemeteries

White Hills is one of several cemeteries in the Bendigo region. The earliest cemetery at 'Back Creek' (later known as Sandhurst, then Bendigo) was located in Bridge Street. This reserve is labelled 'Old Cemetery' on Surveyor Richard Larritt's 1854 plan of the Government Camp and is now subdivided, with part built upon and part now within Rosalind Park. As Bendigo rapidly developed two further cemeteries were reserved: White Hills (c.1853) and 'Back Creek' (Carpenter Street). Each cemetery was managed by separate committees of management although dual control, vested in the City of Bendigo occurred early in the twentieth century. Both are now managed by the Bendigo Cemeteries Trust. White Hills is among several reserves in Bendigo, notably Rosalind Park, Lake Weeroona and the White Hills Botanic Gardens, where there has been a concerted attempt at the beautification of the town by the use of ornamental horticulture. As a result Bendigo provides us with some of the finest examples of mid-nineteenth century tree planting in the State of Victoria. The selection of trees and shrubs at White Hills Cemetery appears to show an awareness of the typical plants found in European cemeteries of the period.

## HISTORY OF PLACE:

The White Hills Cemetery was formerly known as Lower Bendigo Cemetery or Junction Cemetery. The earliest recorded burials were in November 1853 in an unconsecrated non-denominational burial ground close to the Bendigo Creek. The site of approximately ten acres was shown on a government survey as 'burial ground' in 1854 and an undated layout plan of 'Cemetery Reserve Near The Mouth Of Iron Gully' appears to show the same site. A later plan dated 1857 shows a much larger cemetery reserve, and distinguishes between the original ten acres of the 'Old Cemetery' and the 'extension', an area of just over five acres to the north-east. This plan, numbered 57/482, was approved by the Governor-in-Council on 14 December 1857 and allowed for further expansion to the south-west (four acres) and north-west (almost seventeen acres).

The entrance to the cemetery was originally located at a point which is now deep within the grounds directly opposite the present entrance gates. The sexton's cottage (demolished in the 1950s) was situated here along with an orchard. A Pepper Tree marks the location. The gates were reached by St Killian's Street, which was later moved further westwards as the cemetery expanded. The Wesleyan section was nearest the entrance followed by the Church of England which was flanked by the Presbyterians. Behind them were the Catholic, Chinese, Independent, 'Other Denominations' and Utilitarian sections. Most of the major sections were contained within areas surrounded by circular driveways. In the 1890s the section around the former entrance was sold as prestige Catholic plots.

The Central Board of Health observed in 1860 that both the White Hills and Sandhurst [Bendigo] Cemeteries 'have been ornamentally laid out, and from their general appearance exhibit proof of the due amount of attention having bestowed upon them'. Both the 'Iron bark Gully' and 1857 plans show a complex sinuous path system, presumably the layout praised by the health inspector. The next annual report of the inspector noted that White Hills Cemetery 'is continually having improvements effected, which the more flourishing state of finances permit of. Both of these cemeteries [i.e. Sandhurst as well] are in very good order'.

The earliest known reference to planting is in November 1862 when the inspector observed that 'a triangular plot near the entrance gate has been lately trenched and planted, additional shrubs have been distributed about the grounds and the walks further improved by gravelling'. In 1870 sixty plants were supplied from the Melbourne Botanic Gardens by Ferdinand von Mueller, and three years later the Preston nurserymen B & S Johnston supplied the cemetery with eighteen cypress trees and an unknown number of elms.

From 1873 until 1888 the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey and the Department of Crown Lands and Survey were responsible for the administration of cemeteries in Victoria. An area of 44 acres 1 rood 3 perches was temporarily reserved in March 1874 for the White Hills Cemetery and this took in all the earlier ground plus large additional portions. This reservation comprised almost the whole of the land within the present cemetery boundaries. Further ornamental work was undertaken in 1881 when prominent Bendigo architect W. C. Vahland called tenders for a 'Wing wall and Fence for the White Hills Cemetery Gates', presumably the present stone and iron fence which flanks the main gates. An ornamental, timber shelter was erected (matching two other shelters at Sandhurst [Bendigo] Cemetery

Little is known of the White Hills Cemetery in the late nineteenth century and Health Department records for the period before 1913 do not survive. During 1921 £158 7s 1d was spent on fencing but major financial difficulties faced the trustees. The lodge needed to be repaired but funds were not available, and the State Government refused to assist. All seven trustees resigned in April 1926 in an effort to avoid personal liability. The City of Bendigo refused to provide financial support as almost half of the burials came from adjoining municipalities. The State Government attempted to close the cemetery to prevent further burials although following a deputation to the Acting Minister for Health in January 1927 a compromise was reached. From March 1928 management was formally transferred to the Bendigo City Council and the cemetery remained open. The council already acted as a trustee for the Bendigo (formerly Sandhurst, renamed February 1892) Cemetery. Little funding, however, was directed towards White Hills, and each subsequent year the secretary of the trustees reported that no improvement to the cemetery was planned.

Many grave mounds and tombstones were removed between the 1960s and 1980s to allow for tractor maintenance. A major threat to the integrity of the cemetery loomed in 1987 when the then Cemetery Trust resolved to level the hundreds of Chinese graves using city council bulldozers. It was intended to temporarily remove headstones, level the burial mounds and replace the headstones. The trust argued that the cemetery grounds could be improved and weeds maintained if the Chinese section was flat. The local Chinese community was incensed at such lack of respect for their heritage, pointing out that the mounds were a traditional part of the

Chinese burial custom, and that descendants of these Chinese were still living in Bendigo. Public and political pressure succeeded in halting the bulldozers, and a Chinese artist was commissioned by the Bendigo Chinese Association to repaint the calligraphic inscriptions on the headstones.

## Chinese Burials

It is estimated by the Bendigo Chinese Association that White Hills has the largest and one of the last Chinese section cemeteries in Australia. Many of those buried in the cemetery were from Toi Shan village in Canton province, and one of the oldest known graves is of a thirty-five year old miner called James Lee Fo in 1856. Of those buried here, many were from the Chinese Camp at Emu Point. The inscribed headstones record the exact date the person died, but there were two Chinese methods of recording time, both of which differed from the western calendar. Most of the Chinese buried in the cemetery up until the 1870s were in their 30s or even late 20s, and were predominantly miners who died in harsh conditions on the diggings. The Chinese festival of Ching Ming (clear and bright) occurs near Easter and entails an obligatory visit by descendants to their ancestor's graves. Graves are then swept and repaired, and treats offered to the departed spirits of ancestors. These offerings are burnt in the funerary tower, which is said to have been built from 1877-78. There are over 750 known Chinese burials (and possibly 1000) around the funeral tower dating from at least 1854. There are presently about 260 foot-stones, most with inscriptions. The funeral tower is still used by the Chinese Association during Ching Ming.

## William Charles Vahland, Architect

Vahland was born in 1828 at Neinberg, Hanover, and entered the Bougewerkschule at Holzminden, an engineering and building academy in 1846. He graduated in 1852 and worked as an architect before arriving in Melbourne in 1854. Meeting with little success on the goldfields he turned to his architectural skills and designed a two-storey building for H. Sharp & Co., Pall Mall, which was later to become the Lyceum Hotel, now the site of the Bendigo Advertiser. By 1857 he had established an architectural practice in partnership with Robert Getschmann at Temple Court Chambers, Pall Mall. Their buildings include the Town Hall (1878-86), Hospital (1898), St John's Church, the Benevolent Home (1864, 1872, 1902), the second Shamrock Hotel (1860, replaced 1897), the Alexandra Fountain (1881), City Family Hotel (1872), Wesleyan Church (1877), Mechanics Institute (verandah 1891), Henry Jackson Store (1861, 1872), Post Office Hotel (1870), Connelly Store (1877), Commercial bank of Australia (1875), Atkinson Buildings (1877), Rifle Brigade Hotel (1887), Masonic Hall & Temple (1873, 1890), Bendigo Art Gallery (1867), Residence at 32 View Street (1871), Temperance Hall (1860), Sandhurst Club (1893), National Bank (1887), Colonial Bank (1887), former photographic studio (1886), St James Hall (1873), St Killian's (1888).

He was also responsible for the Town Hall & Court House in Echuca in the 1860s. The partnership ceased on the death of Getzschmann (b. 1824) in 1875. During 1892 Vahland admitted his son, Henry Ernest to the business to trade as Vahland & Son which continued until 1901 when Henry formed a partnership with John Beebe in Bull Street. This lasted until Henry's death in 1902. William succeeded his son in the partnership until 1910. He died on 21 July 1915 aged 86.

## Assessment Against Criteria

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

White Hills Cemetery is important as a substantially intact example of a mid nineteenth century Victorian goldfields cemetery.

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

White Hills Cemetery is important for its strong links with Chinese migration to Victoria, their presence in the gold fields and burial practices.

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

White Hills Cemetery is important as a source of information about burial customs and patterns of death in the colony of Victoria.

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

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

White Hills Cemetery is important as an early example in Victoria of the mid nineteenth century Romantic and Picturesque ideals, which gained world wide popularity and are demonstrated through the design, layout and plantings.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

White Hills Cemetery is important for its strong links with Chinese migration to Victoria, their presence in the gold fields and burial practices.

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

## Plaque Citation

An intact example of an 1850s goldfields cemetery with strong links to the Chinese, the cemetery holds the largest number of footstones in Victoria and a rare 1877-78 funerary tower.

With multiple denominational sections established in the early 1850s and a rare 1877-78 funerary tower, the cemetery reflects goldfields history and Chinese migration.. Influenced by Romantic and Picturesque ideals, it also features early and unusual plantings and significant architectural features.

## Extent of Registration

1. All the paths and brick gutters, cemetery markers and signs and landscape plantings.
2. All of the features marked as follows on Diagram 2136 held by the Executive Director:

F1 Entrance gates and fence

F2 Chinese Funerary Tower and all footstones in Chinese section

F3 Rotunda

3. All the drives marked P1 on Diagram 2136 held by the Executive Director.

4. All of the land known as the White Hills Cemetery being all of Crown Allotment 6 of Section F14 Township of Bendigo, Parish of Sandhurst marked L1 on Diagram 2136 held by the Executive Director.

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*