

# ALEXANDRA FOUNTAIN



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SOHE 2008



1 alexandra fountain bendigo  
front view mar1997

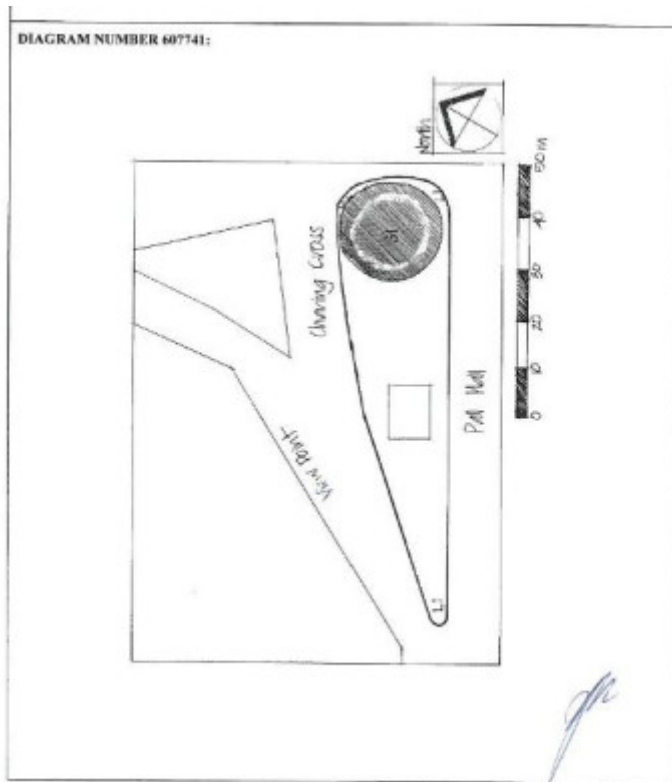


Diagram 607741.JPG

## Location

1 HIGH STREET BENDIGO, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1338

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO108

## VHR Registration

August 14, 1997

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 27, 1999

The Alexandra Fountain, Charing Cross, Bendigo, was designed by local architect, William Vahland and erected by local craftsman. It was named after Alexandra, Princess of Wales whose sons, Princes Albert and George, attended the opening ceremony on 5 July 1881. The fountain is a landmark in Bendigo situated centrally on the most prominent intersection in the city. Built as a symbol of the rapid development and consequent wealth of Bendigo as a result of the successful gold fields during the second half of the nineteenth century, Alexandra Fountain is a good example of late Victorian ornamental exuberance. The design of the fountain, like many other late Victorian ornamental structures, has a strong classical influence in the composition and detailing.

The Alexandra Fountain is of aesthetic and historical importance to the state of Victoria.

The Alexandra Fountain is aesthetically important as one of the largest and most ornate municipal fountains in regional Victoria. The fountain is a very good example of late Victorian ornamental public art influenced by classical models. The fountain has historical importance as a manifestation of the enormous financial success of the central goldfields and of the consequent prosperity of Bendigo, one of the largest gold mining centres in the state.

## 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:

Nil

Construction dates	1881,
Architect/Designer	Vahland, William Charles,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	5149
Property Number	

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### History

Contextual History:History of Place:

The Alexandra Fountain was constructed by the Sandhurst Council in 1881 as a focal point of Bendigo at the Charing Cross intersection.

Funding for the Alexandra Fountain was provided by the proceeds from the first Juvenile Industrial Exhibition held in 1879. The exhibition, which lasted from late March until late June, was held in the town hall and in adjacent temporary annexes and attracted about 1600 exhibitors, over 110 of whom were juveniles. Eighty eight thousand people paid admission to the exhibition and after expenses a profit of £1000 was made. This money, together with £500 contributed by George Lansell, was spent in the erection of the Alexandra Fountain at Charing Cross.

Planning Bendigo

At the time of its opening the fountain is described thus

The fountain is a handsome structure standing 30 feet high from the level of the roadway, and its outer basin is 50 feet in diameter. The fountain had to be carried down in solid masonry to a depth of 13 feet before the bedrock was reached. The outer ring of the lower basin is supported on pillars of solid masonry, spaced 12 feet apart, and carried up from the bedrock to within three feet of the surface, where solid clinker brick arches are thrown across from pillar to pillar, and the remaining portion up to the surface carried out in solid masonry and is capped by a flue axed granite kerb, 16 inches high and 12 inches wide. On this parapet is fixed the wrought iron railings, which encloses the whole structure. At four equi-distant points on the outer rim are fixed fine axed granite blocks, on which ornamental lamps are to be erected. And opposite each of the lamps stands a granite horse trough, which will always be kept filled to supply the wants of thirty quadrupeds. The basin itself will be about 12 feet wide from the inner side of the parapet to the plinth of the fountain and will always contain a depth of 2 feet of water, in which it is intended to have gold fish and such aquatic plants as usually thrive in like situations....The main foundations of the fountain are about 14 feet in diameter with four wings or ramps spaced equal distances apart, making the outside dimension 17 feet 6 inches across; the whole of this, with the exception of a small circular

shaft in the middle, is also carried to the bedrock in solid masonry. From this circular shaft (in which the different taps and appliances for regulating the water supply are contained), there is a tunnel constructed to the outer rim of the lower basin and a square shaft built up to the surface as a means of ingress to the lower workings; this shaft is of course covered over when not required. The fountain itself is commenced with a plinth course of fine axed granite 14 feet in diameter and 2 feet three inches thick, worked to a circle with four square ramps. From the top of the plinth to the underside of the first ledge of granite there is a height of 6 feet 6 inches of clinker bricks built in cement and the whole worked out in ornamental panels and aquatic subjects. On each of the four ramps which diminish with a curve from a diameter of 17 feet 6 inches to 5 feet there rests four well modelled sea horses in natural and easy positions, the panels between the lamps are nicely moulded and the centre of each ornamented with the figures of two dolphins lying crossed on marine shells and supported by a trident between them. The tops of the four ramps are finished with dolphins curling over and their heads forming brackets or supports for the granite ledge, 6 inches thick on which stands four semi-nude female figures, all different in their positions and poise. In the upraised hands of each are held marine shells; their other arms are all in easy positions. One of them holds in her hands a vase of flowers. The general effect of the group is very natural and pleasing and their drapery hangs gracefully from their shoulders. These figures stand upon a fine granite ledge and surround the main shaft of the fountain which is a polished granite moulded column 9 feet 6 inches high, 3 feet 9 inches in diameter at the bottom, 3 feet 3 inches at the top; moulded and highly polished. This shaft weighs over 6 tons and its upper mouldings are ornamented with four bronze acanthus flowers. The main basin rests on a pillar and consists of two layers - the first being 8 feet in diameter and 13 inches thick; the upper one 12 feet in diameter and 14 inches thick. Both these are also of highly polished granite and we believe are the largest diameter of any polished granite ever executed on this side of the line. The lower layer of the basin weighs over 4 tons and the upper one 8 tons and its height is 21 feet from the level of the roadway. There is a row of eight jets from this basin, the water coming out of bronzed lions' mouths. Surmounting the basin stands the finishing finial standing 9 feet high consisting of beautifully polished turned granite, the base being 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet 6 inches high, the top forming a sort of nose from the middle of which spouts eight jets of water streaming from the petals of acanthus flowers and from the apex another jet arises perpendicularly into the air which throws the water about 15 feet higher than the top of the fountain.

By 1881 the Alexandra Fountain was ready to be unveiled and a large event was planned on 5 July 1881 to coincide with the visit of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales to central Victoria. The fountain was decorated for the occasion with gold lettering, 'ALEXANDRA' on the central column. The naming of the fountain was for Princess Alexandra of Wales, mother of the two princes who opened it. Also at the opening ceremony were the architect, Mr William Vahland and the contractors Messrs Finn and Saunders.

Vahland was a prominent Bendigo architect who designed many of the larger buildings in the city and surrounds including the Masonic Hall and Temple, Bendigo Art Gallery, Temperance Hall, Sandhurst Club Hall, various banks, hotels, private residences and ecclesiastical buildings. Vahland was born in Niemburg, Hanover in 1828 and migrated to Australia in 1854, with the principal intention of working the gold fields but soon returned to his original career as an architect. The Alexandra Fountain is believed to have been the only fountain he designed although he is known to have been involved with some works to a municipal park in Echuca where a large prefabricated fountain was installed.

The contractors for the fountain were Messrs Sanders and Hyett and the cost of the structure about £1300. The granite was polished and erected by Messrs P Finn and Co of a relatively new company in Bendigo, the steam granite works. The granite was acquired from Mr Blight's Mount Alexander quarries at Harcourt. The modelling of the figures was done by Mr E Semper of Melbourne. The fixing of the figures and the plaster/cement work was completed by Mr Moses Coombes and Mr Thomas Connolly arranged the plumbing work. Messrs Harkness and Co of the Victoria Foundry manufactured and erected the wrought iron balustrade around the fountain.

The fountain has been described as reflecting 'through a hundred years the buoyant optimism and the grandeur that apparently limitless reefing seemed to promise. An immense polished granite bowl, with lions' heads at the rim is surmounted by a huge central urn. Surrounding the granite stem supporting the bowl are four graceful goddesses, two as Ceres bearing cornucopias; two raising libations are gently Hebes. Instead of the structure seeming ponderous - the total weight of Harcourt granite exceeds twenty tonnes - the easeful figures make it soar above the four eager sea horses with sinuous tails emerging from the buttresses. Traditionally fountains were erected to provide drinking water for the local community but soon became erected by the city dignitaries as symbols of civic pride and progress. Alexandra Fountain is Victoria's 'grandest provincial fountain'

The Alexandra Fountain retains its original position as one of the principal focal points in Bendigo, located on a large traffic island on the main thoroughfare through the city. In 1958 a scaled down version of the Cenotaph in

Pall Mall, London, was erected adjacent to the fountain on the traffic island.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the structure known as the Alexandra Fountain, Charing Cross Bendigo and marked S1 on Diagram 607741.

2. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 607741 held by the Executive Director, being part of a road reserve.

*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/>*