

# LONDON TAVERN



LONDON TAVERN SOHE  
2008



h00350 1 london tavern camp  
street beechworth front



h00350 london tavern camp  
street beechworth rear



h00350 london tavern 43  
camp street beechworth



Front



Rear



Bath house



Rear verandah



Rear verandah

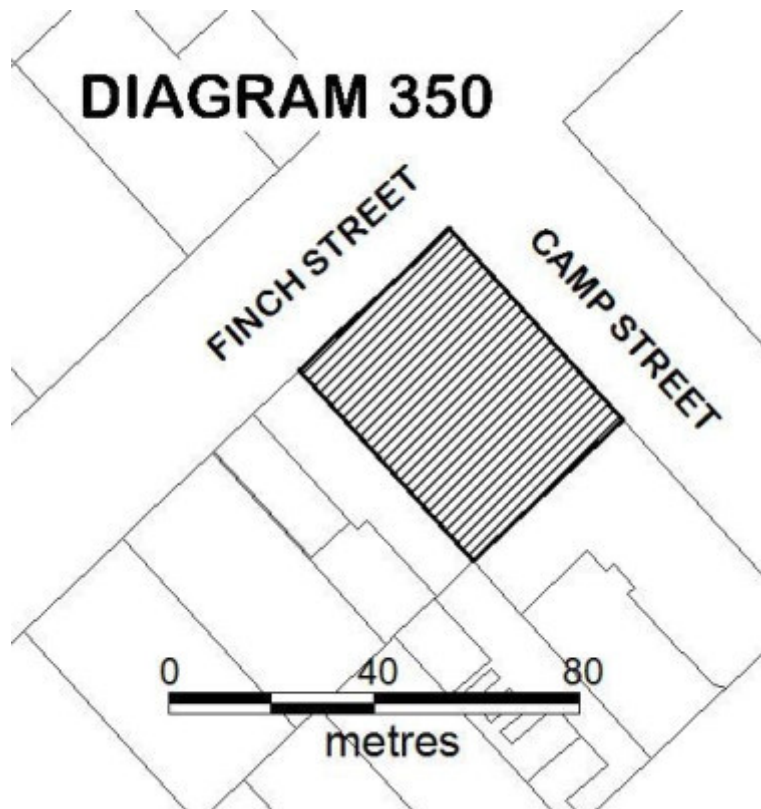


Diagram 350.JPG

---

**Location**

43 CAMP STREET BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

**Municipality**

INDIGO SHIRE

**Level of significance**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0350

**Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO24

**VHR Registration**

October 9, 1974

**Amendment to Registration**

April 9, 2015

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 25, 2004

What is significant?

The London Tavern, including the three brick wings of the former hotel, built in stages in 1859, 1860-61, 1863-64 and 1865-66, and the 1862 brick bath house in the courtyard.

History Summary

The London Tavern was built in stages between 1859 and 1866 by William Thompson Soulby (1830-1916), who was born in Lincolnshire and came to Beechworth in 1856. Gold had been discovered in the area in 1852 and the town grew rapidly to become the main town in north-east Victoria. Soulby purchased land in Camp Street in 1857, and in 1859 built the first wing of the present building, facing Camp Street. No architect is known. It was the first brick hotel in Beechworth, and had verandahs along the front and back, and a weatherboard kitchen and stables at the rear (now demolished). In 1860 Soulby added a dining room, and in 1860-61 an adjoining accommodation wing with several single rooms and a family room. In 1862 a detached brick bathroom building was constructed at the rear of the hotel, which was divided into two parts, part serving as a guest bathroom and part as a 'summerhouse'. In 1863-64 a second accommodation wing was added across the rear of the site, forming a three-sided courtyard with the bathhouse in the centre. The front wing was extended at the rear in 1865-66. The courtyard was planted with a garden. Soulby sold the hotel c1870, and under the ownership of Felix O'Connor in 1876-86 it was refurbished. For several years after 1909 it was known as the Federal Hotel. The last licence for the hotel was issued in 1912 to John Kelly, who in 1918 purchased the building. It was used as a family home until 1970, by which time the buildings were in poor condition. In 1970 it was purchased by a syndicate of Melbourne academics and friends with close associations with the National Trust and a great interest in the heritage of Beechworth, with the aim of conserving the buildings.

Description Summary

The Former London Tavern is a complex of brick buildings with corrugated iron roofs, occupying part of a large corner site. The former hotel is made up of three single-storey brick wings enclosing three sides of a grassed courtyard, with a brick bathhouse in the centre. The front wing (1859, extended at the rear in 1865-66) originally contained the hotel's public rooms, including bars and a dining room, as well as bedrooms. This wing is largely surrounded by verandahs, and the front verandah on Camp Street has cast iron balustrading and brackets, a wide shuttered window opening into the bar and French doors opening into the other rooms. The front wing retains original features such as fireplaces, doorways, some original wallpaper, painted finishes and shingles beneath the corrugated iron roof. The cellar beneath the former bar area has an entrance under the rear verandah. The east wing (1860-61) included a dining room and several bedrooms, and the south wing (1863-64) also had bedroom accommodation. These rooms open off the verandahs (which have been widened) facing the courtyard. The bath house is a brick building with shingles beneath the corrugated iron roof. At one end is an enclosed room, used as a bathroom, and next to it an open section which may have been used as a washhouse and drying area, rather than as a summerhouse.

**How is it significant?**

The London Tavern is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

Why is it significant?

The London Tavern is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The London Tavern is historically significant for its association with the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s. When begun in 1859 it was the first brick hotel in Beechworth and the best hotel on the Ovens goldfields, and lay on what was then the main route between Sydney and Melbourne. It demonstrates the rapid growth of the goldfields towns, and the need for such facilities in these towns, following the discovery of gold in the early 1850s. The former hotel is also significant for its association with the early history of the urban conservation movement in Victoria. [Criterion A]

The London Tavern is architecturally significant as one of the most intact examples in Victoria of a country hotel building of the mid-nineteenth century. It is a rare surviving example of a goldfields hotel, and demonstrates the sort of facilities provided for travellers and visitors at the time, with several public rooms at the front and bedrooms opening off rear verandahs. The bath house in the courtyard dates from a time when separate bathroom facilities in goldfield hotels were rare, and is a unique example of its kind in Victoria. [Criteria B and D]

The London Tavern is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

The London Tavern is significant as one the first brick hotel in Beechworth, and one of the most popular hotels on the local goldfields in the late 1850s and 1860s. It is one of a number of hotels built in Beechworth from the 1850s and is illustrative of the need for such facilities in the town. The restored street facade is an important part of the Camp Street streetscape. It is significant for its association with William Soulby, the first owner, a prominent local resident and businessman who arrived in Beechworth in 1856. The complex is significant for its association with the early activities of the National Trust in Beechworth and with a number of early activists in the heritage and urban conservation movement, including George Tibbits, who was largely responsible for Victoria's first heritage area study: 'Beechworth - Historical reconstruction' (1976).

## 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:**

### PERMIT EXEMPTIONS

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42(4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)

#### **General Condition: 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 Condition: 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.

#### **General Condition: 3.**

All works should be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

#### **General Conditions: 4.**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

#### **General Condition: 5.**

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

### Specific Permit Exemptions

Works and alterations which do not increase the floor area to the following building are permit exempt:

The woodshed

Interior works:

- . Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings, except those with original paint finishes, provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of non-original carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of non-original curtain tracks, rods and blinds.
- . Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights and built-in cupboards.
- . Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.
- . Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring providing that all new wiring is fully concealed and does not involve the alteration or removal of any original fabric.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

- . Installation of plant within the roof space.
- . Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

#### Landscape Exemptions:

- . The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs and replanting the same species or cultivar, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants.
- . The removal or pruning of dead or dangerous trees to maintain safety. If the tree is identified as being of primary or contributory cultural heritage significance, the Executive Director must be notified of these works within 21 days of them being undertaken.
- . Replanting of removed or dead trees and vegetation with the same plant species to conserve the significant landscape character and values.
- . Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996
- . Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009.
- . Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.
- . Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- . Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

## Theme

5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce 6. Building towns cities and the garden state

Construction dates 1859,  
 Heritage Act Categories Registered place,  
 Hermes Number 99  
 Property Number

## History

### Contextual history

Beechworth owes its existence to the discovery of gold in 1852. The Beechworth area was first settled by squatters from 1837, but the discovery of gold resulted in a rush of miners to the area, with about 8,000 arriving by November of that year. The Ovens was an important river system in north-east Victoria and gave its name to the goldfields in this area. The town developed around the Gold Commissioner's Camp, established in 1852 on the granite hill on the north bank of Spring Creek. The township was first known as Mayday Hills, but when surveyed in 1853, it was named Beechworth. The main overland route between Melbourne and Sydney passed through the town until the 1870s (when the railway was built further to the west), and until then Beechworth was one of the richest towns in Victoria and the financial and administrative centre of the north-east .

Until the mid-1850s most buildings in the town were constructed of wood, bark or canvas, but following the election of a town council in 1856 building regulations were introduced. Many of the town's major buildings were erected during the following five years, including the Ovens District Hospital (1856, VHR H358) and the Burke Museum (VHR H345, begun in 1857 by the Young Men's Association as a hall and library). The first town hall

was built in 1859. By the early 1860s a group of important administrative buildings, known as the Beechworth Justice Precinct (VHR H1464), had been completed along the south side of Ford Street, and a large gaol (VHR H1549) was begun to the north of this in 1858. The Beechworth Lunatic Asylum, later the Mayday Hills Hospital (VHR H1864-67), was built in 1864-67, and the landmark post office (VHR H867) was completed in 1870.

The Ovens gold rushes peaked in 1857, and during the following two decades the population of Beechworth decreased (though the last mining company in the district only closed in 1956). Despite the decline in the gold industry, the town was sustained well into the twentieth century by the presence of the government institutions founded in the 1850s and 1860s: the asylum and the gaol.

Tourism has now become a major industry in Beechworth. Tourism began in the 1880s with the town's reputation as a health resort and picturesque beauty spot. The declining prosperity of the town had the advantage that the post-World War II development that led to the destruction of so much of Victoria's nineteenth century fabric during the 1950s-70s was avoided. At this time there was an increasing awareness of the importance of Victoria's early history and heritage. In the 1960s the National Trust was active in classifying Beechworth's early buildings, and efforts began to restore buildings which had fallen into disrepair. The retention of much of the town's historic character has now made it a popular tourist destination.

### Place history

The London Tavern was built in stages in 1859-64 by William Thompson Soulby (1830-1916). Soulby was born in Lincolnshire, and in 1853 migrated to Melbourne, where he was employed at the *Melbourne Age*. He came to Beechworth in 1856, working first as a compositor on the staff of the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*. In 1856 he was married, and took over the Victoria Hotel and Dining Rooms in High Street.

In January 1857 Soulby purchased the site of the London Tavern on Camp Street, and the first wing, facing Camp Street, was built in 1859. It was the first brick hotel in the town, and had a bar fitted 'in the London fashion', a 'superb suite of sitting rooms' as well as a private room, a lead lined 'shower bath', and had a charming exterior with French doors opening onto a promenade verandah. It was rectangular in plan measuring 63½ x 23 ft [19.4 x 7.0 m] with a cellar underneath, was built of double brick and had a shingled roof, later covered by corrugated iron. The bedrooms were in the back part of the building, and at the rear were stables and a weatherboard kitchen. A billiard room and washhouse were said to be under construction.

By 1860 Soulby purchased an adjoining block of land. He added a dining room at the rear of the hotel, and in 1860-61 added at right angles to the first wing an accommodation block (90 x 16 ft [27 x 4.9 m]) containing single rooms and a family room. The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* noted that the addition 'was being made to meet the rapidly increasing demand for hotel accommodation of a superior and safer description than that generally offered by the present buildings that are devoted to the travelling public'. Trees, mainly fruit trees, were purchased and a garden with a fountain was established in the courtyard.

In 1862 a detached bathroom building, a most unusual feature on the goldfields at this time, was built in the courtyard. The agreement between Soulby and the builder notes that the bathroom building was to be 20 x 9 ft [6.1 x 2.7 m], built of brick and divided into two rooms, half to be a bathroom and half a 'summerhouse', and was to cost £36. The open area adjoining the enclosed bathroom is said to have been used as a washhouse and drying area.

In 1863-64 a second accommodation wing was added, thus forming a courtyard enclosed on three sides with the bathhouse in the centre. In 1863 the hotel was referred to as the best hotel between Melbourne and Sydney ( *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 26 May 1863), and was the preferred accommodation for visiting dignitaries, including Sir Redmond Barry and Sir William Stawell, who preferred to stay in the hotel than in the Judge's Rooms provided at the Courthouse.

Soulby's obituary notes that after selling the London Tavern Soulby built the Post Office Hotel in Camp Street, which he conducted successfully for a number of years.

In 1869-70 the licensee of the London Tavern was Thomas Wilkinson, and in 1870-76 it was John Rawlings. At this time the hotel appears to have become less respectable. The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (13.12.1873) records a court case headed 'Attempt to entrap female servant', in which a new servant noted that she had observed 'improprieties' at the hotel, and that the daughter of her employer had 'got money and rings from men for immoral purposes'.

Felix O'Connor owned the hotel from 1876-86. He refurbished the buildings, revamped the hotel gardens, and removed the original stables at the rear of the first hotel wing. Under O'Connor the business did not do well, there being a general economic downturn at the time, and he also had to compete with the new Tanswell's Hotel, built in 1878.

There were a number of licensees in the following decades. By 1909 the hotel name had been changed to the Federal Hotel, and the last license for the operation of the hotel was issued in 1912 to John Kelly. In 1918 Kelly purchased the freehold and it became a family home for Kelly and later for his children. During this time the condition of the hotel buildings deteriorated.

The former hotel was in poor condition when it was purchased in 1970 by a syndicate of nine Melbourne friends, mostly academics from Melbourne and Monash Universities with close associations with the National Trust and an interest in conserving Beechworth's heritage. The syndicate was made up of Alan Beever, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Frank Eastwood, John Loder, Barrie Milne, Kevin O'Neill, Frank Strahan, George Tibbits and Bob Wilson. George Tibbits was a teacher of urban studies and architectural history at the University of Melbourne who initiated the first area heritage study in Victoria, the Beechworth Historical Reconstruction Project (1976). During the following decades the group carried out extensive conservation works at the old hotel, and used the place as a holiday and work centre for themselves and their families. The former hotel continues to be used (2014) by the second and third generations of the families.

#### KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE RECOMMENDATION REPORT

G F Craig, 'The London Tavern, Camp Street, Beechworth', unpublished manuscript, 1999 (in SLV collection).

Joan Hildebrand, 'A History of the London Tavern, Beechworth', Beechworth 2007 (in SLV).

Carole Woods, *Beechworth. A Titan's Field*, North Melbourne 1985.

*Oven and Murray Advertiser*, various dates. Accessed through the Trove database.

#### Plaque Citation

This intact example of an early goldfields hotel, built in stages between 1859 and 1864, was the first brick hotel in Beechworth and was then the best hotel on the Ovens goldfields. It retains a unique 1862 brick bath house.

#### Assessment Against Criteria

##### Criterion

The London Tavern is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history  
Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history  
Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

Why is it significant?

The London Tavern is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The London Tavern is historically significant for its association with the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s. When begun in 1859 it was the first brick hotel in Beechworth and the best hotel on the Ovens goldfields, and lay on what was then the main route between Sydney and Melbourne. It demonstrates the rapid growth of the goldfields towns, and the need for such facilities in these towns, following the discovery of gold in the early 1850s. The former hotel is also significant for its association with the early history of the urban conservation movement in Victoria. [

Criterion A]The London Tavern is architecturally significant as one of the most intact examples in Victoria of a country hotel building of the mid-nineteenth century. It is a rare surviving example of a goldfields hotel, and demonstrates the sort of facilities provided for travellers and visitors at the time, with several public rooms at the front and bedrooms opening off rear verandahs. The bath house in the courtyard dates from a time when



separate bathroom facilities in goldfield hotels were rare, and is a unique example of its kind in Victoria. [Criteria B and D]

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying Heritage Register Number H350 in the category described as Heritage Place.

London Tavern  
43 Camp Street  
Beechworth  
Indigo Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 350 encompassing all of Lot Crown Allotments 19 and 20, Township and Parish of Beechworth.

Dated 9 April 2015

TIM SMITH  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No G14 9 April 2015 p.757]

---

*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/>*