

# 1. Introduction to the Significance Assessment

This Collection Management Strategy was initiated by the Bendigo Historical Society to assist with determining the future management of their collection. It has been made possible with the majority of funding given through the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust.

The majority of the Bendigo Historical Society's collection is currently located at the Old Bendigo Gaol, with furniture and objects recently moved there from the Finn Street Recreation Reserve. There are 1,400 boxes parcels and tagged items, including hundreds of loose objects and pieces of furniture, which are housed in the Governor's Residence, the gymnasium and in a number of the prison cells at the Gaol. Another estimated 120 of its collection items are also on loan to other organisations for temporary display.

A brief Collection Summary was carried out by Society members, Helen and Bruce Mainka, in 2001. This report estimated the size of the collection to be around 14,000 items and gives a breakdown of the type of items in the collection, a percentage estimate of the significance of each category of item, and specifies some of the more important items known to exist. This information has been taken into account in compiling this Significance Assessment. The Mainka's were also involved with the packing of the collection for storage in 1999, and documented box and package contents in a duplicate invoice book. These are referred to as the 'Packing Dockets', and were important in determining the location of items for this assessment.

Since 2001 Society members have also compiled databases and lists relating to the collection from source material such as: the original Acquisitions Register (1955-1985); donations and acquisitions listed in the Society's Minutes of Meetings; Museum register (1983-c.1988) etc. these have proved to be most useful references for the purposes of this study.

In carrying out this project, and examining the contents of selected boxes, it has become clear that the original approximation, particularly of the number of documents in the collection, has been considerably underestimated. The collection size is more realistically in the vicinity of 30,000 items, and could be more. This will only be able to be fully determined as the box and package contents are examined and the cataloguing project progresses.

There have been some difficulties in undertaking this Significance Assessment:

1. Access to the collection has been limited due to its distribution at various sites and the awkwardness of accessing packaged and stacked items in confined spaces.
2. Written documentation relating to the collection items is sparse and only a small percentage of the material has been catalogued to date.
3. Location of items selected for further investigation, drawn from existing data sources, has been problematic and time-consuming due to the difficulty in matching this information with the 'Packing Docket' item listings.

Since commencing this project, the stored items at Finn Street have been moved to the Old Bendigo Gaol. These items are being sorted and those of a similar nature or category are being placed together. This has greatly improved access to the collection, making the process of carrying out an audit and assessment of the collection's condition much easier. It will also be helpful for prioritising cataloguing, and a useful start to addressing the future storage, preservation and conservation needs of the collection.

Please note that throughout this report I may refer to some organisations in abbreviated terms:

- The Bendigo Historical Society Inc. as either 'the Society' or 'BHS'.
- The Old Bendigo Gaol as 'the Gaol'.
- The North Central Goldfields Regional Library as 'the Library'.
- The City of Greater Bendigo as 'COGB' or 'the Council'.

## 2. Assessment of Significance

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### 2.1 Statement of Purpose

Australia's cultural heritage is held in trust for all people by our larger museums and art galleries, along with many smaller regional museums, libraries and community collections. These collections tell the story of our history: the people and events that have contributed to forming our unique sense of cultural identity and national pride.

Assessing the significance of collections helps to identify and preserve our cultural heritage, providing a sound basis on which decisions about collection management, conservation treatment, preservation and public access can be made. It ensures that our moveable cultural heritage will be better documented, preserved, interpreted and accessible for the future.

Cataloguing is the process of classifying an object, documenting its physical details, history, dates and people linked with the item, along with donor information. Significance is an extension of the cataloguing process, placing the object under the microscope for closer scrutiny.

A Significance Assessment defines the intrinsic meaning, context and value of an object or collection through research and analysis. Documenting the level of relevance a collection has in relating its story about history, adds to the depth of interest, meaning and importance it has to the community.

### 2.2 Process & Methodology

This report was compiled with the assistance of a designated liaison person from the Bendigo Historical Society, and with cooperation from other members of the Society and the cataloguing volunteer team. Access to investigate the collection was gained for 1-2 days per week over 8 weeks. The report was carried out over a four-month period from July to October 2007.

As part of the consultant's brief, firstly a broad audit of the collection was undertaken to determine whether or not the collection was still intact, and to clarify where items were stored. This was done primarily referring to the 'Packing Docket' books used to record the packing-up of the collection in 1999-2000.

Notes were compiled on items loaned to other organisations, and visits were made to confirm their locations, and carry out a basic assessment of their display or storage environment, and general condition. It was a consideration at the time that items chosen for loan and display at other venues could be highly likely to be of importance or value to the community.

Commencement of an overall Significance Assessment of the collection was carried out concurrently with the collection audit. A Collection Summary was compiled using database listings, and other relevant material assembled by the Society from sources such as their correspondence files, Minutes of Meetings, and the original Acquisitions Register, etc. Information was also sought from the Society's members, especially those who have had a longer-term association with the collection.

A cross-section of boxes was selected for inspection, using information from the 'Packing Dockets' to attempt to locate the box contents matching the items selected from the database lists, for their probable 'high significance' rating. The numbered boxes then had to be found for the contents to be examined. The contents of boxes undergoing cataloguing by volunteers were also briefly examined, whenever possible.

Notes were made and photographs taken by the consultant of many items at this time, providing a useful reference for further research purposes. A list of selected items deemed to be of special interest, was assembled for further research and investigation. (See Appendix 3: *Items Selected for Further Investigation*)

It was considered important to carry out some preliminary research investigations on a select number of items, to determine what information relating to particular items or themes was on-hand and readily able to be assembled. This was done using the Society's own books and research files. Information was sought from local historians and specialists on particular subjects, as well as from the Bendigo Regional Genealogical Society, and internet sources.

This has confirmed that between the Society's own information files, the resources available through other groups, and the cumulative knowledge of various local specialists, much of the research information needed to supplement and assist with the interpretation of the Society's collection, is to a degree, readily available.

The project also involved collating information and research on the history of the Bendigo Historical Society and its collection and gaining knowledge of the history of the local area, to better understand and analyse the collection's context and relevance to the community. Contact was also made with Historical Society members, individuals from other organisations, and local historians to gain further information and insight into the history, activities and collection background of the Society. This included the distribution of a targeted survey questionnaire relating to the Bendigo Historical Society's collection access, and possible improvements.

The assessment of the collection was made against the set primary and comparative significance criteria, as laid down in Australia's national standard guidelines: *Significance – A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*, Heritage Collections Council, Canberra, 2001.

### 2.3 Benefits of a Significance Assessment

A Significance Assessment of a collection as a whole is important for its contribution to our understanding and appreciation of heritage. It also provides the opportunity for broader communication, deeper connections and more satisfying learning experiences and enjoyment of the collection items.

The assessment is also an extremely useful tool for collection management, assisting with decision-making and prioritising projects such as:

- Guiding strategic planning for collection management
- Revising collection policies and guiding deaccession decisions
- Gaining a better understanding of collection patterns; strengths and weaknesses; scope and omissions
- Documenting the history of items in the collection more comprehensively
- Focussing resources on identified important elements of the collection
- Prioritising items for conservation treatment or special preservation and storage needs.
- Selecting key items for digitisation or replication for broader public access
- Identifying objects and themes of significance to develop and enhance exhibitions and displays
- Supporting and strengthening arguments for grant applications, funding submissions and donations
- Assisting with 'Disaster Planning' – Considering likely risks, display and storage locations, emergency retrieval, security issues etc.

### 3. Brief History of Bendigo and District

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Bendigo (also briefly known as Castleton and referred to between 1855-1891 as Sandhurst) is located in Central Victoria, 120 kilometres north of Melbourne. Prior to European settlement, the region was part of the Jaara country, the traditional land inhabited by the Dja Dja Wrung speaking people. It was densely covered with eucalypt forests of box and ironbark trees, and was a rich hunting ground for the Dja Dja Wrung population. Following the expedition into 'Australia Felix' in 1836 by Major Thomas Mitchell, European pastoralists began to take up land for grazing in the area then known as Mt Alexander.

Gold was discovered in spring of 1851 sparking a rush to the Bendigo Creek at the place now known as Golden Square. As the population of miners swelled, they followed the gold along the creek and its tributaries. The population by June 1852 was estimated to have reached forty-thousand. Diggers from all over the world were working on the Bendigo fields. The surface or alluvial gold was mostly depleted by 1853, and by the late 1850's and early 1860's the more intensive quartz-mining was commenced. Bendigo was one of the richest goldfields in the world yielding over 22 million ounces (684 tonnes) of gold by 1954.

Bendigo very quickly developed into a busy commercial centre, with many hotels, retail businesses and industries providing goods and services for the mining population. Boosted again by the wealth from quartz mining in the 1870's and 1890's, many of the original buildings were replaced with much more substantial and grandiose structures. The district had many business entrepreneurs and pioneers in industry, some of these are still recognised names in the wider community today such as, Myers Department Stores, Leggo's Tomato Preserves, Bendigo Pottery, Cohn's and Tarax soft drinks.

Many of Bendigo's citizens also left their mark as leaders in public affairs and community development. Some went on to become active contributors to local, state and federal politics. Others were involved or instrumental in establishing religious, health and educational institutions, fraternal societies and other organisations for the common good of the community. Many were renowned for their contributions to the arts, music, and theatre, etc., important pursuits in the early development of a cultured society.

Still today there is much evidence in Bendigo of the multi-cultural population who came during the gold-rushes, many of whom stayed and settled permanently in the area. Migrants from Great Britain and Ireland and those from the European continent including Germany, Denmark, Italy, Hungary, and France, together with Americans, Canadians, Chinese and many others, have all made important contributions to the establishment and growth of this vibrant community.

The City of Greater Bendigo continues to thrive today, as the second largest urban area in Victoria, with a current population of 95,000, and growing. The nineteenth century architecture remains as a major feature of the streetscape, providing a prominent and lasting testimony of Bendigo's great prosperity and pride of place in Victoria's history. This, together with the strong cultural legacy of the arts, and innovation in business and industry, established in Bendigo during the nineteenth century, is still continued today, and is a major drawcard for visitors and new residents to the area.

## 4. Brief History of the Bendigo Historical Society

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The first Historical Society in Bendigo was formed in June 1935 at the instigation of Messrs George Mackay and Robert Saunders. The main object of forming the society was for:

‘the preservation of relics and to chronicle events in the history of Bendigo from the time of its foundation, and also to record outstanding events in the history of the State and Commonwealth.’ (*Bendigo Advertiser* n.d. 1935).

A Constitution and Rules for the Society were drawn up, and regular monthly meetings with guest speakers were held in the Committee Room at the Town Hall. Meetings of this Society ceased after September 1936.

An attempt was made to re-form the Society in September 1950. A Constitution and Rules for the Society were re-drafted, with meetings again being held at the Town Hall. An historical exhibition to mark the Bendigo Centenary was proposed for November 1951, with many of the intended historical exhibits to be loaned by members of the public. It was decided at the November meeting in 1951 that the Historical Society would go into recess for three months, and that the Bendigo Art Gallery would be asked to take responsibility for the Society’s exhibits. In June 1954, after nearly three years in recess, the Society called upon its members and extended an invitation to all citizens to attend a meeting and exhibition of historical items at the Town Hall. New office bearers were to be elected at this time also. There are no other records of this group meeting regularly, and the Art Gallery agreed to house the Society’s exhibits until premises could be secured.

In November 1958 the Bendigo and District Branch of The Royal Historical Society of Victoria was formed, this later became an incorporated body in 1989. Various premises were used by the Society including rooms at Charing Cross, Trades Hall in View Street, the Mechanics Institute at Eaglehawk, and the Temperance Hall in View Street between 1958 and 1974. A more permanent home for the Society was found in 1974 at ‘Dudley House’ in View Street, Bendigo, a building owned by the Bendigo City Council. Here, the Society operated its historical museum, providing research services and access for the public, and conducting its meetings and activities successfully for a period of 25 years.

In 1999 the Society was asked by the Council to vacate ‘Dudley House’ while renovations to the building were taking place. It was unclear at that time what the Council intended to do with ‘Dudley House’ after the renovations, but the Society was assured that in the event other uses were decided upon for the building, Council would assist the Society to find a new home.

Since 1999 the collection has been moved to various storage locations, including sheds at ‘Fortuna Villa’, Finn Street Recreation Reserve, two rooms at the Eaglehawk Mechanics Institute, private homes, etc. Some items have also been stored or displayed by other organisations in Bendigo, such as the Bendigo Art Gallery and the Eaglehawk Court House. In December 1996, Future Connections Inc. offered the Society space in the Old Bendigo Gaol, which was taken up, and this is where the majority of the collection is housed at present. The Society has recently been informed that it will have to vacate this space and find new premises.

As access to the majority of the collection was virtually non-existent between 2000 and 2006, for research, cataloguing and conservation purposes, the Society spent some time developing its policies and procedures documents during this time. Visits to observe the operations and collection management methods of other historical societies, has also taken place, as well as attending workshops and seminars relating to collection management. Of a high priority also, was to seek the assistance of the Council in the search to find a permanent home for the Society, or at least an appropriate space to house the collection.

A small, shared space was allocated by Council, upstairs in the Research Centre at the Library in 2001, for the Society's administrative records and a small number of documents and photographs to be housed. The Society's monthly meetings of its members are also held in the theatrette at the library.

Since the move to the Gaol site nearly one year ago, the Society has had considerably better access to their collection, and is planning for its future management. As the first important step towards this goal, a group of new volunteers have been trained to catalogue the collection, and computerisation of this collection data has been commenced.

Despite the issues surrounding the collection, the Society has still remained active in the community in many other ways. Some of the activities carried out by the Society include organising guest speakers on historical topics, producing weekly articles on subjects relating to Bendigo's history for publication in the local free newspaper, assisting with research enquiries (where possible), receiving donations of documents, publications and artefacts for the collection, occasional conservation projects, publishing history guides and booklets, lending items for displays, offering awards to local school students for history related projects, liaising with other groups to organise historical events and activities, and participating in local history related events.

### Summary of the Society's Meeting Places

1935	Bendigo Town Hall – Committee Room
1958-1964	Rooms at Charing Cross
1964	Trades Hall, View Street
1964-1973	Eaglehawk Mechanics Institute (occasionally Eaglehawk Town Hall)
1973-1974	Temperance Hall, View Street
1974-1999	Dudley House, View Street
1999-2001	Bendigo Town Hall – Committee Room
2001- Present	Bendigo Library

## 5. Overview of the Bendigo Historical Society's Collection

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### 5.1 Early References to the Collection

It is not clear when the Society commenced a permanent collection, but it is likely that items were brought together as early as 1935. Suggestions were made at a Society meeting that a room at the Bendigo School of Mines or at the Bendigo Art Gallery would be suitable as possible display venues for the Society's exhibits, though no list of these items has been found recorded anywhere to date.

Newspaper articles in the Bendigo Advertiser list some of the exhibits on display at the Town Hall in June 1954, and mention the work done on gathering data and exhibits for the Society's display. It is known that the Society's exhibits were probably housed at the Bendigo Art Gallery in late 1951, and after this exhibition again in 1954. It is assumed that the collection remained at the Art Gallery until 1964.

The Eaglehawk Mechanics Institute then housed the collection for ten years until 1974, when 'Dudley House' was provided by the Bendigo City Council for the Society's use. The accessions listed in the Society's Minutes of Meetings, from 1959 to the end of 1973, totalled 170 items.

During the 'Dudley House' years from 1974 to 1999, a number of pieces of furniture, and other household and domestic items, were donated or loaned to the Society. These were appropriate for the 'house museum' setting that developed whilst the Society was in residence here. Other collection items were also displayed throughout the house in glass cases. Research and reference materials were stored in the 'Muniment Room', and collection items not on display, were kept within items of furniture in the house. The larger, more robust objects were stored in the Old Coach House at the rear of the main building. The accessions listed in the Society's Minutes of Meetings, from 1974 until 1999, totalled 1095 items.

A number of the items of furniture 'on loan' were returned to lenders when the Society moved out of 'Dudley House'. Items were loaned by the Society to other groups for display purposes around this time also, and some items were donated to other organisations such as the Returned Soldiers League (RSL) for their displays.

### 5.2 Collection Documentation and Cataloguing

Minutes of the Society's meetings note the acquisitions and donors from 1959 to present. A database listing acquisitions from 1959 to 1999 has been compiled by the Society from the Minutes of Meetings Books listing approximately 1265 items. A further database of acquisitions from 2000-2004 listing approximately another 142 accessions has recently been compiled also.

An Acquisitions Register 'Minute Book' was commenced in 1965 listing collection items accessioned up to 1985. This presumably includes items acquired from 1959 onwards, and could possibly include items acquired pre-1958 which may have been passed on from earlier Society's, though this has not been found recorded anywhere. This Register contains 1934 items, and includes: a registration number; a very brief description of the item; the date relating to the item (if known); and the donor's details (if known). In 1977 some 'suggested improvements' were made to the Register, including more detailed descriptions of the items and the date of the acquisition. It also includes a detailed description of 22 firearms and a further 68 items which were entered in 2000.

Two attempts have been made to catalogue the collection utilising the Arts Victoria and Museums Australia (Victoria) - Small Museums Cataloguing System. The first was carried out in 1983-1988 when approximately 850 three-dimensional objects were catalogued. The second was in 2001 when an estimated 800 photographs were numbered and documented.

Since the collection has become more accessible to the Society, with the move into the Old Bendigo Gaol, a cataloguing program has again been commenced. Interested members of the Society along with Conservation Volunteers Australia Heritage Care volunteers and other volunteers from the local community have been working on this project under the supervision of designated BHS Committee Members. The Mosaic computer cataloguing system is being used, and a worksheet for the initial manual cataloguing has been devised to suit the computer system in use.

To date, approximately 5,000 items have been documented manually on worksheets, and around 600 of these have been allocated registration numbers and entered onto the computer database.

### 5.3 Collection Housing Summary

It is apparent that the Historical Society has had many difficulties in the past finding a permanent home for the storage and display of its collection. This has, of course, become an issue of prime concern since 2000, with the collection having grown in immense proportions during its 25 years of residence at 'Dudley House'.

Though the Society was fulfilling its role in the community successfully at 'Dudley House', it is likely that the collection was becoming too large for this space, and the need to consider expanding into a more accommodating and better equipped environment may have been an imminent issue. Unfortunately, no solution was offered or presented itself to resolve this situation at the time, and the matter still lies unresolved today.

Between 1999 and 2006 the collection was stored at various locations including: a shed at Fortuna Villa; the 'Dudley House' Coach House; a private home; Bendigo Art Gallery; Eaglehawk Mechanics Institute; and the Finn Street Recreation Reserve.

The situation with the collection being in storage for the past seven years, has been to the detriment of the Society and the community. Though the Society has been given a small area in the Library's Research Centre, it has not provided an adequate or appropriate space where cataloguing, research and preservation work on the collection can be carried-out effectively. Nor has it addressed the storage needs of the larger part of the collection, or provided a suitable access point to the collection for the general public.

The collection has also suffered from not being able to be adequately monitored or cared for during the time it has been in storage. Some items have been broken or damaged, and many more problems are likely to become evident as the collection is unpacked and more thoroughly assessed.

The current situation at the Gaol has given the Society a considerably better situation to carry out their cataloguing and rehousing projects, and could possibly become a point-of-contact for researchers wishing to access the collection in the future. The space currently available in the Governor's Residence, though limited in size, could be suitable for the short-term storage of the collection, but it would not be appropriate for public displays or long-term storage without costly modifications.

## 6. Description of Collection

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### 6.1 Focus and Scope of the Collection

The Bendigo Historical Society's *Collection Policy* devised in 2000 states:

#### Scope of the Collection

The Society will collect documents, books, reports, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, slides, films, video tapes, audio tapes, digital files, microform, photographs and which have a bearing on the Bendigo region and its communities.

#### Historic Period

The Society will collect material relating to the period from the time of first European presence in the Bendigo region to the present time.

(See Appendix 1: *Collection Policy* of the Bendigo Historical Society Inc.)

The Bendigo Historical Society's collection has remained focussed, for the most part, on its original purpose and goals, though there appears to have been some diversions from time to time, particularly with the domestic objects and some printed material. The biggest problem lies in the lack of detailed information available relating to the artefacts.

As a high proportion of the collection consists of documents, publications, and pictorial material, which are not so reliant on provenance information, it will be of great value to researchers of history, particularly family history. The Society holds some rare and important registers and documents that contain many names and other information relating to early inhabitants of the area. They have also kept copies of talks given on a variety of history subjects at their meetings over the years, many of which are now important historical records in their own right.

The Society has accepted many donations of collected material, and a number of items from the same donors, over the years. These are mostly associated with a specific topic of interest, a local business or industry, or a particular family, often linked with the early pioneers. This has made the collection strong in many respects, offering much potential for exhibitions and 'story-telling' around these connected items.

During the 'Dudley House' years, it appears that the collection developed more into a 'house museum,' incorporating many domestic and household objects and furnishings. These objects were donated or loaned by local people and therefore had a local connection, but it is difficult to determine on the scant information the Society holds on accessions, how relevant these items are to the community, for instance, who they were owned and used by, whether they were made locally etc. Therefore, their context and value to the collection must be questioned, especially now that the 'Dudley House' house museum context no longer exists.

Sub-collections like the Lydia Chancellor Clippings, have limited interest in the context of Bendigo's history other than the donor's connection, though there is a component of 'Early Sandhurst' material amongst it. These items are probably important on a broader scale for their specific interest topics, but more research and investigation needs to be done to determine their importance.

Similarly, the Elliott Collection of early postcards dating from between 1895 and 1915 possibly contains many rare items, including postcards from France sent home by Australian soldiers during World War I. The written content on back of cards will be an important factor in determining their degree of relevance and significance to the local area. Knowing whether they were: sent to the Elliotts by family members or friends; collected by family members whilst travelling; or collected from a variety of sources, will need to be further investigated. However, as an intact collection of early postcards, they are very likely to be important.

## 6.2 Location of the Collection

The Society's collection is currently stored at various locations and some items are on loan to other organisations for temporary display or safekeeping.

### Storage Locations include:

1. Old Bendigo Gaol – Governor's Residence (includes 8 rooms upstairs and downstairs), main gaol gymnasium and some of the cells. Housing publications, documents, illustrations, objects and photographs.
2. North Central Goldfields Library (Bendigo) – Space has been allocated upstairs in the local research area, where the Society has filing cabinets and storage cupboards, housing documents, photographs, some objects and its administrative records.
3. Private Home of Gunsmith – Currently meeting requirements for security and safety of 24 firearms (and 1 set Leg Irons)
4. Bendigo Art Gallery – Storing items of particular value and rarity for safekeeping. Includes nine Items – Objects, Illustrations, Documents and Photographs (Caire's 'Bendigo Series' of 52 photographs mounted on card)

### Loans to other Venues for Display:

1. Eaglehawk Heritage Society Inc: Eaglehawk Court House Museum.  
Approx. 103 items on loan.
2. Huntly & District Historical Society Inc.  
14 Display Props
3. Old Bendigo Post Office – Federation Exhibition  
1 item on loan: Sir John Quick Plaque
4. Visitor Information Centre – Interpretation Display (Old Post Office)  
5 Items – Objects and Documents (Since returned Sept 2007)
5. Golden Dragon Museum  
1 item on loan: Chinese Carved Chair
6. Bendigo Cemetery Trust Volunteer Museum Committee  
(Unconfirmed items apparently returned)
7. Masonic Centre: Plaster Bust of W.C. Vahland by Otto Waschatz (1888)  
(This object needs confirmation of ownership)
8. North Central Goldfields Library  
2 items on loan - Joseph Davies Miner's Certificates
9. Bendigo Town Hall – Harkness Illuminated Letter (Framed)

### 6.3 Contents of the Collection

The following table is a summary of the collection contents, showing in brief terms the breadth and diversity of items under category headings, where they are currently stored, and the approximate number of items in each category. The total collection size based on this summary is estimated to be 29,660 items.

(See Appendix 2: *Collection Summary* for more detail)

PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION & STORAGE LOCATION	SECONDARY CLASSIFICATION DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS	EST. NO. OF ITEMS
<b>PUBLICATIONS</b> (Approx. 130 Boxes)  Stored in the Library and the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence)	1. Books: Reference & Research Library and Collection 2. Magazines 3. Newspapers 4. Government Gazettes 5. Parliamentary Papers 6. Voters Rolls 7. Directories	Est. 3,000
<b>DOCUMENTS</b> (Approx. 67 Boxes & 22 Parcels & 2 Plan Presses)  Stored in the Library and the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence)	1. Documents 2. Clubs & Societies: Minute Books, Ephemera etc. 3. Business & Industry: Chemist Records, Business Receipts, Letterheads, Labels, Accounts, Ledgers etc. 4. Maps & Plans, Posters & Prints 5. Land & Mining Records & Registers 6. Ephemera Incl. Lydia Chancellor Collection 7. Postcards: Incl. Elliott Collection 8. Illuminated Addresses, Certificates etc. Framed Items: Certificates, Illum. Addresses, Maps	Est. 20,000
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS</b> (Approx. 40 Parcels) Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence)	1. Paintings: Oil, Watercolours etc. 2. Prints & Drawings (Original): Etchings, Sketches, Pen & Ink, etc. 3. Reproduction Prints, Photographs etc.	Est. 160
<b>OBJECTS: DOMESTIC &amp; HOUSEHOLD</b> (Approx. 66 Boxes) Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence Gymnasium & Cells)	1. Domestic Items: Household Items, China, Kitchenware, Glassware, Irons, Miscellaneous. 2. Lighting, Heating, Lanterns & Pokers etc. 3. Personal Effects/Accessories 4. Containers 5. Writing: Tools, Equipment, Inks 6. Ornaments 7. Toys: Dolls, Games etc.	Est. 1,650
<b>OBJECTS: FURNITURE</b> Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Gymnasium & Cells)	1. Household: Beds, Wardrobes, Tables, Chairs etc.  (There are also a number of storage: shelves, map cabinets, display cases and exhibition props that have not been included in the count as collection furniture)	Est. 50
<b>OBJECTS: COMMERCE, INDUSTRY &amp; TRADES</b> (Approx. 4 Boxes & many Tagged Items) Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence Gymnasium & Cells)	1. Architectural Fittings 2. Moulds 3. Company Seals 4. Furniture & Fittings 5. Mining: Tools & Equipment, Models etc. 6. Industry: Bottles, Flour Bags, equipment etc.	Est. 600

PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION & STORAGE LOCATION	SECONDARY CLASSIFICATION DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS	EST. NO. OF ITEMS
<p><b>OBJECTS:</b> <b>MISCELLANEOUS</b> (Approx. 14 boxes &amp; many Tagged Items)</p> <p>Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence Gymnasium &amp; Cells)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Natural History</li> <li>2. Ethnographic Material</li> <li>3. Numismatics</li> <li>4. Metalcraft</li> <li>5. Horology: Clocks &amp; Watches</li> <li>6. Militaria</li> <li>7. Musical Instruments: Violins, Organ, Cornet etc.</li> <li>8. Printing: Portable Screen Printer, Typewriters.</li> <li>9. Street Signs, Plaques etc. (Various)</li> <li>10. Photographic Technology: Cameras, Magic Lanterns &amp; Lantern Slides, Stereograph Viewers etc.</li> <li>11. Civic Mementos</li> <li>12. Societies &amp; Clubs: Sporting, Theatrical, Fraternal etc.</li> <li>13. Maritime Technology</li> <li>14. Instruments</li> <li>15. Transport</li> <li>16. Audio-Visual Technology / Recordings</li> <li>17. Trophies &amp; Awards</li> <li>18. Firearms</li> </ol>	Est. 500
<p><b>TEXTILES</b> (Approx. 133 Boxes) Stored in the Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence &amp; Gymnasium)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Costumes &amp; Costume Accessories</li> <li>2. Haberdashery, Manchester, Embroidery, etc.</li> </ol>	Est. 1,200
<p><b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b> (Approx. 14 Boxes)</p> <p>Stored in the Library &amp; Old Bendigo Gaol (Governor's Residence)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Photographs: Ambrotypes, albumen prints, albums etc.</li> <li>2. Slides / Transparencies (Glass, etc.)</li> <li>3. Negatives (Glass etc.)</li> <li>4. Stereoscopic Photographs</li> </ol>	Est. 2,500

### Collection Summary In Brief:

Publications	3,000 (10%)
Documents	20,000 (66.5%)
Illustrations	160 (.5%)
Objects (total)	2,800 (9.5%)
Textiles	1,200 (4.5%)
Photographs	2,500 (9%)

### 6.4 Sub-collections

A large number of items in the collection, relating to specific subjects or themes, have been donated by individuals, families, or organisations, forming sub-collections. Some of these sub-collections contain large amounts of broad subject matter such as the postcard, and the newspaper clipping collections. Others are more specific to the Bendigo region, relating to a particular subject, be it a business, industry, organisation, family or individual.

The collections containing the largest quantities of materials are:

**The McColl, Rankin & Stanistreet Collection:** Consists of Mining Documents, Records, Registers and Company Seals relating to Bendigo and district (Mostly from the 1930's-1960's). Est. 1,200 items contained in 17 tin boxes.

This company acted as legal managers to many Bendigo mines and mines elsewhere during the twentieth century. This collection contains information about the legal and technical aspects of the operations of the mines, including floating and winding up of the mining companies, details of shareholders, dividends paid and disputes between members of the boards.

There is also a complete list of the original shareholders and all share transactions of the Bendigo Gas Company from its initial formation around 1857 to its final liquidation in the 1960's.

**Lydia Chancellor Collection:** Consists of documents and ephemera including newspaper clippings on a wide variety of subjects, such as : Traditions and customs; Aboriginal articles; Glimpses of nature; Wonders of the outback; Dogs; Birds; Ship names; Weekly serials, etc. dating from the 1930's – 1963. Est. 5,000 items contained in 40 boxes.

Lydia Chancellor (1889-1979) was the daughter of George Albert Pethard who started the Tarax soft drink business, originally in Numurkah, relocating to Bendigo in 1909. Her brother, George Albert Pethard Junior, was Mayor of Bendigo on three occasions and was a tireless promoter of local industry.

Lydia was good friends with Amy Huxtable – the first woman editor of the Bendigo Advertiser. She apparently assisted Amy with material for her articles etc. using these private files for research.

**Elliott Postcard Collection:** Consists of early postcards originating from all parts of the world from 1895-1914. Est. 9,000 postcards contained in 11 boxes and 10 postcard albums. Of particular interest are the World War I embroidered postcards from France, and probably other rare items.

**Basil Miller Collection:** Bendigo Tramways material consisting of documents, photographs and ephemera. Est. 500 items.

Basil William Bates Miller (1908-2001) was born in Castlemaine. The family moved to King Street Bendigo, where he lived for 70 years. He commenced work for the Bendigo Tramways as a junior conductor in 1924, later becoming a senior traffic inspector, and retiring in 1972. During this time he gathered together a unique collection of tramways memorabilia.

**Wes Harry Collection:** Bendigo related material consisting of documents, photographs (original and copies), illustrations (copies), postcards etc., textiles and objects. Est. 500 items

Collection of pictorial material, in particular, forms an important basis for research, especially linking Bendigo's history with the holdings of other major institutions, such as the State Library of Victoria, Mitchell Library in Sydney, National Library of Australia in Canberra etc.

Other sub-collections of varying sizes, consist mostly items that belonged to a particular family, or relate to their businesses, interests, or activities.

- Waston (Basil) Collection: Early aviator, Bendigo born.
- Levy, R. Collection: Cohn family domestic items & documents etc.
- Cunningham / Buick Collection: Buick family photographs & documents.
- Abbott Estate: Patents relating to barbed wire etc.
- Chisholm Collection: Poetry and miscellaneous books.
- Pethard Family: 'Tarax' family – Items, documents and photographs.
- Norman Penrose Collection
- Bush Family Collection

The Sub-collections form a large and important part of the BHS's collection. Not only are the items of historic interest for research, many are significant for their direct connection to local citizens who are recognised as important for their contributions. These are of great interest, not only a local level, but also in some cases on a much larger national and even international scale.

## 6.5 Main Themes Represented in the Collection

The majority of the Society's collection of documents, publications, pictorial material and artefacts relates to Bendigo and region's:

- Gold mining
- Industry and commerce
- Civic development
- Social history
- Family history

## 7. Role of the Collection to the Bendigo Historical Society

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### 7.1 Purpose of the Collection

BHS Statement of Purposes 1989 (Associations Incorporation Act) states:

- a) To encourage the study of history, especially the history of Bendigo.
- b) To promote the compilation and presentation of authentic records relating to Bendigo.
- c) To promote historical research.
- d) To acquire by purchase or donation or by way of loan all such objects and materials as have bearing on the history of Bendigo, and to establish, furnish and maintain libraries and museums to house and preserve the same.
- e) To accept gifts or money or chattels whether testamentary or otherwise.
- f) To promote interchange of information among members of the association by lectures, readings, discussions, excursions and exhibitions of objects of historical significance.
- g) To publish books and papers of historical interest.
- h) To raise funds for maintenance of Society property and to further its interests.
- i) To establish and carry on rooms for the above purposes of the Society.
- j) To subscribe to . . . other organisations etc.

Even though some of the functions of the Society have been hindered by lack of access to their collection since 2000, they have continued adding to the collection, and items are still loaned from time to time for use in special displays and exhibitions when they are able to be located.

The purpose and role of the collection to the Society, will gain momentum as the cataloguing project progresses. It will activate many opportunities for further research, indexing of records, digitisation projects, exhibitions and publications, and provide numerous future prospects for interaction between Society members, other cultural heritage organisations, local tourist attractions, and the public.

### 7.2 Relationship to Other Collections

There are a number of other cultural heritage organisations located in the Bendigo region. Many of them operate their own museums or have a point of public contact, providing services, such as research, to the public. These include:

1. Bendigo Art Gallery
2. Golden Dragon Museum
3. Central Deborah Gold Mine (Bendigo Trust)
4. Bendigo Tramways (Bendigo Trust)
5. Chinese Joss House (Bendigo Trust)
6. Victoria Hill Gold Mine (Bendigo Trust)
7. Bendigo RSL Military Museum
8. Eaglehawk Heritage Society Inc.
9. Huntly Heritage Centre
10. Heathcote & McIvor Historical Society

Some of these organisations are actively engaged in collecting items that relate to their immediate locality or their main theme of interest e.g. Golden Dragon Museum – Chinese heritage in Bendigo; Tramways Museum – Bendigo Trams; Central Deborah Reef – Gold mining in the district. The Bendigo Historical Society has worked together with many of these organisations to loan items, or reproduce documents and photographs from their collection, for use in displays and interpretations of these groups.

Maintaining good relationships with other organisations is in the spirit of preserving and promoting a common heritage, and providing a worthy service for the education and enjoyment of the broader community.

### **7.3 Use of the Collection by the Society**

The lack of a permanent and accessible premises to house the collection since 1999 has severely hampered the Society's ability to use their own collection for research, education or display purposes.

As the collection is gradually taken out of storage and catalogued, it will be more readily available for other uses. This is providing it has suitable storage facilities, work and research space available for personnel, and ideally, an area for the display of items.

It is considered that use of the Society's archives and collection will grow when an appropriate place to house, access, and display its holdings has been established.

In the mean time the Society continues to carry out the following collection related services to the community where possible:

- **Research Enquiries:** This service is offered to the public, and currently dealt with by individual Society members, or referred on to either the Bendigo Regional Genealogical Society or the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies – Bendigo Area.
- **Collection Loans:** Temporary loans of items to other organisations.

## 8. Role of the Collection in the Community

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In considering the role of the Bendigo Historical Society's collection in the community, a survey of local people who have used the collection for research in the past, was carried out. In summarising the comments of the survey respondents, it is clear that the collection is considered to be of high value to researchers, but the great difficulty or inability of people to access the collection, particularly over the last 7-8 years, has almost completely diminished the collection's role in the community, and a vital part of the Society's perceived obligation to the public.

A large proportion of the Society's collection consists of documents and photographs, which are essential primary sources of information for researchers. These are of little value if they cannot be accessed or used, by those seeking information. To rectify this situation, and realise its potential role in the community, this collection needs to be correctly stored, documented and managed for future access.

Another important role of the collection is access for the education and enjoyment of the general public. This is normally addressed through the exhibition and display of collection on a permanent basis, and may include rotation of other exhibits regularly, so that more of the collection can be viewed by large numbers of people in a secure and user-friendly environment.

### 8.1 Location and Access

The present situation with location and access to the Bendigo Historical Society's collection is sub-standard, with very little or no access currently available to the public. It is a high priority for the Society, with the support of the community, to address this issue. To have an appropriate storage area and work-space for the collection, so that the cataloguing project can continue, is the first crucial step toward improving this situation.

Progressive steps can then be made towards digitising the collection so that access to the reproduced material can be made readily available via databases and the internet. This will minimise the need to locate and handle the original material in many cases, preservation being considered of utmost importance in the first instance. Digitisation also alleviates the time and personnel needed to retrieve the original material.

In the meantime, an index of the collection (hardcopy and searchable DVD), or slightly more detailed inventory of the holdings, would make the collection available to the public sooner than waiting for the computer cataloguing project to be completed, which may take years.

### 8.2 Significance to the Community

The Society's collection is believed to be the largest holding of historical material relating to Bendigo and district, in the region. Though the collection has been out of the public domain for some time, and its full extent is still unknown, it is considered by many in the community to be of great importance and value.

This is a significant collection not only to the local community, but also to a much wider audience. The history of Bendigo and the surrounding area is recognised as having been integral to the history and development of Victoria, and Australia as a nation, but it also had an immense effect on many other communities world-wide through the momentous and far-reaching impact of its gold-mining industry.

## 9. Fabric and Condition of the Collection

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This is a summary of the storage facilities and condition of the collection, which was carried out in July 2007. (See Appendix 2: For a detailed report on the *Storage and Condition Assessment of the BHS Collection (July 2007)*).

### 9.1 Storage Facilities

- a) Old Bendigo Gaol – Governor’s Residence (Lower Floor)  
Stored Items: Documents, Publications, Illustrations, Photographs, Objects (mostly small) and Textiles
- b) Old Bendigo Gaol – Governor’s Residence (Upper Floor)  
Stored Items: Documents, Publications, Illustrations, Photographs, Objects (mostly small) and Textiles
- c) Old Bendigo Gaol – Prison Gymnasium and Cells  
Stored Items: Objects (medium and large), Furniture, and display cabinets, props, shelving, tables etc.
- d) Old Bendigo Gaol – Holding Cells (Prison entry)  
Stored Items: Objects (medium and large), Furniture, and Display Cabinets
- e) Finn Street – Recreation Reserve (3 buildings)  
Stored Items: Objects (medium and large), Furniture, Display Cabinets etc. Documents and Textiles.  
(These have now been relocated to the Gaol gymnasium and cells)
- f) Bendigo Library – Research Area (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)  
Stored Items: Documents, Publications, Photographs, and Objects (small)

### 9.2 Housing of Objects

Having been in long-term storage, the collection is still mostly contained in cardboard boxes or bubble-wrapped packages, and stacked up together in rooms or designated areas. Those items that are catalogued have mostly been placed into archival storage materials and boxes. There is still an inadequacy of storage materials and furniture to house the collection at this point.

Documents:	Cardboard boxes. Catalogued items have been placed in plastic sleeves, and into cardboard archive storage boxes.
Maps & Plans:	Metal plan cabinet, large timber case and cardboard tubes.
Publications & Books:	Cardboard boxes. Many of those already indexed or catalogued are stored on shelves in metal cabinets.
Illustrations:	Cardboard boxes. Some in bubble-wrap with cardboard dividers, some loose in bubble-wrapped packages (Mainly framed items).
Photographs:	Cardboard boxes. Some framed items in bubble-wrap with cardboard dividers, some loose in bubble-wrapped packages. Catalogued items are in plastic sleeves, placed inside plastic archive boxes and lever arch folders. These are stored in metal cabinets.
Textiles:	Mostly in cardboard boxes, also in tin and wooden trunks.
Objects (small):	Mostly in cardboard boxes, some are loose or placed in larger boxes with other loose items.

- Objects (medium & large) Many are loose and uncovered, standing on the floor. Some smaller items have been placed together in large boxes.
- Furniture & Objects (large) Mostly loose, standing on the floor or stacked on other furniture. Some objects are still housed in their original glass display cases.

### 9.3 Condition of Items

Generally speaking, the items that have been stored in cardboard boxes or bubble-wrap parcels, have been packed well and are in quite good condition. Some items have been broken or damaged, but it is unclear whether this was existing damage prior to packing, or has occurred since being placed in storage. Most of the boxes have been carefully sealed with tape, and it seems very few have been damaged, allowing vermin to enter. Damage has occurred with a few boxes, but fortunately it seems to be minimal. Some boxes have broken open, and the content of these have since been transferred to other packaging.

Many of the illustrations and artworks are still in their original frames with timber backing and broken seals. Those with ornamental gilt frames, have sustained much damage, and are very fragile and susceptible to further damage if not handled and stored with great care. There is much evidence of cumulative light damage, a build up of dirt and grime on the inside and outside of frames and moisture damage to mounts.

The photographs have been better cared for, as many were catalogued and placed into more appropriate storage 5-6 years ago, though this storage is currently overcrowded. There are many photographs, including glass negatives, still in storage boxes, and also in old suitcases and trunks etc. Of these, what I have seen appears to be in reasonable condition considering their vulnerability to damage, especially from silverfish and mould. The early photographs in the collection (Ambrotypes in particular) are in a fragile condition and deteriorating. These, along with the early albumen paper images will need very special care and storage conditions.

The textiles that have been sighted are mostly in good condition, though many costume items are very old and the fabric is deteriorating. Some of these are stained and damaged, but this is likely to have occurred prior to packing and storage. One wedding gown has been placed into a large plastic archive box, using acid-free tissue.

Small objects have mostly been packed very tightly into boxes, their tissue and bubble-wrap packaging giving them some protection from the number of moves they have undergone, and the pressure sustained from having other boxes stacked up on them. Of those objects sighted, many are in poor condition, deteriorating and highly prone to further damage. This is due to a combination of factors: the inherent nature of their materials; inappropriate storage conditions; and lack of proper care.

The furniture and large objects, and many of the medium-sized objects, have been much more exposed to the environmental elements of dust, fluctuating temperatures, relative humidity, light and vermin. On a rudimentary inspection, these items are mostly intact, with some breakages and damage having occurred in transit from various moves. Though these items are in desperate need of cleaning and basic preservation treatment, they appear to be quite stable for the time being.

It has been advised that the BHS employ the services of a trained conservator to carry out a more thorough assessment of the collection, in the form of a Conservation Plan, to fully determine and prioritise future conservation needs.

## 10. Comparative Examples

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Many historical societies in Victoria have collections similar in size and scope to the Bendigo Historical Society, usually with a focus on their own local area. These collections have evolved around a desire to preserve information and objects on the early history and development of settlements and townships, and the people who played a part in that development. It is interesting to note that even though the history of many gold-rush towns and cities is very similar, the collections have grown in very different ways, each having something unique and interesting to offer.

It is important, also, to understand that historical societies and museums are managed and operated in many different ways. While some are operated by local government authorities, with professional staff employed to manage the collection and mount special exhibitions etc., others are run, often in Council owned buildings, by community groups such as historical societies, who offer other services to the public also, such as research. In some cases, historical societies have opted not to collect objects, but to focus on preserving documents, records and photographs, items that are generally easier to store and manage, with high research value. Operations, management, staffing and funding are all factors affecting collection management, access and presentation.

In comparison with other museums and heritage collections in the Bendigo region, the Bendigo Historical Society has the most extensive collection covering a broad range of local history themes. Though there is some collection-type and theme cross-over with the Bendigo Historical Society's collection, these organisations each have their own particular area of interest and focus. These organisations are listed in 7.2: Relationship to Other Collections on page 15.

Two other museums similar in history, theme and collection-type include:

- Castlemaine Historical Museum (housed at the Castlemaine Art Gallery): Similar themes: Gold-rush history, civic development, social history. Collection size approximately 10,000 items.  
The Castlemaine Art Gallery employs a part-time curator, who is responsible for the museum collection management. The collection consists of documents, maps and plans, artworks, illustrations and photographs, objects and textiles. Most are housed in archival storage, or incorporated in museum displays. The collection is catalogued but not all data is entered onto computer as yet. Access to the collection for research is by appointment.

The Castlemaine Historical Society is run independently from the Museum. It operates from the Old Castlemaine Courthouse, and collects documents, publications, photographs etc. relating to family and local history. They do not collect objects, and have an understanding with the Gallery/Museum regarding this. Research services and facilities are available to the public one day a week.

- Ballarat Historical Society's collection is all housed at the Ballarat Gold Museum. It has a similar history and themes to Bendigo, and the collection is similar in breadth and type, with a focus on the gold-rush and local history.

The Ballarat Gold Museum has a large collection consisting of a broad spectrum of items similar to the Bendigo Historical Society's, but much larger in size, as it is an amalgamation of three collections: Ballarat Gold Museum, Sovereign Hill and Ballarat Historical Society. It is open to the public seven days per week. Ballarat is a good example of a regional collection under the care of professional museum management. Its collection is housed and stored appropriately and regularly

monitored. The majority of the collection is catalogued using a combination of paid staff and volunteers (including Ballarat Historical Society members). Access to the combined collections is through museum staff.

Some other collections that would perhaps be worthwhile comparisons for future investigation, are:

- The Burke Museum Beechworth: Gold-rush history; broad collection type; number of themes. Owned and administered by Indigo Shire Council. Staff employed. Open 7 days per week.
- Creswick Museum & Gold Battery: Similar gold-rush history; collection size approx. 6,000. Museum and research archives situated in the Old Town Hall, a Council owned building. Open Sundays and public holidays.

When considering the value of the Bendigo Historical Society's collection against other similar collections, it is evident that Bendigo has a substantial amount of worthwhile material of high value for research purposes. With further investigation of the unique holdings and appropriate conservation treatments, the collection has tremendous potential for interpretation and display that would rival most.

## II. Assessment of the Collection against Significance Criteria

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This assessment is based on the consultant's knowledge of the Bendigo Historical Society's collection gained from database lists and accession registers, and a cross-section of the collection materials sighted during the term of this project.

### II.1 Primary Criteria

**Historic Significance** – Association with people, events, places or themes.

The Bendigo Historical Society's collection is of considerably high historic significance for its strong association with the people, events, places and themes relating to Bendigo and region. Collection components such as the photographs, documents and objects (other than domestic and household items), include a large proportion of significant material. The illustrations, publications, textiles and domestic objects, are significant to a lesser degree.

Items relating to the early gold-mining days of the 1850's, though not great in number, are of high significance. The collection of maps and plans relating to gold-mining, form an important resource for information. A substantial amount of material relates to the civic development of the city and environs, the businesses and industries, prominent citizens, and people involved with various community activities such as, music, art, theatre, sport, fraternal organisations, religion, and politics etc. Covering the period mainly from 1860's to 1930's, these subjects are well represented.

**Aesthetic Significance** – Possessing artistic, technical or innovative merit, or particular beauty, style or quality.

Of particular aesthetic significance is the collection of costumes belonging to the Society. The periods best represented are late nineteenth and early twentieth century items of lady's, gent's, children's and infant's clothing, ranging from wedding and evening attire, to daywear, underwear, and costume accessories. The fabrics used, period designs and decorative features used on the garments are indicative of the changing styles, fashions and modes of manufacture over the years, and add much to their interest and appeal.

Other collection items worthy of note for their beauty, craftsmanship and artistic merit include: some of the photographs and artworks, the illuminated addresses and a few items of furniture.

**Scientific Significance** - Technical or research value potential. Items require documentation and provenance to be of scientific and research value.

The geological and natural history artefacts, along with the aboriginal implements collected in the local area, could be of scientific or research value, but a lack of documentation and provenance precludes them from being used for serious research.

Some of the records from businesses and industries that have been kept intact, can provide important information for research into subjects such as, daily work habits, employment patterns and conditions, manufacturing and production trends, etc. over a period of time.

**Social or Spiritual Significance** – Of contemporary social or cultural importance or connection to the community.

This generally relates to items of contemporary social value or importance to the community. It is difficult to determine what degree of the material in the Society's collection is currently of social significance, as the contents are not very widely known or available to the general public.

Some of the collection items are likely to have been of high social significance to the community at some time, such as civic mementos and presentation addresses etc. These items are often linked with local people, places, and events of note in the history of Bendigo and district. Items associated with people who were held in community esteem such as: the letter from over 3,000 Bendigo residents to George Lansell, who was known as the 'Quartz King' of Bendigo; the awards given to Joseph Davies for rescuing a fellow miner; The Oscar Flight Memorial Organ and the Engraved Silver Cornet presented to James Northcott, both presented in memory of musical contributions made to the community.

There are likely to be a number of items in the collection that will qualify for high social significance, but their significance to the community can only be determined when access and information on the collection is made available to the community.

## **II.2 Comparative Criteria** – These are modifiers of the main criteria, used to evaluate the degree of significance.

**Provenance** – Documentation relating to ownership, context of use or origin.

Some collection items have history and documentation attached or available that clearly indicates their provenance. A few items have been labelled for display, giving important contextual information, or connections with names, dates or places where they were made or used.

The BHS collection is in a similar position to many other historical collections, in that the details of most items taken at the time of accession was either very basic or non-existent, with very few items documented at any length. However, with the donor names often listed, family connections with early pioneers have sometimes been noted down, or connections can be made through genealogical research or contact with descendants, giving hope that more information may still be obtainable.

Research and investigation is needed to assist with gathering further information that may shed more light on the provenance of some items. It is likely that when these items are made available to the public, more information will be forthcoming from members of the public, or the descendants of donors.

**Representativeness** – Representing a particular category of object, or activity, way of life or historical theme. A good example of its kind – typical or characteristic.

The collection of the BHS is a good example of a local history collection. It includes a breadth of material types, including documents, photographs, objects etc. relating to many facets of local history subjects and themes.

Also, many of the items within the collection are representative of their kind, such as commemorative medals and awards, jewellery mounted with gold nuggets, and the illuminated addresses, memoriums and certificates.

**Rarity** – Unusual or unique, with special or distinctive qualities.

A number of rare items have been identified in the collection, and there will possibly be more revealed in time as the collection is catalogued and researched.

Items of particular note in the pictorial collection are: the watercolour painting of 'Falcon Inn, Peg Leg Road' (c.1855) by George Rowe, who was an early artist on the Bendigo goldfields; early photographs such as those taken of Pall Mall by Alexander Fox in 1857, and the 'Bendigo Views' series consisting of 52 mounted photographs taken by Nicholas J. Caire between 1872-1875, are rare and important sources of information.

Other unique items include furniture such as the Anglican Bishop's Chair, an Ornamental Chinese Carved Chair, and carved Chinese Screen. The wall clock with the moving brass face is very unusual, and research is currently being carried out to determine its original use, level of rarity and uniqueness.

**Condition** - Completeness, intactness, integrity. Items in particularly good or original condition.

Many of the sub-collections fit into this category: McColl, Rankin and Stanistreet; Lydia Chancellor; Elliott Postcards; Basil Miller - Bendigo Tramways; T.C. Watts - Photographs of Bendigo houses from the 1920's; Hanro Knitting Mill Company Collection of textiles, documents and photographs, etc.

There are many other items already mentioned in other categories that also fit into this category. For instance: the Caire 'Bendigo View's' Series of Photographs for their intactness; and the bound and cased Illuminated Addresses and Memoriums for their integrity and condition. Some costume items would also qualify, as well as documents that have been preserved in pristine condition.

**Interpretive potential** – Information and educational value with wider context and associations for exhibition or story-telling purposes.

Much of the collection has tremendous potential to be developed in this way. Only when more research has been carried out to determine the connections with other items or themes in the collection, will the interpretive potential be realised.

Items that are deemed to have little significance can also have high interpretation potential, if linked with other exhibits or developed as themes, such as the household and domestic objects, textiles and costumes, children's toys and books etc.

The BHS collection, based on the preliminary research recently undertaken, has excellent interpretive potential for the development of future exciting exhibitions and displays. With a sound knowledge of the holdings, and more research on the collection items to build up supplementary files, many connections will be found to exist, which will strengthen and give more context and meaning to items currently seeming isolated or irrelevant.

### 11.3 Summary of Significance of Collection Components

Documents make up a large proportion of the collection estimated to be over 20,000. Approximately a quarter of these relate to the development of Bendigo and district, its infrastructure, commerce, industry (particularly gold mining) and eminent persons. Many of these are considered to be of high historic significance and rarity locally, with some likely to be of state and national significance also.

There are approximately 3,000 books and publications. A small percentage of these are considered to be of high historic value and rarity, including copies of early Bendigo newspapers. An estimated 25% of these relate to the history of Bendigo and district, local individuals and families, other goldfields or town histories etc. These form an important source of information for local and goldfields history research, and some are now rare.

Around one third of the published material such as newspapers, government gazettes, voters rolls and directories are also of research value. The remainder of the books, mostly given by local donors or having Bendigo connections, cover a wide variety of topics. Some of these are likely to be of historic interest because of their associations, and may be rare or useful for potential interpretations, but others are not thought to be important.

Objects numbering around 2,800 include a wide variety of items, more than half of these being of a domestic nature. The strengths among the objects are: the early gold mining relics; models of goldmining equipment; unique or rare objects relating to the businesses, industries and events in the local area or associated with Bendigo and region's inhabitants.

Textiles, estimated to consist of around 1,200 articles, form a sizeable part of the collection. This includes approximately 1,000 costume items and accessories. Many of these belonged to and were donated by local families. These are of historic interest for their local links, and can be considered aesthetically appealing, representative and rare as a unique collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century garments. They also have potential for future interpretation and display.

The pictorial collection is extensive, including an estimated 2,500 photographs, albums, and glass negatives. A large number of the photographs are originals, and are of high historical significance and rarity for the information they depict relating to the early development of Bendigo and its changing landscape and streetscapes. Photographs relating to commerce and industry, as well as families and individuals, are also a strength of the photographs.

Of the 160 illustrations and artworks, less than half are originals. Only a small percentage of these are of high historical significance, but these are also considered to be very rare, representative, in good condition and with interpretive and research value.

For further collection information see Appendix 3: *Selected Items for Further Investigation*. Also, Appendix 4: *Examples of Significance Assessments on Individual Items*.

## 12. Statement of Significance

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The Bendigo Historical Society has been a repository for items relating to the history of Bendigo and the surrounding area continuously since 1958, with some collection items possibly being acquired as early as 1935 by previous societies. The historical collection is estimated to be around 30,000 items including documents, publications, illustrations, photographs, objects and textiles. It is the largest and most historically significant collection of items relating to the history of Bendigo and surrounds in the region.

The Society's collection as a whole has historic significance for the extent of material that conveys the history of the community. It reflects the diversity of people and cultures that came to the early goldfields, the personalities, events, activities, industries and businesses that have influenced the history and culture of Bendigo and environs. It is representative of the unique history of a major regional city in Victoria, built on an Australian goldfield of national and international importance.

Most components of the collection indicate strong links with the local pioneering families and identities in the community, many also connected with civic development, commerce and industry in the area. Some items in the collection are considered to be very rare and representative of their kind.

This collection forms an important source of information for local and goldfields history researchers, as well as having great interpretive potential and 'story-telling' ability for future exhibitions and publications.

Lauretta Zilles - Project Consultant  
Collection Management Strategy  
October 2007

## PART 2

# COLLECTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

BENDIGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

## 13. Introduction to the Collection Management Strategy

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The purpose of this Collection Management Strategy is to define aspects of on-going work for the Society in addressing the overall task of collection management, and to provide a 'vision' for the medium to long-term future of the collection.

Federal government initiatives are in the pipeline to assist the keepers of historical collections in Australia, such as historical societies and regional museums, to better conserve, document and make available their important historical resources. Funding for projects and training programs are offered in Victoria to support collecting organisations and volunteers, and some of these programs are presently focussing on the Goldfields regions.

The Bendigo Historical Society is well positioned to gain many of the benefits currently available through these sources. There will be much to gain by working with other organisations within the community to strengthen relationships and build a niche to become an important focal point for cultural heritage in regional Victoria.

### 13.1 Collection Management Responsibilities

Key to operating a successful collecting organisation is sound collection management. This starts by having clear organisational goals, and requires forward planning and the development of policies and procedures to ensure that the best decisions are made regarding the collection.

- **Mission Statement** (or Statement of Purpose) – Defines the goals and primary reason for the organisation's existence. It will often also include how the organisation intends to achieve its mission.
- **\*Collection Policy** – Determining what the organisation will collect, how it will collect and criteria for acquisitions. It will also consider ongoing collection care, documentation, storage and conservation, and will include criteria and procedures for deaccessioning of items considered unsuitable for the collection.
- **Assessment of Significance** of the collection (and individual items) – Strengthens collection management decisions, conservation, interpretations, public programs, funding applications and marketing initiatives by highlighting the relevance and historic importance of the collection.
- **\*Cataloguing the Collection** – Numbering and documenting individual items in the collection for future reference and retrieval. This includes creating a Register Book for Accessions, an Index Card File system for easy access to items, and ultimately, computerisation of the catalogue information, for efficient access to the collection and information retrieval.
- **\*Care of the Collection Policy** – Handling, storage display and transport of collection should conform to current museum practice. Housekeeping and regular monitoring of the collection for deterioration and conservation guidelines.
- **\*Collection Access Policy** – Outlines public access procedures to original items and supervision requirements. Also, appropriate methods of collection handling to reduce the risk of cumulative damage to the collection.

- **\*Loans Policy** - To have clear guidelines and procedures in place for loans to other organisations, with any restrictions noted on items unable to be loaned due to fragility or conservation requirements, or special information on the display or security requirements. A standard document is required to record and formalise the loan agreement.
- **Object & Archives Storage** – To provide a secure environment for the collection with consideration for safe and efficient access. When setting up a storage area preventive conservation is a priority, taking into account environmental factors that may affect the long-term preservation of the collection, and the physical requirements of different objects and materials.
- **Contemporary Collecting Policy and Procedures** – Consideration of current initiatives, activities and innovations relevant to, or affecting your region that may be important for future historical reference.

The Bendigo Historical Society has some of these documents, policies and procedures already in place (see those above marked\*). These should be reviewed every three to five years. Other suggested policies and procedures should be developed as soon as practical, to ensure that clear guidelines are in place for future important decision-making, especially where changes to the collection are imminent or new members of the Society or volunteers are becoming involved with the collection.

The documentation outlined above is important groundwork for all professional collecting organisations, and is a basic requirement of the Museums Accreditation Program, which was established by Museums Australia (Victoria) in 1993, to raise the standard of museums within the state. It is envisaged that all museums in Victoria, especially those with collections of high significance, will eventually become accredited.

## 14. Future Care & Management of the Collection

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### 14.1 Assessment of Current Collection Housing and Facilities

An assessment of the present situation regarding the collection housing and facilities, has been reported on in *Part 1: Significance Assessment, Section 8. Fabric and Condition of the Collection* on pages 18-19 of this document. (See also Appendix 3 *Storage & Condition Assessment of the Collection* for further details).

#### Evaluation of collection housing and facilities at the Old Bendigo Gaol:

- There is possibly enough room for storage of documents, photographs, illustrations, textiles and small objects in the Governor's residence (ground floor and upstairs), providing the large room where Lion's Club meet, becomes available for cataloguers to use. There is inadequate space for consolidation of all collection types, particularly medium and large objects, and furniture in the Governor's residence.
- There is some difficulty in accessing upper floor of Governor's residence, especially for movement of collection, as the staircase is very narrow and poses a risk to personnel and objects being moved.
- The gaol gymnasium, cells and holding cells (at entry to gaol) currently used for objects and furniture, are difficult to access and not appropriate for long-term storage and access. Environmental factors such as dampness, dust and vermin are difficult to control. This area is definitely not suitable for the storage of paper-based materials (documents, photographs, publications etc.) or textiles.
- There is inadequate storage furniture and archival materials available at present for the housing needs of the collection.
- The gaol is an improvement on previous seven years storage arrangements. The situation is not ideal for long-term housing, but is adequate in the interim period whilst a more suitable premises is being sought.

#### Recommendations relating to Gaol Storage:

- All items of a vulnerable nature: documents, publications, illustrations, photographs and textiles, should be consolidated and stored in the Governor's Residence, with like-items placed together in specified areas.
- All remaining objects and furniture of a less vulnerable nature, should be brought together and stored in the gaol gymnasium and cells.
- Cataloguing priority should be given to the documents, publications, illustrations and photographs first, as these generally require less work-space, and are most likely to be used for research purposes. They are also more compact to re-house and it will be easier to meet their storage requirements in the short-term using existing furniture.
- Items currently housed with other organisations should remain as they are, until a suitable premises is found, secured and fitted out for appropriate storage of these items. These items will need to be returned to the Society at some stage for cataloguing.

## 14.2 Future Collection Conservation and Storage

The main requirement for good storage is to provide a protected and secure environment for the collection with consideration given for safe and efficient access. Preventive conservation is a high priority. Being aware of the importance of monitoring environmental factors that may affect the long-term preservation of the collection, and the physical requirements of various items, should be taken into consideration when setting up a storage area.

Environmental factors such as: fluctuating temperatures; relative humidity levels (air moisture content); light levels (lux) and ultra violet (UV) content; pests (insects and moulds); and atmospheric pollutants (dust, car and industry fumes etc.), can be compensated for to a degree. The choice of storage materials, and preparation of the space prior to the collection installation to counter the known risks is advisable.

An ideal storage area would be a large space which could be fitted-out according to the needs of the collection, with little or no natural light, and a minimum of entry points (to assist with security and climate control). It may, alternatively, be made up of rooms of varying sizes that could be fitted-out to house different collection types, for instance, a room for documents, publications and photographs, and materials often accessed for research or requiring special care.

There are various requirements for the physical housing of different types of items. The types of materials available from different suppliers, and the costs of these can vary greatly. My recommendations for the needs of the BHS collection have been made with consideration for items of importance being given the best storage conditions for long-term preservation, and stabilising the remainder of the collection into cost efficient housing materials, with consideration for preservation and access in mind.

### Collection Care & Management Recommendations:

- A suitable premises should be sought for accommodation of the whole collection, providing a secure environment, with adequate space for storage and access. It is also vital that the cataloguing, re-housing, research and preservation work can continue.
- A Conservation Plan of the collection should be carried out by a trained conservator, to determine the future conservation treatments and preservation needs of the collection.
- Grant applications should be made for archival storage materials, and to commence conservation and digitisation projects over the next 5 years, in preparation for public access for research and the eventual display of the collection.

See Appendix 5: *Collection Housing & Storage Recommendations* for further details on collections storage requirements.

### 14.3 Archival Storage Materials Requirements

The number of storage materials needed to re-house the entire collection can be difficult to estimate. Consideration needs to be given on an individual basis for some items, due to their high significance or degree of fragility etc. The most important immediate issue, is to ensure that the collection is safe in the short to medium-term, and when this is consolidated, the longer-term decisions can be made and progressive funding sought accordingly.

These recommendations are therefore based on the immediate need to preserve and consolidate the collection, using standardised and economical storage systems as much as possible. My estimates for initial purchase of materials are as follows.

#### Archival Suppliers

• Archive Boxes (Corrugated board)	371x168x250mm	x50	\$180
	371x284x250mm	x25	\$160
	371x429x115mm	x25	\$150
	400x553x200mm	x20	\$165
	750x553x116mm	x10 (Newspapers)	\$330 (985)
• Polypropylene Boxes	Large	x20 (Costumes)	\$790
	Medium	x50 (Photos & Costumes)	\$660
	Small	x50	\$395 (1845)
• Acid-free Tissue	Rolls	x2 (75m)	\$240
	Sheets	x1000	\$220 (460)
• Solander Boxes	Large	x1 (Large Documents)	\$370
	Medium	x2 (Illustrations & Doc's)	\$285
	Small	x1 ('Ambrotypes' &c.)	\$220 (875)
• Ring Binders (slipcase) (Polypropylene)	A3	x10 (Large Doc's & Photo's)	\$300
	A4	x50 (Photo's, Postcards)	\$800
• Polypropylene Sleeves (for portfolios)	A3	x250	\$300
	A4	x1000 (6x4)	\$400
	A4	x1000 (7x5)	\$400
	A4	x1000 (10x8)	\$400 (2600)
• Mylar Enclosures	Large	x50	\$190
	Medium	x50	\$130
	Small	x50	\$ 60 (380)
• Polypropylene Enclosures (Maps, plans, costumes &c.)	Large	x100 (16x20)	\$140
	Medium	x100 (12x16)	\$ 80 (220)

#### Office Suppliers

• Divider Cardboard or Support Board (Buffers for framed works etc.)		\$200
• Polyethylene Ziplock Bags	x1000 (14x11, 10x8, 5x7, 5x4)	\$200
• Bubblewrap	Large Roll x2 Small Roll x10	\$300
• Lever Arch Files	x50 (Doc's/Chancellor)	\$300
• Plastic Sleeves for files	x5000	\$300
Incidentals: Tags & Sticky Labels; Document Repair Tape; Soft Brush; Cotton Gloves; Glass cleaning cloths etc.		\$200 (1500)

Note: These prices have been compiled from one major archival supplier's price list, with trade discounts applied and further bulk discounts where applicable. Other suppliers may stock similar materials at more competitive rates.

**Cost of Archival Storage Materials**

**Total Cost Estimate: \$8,865**

Note: This cost estimate is for the initial purchase of storage materials only.

## 14.4 Storage Furniture Requirements

- Compactus Filing System: Documents, Publications, Small Objects.  
Probably better to buy smaller, compact units and add to as needed, especially if it is likely they will have to be moved.  
Compactus (mobile storage unit) BOC-F: Base size L.3200x W.1245xH.2000; Storage capacity 37.8 linear metres; Shelf D. 300mm & 400mm;  
Cost \$5270 (new) or from \$2480 (used). **Cost of 2 new units: \$10,540**
- Metal Storage Cupboards: Photographs, Reference Books, Postcard Collection etc. Also Catalogue Worksheets. These are good for regularly accessed items, and research materials, placed in a research or work area, as opposed to the compactus in the storeroom for lesser-accessed items. (There are already 3 metal cupboards at Library housing reference books)  
Size: H.1800 x W.900 x D.460mm; Cost \$350 per unit. **Cost of 5 units: \$1,750**
- Shelving: Metal or timber for objects, and textile boxes (3 x from bank)  
Longspan or archive shelving units: Size H.2100x1800xD.600 Cost: \$385 each.  
**Cost of 12 units: \$4,620**
- Storage Racks: Framed Illustrations, Illuminated Addresses, Photographs  
(To be custom-built according to largest framed items, etc.)  
Large Rack: Size H.1400 x W.2000 x D.1000mm (appr.) laminated MDF \$850  
Medium Rack: H.1000 x W.2000 x D.750mm (appr.) Cost \$650  
Small Rack: H.750 x W.2000 x D.500mm (appr.) Cost \$500  
**Cost estimate: \$2,000**
- Metal Plan Cabinets: Maps, Plans, Posters, Large Documents  
There are existing plan cabinets that can be used if they are not rusted or in poor condition. Otherwise, it may be better to sell these and purchase on good plan cabinet, to consolidate these items into one unit.  
**Cost of Metal Plan Cabinet: \$2,500**
- Filing Cabinets: Society's Administration and Archives, Collection Management Files, Research Files, etc.  
There are already 6x at Library housing reference books and another 4x donated by the Bendigo Bank. Providing these are in good condition, there is probably no need to purchase more filing cabinets at this stage.
- Metal Index-card Cabinet: For glass negatives and slides etc. **Cost: \$350**
- Firearms Locker: Firearms will require special safety storage furniture if the Society intends to house them with the rest of the collection. There are also legal requirements that will need to be considered.  
**Cost of Firearms Locker: \$1200**

### Existing Furniture:

Library Furniture: (New in good condition)

- 3 Metal Storage Cupboards and 6 Filing Cabinets

Bendigo Bank furniture (2<sup>nd</sup> hand) donated in 2007:

- Gaslift office chairs (x 8)
- 2 Drawer filing cabinets (x 2) and 4 Drawer filing cabinets (x 2)
- Brownbuilt metal shelving units x 2m x 1.2m (x2) and 4m x .9 m (x 1)

Note: The Government Gazettes, Encyclopaedias and some other materials have their own existing storage shelving.

**Cost of Storage Fit-out**

**Total Cost Estimate: \$22,960**

Note: This does not include any costing on specialised equipment such as an air-conditioning unit required for controlled atmosphere, dehumidifiers or the like.

## 14.5 Storage Space Requirements

When calculating the amount of storage space required to house the Bendigo Historical Society's collection, it is with the assumption that the whole collection will be consolidated onto one site and into one space.

The current storage area occupied by the Society at the Gaol, including the Governor's Residence, gymnasium and cells, is estimated to be 285 square metres of floor space. This is without the use of proper storage furniture and shelving.

The estimated space proposed for the storage of the collection is 400 square metres. That would be an area of 20 x 20 or 16 x 25 metres. Fitted-out with the appropriate storage furniture, this space would also allow for:

- Personnel movement between storage furniture and large objects
- Safe areas to place boxes for contents checks etc.
- Allowance for movement and transition of objects as required
- Some storage of display furniture and props not in use
- Allowing for some future growth of the collection

The eventual place chosen for the Society's collection storage may not be in a custom-built site, but an existing building with predetermined space divisions. This could be useful for accommodating different categories of the collection with varying storage and access requirements.

An interesting point to bear in mind is the basic calculation used when developing a new museum space. It is recommended to allow one third of the space for displays and exhibits, one third for collection storage, and one third for personnel, administration and workspace.

**Storage Space Estimate: 400 square metres**

## 15. Future Staffing

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### 15.1 Assessment of Current Personnel Housing and Facilities

Evaluation of workspace conditions and facilities at the Old Bendigo Gaol:

Most of the personnel working on the cataloguing of the collection are situated in rooms on the ground floor of the Governor's Residence. Sometimes, one or two people work upstairs on collection stored in that area.

- The space is a little crowded for the number of volunteers working on the cataloguing project, but it is currently adequate while working on the smaller, more manageable items.
- There needs to be reasonable amount of space for spreading out box contents for inspection etc. and the Lions Club meeting room has been used for this purpose.
- Facilities are adequate and comfortable for volunteers, with gaslift chairs, trestle tables, heating, kitchen facilities and toilet facilities available.
- This space is not suitable or set up at present for public research access.

**Recommendations:** Future requirements

Any future accommodation for the Society should include adequate spaces for staff, and volunteers to carry out:

- Collection management tasks (manual): cataloguing; numbering; indexing
- Computer cataloguing
- Collection research
- Collection re-housing and preservation tasks
- Administration and management

Space allocation should also take into account the number of volunteers expected to be working at any given time.

### 15.2 Future Staffing Considerations

Collections like the Bendigo Historical Society's can and are being managed by volunteers in many situations, though it is often carried out under great difficulty. Managing many functions, like archives and research facilities, as well as collections, and museum operations with regular open access to the public, is a huge undertaking for many relatively small community organisations.

It is not easy with a collection the size and breadth of the Bendigo Historical Society's, to expect that volunteers will want to learn or take on the responsibility, knowledge and expertise which is becoming increasingly expected of them. Also, continuity of personnel with the skills, interest and knowledge of collections management in volunteer organisations is often difficult to find and maintain.

Another factor is the growing demand and expectations of the public, to be able to access information or visit an organisation to view and experience the collection and to learn about the local history. It is important to provide services to meet the needs of the community, which in turn helps to maintain the interest of members and volunteers, and the viability of the organisation.

There are a variety of modes of operation and management that can be looked at to assist with decision-making relating to future staffing options. A number of small museums employ professional curators with collection management skills in part-time positions, supported by trained volunteers. These museums are generally owned and managed by local Councils, as volunteer organisations generally don't have the funds readily available to do this.

Historical collections are recognised as an important asset within the community, providing a useful service to the public, similar to a library or an art gallery, with considerable potential for opening up many marketing and tourism opportunities.

It is becoming more prevalent for local government to take on the role of museum management and to employ professional staff to manage and maintain daily operations. This is in the best interest of the wider community, as it generally means that the collections are being properly managed and monitored, the public can have access under proper supervision, and the larger issues of insurance, public liability etc. will be covered under their umbrella. Local government support and commitment is also an acknowledgement of the importance of local history preservation for the future benefit of the community.

The Government, at both federal and state level, recognise that our heritage collections need to be properly preserved, documented and presented. This has opened up many opportunities for regional collections to move into a more professional realm of operation, which will have long-lasting benefits for all.

#### **Suggestions for Professional Staff:**

- Collections Manager/Curator – To maintain collections, deal with collection related enquiries, manage cataloguing and computer databases, and supervise cataloguing and collections volunteers, liaise with other organisations regarding loans for exhibition etc. Possibly organise changing exhibitions. Annual full-time wage in the vicinity of \$40,000 - \$50,000. Employment starting point – 2 to 3 days per week.
- Collections Officer – To assist with work on cataloguing and preservation of the collection, and supervision of volunteers. \$35,000-\$38,000. Employment starting point - 2 days per week.
- History Research Officer - To deal with research enquiries from the public, and coordinate research volunteers, etc. Annual full-time wage in the vicinity of \$35,000 - \$45,000. Employment starting point - 1 day per week.

### **15.3 Volunteer Assistance, Training & Management**

Volunteers are crucial to the running of many cultural heritage organisations. In the case of Bendigo Historical Society and many others in the state, it was these community groups who had the foresight to commence collecting items important to local culture and history, and they have been solely responsible for their management and upkeep for many years.

In the last two decades, the need for appropriate care and management of historical collections has been recognised as an important issue by government. Expectations have been placed on these organisations to work towards better documentation of items, and to see that the preservation needs are met of their ever-growing collections. Regional and small museums/collections are estimated to hold at least one tenth of Australia's significant cultural material.

Volunteers bring many positive outcomes to an organisation: assisting with long-term and ongoing collection management tasks; bringing a variety of skills and experience; extending the output of paid staff; providing an important link with the outside community. There are many risks as well as benefits involved in managing volunteers. The organisation engaging the volunteers needs to be aware of the pitfalls, and know exactly what their own motives are for having volunteers in the first place, so that they can plan for responsible management of the program.

There are some basic requirements for running a successful volunteer program:

- Appoint and train a volunteer co-ordinator or liaison person, to recruit, manage the volunteers, and be their official point of contact.
- Guidelines for volunteers need to be developed. This may be in the form of a manual and include an outline of the organisation's goals, role in the community and structure, as well as procedures, and expectations of volunteers.
- A list of clearly defined roles for volunteers or 'job descriptions' should be drawn up for the benefit of both parties.
- Regular informal gatherings of volunteers should be arranged for socialising, feedback and showing the organisation's appreciation.
- Evaluation of the volunteer program should be carried out from time to time to assess its effectiveness.

Opportunities for Volunteer Training are offered regularly through the following cultural heritage peak bodies:

- Royal Historical Society of Victoria who support Historical Societies with advice and training etc. specific to their needs.

Museums Australia (Victoria) and Heritage Victoria who run regular training workshops aimed specifically at the needs of small, volunteer-run organisations.

## 16. Mission & Collection Policy

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### Mission Statement

Creating a mission statement is important, as it succinctly states what your organisation does. It is often produced as part of the strategic planning process, and it is imperative that all members have their input into its making.

The Society should formulate a mission statement that is ideally no more than two or three sentences, or one paragraph long. A draft of this document can be produced as a starting point for discussion amongst members, and can be further discussed and developed at a special meeting before being officially adopted. Like all other policy documents, it should be reviewed from time to time.

### Collection Policy

The Bendigo Historical Society's Collection Policy was devised in 2000, and covers issues such as: Scope of the collection; Historic period; Acquisition (methods); Collection criteria; Delivery of items; Documentation; Duplication (of collection items); and Review of the Collection Policy. (See Appendix 1: *Collection Policy*)

A review of the collection policy by the Committee is scheduled to occur every three years, or more frequently if deemed necessary.

It is important for the Society to keep abreast of what other organisations and groups in the region are collecting also, as it is best to avoid duplication, especially where it is costly to obtain, difficult to manage or space consuming. It is also important to know where the gaps are, which can assist with determining future directions for the Bendigo Historical Society's collection policy.

The following notes are for consideration, along with some suggested changes to Bendigo Historical Society's Collection Policy, when it is next reviewed.

#### The Scope of the Collection:

- What is the Bendigo library currently collecting in the way of microform copies of local records and newspapers, local reports or manuscripts?
- What research material do the genealogical societies collect, or have available to the public already?
- What are other heritage groups in the region collecting?
- What will the proposed new Bendigo Regional Archives Centre be holding or collecting?

It may be that another paragraph is added to the policy outlining collecting cross-overs, and agreements or understandings with other organisations about this. Otherwise, the Society may reconsider what it no longer needs to collect because it is already covered by another organisation that is better equipped to manage it.

#### Historic Period:

The Society states here that they 'will collect material relating to the period from the time of first European presence in the Bendigo region to the present time.'

Just to note, that the Society does have items in the collection relating to Dja Dja Wrung population, collected in the local area and pre-dating white settlement. Whether there is likely to be any other local organisation collecting in this area is to be considered, as it could be important for the local indigenous culture to be represented within an organisation such as BHS. Consideration needs to be given to the cultural and legal issues surrounding these objects and their original owners, if the Society decides to pursue collection of indigenous artefacts. Co-operation with the local Dja Dja Wrung organisation would be advised.

#### **Documentation:**

A change to the wording needs to be made with regard to the cataloguing system now in use. The Mosaic computer cataloguing system and the catalogue worksheets devised by the Society to suit this system, now replaces the 'Victorian Ministry for the Arts Cataloguing Data Sheet' system.

#### **Duplication:**

With regard to reproduced or copied items being 'collected for information, display, education or other purpose', it is important that the following procedures be established:

- details of ownership are recorded and kept with the item.
- the item is clearly marked as being a reproduction of the original.
- any reproduced material is kept separately from the 'original' collection materials, for instance in a research or supplementary file.
- If the Society wishes to display or use the item in any publication or publicity, that the owner of the original be consulted for approval first, and that due acknowledgement is given (unless the owner wishes to remain anonymous).

These procedures and details are important for future access and research purposes so that there can be no confusion with regard to copyright and ownership of any reproduced item in the collection.

## 17. Future Planning and Development of the Collection

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### 17.1 Timeframes for Future Care and Management of the Collection

These future project timeframes have been divided into two categories. Some of the larger tasks will require funding from grant sources and sponsorships to be successfully carried out. These will often need to employ the services of qualified specialists. Others projects can be done with minimal cost outlays utilising the services of volunteers.

Setting timeframes for projects can sometimes have drawbacks, as carrying-out the more costly tasks are often tied with the success of grant applications and funding availability. On the other hand, undertaking the projects reliant on volunteers, can depend entirely on whether the personnel with the right skills are available to manage, oversee and/or carry out the tasks in the projected timeframe.

Priorities may also need to change occasionally, especially if something unforeseen or an emergency situation arises, which requires the need for funds or personnel to be redirected.

Some of the tasks listed below may be best left until the Society has secured a more permanent home, but many of them can be carried out whilst the collection is housed at the Gaol, just so long as there is adequate access for the Society's volunteers to continue their work. These projects are based on the Society's current work arrangements, with an average of 6-8 volunteers working on the collection 2 days per week.

### Collection Projects Requiring Funding

See below for further information on funding sources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME	COST EST.	FUNDING SOURCE
1. Conservation Plan (or Preservation Survey)	1-2 years	\$3,500	Heritage Victoria CHG
2. Purchase of archival storage materials, and furniture ( This can be done in stages)	1-5 years	\$32,000 (Initial Set-up)	CHG LHGP MAVic BBRM Heritage Victoria
3. Conservation projects - As prioritised by Conservation Plan & Significance Assessment. This will initially include conservation treatments to selected collection items deemed to be of high value to the collection, or a high risk for further deterioration, or important for use in a future display.	Commencing in 2-5 years & Ongoing	To be determined by Conservation Plan	CHG LHGP Heritage Victoria Philanthropic Trusts
4. Digitisation of registers and other valuable research material on microform	2-5 years	To be determined	CHG LHGP

## Funding Sources for Collection Management Projects

**Victoria's Heritage Grants: Strengthening our communities (Heritage Victoria)**  
Community collections management. To improve the identification, collection management, preservation of and public access to collections.

**Community Heritage Grants (Up to \$15,000)**  
Funded jointly by the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Assisting community groups to preserve and manage heritage collections. Grants given for the preservation and reformatting of cultural material including archives, records, oral history recordings etc.

**Local History Grants Program (Up to \$12,000)**  
Funded jointly by Arts Victoria and the Department of Planning and Community. Supporting projects that preserve and circulate local historical knowledge in Victoria.

**Museums Australia (Victoria) – Building Better Regional Museums Program**  
(Funds available by invitation only basis: Around \$5,000.)  
This project funding comes from Arts Victoria's Creating Space and Place program. To improve and develop the standards in regional museums. The grants cover the costs of conservation materials, improved storage and display facilities, collection management tools and equipment, and environmental control.

**Volunteer Support Grants – Building Stronger Community Grants**  
These grants have been developed through a partnership between the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Municipal Association of Victoria. Designed to better equip communities to support, extend and sustain volunteer activities, such as funding for Volunteer Training Programs.

### Philanthropic Trusts & Other Sources

It is worth seeking support from the local community and other sources to assist financially with special projects. There is often a requirement from major funding bodies that other contributions are forthcoming, either from the organisation applying or from other sources. Application partnerships and funding from other sources will endorse your project as worthwhile and generally increase your chances of success with grants.

Some other sources for funding contributions could include:

- Abbott Foundation
- Bendigo Bank
- Sandhurst Trustees – Community Enterprise Foundation
- Myer Foundation
- Ian Potter Foundation

It is worth purchasing *The Australian Directory of Philanthropy*, which is published every year and available from Philanthropy Australia, so that appropriate funding sources can be matched with your particular project.

## Collection Projects Utilising Volunteer Resources

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES
1. Cataloguing – Entering basic information only.	Current Estimated to take 3-5 years and will be ongoing	BHS Volunteers (Team of 8-10 currently working on this project 2 days per week)
2. Collection Inventory - Produce and inventory merging information from the old Acquisitions Register with donations recorded in Minute Books. Will provide a handy, quick reference while cataloguing is being done.	1 year	BHS Volunteers (Merging data already compiled by R. Lethlean and T. Davidson onto a database, with more information fields added)
3. Conservation Storage - Placing items into appropriate archival materials, and storage facilities	Current 1-5 years Will need funding to continue	BHS Volunteers With training in handling and storage of objects.
4. Computer entry of basic cataloguing data from worksheets	Current Estimated to take 3-5 years and will be ongoing	BHS Volunteers With computer skills and training in cataloguing procedures
5. Research on collection & follow-up cross-referencing of information onto catalogue worksheets and computer	Ongoing	BHS Volunteers & others with an interest in, and knowledge of research procedures.
6. Digitisation of selected documents, photographs etc.	2-3 years (Ongoing)	BHS Volunteers With training in handling of documents and photographs, and computer skills
7. Indexing of records for research purposes: Registers, ledgers &c.	2-5 years	BHS Volunteers Ties in with research Computer skills
8. Online Collection Information links: CAN and RHSV website	1-2 years (Can be added to on an ongoing basis)	BHS Volunteers Working in with these two organisations to make the most of services and links already available

## Ongoing Collection Management Projects

### Cataloguing

The cataloguing of the collection is the most imperative task needing to be attended to. There are three phases to the cataloguing:

- Numbering each item individually and filling out the basic details manually onto a catalogue worksheet.  
Producing an index card for fast manual reference to the collection (optional)
- Entering the basic worksheet data onto the computer with all possible cross-references listed.
- Follow-up research on items of particular interest or significance, to add to the worksheet (as an attachment), and also add to the database or make a reference to a supplementary file where the information is stored.

### Inventory or Index

Produce and inventory merging information from the old Acquisitions Register with donations recorded in the Minutes of Meetings books. This will involve merging data already compiled by R. Lethlean and T. Davidson onto a common database, with more information fields added, and will provide a handy, quick reference to the collection, while the longer-term cataloguing project is being carried out.

### Research

As a follow-up to the cataloguing process, further research on the collection is required that will link the 'story' around the item with people, places and events that give it more meaning and context. Some items should be given a priority for research and investigation, and the significance assessment guidelines should be used to assist with the compiling of information.

Utilising the Society's own information files, the resources available through other historical groups and organisations, and the cumulative knowledge of various local specialists, much of the research information needed to supplement and assist with the interpretation of the Society's collection, is readily available.

This work could be commenced with a group of volunteers interested in historical research, to create supplementary information files on collection items. It is also very useful as a resource for interpretations and a variety of other future purposes.

Suggested liaison or partnerships with other groups and organisations could be of mutual benefit: Latrobe University History Department; Bendigo Regional Genealogical Society; The Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies (Bendigo); the Research Centre at the Library; other heritage groups, etc.

### Conservation & Storage

The Conservation Plan will specify the conservation treatments required for the collection. It is important that the extent of works is determined by an experienced conservator, and will cover the areas of: conservation of artworks; textiles; furniture; metal objects; documents etc. This plan will also outline what volunteers can do towards employing better preventive conservation measures.

When funding has been received for the archival materials and storage furniture, a group of volunteers can work on the project of the collection rehousing. Training in handling and storage of collections is advisable, or supervision by a suitably experienced person, would be ideal.

## Working Towards Better Public Access

Along with the ongoing collection management tasks, the following projects will consolidate a good deal of historical information, which can then be made available to the public either through the Bendigo Library's Goldfields Research Centre, or the Society's own research service.

### Digitisation

As well as being an important tool for collection management, conservation and curatorial practices, digitisation can allow broad public access to the collection through the World Wide Web.

Identifying what part of the collection should be given a priority for digitisation, will be determined by user-needs. A high priority for those doing family research would be the digitisation of local registers, ledgers and minute books etc. containing names, dates and information on local people. This would probably require grant funding, to be placed on a microform format, which could be made available at the local library or used by the Society's research service.

Another priority for research would be to scan the photographic collection. This could be done by a small team of volunteers trained in the handling of photographic materials, and with an understanding the computer technology involved. It is also vital that the scanned material is named and numbered (using its allocated catalogue number) so it can be tracked and readily retrieved on a search.

### Indexing

Though sometimes cumbersome and time consuming to undertake, indexed records, such as rate books, land sales registers etc. creates a tremendously useful research tool. Choosing volunteers with the patience and skills to decipher hand-written original documents is the first step. Entering the material into a database, with comprehensive fields such as name, date, or district, or other information that can easily be searched, makes this a very worthwhile and time-saving information resource.

### Online Information

When cataloguing, research and digitisation projects are well on the way, public access to the collection can be set-up through existing organisations websites. These include the Collections Australia Network (CAN), the Victorian Local History Database (Royal Historical Society of Victoria), and Picture Australia (National Library of Australia). Links back to the Society's own website can also be added to these.

## Deaccessioning Considerations

Some items in the collection may be considered unsuitable to retain because they are not relevant to Bendigo and district, or perhaps because they are impractical to manage from a storage point of view. eg. Architectural fittings.

Items should not be deaccessioned before they have been fully researched to determine their provenance, or history. At face-value it might appear that some items are worthless, but with a little investigation and research the importance or relevance may become apparent. This should be determined before a decision to deaccession is finally made, and the procedures set down should then be strictly followed.

Items that may be deemed unsuitable to retain in the collection could include:

- Magazines, newspapers or ephemera not relevant to Bendigo and district.
- Books not relevant for future museum displays, research or reference.
- Domestic objects or other items where: the provenance is not known; a link with the region is dubious; the item is badly damaged; or it duplicates other items already in the collection.

## 17.2 Potential Scope & Strategies for Inclusion into a Museum

### Developments Towards a Regional Museum for Bendigo

The idea of a regional museum for Bendigo is not new, and some preliminary work by the City of Greater Bendigo has been done towards this concept. In 2001 the *Bendigo Regional Museum Strategic Plan* was produced for the Council by Jenny Whitelaw. This plan considered the needs of historical collections in Bendigo and region, and put forward a proposal for how appropriate storage, access and displays could all be brought together within a museum setting.

In its Bendigo +25 - Greater Bendigo Community Plan (2005), the COGB has included the idea of 'establishing a centralised collection storage facility (historical, art, archival, library) on a major scale surrounded by museum display areas visited by tourists and researchers from near and far'. This is seen as a long-term goal, which the COGB would like to achieve by 2030.

A major development about to commence is the building of a Bendigo Regional Archives Centre to be jointly run by the City of Greater Bendigo, the Goldfields Library Corporation and the Public Records Office Victoria. The Bendigo Library will be the public access point, and the storage facility will be located at Eaglehawk. It will hold public records from the Bendigo region as well as private records.

COGB has also recently developed a plan to refurbish part of the Visitor Information Centre at the Old Bendigo Post Office to create a temporary exhibition space to showcase Bendigo's history using a selection of historical artefacts borrowed from local collections. A Community Liaison Officer has been employed for 12 months to work on this proposal, which is considered to be a step towards developing a regional museum for Bendigo.

Though these are both positive moves, they do not provide an answer to the Historical Society's requirement for a suitable space to store and care for its multi-faceted collection.

The Council has also recently had a master plan prepared to redevelop of the View Street Arts Precinct, which is established as Bendigo's 'cultural precinct' and recognised as an important destination for visitors. The redevelopment aims to enhance the heritage streetscape and consolidate the cultural and arts precinct alongside business. Major works behind the scenes are planned for the Capital Theatre and Art Gallery, expanding exhibition, storage, collection management, conservation and educational facilities to the latter.

Unfortunately, this plan does not consider any inclusion of a museum in the View Street precinct, where it would ideally be placed nearby other major cultural attractions. There needs to be more communication with the City of Greater Bendigo to determine their future plans and timelines with regard to the development of a museum, and to ensure that the needs of the Historical Society and its collection are being considered as part of that plan.

Should the City of Greater Bendigo decide to proceed with developing a Regional Museum in Bendigo, it would seem logical that the Bendigo Historical Society's collection would form the basis of the displays and interpretations. It would also be ideal for the collection to be housed close-by in an environmentally sound, custom-fitted storage area, preferably under the care of a qualified professional. Addressing this issue of a permanent home for the Society is now a matter of some urgency, needing to be dealt with sooner rather than later.

## Recent Developments in the Cultural Heritage Sector

### Collections Council of Australia – CollectionsCare Vision

This is a plan to establish a system of staffed 'regional hubs' where heritage collections can be managed and accessed through community and government partnerships. Making connections between archives, galleries, libraries and museums. CollectionsCare will have a ten-year start-up period and be negotiated between the Collections Council of Australia and the federal, state and local governments.

The expected outcomes of CollectionsCare are, in brief:

- Collaboration across collections
- New resources for regional collections
- Collecting organisations contributing to the community's cultural life
- Creating new educational and cultural opportunities in regional communities
- Documentation and display of unique narratives of objects in regional collections
- Support the work of volunteers
- Sharing of resources and expertise
- Development of skills
- Improved planning for sustainable collections

### Community Museums Pilot Program – Collecting Stories in the Goldfields

This is a partnership program between Arts Victoria, the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFE), Heritage Victoria and the Department of Planning and Community Development. The program is a Victorian Government initiative to invest in the community museums sector, and is part of its draft strategy: *Revitalising Victorian Community Museums – Collecting our Stories*.

A Project Officer has been appointed for 18 months to work with community museums, local governments and communities to plan, develop and implement innovative and practical approaches to issues relating to collection care and interpretation, and the promotion of cultural heritage collections and stories.

## Promotional Strategies

### Building the Society's Profile and the Role of the Collection in the Community

The Society needs to have clear aims and objectives for the ongoing preservation of the collection, and also for how access can be given to best meet the needs of the community. The community also needs to be made aware of the Society's goals, and to be kept up-to-date with its progress and achievements.

It is important to gain the support of the local community, and to encourage new people to become involved with the Society and its projects. Some may become members of the Society to attend monthly meetings with guest speakers, and others may prefer to work on specific tasks such as cataloguing or researching the collection. There may be a few that have special skills and can offer assistance on an intermittent basis as needed, such as media connections, marketing or funding networks, which can be very useful to call upon from time to time.

As an initial step towards this, the Society needs to produce a simple brochure or trifold, with information about the organisation, its mission, what it does in the community, membership and volunteering, future goals and projections for the collection. This should be distributed widely within the Bendigo region at such places as visitor information centres, libraries, other museums and heritage organisations, and tourism outlets.

As the collection management projects progress, the Society should keep the public informed of its developments through publicity and the local media. Collection information can be made available for researchers in increments, as it becomes ready. A leaflet should be produced for general distribution, listing the details of what research material is available through the Society. This information can also be added to the Historical Society's website.

The Society has existing promotional tools in place that it can continue to use and build on in the future.

- Weekly news articles in the Bendigo free newspaper
- The Society's monthly newsletter 'Marunari'
- Monthly meetings with guest speakers on history-related topics
- Information on the Society's website

It is important that the newsletter is distributed, not just to the members of the Society, but also to other interested parties, or potentially useful people and organisations. This is a good way to strengthen partnerships, and may open doors for future collaboration on projects and initiatives.

Links can eventually be made on a much broader scale with other websites specialising in historical collections online. This would include the national digital platform - Collections Australia Network (CAN), and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's - Victorian Local History Database. Another good website to add to is Picture Australia, administered by the National Library of Australia, which allows you to search many significant pictorial collections online, from one internet based service.

Maintaining close connections and dialogue with the peak bodies supporting heritage collections is imperative. Keeping up-to-date with developments around government policy, future funding directions, and the projects and initiatives of other organisations can be very useful. Seeking the advice and support of professional colleagues within these organisations is a helpful, positive and empowering benefit.

## Liaison with Government Bodies

### Local Government

The Society needs to have a clear idea of its goals and objectives for presentation to local government in a concise and comprehensible way. Consideration will need to be given to Council's structures, procedures and whom the appropriate contacts are relating to heritage and museums. It is helpful if the Society is aware of other projects council has planned, the budgeting process and the way funds are allocated when discussing timelines for proposed ideas. It is also important to be in contact with councillors who are serving on heritage advisory sub-committees or who are particularly interested in heritage issues.

Some guidelines to bear in mind when approaching Council:

- Know who the appropriate Council contact is
- Be aware of Council's strategic planning documents, programs and projects
- Approach council with a specific request or concrete plan rather than a general plea for support
- Have your plans or objectives clearly and concisely written down
- Align your goals and outcomes with Council's current priorities and community developments
- Focus on the economic and social benefits to the whole community, not just the benefits to your own organisation
- Ask them for comment or advice on how you can best achieve your goals
- Participate in working groups or steering committees relating to cultural tourism
- Remain open to other possibilities or to compromise

It is vital that the Historical Society liaise closely with the City of Greater Bendigo to ensure that the requirements of the Society, in preserving this important community heritage asset, are being considered and included in future planning projects. The Society should also continue with its current involvement in the 'Bendigo +25 Arts & Culture Action Group', and be included in discussions about any future projections for a museum.

### State and Federal Government

Keeping locally based state and federal government politicians informed of your planned goals and projections, is also important. They can sometime offer advice or direction to assist with achieving goals. It is good for these government representatives to be informed first-hand, and have an understanding of the problems and difficulties associated with ongoing heritage collection management. They can also assist with funding applications for worthy projects through federal and state government sources.

## 17.3 Future Options for the Collection

### Future Role of the Bendigo Historical Society & the Collection

The role of historical societies in the community as repositories of local history archives and artefacts has changed, especially in larger regional centres, with the advent of library research centres, genealogical societies, regional archive centres, and local government managed museums becoming more commonplace. The Bendigo Historical Society will need to determine what role it will play alongside other established or proposed organisations, and clarify its future position.

Careful consideration will need to be given to what 'vision' the Society has for its own future; whether it can, or whether it wants to manage a large and diverse historical collection; what it will continue to collect; what services it will provide to the community and how it will deliver these; what part it will play in the Bendigo Regional Museum proposed by the Council; and ultimately, what is best for the collection and for the community.

### Future Housing for the Collection

In terms of the future, the significance of the collection needs to be acknowledged within the community. It should be cared for accordingly by being housed in a suitably equipped space, and managed by appropriately trained staff, to ensure its future preservation and accessibility. If there is a place already established or proposed that will meet these requirements, then it is reasonable and economical to choose this option.

There are two options that may meet these requirements:

- Option 1:** A Regional Museum Facility – Providing exhibition space for historical displays. Accommodating collection in proper storage areas and making workspace available for volunteers. The Society could continue to conduct its administration, meetings and public research/access from the Bendigo Library, or may possibly be allocated space for these operations within the proposed facility.
- Option 2:** An independent premises for the Bendigo Historical Society – Providing a home for the Society's collection, a workspace for volunteers and public research access. This could also include an exhibition space and area for the Society's regular meetings and activities.

**Option 1 would necessitate:**

- Determining what Council's plans and timelines are for the Regional Museum facility to materialise, and whether or not this will fulfil the needs of the Society.
- The Society finding an appropriate building to house its collection, in the interim, which will provide adequate workspace for the volunteers to continue with their collection tasks.

Many questions need to be answered with regard to this proposed facility, and how it would be run. Discussions, planning and decisions could then be made with regard to this option.

If the collection were to be housed in a regional museum, there is no reason why the Society couldn't remain involved in some capacity, bearing in mind the reliance even large, government funded organisations still have on volunteer assistance. The housing of collections in appropriate storage, with skilled staff employed to manage them,

alleviates a huge burden from the shoulders of community organisations that often struggle just to keep the doors of their museums open to the public.

Option1 - Other scenarios for consideration:

- a) Whether the management and care of the collection is handed over to professional museum staff under a 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreement (similar to the Gold Museum at Ballarat).
- b) Whether the museum facility will accommodate the Historical Society's normal activities and operations.
- c) Whether only the collection of three-dimensional objects is placed in the care of Museum, and the Society maintains its research files, books, documents and photographs, storing them at the library and performing their activities and operations from the Library.
- d) Whether the Society places its documents into the Bendigo Regional Archive Centre and focuses its attention purely on research, family history, guest speakers and other activities, as are currently carried-out by the Society.

Option 2 would necessitate:

- Finding an appropriate premises with adequate space to house and possibly display part of the collection, and workspace for volunteers, research and public enquiries, and possibly a regular meeting space etc.
- Gaining community and Council support for the plan
- Determining how it will be run and maintained
- Deciding whether it will be managed by paid staff, and how this could be achieved

This option would be best carried out possibly in partnership with Council and other groups, with funding assistance from state and federal sources to get it established.

Option 2 – Other scenarios for consideration:

- a) It may be that this 'premises' is just a storage location and workspace for collections management, rather than a fully-fledged home, research and access facility or museum.
- b) Or otherwise it may be an interim home until a Regional Museum is established.

The way to proceed to obtain a suitable premises for Society would involve:

- Consultation with 'peak bodies' to determine best pathway for future, and to gain their advice and support.
- Compilation of a detailed proposal to find a permanent home that addresses all the needs of the Society and collection.
- Meeting with local government representatives to present the proposal, gain their advice and support and decide on the best way to proceed.
- Writing to state and federal ministers outlining proposal, and requesting their assistance, or advice on funding sources.
- Informing the local community of your plans.
- Approaching prospective 'partners', supporters or sponsors who can assist either financially or in kind to the proposal.
- When a suitable premises is found, following up on funding from sources who have indicated their support or interest.

# Recommendations

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## Collection Management Recommendations

- Secure tenure at the Old Bendigo Gaol for a period of time that will coincide with any proposed timelines either to establish a Regional Museum, or otherwise to obtain an independent premises that is suitable for the ongoing needs of the Historical Society's collection and volunteers. Local, state or federal funds should be sought to establish 'industry standard' facilities for the Bendigo collection.
- In the event of other independent premises being proposed, any potential move should be strictly governed by the conservation requirements of the collection, and that its status should not be compromised.
- Continue to work on collection cataloguing, re-housing and preservation projects.
- Apply for funding to have a Conservation Plan carried out on the collection.
- Establish a team of research volunteers to assist with the building up of information files on the collection for future use in interpretations, exhibitions, publicity etc.
- Work towards better public access to the collection, making more information resources available through digitised and microform material, and the internet.
- Operate a public point of contact from the Library. Consider other options that may be more suitable, if they arise.
- Apply for funding for other ongoing projects, such as storage materials and furniture, collection conservation projects, digitisation projects etc.

## Strategic Future Planning Recommendations

- **Conduct a review of the Bendigo Historical Society's purpose and role in the community.** This may require the services of a 'facilitator' to work through ideas and options. It is important that the membership be fully informed of any further developments around cultural heritage that the Council may have planned, and would be a good idea to invite people involved in other history related initiatives to come and briefly speak about their projects first, so that the Society can get a better understanding of what they are doing. The Society can then consider what their future aims and objectives will be, and review policies and procedures in line with any changes agreed upon.
- **Develop a 'Forward Plan' or 'Future Strategy' document stating the future directions and goals of the Society.** This document will focus the Society on what is important and guide any decision-making. It can also be used to inform the public, government bodies and other interested parties of what the Society has planned for the future, and how it intends to achieve these goals. The goals will include a timeline and strategy to find a more permanent home, to outline its proposed objectives in relation to the collection, and to define its future involvement in a museum.
- **Work with the City of Greater Bendigo towards the establishment of a Regional Museum.** Discuss the requirements of the proposed facility, to ensure it is meeting all the needs of the community, and how it will operate. Investigate funding sources and potential partnerships. Agree upon a timeframe for the development of plans, the estimated commencement of project through to an anticipated completion date.

## Conclusion

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The Bendigo Historical Society has a collection that is of high historic significance to the region. It represents the unique story of Bendigo, whose gold-mining history had a widespread effect on the State and the Nation.

It is vital that the work already commenced on the cataloguing and preservation of the collection be continued, and supported by the community, who will gain many benefits in return. Important decisions regarding the future of the collection will need to be made for its long-term preservation and management, in the best interests of the community.

Bendigo is a major regional centre with the potential to become a 'hub' for the region's cultural heritage. It is fitting that this worthy collection should eventually be housed, cared for and displayed in a suitable museum setting where Australians and overseas visitors can come to learn about, experience and enjoy the exceptional stories Bendigo has to tell.

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## Appendices

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- Appendix 1. *Collection Policy Bendigo Historical Society Inc. (2000)*
- Appendix 2. *Storage & Condition Assessment of the Collection (July 2007)*
- Appendix 3. *Items Selected for Significance Investigation*
- Appendix 4. *Examples of Significance Assessments on Individual Items*
- Appendix 5. *Collection Archival Housing & Storage Recommendations*