



Specimen Cottage – Interpretation Project

Call for assistance to develop exhibition themes & stories

Background:

This project aims to create exhibitions to re-imagine the visitor experience and revitalise the Cottage. It aims to establish the Cottage as a relevant attractive tourist destination in the modern market.

The project also aims to create a facility where locals will be able to recognise their own lives and history. With an expanded tourist market in mind, the project will help create a facility where tourists will be able to understand, reflect on and relate to the nature and rhythms of life in Bendigo over the past 150 years. However the project also calls for recognition of the Dja Dja Wurrung people of the region.

This stage of the project is not a design for exhibits. It is a framework so that the BHS can develop exciting and cost effective exhibitions.

While it is recognised that to construct many of the exhibitions financial assistance will be required, volunteers and other experts can undertake a large proportion of the research relating to content development. This means that the vital work relating to thematic interpretation and storytelling using the collection can begin now.

New thematic approach:

1. Welcome to Bendigo
2. Town and Country
3. 'Quartzopolis!'
4. Living a Life in Bendigo

Timeframe:

From the first European presence in Bendigo region to the present time. This will include material relating to the Dja Dja Wurrung.

Geographic boundaries:

The City of Greater Bendigo, keeping in mind other areas have their own historical society and collections.

Target Audience

1. Local community
2. Tourists & visitors
3. School groups
4. Service groups
5. Local historians

Implementation Approach

The widely adopted definition of interpretation in the museum context is:

'The process of engaging with visitors and users to create understanding'.

This part of the project will use the following *three principles* to guide its progress.

1. **Learn** – what do we want visitors to learn? (ideas, connections, facts, names)
2. **Understand** – what do we want visitors to understand? (the nature or meaning)
3. **Feel** – what do we want visitors to feel? (emotion, empathy)

Project – Content Developers - this is where you come in!

We are asking for volunteers who feel they could contribute as a team member to develop one (or more) of the themes listed below. The current extent of these themes is broad. The task of each team will be to provide focus for each theme as well as some significant stories about people, places and events.

At the first meeting of each team, exhibition coordinator, Euan McGillivray will conduct a short workshop that will help teams structure their progress. However the first part of the process will be ‘brainstorming’, where all ideas will have equal merit. Expect 3-5 meetings over a three month period, beginning in March 2020.

Skills you require:

Content Developers in these exhibition planning teams are responsible for the development of the thematic approach. You will also research background information about the subject area and help develop storylines for the exhibition. You may consult with subject specialists, community groups and organisations, and other information providers. You will help determine which objects will be displayed and draft text for the exhibition.

It is essential that you have some specialist knowledge in the theme you select to work in and can use the internet and email.

Theme: Welcome to Bendigo

This theme will be developed for the meet and greet space. It will be used to provide a multidimensional *timeline history of Bendigo*, including indigenous stories. This is where the story of Specimen Cottage will also be told.

Theme: Town & Country

This theme will be developed to allow visitors to gain a deeper understanding of how Bendigo developed into a civic powerhouse – using sub themes such as: education, agriculture, religion, sports, arts, health, multiculturalism, home life, a regional hub, (past & present) and infrastructure.

Theme: Quartzopolis!

This theme will focus on gold mining in the Bendigo district. Bendigo Creek was one of the biggest rushes in Australian history. Quartz mining at Peg Leg, Eaglehawk, New Chum, Hustlers Reef and many more led to Bendigo boasting the deepest gold mines in the world. Rich stories can be told about mines and miners from Chinese, American, German, English, Irish, Scottish, Cornish and Welsh heritage that had descended on the gold fields to find their fortune.

Theme: Living a life in Bendigo

This theme will tell stories about some of the thousands of ordinary people who toiled in the mines, foundries, shops, businesses, factories, homes and so on to transform this quiet valley into a thriving city. Great change swept through Bendigo like elsewhere – cars and planes became commonplace, life was good for some, however economic depression and drought shattered the dreams of many and the balance between work and leisure changed forever. Bendigo today, will also feature.

If you are interested or would like further information:
Contact: Euan McGillivray, mcgh@optusnet.com.au