

## BENDIGO CREEK

(refer Vol.2 Environmental History and A.Ward, A Preliminary Conservation Analysis of the Bendigo Creek from Rosalind Park to the Botanical Gardens, Bendigo City Council 1988)

### History

First pastoral pursuits and later alluvial gold seeking occupied the Bendigo Creek in the 1840-50s. The whole creek bed and associated branches in the City of Bendigo was upturned during the 1850s in search of gold, greatly altering the creek and its immediate landscape.

The various Chinese camps along the creek set up minor villages there and generated market gardens in the low-lying lands along the banks, further altering the creek's topography. A good example of such a garden can still be recognized today on the land between Thunder Street, the railway and the Bendigo Creek.

From 1854 freehold land was surveyed and sold near the banks of the creek bringing on a new facet of its development. Increasing development of quartz mining in the 1860s also took the mining community away from the creeks and distributed them on the north-south reef lines, away from central Bendigo with only a few exceptions. However puddling or the reworking of the discarded spoil occurred from the mid 1850s, causing sludge build-up on the newly sold freeholds along the creek. Sludge channels had to be created and recreated eventuating in a Royal Commission's recommendations in 1858 to construct a box-drain, along a realigned Bendigo Creek, with hardwood lining (timber lining survives on the creek at the Bendigo gasworks site). Works continued, with some government funding) into the 1880s when stone walling of an extensive part of the creek was planned and eventually carried out.

### Chronology

1851 Assistant Commissioner Horne leaves the government camp at Mt. Alexander to establish a government camp on the Bendigo Creek.<sup>1</sup>

1852 Golden Point (now Bullock Street??) discovery along Bendigo Creek, later at Eaglehawk Gully and Red Hill.<sup>2</sup>

1856 Miners meet to object to clearing of Bendigo Creek and plans to cut a channel from Epsom to Golden Point.<sup>3</sup>

1862 Bendigo Creek's sludge channel opened, as reported by Health Inspector Hassell.<sup>4</sup>

Public Works Department start the covering of Bendigo Creek for 16 chains, with stone walls and 42 ft. wide culverts, superseding old bridges connecting High Street, View Point, Pall Mall and Mitchell Street.<sup>5</sup>

1870 Specification for an iron structure over the Bendigo Creek was prepared.<sup>6</sup>

25/08/1871 Assistant Commissioner for Lands & Survey, Melbourne, told council that the commission has received a petition holding 2,000 names of Sandhurst residents who want the vacant crown land on the Bendigo Creek to be surveyed and land adjoining Pall Mall to be sold by public auction.<sup>7</sup>

03/02/1873 Central Board of Health recommends government funding of £2625 to improve the creek up to the reserve in Pall Mall.<sup>8</sup>

1878 Bendigo Creek at Charing Cross received a new bridge.<sup>9</sup>

23/03/1882 G.R.Steane, the City Surveyor, prepares plans and specifications for walling and a lattice-balustrade bridge over the creek at Rosalind Park.<sup>10</sup>

08/11/1882 Council committee for walling of the Bendigo Creek inspected the creek from where done; i.e., Wattle Street to Golden Square Bridge and from Harvey's Bridge to gasworks, and also inspected the flood damage near Honeysuckle Creek, recommending that the creek be widened and deepened at the rock cutting and the gap leading to the original creek be filled up and strongly faced with stone. The permanent walling of the creek was deferred until the remaining section is considered.<sup>11</sup>

1 Cusack p.63  
2 EH p.3  
3 EH p.16  
4 EH Page 17  
5 EH Page 17  
6 Maslunka, Catalogue of Bendigo City Correspondence, BCC Box 3, #6  
7 Maslunka, Catalogue of Bendigo City Correspondence.  
8 Ward  
9 Cusack, p.169  
10 BCC plan collection  
11 BCSCM p.187

14/01/1884 The council committee of Whole reconsidered the walling of Bendigo Creek, inspected the creek where the proposed walling was to take place, at the Golden Square Bridge, Thistle Street and Myrtle Street, resolving that the creek would be walled on both sides from where done at Wattle Street towards Golden Square, as far as the money at their disposal would allow and simultaneously a portion of the north side near Golden Square Bridge be also walled, the balance being finished next year<sup>1</sup>.

19/02/1886 Minto, City Surveyor, reports on his design for further walling

18/04/1889 Council request of £1350 for more walling.

22/11/1889 Report was prepared for council, requesting the fencing of the wall portions of the Bendigo Creek in Sutton Ward, with post and rail fencing similar to that used on the approaches to bridges<sup>2</sup>.

1899 Number of road bridge designs prepared for spanning the creek at Myrtle Street, White Hills Road, Oak, and Thistle Streets. Similar bridges were also planned for the Back Creek at Abbott and Wade Streets<sup>3</sup>.by G.R.Steane, City



### 3-57

*Bendigo Creek at Bridge Street looking north-east, basalt paving, rubble stone and more recent brick abutments and a new bridge which emulates the 1880s Rosalind Park footbridge lattice balustrade.*

1900 Lattice-balustrade bridge planned over creek at High Street<sup>4</sup>

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BCSCM p.220  
BCSCM p.424  
BCC plan collection  
ibid

### Description

Basalt lining, with sandstone walling and granite capping comprise the most valuable part of the creek's current state. This extends from Bridge Street to past Violet Street. The other sections are lined with reinforced concrete which in some cases combines with remnant timber lining (near the gasworks site). Towards White Hills the creek takes on a more natural appearance.

### Bridges on Bendigo Creek

Bendigo Creek Bridge, Booth Street 1920c? bridge Over Bendigo Creek. typical of other bridges along the creek.

Bendigo Creek Road Bridge, High Street 1899c brick with basalt capping stone with margins and rock face finish.

Bendigo Creek Foot Bridge, Bull Street, 1882, Rosalind Park bridge.



3-58

*Back Creek near the tramway museum, with basalt paving and more recent concrete drop-slab construction for the walls.*

Bendigo Creek Road Bridge, Short Street, 1899c, notable, with wrought-iron stone and brick construction. riveted girders.

Bendigo Creek Bridge, Weeroona Avenue, c1930, concrete framed bridge with metal balustrading and chain wire infill over bendigo creek.

Bendigo Creek Bridge, Williamson Street c1930C, concrete framed bridge with metal balustrading and chain wire infill over bendigo creek.

**Significance**

The stone-lined section of the creek is both a significant urban element, reinforcing the period character of the Pall Mall public building area and Rosalind Park, and historically important as a reminder of the extensive gold-seeking activities in the area which were so changed the creek (flow and path) that these major works were required to protect the freehold sites developed along its banks from 1854. There is no comparable drainage scheme linked to gold set in an urban domain in the State. Associated with these areas are the brick, iron and stone road and pedestrian bridges, some of which are individually notable<sup>1</sup>.

The concrete lined sections (east of Bridge Street) tell a similar story but with the historic fabric largely replaced: their significance lies in the necessity for the lining rather than the lining itself, with the exception of the remnant timber lining in these sections.

Note that similar notable stone lined pavements exist on the Back Creek channel near its junction with Bendigo Creek.

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<sup>1</sup> see site schedule