

Historical archaeological site card

Heritage Inventory number and name

FORMER BENDIGO SANITARY DEPOT H7724-0650

Date received

Monday, 25 August 2025

Date accepted

Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Hermes Number

216039

1. Place details

Place name:	BENDIGO SANITARY DEPOT ARTEFACT SCATTER
Heritage Inventory Number (if any):	H7724-0650
Other or former names:	Bendigo Sewage Farm & Manure Depot; Bendigo Sanitary Depot; Wellsford Sanitary Depot
Municipal Council:	
Address:	2-10 PIPER LANE, EAST BENDIGO, VIC
Geographical coordinates (GDA94 or WGS84) expressed in degrees and decimals of a degree:	
Mapsheet name and number (1:100,000 only):	

2. Cadastral location

County:	Bendigo
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Parish:	Sandhurst
Township:	
Section:	
Allotment:	Allot. 2212 Parish of Sandhurst
Standard Parcel Identifier (SPI):	2212\PP3473

3. Details of site owner or land manager (where known)

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name:

Position title:

Address:

Email address:

Telephone:

4. Details of site occupier (where known)

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name:

Position title:

Address:

Email address:

Telephone:

5. Aboriginal cultural values

Site has known Aboriginal values	YES
Site is recorded on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register	YES

6. Current description of site

Please provide description:

The majority of the property contained only sparse historical ceramics and glass, however a concentrated scatter of artefacts ($n = >50$) at the location marked in the attached map was noted. This area contained a dense surface scatter, with items such as complete bottles, leather shoes, metal fragments, brick/brick fragments, glass and ceramics. Notably, several artefacts had also been recently placed inside and on top of a nearby dead tree trunk. This appears to have been done recently. Based on a preliminary assessment, the artefacts may date from the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Date recorded: Friday, 06 June 2025

On Victorian Heritage Register

On Heritage Overlay

Associated sites: No

7. Place history

Please provide a brief history of the place (at least 1 to 2 paragraphs):

The property at 2–10 Piper Lane is currently vacant Crown land. No visible surface remains of former buildings were identified during the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) survey. However, analysis of historical aerial imagery reveals that structures once stood further west on the property, with smaller outbuildings located near the historical artefact scatter identified. These buildings were demolished between 1958 and 1967.

Historical records held at the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) identify these structures as the former Bendigo Sanitary Depot buildings associated with the Bendigo Sewage Farm and Manure Depot—also known as the Wellsford Sanitation Depot—which was officially gazetted in 1892. The land at Piper Lane formed a small portion of the original 127-acre depot site, which was expanded by an additional 227 acres in 1894.

A detailed account published in the Bendigo Independent in December 1913 described the depot as a well-managed and impressively hygienic facility located approximately 2.5 miles (4 kilometres) from the city centre. During an unannounced inspection, City Health Inspector J.E. Paynter guided a local journalist through the site, showcasing its operations in full

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swing. Nightsoil pans were unloaded onto a sturdy wooden platform and transferred into vans, while workers scrubbed pans and wagons with Condyl's fluid and phenyle. The air was dominated by disinfectant scents, with no offensive odours detected. In one corner, a worker treated disease-contaminated pans by dipping them into boiling tar, while a copper cauldron bubbled nearby. Adjacent to this was a blacksmith and repair shop where damaged pans were repaired and lids refitted with rubber seals to ensure airtight transport.

The depot also housed stables for approximately two dozen draught horses and a fleet of clean wagons, all prepared for daily collection. Waste was transported across a large paddock to trenches located roughly half a mile (805 metres) away. Each trench received about 12 inches (30 centimetres) of waste material from a trough before being filled in with soil. The trenching system was rotational, with older trenches covered and dry, and some areas showing lush grass growth—evidence of soil enrichment. The reporter noted minimal surface liquid and no abnormal smells, even in freshly opened trenches.

Inspector Paynter was commended for his methodical leadership and rapport with workers. He advocated for daytime collection, arguing it allowed for cleaner, more thorough service and reduced inconvenience for residents. The article concluded with a strong endorsement of the depot's operations, portraying it as a model of early 20th-century sanitation infrastructure—efficient, hygienic, and professionally run.

In the 1940s, the site was considered for development as the future Bendigo Aerodrome. Despite this proposal, the sanitation depot continued operations treating nightsoil and receiving trade refuse, well into the 1950s and possibly the 1960s.

Following the demolition of depot structures, the land has been used as open space or for grazing, likely supporting pastoral or light agricultural activities. Two historical mine shafts (Mine IDs: 208994 and 208989) are located directly west of the property, adjacent to Spring Gully Channel.

Further research into the site's earlier land use is ongoing. To date, no records have been found predating 1892, aside from its inclusion in the Barnedown West pastoral run.

8. Analysis of site (interpretation)

Include phases in the development of the site, functions and activities represented, as well as current place use:

The archaeological evidence identified during the survey indicates that the site retains a modest yet meaningful record of historical occupation and activity. While surface finds across most of the property were sparse—primarily comprising historical ceramics and glass—a concentrated artefact scatter ($n = > 50$) was documented at the location marked on the attached map. The potential extent of the historical site has been delineated with a yellow line on this map, based on on-site observations. However, further archaeological investigation would be required to clarify the full extent of the artefact scatter.

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The historical artefact scatter included complete glass bottles, leather shoes, metal fragments, bricks and brick fragments, glass and ceramic fragments. Some items had been recently repositioned on or within a nearby dead tree trunk, suggesting modern interference unrelated to the original depositional context.

Preliminary dating of the artefacts places them approximately between the late 1800s and early 1900s, consistent with the site's historical use as a Sewage Farm and Sanitary Depot dating to 1892. Although no surface structural remains were observed during the field survey, historical aerial imagery confirms that buildings once stood west of the artefact concentration, with smaller outbuildings likely nearby. These structures were demolished between 1958 and 1967, and their absence aligns with the site's current open and undeveloped condition.

Following demolition, the land appears to have been used for grazing or light agricultural purposes. These activities may have contributed to the dispersal or degradation of archaeological materials, particularly in areas affected by trampling, erosion, or vegetation clearance. Nonetheless, the survival of a concentrated artefact scatter suggests that subsurface integrity may persist in less disturbed areas.

In summary, the artefact scatter likely reflects domestic or occupational activity associated with now-demolished structures—potentially outbuildings or workspaces linked to the former Bendigo Sanitary Depot. Alternatively, the assemblage may represent refuse disposal practices concurrent with nightsoil treatment, which was historically ploughed into the land.

9. Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The site at 2–10 Piper Lane comprises a portion of former Crown land historically associated with the Wellsford Sanitation Depot or Bendigo Sewage Farm and Manure Depot, gazetted in 1892. Its establishment was a direct response to mounting public health concerns and complaints about unsanitary conditions in Bendigo during the 1870s to 1880s. The relocation of sewage treatment operations to this site marked a significant shift in the city's approach to waste management.

The artefact scatter may be associated with two overlapping historical processes:

- Refuse disposal practices: Historical records and newspaper accounts (e.g. Bendigo Advertiser, 1943) indicate that trade refuse was deposited at the sewage farm. This was due to ongoing rat infestations and broader sanitation concerns occurring in the Bendigo region. The artefacts may relate to these disposal activities and they may offer insights into the material culture of Bendigo's residents and the evolving patterns of urban waste management.
- Depot operations and occupational activity: Alternatively, the artefacts may reflect the daily routines of depot workers and the infrastructure of the sanitation depot itself. In this context, the scatter could represent domestic or



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work-related refuse linked to outbuildings or workspaces that once stood nearby, as confirmed by historical aerial imagery.

How is it significant?

The site at 2–10 Piper Lane is of local historical and archaeological significance because it retains material evidence that can contribute to understanding historical sanitation practices, occupational activity, and waste disposal systems in regional Victoria. The concentrated artefact scatter identified during the CHMP survey—including complete glass bottles, glass, ceramics, leather shoes, brick and metal fragments—suggests a coherent deposit with potential subsurface integrity, despite some modern disturbance. Its proximity to the documented Bendigo Sanitary Depot/Wellsford Sanitation Depot, which operated from 1892 into the mid-20th century, strengthens the likelihood that these materials are linked either to depot operations or to refuse disposal processes. If associated with trade refuse or domestic waste, the artefacts may offer insights into the material culture of Bendigo's residents and sanitation workers, including the tools, routines, and infrastructure used in early waste management. Given the site's undeveloped condition and limited recent disturbance, there is reasonable potential for subsurface features such as trench remnants, refuse pits, or structural footings to survive in the broader area. These could provide stratified archaeological contexts suitable for controlled excavation and analysis, making the site a rare and valuable opportunity to investigate sanitation landscapes in regional Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The site is significant at the local level for its ability to illuminate Bendigo's early public health infrastructure and sanitation practices. It is directly associated with the Bendigo Sanitary Depot/Wellsford Sanitation Depot, a purpose-built facility gazetted in 1892 in response to mounting concerns over urban hygiene and waste management. Historical accounts, including a detailed 1913 inspection report, portray the depot as a model of early 20th-century sanitation—methodical, hygienic, and professionally operated. The historical artefact scatter identified during the survey may reflect either refuse disposal practices or occupational activity linked to depot operations, offering rare material insights into the lived experience of sanitation workers and the broader community's relationship with waste.

Archaeologically, the site retains integrity in a concentrated artefact scatter and may contain subsurface deposits capable of yielding further information about depot logistics, refuse handling, and environmental engineering. Its proximity to Bendigo Creek and Spring Gully Channel situates it within a historically modified landscape shaped by sludge management and drainage works. The site also reflects broader patterns of land transformation, from sanitation infrastructure to grazing and light agricultural use following the depot's closure.

10. Suggested Protection :

11. Threat

Is the place under any threat? If so, what is the threat?

The site is currently proposed for development for an industrial subdivision.

12. References / Informants

Please list books or other sources that may provide historical information about this place.

13. Attachments

- Site card supporting documents-1 WH.zip
- Site card supporting documents-2 WH.pdf

Historical archaeological site card

- Spatial Extent files WH.zip
- Application form WH.pdf
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14. Recording archaeologist's details

First Name:

Surname:

Business or organisation name: Vestigio Heritage Pty Ltd

Position title:

Business or company address:

Email address:

Telephone:

15. Declaration

I state that the information I have given on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge.



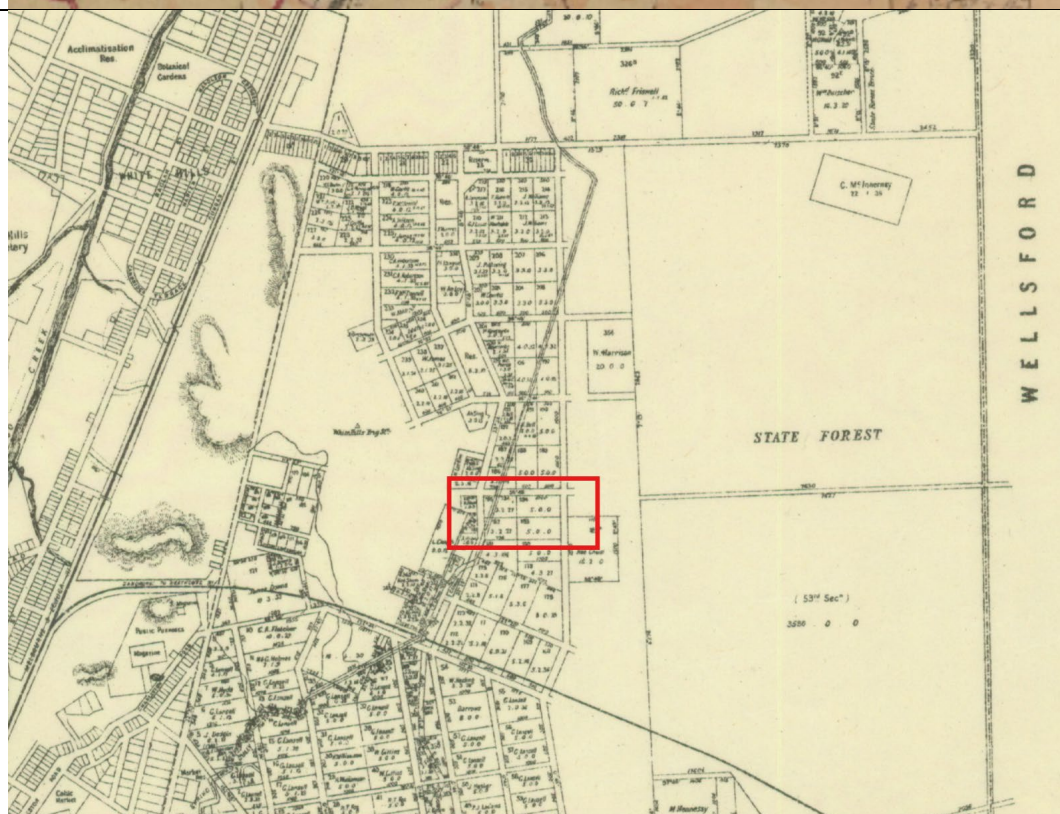
History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

1882 Squatters Run –
Barnedown West.
Site location
approximately
circled red



This plan dates to
1926, however, it is
likely depicting the
region approximately
in the 1880s, prior to
the land being
chosen for the
Sewage Farm &
Manure Depot site in
1892.

Site location
approximately within
red area.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

This plan dates to 1926.

Site location approximately within red area, and formed part of the 'Sewage Farm & Manure Depot'. This plan also shows the area to the east as an extension to the depot (gazetted 1894)





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

File extracted from archives obtained from PROV – ‘Proposed Aerodrome Bendigo – Parish of Sandhurst’, C88362. These files date between 1942-1943.

The Sewage Farm & Manure Depot is being proposed for the future Bendigo Aerodrome (current airport).



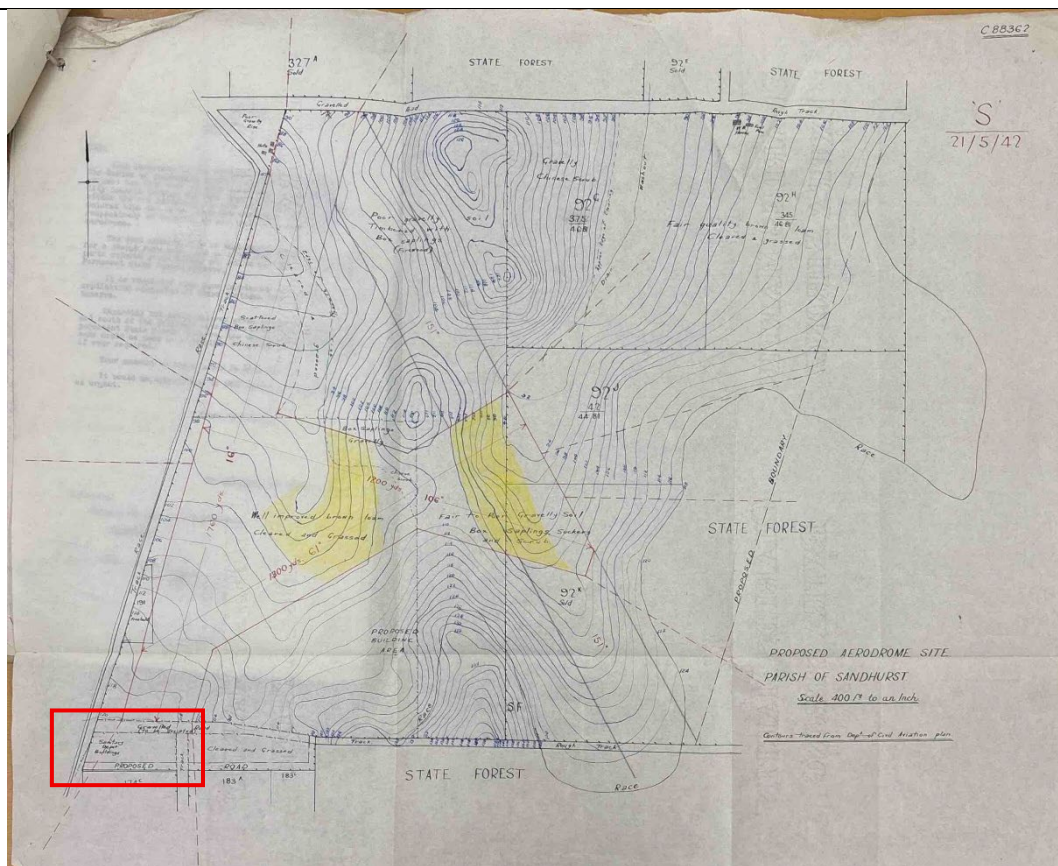


History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Part of the files
'Proposed
Aerodrome Bendigo
– Parish of
Sandhurst', C88362.

This plan formed
part of the
Department of Civil
Aviation Engineer's
report depicting the
proposed aerodrome
site.

The site under
assessment is
outlined in red. A
close up of this area
is provided below.

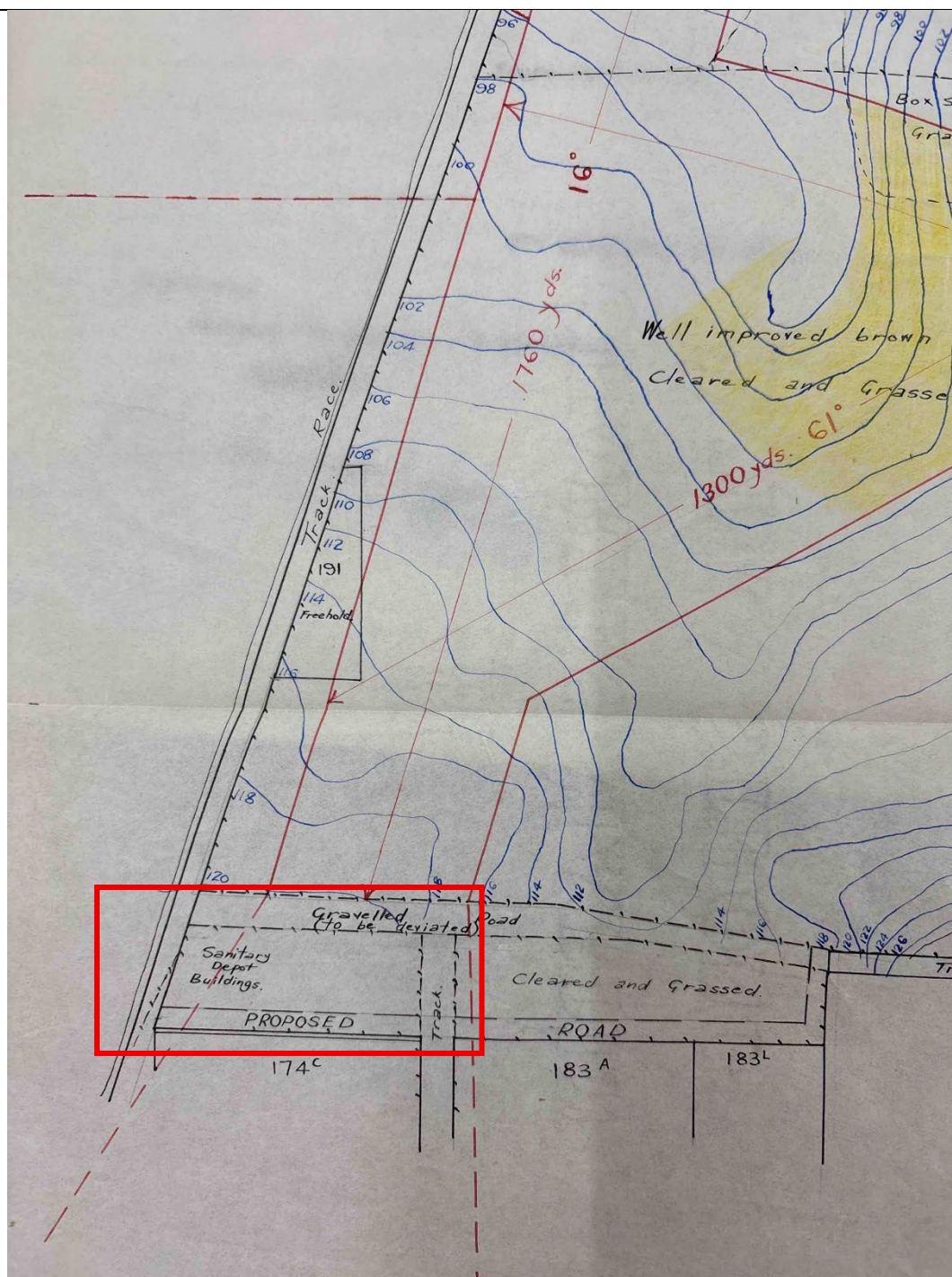




History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Part of the files
'Proposed
Aerodrome Bendigo
– Parish of
Sandhurst', C88362.

Close up of the site
under investigation;
this survey plan
locates the Sanitary
Depot buildings at 2-
10 Piper Lane, East
Bendigo.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Part of the files
'Proposed
Aerodrome Bendigo
- Parish of
Sandhurst', C88362.

The Sanitary Depot
buildings are
described as being
located in the 'south-
west corner' of the
proposed aerodrome
site. The City
Engineer proposes to
have the buildings
removed and have
the sewage disposed
of elsewhere.

PROPOSED AERODROME SITE
PARISH OF SANDHURST.
The Surveyor General.

C.88362.

The area desired for an aerodrome site is shown
on litho at back of file.

I have interviewed the City Engineer and the Town
Clerk, who supplied me with the Department of Civil Engineer's report
and contour plan. Copy of the report and tracing of the contour plan
marked S-21/5/42 are attached. Plan S-21/5/42 shows also general
description of the area and positions of proposed runways. The work
necessary for the preparation of these and the estimated cost are dealt
with in the Aviation Engineer's report.

SANITARY DEPOT. (Temporary Reserve.)

As most of Bendigo is sewered the amount of sewage now
being deposited here is small. The City Engineer proposes that the
buildings in the south-west corner be removed and the sewage disposed of
elsewhere. About 135 acres comprising most of the southern half of
the Reserve has been cleared and used for the disposal of sewage.
Most of the remainder is timbered.

The preparation of the cleared area for the deposition
of sewage was costly. The City Engineer estimates the cost at about
£ 15. per acre, - a total of about £ 2,000.

I estimate its present improved value at £ 35, per acre.
The whole reserved area I value as under:-

135 acres at £ 35. per acre.	£ 4,725.
20 acres at £ 5. per acre.	100.
10 acres at £ 20. per acre.	200.
184 acres at £ 1. per acre.	184.
Total	£ 5,209, (say £5200.)

ALLOTMENTS 92 G.H.J. and K.

These are classified 1st. at £ 1. per acre. Allotment
92H. and about half of 92G. are cleared and grassed. There is a weather-
board house and outbuildings on Allotment 92H. It may however be decided
to exclude the cleared area and the house from the proposed site. See
paragraph 5 of the Engineer's report.

There is at present no aerodrome in the vicinity of
Bendigo. A Permissive Occupancy for an Aerodrome over an area of about
90 acres, fronting Finn Street was formerly issued to the Council, and
about £ 30,000 was spent in grading it. However, before the completion
of the work it was taken over by the Commonwealth as a site for an Ordnance
Factory. The area now desired is much larger-about a square mile. The
initial cost of preparing three runways as estimated by the Department of
Aviation's Engineer would be about £ 5,000. This does not include the
fourth landing strip, buildings, extensions and approach roads.

Since the Sanitary Depot is no longer required as such, I
see no objection to its use for an aerodrome. I understand that in similar
cases Permissive Occupancies are issued by the Department, and the same
procedure should satisfy requirements in this case. Subject to Forests
report, the portions of State Forest desired could, after excision, be
included.

Regarding the "Possible Future Extensions" shown on
litho. The only action that the Council desires the Department to take at
present is to withhold the unsold land from alienation. In the event of
applications to purchase being received, special consideration could be
given to the Council's request.

E.W. Mahon.

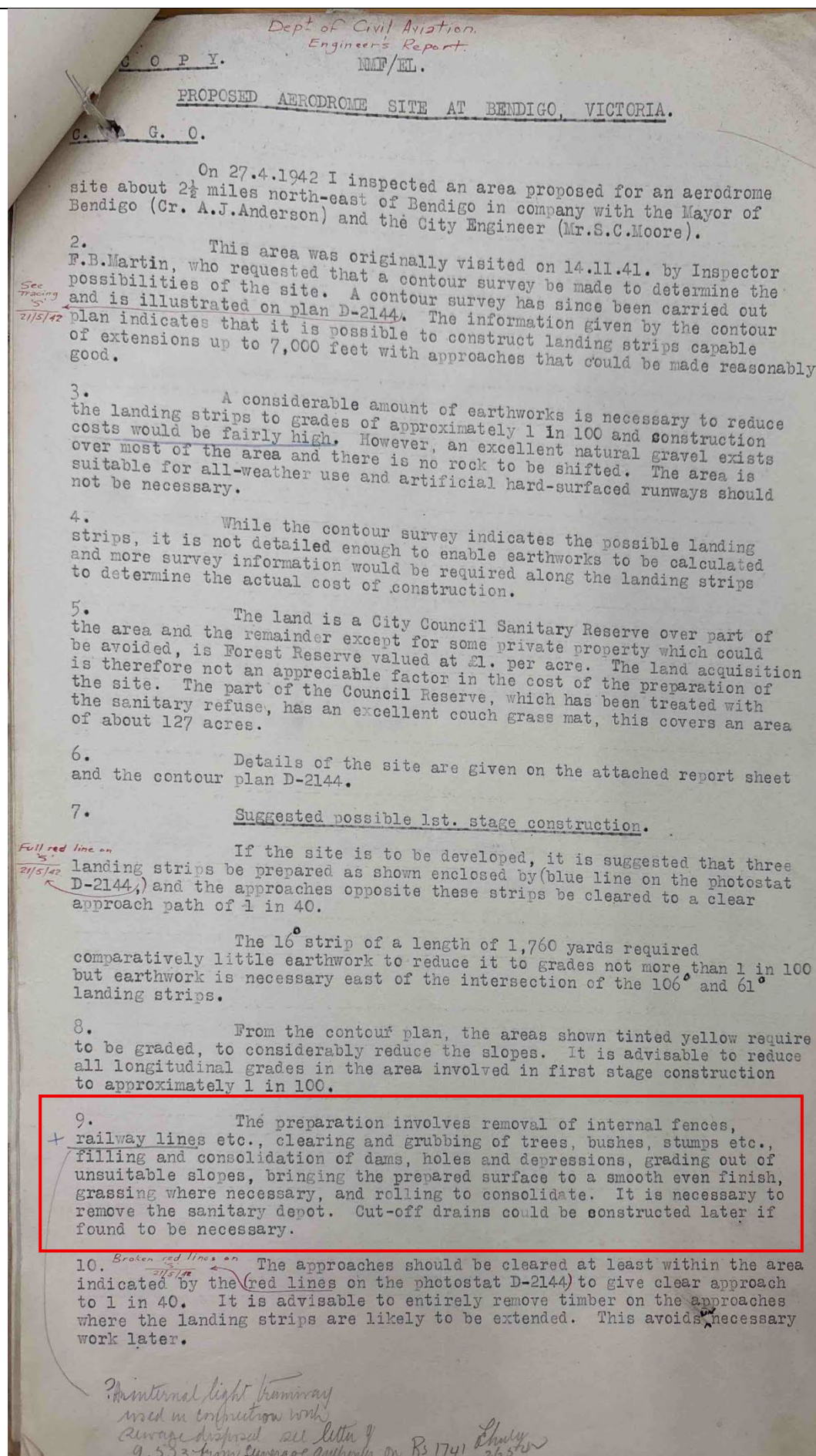
21/5/42.



History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Part of the files
'Proposed
Aerodrome Bendigo
– Parish of
Sandhurst', C88362.

Other features
associated with the
Sewage Farm are
described here,
including internal
fences, an internal
light tramway, dams,
holes and
depressions, drains.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Part of the files
'Proposed
Aerodrome Bendigo
– Parish of
Sandhurst', C88362.

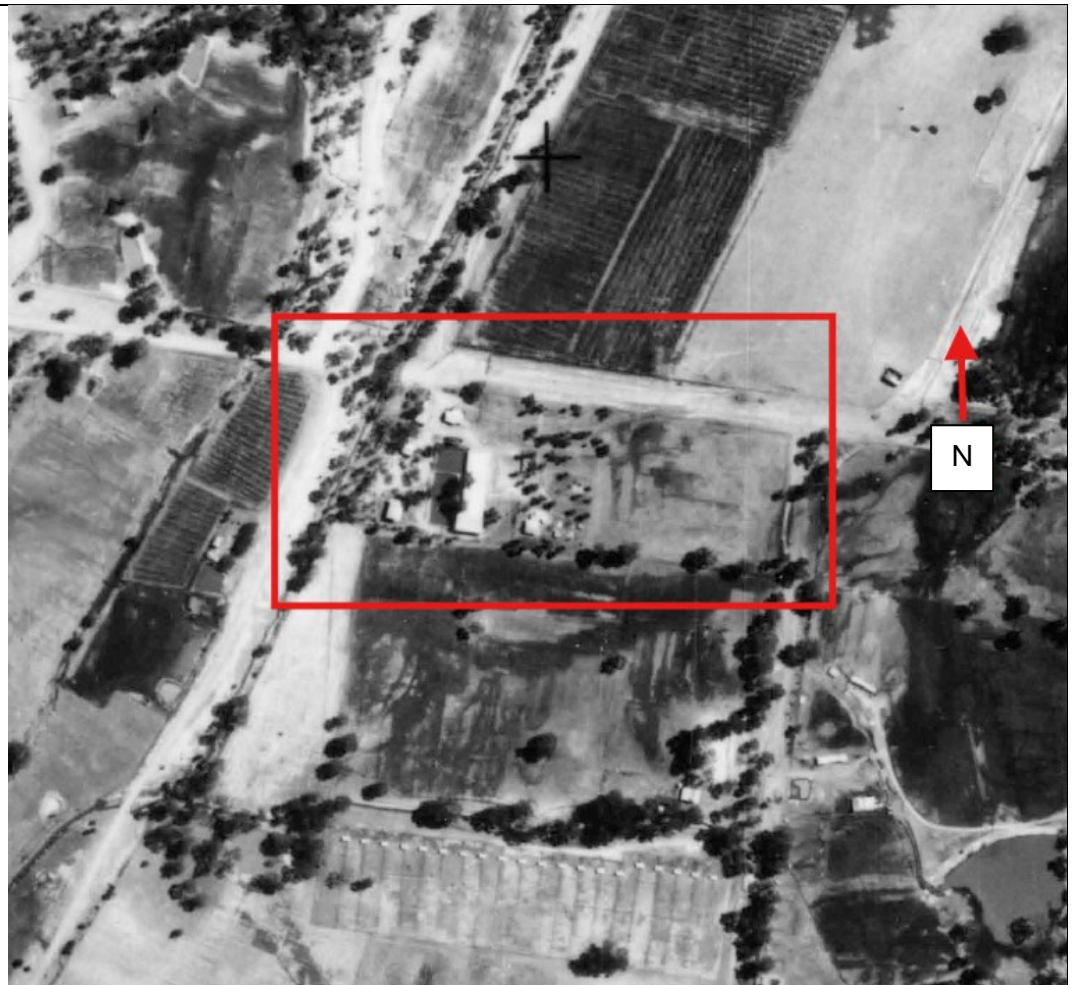
Plan of proposed
aerodrome site.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

1947 aerial showing Sanitary Depot buildings, as confirmed in the Department of Civil Aviation Engineer's report and plan.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

1958 aerial showing
a more close up look
of the Sanitary Depot
buildings



1967 aerial showing
the Sanitary Depot
buildings have since
been demolished





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

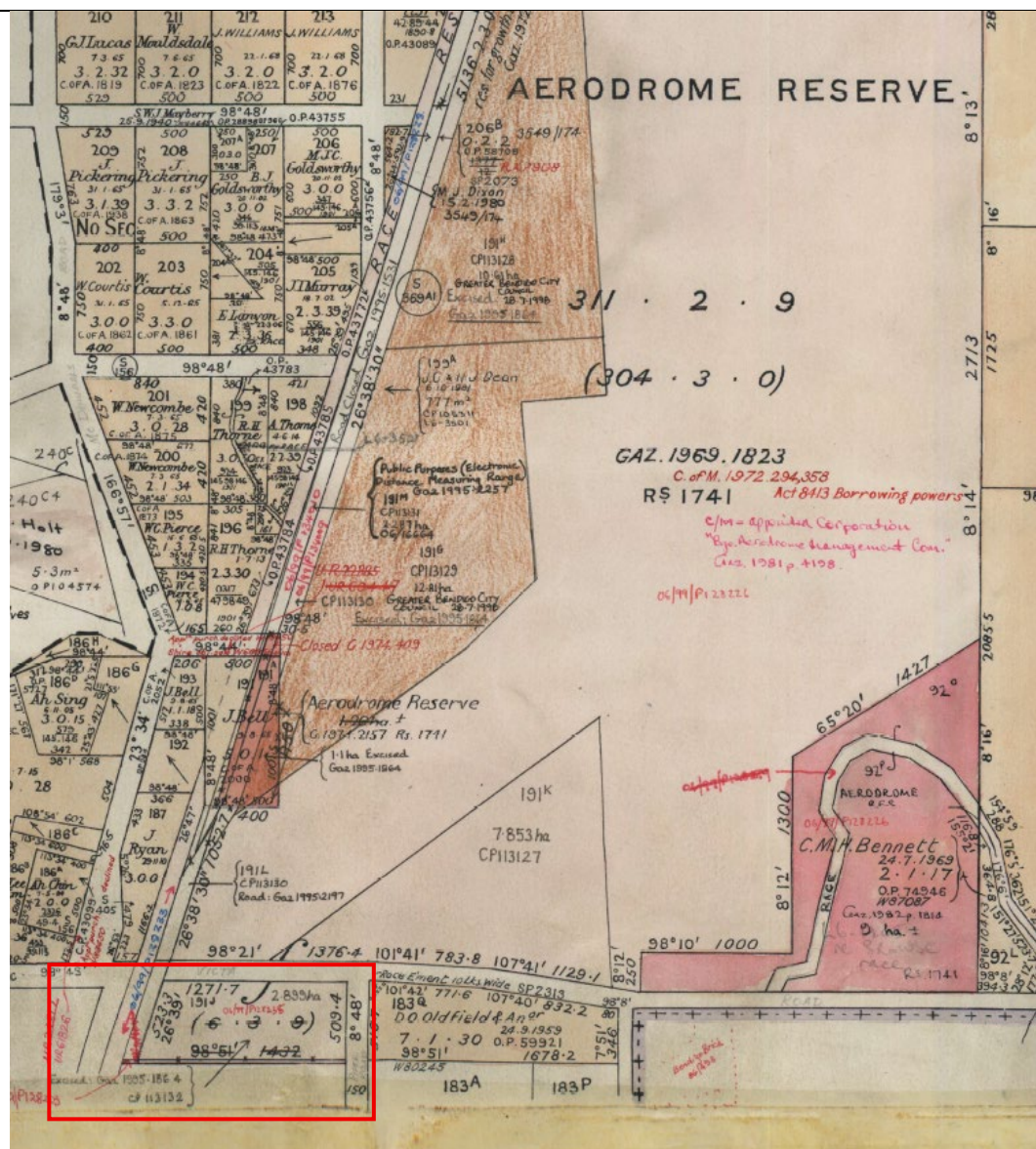
1978 aerial showing the land remained vacant and likely used for pastoral activity since then. The development of land to the north for the proposed aerodrome can be seen underway.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

This latest plan shows the site under investigation (in red) was later reserved as Crown Allotment 191J and gazetted in 1995.

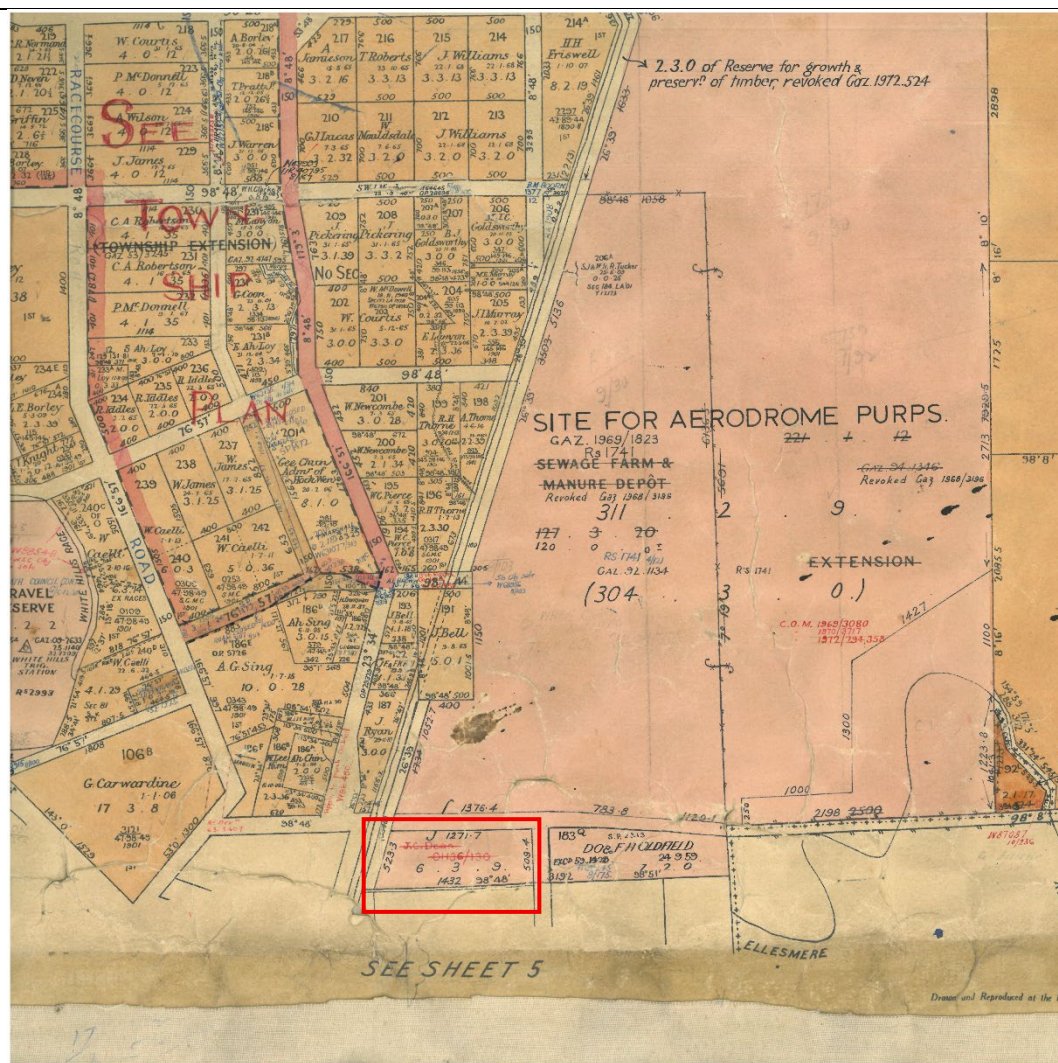




History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Undated plan
provided by Bendigo
Historical Society.

The name J. C. Dean
has been written and
crossed out (in red)
across allotment
191J.





History of Bendigo Sanitary Depot

Victorian Government Gazette 1995 page 1864. Although it appears the site has always remained vacant and has not been developed as part of the Bendigo Aerodrome.	1864 G 28 20 July 1995 RAINBOW—The temporary reservation by Order in Council of 28 April 1897 of an area of 366.54 hectares of land in the Township of Rainbow, Parish of Werrap (formerly mallee allotment 22 and part of mallee allotment 23, Parish of Werrap) as a site for Timber and Water Supply purposes, revoked as to part by various Orders, so far only as the portion containing 5.039 hectares indicated by hatching on the plan published in the Victoria Government Gazette on 22 June 1995—page 1527—(Rs 191). SANDHURST—The temporary reservation by Order in Council of 10 June 1969 of an area of 126.08 hectares of land in the Parish of Sandhurst as a site for Aerodrome purposes so far only as— (a) the portion containing 2.899 hectares shown as Crown Allotment 191J, Parish of Sandhurst on Certified Plan No. 113132 lodged in the Central Plan Office; and (b) the portions containing 25 hectares, more or less as indicated by hatching on the plan published in the Victoria Government Gazette on 22 June 1995—page 1527—(Rs 1741). SANDHURST—The temporary reservation by Order in Council of 6 June 1974 of an area of 1.26 hectares, more or less, being Crown Allotment 191A, Parish of Sandhurst as a site for Aerodrome purposes, so far only as the portion containing 1.1 hectares, more or less, as indicated by hatching on the plan published in the Victoria Government Gazette on 22 June 1995—page 1527—(Rs 1741).