

HAWTHORN PARK

Address	112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan	Date Inspected	September 2023 & August 2024
Construction Date	c. 1881	Period	Late Victorian



Hawthorn Park from Olliers Road.
(Source: RBA, September 2023)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT?

Hawthorn Park at 112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan, is significant. It was constructed as a homestead on an initially larger agricultural holding on behalf of businessman and farmer, George Ronald, in 1881. The prolific Ballarat-based architect Henry Richard Caselli was responsible for the design.

The significance of Hawthorn Park is attributed to its original form and fabric, namely its principal hipped roof section (slate tiles) and rear attached crenelated parapeted (unpainted render) bays with skillion wing (short-sheeted corrugated sheeting), bracketed eaves cornice and string course (moulded bricks), bichromatic brickwork (red and cream), all chimneys (inclusive of the Federation period eastern replacement), return conclave verandah with cast-iron open columns, frieze, and brackets, and fenestration (six-panelled front door/sidelights and timber-framed double-hung sashes).

The modest, skillion-roofed timber structure with a red brick chimney to the rear of the homestead is an early and significant outbuilding at the place.

The pair of Italian cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) flanking the entrance to the western drive are early surviving plantings and are significant to the place.

Non-original or heavily modified elements, including the northern extension of the rear skillion wing, are not significant.

HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

Hawthorn Park is of historical (Criterion A) and aesthetic (Criterion E) significance to the City of Ballarat.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

Hawthorn Park is of historical significance as an exemplar of a high-class late Victorian-period homestead in rural Ballarat. It is a key illustration of agricultural development during this era in the area and a noteworthy residential example of the manifold output of the prominent late 19th-century Ballarat architect Henry R. Caselli. The original purpose of the skillion-roofed timber outbuilding with a chimney at the rear of the homestead is not known, but it is an early structure at the place that reflects its formative functioning as a farm complex. (Criterion A)

Hawthorn Park is of aesthetic significance as a generally intact and bold instance of a late Victorian-period architect-designed villa, distinguished by its lively bichromatic brickwork and unusually expressive rear secondary wing, which features rendered crenellated side bays. The contrast of the residence's pronounced underlying symmetry and classicised proportions with its conspicuously florid cast-iron ornamentation is purposefully striking, imparting a sense of grandeur to the frontage commensurate with its status as an affluent country seat. The pair of Italian cypresses on either side of the entrance to the original western drive are early plantings that contribute to the sense of arrival at Hawthorn Park, which is further augmented by its ample garden setting. (Criterion E)

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Historically, the boundaries of Mount Rowan – which fall within the Country of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples – have been indefinite. At their broadest extent, the district encompassed the area from its namesake – the extinct volcano that dominates the landscape between Cummins (north) and Sims (south) roads – to Burrumbeet Creek in the south and southwest. Then north towards Sulky, east past Midland Highway (formerly Creswick Road), and northwest to the edges of the township of Miners Rest. The landform is of flat volcanic plains dissected by fertile alluvial terraces and underground springs with some low-relief cone-like hills, of which Mount Rowan is the largest. Prior to European settlement, this area was characterised by open eucalypt forest.¹

The post-contact history of Mount Rowan has been one defined by relative consistency, having emerged from the early 1840s as a lightly populated rural landscape – devoid of an urban centre (that role was initially served by Miners Rest) – on the northern outskirts of Ballarat and Wendouree.

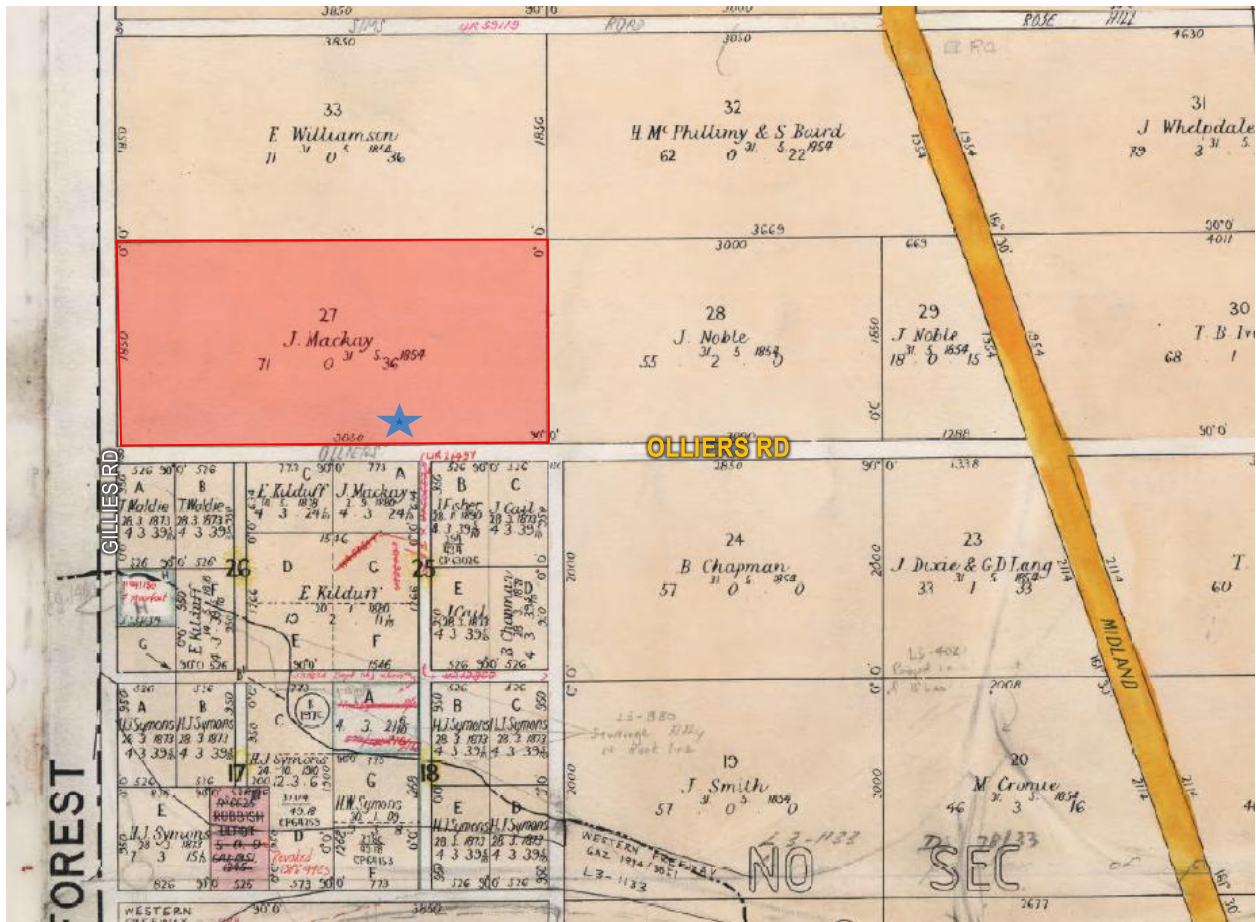
Much of Mount Rowan was initially encompassed within Thomas Waldie's (d. 1884) pastoral run known as Wyndholm (at its peak, over 18,000 acres), on which he obtained a Pre-emptive Right to 640 acres by 1854.² Private sales commenced at pace in the locality from the mid-1850s, with small to medium-sized mixed farms (agricultural/pastoral) rapidly emerging, alongside some limited company-led deep lead exploration and quartz crushing. Mining activity appears to have largely ceased by the early 20th century, with the area characterised in 1905 as a 'post town' encompassing a state school (no. 757, closed 1946), one store, and 'a small, rather scattered population of about 200.'³

The *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History* (July 2024) provides the following contextual summary:

Mount Rowan is a small farming locality north of Ballarat, close to the Creswick Road, and takes its name from a volcanic hill of the same name. The Burrumbeet Creek crosses the area to the south. Crown land allotments were sold for farming from the mid-1850s. A common school was established in the mid-1860s and a Presbyterian Church was built c.1870. A state school was built in 1876 (VGG, 1876) and a local post office was also provided. By the 1930s, there was sparse settlement in the locality (Military map, 1935). The state school closed in 1946 (Watson 2001). A new government secondary school opened in 2019.⁴

PLACE-SPECIFIC HISTORY

The subject land derives from Crown Portion 27 in the Parish of Ballarat, Country of Ripon. This approximately 71-acre (28 ha) parcel was granted by purchase to James Mackay in 1854.⁵



Extract from the Parish of Ballarat with Crown Portion 27 shaded red. The approximate future location of the Hawthorn Park residence is marked by the star. (Source: Parish of Ballarat map, B126, Sheet 2, PROV)

Little of Mackay's activities are known, but he developed the holding agriculturally, naming it *Bellville Farm*.⁶ In 1880, he sold the property to George Ronald.⁷

Ronald (1830-1906), born in Perthshire, Scotland, had joined the gold rush in his mid-twenties and was later described in his obituary as 'one of the earliest arrivals on the [Ballarat] goldfields', having arrived in 1850. He had previously operated a 'large hay and produce store at Smythe's Creek [a branch of the Wardy Yallock river], and amassed a competence, which he invested in real estate.' Ronald's obituary noted that 'at the time of his death he was a considerable property-owner in the city [Ballarat].'⁸ He had married Isabella née Campbell (1841-1918) in 1868, with whom he had two daughters.⁹

Ronald renamed the farm 'Hawthorn (sometimes spelled with an 'e' at the end) Park' and was responsible for commissioning the existing villa, which likely replaced or supplanted an earlier residence.

As a sign of his relative affluence and social cachet, Ronald was able to use the services of the well-known Ballarat-based professional architect Henry Richard Caselli (see below) to design his country seat.

Tenders for Ronald's 'brick residence' were run by Caselli in early 1881.¹⁰ In July of that year, the Ballarat Star could report:

Mr. G. Ronald's Private Residence — A very handsome private residence is now in [the] course of erection in Hawthorn Park, Wendouree [as Mount Rowan was occasionally referred to at the time], for Mr. G. Ronalds, farmer. The building is of brick, with a slate roof, and the design, prepared by Mr Caselli, architect, is a very neat one. The amount to be expended is about £800, and the contractors are Leatsh [?] and Akins.¹¹

Ronald held Hawthorn Park until early 1905 (retiring to Ballarat), after which he sold it to John Henry Adeney, an 'accountant and farmer' of Ballarat.¹² It was then acquired by Henry Newtown, a farmer, in 1912, staying with his family into the early 1970s.¹³ After which the original holding (Crown Portion 27) was progressively broken up.¹⁴

The following aerial image depicts Hawthorn Park in 1934.¹⁵ It shows the primary form and rear attached crenelated bays with interlinking skillion section (later extended to the north). There appears to be a formal front garden, including a straight path from the verandah to Olliers Road (flanked by regularly placed plantings), which has been lost, as has a large stand of trees to the west and north of the villa and at least most of the outbuildings. The existing drive to the west of the house is apparent (as it appears are the flanking Italian cypresses at its entrance). The aerial image shows the broader property comprising of paddocks and fields.



Aerial photograph, dated March 1934, of *Hawthorn Park* (yellow arrow) with Crown Portion 27, its original holding outlined in dashed red. (Source: Map2806, Run 6, Frame 13241, Geoscience Australia)



Close-up *Hawthorn Park* (March 1934). Other than the villa, the only surviving element of some note appears to be the western drive and the skillion-roofed timber outbuilding (indicated) at the rear of the homestead, which survived. The front fence does not appear to be a hedge, as extant. (Source: Map2806, Run 6, Frame 13241, Geoscience Australia)



Aerial image of Hawthorn Park dated 1994. Note the frontage had been largely cleared.
 (Source: *Aerial Imagery Ballarat Area, Visualising Ballarat: Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat*,
https://www.visualisingballarat.org.au/visbal_map.php)

HENRY RICHARD CASELLI (1816-85)

Caselli, born in Cornwell, southwest England, to Italian parents, was a notable early professional architect in Ballarat.¹⁶ He was apprenticed in 'early boyhood' into a shipbuilding yard but, upon completion, undertook further studies to qualify as a naval architect/engineer.¹⁷ Caselli drew note in England and the Continent for his invention of an improved gun carriage platform and later worked in Germany overseeing improvements to coastal batteries.

In his late thirties, Caselli immigrated to Australia, arriving in Geelong in 1853, where he accepted the role of a surveyor of Corio Bay Harbour for Lloyd's Shipping Company. The next year, Caselli shifted to Ballarat in the halcyon days of its gold rush. He had 'moderate success' as a miner on the diggings at Pennyweight Flat, Dalton's Flat, Eureka, and other sites, 'but feeling that Ballarat would become a thriving centre Mr Caselli determined to cease his wanderings and settle down to business as an architect.'¹⁸

Caselli's design output in Ballarat and its hinterland between the mid-1850s until his death was prolific. Alongside an array of substantial civic, religious, industrial, and commercial projects, he was responsible for 'scores of private residences, including some of the mansions of the district, being able to work across several popular styles, including late Regency, the Italianate, and Gothic.'¹⁹ Publicly spirited, Caselli was framed as a leading Ballarat citizen at his death, having been closely involved in several local organisations.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Hawthorn Park is a single-storey late Victorian-period villa at a deep setback from the north side of Olliers Road on generally level land. The vicinity of the dwelling is well-planted, and a tall hedge runs the front title boundary, extending to flank the original/early unsealed drive in the west. The drive entrance is defined by a pair of Italian cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*), which appear to be apparent (on close inspection) in the 1934 aerial photograph. These are the only identifiable early plantings remaining within the frontage of the place.



Panoramic aerial photograph of Hawthorn Park (red arrow) with the skillion-roofed timber outbuilding circled.
(Source: Nearmap, December 2024)

The residence has a contained footprint, the principal part of which is surmounted by a hipped roof (rear M-profile) clad in slate (replacement galvanised flashing to ridgelines) with a bracketed (possibly timber) eaves cornice, including moulded cream brick stringcourse. A pair of bichrome brick chimneys with moulded rendered caps (unpainted) puncture the north-south ridgelines, reinforcing the underlying symmetry of the overall composition.

Walls visible from the public realm are of bichrome brickwork in a stretcher bond (indicative of cavity walling in this period). Red face bricks are evident to the body with thin white mortar joints, possibly tuckpointed. Cream bricks are used for corners and openings, bestowing a quoining effect.

A conclave-roofed raised verandah (contemporary corrugated metal sheeting) extends the façade (south elevation), returning on both sides. Its deck, basecourse, and front (south) stairs are not visible from the public realm. The verandah is supported by its original and intricate cast-iron openwork columns, frieze and brackets (elaborate floral pattern).

The central front entrance features a six-panelled timber door with sidelights (upper part section has fine glazing bars, timber moulding to the dado). Toplights or transom windows are not visible from the public realm but may be present. On either side are tall, recessed timber-framed double-hung sashes with masonry (possibly granite) sills. This window type is repeated in the side primary elevations as well.

Attached at the rear of the primary footprint is a bichrome secondary wing that is defined by crenellated (unpainted render) side bays that step out in line with the outer edge of the return verandah. The bays also display a bracketed eaves cornice with string course, but some of its elements are missing (at least from the eastern bay). The outer face of the bay includes a timber-framed sash window with cream brick voussoirs.

The crenellated parapet conceals a skillion roof clad in short-sheeted corrugated metal (original or early) with two tall chimneys in the manner of the forward pair, except that the eastern one has been replaced by a plainer red brick chimney. The skillion volume that extends past the crenellated side walls is a modification or addition.

Several metres north of the primary residence is a small skillion-roofed (corrugated metal) weatherboard-clad outbuilding with a plain red brick chimney to its east elevation and limited openings, although two-paned double-hung sashes are visible in the north wall. This assessment has only inspected this outbuilding via contemporary aerial photography, but it presents as an early agricultural structure.



Hawthorn Park, from Olliers Road.
(Source: RBA, August 2024)



Close-up of *Hawthorn Park*'s east elevation from Olliers Road.
(Source: September 2023)



Hawthorn Park, close-up of the façade.
(Source: RBA, August 2024)



Close-up of eastern crenelated parapeted bay (replacement Federation-era chimney evident). Note missing bracket.
(Source: RBA, August 2024)



Italian cypress trees, flanking drive with *Hawthorn Park* right of frame.
(Source: August 2024)

THEMATIC CONTEXT

GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, vol. 2, final report (interim), July 2024:

3.4 Adapting and exploiting the land and its resources

3.4.5 Farming

The gold rushes in the Ballarat district hastened the development of farming in the Ballarat area, which quickly became a highly productive land use owing to the good soils and temperate climate. The sudden influx of thousands of people to the goldfields in the early 1850s led to a high demand for fresh produce, particularly meat, grain and potatoes. Licensed slaughterhouses were also established, which were required under the health regulations. Farming ensured a ready market for agricultural produce and also encouraged the development of flour mills. Yields of wheat in the northern area of the City of Ballarat in the 1870s and 1880s were high, and the area's overall production made up a sizeable component of Victoria's total yield [Blainey, *A History of Victoria*, Cambridge University Press, 2013]. So great was the demand for fresh food at the Ballarat goldfields that supply also came from much further afield, including the rich potato country around Koroit in southwestern Victoria, over 100 miles away [Doyle, *Moyne Shire Thematic Environmental History*, 2006]. By the 1880s, once farm production had become well established, Ballarat was also supplying produce to Melbourne.

3.5 Shaping the city, towns and villages

3.5.5 Building Homes

Victorian-era houses predominate in the early residential areas of Ballarat, including Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Eureka, Mount Pleasant and Canadian. Later periods are also represented by the existing housing stock, especially the Edwardian/Federation and interwar eras. There are fewer houses from the postwar period. In the areas that were later to develop, such as Ballarat North and Alfredton, there are still many Victorian and Edwardian homes but also a greater number of interwar and postwar homes. In Wendouree there is mixture of styles, with a large proportion of Federation

and interwar residences, and also a fair share of postwar homes. Generally, the occurrence of postwar housing increases with the distance from the city centre. Many of the postwar homes that have been built in early mining areas, such as Ballarat East, are constrained by the small suburban lot sizes of the 1850s and have been designed accordingly.

[...]

Victorian era

The Ballarat municipality was born and came of age in the Victorian era, which officially began in 1848 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The building styles and methods that pastoralists and others brought with them to Buninyong and Ballarat from the late 1830s, however, more often followed a simple Georgian style or colonial vernacular traditions.

Extremes of wealth and economic hardship that were a product of the gold-mining environment saw a corresponding variation in the style and quality of homes. Houses built in the Victorian era in the City of Ballarat range from the most modest cottages to grandiose displays of wealth.

[...]

As permanent settlement took shape on the goldfields, small dwellings were built to a simple square or rectangular form plan. These early cottages retained vestiges of a colonial vernacular Georgian style, despite the passage of several years since Queen Victoria's death. Cottages were typically double-fronted with a symmetrical facade, but smaller cottages that were only one room wide were also built. They were typically built without verandahs and were set flush with the roadside ... They were predominantly timber-framed and clad in weatherboards ...

Those who could afford it built better-quality homes or called on the assistance of an architect ...

[...]

As settlement progressed in the suburbs of Ballarat and the surrounding towns in the 1870s and 1880s, many of the small rudimentary timber cottages of the 1850s were replaced with larger, more permanent homes. New homes tended to be double-fronted, with a symmetrical facade, and followed a square or rectangular format, usually with an M-plan hipped roof. Although more often built of timber, bricks were also used. Typically, a front verandah was added, which was framed in decorative cast iron. Decorative cast iron for domestic use was produced locally at the Phoenix Foundry and included some distinctive designs as well as unusual openwork verandah columns [Landmark Heritage, 'Mossmount House' and Garden Heritage Citation', 3 November 2022,p22].

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Hawthorn Park is a fine example of an architect-designed, late Victorian period, bichromatic brick country villa. Broadly speaking (period/material), this type is well-represented under the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Ballarat Planning Scheme. However, the majority of these listings are concentrated within the urban core of Ballarat (often in precincts) or along historic arterial routes leading to the centre. To date, rural areas in the municipality have not been closely reviewed from a heritage perspective, despite farming and agricultural development forming pronounced themes in the shaping of Ballarat's cultural landscape.

At the time of the assessment, only five homestead-type properties in the LGA were heritage-listed:

- Ballantrae, 7208 Midland Highway, Buninyong (H0551, H0133). A State-significant, highly ornate Gothic Revival-style timber dwelling, built in 1857 – set in extensive landscaped grounds but historically seemingly not a working/agricultural property ('gentleman's retreat').
- Lauderdale (Homestead), 7 Prince Street, Alfredton (H0486, H01). A State-significant and substantial, architect-designed (J.A. Doane) Free Classical-style homestead (1863) with a corbie gabled outbuilding, both of basalt. Architecturally elaborate (bracketed eaves, dressed quoining, window surrounds, and decorative verandah). Formerly rural, now set within well-established suburban environs.
- Barnfield Cottage and Barn, 195 Kennedys Road, Miners Rest (H0138). No heritage assessment is available; however, the list includes a mid-Victorian period hipped house with bichromatic brickwork to the facade (at least)

and a verandah that returns to both sides as well as a basalt outbuilding (squared random courses, roughly worked).

- Roxburgh Dairy Farm (Former), 624 Glenelg Highway, Smythes Creek (HO212). A small complex with two timber residences dating from the mid-to-late Victorian period respectively, a double-height wooden 'Cow Shed', and some significant plantings (a pair of Canary Island Date palms and several Monterey cypress trees).
- Lintel Grange Homestead Complex, 127 Edmonston Road, Addington (HO232). An evolved mid-to-late Victorian period hipped-roofed farmstead of basalt construction (squared random coursed and finely dressed, tuckpointed façade) with white local granite accents and a classically refined, cast-iron filigree character. Various other significant elements, including multiple and varied late 19th century outbuildings, Golden privet hedge fencing, and some historic plantings (Weeping Nootka cypress, ash and walnut trees).

Hawthorn Park compares fairly closely to Barnfield Cottage (HO138), which also has bichromatic brickwork but lacks cast-iron ornamentation (whether never extant or missing is unknown). In general, all of the above noted comparators are aesthetically striking, encapsulating the variety of commodious rural homestead types that developed in Ballarat's hinterland during an era defined by prosperity and economic/agricultural growth. Hawthorn Park is on par with these examples in terms of its architectural distinctiveness/refinement and general intactness.

As discussed, the architect behind Hawthorn Park, Caselli, was very active across Ballarat and the surrounding areas over the mid-to-late Victorian era; however, most of his identified buildings are his non-domestic projects (churches, civic, industrial, etc.). Caselli's residential body of work has not been comprehensively surveyed, but in type and expression, it clearly ranged widely, encompassing more modest cottages and villas as well as grander developments. His perhaps finest surviving masonry design is the eclectic and distinctly asymmetric multi-hipped villa at 16 Seymour Crescent, Soldiers Hill (HO102), built in 1872, which has particularly lively bichromatic brickwork.

OTHER HERITAGE LISTINGS

Previously identified as 'Margaret Maher Homestead' (the name referring to a contemporary owner-occupant) and recommended for local heritage listing (NB. address incorrectly given as 'Millers Road') – Andrew Ward, *Ballarat Heritage Review 1998*, vol. 4, City of Ballarat, p178

RECOMMENDATIONS

HERITAGE OVERLAY SCHEDULE CONTROLS

External paint controls	No
Internal alteration controls	No
Tree controls	Yes (front Italian cypresses)
Solar energy system controls	Yes
Outbuilding or Fences	Yes (skillion-roofed timber building with chimney)
Prohibited uses permitted	Yes
Aboriginal heritage place	No

EXTENT OF THE HERITAGE OVERLAY

Hawthorn Park at 112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan, is recommended for inclusion under the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Ballarat Planning Scheme with a reduced extent of overlay (not title boundaries), as depicted in the aerial photograph below.

The recommended HO polygon extends from the cardinal building line to the southern and western title boundary, east by approximately 45m (to the established tree line), and north by 15 metres. This curtilage encompasses the significant residence, the pair of Italian cypresses to the western drive, and the rear skillion-roofed outbuilding.



The recommended extent of the heritage overlay for 112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan, is shown approximately in red. The pair of Italian cypresses are identified by the yellow arrow. (Source: Nearmap, February 2025)

ENDNOTES

- 1 See *Native Vegetation – Modelled 1750 Ecological Vegetation Classes*, Department of Energy, Environment, And Climate Action (VIC)
- 2 William Bramwell Withers, *The History of Ballarat, from the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, 2nd ed., 1870, available online, Project Gutenberg Australia, p13
- 3 *The Australian Handbook*, Gordon & Gotch, 1905, p466
- 4 GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, July 2024, vol. 3, p19
- 5 Parish of Ballarat map (notation), B126, Sheet 2, PROV
- 6 'Advertising', *Ballarat Star*, 30 February 1868, p3. (Hugh Mackay, probably a relative of James Mackay, held the title for at least some of its pre-1880 history but does not appear to have been widely associated with the estate – Certificate of Title, vol. 10984, folio 758)
- 7 Certificate of Title, vol. 1169, folio 737. (A preliminary notice of sale of 'Mr. James Mackay's FARM, Mount Rowan' was made in the *Ballarat Star*, 23 February 1880, p3, but without a detailed description of the holding.)
- 8 'Personal Items', *Ballarat Star*, 17 November 1906, p4
- 9 Bruce Jenkins, *Jenkins/Robertson Scottish Family Tree* (public), via Ancestry.com.au, accessed 4 September 2024
- 10 'Advertising', *Ballarat Courier*, 15 February 1881, p3
- 11 'Building improvements in Ballarat', *Ballarat Star*, 22 July 1881, p3
- 12 Certificate of Title, vol. 1169, folio 737
- 13 Certificate of Title, vol. 3608, folio 589
- 14 Certificate of Titles, vol. 8985, folio 202 and vol. 9052, folio 936
- 15 Aerial imagery dated 1933 (RAAF Ballarat) is available online via *Visualising Ballarat* (Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat) but is of a moderately lower quality than the 1934 image reproduced in this citation. (See: https://visualisingballarat.org.au/visbal_map.php).
- 16 GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, vol. 2, final report (interim), July 2024, p357. See also Dorothy Wickham, *The biography of Henry Ricard Caselli: architect*, undergraduate thesis, University of Melbourne, 1977, available online
- 17 'Death of Mr H.R. Caselli, J.P.', *Ballarat Star*, 4 March 1885, p2
- 18 'Death of Mr H.R. Caselli', *Ballarat Star*, 4 March 1885, p2
- 19 A list of known Caselli designs is available at 'Henry R. Caselli', *Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project*, Federation University Australia, updated 6 June 2019, accessed 30 October 2024, https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php?title=Henry_R._Caselli