

## LOBBS' TEAROOMS (FORMER) AND DVLC

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<b>Address</b>	1 Diamond Creek Road, Greensborough
<b>Significance</b>	Local
<b>Construction Date</b>	1925
<b>Period</b>	Interwar
<b>Date Inspected</b>	January 2021



### Statement of Significance

#### What is Significant?

*Lobbs' Tearooms (former) and Diamond Valley Learning Centre (DVLC)* at 1 Diamond Creek Road, Greensborough is significant. It was constructed in 1925 at Greensborough Park, likely to design the City of Heidelberg for use as a tearoom, caretaker's residence and changing facility. The place continued in this role into the late 1960s, operated by a succession of lessees. The building appears to have been officially known as the 'Greensborough Park Tearooms; however, the lengthy occupancy of the last commercial tenants, William and Olive Lobb, saw the name 'Lobbs' Tearooms' popularly adopted. Since 1974, the building has accommodated the DVLC.

The significant elements are the gabled-roofed structure perpendicular to the main thoroughfare and immediately north of the car park's driveway and the latter's exposed rafters, gable ends (timber lattice and weatherboarding), front gabled porch (excluding non-original weatherboard enclosure), walls of painted weatherboard, and timber-framed, double-hung sashes.

The pair of mature English elms (both likely *Ulmus procera*) that frame the porch are early plantings associated with the place's former role as a tearoom and complement its setting.

While illustrative of the DVLC's growth and development, other structures at the place, including the car park are not significant.

#### How is it Significant?

*Lobbs' Tearooms (former) and DVLC* is of historical, rarity, representative and social significance to the City of Banyule.

## Why is it Significant?

*Lobbs' Tearooms (former) and DVLC* is of historical significance as a reasonably intact example of a purpose-built 1920s tearoom/kiosk. It is illustrative of Greensborough Park's early and continuing role as a centre for leisure, sport and recreation, serving light refreshments for visitors, change room facilities for sporting teams and accommodation for the caretaker. More broadly, the building's role as a tearoom reflects the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century reputation of Greensborough as a pleasing landscape frequented by Melbourne excursionists and day-trippers. Many of the tearooms' operators were women. Their association with the building speaks to a layer of often-overlooked female experience during the interwar and postwar years, that of entrepreneurial women running local businesses. The building is also closely associated with the DVLC, which set up at the former tearoom within a year of their formation. This non-profit organisation was one of Victoria's first community education centres and an influential pioneer in facilitating adult female vocational education during the 1970s and 1980s. (Criterion A)

*Lobbs' Tearooms (former) and DVLC* has significance for its rarity as the only known purpose-built tearoom/kiosk remaining in the Greensborough area, where such a typology was once more common. More broadly, the survival of such large interwar timber buildings in the municipality is also uncommon. The pleasant, home-style design of the weatherboard building is also likely representative of the design of outer-suburban tearooms in the Interwar period. (Criterion B and D)

The former tearoom is of social significance for its use by the DVLC. The important, life-changing educational role played by this organisation is valued by a large community of current/former users and is closely tied to the building, out of which the DVLC has operated for over four decades. Such attachment is demonstrated through the continued lively engagement of the diverse array of learners with the place. (Criterion G)

## Description

*Lobb's Tearooms (former) and DVLC* is situated on the eastern boundary of Greensborough Park, between the oval and Diamond Creek Road.



1925 façade – note distinctive fenestration and retention of signage panel

The Interwar period footprint of the single-storey building is formed by two intersecting sections that are orientated diagonally to the nearby thoroughfare, which it addresses at a small setback. Both wings have gabled roofs, clad in replacement corrugated sheet metal, with exposed timber rafter ends. The front wing's ridgeline – initially, over the kiosk/tearoom – sits above the rear, which housed the operator and changerooms. Originally, the latter was narrower but was expanded with the addition of flanking



skillion-roofed extensions that appear to date from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original footprint is depicted in the aerial photograph at the end of this citation.



Eastern elevation – note the skillion-roofed extension, left of frame

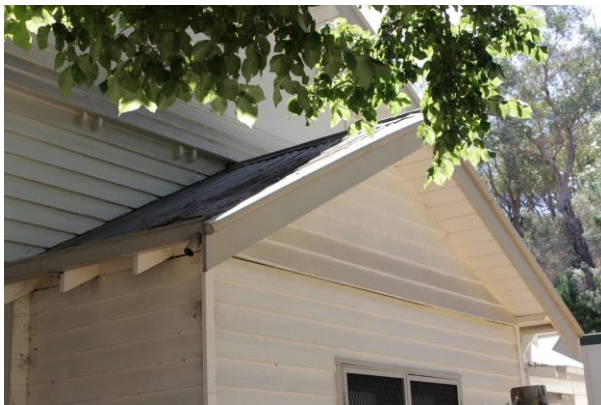


1925 rear – flanking skillion volumes are later additions

The two brick chimneys, evident in historical photographs, are no longer extant, although the timber-lined soffit remains.

Gable ends are finished in weatherboard with a small section of lattice to the apex. The primary front gable has timber brackets and now blank signage panel, which previously accommodated a painted sign ('Greensborough Park Tearooms').

This central gabled porch defines the symmetrical façade and operated as the public entrance to the tearooms. It was previously open and characterised by two groups of paired timber square posts, a low waisted timber/glazed door bordered by high waisted sidelights and raised deck. In recent times, the porch has been enclosed with weatherboarding and no longer functions as an entry. The weatherboard finish with a central notched band to the porch's gable end is likely original.



The gable end and roof form of the porch are likely original



Original fenestration, note 'corner' window

The building is timber-framed and clad in painted weatherboard. Based on historical photographs, the colour scheme has always been light (possibly cream with detail picked out in earthy hues), as it remains.

Original windows are timber-framed double-hung sashes arranged in pairs, including those at the corners of the front (north) elevation. Such 'corner windows' are distinctive (note thick mullion). While an efficient and practical means of bringing light into the tearoom's interior, such fenestration was not typical for the mid-1920s. Such corner windows are more associated with the late Interwar period, raising the possibility that these windows were introduced or modified in the 1930s. Aluminium-frames or horizontal windows elsewhere at the place represent later alterations.

Stylistically, the building's rugged realism and 'natural' and 'honest' material palette of timber reflects the still then prevalent expression of the Arts & Crafts movement. The design, while relatively utilitarian, is also influenced by the homely character of the 1920s bungalow, a case illustrated in particular by the gable arrangement.

The pair of English elms (both likely *Ulmus procera*) situated either side of the north elevation are mature specimens that were likely purposefully planted to enhance the aesthetic of the entrance to the building.



English elm, south of the porch

Attached to the west elevation of the 1925 section of the building are two interconnected gable-roofed weatherboard wings, which were added during the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Their detailing (gable ends, porches, windows, rafter ends) largely mimic the former tearoom, while their siting allows for the legibility of the former tearoom to remain interpretable. A bitumen finished driveway and car parking edge the building to its east and south.



View to later additions from the rear carpark – the former tearoom is situated right of frame



## History

### Context

The City of Banyule covers the unceded Country of the Wurundjeri-willam people, who have inhabited and managed its landscape for thousands of generations and maintain an ongoing cultural connection.<sup>1</sup> The undulating open woodlands, threaded by the River Plenty, which later became known as Greensborough (initially 'Keelbundora',<sup>2</sup> after the parish), were mostly purchased in 1838 by the Sydney-based speculator Henry Smythe.<sup>3</sup> He sold it two years later to Edward Bernard Green (1809-61), a shrewd English entrepreneur.<sup>4</sup>

Seeking to capitalise on the contract he held for the overland delivery of Melbourne-to-Sydney mail, Green manoeuvred to alter the route during the mid-1840s. He proposed running the mail through his undeveloped holding at Keelbundora/Greensborough, surveying a private township – grandly named 'La Trobe' (after the lieutenant-governor) – on the high ground overlooking the river flats in preparation.<sup>5</sup> Green's heady expectations for the location were dashed when the riled authorities publicly endorsed the official route. While the surrounding district was progressively cleared over the remainder of the decade to make way for market gardens and orchards, 'Green's town' languished. In the early 1900s, the township (population 270) was still classed as a 'pretty little village'.<sup>6</sup>

The promotion of Greensborough's 'picturesque' river banks and scenery to day-trippers and 'excursionists' from Melbourne – arriving via rail (the station opened in 1902), charabanc and, later, private motor vehicles – conferred a noted recreational and leisure reputation upon the locale, which continued well into the postwar period.

However, the area's residential profile only rose markedly in the 1920s, chiefly along the railway corridor. The 'live' Greensborough Progress Association proclaimed it 'Melbourne's premier rural suburb', with 'Neat bungalows, of every conceivable design, both brick and hardwood ... springing up everywhere'.<sup>7</sup> Less effusive assessment classed the area as something of an outer-ring 'backwater'.<sup>8</sup>

Broader Greensborough remained primarily rural – a belt of family-run orchards, dairies and poultry farms – into the late 1950s, before receding in the face of rapid suburban expansion.<sup>9</sup> The consolidated township continued as the commercial and service hub of an extensive peri-urban district administered as the Diamond Valley Shire (1964-94). From the late 1980s, the town itself underwent an intensive multi-phased redevelopment, transforming into 'Greensborough Plaza', a regional retail/employment centre.

### Site-specific

The River Plenty denoted the boundary between the parishes of Keelbundora (west) and Nillumbik (east), the extent of contemporary Greensborough traversing both.<sup>10</sup> The subject land – on the east bank of the river – derives from Portion 13 of the Parish of Nillumbik, a 259-hectare purchase of 'good pastures timbered with Gum & Box' made in 1840 by the Scottish merchant John Alison, who set up the earliest commercial flour mill in the Port Phillip District (King Street, Melbourne).<sup>11</sup>

Around 1907, a group of residents – concerned at the lack of reserved Crown land in the area – 'manfully' organised to raise funds that were used to procure approximately 5 hectares of Portion 13 for the establishment of a public park.<sup>12</sup> Trustees and a committee were appointed and beautification efforts initiated. By the following year, *The Evelyn Observer* described the result:

<sup>1</sup> Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018, pp15-20, available online

<sup>2</sup> Keelbundora stems from a European rendering of 'Kulbundora' – the name of the eldest son of Billibellary, the *ngurungaeta* (essentially 'head man') of the Wurundjeri-willam clan. ('Suburban Native Names', *Argus* 28 April 1906, p5)

<sup>3</sup> Gary Presland, *The Place for a Village: how nature has shaped the city of Melbourne*, Museum Victoria, 2008, pp122-23

<sup>4</sup> 'Pastoral Pioneers: E. B. Green. No. 60', *Australasian*, 9 February 1935, p4

<sup>5</sup> Dianeh H Edwards, *The Diamond Valley Story*, The Shire of Diamond Valley, 1979, p111

<sup>6</sup> *The Australian Handbook*, Gordon & Gotch, 1905, p449

<sup>7</sup> 'Greensborough's Beautiful Hills & Valleys', *Herald*, 2 July 1924, p15

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, *The Diamond Valley Story*, p175

<sup>9</sup> 'Greensborough', *Victorian Places*, 2014, available online

<sup>10</sup> Nillumbik originates from the Aboriginal world *nyilumbik*, thought to mean bad, red or no good earth.

<sup>11</sup> (Description of Portion 13) *Plan of the Lands in the Parish of Nillumbik*, 1 March 1841, M62, Landata, Put-away map; (purchase) 'Port Phillip', *Sydney Herald*, 24 February 1840, p2; and (Alison) 'Family notices', *Herald*, 1 February 1864, p2; and *Give us this day our daily bread – millers and mills in Port Philip*, Port Philip Pioneers Group Inc, available online

<sup>12</sup> 'State Schools' Picnic At Greensborough', *Evelyn Observer*, 6 December 1907, p2; and 'Greensborough', *Heidelberg News*, 31 January 1914, p2

The Greensborough Park ... is picturesquely and conveniently situated close to the township, and is bounded on two sides by the River Plenty [and the Diamond Creek Road to the east]. The land was obtained for £260 ... improvements, such as levelling, erecting wire netting fence twelve feet high along the bank of the river ... It is a public Park, open to the public free, that is as far as foot traffic is concerned, a small fee is charged for the admittance of vehicles.<sup>13</sup>

In the early 1920s, ownership of Greensborough Park passed to the Shire of Heidelberg.<sup>14</sup> The park, well utilised by locals and sporting bodies, was also considered a destination for tourists within the broader sylvan landscape of Greensborough by this point:

Five miles from Heidelberg is GREENSBOROUGH, on the Plenty River, and within easy reach of the station are many beautiful picnic spots along the course of the stream, or in the hills farther back. There is good fishing to be had, and hares and rabbits are plentiful in the vicinity. Good hotel accommodation is available, consequently Greensborough is a favourite week-end resort.<sup>15</sup>

The Shire undertook upgrades at the park, including the construction of the subject building in 1925:

The pretty sports ground and park here is rapidly approaching completion ... The caretaker's residence, a handsome structure, to which is attached two dressing rooms, showers, etc, and the kiosk have been completed.<sup>16</sup>

The structure – initially known as the 'Greensborough Kiosk' – was likely erected by a contractor to plans prepared by the Shire's engineer, as was typical for projects of this ilk throughout the Interwar period in the area.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of the 1920s, the descriptor 'kiosk' (from the Turkish word *köşk*) carried vaguely exotic overtones but were generally understood as a modest building that sold light food and drinks, particularly tea, that were found at parks, the beach and shopping arcades. The classification of kiosk/tearoom was interchangeable across the period. The fashionable practise of public tea-drinking in Australia followed soon after the emergence of specialised tearooms in the United Kingdom from the 1870s, a phenomenon that held strong links with the temperance movement.<sup>18</sup> The influential Sydney-based Chinese merchant Mei Quong Tart (1850-1903) is attributed with popularising tearooms as an attractive commercial enterprise in Australia. In building type, tearooms varied widely, ranging from sophisticated urban operations to small-scale, basic timber pavilions and structures in suburbs and country towns.

The change rooms were utilised by the locally celebrated Greensborough Football Club (established 1905). Their spectators, along with 'picnickers' and hikers from Melbourne formed the kiosk/tearoom's key customer base.<sup>19</sup> Mr and Mrs Roy of Greensborough, granted a 12-month tenancy in 1925, the year of construction, were the first lessees of the kiosk and park caretakers. Their lease held an option for three years, on the condition that for three annual 'carnivals', they would not 'sell soft drinks, confectionery, etc.'<sup>20</sup> Wider park improvements in the next few years further increased the park's use and recognition:

It is pleasing to note the increased patronage that our pretty park and reserves are receiving from visiting picnic parties. Some important large societies and sections of unions, viz., the Railway Guards' and Transport branches, have held their picnics at the park. The bathing sheds (men's and women's), tennis courts (three), cricket pitches, and kiosk help to make the park equal to anything anywhere.<sup>21</sup>

In 1928, the Shire announced via a tender that a 'larger scheme' of works to the 'Greensborough Park Kiosk' was envisioned. At the same time, Mrs Roy was reconfirmed as the tenant at an annual rent of £25 and promise to spend £500 'on improvements'.<sup>22</sup> The substance of these works is unclear or whether they took place is unclear (possibly there were focused on the interior).

The Roys had to request a rent abatement in 1930, likely due to the onset of a severe economic contraction brought about by the Great Depression. By early the following year, a new lessee – Mrs Leed – was accepted.<sup>23</sup> She too, it seems, struggled to keep the kiosk economical. Both 'kiosk and residence' were again offered to let in 1933. Soon after, Mr and Mrs McGeorge were noted as both operators and occupants.<sup>24</sup> Their tenure, coincided with the uneven economic uptick of the mid-to-late thirties and may

<sup>13</sup> 'Bazar at Greensborough', *Evelyn Observer*, 4 December 1908, p2

<sup>14</sup> 'Heidelberg Shire Council', *Advertiser* (Hurstbridge), 18 May 1923, p2. The chronically under-resourced local body, the Greensborough Road District (formed in 1858) had requested annexation to the Shire of Heidelberg in 1875.

<sup>15</sup> *Visitor Guide to Melbourne*, Victorian Government Tourist Bureau, circa 1925, p39

<sup>16</sup> 'Greensborough', *Advertiser*, 7 August 1925, p4

<sup>17</sup> 'Greensborough Park Kiosk', *Advertiser*, 20 July 1928, p1

<sup>18</sup> Jane Pettigrew, *A social history of tea*, National Trust (London), 2001, passim

<sup>19</sup> 'Greensborough', *Advertiser*, 10 June 1938, p1

<sup>20</sup> 'Shire of Heidelberg', *Advertiser*, 22 May 1925, p3

<sup>21</sup> 'Greensborough', *Advertiser*, 6 January 1928, p2

<sup>22</sup> 'Heidelberg Council', *Advertiser*, 20 June 1928, p1

<sup>23</sup> 'Heidelberg Council', *Advertiser*, 19 September 1930, p6; and 'Heidelberg Council', *Advertiser*, 13 February 1931, p4

<sup>24</sup> *Age*, 3 May 1933, p5; 'Greensborough', *Advertiser*, 9 March 1934, p10

have benefited from the 1937 decision of the park committee to permit games on the Sabbath, 'provided they are conducted without undue noise and barracking.'<sup>25</sup>

It appears that during the tenure of the McGeorges the kiosk was renamed the 'Greensborough Park Tearooms' (see photograph below).



Late 1930s photograph of the Greensborough Park Tearooms  
(Source: Greensborough Historical Society)



1973 sketch by Roy Reynolds, inscription: 'Mrs Lobbs Kiosk, Lwr. Park' (Source: Turvey, Greensborough and Greenhills)

Beyond representing a shift in the public consumption of food and drink, tearooms were also considered 'decent' venues that, due to their associations with domesticity and even femininity (strong counterpoints to the masculine drinking culture of public houses), offered a rare social sphere for women to interact and engage freely. As reflected in the number of known female operators and proprietors at the place, tearooms were also – in the highly gendered domain of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century business world – one of the few 'respectable' enterprises that women could run. The presence of interwar businesswomen runs counter to the dominant interpretation of women in the period as constrained to the private realm, focused on charitable activities or forced into lower-order work, such as domestic service and factories.

The tearooms entered the public discourse during 1938 when A J Fahle – then the owner of the Greensborough Hotel – made an offer to the City of Heidelberg to spend £500 on the building if he was granted a ten-year lease. Fahle's proposed improvements included a 'new dining hall, new training rooms for the home team and visitors, and the provision of a hot-water service and showers.' Fahle exclaimed at a council meeting that discussed his proposition, 'It would help the town on. No one could get a meal in the town to-day except at his hotel. In other public parks people could get what refreshments they required at the kiosks'. The offer, however, had been rejected as the current tenant, Mrs McGeorge, upon interview by the Parks and Garden committee, made it clear she had no interest in relinquishing the lease. At the same meeting, the prominent councillor John C Jessop commented:

he did not think the buildings in the park were in a bad state. One hour's work in cleaning them out would make them all right. The object of the park was not to make a profitable business for one person, but for all the convenience of all the people. No other park in the present football competition was as well fitted as the Greensborough Park insofar as rooms for the players were concerned. The rooms cost £700 and were in a very good state of repair ...<sup>26</sup>

The McGeorge family relinquished the lease in 1940 and tenders were invited by the municipality for the 'Dwelling and Kiosk'.<sup>27</sup> Husband and wife, William and Olive Lobb took over the tenancy at the end of the year, after negotiating 'certain renovations' for the kiosk:

The health inspector to arrange for covering of garbage at the rear of the park; trucks and lines to be removed; troughs in laundry to be renewed; stiff brooms and phenyle to be supplied as required; three new windows and new material for seven blinds to be supplied in the shop and power point installed for refrigerator; the stove in the residence to be re-set and verandah outside kitchen door to be completed.<sup>28</sup>

During the Second World War, as part of civil defence air-raid precautions, wardens and other members of the local Volunteer

<sup>25</sup> 'New Park Committee', *Advertiser*, 19 November 1937, p2

<sup>26</sup> 'Greensborough Affairs', *Advertiser*, 24 June 1939, p3

<sup>27</sup> *Age*, 25 May 1940, p6

<sup>28</sup> 'Greensborough: Council Matters', *Advertiser* [Eltham], 18 October 1940, p5

Defence Crops met and trained at tearooms.<sup>29</sup>

The Lobb family lived at the site into the late 1960s.<sup>30</sup> Their presence gave rise to its designation as 'Lobb's Tearooms', although photographs dating from their tenure show the retention of 'Greensborough Park Tearooms' to the front signage panel. Lobb's Tearooms, however, appears to remain favoured locally in references to the place.



1945 aerial photograph with the subject building identified by the red arrow – note Diamond Creek Road has been re-aligned  
 (Source: Department of Lands and Survey, *Aerial Survey of Victoria*, Adastra Airways, 839 C3B, Zone 7, The University of Melbourne)



1950s photograph of the rear of the Greensborough Park Tearooms, looking north across the oval  
 (Source: Victorian Places, courtesy of Greensborough Historical Society)

<sup>29</sup> Irene Turvey, *Greensborough and Greenhills*, Cypress Books, 1973, np

<sup>30</sup> Information supplied by the Greensborough Historical Society





Photograph of the façade (left of frame) and northern elevation in the early 1960s  
(Source: courtesy of Greensborough Historical Society)



Photograph of the Greensborough Park Tearooms from Diamond Valley Creek Road, in 1978, prior to additions  
(Source: wikinorthia)

In 1974, the Diamond Valley Shire made available the tea rooms – ‘known locally as Lobbs’ kiosk’ – for the Diamond Valley Learning Centre (DVLC), then just recently incorporated as a non-profit organisation after having been found the previous year by the Centre for the Study of Innovation at La Trobe University.<sup>31</sup> Its formative history and fluid purpose, function and survival has been comprehensively detailed and discussed in Michele Lonsdale’s publication, *Insistent voices: the story of the Diamond Valley Learning Centre* (1993).

The DVLC emerged from various shifting cultural currents of the late 1960s, particularly the women’s liberation movement and a radical ‘progressivism’ that had begun to characterise Australian education. The women-centre, flexible and participatory learning and social environment it fostered was, at the time, radical:

... the innocuous appearance of the Centre is deceiving. At various times in its history, the Diamond Valley Learning Centre has been seen as a refuge for the distressed, a Church-like body with an all-encompassing spirituality; a hotbed of militant lesbian socialists; and a scaled-down equivalent of the average suburban secondary school ... One of its most fundamental principles is to affirm the experience of women...

The Diamond Valley Learning Centre has been a pioneer in the field of adult education. It has proved to be the inspiration for hundreds of other, similar, community-education centres throughout Australia. Its emphasis on a non-threatening, informal learning environment, and in its recognition of childcare, the Centre has influenced the ways in which bodies like the Council for Adult Education (CAE) and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) have operated.<sup>32</sup>



DVLC class, front room of the former tearooms, 1970s  
(Source: Michelle Lonsdale, *Insistent voices*, 1993, p74)

<sup>31</sup> Michele Lonsdale, *Insistent voices: the story of the Diamond Valley Learning Centre*, Diamond Valley Learning Centre, 1993, p24

<sup>32</sup> Lonsdale, *Insistent voices*, p2

In the late 1970s, council concern at the former tearooms physical condition raised the spectre of demolition. In response, the DVLC's management committee and others campaigned for its conservation, arguing that 'Lobbs's Kiosk is worth looking after as a part of Old Greensborough and hopes some plan to preserve it can be produced.'<sup>33</sup> Seemingly in response to this call, the building was maintained and expanded, with two interconnected weatherboard wings constructed to the west elevation of the original footprint over the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The DVLC remained in occupation at the time of this assessment.

## Thematic Context

Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018:

- Theme 5: Suburban development
- Theme 6: Community and cultural life
- Theme 8: Parks and gardens and the urban landscape

## Comparative Analysis

No former kiosks/tearooms are known to be subject to a heritage overlay in the City of Banyule nor – at least in Greensborough – are known to remain.<sup>34</sup> In general, few early timber buildings from the interwar years, particularly those related to parks or recreation/leisure, survive in the municipality.

The only other heritage-listed timber building in Greensborough is the 1890s Arts & Crafts-style residence at 3 St Helena Road (HO143), roughly opposite the subject place.

## Intactness

Reasonably intact

## Previous Assessment

- RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants, *Banyule Heritage Study 2020: Stage 1 report*, Banyule City Council, August 2020 – High priority, recommend for Stage 2

## Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	Yes (pair of English elms)
Outbuildings and/or fences	No

<sup>33</sup> 'Call to Keep Lobb's Kiosk', *Diamond Valley News*, 19 September 1978, np in Lonsdale, *Insistent voices*, p75

<sup>34</sup> Known examples, since demolished, include 'Hutt's Tearooms' (Greensborough Historical Society, Victorian Places, object registration 1482) and various newspaper references to tearooms, such as 'Millan's', to Main Street in the township.



## Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay is outlined approximately below.



Recommended extent of heritage overlay  
The original extent of the interior building is approximately outlined in dashed yellow  
(Source: Nearmap, April 2020)