



20<sup>th</sup> October 2008

F.N: B1177

**Heritage Advisor  
City Of Greater Bendigo Council  
P.O Box 773  
BENDIGO Vic 3522**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: National Trust Classification of Fortuna  
Chum Street Golden Square, BENDIGO, 3552      Classified: State**

I we write to inform you that the property has been re-classified by the National Trust and upgraded from Local to State significance.

The National Trust is an independent membership organization committed to the conservation of Victoria's heritage. Fortuna has been upgraded because of its special historic and aesthetic qualities and it is our belief that it is an important part of our cultural heritage that should be preserved for the education and appreciation of future generations. A report explaining the reasons for classification is attached.

Please be aware that the inclusion of a property in the National Trust Register does not impose any legal obligations on property owners. The Trust is not a government body, and has no legislative power. However, most properties classified by the Trust are also recognised as important historic items by the local municipality.

As this property is considered significant at the State level, it may be registered by Heritage Victoria, which is a state government body and permits would be required from them for any significant alterations or demolition.

We would like to request that you place this letter on the appropriate file, with the intention that the Trust be informed should Council become aware of any proposed developments that could have an adverse impact on the above mentioned property.

If you have any queries regarding this classification please contact Ann Gibson of this office on 9656 9818.

Yours sincerely

**Ms Tracey Avery  
Conservation & Heritage Services Manager**

**CC. The Owner  
Bendigo Historical Society  
Bendigo Branch National Trust (Vic)  
Anstat  
Vic Roads**

## **NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)**

### **CLASSIFICATION REPORT**

**NAME:** Fortuna, Bendigo

**FILE NO:** B1177

**LOCATION:** Chum Street Golden Square, Bendigo, City of Greater Bendigo

**OTHER/CURRENT NAME:**

#### **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

##### **What is significant ?**

Fortuna Villa was initially commenced as a modest single storey home in 1861 next to the 180 Mine by Theodore Ballerstedt, who sold the mine and house to George Lansell in 1869. Lansell already owned the adjacent Fortuna Mine, and through deeper mining techniques greatly expanded the mine's operation, his personal wealth, and the house and grounds. Lansell was soon known as the 'Quartz King', Australia's first gold mining millionaire and credited as the driving force behind much of Bendigo's prosperity. He continuously added to and expanded the villa, decorating it extravagantly with the finest of artworks and materials, into a sprawling mansion with extensive landscaped grounds, to create a house and grounds of a size and grandeur with few rivals in Australia. After his death in 1907, his second wife Edith carried on with improvements, creating a house and grounds developed over 50 years. The attached mine also contributes to its significance, being one of the richest mines in Bendigo, and at one stage probably the deepest gold mine in the world at 3176 feet. The 1875 crushing works are attached directly to the mansion, and the mine's tailings and settling ponds (turned into ornamental lakes) represent a direct link between George Lansell's wealth and its source. Fortuna was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in 1942 as the Cartographic Headquarters of the Australian Survey Corps during World War II, and many ancillary structures were added while preserving the main house and ornamental grounds.

##### **How is it significant ?**

Fortuna house and gardens are significant at the National level.

##### **Why is it significant ?**

Fortuna is historically significant as the former home and lifelong passion of George Lansell. As one of Australia's wealthiest men, and possibly its first gold mining millionaire, Lansell was a man of great repute, not just in Bendigo, but throughout Australia and Great Britain. His wealth and renown are demonstrated in the calibre of guests hosted by Lansell at Fortuna, including royalty, governors of Victoria and Dame Nellie Melba. Lansell's local popularity is demonstrated by a petition signed by over 2600 Bendigo men imploring him to return to Bendigo from Europe in 1887 to help restore the town's fortunes. Fortuna is also associated with Theodore and Christopher Ballerstedt, the property's original owners, who are believed by many to have

been Australia's first mining magnates.

Fortuna is architecturally important as an impressive mansion, built over a considerable period, and incorporating a number of complementary styles, orchestrated by some of the Bendigo district's finest architects, including Vahland, Getzschmann and Beebe. It successfully combines Victorian Italianate with later Federation style additions to make a picturesque whole. This includes the late H shaped main Victorian sections of two storeys with extensive decorative cast-iron balconies front and rear. Steep hip roofs with lanterns and dormer window proliferate on these and later sections. The main entrance is a classical composition with grand stairs leading up, and a pair of cypresses in line in the garden beyond. Adjacent to this is a corner turreted room with a witch's hat roof, with an attached balconied section set back next, and further back is the ruby glass walled conservatory, elevated and cantilevered above a smaller ground floor area. This whole composition is the focus of the main diagonal views across the lake forming the most picturesque view. Edwardian era additions include the main stairs and corner turret, as well as various curved and bay windows added to the structure or within the balconies.

Fortuna contains several important features of individual rarity and significance. The Pompeii Fountain, constructed in 1879 is a scale replica of the Great Fountain in Pompeii, Italy. Comprising a number of water features, statues and a tall Roman column surmounted by a statue of a small boy, the fountain has outstanding aesthetic qualities and is believed to be unique in Australia. The conservatory features glass workmanship of the highest quality, regarded as among the most important examples of its type in Australia. It features panels of Ruby Flashed Seedless French Antique glass, as well as frosted acid-etched glass walls, containing a variety of artistic designs, including mining scenes, Australiana and heraldic symbols. The Roman bath, built by the Ballerstedts in the 1860s, was also an uncommon feature for large villas of the time.

The juxtaposition of the crushing works and the domestic abode in the same complex is also highly unusual in Australian mining and industrial history. The interaction of the domestic and mining landscapes at Fortuna are recorded in the appropriation of redundant mining spaces such as settling ponds and tailings into the villa's grounds and gardens. The largest lake (a former settling pond) and its surrounds remain, providing a picturesque setting for the house (though the lakebed itself is now dry). The mining landscapes also affected the house through the construction of a walled barrier and the reversal of the house's front entrance.

Fortuna is regarded in Bendigo today as an outstanding symbol of the town's early growth on the wealth of gold, much of it attributed to Lansell's intuition for finding and exploiting reef deposits.

Fortuna is also historically significant for its association with the Survey Corps, later the Survey Regiment, of the Australian Army. The site was acquired in 1942 as the Land Headquarters (LHQ) Cartographic Company, a base for the mapping activities of the Survey Corps during World War 2. Two corrugated iron buildings, known as buildings 10 (Reame Store) and 12 (Clothing Store) are the earliest remnants of the army's presence at Fortuna. In 2008, Fortuna was still operated of the Army Survey Regiment, with the mansion being used for accommodation and administration, and the former crushing works being used for the storage and printing of military maps.

## **EXTENT**

The house known as Fortuna Villa and surviving interior decoration, original coach house, shade house, Pompeii fountain, site of former lake and remaining formal gardens, crushing works, main Chum Street gate and fence, site of adjacent mine workings, the two 1942 buildings in most intact condition (no. 10 - Reame Store and no. 12 - Clothing Store), and whole of existing allotment.

## **HISTORY**

Fortuna Villa is an expansive Victorian mansion built entirely on the profits of Bendigo's lucrative gold reefs. Established by the wealthy Ballerstedt family in the 1860s, it was purchased and expanded in the 1870s by George Lansell, who was to become one of Australia's wealthiest men. Fortuna's villa and gardens have been occupied and cared for by the Australian Army Survey Regiment since 1942.

The Bendigo goldfields were among Australia's richest. The first gold was discovered there in 1851, in substantial quartz reefs, especially in the area now known as Golden Square. The township of Sandhurst (later to be renamed Bendigo) was established in 1854-55 in response to the immediate population presence that substantial gold discoveries caused. One of the more lucrative reefs in the district at this time was known as the New Chum or Victoria Reef. It was here that Germans Christopher Ballerstedt and his son Theodore began to acquire significant wealth. By the 1860s the Ballerstedts were extremely wealthy, believed by some to have been Australia's first gold mining magnates.

By the end of the 1850s, new techniques were being introduced to gold mining, most importantly the construction of large, steam powered, quartz crushing works. The significant level of capital required to establish such plants brought about the formation of hundreds of mining companies, through individual miners combining their capital and assets. More wealthy operators, however, were able to maintain many of their individual interests without the assistance of other miners.

Theodore Ballerstedt purchased the Fortuna site from the Crown in 1857 and had erected a steam crushing plant and a house there by 1858. The mining run, known as the '180 Mine' after its size, was immediately adjacent to the New Chum Reef. The house was originally a substantial, but modest, single storey building. By the late 1860s the Ballerstedts had extracted a considerable amount of gold from the 180 Mine. In 1869 a substantial two-storey addition was made to the villa. That same year Christopher Ballerstedt died, and two years later Theodore sold the mine and house to George Lansell, for the extraordinary sum of 30,000 pounds, believing it had already yielded most of its potential wealth.

George Lansell was born in Kent in 1823, the son of a Chandler and tallow boiler. Lansell migrated to Australia with his brother in 1853, landing at Port Adelaide and making his way to the diggings at Echuca. Unsuccessful there, he moved on to Bendigo, where he established a business as a butcher and Chandler. Retaining his interest in gold, he invested the money he made from his business in various mining companies. He became convinced that the conventional thinking about the depth at which gold could be found was wrong, and sought to find companies that were willing to sink shafts deeper into the quartz reefs. These early investments were an overwhelming failure, and Lansell had to continuously rebuild his finances to a point where he was able to reinvest and buy further shares in mining companies. By the 1860s, Lansell's theories about quartz mining started to pay off. The companies he was associated with started increasing their finds at greater depths. The wealthiest of these mines was the Advance Mine. By the mid 1860s Lansell had become one of Bendigo's wealthiest men and had become universally known as the 'Quartz King'.

Prior to acquiring the 180 Mine, Lansell had purchased Lundt's Fortuna mine, adjacent to the Ballerstedt property. The 180 Mine was then subsumed into the Fortuna holdings. Many believed that the 30,000 pounds Lansell paid for the property was most generous for a mine that had already yielded a majority of its wealth. Lansell, however, stunned the township by extracting 180,000 pounds worth of gold within the first few weeks. Sending the shafts deeper and deeper, all the while extracting further gold, the 180 Mine contributed to making Lansell Australia's first gold mining millionaire and one of Australia's wealthiest men. The mine itself was sunk down to 3,179 feet, possibly making it the deepest gold mine in the world at the time.

As Lansell's wealth grew, so did the Fortuna Villa. The building was expanded, upwards and outwards, constantly during George Lansell's life there. From 1871 to 1924 Lansell, and his wife after his death, developed the villa, adding rooms and features, each reflecting aspects of the styles and tastes of their era. The villa was also remarkable for the fact that it was physically attached to the mining works, the crushing plant being attached to the north wing of the homestead. The surrounding landscape, initially mullock and spoil heaps, dredging pools and puddlings, was gradually absorbed into a gentrified garden of Lansell's design. The property at one stage had seven ornamental lakes, each of which had formerly been settling ponds from the mining operation.

Lansell's first wife Bedelia died suddenly in 1879. Although well loved and admired in Bendigo, Lansell returned to England to live the following year, partly out of grief and partly in response to a mischievous prank that he had interpreted as a death threat. The villa was occupied by E. I. Dyason, Lansell's bookkeeper and agent, who kept an eye on his Antipodean affairs while Lansell lived off his substantial wealth in Europe for six years. Whilst in London, Lansell married Edith Bassford, an English girl whom Lansell had met in Bendigo some years earlier. The couple had three children in quick succession. In 1887, Lansell received a petition from 2628 men imploring him to return. Bendigo had begun to struggle economically and saw Lansell's presence and leadership as an important boost for the region. Lansell returned that year with his new family, taking up residence at Fortuna once again.

One of Lansell's first actions upon his return to Fortuna was to commence a new three-storey addition to the north side of the building. These were the backdrop for the Lansell family's considerable social life, which was facilitated by two ballrooms and a billiard room. Each of Fortuna's rooms was luxuriously appointed, including several guest bedrooms with built in bathrooms. It is reputed that Lansell hosted many prominent guests at Fortuna, including the Prince of Wales and Duke of Edinburgh, numerous governors of Victoria and artists such as Dame Nellie Melba.

Fortuna's extensions continued until and after George Lansell's death in 1907. They were continued by his widow, Edith. The mine ceased operation in 1922, after which the mines were flooded or filled. Edith Lansell died in 1934, and the house and its contents were announced for auction. The contents, including many fine artworks, statues and furniture pieces were auctioned first, followed by the house, purchased by Bendigo Mines Pty Ltd. It was subsequently listed for sale or demolition four years later, to be purchased by Maud Matilda Mott, who used it for a short time as a reception venue.

Fortuna was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in 1942 as the Cartographic Headquarters of the Australian Survey Corps during World War 2. The Survey Corps, now the Army Survey Regiment, has occupied the property since 1942, making several significant changes to the grounds, including the construction of several support buildings. Fortuna Villa has been used by the Regiment for accommodation, messing and office space. Fortuna played an important role in the Survey Corps' contribution to the war effort, and even accommodated 30 Italian Prisoners of War for a short time.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the house was open for public inspection on Sundays. Many conservation works were undertaken by the Federal Government's Australian Construction Services, for instance repairing and restoring the glass of the conservatory. Some of the interior decorative treatments (long overpainted) were also revealed and restored. The house ceased to be open around 2000, and is to be put up for sale in 2008.

## **DESCRIPTION**

Fortuna Villa is a grand Victorian mansion, displaying aspects of a range of architectural styles and eras. While it has something of a rambling appearance, there is an order and logic to its expansion. A majority of

the rooms and features are in excellent condition, maintaining their original decorative materials, including leadlighting, plaster and pressed metal ceilings, and fine materials such as marble, cedar and blackwood. The proportion of Lansell's wealth invested in the villa was considerable. One visitor to the property in the early 20th Century noted that 'the home simply looked as if there had been so much money to spend and nothing left on which to spend it. The original entrance of the mansion faced east towards Bendigo and commanded a fine view over the township. Gradually, however, mullock heaps from continuous mining activity encroached upon the view. A new entrance was therefore created in the late 1870s, directly opposite, to the west of the building. This entrance was continuously upgraded and expanded, not finished until 1904, when the cupola stairwell and tower, which provides part of Fortuna's distinct character, was constructed. The central core of the villa, on the basement level forms its oldest component, with much of the original fabric of the Ballerstedt house surviving.

The conservatory is one of Fortuna's most important rooms. Originally a sun or observation deck, this room was built-in in the late 1870s. The walls were extensively comprised of acid-etched and ruby glass, imported from Italy. The ruby glass, of the "Ruby Flashed Seedless French Antique" type, is unusual in Australia, and of the highest quality. The designs on the acid-etched panels display a variety of British heraldic symbols, Australiana and gold mining scenes. The conservatory had suffered in integrity during the 1942-1990 period of army occupation, when it was used as a storage area, due to the removal of some glass panels and the insertion of louvres. Recent conservation work has worked towards restoring the original appearance of the room, however, and it is currently used as a conference facility.

One of the most outstanding features of the Fortuna Site is the Pompeii Fountain. This feature, built around 1879, is a scale replica of the ancient Roman fountain in the House of the Great Fountain in Pompeii, Italy. It is believed that Lansell saw the Great Fountain on a trip to Europe in 1875 and requested the construction of a replica soon after his return to Fortuna. The fountain contains a Roman grotto with a number of water features and cement statues. The centrepiece of the Pompeii Fountain is a tall cement rendered Roman column, surmounted by a statue of a young boy. This feature is unique in Australia, and it is possibly the only scale replica of the Great Fountain in the world.

At the northern end of the villa complex was attached the main mining plant, a 30 head stamper battery constructed in 1874. For many years the tall chimney stack of the plant stood side by side with the villa. The chimney and the plant's machinery were removed in the 1940s when the structure was converted for use as the Survey Regiment's printing press. Despite the removal of the machinery, the battery remains essentially in its original condition. Set high in the wall is a stone plaque which reads 'G. Lansell's Fortuna Crushing Works 1874'.

The battery and other aspects of the mining landscape were a constant presence for the Lansell family at Fortuna, which was mitigated by a number of measures. One of the more prominent of these at the homestead was a large brick wall with arched gateway, part of which remains today. This wall and gate acted as a screen for the Lansell family from the mining landscape, and symbolised a passage from the domestic to the industrial.

Between the crushing works and the villa were the stables and coach house. A brick lined underground tunnel, leading to the rear of the coach house from the north wing of the main house, is also located here. The most common theory for this tunnel is that it led from the secure bullion room to the coach house as a security measure, to allow for the gold to be loaded onto armed coaches for transport.

Fortuna's gardens, at their peak, were a marvel of aesthetic design, representing a gradual appropriation of the mining landscape as it became redundant. Mullock heaps, tailings and settling ponds were all transformed into garden features for the Lansell family. The present lake (now dry) is the only remainder of the former six lakes that were once settling ponds from the mines. While the others were filled and built over at various

stages, this main lake, which sits in front of the main house, survives as a reminder of the former garden. The lake is lined by symmetrical rows of original trees, including palms, sequoia and eucalypts. The gardens were scattered with statues, shade houses and other features during Lansell's time, but most of these features have since been removed. The property is entered from Chum Street through a set of cast iron gates supported by a pair of cement-rendered, finely decorated pillars, linked by a decorative iron archway. Fortuna's grounds, today, have been largely appropriated by the Army Survey Regiment, with accommodation, office facilities and a parade ground now dominating most of the former garden space. The main lake and its surrounding trees, however, have largely retained their integrity, and are not crowded or detracted from by the recent buildings. The shade house and garage, as well as elements of the original landscaping and fencing also survive.

Two buildings, dating from 1942, dating from the Army's first occupation of the complex also survive in good condition. These corrugated iron buildings, building 10 (Raeme Store) and building 12 (Clothing Store) are strong reminders of the type of military architecture that sprang up around Australia at new and makeshift bases around Australia.

## **CONDITION**

The house and grounds at Fortuna are in excellent condition and are well maintained by the Army Survey Regiment under the guidance of a Conservation Management Plan (ACS 1987). Since 1990, conservation works have been undertaken in the Conservatory, the Garage, the Coach House and on the Pompeii Fountain. The former crushing plant building was subject to some modifications in 1995, with the removal of the Survey Regiments printing presses to a new building constructed to the rear (2001).

## **COMPARISON**

The most unique feature of Fortuna is that house and gardens survive on the same site with evidence of the mine that was the source of the wealth that created it; indeed the mine in part created the landscape, and the stamping battery is still attached to the house. It is also extremely picturesque in form and detail, and could not be said to be in any one style, yet forms a pleasant whole, in contrast to other mansion estates that are usually grand Italianate or Gothic Revival designs. The Pompeii fountain at Fortuna is also a unique feature.

The closest comparison in Australia is the Rippon Lea estate in Elsternwick in suburban Melbourne, with its elaborate garden, with a lake, shade house and other features providing a picturesque setting for a picturesque house, which was also built over a period of time. However, Rippon Lea has a far more elaborate garden, and survives complete with some internal decorative schemes and furniture.

Elaborate gardens of other suburban estates have been lost to subdivision, and those that survive are not nearly as complex, usually park-like, consisting of lawn, shrubs and trees.

There are a several country houses in Victoria with large gardens centred on an artificial lake that are similar in general form to Fortuna, including Noorilim, near Murchison, Ercildoune at Burrumbeet and Rupertswood at Sunbury. However, these are grand country estates built by men of wealth in a relatively short period, in an identifiable style, rather than built over a period of time, and are not attached to the source of the wealth that created it.

Interstate, Vacluse House in Sydney is the only grand nineteenth century suburban house with a relatively large garden intact, but this is largely lawn and trees.

**Australian Construction Services, 1987. Conservation Plan: Fortuna, Bendigo, Victoria.**

**Windsor, R.P. n.d. Commonwealth of Australia Historic Buildings: "Fortuna" Bendigo Victoria. Unpublished History.**

**Eckersley, H. 1998. Conservation and Repair Works: Pompeii Fountain and adjacent structures, "Fortuna", Chum Street, Bendigo, Victoria. Section 30 Referral to Australian Heritage Commission.**

**Army Survey Regiment n.d. Lansell's Fortuna. Guide to Fortuna's historic features.**

**Hetherington, J. 1964. Witness to Things Past. pp. 56-62**

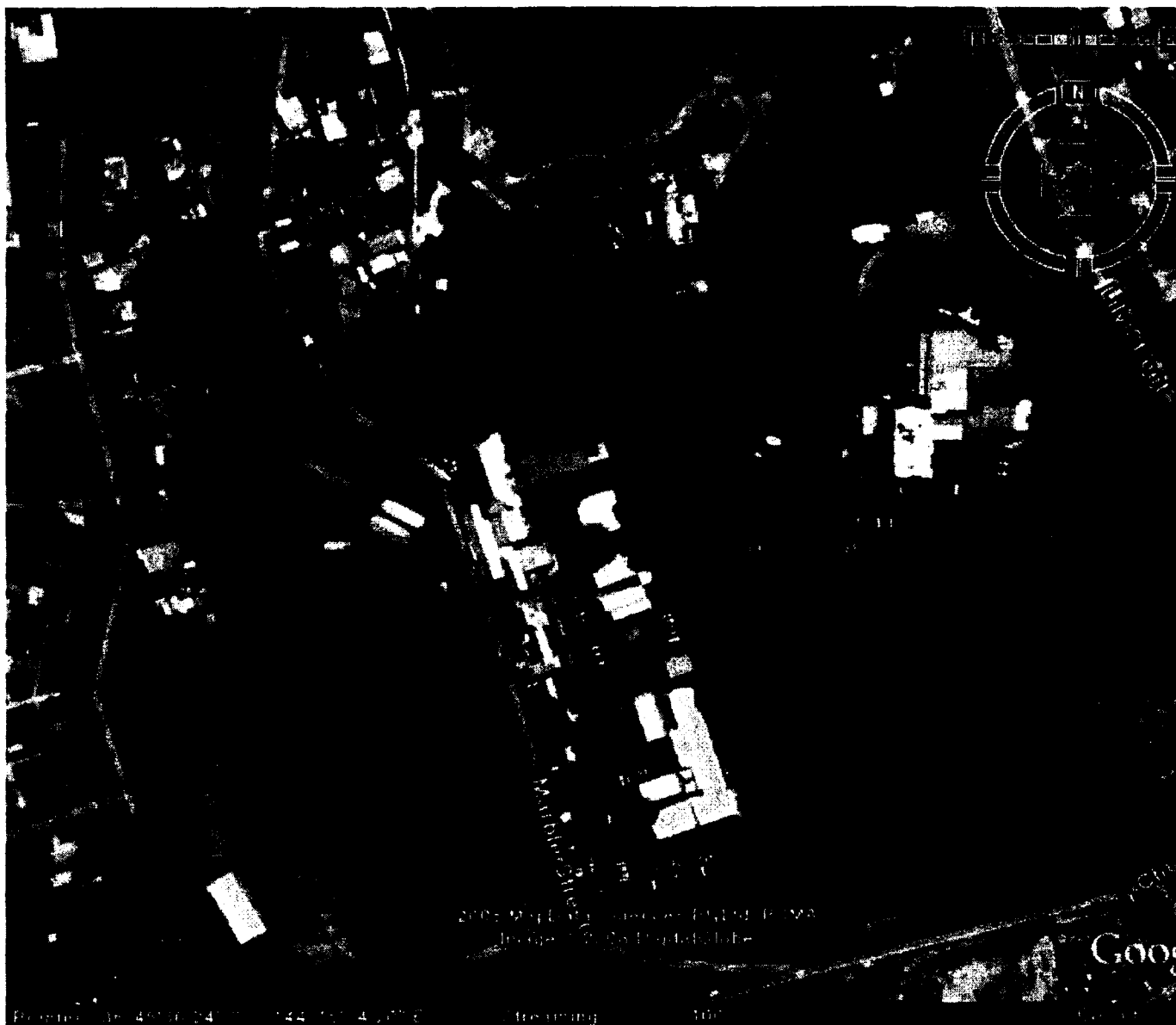
**Jordan, P. 1996. Upgrade for Army Topographic Support Establishment (ATSE) at "Fortuna", Chum Street Bendigo. Section 30 Referral to Australian Heritage Commission.**

**Nelson, I. 1990. Conversion of Conservatory Fortuna (Army Survey Regiment), Bendigo, Victoria. Section 30 Referral to Australian Heritage Commission.**

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Fortuna, Bendigo

Entire House and grounds from Google Earth 2008



## Fortuna, Bendigo

House, lake and garden close-up from Google Earth 2008.

Note dry state of lake and former crushing house and coach house to north.





**View across lake c1940 , State Library Victoria**



**similar view, 1965, State Library Victoria**



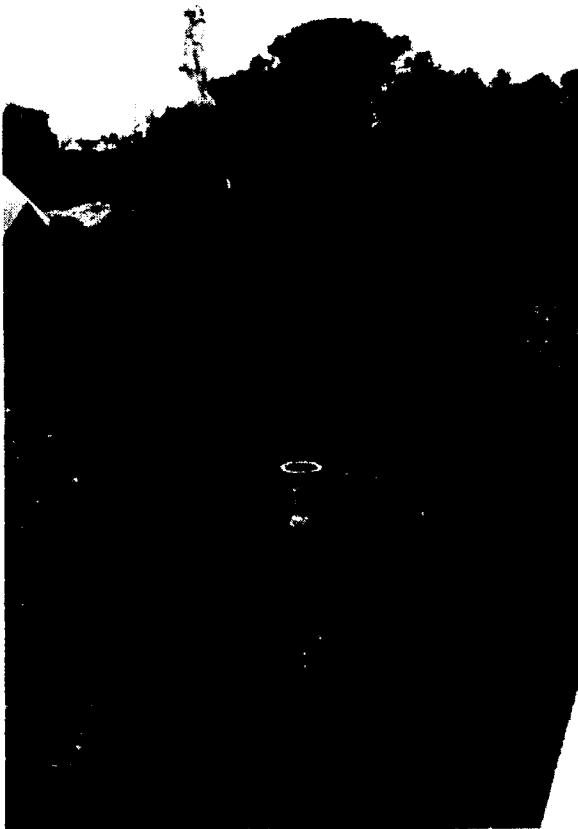
**Entrance front 1988, Dep Defence**



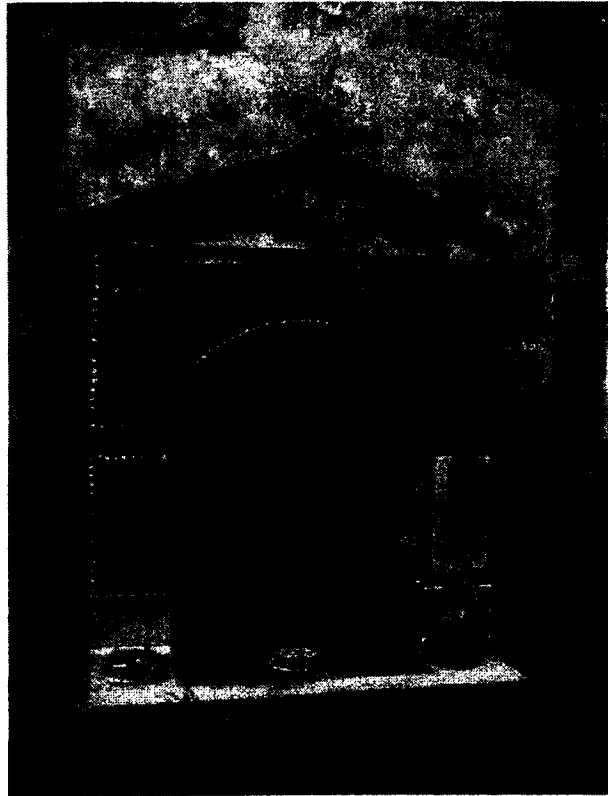
**Rear balconies 1965, State Library of Vic**



**View from main drive, glass conservatory on right Dep Defence**



**Fountain 1988, RNE database**



**Fountain in House of Great Fountain, Pompeii  
(photo internet 2008)**