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Nathalia Broken Creek PRECINCT

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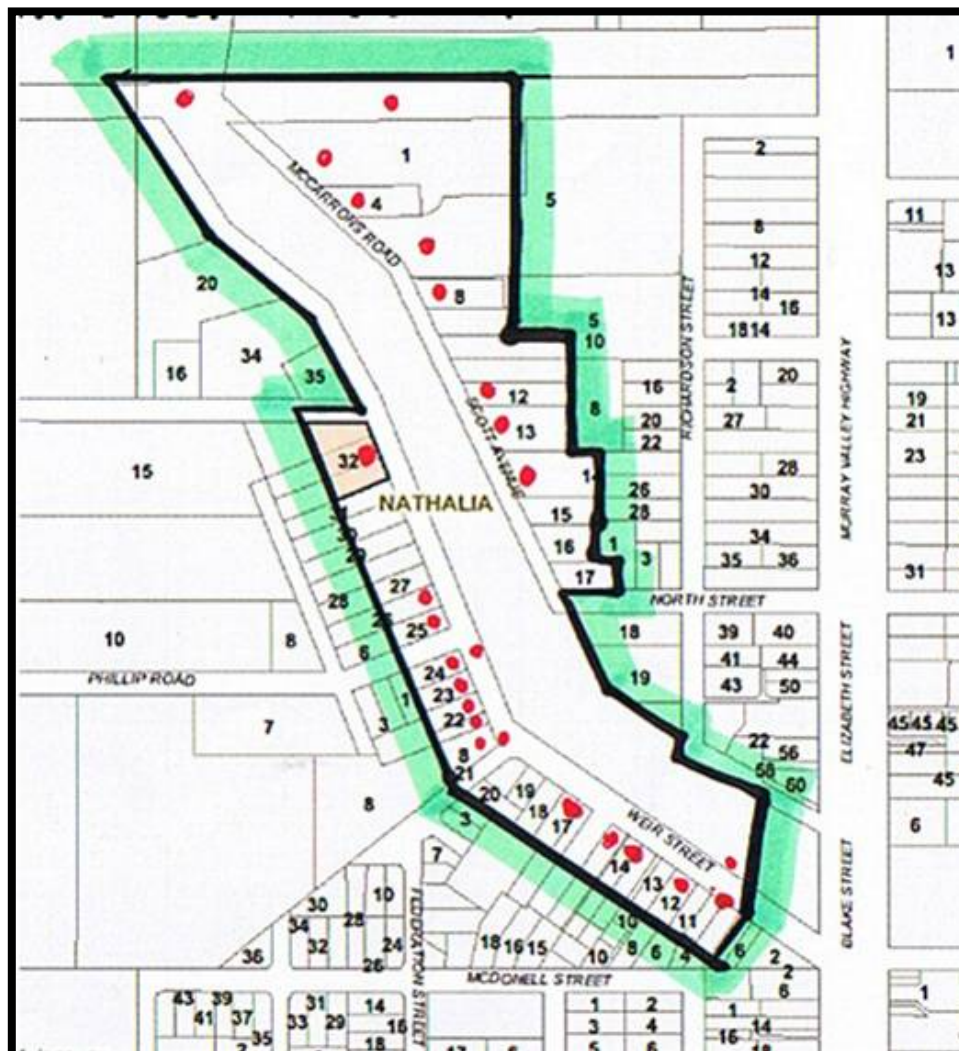
NATHALIA BROKEN CREEK PRECINCT

## LOCATION

### Precinct Boundaries and Map

The Nathalia Broken Creek Precinct incorporates historically significant places along both sides of Broken Creek. They all front the creek and either Weir Street or Scott Avenue. The northern section crosses over the creek along the former Railway Bridge and continues a short way along the Railway Reserve. At the south end, the precinct is terminated just prior to the road bridge along the main thoroughfare of Blake Street, which is in the adjacent Town Centre Precinct.

The area within the boundary incorporates historically, socially, aesthetically and scientifically important places and views of Nathalia's railway and water supply infrastructure and historic residential places fronting the creek. These are illustrated on the map in Fig 1 and listed in Table 1.



**Fig. 1. Nathalia Broken Creek Precinct showing 25 significant sites in red.**  
Source: Lorraine Huddle 2005.

**NATHALIA BROKEN CREEK PRECINCT**

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**Table 1. List of culturally significant places, their location, DB number and historical context. .**

<i><b>Period</b></i>	<i><b>Associated Historical Themes</b></i>	<i><b>Date</b></i>	<i><b>Extant Places within the Nathalia Broken Creek Precinct e</b></i>	<i><b>Location</b></i>
Victorian 1880s to 1900	Town first surveyed and gazetted in 1879. Richard Blake's holdings were sold as part of further surveys in 1886 and 1889 that enlarged the township westwards. Early agricultural development;  Infrastructure: Railways open 1888. Water Supply from Broken Creek . Expansion of Primary production. Flourmills and commercial concerns.	c. 1886	Victorian Weatherboard Houses	Weir Street
		1890s	Victorian Red Brick Houses	Weir Street 5 Scott Avenue
		c1890	Gigantic Street trees. Moreton Bay Fig Trees and Pepper tree.	Weir Street
			Railway reserve and rail crossing over Broken Creek.	Railway reserve and Broken Creek.
Federation 1900s-1914	Infrastructure: Water Reticulation, Electricity and Fire Brigade.			
Interwar 1920-30s		1920s	Inter-war houses	14 Scott Ave. & Weir Street
		1930s	Interwar bungalows	Scott Ave.
Post War period 1946 - 1960s	Immigration; Soldier Settlement; improved irrigation and influx of new farmers.  Population peak.		Concrete rail bridge	Broken Creek
			Post war houses.	Scott Avenue
			Bowling Club	Weir Street

Refer to Appendix 1 for a List with Photographs.

NATHALIA BROKEN CREEK PRECINCT

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Nathalia Broken Creek Precinct is a principally residential precinct centred around Wier Street on the west and Scott Avenue on the east side of Broken Creek. Wier Street is on land that was part of Richard Blake's selection west of the original Nathalia town allotments. When Alfred Leahy first surveyed and gazetted the township of Nathalia in 1879, the town allotments area was in fact bounded on the west by Blake Street and on the east by the Broken Creek. (Fig. 2)

The movement of the town westward was a natural progression however as the land to the east on the banks of the Broken Creek were prone to flooding, and Richard Blake's holdings were sold as part of further surveys in 1886 and 1889 that enlarged the township westwards. The exact age of the massive Moreton Bay Fig trees and Pepper trees is not known, but the first Australian Arbor Day was held in 1890, and Moreton Bay Fig Trees were planted in many public places at that time, so they may date from that year.

Scott Avenue was part of the selection of German colonist Henry Kostadt generally north of Broken Creek, and on the east side of Broken Creek in this precinct. The Kostadt selection was surveyed by Henry Moorhouse and divided into seventy three allotments in 1886.<sup>1</sup> The streets named on this plan were Kostadt, Railway, North, Nicholson and Fraser streets, making Scott Avenue one of the later additions. W P Scott and Fenton were the first managers of Brown Cork and Co. Originally the house at 14 Scott Avenue was a single storey house called "The Nut", which was built for Frederick Fenton c1900s. In 1924 Mrs Edith Scott, wife of W P Scott, bought this house and added the second storey and called the house "Tandara".<sup>2</sup> It may be that Edith Scott also subdivided the land to create Scott Avenue, and not coincidentally the houses there are more recent than those along Wier Street. While Victorian houses predominate along Wier Street, Scott Avenue is more notable in particular for its variety of interwar bungalows.

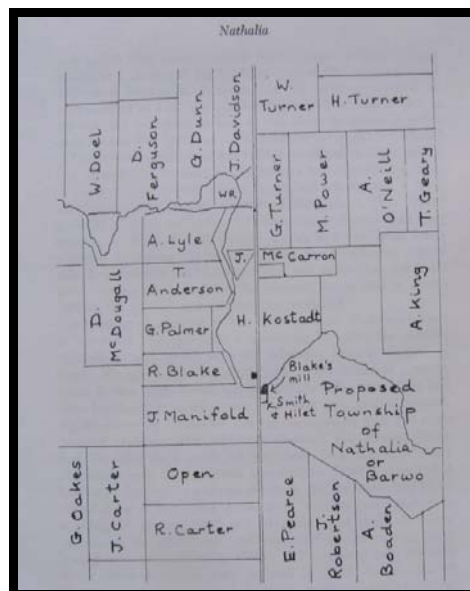


Fig 2. Map showing landowners in Nathalia area 1877. Source Hibbins.

**NATHALIA BROKEN CREEK PRECINCT**

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The two banks of the Broken Creek Precinct are connected by the former railway bridge and railway reserve to the north, when the town was connected to the railway, which opened in 1888 and operated throughout the period of the precinct's residential development.

The west bank of the Broken Creek Precinct is particularly associated with the period of rapid development and land sales from the late 1880s in anticipation of the opening of the railway line. Around this time the population of the town fluctuated between 300 and 400 people. The opening of the railway in 1888 provided a much anticipated but short-lived boon to the north side of town, with the financial and land sales crash in 1890 badly affecting all Victoria. The east bank on the other hand was developed in the early twentieth century, during a period of urban consolidation.

In April 1888 the *Nathalia Herald* announced that 'Anyone visiting our little township will be surprised at the number of buildings that are being erected and the character of these buildings proves at a glance that the days of the bark and log hut are passed.'<sup>3</sup> Nathalia began to feel the Depression in the following year however, with a fall in land sales and trouble for the banks as overseas capital and land speculation collapsed. Small, steady development continued however - by 1891 the population was 689 and by 1901 it was 828. The largest growth in population accompanied the post World War Soldier Settlement schemes in the area, from 954 in 1947 to 1,859 in 1961.<sup>4</sup>

As an agricultural town, the fortunes of Nathalia were inextricable from those of its farming communities, and the history of the town was particularly affected by droughts such as those of 1908 and floods such as that of 1887. During and after the Great War of 1914-18 no less than 39 families left the area because of droughts, explaining the relatively staid population growth in the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

Nathalia was a major centre for wheat and barley growing but had also developed in dairying and orchards. The Nathalia Irrigation League established in 1914 was unsuccessful in having existing and planned irrigation schemes extend to Nathalia and wheat continued to be the main produce from the area. The Nathalia region was forced to wait until 1951 for the construction of irrigation channels from the Murray-Goulburn scheme and the effect on the district was a 70% increase in population between the censuses of 1946 and 1961.<sup>6</sup>

In the post war period the face of Nathalia changed sometimes drastically, but the residential streets such as those in the Broken Creek Precinct, particularly Wier Street and Scott Avenue, thus retained a special and nostalgic significance in local opinion:

Nathalia's broad main street with its towering poplars and flowing pepper trees is briefly admired as the motorist rushes through the Murray Valley Highway. But the town's glories lie behind Blake Street and along the Broken Creek, and need to be savoured at leisure. Here in Muntz, Scott and Weir Streets can be found the old houses with their curved verandah roofs, once painted in broad stripes and now more sedately coloured. Like pressed flowers, somewhat tatty around the edges, they nevertheless evoke a vision of the days when ladies in long dresses and hats with sweeping feathers walked the gardens of camellias, lilacs, roses and daisies running riot.<sup>7</sup>

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### Urban Design, Views and Foci

Nathalia Broken Creek precinct has an irregular layout as it follows the curve of the creek, giving a significant visual effect. The extensive open space, grass and trees associated with the flow of the creek, create variable open views. The extant buildings are predominantly aligned at right angles with the rectangular allotments and road frontage of Weir Street but at a roughly 45 degree angle along Scott Avenue. These building and street alignments are an important part of this precinct's setting.



**Fig 3 Moreton Bay Figs and Pepper Trees, Weir Street**

The massive individual street trees, especially the large Pepper and Moreton bay figs are of considerable age and create strong landscape element making a major contribution to the local townscape. Banks of the creek are lined with Gum trees.

The Moreton bay fig and pepper trees are especially old. The pepper trees in Wier Street are amongst the largest known examples of the species in Victoria; one of these trees is notable for its large trunk and unusual growth form. The tree has previously been pollarded.

Significant views can be seen while looking north along Broken Creek towards the railway bridge, east along the railway reserve towards the silos and south along Broken Creek towards the Blake Street road bridge. This precinct is terminated to the north by the railway reserve that crosses the creek and runs east-west along the top of the precinct. The railway's presence is a reminder of the pivotal role that this piece of infrastructure played in Nathalia's history, especially during the 1880s.



**Fig 4 Typical view along Broken Creek showing the tree lined banks.** Source. Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd 2005



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**Fig 5 The railway reserve and view towards silos.**  
*Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004.*

The views include the spatial width of the creek, the large evergreen trees and well-kept creek banks which combine to enhance the surrounding residential area. Low residential fences provide a soft interface from the houses and their gardens and trees on one side of the creek to the other. The use of light woven wire, picket, and hedge fences in front of houses in this precinct gives a feeling of openness that also provides a friendly nexus between private homes and the public realm. Views across streets, and between properties, strengthen traditional social ties between neighbours and passers by.

**Former Railway Bridge and Reserve**

**DB 1011 & 1012**

The railway opened in Nathalia in 1888 after years of public agitation, delegations and anticipation. The railway was first conceived of when Nathalia was gazetted as a village in 1880, but did not open until 1888. The current and more recent concrete bridge, converted into a pedestrian crossing connects the walking track on the two banks of the precinct. The view along the railway reserve is also a significant reminder of the railway's connection to the wheat silos and thereby its importance in the agricultural and wheat production.



**Fig 6. The former railway crossing at Broken Creek.**  
*Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004.*

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## Culturally significant places

The early houses of Broken Creek Precinct form a significant part of Nathalia's heritage.

### Victorian weatherboard houses (c. 1886) DB 1061, 1063, 1059, 1055

The Victorian weatherboard houses are the earliest residences in the Broken Creek Precinct and as such are concentrated along Weir Street. Richard Blake sold his land here in 1886 upon his departure from the town after a decade association with the town and its flour mill. They are associated with the history of the town immediately preceding and following the opening of the railway in 1888 and the first wave of urban residential development in Nathalia. Most have generous front and site setbacks.



Fig 7. Victorian House, 23 Weir Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle

### Victorian Brick Houses (1890s) DB 1058, 1064, 1008

The Victorian red brick houses in Weir Street and Scott Avenue are among the earliest surviving brick homes in Nathalia, and probably date to about 1894, when Walter Ritchie was operating his brick building business from pits and kilns north of the town, and on Blake's land along Broken Creek within the Precinct itself.<sup>8</sup>

The red brick home at 32 Weir Street also includes an old wooden stables, and is particularly associated with former local member of parliament G. S. Tucket, who used to live in the house.<sup>9</sup> It is an architecturally fine example of a picturesque Late Victorian styled home.



Fig 8. Left. Victorian House & Stables, 32 Weir Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

Fig 9. Right. Victorian House, 22 Weir Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004



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**Inter war Bungalows (1920-30s) DB 1053, 1057, 1062, 1005, 1004**

As examples of a more recent style (1920-30s), the interwar bungalows can be found in Weir Street but are predominant along Scott Avenue on the north side of Broken Creek where more urban redevelopment tended to occur at this time when the population of Nathalia hovered between 800 and 900. They are also associated with the movement of commercial workers and retired farmers into the town from the 1920s-30s at a time of fluctuating farming fortunes ahead of the long sought after extension of the irrigation system. 13 Scott Avenue is a two storey red brick Inter war Arts & Crafts Bungalow. Built by Tuttle Snr of Numurkah or Bertram Binger in 1923 and named Harboniere after the town in France where Binger had served in World War 1.<sup>10</sup>



**Fig 10 Inter-War House, 13 Scott Avenue**  
Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

**Post war Bungalows (1940 +) DB 1010, 1062, 1010, 1006, 1007, 1005**

As examples of a more recent style (1920-30s), the interwar bungalows can be found in Wier Street but are predominant along Scott Avenue on the north side of Broken Creek where more urban redevelopment tended to occur at this time when the population of Nathalia hovered between 800 and 900. They are also associated with the movement of commercial workers and retired farmers into the town from the 1920s-30s at a time of fluctuating farming fortunes ahead of the long sought after extension of the irrigation system.



**Fig 11 Post-War House, 12 Scott Avenue.** Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

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**STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE<sup>11</sup>**

**Nathalia Broken Creek precinct**

The other culturally significant places within the precinct, not specifically mentioned in this documentation are listed in Appendix 1 and are documented in the accompanying database. The history and description that precedes this Statement of Cultural Significance is the source of the evidence for the statement below.

The precinct is **aesthetically** significant on a **local** level. (AHC, D2) It contains excellent examples of several different architectural styles from the Victorian, Interwar and post-war periods. Low front fences made of light woven wire, pickets, brick and hedge allow open views of predominantly single storey houses along Weir Street and some two storey attic houses of brick and render along Scott Avenue. The skyline is punctuated with high pitched gable and hipped roofs, ornate chimneys, gum trees and exotic trees. There are aesthetically pleasing views along Weir Street and Scott Avenue, and along the river from the former railway bridge, and to the silos along the railway reserve.

The Victorian weatherboard houses are historically significant on a local level through their association with the early subdivision of Richard Blake's selection in 1886, making them among the older homes of the town. The Victorian red brick houses are also historically significant on a local level through their association both with the early residential development in the 1890s as further association with the local brick making industry at that time. (AHC A.4) The interwar houses and bungalows are historically significant on a local level through their association with the residential development of Nathalia in the 1920s-30s and the period of urban consolidation around this time. (AHC A.4) Both the Victorian and Interwar houses, combined with the Moreton bay fig trees and pepper trees are especially significant on a local level through their recognised value as representatives of Nathalia's residential heritage. (AHC G.1)

The railway bridge and reserve are historically significant on a local level through their association with the period of the railways and the development of transport infrastructure. (AHC A.4)

The precinct is **socially** significant on a **local** level. Housing in the precinct reflects the pride that residents had in their private domain during the late colonial era and first part of the twentieth century. The development of services for water, railways and walking tracks reflects the determination of the local community to improve their facilities since the inception of the town and the beautification of the streets with substantial shade trees along the streets and river bank illustrates their civic pride.

**Overall, Nathalia Broken Creek precinct is culturally significant at the LOCAL level.**

**MOIRA SHIRE STAGE TWO HERITAGE STUDY 2007**  
**VOLUME FOUR of Five: HERITAGE PRECINCTS: COBRAM, NATHALIA**

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- 1 Hibbins, *A History of the Nathalia Shire* p.92, 101.  
2 Tim Mannion Nathalia Historical Society 2005.  
3 Hibbins, p.13.  
4 See also Thematic Environmental History (2004).  
5 Hibbins, p.171.  
6 Thematic Environmental History (2004).  
7 Hibbins, p.234.  
8 Hibbins. P.113. It is also noted that the house at 14 Scott Avenue was originally a single storey house called The Nut, built for Frederick Fenton c1900s. W P Scott and Fenton were the first managers of Brown Cork and Co. In 1924 Mrs Edith Scott, wife of W P Scott, bought this house and added the second storey and called the house Tandara. Source: Tim Mannion Nathalia Historical Society 2005.  
9 David McKenzie 2005.  
10 Kathleen Binger 1998. Nathalia 2006.  
11 Definitions used are from the *Burra Charter* 1999; historical themes relate to the Principal Australian Themes – Australian Heritage Commission; criteria for Locally Significant places are from the Australian Heritage Commission and in the case of State Significant places, from Heritage Victoria; levels of significance used are State and Local, which directly relate to the two legislative authorities who administer the protection of heritage places, the State Government and Local Government respectively.