

F.N. 4929

Burnham Beeches, Sherbrooke Road, Sassafras



The centre piece of this magnificent hill station in the Dandenongs, is one of the earliest examples of a major Victorian Moderne-style mansion. It sits within an extensively landscaped setting of rockeries, exotic trees and plants (and originally included the now publicly owned Nicholas Memorial Gardens). Numerous outbuildings required to maintain the vast estate which included a small scale farm, are also part of the setting.

Having operated as a hotel in the 1980s, Burnham Beeches has been closed for a number of years, and was recently sold. Current proposals lodged for conversion to a major hotel health resort and function centre involve extensive alterations and additions that would substantially degrade the completeness and significance of the property. These proposed alterations include extensive demolition on the ground floor to enlarge rooms, creation of new doorways and

openings on the main floor and the demolition of the servant's staircase. A proposed large new Ballroom, in a simplistic Art Deco style, would obscure the north side of the house, and involves the removal of a number of large trees.

The only cottage remaining on the site, built for the gardener, Percy Trevaskis, would be demolished and replaced with a health club facility almost as large as the house. The original Machinery Shed would also be demolished.

There are some positives - the new owner proposes to re-unite the house with the gardens by installing gates in the fence that currently divide them, and to restore the original planting on the terrace in front of the house. The Trust has made a substantial submission to Heritage Victoria, outlining our concerns with the extent and unsympathetic nature of the proposed alterations.