

# Botanic fernery renewal

## Lost gothic gateway rebuild is planned

BY CALEB CLUFF

ONE of the Gothic highlights of Victorian and Edwardian Ballarat is proposed to be rebuilt in the Botanical Gardens, with the planned construction of a replica of the ornate 1887 fernery.

The building has been designed by Balance Architecture and is a copy of the original Gothic entrance, which was completed in 1898. The firm referred to original photographs and plans of the filigreed 'batten fernery' to recreate what the wooden structure looked like. The plan is being considered by Heritage Victoria.

It is not clear when the original fernery was demolished, but postcards of the period show a finely-detailed peaked structure surrounded by the Stoddart statues.

Architect Andrew Fedorowicz says working on a unique building such as the fernery is a joy as much as it is a challenge.

"What looks like something straightforward in one picture becomes a more complex corner detail in the next," he says. "It's a big building, 11 metres to the pinnacle."

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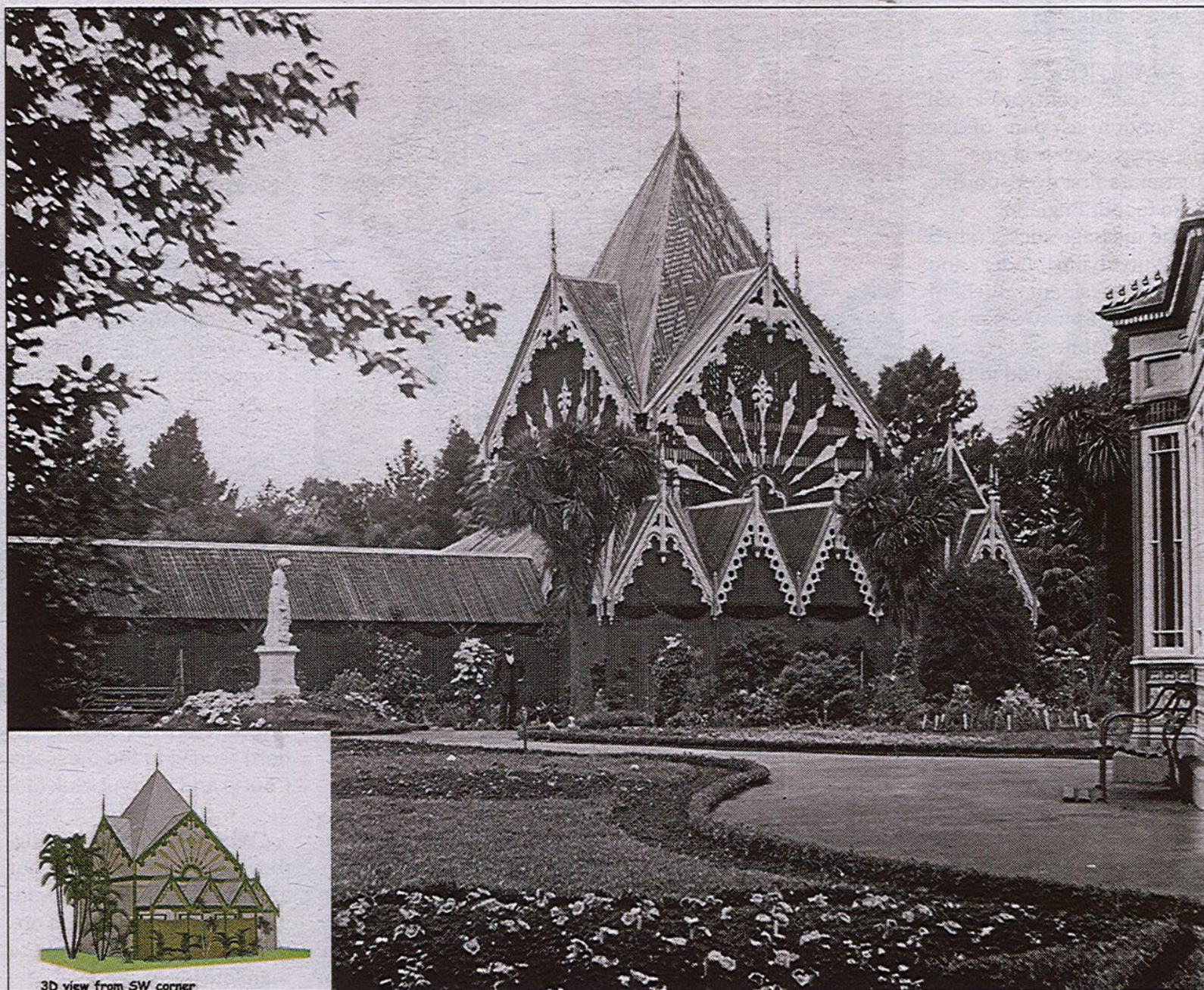
**Andrew Fedorowicz,  
Balance Architects**

Mr Fedorowicz used photographs as they came to light to gradually reconstruct the many angles of the wooden fern house. The transparent roof of the fernery is composed of strips of timber which gave the building the name Batten Fernery.

"It's important that those battens go back, to give it that transparency. There will be gaps between each 90mm board for that reason."

The current fernery, labelled as being in 'a disgraceful state' by support group Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens (FBBG), has been assessed as having engineering problems that may 'compromise the structure's integrity and safety' if continued deterioration is allowed.

The City of Ballarat has issued a statement saying the



**A WELCOME RETURN:** The original fernery in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens and (inset) the recreated version by Balance Architects which is expected to be completed by October 2018, pending Heritage Victoria approval.

projected reconstruction is 'shovel ready' and makes a commitment of \$1.2 million to the first stage, with another \$200,000 coming from the FBBG and a planned

further \$200,000 grant from the Living Heritage Grants program.

Elizabeth Gilfillan of the FBBG says while the group hasn't seen the final plans

for the building, it's an exciting development after years of lobbying. The group has spent over 20 years raising funds for the project.

"We proposed the recon-

struction of this building 10 years ago," said Ms Gilfillan. "The buildings that currently house the fernery were originally temporary and were built in the 1950s."