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## A Vestige of Architectural History: The Lansell Laboratory Building

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*Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service, Bendigo*

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## Abstract

The Lansell Laboratory Building is a beautiful heritage edifice located in the grounds of the old Bendigo Hospital in my hometown of Bendigo, Australia. I once worked in the Lansell Laboratory Building in my role as Data & Quality Specialist with the Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service. I took this photograph of the building as I left it for the last time late one afternoon, just before moving to an office in the new Bendigo Hospital across the road. I felt as though the shadows falling across the building at this time of day were marking the end of an era for the building and myself.

## Author/Artist Bio

Dr Michael J Leach is an adjunct research associate at the Monash University School of Rural Health, a Data & Quality Specialist at the Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service, Bendigo Health, and a freelance poet, writer, and visual artist. He holds a Bachelor of Pharmacy, a Graduate Certificate of Science (Applied Statistics), a Master of Biostatistics, and a PhD (Pharmacoepidemiology). Michael started out working in community pharmacies before conducting masters research into post-stroke stroke quality of life and doctoral research into psychoactive medicine use and the risk of hip fracture among older people. In his current role as Data & Quality Specialist, Michael uses quantitative and qualitative data to support quality improvement in cancer services across the Loddon Mallee region of Victoria. His strong interest in health science is complemented by a passion for health humanities, particularly health-related poetry and photography. Michael is a STEAM advocate who has studied multiple arts courses online through Open Yale (<http://oyc.yale.edu/>) and undertaken health humanities projects at Monash University. His poems and visual images have appeared in literary and health publications, including Cordite Poetry Review and Pulse – Voices from the Heart of Medicine. Michael currently lives in his birthplace of Bendigo.

## Keywords

Photography, hospital architecture, health history, architectural history

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The places where scientists and health professionals work have changed dramatically over the past century, with contemporary edifices such as the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) Building being compared with spaceships. These changes in the style of science and medical buildings have coincided with advances in engineering as well as the scientific art of architecture. Around the globe, contemporary architecture is often seen in airports, malls, stadiums, libraries, hospitals, and university buildings, particularly those used for scientific and medical research. As architecture advances into uncharted territory, however, there is value in looking back at the buildings of the past for inspiration and to see how far society has come.

The Lansell Laboratory Building is a quaint, heritage-listed building located in the grounds of the old Bendigo Hospital in my hometown of Bendigo, Australia. While the building lacks modern features such as automatic doors and environmental sustainability, some might say that it is more aesthetically pleasing than many examples of contemporary architecture. I once worked in the Lansell Laboratory Building in my role as Data & Quality Specialist with the Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service. At the same time, I continued to pursue my keen interest in using digital photography as a means of capturing a more humanistic side of science and medicine.

My photo of the Royal Adelaide Hospital was taken from the Adelaide Botanic Garden (<https://pulsevoices.org/index.php/archive/visuals/707-a-therapeutic-garden>).

My photo of Bendigo taken from my office in the Lansell Laboratory Building were published in Pulse—Voices from the Heart of Medicine during 2016. (<https://pulsevoices.org/index.php/archive/visuals/824-the-day-grandpa-passed>)

I took this latest photograph of the Lansell Laboratory Building as I left it for the last time late one afternoon in 2017, just before moving to an office in the newly-built, spaceship-like Bendigo Hospital across the road. I felt as though the shadows falling across the Lansell Laboratory Building at this time of day were marking the end of an era for the edifice and myself. My photograph captured a time of change – a turning of the page and the beginning of a new chapter in the building’s narrative.

I have long been fascinated by the Lansell Laboratory Building and feel honoured to have been part of its evolving narrative in the history of science and medicine. The Lansell Laboratory Building was constructed from red brick in 1928 using funds donated by Bendigo residents. The building started out as a Commonwealth tuberculosis clinic and laboratory that provided crucial X-ray and pathological services to Bendigo and surrounds. This historical function is reflected by the name written in rendered capital letters across the building’s cream-coloured loggia: ‘EDITH & G.V. LANSELL LABORATORY & CLINIC’. The building was named after the Lansells as this family donated a majority of the funds required for construction – £3,000. This was a considerable sum of money at the time.

After the pathology service moved down the road in 1976, the building started to be used as office space for clinical, research, and administrative staff across various departments of Bendigo Health and Monash University. Over the years, the Lansell Laboratory Building has housed such departments as the Centre for Rural Mental Health and my current workplace – the Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service. In early 2017, Bendigo Health made final preparations to tear down the less historic structures surrounding the Lansell Laboratory Building to make way for a multi-storey carpark for the new hospital. It was at this time that the Lansell Laboratory Building was decommissioned. At the time of writing in September 2018, Bendigo Health is repurposing the building for a new, yet-to-be-announced function.

While the future of the Lansell Laboratory Building is uncertain, the building's heritage listing ensures that it will remain as a vestige of architectural history in an ever-changing landscape. It continues to stand vigilantly amidst contemporary hospital architecture, providing a stark reminder of the science and medical buildings of the past. I will always treasure the memory of looking out over my hometown of Bendigo from the Lansell Laboratory Building's beautiful multi-paned windows, just as the first team of clinic and laboratory workers did nearly a century earlier.

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