

## **Fairfield U3A Bike Group – History Bike Ride**

P Michell, 2017

Fairifeld Park / Yarra Bend / Merri Creek / CERES

\* Indicates stops.

### **\* Intro & Fairfield Park**

#### Fairfield Park

Adjoining 15 acres parkland to Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum – been set aside in 1914. Levelled and fenced in 1912. Chief Engineer of PWD – Carlo Catani (1852-1918) designed gardens and rockeries.

Pipe Bridge (1878 damaged in 1934 flood – rebuilt in 1937)

Yarra River – many floods / Recreation from C20th, Boating & Swimming carnivals since 1908 / Annual 3 mile race (1913-63) / Hardings ferries / have to get out at Dights Falls!

Boat Houses – Fairfield (Willow Dell) (1908 - ) / Rudder Grange (1904-1963) Heyday before WWII.

Swimming carnivals began in 1908.

Old Heidelberg Rd – First Major road. Estd 1839. 1842 Macadam surfacing. (Pionnered in Scotland in 1820. Rocks crushed with ground rock dust.)

McPherson Robertson – Station St. Yarra to house for parties.

*Ride to picnic area at ...*

### **\* Yarra Bend**

Yarra Bend Asylum (1848-1925). Up to 1200 patients. Included HaHa Wall. No new monies from 1905 for buildings. Admissions ceased 1924. Patients transferred to Mont Park. Buildings demolished 1926.

Playing fields – old gardens of Asylum

Burial Ground – many bodies still remaining despite some transferred to Melbourne General. Located on Yarra Bend Golf Course facing Yarra.

Yarra Bend Golf course – old asylum grounds. New Clubhouse opened in 1936 - US 'Country Club' style.

Kane's Bridge (1929/1935). Washed away in 1934. Rebuilt. Wooden swing bridge. Studley Park Boathouse opposite

*Loop around and climb hill. Turn into Deep Rock Rd (before freeway)*

### **\* Sir Hubert Olney Oval**

Aboriginal Mission – Merri Ck Aboriginal School (1841-1851) -

Melbourne Procterorate District HQ, Native Police HQ (1842/3 only). Billibellary (aka Jika Jika) died here (1846). Senior Wurundjeri elder. Signatory to the Batman

Treaty. Persuaded natives to use the school. Once he died then it was difficult for it to continue. Protectorate dissolved in 1849.

William Thomas (1793-1867) – protector of Wurunjeri & other Aboriginal tribes lamented on his death:

"It may be said of this Chief and his tribe what can scarce be said of any tribe of located parts of the colony that they never shed white man's blood nor have white men shed their blood. I have lost in this man a valuable councillor in Aboriginal affairs."

In 2014, 4 vols of his Journals has been published. He travelled on foot with the aborigines staying in tents. Is considered one of the best observers of early aboriginal life in the colony."

Thomas' boss was George Augustus Robinson (1791-1866). Tasmanian Aboriginals connection. Initially wanting to help and travelled with them. Soon changed to profiteering. Organised 4000 Aboriginals to be segregated on Swan Is. Within a year had declined to less than 150. From 1839 spent 11 years in Port Phillip with poor management. In 1852 he left Australia. Treated Thomas poorly.

Deep Rock Dive and Aleck Wickam (1918). 60,000 people. World record dive of 62.7m for £100. Australian crawl & Cavill Bros. John Wren.

Deep Rock Swimming Basin. Demolished with Eastern Freeway build.

Eastern Freeway (1972/7) & Yarra diversion.

*Return to Yarra Bend Rd and after crossing freeway – stop at ...*

\* **Pillar – 1860** from asylum gate later prison.

Fairfield Infectious Diseases (Queens Memorial) Hospital (1904-1996). Related to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 1897. Any funds raised to help the sick. Site of 6.1 Ha established north of Asylum. Buildings completed in 1901 but nil monies for furnishings and staff. Site now split between Thomas Embling and Northern Polytechnic (ex NMIT).

Venereal Disease Clinic 'Fairhaven' / Fairlea Prison (1953 -1996) / Thomas Embling Hospital for Criminally Insane (2000 - )

The Mission of St James and St John opened a Venereal Disease Clinic named "Fairhaven" in 1927 on the northern section of land previously occupied by the Yarra Bend Asylum, including the asylum's main buildings. The clinic closed in 1951 and the site was temporarily used by the adjacent Fairfield Hospital as staff quarters and storerooms.

In 1953, the former "Fairhaven" site was acquired by the Prisons Division for conversion into a female prison. **HM Prison Fairlea** was officially opened in 1956 and closed in August 1996.

Embling - health reformer. First resident medical officer at Yarra Bend. Political activism on behalf of Eureka and supposedly coined the phrase – “Eight hours work, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest”. Supported Zoological society and exotic animals, particularly camels (from India) which were used on Burke & Wills expedition.

*go on bike track to ... opp car park ABOVE Westfield Reserve next to 3 large rocks.*

**\* Westfield Reserve (East side Merri Ck)**

Shepherd Tar Paving Co (1870s-1930) - Quarrying bluestone and crushing for road works.

1856 William Henry Dennis (1852-1909), a Cornwall lad, bought land in Northcote, lived in East Collingwood. Bluestone House built in 34 Walker St. (Later brick front added.) Prominent family dynasty. In the 1870s he took over the Shepherd's Patent Composition and Pavement & Stonebreaking Co. Northcote councillor (1883-1904), and the second mayor in borough of Northcote (1884/5), Mayor of Town of Northcote (1902-3). He was active in Methodist Church. Sunday School Superintendent for 32 year since 1860s. His sons W J & S Dennis both became councillors. In 1864 the brother

There is a plaque on north corner of Urquart & High Sts. that commemorates Cr. Samuel Dennis and a clock tower opposite, before removal during 1970s road widening.

In 1890 two other companies located here also – Fitzroy Council Stone Crushing works & Campbell & Brooks Stone Crushing & Tar Paving Works. Fitzroy lasted less than 5 years. Campbell less than 10 years.

Massive removal of rock from site as can be seen by the depression south of Heidelberg Rd where the park is.

Susso / Depression work – Bluestone staircase & creek terraces / Plans for dam. V J Bradley. Northcote Council engineer / surveyor. Responsible for many Northcote projects including Normanby Rd bridge. Sophisticated engineering works pre and during WWII. Large purchase of war surplus equipment (with Brunswick council) from Darwin. Later Chief Commissioner with Housing Commission.

Island in Merri Ck.

*Ride down path and over Heidelberg Rd Bridge .*

***WARNING – RIDE ON RIGHT SIDE OF DOWN RAMP!! DEEP GUTTERS IN MIDDLE.***

*(Stop before going under bridge)*

**\* Heidelberg Rd Bridge (1867/1936)**

Lost Aboriginal heritage / Merri Ck crossing before bridge.

Bridge – 1840s washed away. 1853/4 bridge. Originally half width.

Other notable early bluestone bridge – Heidelberg Rd over Darebin Ck.

*Continue along Merri Ck - Cross Merri Ck (Bridge 1) – to car park behind flats off Walker St*

**\* Tunnel (1860s?)** - WWII use with guard. Possibly served as underground water course for well for John May's (1870s) houses crnr Cunningham & East St. Now filled in.

Flats – 1960s.

*Continue along pathway – turn right into Ross St.*

**\* Ross St**

44 Urquhart St – two storey with balcony at rear.

& 38-42 Urquhart St - 3 x Row houses – land purchased and developed by John Cosgrove, gentlemen, in 1880s. Built in 1887. Cosgrove lived in #38.

20 -28 Ross St – Dysons 'Northcote' Nursery (1870-1915) Built upon after WWI. c1900 was Alfred Dysons nursery which was dating much earlier. By 1934 most of the nursery land was built on. Alfred still lived at #20 house called 'Dysonia'. Now flats..

9 Ross St – Federation house with sunburst

32-42 Ross St (after Walker St) – 1880s row houses.

*Rejoin bike path and Stop after ....*

**\* High St Bridge (1875)** – double arched brick. Widened in 1890 for cable tram extension. Crossing here from the 1850s.

Heidelberg Railway Viaduct pillars.(c1881) C H James for 'Nowhere to Nowhere' Railway. Fairfield land auctions between 1881-1886. Heidelberg Railway line 1888. Duplication 2009.

Bridge Inn (1871-1922) High St just after the bridge - Situated on the banks of the Merri Ck it was a small affair of some five room. Northcote Health League, led by Rev Duncan Fraser. Out of which council was formed and it was disbanded - the monies went to stock a library for Northcote.

Northcote Loop (south) (1904) – artificial hill. More at next stop.

*Continue along bike path – cross Merri Ck (Bridge 2) go under Rushall station and stop in front ...*

**\* Rushall Station (1927)**

Note late station – line opened in 1888. Post Northcote Loop station.

Footbridge (1930s) Links the early settlement of Lower Northcote / Northcote Bridge (now Westgarth). MacLachlan & Cunningham Sts – settled in 1850s.

Batman Treaty was signed according to 1880s writers. Statue washed away in floods. Rex Harcourt's view that Hume & Hovell expedition (1824) which disproved the view that Victoria was uninhabitable - having discovered Australia Felix (Fortunate/Happy Australia). Harcourt contends that it was the earlier expedition not Mitchell who discovered the lushness of Victoria. Duly paving the way for the Batman et al who wished to make a land grab for Victoria.

Northcote Loop (Contd). Tight turn. Prior all Northcote trains went via Inner Circle line. Fitzroy then Carlton, Zoo, Spencer St.

Old Colonists Home (1869-) on Fitzroy side initiated by George Coppin. One designed by Walter Burley Griffin. Interesting historical buildings.

*Continue along bike path and cross (Bridge 3) Merri Ck. Stop*

**\* In park before St Georges Rd.**

Whittlesea Railway Bridge crossing the Merri Creek (1889). Late railway.

Costliest structure in the construction of the Whittlesea railway line. Took over a year to build, because of foundation problems. Cost £46,632. Highly likely that this and Bent's non-ownership of relevant land is what stymied the Grand Junction Project.

Grand Junction Railway – ill fated plan to build a major station here. Fitzroy (from city) & Whittlesea lines were to intersect. Land sold in 1887 to capitalise on this. Albion Family Hotel (1887 -) - Massive hotel built in anticipation of the Grand Junction Railway Station.

Inner Circle Railway – Whittlesea line went to Spencer St via Royal Park and North Fitzroy. Very long ride of course. Slowed Northcote's growth until loop line.

St Georges Rd Pipetrack & Yan Yean Reservoir (1853-57) largest construction in Southern Hemisphere. Caused by blowing up falls. Designed by James Blackburn (1803-1854) (convict engineer) died during construction. Fall created high pressure and Reservoir holding ponds built to reduce pressure. Still problems – thus continuous repair work.

Bridge (1850s/ 1886 / 1962) - Early c1850s crossing for Yan Yean Pipe Track. Water Supply Dept owned land, not a public road. Fitzroy, Northcote & St Georges Rd League formed in 1884 to petition for road. As this was the construction zone for the Yan Yean pipeline to Melbourne there would have been a very early crossing 1855. This was because for decades after as burst pipes were not uncommon.

C A Groves (c1925 - late1950s) – Wood yard active on banks of Merri Ck. Made broom handles & etc. Possibly supplying Aust Broom Co. Two huge fires.

*Ride down to Merri Ck under bridge / alternate go across St Georges Rd and cross over footbridge (Bridge 4) onto Brunswick side.*

### \* **Opposite Substation**

Merri Ck Straightening – discuss flooding / wetlands & drain from Batman Park and beyond

Drownings – Fogg & Old Northcote Baths (1923-1969).

May drownings along Merri Ck and quarry holes. Though fairly polluted. Many suicides.

Due to numerous drownings (often 1 a week during summer months), prior to WWI Northcote council was under pressure to build a safe swimming baths.

Delayed until 1923 when it opened in Frederick St - now a housing estate.

It was the drowning death of his brother that lead Joe Fogg (1891-1970) from Abbotsford to train as an early life saver and become the iconic manager of Northcote Baths from 1928 until its closure in 1969. Granted a OBE in 1970 for his services to swimming and lifesaving. Received two bronze medallions for life saving – one in NSW another on Yarra. Deep Rock connection.

Claims to have trained 50,000 children. For over two decades Northcote was in the top three councils that in number of children trained in 'Learn to Swim Campaign'. Fogg's media persona.

Captain Andrew Clarke (1824-1902)

Born in India. In Melbourne from 1853-1858. House on Merri Ck. Still existing c1930s. Surveyor General of Victoria [assistant was Nehemiah Wimble (1829-1906) (From 1869, Secretary Lands Dept who had a house St Neots on Northcote Hill)]. Example of early gentleman estates in Northcote pre 1900. Replaced Robert Hoddle in 1853. Established Roads Boards. Municipal Govt. 2<sup>nd</sup> governor of Straits Settlements (1873-75). Clarke Quay in Singapore named after him. Marcus Clarke novelist and author is a nephew. Son of Gov of WA - Andrew Clarke (1793-1847). Irish. With Redmond Barry behind estd Museum. The housing development between St Georges Rd bridge and Northcote High is on the site of his property.

#### Inebriate's Retreat (1873-1892)

The Northcote Inebriate (Alcoholism) Asylum (a.k.a. the Northcote Inebriate's Retreat) was opened by Dr. Charles McCarthy in 1873. McCarthy had argued for some years in medical journals and daily newspapers that the treatment of alcoholism should be addressed as a medical rather than a moral problem, and in turn should be a government responsibility.

In December 1872, a property of some 21 / 32 acres in Northcote was acquired from T J Sumner.

A substantial two-storey brick building was erected for accommodation of the inmates, and a second wooden building housed McCarthy's private quarters, a library, and a meeting-room.

After 1874 funding was erratic -closed in 1892.

The buildings remained until demolished in 1926 preparatory to the construction of the Northcote High School; parts of the grounds were earlier granted to Northcote City Council for the establishment of a new recreation reserve.

NHS was one of only six high schools in Melbourne pre WWII.

Famous alumni: John Cain, Norman Banks, Bruce Dawe, Noel Ferrier, Jack Hamilton (footballer, admin – many footballers), James Mollison, Normie Rowe, Jac Nasser. Next door land set aside for Merri Park.

#### Theodotus Sumner (1820-1884) / Stony Park (1840s?-1929) / Sumner Estate & Substation

William Rucker connection – bankrupt 1843.

Theodotus Sumner (1820 – 1884) MLC. Had extensive pastoral and agricultural interests. Endowed Sumner Ward – Children's Hospital; Old Colonists Home & Melbourne Hospital.

Theodotus bought land taking over Rucker's mansion ? and expanded it – Stony Park. Extensive gardens and fields.

About 100 acres. Extensive hydraulic system from a weir with a self-acting ram that pumped water to large storage tanks.

Sumner & Stony Park were famous for particular breed of cows – Alderney which are the Jersey cows of today. During WWII the German soldiers invaded Alderney and ate all the cows!

Sumner practiced careful breeding of the 18 cows from different stock.

Producing many prized offspring which were sold.

He took over the land of Peter Macarthur's – Arthurton farm on the Northcote side in 1861. He owned all the land between St Georges Rd and the Merri Creek. A famous resident of Stony Park was Maie Casey (Sumner)– later to be Lord Casey's wife. She remembers as a child looking over the paddocks to the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Wife died in 1929 then estate sold. Housing is on some of estate as well as Brunswick (Electricity) Terminal Station (1939 - ). Plant upgrading.

*Ride on to ....*

**\* Wales Quarry (1857 -c1957)**

**Whelan the Wrecker dump (1957-1970s)**

In operation for around 100 years. Post WWI was largest Victorian producer of road stone. Rock face and some equipment still visible.

Polluted / damaged Merri Ck of the past. Particularly offal from abattoirs in South Preston brought down via Bullen's drain.

*Ride on to ...*

**\* CERES – (off Blyth St) – Arthurton Rd [END OF TOUR]**

*show pictures*

Estd 1982.

Merri Table Café open 9-3

Chinese Market Gardens

Old quarry

Community centre

Rehabilitation area – different from Collingwood Children's farm which was Convent farm.

Traditional meeting place of Wurundjeri clan.

CERES blue stone building only a few months old.

**East over Merri Ck - Northcote:**

Peter McCarthur & Arthurton (1874-1861)

Bought land on Merri Ck in 1842 from original purchaser Henry Lake Worsely S107 – 140 acres – stretching from Merri Ck to Rahtmines St. Separation St runs down the centre of the selection. Original house was where where Arthurton Rd approaches Merri Ck. In 1851 sold eastern section of his land becoming Northcote Brick works. He established a street to gain access to it and other subdivisions - Separation St to celebrate separation of the. A military surgeon he arrived in Melbourne in 1842. Lived at Arthurton. Died aged 87 years at his farm. Like Sumner raised livestock including cows.

Post death – Sumner purchased land west of Pipetrack.

Arthurton Rd bridge (1891/ 1909 /1955)

Land obtained from Sumner estate in 1890. Floods in July 1891.

Initially narrow crossing that veered north then south.

Angus & Co (1914-1970s)

Many manufacturing businesses occurred on the banks of the Merri between Arthurton Rd & Normanby Rd. Angus is just one.

The company was famous for a number of products including Clag, Poster paints and Ink. In 1933 - "The largest ink, gum and paste manufacturers in the Commonwealth." Bottle works and other buildings. A catastrophic fire in 1921 then re-built in modules. Sales exceeded 234,500 bottles in 1932.

Behind Angus was Bysouth Quarries with many large holes for extracting bluestone. Behind that was Croft Bank Dairies.

MMBW depot.

Normany Rd Bridge (1938-51) and Merri Creek alteration – show Andersons 1921 map. Current concrete bridge 16 May 1951. WWII build. Public Works Dept, V J Bradley engineer. Arthurton Rd was a Small (single road?) crossing (eastwards) before Merri Ck straightening in 1938. Creek was moved approx 30m west. Between 1938 and 1951 issues with crossing Merri Ck.

Aust Broom Co (c1920s – 1970s). Wilkes family. Cooperative management. Bent St, west of St Georges Rd. Now apartments.

## **Addendum:**

### **Knockando / Woodlands / Paper Mills / Village / Outer Circle Railway**

Chandler Highway (ex Railway crossing Yarra River 1891-1893) 1930.

Outer Circle Railway. Sir John Monash. Tested by having locomotives sitting end top end on it. Rails removed 1919. 1930 for vehicles. Side walkway 1950s

Knockando / Fulham Grange / APM Site

Knockando farm (1853-1879). Dr Alan Ranald McDonald. 30 acres.

Highly likely that Perry Bros leased some of McDonald's land south of Hedileberg Rd. They owned land north – Fulham Grange. After 1879 nil info on Perry Bros in Alphington.

Woodlands (1883 – 1914). Albert Miller (son of Henry 'Money' Miller) bought farm speculating on Outer Circle Railway. Thoroughbred racehorses stabled there. 1888 Miller moves to Toorak. After he hired Harry Miskin as manager, living there from 1900.

In 1905 Miskin had the best milking cows. Woodlands estate was subdivided in 1914.

Much of land east of APM was sold from Miller's allotment inc Alphington Park. APM (1918- c2010) - 1921 APM completed a papermill. Sited on 23.5 acres, 300 employees, £200,000 cost.

Partly flooded in 1930s.

Now being redeveloped into a village.

Fulham Grange – Perry Bros Orchard.



Outer Circle Railway (1880-93) - short lived white elephant project of which Chandler Hwy is remnant. Went from Fairified Park to Oakleigh. Camberwell line is remnant. Northcote Brickworks connection?

### **Known Floods**

1839 (very bad – nil records), 1842 July & Oct), 1844, 1849, 1863, 1891, 1911, 1934.

Due to the ongoing flooding major works were undertaken in early 1900s – straightening and improving drainage flows. The 1934 flood was not as severe as earlier ones. Further work done during the depression years.

More recent ones that some may remember:

1952 - July 16 - 'Floods Hits Northcote; Merri Overflows'. Leader newspaper describes of Saturday and Sunday flooding. Wettest July weekend for 61 years. Water at house floorboards.

1972 – Elizabeth St, Melbourne flood

2003 – 3 Dec - Preston and Fairfield severely affected with local flooding. Almost 50% of the 700+ SES calls came from Northcote, Preston and Fairfield. Station St floods.

END