

Waterways - U3A Talk

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Pre-amble

Northcote has waterways on three of its boundaries – Merri Ck to the west, Darebin Ck to the East and Merri Ck & Yarra River to the south.

Over the years the geographical southern and eastern boundaries have altered. Alphington and Fairfield left Heidelberg in 1962. In 1994 area south of Heidelberg Rd joined City of Yarra. During the 1930s Yarra Bend became part of Northcote. This tour includes the Yarra.

In the 1930s the Merri Creek's course was altered in a number of locations within Northcote to reduce the number of bends and thus reduce the risk of serious flooding.

In addition two open drains crossed the west of St Georges Rd / Pipe Track. Bullen's drained from South West Preston now covered – McCracken St. Carrying offal and ammonia rich residue from tanneries and pig factories such as Huttons. Another ran diagonally through Batman Park draining the area Preston South east. These would remain open and fetid for decades. It was particularly disgusting when Merri Creek regularly flooded.

Both effectively reducing housing prospects until covered.

This means that Northcote was physically isolated by its geography.

Overseas waterways were part of business development especially as transport for goods. The creeks in Northcote are not suitable for industrial purposes.

The waterways in the past were seen as places for quarrying and dumping animals, vehicles, waste goods and using it for manufacturing. There developed along its banks industries that took advantage of this – wool scouring, candle making, soap making. Most common of all was quarrying. Though somehow Darebin Ck was spared this pollution. Though vast tracts of embankments have been removed in the south – resulting in Darebin Parklands. Further north were the council quarries.

Irregular Water flows impacted on subdivisions. Long rectangular blocks with water access at far end. was an ongoing problem. Most of the time there would be very little water then floods. For much of Northcote's history low lying land was not built on for this reason. Sumner built a dam on the Merri to sort out the problem. Chinese Market gardeners were active on the Yarra and Merri. Used sophisticated water containment. (Eg: Ivanhoe beside the Yarra)

However the impediment of the water had to be fixed. Roadway bridges were crucial to development.

Apart from agricultural and domestic needs the waterways - in particular the Yarra and Merri Ck were used extensively for recreation. Sports and swimming were popular in summer months. Eventually concrete baths were built along the banks of the Yarra.

This Waterways journey goes clockwise WEST TO EAST starting at the top of Merri Ck.

Job Smith

Original purchaser in 1854, of 187 acres north-west section. Bounding Merri Ck, Miller St, High St and back of Mansfield St houses. Named farm – Thornbury. He was a prize grower of wurzel-mangel (common beet - food for livestock) and sugar beet. Won many awards at Agricultural Shows. Newspaper article in 1876 on his growing of Wurzel.

Over the years he gradually accrued more land.

A rather canny man, sold his holdings in mid 1886 for a considerable fortune and relocated to Kew becoming a councillor. He made quite a profit – paying £2737 and selling for £46,000. Quite a profit.

There was a plan in 1886 to locate an institution on his land when it sold.

The land eventually became part of the Penders Grove Estate.

Normanby Ave (Merri Ck) Bridge - 1938 / 1951

Current concrete bridge 1951.

Originally the Merri Ck deviated a long loop eastwards. Small road crossing, before Merri Ck straightening in 1938. The creek was moved approx 30m west. For over 10 years crossing may have been impassable.

Began construction during WWII. Whilst the plaque acknowledges Public Works Dept, V J Bradley engineer is listed on the bridge's plaque with Brunswick, Coburg & Northcote Councils. Bradley for many years was Northcote's engineer.

Croft Bank Dairy (1895s – 1960s)

Dairying was important and Northcote and Preston produced exceptionally high quality milk which became household names – Pura (Preston) and Cranbourne connection. There were many dairies scattered and this but one.

From around 1895 Thomas Elliot Brown (?-1933) established a dairy between Arthurton Rd & Clarendon St. Property probably went from back of Bysouth Quarry – back of house blocks of Beaconsfield Pde to just below Bird St, where Chinese garden was. This would approximate 74 acres.

His wife, Emily, is an example of a significant woman in Northcote's history. From the mid 1920s there is a numerous report about Emily Brown , Dairy Woman, being fined for various infringements. She ran the dairy after the death of her husband.

Dr Peter McArthur / Arthurton Farm (c1774 - 1861).

Bought land on Merri Ck in 1842 from original purchaser Henry Lake Worsely - S107 140 acres – stretching from Merri Ck to Rathmines St. Separation St runs down the centre of the selection. Original house was where Arthurton Rd approaches Merri Ck. In 1851 sold eastern section of his land over High St becoming Northcote Brick works. He established a street to gain access to it and other subdivisions - Separation St to celebrate separation of the Colony of Victoria from New South Wales.

A military surgeon he arrived in Melbourne in 1842. Lived at Arthurton. Died aged 87 years at his farm. Swift in his tour of 1885 details extant Arthurton farm house and access.

Angus & Co (1914 - 1970s)

Number of large manufacturers occurred along the banks of the Merri especially between Arthurton Rd & Normanby Rd. Quarrying on Brusnwick and Northcote side was significant.

Angus & Co was described in the Northcote Jubilee Program in 1933 as: 'The largest ink, gum and paste manufacturers in the Commonwealth.' Had a bottle works and other buildings on Arthurton Rd on Merri Ck. The company was famous for a number of products including Clag, Poster paints and Ink. Suffering 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.

Arthurton Rd (Merri Ck) Bridge 1891 / 1909 / 1955.

Current concrete bridge dates from 1955.

Land from Sumner estate in 1890. Floods in July 1891 washed away building materials. Flooding nearby market gardens. Arthurton Road was straightened and widened 1909-11

St Georges Rd (Merri Ck) Bridge - 1850s / 1886 / 1962.

c1850s crossing for Yan Yean Pipe Track. Stone and brick. Water Supply Dept owned land, not a public road. Fitzroy, Northcote & St Georges Rd League formed in 1884 to petition and raise money. As this was the construction zone for the Yan Yean pipeline to Melbourne there would have been a very early crossing 1855. Though this land belonged to the Water Board and did not carry private vehicles. This was because for decades after as burst pipes were not uncommon. Current bridge 1962.

Albion Family Hotel (1887 -)

Massive hotel built in anticipation of the Grand Junction Railway Station. However the planned railway extensions were never built.

C A Groves * (c1925-1950s)

Woodyard active on banks of Merri Ck. West of railway bridge. Two fires severely damaged the site. The last being inadvertently lit by two schoolboys cooking yabbies in a jam tin by the side of the creek. Now parkland.

Whittlesea Railway Bridge crossing the Merri Creek (1889)

Biggest and 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 high cost contributed to the nil build of the Grand Junction.

Northcote Railway Loop (1904)

When the Collingwood to Melbourne railway opened in 1901 and connected with the Heidelberg Railway line there was a push to end 'The (Northcote) Great Way Round'. The Whittlesea line to Melbourne went via the Inner Circle line. Through Royal Park. A rather slow route via Fitzroy. A loop line was constructed at a cost of £8001 joining Northcote to Clifton Hill and creating Rusahall station. Even now trains are limited in the speed they can travel due to the tightness of the curve. It means the embankments on the western side of the bike track are artificial.

Footbridge across Merri Ck to Russell Station (c1927-8)

Links the early settlement of Northcote (now Westgarth) in McLachlan & Cunningham Sts. Station opened in 1927. Footbridge constructed some time after. Historical area supposedly where Batman Treaty was signed according to 1880s writers inc Sutherland. Originally a statue of Batman overlooked the Yarra. Old Colonists Home on Fitzroy side initiated by George Coppin in 1869. Aged care for entertainers. Interesting historic buildings. One designed by Walter Burley Griffin.

Bridge In Hotel (1871-1922)

Another hotel in the circuit.

Situated on the banks of the Merri Ck it was a small affair of some five room.

Possibly an earlier house. It was on the porch and no doubt over a few ales, that the first committee of Northcote was formed - 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.

High St (Merri Ck) Bridge – 1875, widened in 1890 for cable tram.

Early crossing with references to 1850s. It served the first township of Northcote south of Westgarth St. Lower Northcote, Northcote Bridge. Original High St toll bar nearby at Urqhart St.

Northcote Tunnel (1860s?)

In the early 2000's a team led by Mark Rawson discovered and penetrated a tunnel on the northern slopes of the Merri Creek.

During WWII there were descriptions by older residents of military guard at the tunnel's entrance.

Due to its this author feels that its purpose was to provide water for a well to service John May's properties directly above in corner Cunningham & East Sts.

Underground radar was done by no conclusive evidence has appeared. Due to safety the tunnel entrance has been filled in again.

Heidelberg Railway Bridge over Merri Creek (1880s /2009)

C H James opened a railway in the early 1880s too service the sales of his Fairfield properties. Advertising at the time highlighted the railway. Though it only connected Clifton Hill to Fairfield Park station. Known as the 'Nowhere to Nowhere Railway'. When the Heidelberg Railway was built in 1888 would have used the existing one track line on brick pillars that are still there. Was not duplicated until recently - 2009.

Northcote Football Ground

Only park established by council in 1880s. (Others bought later.) Some quarrying occurred near the Creek. Ongoing requests not granted. Though some quarrying more than likely occurred at the cliff face at creek level.

Heidelberg Rd (Merri Ck) Bridge – 1866 / 1936.

Very early crossing. 1840s – four foot causeway washed away. 1853/4 – Stone and timber. Current bridge bluestone foundations and brick arches. Widened to double width in 1936.

Heidelberg Road (1839)

Old Heidelberg Rd – First Major road in Melbourne. Estd 1839. In 1842 macadam surfaced. Pioneered in Scotland in 1820. Crushed rocks combined ground rock dust.

Shepherd Tar Paving Co. Dennis, W H. Later Dennis Bros. Now Westfield Reserve. (1885-1930)

Established on banks of Merri on Fairfield side. Quarrying bluestone and crushing for road works.

In 1890 two other companies were working 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.

Yarra Bend road to the east led to ...

Yarra Bend Asylum (1848-1925)

Opened in 1848. Within 12 months 43 patients. By 1858 there were 450. By 1870 there were 1000. Kew asylum opened in 1871. Officially called Yarra Bend Asylum in 1851 upon separation from NSW. Over crowding and poor conditions. Somewhat relieved by Royal Park, Mont Park and Sunbury. In 1905 Sir Thomas Bent, premier, provided no further monies. Buildings fell into disrepair. Though continued to operate until 1924. Closed in 1925, patients transferred to Mont Park. The closure and dismantling of many structures. Much became parkland. Fairhaven Venereal Diseases Clinic in turn became Fairlea Women's Prison. It is estimated that over 1200 inmates died and were buried. Most transferred to Melbourne General Cemetery upon closure. Only reminder is a single gate pillar just before the freeway.

Kane's Bridge (1929 / 1935)

Kane's Bridge was built in 1929 to link Studley Park and Yarra Bend Park. Washed away by the floods in 1934 and rebuilt in 1935. The bridge was named after Councilor T J Kane of Collingwood. It is a suspension bridge and looks quite solid and substantial. However, like all suspension bridges it does vibrate and sway.

Yarra River

Well frequented in summer.

'There used to be suburban river beaches and pools, dug out surrounds, semi concreted in like Sydney's sea-baths. The Ivanhoe, Alphington and Fairfield stretch was described as equal in popularity at St Kilda beach in the 1920s.

Zig Zag Bridge with festive gala days crossed the river. Washed away in 1930s floods.

Deep Rock Swimming Club formed in 1900's, in 1918 with John Wren, organised a patriotic carnival - a deep dive. Alic (Prince) Wickham performed the dive for £100 purse. The dive was so strong it tore of his bathing suit. 60,000 people viewed the event. He met the Cavill brothers in Sydney and introduced the freestyle stroke.

Yarra River Boathouses

Boathouses were popular centres for boating, canoeing, swimming, picnics and carnivals until the 1950s. Their popularity declined as motor cars and television offered new opportunities for leisure, and as increased pollution made swimming unattractive.

Fairfield Boat House (1908-)

Dating from 1908. Has undergone many restorations. Due to flooding and neglect. Established by Fitzroy piano-tuner John St Clair, Fairfield Park Boathouse sits on the Northcote side of the Yarra River beside the Pipe Bridge (1878 ?) to carry water to the expanding eastern suburbs. Was originally in the grounds of Yarra Bend Asylum, the boathouse was purchased by Heidelberg Council in 1915, after Fairfield Park had been separated from the hospital grounds. The boathouse was flooded regularly

in its early decades. After the last major flood in 1972, Paul van der Sluys, whose parents ran the Studley Park and now demolished Rudder Grange boathouses, won a tender to refurbish and operate the badly rundown site. He and his wife Jill reopened the boathouse in 1985, with a new fleet of hire boats modeled on those used on London's Thames in the mid-19th century. The site is now leased from Yarra City.

Rudder Grange Boathouse (1904-63)

Located on the Yarra at the end of Alphington Street. Built by the Cooke family, the boathouse was a popular destination on the Yarra River. In 1911, after one of the many floods, the original humble building was replaced by a substantial two storey building.

During the 1920s the Fairfield Canoe Club relocated close to Rudder Grange and canoeing became the 'rage'. Steam vessels from Melbourne would ply the Yarra to Dight's Falls in Clifton Hill meeting with smaller vessels above the falls then going onto Rudder Grange.

The Cook family sold the property to Carl Sierak in 1938 who scaled down operations from the boathouse. After the Second World War Rudder Grange was sold again as it slowly slid into decay. Changing tastes in recreation had left the boathouse behind and in 1963 it finally closed. Little remains.

Drownings

Sadly all this activity in the water led inevitably to inevitable and regular deaths during the hot summer months.

Selection of newspaper reports:

1906 - Jan 20 - Swimming/Drowning – Editorial.

1916 - Apr 15 – Letter re Municipal Baths League and need for baths in Northcote.

1916 - Nov 25 - School Boy Drowned. Fatality in Merri Ck. Walter Stanely Meyer (10 years) of Croxton. During school lunchtime.

1916 - Dec 2 – Drowning season re Royal Life Saving letter.

1917 - Dec 1 – Boy Drowned in Merri Ck. Albert Amiet (aged 11 years) of 31 Charles St. Northcote. He could not swim.

1928 - July 27 - Body found in Merri Ck. Edward Lawrence Bourke (38) of Taylor St. North Fitzroy. In creek found bottle of corrosive disinfectant. Had a nervous breakdown six weeks before. Being treated by Dr Cahill. [Not all bodies were accidental drownings.]

1936 - Jan 16 – Inquest into drowning of Katherine Byrne Watson (child). Children played in Merri Ck near Arthurton Rd where it is deep – 8 to 10 feet. Nil signage. Near Bysouth quarry.

Northcote Baths, Joe Fogg & Life saving

Because of the various water deaths and public agitation, prior to WWI, Northcote council was under pressure to build swimming baths to teach swimming. Sadly both monies and the war years delayed this until 1923 when it opened in Frederick St - now a housing estate.

It was the death of his brother that led Joe Fogg (from Abbotsford) to train as an early life saver and become the iconic manager of Northcote Baths for some 41 years from 1928 until its closure in 1969. British Empire medal in 1970 for his services to swimming and lifesaving.

Claims to have trained 50,000 children.

See <http://northcotehistory.weebly.com/fogg--donnett.html>

Roads south of Heidelberg Rd lead to the Yarra.

Residents living near the river had issues with the roads. Councils declared them private roads and would not maintain nor make them. After floods owners had to band together and pay for repair and bitumising. Hence many deep roads were unpaved for decades.

Godfrey & Richard Howitt

Early property owners in Fairfield 1840. Located where station is down to Yarra. Godfrey was a Medical doctor. Had other properties including the city. Extensive gardens of bamboos, cacti, tobacco, & fruit trees. Naturalist. Hon Physician of Melb Hospital. Later, member of University Council. Foundation member of Royal Society of Vic. Member of Medical Board of Port Phillip.

Brother, Richard arrived with him in 1840, worked at the property. Wrote book – ‘Impressions of Australia Felix’. Friends with Wordsworth. On arrival in Melbourne he wrote:

‘Melbourne and district were at the top of prosperity, everyone fully employed, all was activity, and a man with his horse and dray thought it poor work to get only £6 / week.’

Richard transported a cottage by bullock team to his property, further east, in Alphington. Took nearly a week to make the trip. He writes:

“The roads were none the best, to say nothing of the Merri Ck, the bed a torrent full of rough stones and partially flooded.”

Further describes Heidelberg Rd in 1840s:

“We were in clear prospect of the Heidelberg Rd, on which daily went to and fro, and a very animating sight it was, carriages open and closed, filled with gay families of the wealthy settlers located on the rich banks of River Yarra. Gentlemen, and Ladies too, we saw on horseback in their gay riding dresses, there was a perpetual gleam of rich beaver, ostrich plumes, veils steaming in the air, and parasols showing their rich silkiness in the sun. Then the horses, full of blood and of the highest condition, fleet and beautiful were they, and the sight of them did our hearts good.”

After the land collapse, 1844 Richard Howitt sold his farm and returned to England.

Chandler Highway (ex Railway crossing Yarra River) – 1891 / 1930.

White elephant project. Massive infrastructure project built for ill fated Outer Circle Railway. To link eastern suburbs with Melbourne via Fairfield. Sir John Monash one of the engineers. Trains ceased running on bridge after only two years in 1893.

Rails remained until 1919. Used for pedestrian traffic until 1930 when modified for

vehicles as well. Viaduct widened in 1950s. Within a couple of years or so (c2019) this will be fully duplicated on southern side.

Perry Bros / Fulham Grange / Woodlands / APM Site

The defunct Australian Paper Mills site corner Chandler Highway was originally a farm. Knockando (1853-1879) owned by Dr Alan Ranald McDonald. Some 30 acres. Could be that McDonald bought land from Perry Bros and subleased it back. Or vice versa. After McDonald sells land Perry Bros also left Alphington.

Between 1883 and 1914, Albert Miller (son of Henry 'Money' Miller) bought the farm speculating on Outer Circle Railway. Named it Woodlands. 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. A couple of old buildings will be retained.

Directly opposite APM was the extensive orchards and farm of Perry Bros.

In 1849 the Perry family – Richard and his three sons – Richard, William & George took up 100 acres in Alphington – Fulham Grange. Area north of Heidelberg Rd.

Purchased at £5 / acre. 25 acres south of Heidelberg road and 75 acres north.

South side whole devoted to gardening. Other side is 22 acres of orchard, remainder cultivated paddocks. One of the largest nurseries in the colony By 1853 the orchard and farm was in production and by 1868 there was factory producing bottled fruits, jellies, sauces, and condiments. Well over 100,000 trees, 40 tons of pears, 15 of cherries, 20 of plums. Mountains of apples!

Trivia: The Perry Orchard was one of the first to introduce silk worms to the colony.

Land subdivided in 1883.

Bokhara - 1 View St, Alphington

Along Heidelberg Rd to Darebin Ck, there are number of significant houses between Heidelberg Rd and the Yarra River as this was consider a prize location. Only one is described. Having a long history with a variety of owners.

"Bokhara" - a historic homestead at 1 View Street, Alphington - was built in 1892, by local butcher Alfred Pridham. First subdivided in 1854.

By 1900 Pridham was leasing this property to John Hinxman, a dairyman, then later to William McDonald. 5 years later a tobacco merchant, David W. Keir, bought "Bokhara" and also leased it, first to Joseph Davis, a fruit merchant, then to John S. Cogle, a butcher.

After 1910, Keir lived on the property but it seems, prior to this, he erected the unusual tower to the north of the house. Still standing. Resembling a dovecote. He remained there for about 35 years, selling to James Robert McNabb around WWII.

By 1980 the now deserted house was bought by the Melbourne Country Club. Seemingly a social group who played football at Melb Uni. It had club rooms in the house. 'The club created some controversy in the local neighborhood for its raucous New Year's parties in the early 1980s. Now with new owners and redeveloped.

Tower Hotel (1891-2000s)

On the corner of Old Heidelberg Rd. A hotel has been on this site since at least 1865. Current building dates from 1890s. Original hotel took advantage of locals as well as travellers.

Heidelberg Rd Bridge (Darebin Ck) – 1862. Widened 1937/8.

One of the oldest standing road bridges in Melbourne. Stone, iron and concrete extension. First wooden bridge 1852. Early crossing (1850s) was by ford at end of Old Heidelberg Rd. [Now oval of college.] Unusually this stone bridge was paid for by wealthy Heidelberg residents.

Note: The top of the bridge has lost the 'ornamental decorations', example of which can be seen on the previous Heidelberg Rd bridge over the Merri Ck.

Darebin Bridge Hotel (1844-1922)

Just over the bridge and in Heidelberg is this still extant two story solid basic construction. A very early building in Melbourne.

Alphington Quarries (1880-1965) / Darebin Parklands (1973)

In 1880 John Sharp Adams purchased land inc 60 acres along Darebin Ck. Kept in family for 80 years. Agriculture, pastoral & quarrying activities. Adams general store (storey bluestone building) on Heidelberg Rd. House 'Rockleigh' corner Separation & Yarana Rd. (Demolished 1956.) Quarrying ceased in 1965 by which time 6 million tones of basalt had been removed. Then council tip. 1973 Darebin Parklands created via strong and active community involvement.

Adams developed the township of Alphington. Early building still surviving – bluestone butchers – Kings (1863), Wesleyan Chapel – later Alphington Uniting Church (1859).

North along Darebin Ck

Between Alphington and Penders Grove, C H James subdivided much of the land in 1880s on either side of Station St. Though the banks of the Darebin were still isolated. In 1890s illegal boxing matches were held there.

In 1907 a 'pristine' Darebin Ck described by J H Bee in the Leader newspaper,

'The line of basaltic pillars along the Merri creek marks one coast line, the basaltic boulders of the Darebin another. As yet the Darebin has not like the Merri been made a sewer. May that fate be long postponed. Its waters are still clear and

pellucid, its banks still clothed with vegetation, the birds have yet been banished from its edges ... On the other (Heidelberg) side the fruit trees are in bloom, the spring zephyr (wind) brings down showers of snow white blossoms and wafts delicious fragrances to the rambler. The Cape Broom (introduced upright evergreen shrub 1-2m high) clothes the side of the hill with green and gold, and is alive with wrens ..."

Farms were dotted along the creek. Advt: 1864:

Man wanted to work in garden, milk one cow. Good refs. P J Burton, Elm Lodge, Darebin Ck.

Planned motor parkway. In 1929 a substantial Metropolitan Town Planning Committee plan proposed acquiring 2000 acres " ... beyond Fairfield Bridge for park development, Darebin Ck would benefit from parklands and 'parkway' roads flanking the reserves. Merri Ck was included with a lake north of Arthurton Rd – from Beavers Rd to Bell St."

Part of the mover for this grand initiative may have been V J Bradley, Northcote's City Engineer who in mid 1930s actively campaigned for a dam on the Merri Ck. Partly to employ the depression workers. Partly for beautification of the polluted Merri. (The terraces along the Merri and various stairways, and bluestone surrounds at Yarra Bend Oval were built instead.) Bradley's interests went well beyond Northcote. In the 1950s he was head of the Housing Commission of Victoria. Overseeing slum clearances and transition to high rises.

Darebin Rd (Darebin Ck) Bridge – 1914

Shared cost with Heidelberg due to their request. Suggested 23 years earlier by Heidelberg Council. Street still not made on Northcote side for some years after. This bridge is a good example of how the pre WWII bridges would have looked. Two lanes wide. Note the cutting that had to be made on Heidelberg side in the cliffs. Most of the cost born by Heidelberg.

Penders Grove / Council Quarry

The land know as Penders Grove is bounded by Dundas St to the north and the back of houses along Mansfield St to the south. It was a long and narrow east-west rectangle with east side being the Darebin Creek, the west side High St. Michael Pender, was an early Melbourne pioneer more known for owning and bequeathing various pubs for his relatives. Pended bought the 256 acres in 1839.

From a Northcote point of view however, it is Michael's son – William Pender (1832-1873) that is relevant. William lived on the farm with his family for some twenty plus years, from 1840s to 1862. He and Job Smith of Thornbury, were one of the very few pioneer settlers to run farms in Northcote. All be it by a manager, who supervised all the hard work with hired laborers. (Most other purchasers bought land for speculation only, quickly divesting their holdings after creating small blocks.)

Sadly William Pender was not as industrious as his father. Despite Michael providing the farm, the son lived the life of a drunken playboy. Possibly because of these predilections the farm was never transferred to his name.

By 1862 William and his family had left Penders Grove - to live in St Kilda. Though William didn't seem to spend too much time there either. He had become a land speculator and travelled in rural Victoria pursuing speculative pastoral interests. Eventually going broke and dying early.

The whole of Penders Grove including Job Smith's western sections were acquired by the Closer Settlement Board in 1904 after the initial land developer (1888) went bankrupt. It would take many decades before the whole was settled.

A further development is the connection with Sir Thomas Bent and Glen Iris Brickworks in Thornbury. This occupied the western side of High St – old Thornbury farm.

Council bought and opened up quarry on south/western section of Penders Grove in 1911 on Darebin Ck.

Northcote Technical School (Darebin Secondary College) opened in 1966 on part of the old quarry site.

Penders Grove Primary School opened in 1925 on current site, but was taking students from 1913 in Progress Hall in Newcastle St opp Tower House.

Known Major Yarra 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 1900s –and improving drainage flows. The 1934 flood was not as severe as earlier ones. Further work done during the depression years including straightening the Merri Ck.

More recent ones that some may remember:

1952 - July 16 - 'Floods Hits Northcote; Merri Overflows'. Details of Saturday and Sunday flooding. Wettest July weekend for 61 years. Northcote High, Anderson Rd, Fyffe St, Darebin Creek. 'New' Moreland Rd bridge mentioned.

1972 – Elizabeth St, Melbourne flood

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

Epilogue

What is clear from this is that access to the east and west was for a long time still severely restricted - Heidelberg Rd and Darebin Rd only access. Nil at Dundas St. . Arthurton Rd was a small single lane that veered to the north before crossing the Merri. Normanby Rd had nil access until after the war years. Rendered the area marshy and inaccessible for vehicles. Now surrounding area golf course.

Pre Europeans, the Aboriginals used the waterways extensively for fishing and corroborees – especially around the confluence of the Merri Ck & Yarra River.

Unfortunately the landscape along all three waterways is severely altered. Over the last century. Aboriginal evidence has been destroyed over 100 years – particularly along the Merri. What humans have not destroyed regular floodings destroyed the rest.

THANK YOU