

Northcote Jubilee Celebrations 1933

Tour of the City - Tuesday 23rd May,
End notes – P Michell, 2016.

Editor's note:

As part of the 50th celebrations this tour was organised to feature the changes to both past and present residents.

To assist with reading, the editorial words are defined within square brackets. It is worth comparing this route with the earlier 1885 Tour.

The tour often passes recently constructed / altered sites. Eg: Fitzroy Race Course. Whilst most of the streets have not changed over the years there has been significant loss of sites. These are noted at the end.

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Description of Route to be traversed

Visitors taking part in the Tour of the City are requested to assemble in the Town Hall, Westbourne Grove entrance, at 2 pm. Places will be allotted in cars immediately, and the procession will traverse the following route:-

[Starting] west along Westbourne Grove (passing immediately the St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church) to St. George's Road; thence south along St. George's Road to the Merri Creek Bridge, turning and travelling north along the west side of St. George's Road.

[Continuing] past the Northcote High School and the Merri Park of 15 acres, controlled by the Council; thence west and north along Sumner Avenue and Winifred Street, passing on the left the Depot of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (1), the property of which it will be noticed, has been beautified by lawns and gardens. This was carried out by the Board, at the instigation of the Council.

Turning east into Arthurton Road the Ink and Clag Factory of Messrs. Angus & Co. is passed (2). On to St. George's Road, and turning to the north, on the right will be seen the beautiful lawns and plantations, which have a length of 2 miles, established by the Council on what was previously known as the Pipe Track, but now St. George's Reserve (3). The cost involved in this work was £15,000, £7000 being provided by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. On the left will be passed the delicensed [Fitzroy] Racecourse (4), which later will be turned to more important use.

At Hutton Street a turn will be made to the left along that street, and then to the right along Comas Grove to Miller Street (the boundary street of Northcote and Preston). Then easterly to St. George's Road; on the left will be seen the extensive depot and workshops of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board.(5)

It is not only a matter of interest, but a concrete illustration of the rapid advance made by the City to note that the section between the [Fitzroy] Racecourse and the northern boundary of the Municipality (Miller Street) was known as the Thornbury Park Estate (6), on which, prior to 1920, when the St. George's Road tramway was laid down, there were

only a few scattered houses, the area being mainly open paddocks. Today the estate is practically covered with houses, and all [the] streets are constructed.

Turning south into St. George's Road, passing the Glen Iris Brick Works (7) (on the east), to Murray Street [now road]; thence east past the Thornbury School (8), and south and west back to St. George's Road. Thence south past the modern Church of Christ and Methodist Church buildings to Shaftesbury Parade; thence east along the latter street, and back along Woolton Avenue to St. George's Road. Thence south, passing Batman Park and the Little Sisters of the Poor, to Merri Parade; thence to Westgarth Street, along the latter street, across High Street, and passing on the right the factory of the Leeds Dyeing Co. (9), formerly known as R. B. Lawrence's. Continuing through the railway gates (10) and past the Northcote Park on the right, where beautiful gardens will be noticed, and in the recreation grounds spacious grand stands.

Turning north into Victoria Road and continuing to Bastings Street, and again turning west to pass probably the best laid-out gardens in the City, known as Johnson Park, and later the factory of Smith & Sons (9), known previously as Smith's Bacon Factory. Turning north into Waterloo Road, west into Ilma Grove, and south into Bastings Street, through which streets will be passed some of the larger houses of the City.

Continuing along Bastings Street, passing on the right, the Baby Health Centre [Beaumont – 11 Bastings St] and Creche (10). This building was once one of Northcote's fine old homes, being noted for its beautiful surrounding grounds, which have long since been sub-divided, and now contain some of the city's finest modern dwellings. Immediately opposite is "St. Neots" (11), which previously fronted Bastings Street, and also boasted a beautiful garden. The grounds, which were attached to this home have, too, been sub-divided and replaced with modern houses.

A continuation is made to High Street, and south along the southern boundary, through the lawns and rockeries (for the construction of which the South Ward were responsible) to Urquhart Street at the southern boundary. There it may be noted that the replacement of the railway gates at the crossing over the tram-line with the present overhead railway bridge took place in 1925; the cost of this improvement was shared by the Railway Department, Tramway Board, and the Council.

A [U] turn will be made in [at] Urquhart Street, to the west side of High Street, which will be traversed in a northerly direction, passing on the right just above Westgarth Street, the Westgarth Picture Theatre, which was erected in 1925 by several enterprising local business men. On the right at the brow of the Hill is the Post Office (12), erected in 1926, and on the adjoining corner of Bay View Street, the Church of Epiphany, with Vicarage, which is the site of "The Alpines," another of Northcote's fine old homes, now completely removed (13). Continuing beyond the Town Hall is the Northcote Picture Theatre, which was erected in 1912, and was the first Theatre in the Municipality (14).

A source of interest is the number of large business houses erected between Mitchell Street and Elm Street. In this area the high price of £200 per foot for the land was paid within the last few years. Immediately south of Elm Street (15) is the modern Northcote Market (16), and on the corner of Elm Street the Bank of Australasia building is nearing completion.(17)

The route is continued along High Street to Dundas Street, passing in the meanwhile numerous shops and business houses of modern design, including [on the east] several on the front portion of the old Croxton Racecourse and Recreation Ground (18), the balance of this area containing up-to-date houses.

Immediately before approaching Darebin Street will be seen on the right the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Memorial Hall (19), and, again, on the right at the north end of the City, the inspiring buildings of the Roman Catholic Church, known as St. Mary's, will be noticed. Further north on the left is the Regent Picture Theatre, erected in 1925 (20).

At Dundas Street a turn will be made to the east side of High Street, proceeding south to Penders Street; thence westerly along this street, passing Penders Park to Victoria Road, where will be seen the Penders Grove School (21); thence southerly along Victoria Road to Darebin Street, passing the Northcote Tile and Pottery Co. on the right (22).

A turn will be made westerly along Darebin Street [Rd], where, on the top of the hill, will be noticed on the right, "Benvenut[[]]a" (23), another old home, the grounds of which have been sub-divided, and now contain a number of modern dwellings. Again turning to the right along Francis Grove to Speight Street, where the Wales Street School will be seen; thence westerly to St. David Street, turning north past the Prince of Wales Park Methodist Church on the right, into Martin Street, and thence to High Street, travelling southerly along this street to the Town Hall.

END

Notes:

- 1 Merri Park MMBW depot now gone.
- 2 Angus & Co. was located at 154-178 Arthurton Rd, north side, west of Woolhouse St. It was demolished c1980s. Joseph Angus made his name famous with Clag. Ink and poster paints were also made in the works in Separation St and distributed throughout Australia. A large fire occurred in April 1968.
- 3 The reserve in St Georges Rd has been beautified many times. Completely redesigned in 1998. Due to original water pipes buried in centre trams travel on side not in centre.
- 4 The Fitzroy Race Course was one of three 'illegal' courses run by John Wren. It was located east of St Georges Road. The last race was held in 1932. Housing occupies the site including two new streets – Bird & Bradley Avenues.
- 5 Dating from 1924-6 the extensive tramway workshops were vast. By the 1990s with privatisation of tram network the workshop lost much of its workforce. From 2014 a project was established to revitalise the workshops. Now servicing some of the modern tram fleet.
- 6 Thornbury Park Estate was once the land owned by Job Smith. An original purchaser in Northcote. He ran a dairy farm called – Thornbury. With additions over time the estate covered south of Miller St to Normanby Rd and between Merri Ck and High St. First land sales were in 1882 for the southern section east of St Georges Rd.

- 7 Glen Iris Brick works is now the site of the Pastor Doug Nicholls reserve which is part of the Aborigines Advancement League in Watt Street, Thornbury. The brickworks were established as a defacto state brickworks from 1912 to early 1970s.
- 8 Thornbury Primary School was established in 1915 on land that was initially appropriated to Glen Iris Brick Co.
- 9 Leeds Dying Works was demolished c1990s. It was west and adjacent to the railway line. Housing / offices now occupies the site.
- 10 Beaumont though much altered over the years dates from 1864. Initially built for John Gull Johnson (fruiterer). Later Joshua Pitt who owned Pitt's tannery in Thornbury. Northcote Council bought decease Pitt's house and it became Annie Dennis Kindergarden in 1928.
- 11 St Neots ex 14 Bastings St. Constructed in 1860 for Nehemiah Wimble who was a successful civil servant. Becoming Secretary for Lands (1890) for Victoria. House probably demolished in the late 1930s.
- 12 This post office was demolished c1960s. Now a two storey Telstra non-descript brown brick building. The Post Office was relocated to crnr Robb & High Sts. In 1996 this closed. Now multi-storey apartment building.
- 13 Ruckers Folly, Alpines, or Sunnyside was a large bluestone building that was altered by various owners. It was demolished in 1926. Despite its reference highly unlikely that William Rucker built original building. Though he did own the land on top of the hill. He was bankrupt by mid 1840s.
- 14 The Northcote Picture Theatre was the first enclosed picture theatre. There were at least two earlier open air theatres both in High St - north of Separation St next to the (demolished) Carters Arms and near the Regent Theatre in Thornbury.
- 15 The tour ignores hotels / pubs – such as the Carters Arms, Commercial Hotel as well as polluting / noisy industries such as Northcote Brickworks and tanneries.
- 16 Northcote Market was located on west side of High St between Elm and Bent Sts. It was relatively short-lived. The now demolished Northcote Plaza Picture Theatre (1934 - 2014) was built on the site.
- 17 Bank of Australia was located at 378 High St between Robbs & Langwell Pdes.
- 18 Croxton park Racecourse was attached to the Croxton Park Hotel. Included stands for spectators. Events included athletics, bicycle racing, horse races. The latter's events taken over by the nearby Fitzroy Racecourse.
- 19 Soldiers & Sailors Memorial. Northcote Cenotaph (1921) was until 2012 home to the Northcote RSL. Designed by Harry Norris who lived in Preston. Arguably one of his earliest major projects. Norris would in the 1930s and 1940s be a significant force in the architecture of Melbourne. Architect for many Coles stores.
- 20 The Regent Theatre had only recently (1933) re-opened after renovations. Closed in 1970. Still operating as a live theatre after many years as a reception centre.
- 21 This part of the tour takes in the controversial Penders Grove Estate. Closer Settlement Act allowed the compulsory acquisition by State Government for assisted housing in 1906. Penders Grove Primary School was opened in 1925 by John Cain Snr. Penders Park was in part developed by council (£1000) thus dropping opposition to the Closer Settlement. The estate would not be full developed until the 1950s and the extension of Station St to Preston.
- 21 Northcote Tile & Pottery Co closed in mid 1990s. Outer walls preserved in Clyde St.
- 22 'Benvenula' (1885) still exists at 6 Francis Grove. 1933 tour has name as Benvenuta however MMBW (1930) plans ascribe it as Benvenula. Connections with Thomas McLean (tannery) and Charles Trescowthick (shoe & boot manufacturer).

