

1939 Tour

Goodwill Tour by The Mayor – Cr French Inspects Northcote Industries

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Below is a tour reported in Leader newspaper.

Twelve businesses were selected for this tour in 1939. Interestingly it includes some of the 'noxious' industries of the time including dye-works, brickmaking and leather making. These businesses were some of the biggest in Northcote at the time.

Ice Works is one of the industries. Up to this time not everyone had electricity and mass cooling was necessary. Also the Ice Company would daily deliver ice for household. Electrification is described with much fanfare particularly at the Ice Works and New Northcote Brick Co. Interestingly nought is said about electrification at the larger Northcote Brick. Pre electrification many industries had steam power with resulting (now demolished) large smoke stacks.

Only one business remains Smith & Sons in Bastings St, now Liberty Meats. (Established around c1978. This is soon for closure as the business has relocated to Preston.)

There some omissions of significant Northcote business including Angus & Co which was very near C G Baragwanath. Macs Steam Laundry, Pitt's Leather Belting, Northcote Tile & Pottery Co, Thornton Model Dairy, Northcote Shoe Co, & Needlands Timber. These were featured in the Jubilee book as well as some of the visited sites. Management availability and access was a major factor in choice of sites.

End notes will be added to identify where the businesses were located.

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A pleasing innovation in the activities of the Northcote Council was experienced of Wednesday, July 5, when the Mayor (Cr J W French, J P) accompanied by Crs W Hayes and A V Peters and the Town Clerk (Mr J A Thomson) made a goodwill tour of some of Northcote's most important industries. This enterprise is to be highly commended, for it brings the Town Hall and administrators of the City of Northcote into personal contact with the largest employers and ratepayers of the city.

The tour occupied a full day and extended to all parts of the city. In all the Mayor visited twelve business enterprises, which included three brickworks, dying works, leather manufacture, two furniture manufacturers, ice and cold storage works, general woodworkers and small goods manufacturers, and an engineering concern.

The first visit was paid to the **Leeds Dyeing & Chemical Works Pty Ltd** in Westgarth St, where the Mayor, as throughout the whole trip, displayed the keenest interest in the working of the business. This firm handles 30,000 yards of material per week, and their processes include all activities from scouring to dyeing.

Visit No 2 was paid to the **Paramount Furniture Co**, situated at the western extremity of Beavers Rd. The Mayor was shown something entirely new in the finishing of suites. A compound is spread on dies and drawers, which when dried and brushed, gives a finish exactly resembling baize cloth. The Mayor displayed a keen interest in a demonstration whereby seventeen sheets of three-ply were bent arc-wise by atmospheric pressure. He commented on the quality of the veneer used and was informed that Australian veneers were unequalled in quality throughout the world.

Another furniture factory, that of **C G Baragwanath**, in Arthurton Rd, was next visited. Every branch of suite making, including bevelling and silvering of mirrors, was shown to the interested party. This firm employs between 80 and 100 men, permanently. Before leaving the Mayor expressed his admiration of the outward appearance of this factory, and the modernistic appearance of the front offices.

The next visit was **Lawrence Leathers Pty Ltd**, where various ingenious machines for the treatment and splitting of leathers, from the first stages to the finished product, such as hand bands and leather ready for ladies' hand bags etc., were shown and explained.

The last calls before lunch were to the **Northcote Brick Co Ltd** and the **New Northcote Brick Co** where the same interest and appreciation was again apparent. The party witnessed the dynamiting of the clay face at the clay hole of the former company. The Mayor displayed special interest in the electric plant of the New Northcote Brick Co, which was recently installed and which replaces the steam power previously used.

After lunch the first call was at the **Northcote District Ice and Cold Storage Works**. The proprietor (Mr T Gannon) told the party that on average 75,000 cases of fruit were sorted yearly in the company's cold chambers. In 1917 which was its best year, 114,000 cases passed through the chambers. The process of hygienically filling and sealing milk in bottles was witnessed by the visitors, to whom the process of making ice was also explained. The Northcote District Ice Works, Mr Gannon said, was capable of an hourly output of 65 tons of ice. The building, which when completed will have cost £2000 was inspected. The building will have 4 inch cork lined walls, and will be one of the most modern in Australia.

The next visit was to the works of the **Glen Iris, Brick, Tile and Terra Cotta Co Pty Ltd**, situated on the northern boundary of the West Ward near the Thornbury station. Mr J W Adams, J P, the manager, mentioned that electrification of the plant,

although not reducing the actual cost of production , certainly saved a good deal of time and worry, and tended to give greater uniformity of brick production. The installing of electric motors was assuredly a progressive step.

The factory of **C A Groves Pty Ltd**, broom handle makers and suppliers of general woodwork to the trade, was then seen. Again some ingenious machinery for wood turning was seen, and the party was intrigued with the rapidity with which the various operations were performed. The making of dowel rods was also witnessed.

A visit to the premises of **Smith & Sons**, butchers and smallgoods manufacturers was next on the programme. This is one of the oldest established businesses in Northcote. Here the making of sausages was demonstrated, as well as the processes in the manufacture of other classes of small goods. It was stated that up to 8000 pounds of sausages could be made daily at the factory in Bastings St. The firm employs 58 people and runs 11 delivery trucks. Altogether the plant was turning out 15 tons of smallgoods per week.

The last call for the day was to the **Sutton Tool and Gauge Manufacturing Co Pty Ltd** in High St, Westgarth. This firm is the only private concern in Australia in this line, and makes precision tools and gauges. Some interesting demonstrations on various machines were watched. Some of these complicated machines are worth £4500 each.

The last visit on this goodwill tour was made on Thursday morning when the Mayor and councillors visited the **Australian Broom Manufacturing Co.'s** factory at the corner of St Georges Rd and Bent St. All classes of brush-ware and brooms were seen in the making. The Mayor was greatly interested in the operation of several machines, one of which is the only one of its kind in Australia, and is capable of turning out one hair broom per minute and automatically changing from black to white and vice versa. This broom factory supplies not only Victoria but its products are sent all over Australia, and some products are exported to New Guinea and the Far East. One machine was turning out a certain type of mop at the rate of 46 per minute.

The Mayor presented a copy of 'The History of Northcote' to each industrial concern visited, and issued invitation to the manager and proprietors to be present at the Northcote City Council meeting on July 24.