

BEATING THE BOUNDS – Northcote Council Make a Tour Inspection.

Leader 3 October 1908

Edited with descriptive notes. P. Michell © 2004, 2016.

The following is the tour. The Leader gave no description apart from numbering and location. In an attempt to clarify, descriptive notes have been added.

No mention made of land east of St Georges Rd.

Tour does not include Fairfield / Alphington as they did not become part of Northcote until 1962.

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“The good old municipal custom, long dropped locally, of beating the bounds was revived by Mayor Tharratt in Northcote yesterday, when by his invitation councilors made a tour of the municipality per four horse drag, seeing for themselves the condition of things generally, but more particularly inspecting:

1. Robbs Parade permanent track.

One of the roads abutting Northcote Brickworks from High St. The cottages were built by the company using cast off bricks from the works. Brickworks built the road on the condition council maintained it. At the time heated debate.

2. Langwells Parade – drainage, etc.

Another road abutting Northcote Brickworks from High St. Similar situation to Robbs Pde with worker's cottages. Around 1889 a horse-drawn railway line went along this, crossing High St and connecting to the new Whittlesea Railway. Dismantled 1957. At the time there was no other streets between Robbs & Langwell Pds.

3. Martin Street Bridges and High St Deep Drain

Maybe referring to deep drains on either side of High St and small footbridges required to cross them. Many years later the drains would be covered over.

4. Tram Sheds and Fencing

The cable tram began operation in 1890. Brown Bros Motors cnrr Martin & High Sts was the original cable tram engine house and tram car storage. Unknown fencing issues regarding the site – poor repair or not secure. Maybe still unfinished.

5. Land Main Drain – Sale of

Due to the hill the main drain needed completion.

The land sale may reference the Penders Grove Estate which had been acquired by the government for use as Closer Settlement in 1906 after much haggling over the years. Originally Northcote council was bitterly opposed to

this. They duly contributed £1000 to allow the allocation of Penders Park. Highly likely the Tour was looking at some of the lots for sale in the west portion – Bounded by Dundas, Newcastle, Flinders Sts & laneway behind High St.

Whilst the Croxton Park Hotel on western side was expanding its sporting interests. In 1909 it built new stands for events. So it is unlikely to be this side of High St.

6. St Georges Rd., Old Drain and culvert at Beavers Rd

Swift (p 63) describes a large unnamed open drain on east side of High St running from Penders St to Beavers Rd. Then a culvert passed under High St, then a deep channel running west to an open drain connecting with an old water course near Arthuton Rd and pipe-track south-side. During heavy rainstorms the culvert couldn't cope and High St flooded. Council was inspecting ways to remedy this. Though probably not completed until the 1950s.

7. Batman Gardens and Fencing

Park was recently purchased in 1907. Fencing around the park.

8. Merri Pde Sewer Spoil Depot

Some cart operators would often use the cover of darkness to save time by illegally off loading the waste into the creek.

By the 1890s residents near Merri Ck were complaining of offensive odors arising from the creek especially near St Georges Rd. This included rabbit pelts, and detritus washed down from the Preston tanneries. Report on Merri Ck published in 1906 indicated the drainage was stagnating in the area. Estimated cost to repair £18,000. A huge sum then. In 1910 control transferred to MMBW.

Swift describes the 'offensive' Bullen's drain and Merri Ck which had become a common sewer owing to discharge of noxious drainage from industrial premises at Preston. After much haggling improvements made. Though not solved until the extension of the sewerage system in 1910.

Bullen's drain was a major eye (and nose sore) and contributed to poor housing development over the years in Thornbury west between Miller St and Normanby Ave. The pollution and noxious odours were particularly bad when flooding occurred. Bracken St now runs over the covered drain.

Note: Bullen's drain would have drained into a more easterly part of Merri Ck which has been diverted when the creek was straightened. The creek then forming a loop coming near Leisner Gve.

9. McLachlan and Walker Sts filling

Very few roads were bitumised at this time. Like current unpaved country roads blue metal was used to create a usable surface whilst allowing drainage. This process would have included the leveling out of these streets as well. William Henry Dennis, Northcote councilor and contractor, and his sons lived

at 34 Walker St. Work no doubt assisted his business which involved much vehicular traffic.

10. Fence along Railway Queens Parade

Until the Clifton Hill rail overpass (1925) there was a railway crossing with the cable tram just after the Merri Creek bridge. The tram took place only four years after the Northcote Rail Loop (1904) had opened. Thus allowing passengers to travel to the city via Clifton Hill rather than the circuitous Inner Circle line via Royal Park. Fencing was common along railway land to stop access and hopefully prevent accidents.

11. Cunningham St – Mr Lumbs Property

In 1888 Joseph Wigg complains to Council that that he was unable to let two houses he had built in Cunningham St because the footpath was 'like crossing a ploughed Field, also the Place where are the channel ought to be is in a Very Filthy State – all chocked up with weeds [sic]'.
Wigg, a property developer (amongst other pursuits). In 1905 He lived at 69 Cunningham St, Westgarth.

Thomas F Lumb was a near neighbour, at No 97.

12. Gotch Street opening

Renamed Thomson St in 1937.

A large 4 inch water mains goes down Simpson St past Gotch. A large culvert was on opposite (north) side of railway track.

13. Wigg's Depot Sewer Stone

Same J Wigg ? see above Cunningham St.

Apart from South Westgarth property speculation, Wigg was heavily involved with land development east of High St of Plant's paddock – between Roberts & Union Sts

Cess pits were common until sewerage was connected to households much later. Was there a problem with one of Wigg's properties?

14. Retaining Wall

The High St viaduct was built for the cable tram in 1890. A year later the road was widened to allow vehicles to pass the tram. Northcote council took over the cable tram in 1900 subleasing in 1901.

15. James Street Council Store Yard

Beside the Town Hall was a two storey Victorian building.

Council owned the property beside this, utilising it as a gravel quarry. The Carnegie Free Library would be built three years later. The front entrance of the police building faced High St. Obscured for almost hundred years. Only when the council's infill building was demolished was it again visible.

"On completion of their labours the Mayor entertained councilors at dinner at the town hall."

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