

## **Northcote - East Westgath Walking Tour - U3A Darebin**

Paul Michell. 2015.

The surveying of Old Northcote Town was by Richard Larritt under Robert Hoddle in 1853. It was Hoddle who gave aboriginal names to waterways. (Plenty Rd.) High St as it is now was part of the main north-south axis that Hoddle mapped most of Melbourne against. The streets in this part of Northcote were named after first land purchasers in 1840.

Within a decade of the establishment of this part of Northcote an opposing community lived on top of Rucker's Hill. By the 1880s it was clear that the population centre would be over the hill. Known as Westgarth around 1912. Prior to its new name it was known as either *Lower Northcote*, *Northcote South* or *Northcote Bridge*.

### **The Merri Creek**

Railway bridge over High St dips down just over Merri Ck. This was not done until relatively late in 1925. Up to that time cable trams had to cross the railway line. More work was done when double-decker buses replaced the cable trams that finished in 1940. As a result the road beneath the railway bridge had to be lowered! Further disruption occurred when electric trams were introduced in 1955 and the old cable track was finally removed. Elevated outlook with flood basing below.

### **All Saints Church (1859)**

One of quite a number of surviving buildings from old Lower Northcote. Typical of early English parish church of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Nathaniel Billing architect. Bacchus Marsh basalt.

### **The Merri Creek**

- Elevated vantage point on east side. High St drops down to flood prone Merri Ck. Looking south down High St. - The railway bridge over High St just over the Merri Creek and High St. dips down. Not built until relatively late in 1925. Up to that time cable trams had to cross the railway line. 1940 - last cable tram. Road beneath the railway bridge had to be lowered for double decker buses! Further disruption occurred when electric trams were introduced in in 1955.

### **Planting along High St. (1905-07) & Twin Cannons (1884/5)**

Bluestone rockeries are what is left of substantial planting and decoration for the entrance into Northcote. Northcote South Pioneers Assoc. organised beautification project. The two cannon came to Northcote in 1913 from the South Channel Fort. The NSPA were responsible for getting the two 12 tons 8" cannons. Originally cost £4500 each.

Diagonally opposite on the other side of High St, near the corner of Cunningham & High Sts (north- side) stood a small Presbyterian Church, which is described in 1885 Tour of Northcote. This was removed probably around 1900.

### **Sutton Tool & Gauge (1933), North Edge Apartments**

#### **Arts Project / Beraldo Coffee / Gateway Appts (modern)**

This was purpose built for Sutton Tool & Gauge, which with Patience & Nicholson held a virtual monopoly for decades on drill bits and other precise machine tools in Australia and overseas. In 2001 it took on a new life as apartments.

Around 1900 there was starting from Walker St - Mrs Donohue's private hospital (Gateway apartments #18-20). C J Verso (builder and councilor) hosue and business (Beraldo coffee #22). A school - 'Alexandra College' with Mr Robert Farr as principal (Arts Project #24). Next door was J Evans - Coachbuilder - til 1905. Taking up land to Cunnigham St. Later his land would be split between Northcote Motor Garage and Ice Works.

#### **24 Walker St. (1861) Former Police Station**

A police reserve had been part of the original allocation of land to the Northcote Township. Note Roof line from side.

#### **Train Line.**

This is the site of the "nowhere to nowhere railway line". Until recently single track.

#### **45 Walker St (1880s)**

Two storey 1880s brick terrace. Orchard next door.

#### **34 Walker St (1870 maybe earlier)**

1856 William Henry Dennis bought land in Northcote. In the 1870s he took over the 'Shepherd's Patent Composition and Pavement & Stonebraking Co. and became manager. The basalt rear of the property would have to date from at least 1870, maybe earlier. Dennis was a Northcote councilor & mayor. His sons W J & Sam Dennis both became councilors. The front of the house has a Victorian 1880s look.

#### **38 Walker St (modern)**

Timber shingled house.

#### **9 Ross St.**

Federation weatherboard house has the symbol of the rising sun - the birth of a new land. On the east site of Ross St was Dysons Nursery dating at least from the 1880s.

#### **56 Cunningham St. (Lady Gladys Nicholls House 1958)**

Old church manse site connected with All Saints Church. Lady Nicholls was wife of Doug Nichols (1906-1988) an aboriginal who made his name in football, aboriginal rights and as a clergyman in Northcote. Residence at Northcote Football Ground in the 1940s and 1950s. Aboriginal women live here. The Nicholls used to shelter homeless aboriginals in their modest house at Northcote Park. 1958 was the establishment of the Aborigines' Advancement League.

#### **42-32 Ross St - (1880s) Wodonga Terrace - crnr Walker / Ross Sts**

Fine set of Victorian single fronted brick cottages.

**55 Cunningham St. crnr Ross St. 'Stawell' (c1860s)**

Named after J Cunningham original purchaser of this allotment.  
Former 'Lawn Cottage' which had a pond next door and where the flats was a large house 'The Lawn'.

**47 Cunningham St. (1866)**

The oldest surviving houses in this tour. Richard G Westlake (or Westlick, Westlock, Westleck) a sail-maker lived here from 1866 till 1890s.

**57 Cunningham St (1880s)**

Double fronted brick terrace. Now child care centre.

**67 Cunningham St.**

Grand triple fronted Queen Anne style house a reminder of the more ornate ones in Clarke St.

**88 Cunningham St. crnr Short St (Lonsdale Nursing Home) (1880s)**

At one time was Cr Ralph Candy's home. Councilor and mayor

**69-71 Cunningham St.**

Ornate arched front windows of these identical pair brick cottages.

**77 Cunningham St. (Bend Creek Villa) 1870s?**

Another early house of them district. Note the wide triple block. Between this and Mayville was an orchard. Mark Rubbo, of Readings Bookstore, once owned this house.

**85 Cunningham St. (1870s) Mayville**

House of John May (bricklayer) who is first listed as living in Northcote in 1860s, before then lived in Carlton. Though he obtained the land in the 1850s

**Merri Creek Escarpment**

Early 2000s a tunnel found just above the Merri Ck. Guarded during WWII were they used for storing munitions? Further along these cliffs can be seen the drill marks used quarry the basalt rock (bluestone). Tunnel filled now filled in.

**3 East St.**

Another bluestone house built by John May opposite Oldis Gardens. Dating similar to Mayville.

**Oldis Gardens & Northcote Park**

Northcote's only park when council was formed in 1883. Named in honour of Cr Albert Oldis died as Mayor in 1933. In addition extensive stone works were initiated. In the middle of the park is a fountain "NSPA 1911". Some trees still extant – blue atlantic cedar, sugar gum, oak, elm and palms.

**Westgarth St.**

This street was the old northern extremity of the original Northcote Town. William Westgarth encouraged German settlement in Melbourne.

### **75 Westgarth St. - William T Onus Hostel.**

Up to 1923/4 was the residence of the local doctor, William A Forsyth. Emmanuel & Joan Rosanove resided here 1924-1933. Not original structure.

William T Onus (1906-68) was an aboriginal elder, artist, political activist) Film actor ('The Overlanders'). May have popularized 'Moomba' in a 1951 play 'An Aboriginal Moomba: Out of the Dark'.

### **Former Northcote South Station & Nowhere to Nowhere Railway.**

The original station on the southern side of Westgarth St called Northcote South. It was closed in 1912 relocating across the road.

### **46-52 Westgarth St – (ex) Leeds Dye Works now Office Bldg (Crnr High & Westgarth Sts.)**

Dating from 1874 William Lawrence's Dye Works & oil-cloth factory. By early 1900s this business had turned into the largest dye works and dry-cleaners in all of Melbourne. Now apartments.

### **Westgarth Shopping Centre**

Major development occurred along the western side. This is the beginning of the shopping strip that stretches to Dundas St. The old **Toll Gate** for collecting road fees (pre-council collection of rates) was re-erected from Merri Creek. WB Jones a former Northcote policeman built the two story grocery shop on the eastern corner of High & Westgarth Sts. Opposite was a wood-yard.

### **42 High St (1882)**

Blundell purchased then land for this and #38 in 1853. Henry Toenies, dairyman, built this, more than likely replacing earlier structure. Beside the house (on south) is a basalt driveway leading to the stables and coach house at rear connected with the original dairy.

### **38 High St (Durham) (1903)**

By 1900 Joseph Wigg, Cunningham resident and land developer, owned this. This is a common structure in Northcote.