

Three Former Churches

P Michell, 2018.

The history of these 'lost' churches illustrate the way Northcote developed in late 1880s and early 1900s. The transference of two to Northcote Hill led to settlement's dominance there.

Wesleyan - St Georges Rd (Clarke St, near Merri Ck) (1891 – late 1970's early 80s)

West side of St Georges Rd there was a small timber Wesleyan / Methodist church presence for around ninety years. It served rather the small community beside the Yan Yean Pipe Track / Tram Rd / St Georges Rd.

Occupied the block bounded by Clarke St, St Georges Rd, Eunson Ave and a back lane. The church initially faced east/west, with access from St Georges Rd. Located next to Eunson Ave.

In the 1930s had a Sunday school of 150 pupils. Kindergarten had 60 children. Housing currently occupies the former church block.

Earlier, in 1918, the building was turned ninety degrees to face north/south due to the planned electric tram along St Georges Rd (1920). The same time it was moved closer to Clarke St. Located at what is now 13-17 Clarke St, at least until 1974.

By the early 1980s it was demolished.

Notes:

MMBW plan 1941 (east/west) 1906

MMBW plan 95 (north/south) 1933

Sands & McDougall Directories.

Northcote Side of the River, 1983. A Lemon

Leader Jubilee Ed, 19 May 1933

Leader Newspaper

Presbyterian – crnr High and Cunningham Sts (1876-1896)

Further down High St., near the corner of Cunningham & High Sts (north-west side) stood a small Presbyterian Church placed back on the lot, which is described in Swift's 1885 Tour of Northcote.

The Presbyterian Church, a small wooden building with a little porch, stood just about the rear of the lot facing High St.

The first Primitive Methodists Hall (1867-76) was located elsewhere, until land crnr Cunningham & High Sts a government reserve, was selected. A timber church, with a shingle roof, was built in 1876. Enlarged it in 1877 to hold 150 people. A Sunday School was established by 1880.

With the creation of Heidelberg Parish the Rev Duncan Fraser lived in Northcote from 1875 in newly built brick manse (1874) crnr Ross & Cunningham Sts – costing £786. He found that 1.5 acres had been allocated for church land on both sides of High St (Manse – East side, Church on West side).

Duncan Fraser probably not satisfied with the small buildings and growing population of Northcote. He pushed for a larger and more substantial church on the hill.

A new church was constructed in James St in 1894. Earlier, Duncan Fraser had left Northcote in 1893. In Nov 11, 1896 the old church (Cunningham St crnr) was relocated, as a Sunday School for the new church. In November 1889 the 'New Lecture Hall' (former old church) was opened and could accommodate 273 people. Came complete with four Welsbach incandescent burners that illuminated the interior. Though the building was in a poor state upon re-location.

Replaced in 1906 by a brick hall. The old church was relocated again to Middle Park and after some years sold and removed to Balaclava East where a severe wind blew it down! (Probably to save it from being re-located ...again.)

Trivia: J Fraser (son of Duncan Fraser) built what is considered to be the first (private) telephone line in Australia. Establishing a line between the manse and the old church. Duncan Fraser (the father) was an amateur scientist and demonstrated the telephone at the old Wesleyan Schoolroom in High St. Fraser's son went on to become a chief engineer at the Railways.

Notes:

History of Northcote, W G Swift, 1928. p 57

Conservation Study of Northcote, G Butler, 1983. p 8, 134, 149-50

Leader, 14 Nov 1889, p 2

Leader, 19 May 1933, p 9

(Lower) Northcote Plan c1870

St Josephs Catholic Church - Arthurton Rd (1893 – 1918)

Part of the short lived Dr Peter McArthur's Cawdor Township. Settlement along Arthurton Rd between St Georges Rd and High St. St Josephs timber church was located north side of Arthurton Rd between High & Elm Sts.

Now a large industrial site it belies a varied past.

First Catholic Church in Northcote. Included a church, Sunday & day school. Cost £1250.

In 1892 with the creation of Northcote & Preston Mission, land was acquired in Westbourne Gve, but took many years for a new church to be constructed. First the presbytery (1898), then church (1916).

With construction of school (1918) in Westbourne Gve the Arthurton Rd buildings were relocated and land sold cNov 1918.

A year later, in 1919, the Northcote Iceworks occupied this large site until 1970.
1970 - Construction of Julius Marlow shoe factory. Was the largest shoe factory in Australia costing \$1.5 million.

Notes:

MMBW plan #2097 (1908)

Conservation Study of Northcote, G Butler, 1983. p 207.

Jubilee of St Josephs, Advocate, 14 Oct 1943, p 4

Northcote Jubilee, Official Programme (1933), p 26

Leader 1970, Jan 21, March 4, Apr 8

Sands & McDougall Directory

Northcoe Leader & Argus