

Former Cawdor Town

A forgotten development in Northcote in its early days was **Cawdor Town**. It was to be the third settlement after the southern villages of Lower (Westgarth) and Upper Northcote (Northcote Hill). Looking west down Arthurton Road from High Street it is hard to believe that this was once a residential precinct with some shops and a church.

Cawdor was conceived by an early resident—Dr Peter McArthur, a ship's surgeon—who initially owned all of the land along the length of Separation St and Arthurton Rd from Merri Creek to Rathmines Rd. Cawdor Town was planned for the area west of High St across to St Georges Rd.

By the mid-1850s, however, McArthur had sold much of the land west of High St. Purchasers included German farmers along the southern part of Separation St. (these settlers created a cemetery which exists to this day*). McArthur renamed the narrow road, then known as German Lane, to celebrate the separation of the Port Phillip District from the colony of New South Wales. (The Port Phillip District officially became the colony of Victoria on 1st July 1851.)



Peter McArthur 1839

McArthur had purchased more land along the Merri Creek to add to his holdings. Seemingly the plan was to farm on the western part of the township, with the Yan Yean tramway (St Georges Rd) creating a barrier at Merri Ck.

By the 1860s the south side of Arthurton Rd had a few houses, including Oliver (the butcher) and most importantly McArthur's house – Arthurton Villa. McArthur's self-named Arthurton Farm was productive with 10,000 vines and over 500 fruit trees.

A couple of stores were located on the north side of Arthurton Rd, however little more was built for more than twenty years until a wooden building serving as St Joseph's Catholic Church and school was opened on a plot in 1891, with extensions and a hall added in 1897.

In 1898-99, St Joseph's parish built a 2 storey brick presbytery in Westbourne Grove (and later the current church, with a school in James St). The original wooden building was moved from Arthurton Rd in 1918.

Despite later industrialisation of Arthurton Rd, some remnants of McArthur's dream remain, though little of the original buildings is left.

The ARTHURTON ESTATE
And
TOWNSHIP of CAWDOR,
Upper Northcote, Plenty-road.

MR. STUBBS begs to inform intending buyers that LITHOGRAPHIC PLANS of the above township may be had at his rooms, 81 Collins-street, Melbourne.
The whole will be sold on Thursday.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23.
Most Important Sale
Of
The Valuable Properties known as
The ARTHURTON ESTATE,
And the Township of
CAWDOR.

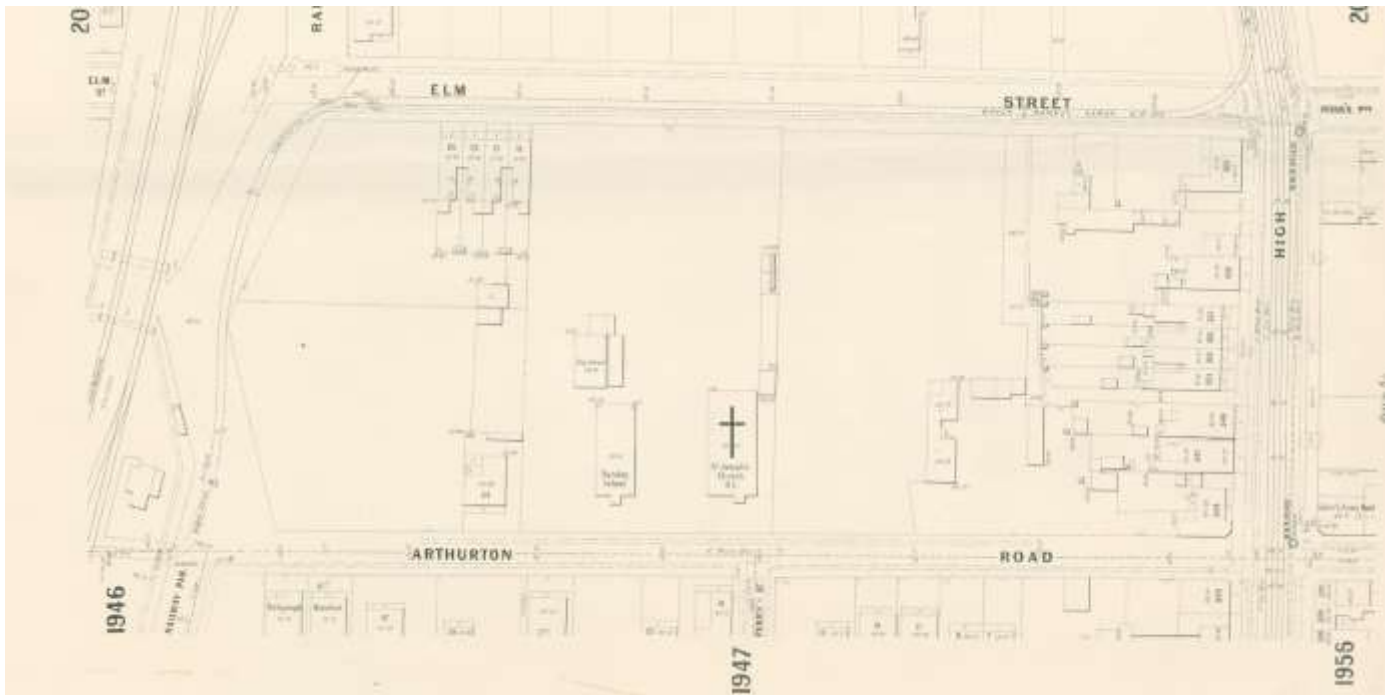
To be Sold by Order of the Trustees of the late Mrs. Ann M'Arthur, for the Benefit of the Surviving Members of the Family.

MR. STUBBS is favoured with instructions to submit and to SELL by PUBLIC AUCTION, at his rooms, 81 Collins-street, Melbourne, on Thursday, the 28th April, at twelve o'clock precisely, All the above.

Note.—The topography and productiveness of these valuable family estates are universally known. Their boundaries extend from the Plenty-road south to the Merri Creek on the north, and from the really beautiful estate of T. J. Sumner, Esq., on the west, extending to that of W. Minnithorpe, Esq., on the east, the Yan Yean tramway running through the centre of the township of Cawdor, in extension of the township of Northcote.

The subdivision of the town admits all persons to participate in the benefits of the sale. The size of the allotments is all that is sought for by the working-classes, marketgardeners, and vintners, viz. half an acre each, optional to the purchaser to take more than one lot.

Advertisement for sale of Cawdor Town in *The Argus*, 18 April 1864.



Part of MMBW Plan #2097 of 1908, showing the church (north) and houses on south side.

William Shade established an ironmongery on the eastern side of High St (number 358, home to William and Mary Shade and their family) and John Roberts owned the *Carters Arms* hotel and the subsequent brickworks. *Northcote Central* is the site of the Carters Arms and *All Nations Park* a legacy of the *Northcote Brickworks*.

A number of things led to the demise of Cawdor Town. The death of Peter McArthur in 1861, removed the driving force of the development. The on-going maintenance of the Yan Yean water-pipe track along St Georges Rd restricted easy access, as it remained a non-public road well into the 1880s. The railway (North Fitzroy to Reservoir) that opened in 1889 split the development in half, then the 1890-91 banking crisis in Eastern Australia saw the end of the Land Boom in Melbourne. By this time Northcote had become less desirable for new residents, due to its brickworks and a smelly tannery in High St.

Whilst the Northcote & District Ice and Cold Storage Works (built in 1921 at 20 Arthurton Road) were an important asset to Northcote, not many wanted to live nearby. Nearby Eastment Street became a centre for pastry making, and in 1922 a flour manufacturing business was established at 54 Eastman Street. By 1925 the owner had branched out, launching the Melbourne Vinegar Company (taken over and operated by Skipping Girl Company from 1958). Soon (almost) all the Arthurton Rd houses east of the railway line had been razed for industry, the residents from a previous century now a distant and blurry memory.

P. Michell, January 2019

* [German Cemetery, Northcote](#)

In May 1861 four residents, August Schwaebisch, Albert Fritsche, Moritz Heiner and Edward Hellwig purchased one acre of land for use as a cemetery. The land is situated in Separation Street in Northcote (known at the time as German Lane.)

Only one of the four founding members, M.Heiner, is buried there. The cemetery was taken over by Northcote Council in the 1920s, by which time the cemetery had been closed except for holders of Rights of Burial (an occasional burial still took place up until 1971).

