

North Carlton Heritage Walk

Land that was to become North Carlton and Princes Hill, developed from the 1850s as an outpost of Melbourne Town, with a blue stone quarry reserve, an associated penal station, and the Melbourne General Cemetery as the main attributes set among native woodland.

North Carlton was surveyed in 1869 as an extension for Melbourne's residential suburbs. The new half-acre blocks extended as far as Fenwick St, continuing the north-south grid of Carlton, with 30 metre frontage allotments served by generous 20 and 30 metre wide government roads. Reserves were set aside for public buildings and gardens. The renowned surveyor, Clement Hodgkinson, was the initiator of the 1869 North Carlton plan, as head of the Crown Lands and Survey Department.

In 1876 the balance of North Carlton, north of Fenwick St (approximately 173 acres), was subdivided into small suburban lots typically with 15 metre frontages but each was provided with the Victorian-era amenity of rear service lanes, separating utilitarian household functions such as coal and other deliveries, nightsoil cartage and stabling, from the formal house façade. The 30m wide roads of Drummond, Rathdowne and Canning Streets were also continued north. The subdivision led to a distinctive form of housing development where closely spaced, sometimes richly decorated, houses are viewed over low formally arranged front gardens and fences, forming a continuous and distinctive residential Victorian-era streetscape.

The extension of the *Melbourne Building Act* in 1872 to cover all of the Melbourne municipality ensured fire proof regulated construction and promoted a more homogenous built character for North Carlton.

Transport

Public transport which was at first a horse-drawn omnibus service along Nicholson St to the city, stimulated development in Canning and Station Streets where standard pattern terrace housing predominated. With the population growth came the first government primary school (opened 1873, later replaced by the Lee St Primary School, 1878), shops, shop rows, and corner hotels.

The 1883 announcement of Rathdowne and Nicholson Sts as future cable tram routes meant an explosion of dense residential development of terrace housing in almost every street north to Park Street. In 1887-8 new cable tram and Inner Circle railway services gave this area perhaps the best access to public transport of any Victorian-era inner Melbourne suburb: rows of shops and residences were built along the tram routes. At the cable tram terminus in Nicholson St, adjoining the North Fitzroy Inner Circle railway station, a major shopping centre developed with grand shop rows, extending from Macpherson to Park Streets. Then at the fringe of suburbia, northern sections of Canning and Drummond Sts were popular for larger, detached late Victorian houses that might have been served by private transport in the form of stabling. The Inner Circle passenger train link to the Melbourne (Princes Bridge) was completed in 1901 and operated until 1948 which explains the popularity of North Carlton in the Edwardian and Interwar eras.

Landscape

Significant public landscape in the area is both early, in the form of Curtain Square with its Victorian-era residential perimeter, and residual, such as the linear park along the former Inner Circle railway in Park St. Significant street trees include median planting of Drummond St (mature poplars) and Canning St (mature palms alternating with poplars), more recent median planting of exotic trees along the line of the former cable tram route in Rathdowne Street (pin oaks), and the plane trees along the centre of Newry St.

Small front gardens in the dominant terrace housing of the suburb make up most of the private landscape, including typically low and visually transparent iron and masonry fences, ornamental borders to garden beds, and paved paths and verandah floors: all often highly decorative.

These living landscape elements along with the hard landscape of the street and its fittings, such as the stone paving and cast-iron street furniture, reinforce the strong sense of period in the suburb.

Main development phases

Post 1900, infilling of North Carlton's vacant sites proceeded quickly and by about 1915 the suburb was virtually complete, with religious and educational buildings, and government services following each development surge. The suburb, once developed, was almost entirely residential with some factory-warehouse development after 1900 serving the commercial development in Nicholson and Rathdowne Streets.

As a result North Carlton is a highly homogenous 19th and early 20th century residential suburb largely occupied by dense terrace development, set within a rigid rectilinear grid of north-south and east-west

streets, served by rear lanes as an obligatory feature of polite suburban life of the era. Early and original rear outbuildings are an integral feature of the Victorian and Edwardian era character of North Carlton and are of particular historic significance where houses are on corner allotments where their outbuildings are exposed to public view.

Immigration

As a dense residential enclave close to Melbourne, employment centres, and the metropolitan public transport hub, North Carlton has also shared in the accommodation role of other inner suburbs, absorbing waves of immigration into aged but cheap housing stock and developing specific ethnic attributes, among the existing Victorian and Edwardian-era infrastructure, with each successive immigration wave.

Traces of the Jewish, Greek, Italian, Lebanese and Turkish communities that settled in the suburb are still evident. Their community gathering places include those for the Serbian Orthodox, and Ukrainian Orthodox Church communities, the 1932-3 Kadimah (former Jewish centre), St. John the Baptist's Greek Orthodox Church, and the more recent Mosque in Drummond Street. Often they occupy the Victorian-era Christian buildings.

Beyond the meeting places are the distinctive house renovations that transformed the Victorian-era Italianate into a form of post World War Two Italianate. Examples of these have been documented by the National Trust of Australia (Vic); all of these places are important milestones in North Carlton's development as a reception centre for immigrants.

The walk is approximately 5 kilometres in length.

The walk starts at the intersection of Nicholson Street and Alexandra Parade. Walk north along Nicholson Street (away from the city) and turn left into Lee Street.

San Remo Ballroom, 357-365 Nicholson Street



Halls were important places for social gatherings during the Victorian and Edwardian era. The Ballroom is of social and historical significance to the area, as its development and use mirrors the social development of the precinct. The building started as large brick Bicycle School and Roller Skating Rink in 1900, in the 1920's the building was converted into the Adelphi cinema, and in more recent times has operated as a ballroom.

Church, 238 Station Street



This former chapel was constructed for the Primitive Methodist Church in 1884.

The building is noted for its recent conversion into townhouses. The North Carlton area has a variety of former industrial, hotel and church buildings which have been converted into dwellings. The adaptive reuse of these buildings forms part of the eclectic character of North Carlton.

Lee Street Primary School



The present school covers most of the site of the former Collingwood Stockade, which was established in 1853 to house convicts who worked in nearby bluestone quarries. When the stockade was closed in 1866, the site was acquired as an asylum for 'harmless imbeciles'. The transfer of patients to the new Kew Asylum in 1873 saw the opening of a school on 28 July 1873, utilising the existing buildings (after extensive fumigation with sulphur). These were demolished when the existing school buildings were constructed in 1878.

The school buildings were built during 1877 in the Gothic Revival style, it is noted for its vast slate roof, relatively short walls, Gothic-style windows and buttresses, and huge windowless gabled ends. The school was opened by the Minister for Education on 28 June, 1878.

The school is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Turn right into Rathdowne Street.

You may wish to stop here and enjoy refreshments at one of the many cafes.

Rathdowne Street Shopping Strip



Rathdowne Street was an important shopping strip after the opening of the cable car line in 1889. There are shops scattered along the whole length of the street.

The shopfronts and verandahs of many of the shops along Rathdowne Street are still intact.

Curtain Square, located in the centre of the main shopping centre is located on the site of an old quarry (which was quarried by the convicts housed at the penal station in Lee Street).

Turn right into Fenwick Street

Maller's Flats, 93 Fenwick Street



Maller's Flats were constructed in 1942. It is a distinctive Moderne-style, double storey, flat block. It is noted for its cream and manganese brick work, the curved wall, and steel framed windows.

Turn left into Canning Street

Canning Street



The central plantation reservations in Canning, Drummond and Rathdowne Streets make a significant contribution to the amenity and character of North Carlton.

The plantation in Canning Street is noted for its use of palm and poplar trees.

The block between Fenwick and Macpherson Streets demonstrates a typical cross-section of buildings in North Carlton, with a variety of single and double story Victorian-era terrace houses, a corner shop, and some infill Edwardian and inter war architecture.

The townhouses on the corner of Macpherson Street were constructed on the side garden of the former Baptist Church (constructed in 1885) located in Macpherson Street.

Turn right into Macpherson Street, and then left into Station Street

House, 441 Station Street



This house was constructed in 1929. It is a well preserved, rendered inter-war house, and it is noted for its distinctive Walter Burley Griffin school character to the window grouping and pilaster capitals.

As you proceed north along Station Street you will notice the gradual shift from Victorian-era buildings to Edwardian-era buildings.

Terrace, 566-574 Station Street



This row of terrace houses was constructed in 1913. It is noted for its distinctive terracotta tile roof, and prominent chimneys.

This terrace row is complemented by the two pairs of Edwardian-era houses to its north (576-578, and 580-582 Station Street).

Proceed to Park Street, which forms the northern boundary of North Carlton.

To get to Park Street you have two options from Pigdon Street.

Option 1 - Laneway Walk



Turn right into Pigdon Street, and then left into the laneway between Station and Nicholson Streets. Along the laneway it is worth noting the outside toilets, stables / garages, and sheds which abut the lane, as well as the former factory in Mary Street behind 761-763 Nicholson Street.

Option 2 - Nicholson Street Walk



Turn right into Pigdon Street and then left into Nicholson Street. The shopping centre in Nicholson Street rose to prominence as this was at the junction of the Nicholson Street cable car line, and the Inner Circle railway line. The bus depot is located on the site of the former cable car depot. The Railway Hotel was named after the Railway line which ran along Park Street.

It is worth looking at the interior of the former butcher shop at 743-745 Nicholson Street, as this has retained many of the former fittings of its former use.

Turn left into Park Street

Inner Circle Railway Reserve, Park Street

The reserve to the north of Park Street is the site of the former Inner City Railway. This railway line once linked Royal Park station with Clifton Hill station. The line was opened in 1901 and operated as a passenger line until 1948, and carried goods trains until 1981.

Some rail infrastructure still exists along the route, including North Carlton Railway Station in Princes Hill, and the Electricity Substation in North Fitzroy.

Turn left into Rathdowne Street

Cable Engine House and Car Shed, 1015-1029 Rathdowne Street



The North Carlton route was opened on 9 February 1889 and ran from Park Street along Rathdowne Street to Elgin Street.

The engine house was designed by Robert Gordon and is constructed of brick on a bluestone base and decorated with cement plaster mouldings, cornices and architraves. The building housed the engine, drive wheels and the cable tensioning mechanism.

The car depot building was designed by Frederick Williams and is an unadorned utilitarian brick structure with a wide central doorway and narrow windows. The walls enclose a single open space that once included tracks, pits and a turntable for storing, servicing and turning the tram cars and dummies.

These buildings are included on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Turn right into Pigdon Street

KayOra, 146 Pigdon Street



KayOra was constructed in 1938. It is a well preserved flat block with a sand render finish, as well as a significant curved Moderne-style form. It is noted for its prominent entry hall, and tapestry bricks.

The intact front fence is significant in its own right. This building is a good example of inter-war flat development in the area.

Turn left into Lygon Street

St John the Baptist, 998 Lygon Street



This Greek Orthodox Church was constructed in 1968. This imposing building is noted for the contrast created between the austere besser blocks and the ornate detailing.

This church illustrates the number of Greek people who lived in North Carlton in the post-war period.

Turn left into the laneway on the north side of the Church, and then right into Drummond Street

Havana Court, 887 Drummond Street



These flats were constructed in 1942. It is a well preserved, three storey, manganese brick, Moderne style building. It is noted for its curved cantilevered balconies, curved glass windows, as well as its ornamental bricks.

The front fence is original, and adds to the integrity of this building.

Drummond Street is noted for its grand houses, as well as its mature poplar trees which are located in the central median.

Terraces, 789-795 Drummond Street



This elaborate terrace row is noted for its elaborate cast iron ornamentation.

Terraces, 758-760 Drummond Street



These ornate double-storey, Victorian-era terraces are noted for their ornate render work, and cast iron ornamentation.

It is worth noting the arched entrance located between the two houses, which provide access to the rear of the houses.

Mosque, 765-769 Drummond Street



The Mosque was constructed in 1967 for the Albanian Australian Islamic Society.

The Mosque is noted for its minaret, which is an imposing feature in the area.

The Mosque is another reminder of the post war immigrants who called Carlton and North Carlton home.

Reclamation area, 611-649 Drummond Street



In 1964 the block bounded by Newry, Lee, Lygon and Drummond Streets, was declared a 'reclamation area' under the Housing Act, as this area had been identified as being slum. The land in this area was acquired in 1966, and subsequently the buildings were demolished. The land has since been redeveloped with medium density housing.

Cambridge Terrace, 557-567 Drummond Street



Cambridge Terrace was constructed in stages between 1867 and 1885. The terrace is a row of six double storey houses. They are constructed of red brick with cream brick details around the openings. The roof features a continuous parapet with fine cream brick cornice detailing at the front and a curved parapet with brick detailing at the rear. Each terrace is narrow, being of a single room width, with a small enclosed yard at the rear. Two of the terraces retain their outdoor toilet structures.

The terrace is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register

To return to the start of the walk you can turn left into Princes Street and walk to Nicholson Street.

The information from this walk was sourced from:

- [“North Carlton Conservation Study”](#), Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1984
- [“City of Yarra Heritage Review”](#), Allom Lovell and Associates, 1998
- [“City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas 2007”](#), Graeme Butler and Associates, 2007

If you would like information about the history of North Carlton, contact:

[Carlton Library](#)

667 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton

[Carlton Community History Group](#)

<http://www.cchg.asn.au>