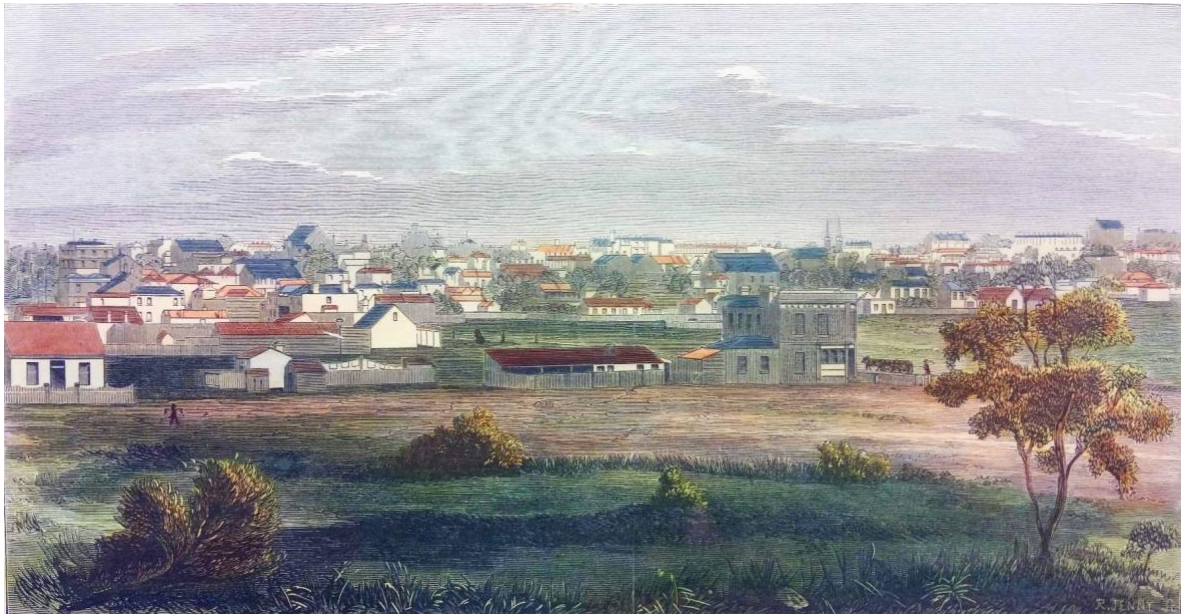*We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri people*

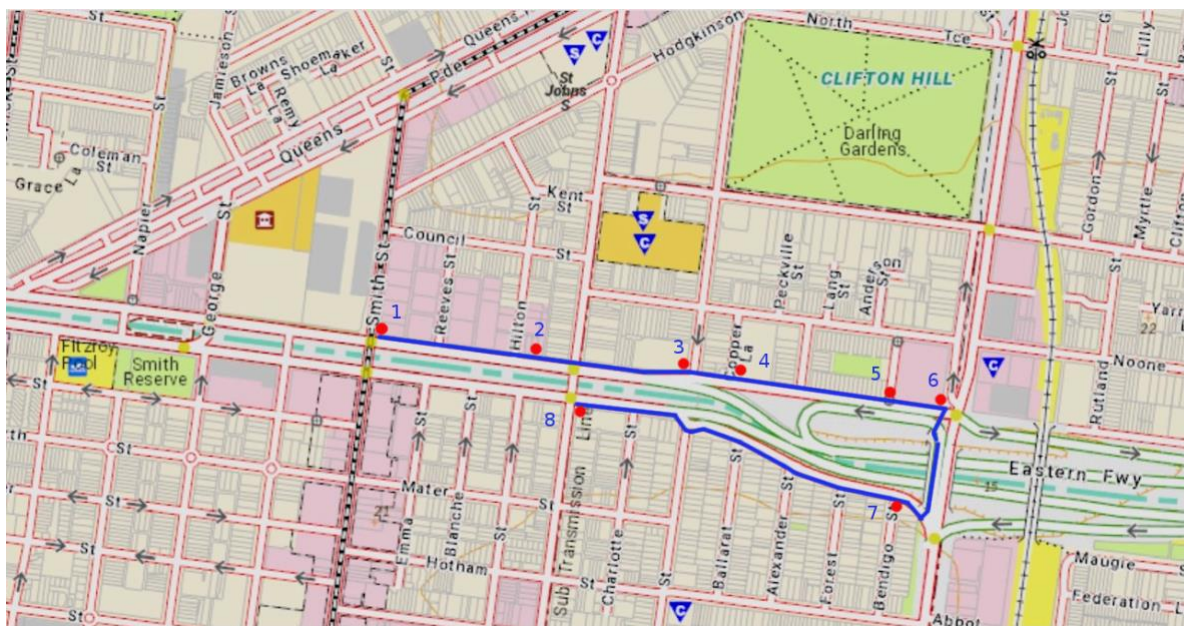# Collingwood Historical Society Annual Walk

Alexandra Parade: November 2021

This self-guided walk can be printed to take with you or used online. It includes links to further information on the Collingwood Historical Society website https://collingwoodhs.org.au.

Rudolf Jenny's etching looking south from Queens Parade (then called Heidelberg Road) about 1870. Reilly Street in the middle ground with the Gasometer Hotel middle right.

Route Map

Introduction Prior to colonisation, the area we now know as Collingwood was home to the Wurundjeri people. Sales of Crown land took place in 1838-1839. Collingwood is bordered on its south and north by two wide boulevards, Victoria Parade and Alexandra Parade.

Alexandra Parade, while a major arterial road connecting Princes Street and the Eastern Freeway, is strongly defined by its landscaped central median and views of the spectacular Shot Tower. Its surroundings are in a process of significant change as multi-storey apartment blocks are rapidly changing the skyscape.

In planning terms, it is covered by Interim Design and Development Overlay 38 as part of Amendment C288yara. [Click here](#) for more detailed planning information.

Stop 1   *Start at the northeast corner of Smith Street and Alexandra Parade*

Smith Street marks the boundary between the former City of Fitzroy to the west and the former City of Collingwood to the east. It was known as the Heidelberg Road until it was named Smith Street after Melbourne City councillor John Thomas Smith in 1851. Alexandra Parade was also established as a government road and was named after Melbourne City Councillor Francis Reilly in 1851. It was re-named in honour of Princess Alexandra of Denmark, who married Prince Edward VII in 1863 and was Princess of Wales until 1901 when she became Queen on Edward's ascension to the throne. The name change applied to the Fitzroy section from 1878 but was not adopted by the City of Collingwood until 1908.

Crown land was sold in large allotments in 1838-39. Portion 86, on the southeast corner shown here on Bernard Barrett's map in *The inner suburbs*, was bought by James Stewart Ryrie and was referred to for years as **Ryrie's Paddock**. Flat and poorly drained, much of it would not be developed until the 1860s and 1870s.

Gasometer Hotel: Despite the drainage issues, in 1859 a bluestone hotel was built for **Charles Mater** on the corner – and remains today at 484 Smith Street, one of Collingwood's oldest hotels. By this time Charles Mater owned the land that had been Ryrie's Paddock. It became known as Mater's Paddock.

Gasometer Hotel now overshadowed by Trilby apartment block

https://collingwoodhs.org.au/view/all-hotels-2/entry/44/

Where did the hotel's name come from?

Look across the road to the northwest corner of the intersection. In 1859 the **Collingwood, Fitzroy and District Gas and Coke Company** was established, and this site became a key supplier of gas for Melbourne until 1927, remaining operational until the 1970s with three large gasometers. Office buildings were used by the Gas and Fuel Corporation for some years afterwards.

One of the tents used for the soil removal

The Gasworks Re-development Site – Smith Street

The Gasworks Site is currently undergoing remediation works to remove all the contaminated soil from the site up to a depth of 10 metres. Some of the soil removal has been completed, especially in the north-west corner, Queens Pde/George St, where the new Fitzroy Senior High School construction is nearly complete.

New Senior High School from Queens Pde

The school is designed for 650 senior students to relieve pressure on Collingwood College & Fitzroy High School.

https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/contaminated-dirt-to-be-dug-up-ahead-of-fitzroy-gasworks-development-20180713-p4zrbz.html

Read more …

The 'Foundry' Development on the northeast corner was recently approved at a VCAT hearing despite strong community objection. Almost immediately afterwards the owners put the site up for sale. The plans involve an 11-storey development running through to Reeves Street and will have a noticeable impact on the surrounding one and two storey Clifton Hill buildings.

55 Emma – new apartment development site:

Look across the road to see the billboard about this development, the latest new apartment complex to be built in this area of Smith St.

The developers say it is a

'visionary building, an undeniably timeless design outcome with emphasis on light and space, and a contemporary design palette that reflects local heritage within a boutique setting. The contemporary architecture has been inspired by the historical urban fabric.'

Look at the architect's rendering and judge for yourself.

Street names, south side: When Mater's Paddock was subdivided, he chose family names for the streets: daughters Blanche and Emma, son Henry (now Budd Street), wife (Jane) Charlotte, wife's maiden name Simson (now Hotham Street).

Pause at Reeves Street and look up it to get an idea of the size of the Foundry development which will stretch almost as far as Council Street.

Stop 2 *Stop just beyond Hilton St*

46-48 Alexandra Parade*:* '*M*odernised' around the 1960s, but the change might be only skin-deep. Look carefully at the western wall and get a surprise. This is the only residence left on this side between Smith St and Wellington St.

Walk east to Gold St corner

Stop 3

Later in the nineteenth century a number of noxious trades developed along Alexandra Pde including Box's hair works, the Shot Tower and Hall Brothers and William Murray woolworks (as well as tanneries to the east of Hoddle Street), all conveniently located adjacent to the old Reilly St drain which emptied into the Merri Creek.

64 Alexandra Parade Charles and George Box, hair curling works, later Provan's Timber

Hair curling was once an important industry, providing horsehair for stuffing mattresses and saddles, and also drawn hair for making brushes; this was the biggest such manufacturer in Melbourne. The business started in Reilly St East near Dight's Falls about 1873 but after a spectacular fire it moved to this location around 1880. The brothers owned a large tract of land running through to Noone St. If you have ever wondered why houses on the west side of Gold St and 13-17 Noone St are Edwardian while the opposite side is Victorian, the Box brothers supply the answer to the late subdivision.

David Provan & Sons set up on this site in in 1924 after a fire in October 1923 destroyed his previous timber yard. David set up, with his sons Bob & Ed, a new firm called David Provan & Sons Pty Ltd and that business continued until Mendy & Barry Rosenberg bought it in

1966. They were also father and son, so continuing the tradition started by David Provan. The business thrived and had two hardwood yards – the other one between Emma & Blanche Streets, Collingwood, where the Shell Service Station is today.

David Provan & Sons made an astonishing range of products from doors, cabinets and stairs to roof trusses, flagpoles and church furniture. David died in 1931. His three sons Edgar, Robert and Albert all worked in the business.

The building is more significant than one might think at first glance. The central two-storey section dates from 1880 and is believed to be the only 19th century timber framed factory remaining in Collingwood and one of very few two-storey 19th century timber factories in Melbourne.

It was acquired by the State Government in the aftermath of the East-West link cancellation, and Provans moved from this site in 2015 to the corner of Hoddle St.

Reilly Street Drain In 1859 an open drain was constructed in the middle of the street by Fitzroy and Collingwood councils to drain the Crown land to the north (later known as Clifton Hill). The drain was a failure, overflowing onto the Collingwood flat the following winter. It remained as a health hazard for decades and was not fully enclosed until the early 1900s. The drain is a bluestone u-shaped channel covered by a concrete deck or cover and is located closer to the city-bound side of the Parade. The concrete deck was recently found to be in poor condition in some sections. Work to replace sections of the concrete cover between Nicholson Street Fitzroy and Gold Street Clifton hill was carried out in 2017-2018. This led to the loss of some trees, most regrettably the large tree on the west side of the

Wellington Street intersection. Re-vegetation was subsequently undertaken. We had hoped to be granted a glimpse of the drain interior, but this was not allowed. Melbourne Water did send us a couple of photos of items found in the drain.

Freeway protests 1970s:

The 1969 *Melbourne Transportation Study* planned three new freeways through Collingwood as well as major street widening. These included the Eastern Freeway (F19) and the Hume Freeway (F2) which was to join it.

Amidst a turbulent time for freeway construction the F19 east of Hoddle Street was approved in December 1970. There was strong public opposition to the route which would consume a large swathe of parkland in the Yarra Valley. Read more …

East West Link, **(Eastern Section)** However, the issue of the extension of the Eastern Freeway continued to be on the State agenda. More specifically the Victorian Liberal Premier Denis Napthine whose government had been elected with the promise of finally implementing the Doncaster Rail line included in the 1977 freeway plans instead declared formally on 20 December 2012 the East West Link (Eastern Section) Project. Part A of this was to extend from the Eastern Freeway near Hoddle Street to CityLink, and Part B from CityLink through to the Port of Melbourne. The battle was on again to save our community. Read more …

Walk east along Alexandra Parade to the corner of Copper Lane

Stop 4

The Shot Tower: Victorian Heritage Register HO709. This extraordinary landmark building, constructed in 1882 for the production of lead shot, is a very significant remnant of industrial heritage of worldwide as well as local and state importance, being one of few remaining 19th century shot towers and, at close to 69 metres, among the tallest.

https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/295

https://collingwoodhs.org.au/resources/collingwood-history-plaques-project/the-shot-tower/

Stand at the very bottom and look straight up for a dizzying view. Note the plaque.

Continue walking eastwards past Alexander St, noting the public housing estate

Stop 5 *Stop at the wide lane between the housing estate and Provans*

Public Housing: The 36 two storey townhouses fronting Alexandra Parade and Noone St were built in 1968. It was among the most widely approved of the Housing Commission's inner-suburban estates (Barrett p 166). Three-bedroom houses have private front and rear gardens as well as a communal central playground. In 2017 the State Government planned to redevelop this and some other estates in public private partnerships which would see the land pass to private developers. This estate was removed from the plan after initial consultation which had proposed buildings up to 14 storeys and added only 4 extra social housing units.

Hall Brothers: 174 Alexandra Pde – demolished

The Hall Bros factory was demolished in recent times, despite being rated as of **state** significance by the *Northern Suburbs Factory Study* as a well-preserved 19th century wool scouring works. It was also important as a rare example of the once common type of timber-framed, corrugated iron clad factory building.

Hall Brothers were at this site by 1869. They developed and manufactured a steam operated wool scouring machine, believed to be the first mechanical wool scourer in Australia. The brothers lived locally, Robert Hall at 481 Hoddle Street (now divided into flats) and Midgley Hall at 10 South Terrace (demolished). The firm continued until 1972 and was still trading as a textile engineering works under the name Hall in 1992.

Stop 6 457 Hoddle Street Clifton Hill, former William Murray Woolworks, now Provan's (HO89)

Scottish-born wool merchant William Murray was involved in fellmongering in Victoria Crescent Abbotsford, until in the late 1880s he purchased this property from Robert and Midgley Hall, stretching from Noone Street to Alexandra Parade. He took over the Hall Brothers wool works and built his own residence, *Rathgael,* on the corner of Noone Street, following the typical nineteenth century pattern of an owner residing near his works. After his death in 1892 the business continued as William Murray and Co, and in 1917-18 the current building replaced the earlier structure. The Edwardian red brick factory with the name in low relief on stuccoed panels and ornamental dogtooth corbel at the cornice line has a symmetrical presentation to Hoddle St. The brick chimney has been reduced from its original height.
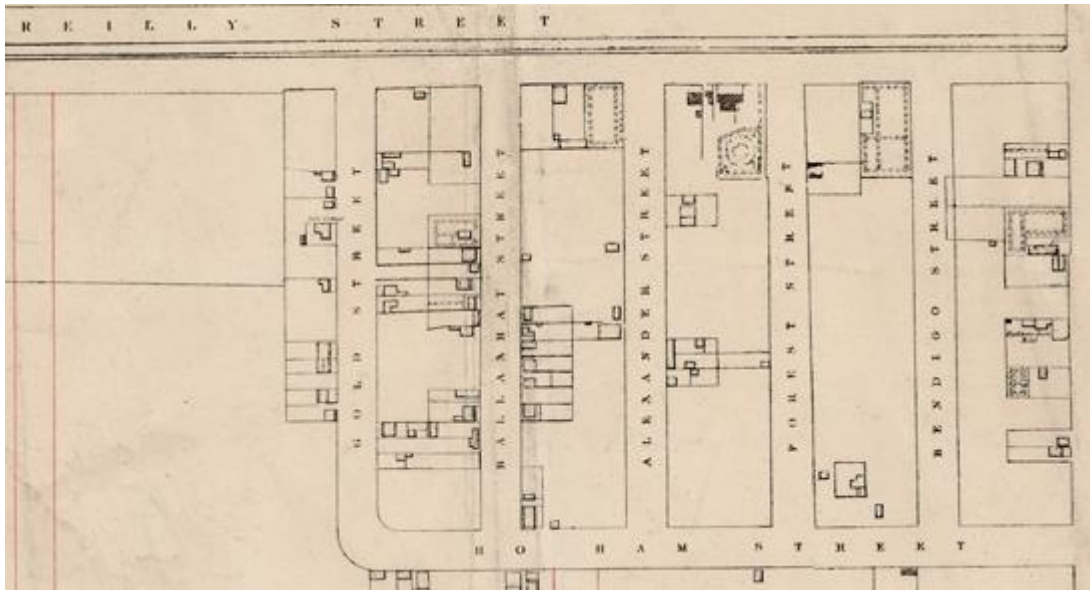
Look up and across Hoddle St to note the large former boot factories. Cross the bridge at the lights (carefully!) at Hoddle Street. Pause to look east and west at the freeway and south at the view of the Collingwood Town Hall. Follow the footpath by the slip road on the south side.

Slip road to Alexandra Parade

The 1970s construction of the entry to Alexandra Parade from Hoddle Street involved the demolition of residences and small businesses with frontages to Alexandra Parade.

Stop 7 Bendigo St

Bendigo, Ballarat, Alexander and Forest Streets 1850s subdivision: This area, less poorly-drained than Ryrie's Paddock, was subdivided in 1853 and the streets named after goldfields. Hodgkinson's map shows the extent of building by January 1858.

Take a brief detour down a couple of these peaceful small streets. As described under East-West Link (above) Bendigo Street in particular would have been devastated by construction works. Some houses were acquired and occupied by homeless: https://en.squat.net/tag/bendigo-street/

Continue westwards along Alexandra Parade, passing a few remaining houses and the former Trescowthick's boot factory at number 59.

Walk west towards Wellington Street.

Stop 8 Fox Hotel, southwest corner Wellington Street.

There has been a hotel operating on this site continuously from 1871 until the present day. During this time the hotel has operated under four different names:

Fox's Hotel 1871-1882 (presumably named after the first licensee, John Fox)
Tower Hotel 1882-ca 1992 (renamed in reference to the Shot Tower built nearby in 1882)
Office Inn ca 1992-2007
Fox Hotel 2007- present (reversion to a variant of the original name).

Read more …

END OF WALK

Today the place we affectionately call Foxy Forde's after its first female publican, Mary Forde, thrives as a local place to gather, to have a meal or try one of the beers they have on tap. We wish we were ending our walk there!

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING – follow this link