

Know Your 'Hood

This project mines the local history memories of your streets to find stories for walkers. It introduces you to your predecessors, their lives and pre-occupations and the ways your neighbourhood has been shaped

Darebin Creek - Plenty Road to the Yarra River:

This walk meanders along the Creek from its intersection with Plenty Road to the Yarra River Trail and includes stories belonging to children, the dispossessed, bike riders, migrants, quarriers, shoppers, golf players and others. There have been enormous changes along the Darebin Creek over the last 180 years in its landscape, its flora and fauna, and the way residents think, use and play with it.

Its stories:

1. Bundoora Park
2. Darebin Creek – defining communities
3. The children's creek
4. The Nissen huts
5. 'A complete air-conditioned shopping city'
6. Being supported by the creek
7. Different perceptions in the early 1950's
8. Livingstone Street
9. Rockbeare Park
10. Dairy cows and susceptible vegetable gardens
11. From stone to rubbish to parkland
12. Latrobe Golf Course
13. Darebin Yarra Bridge



Story Route



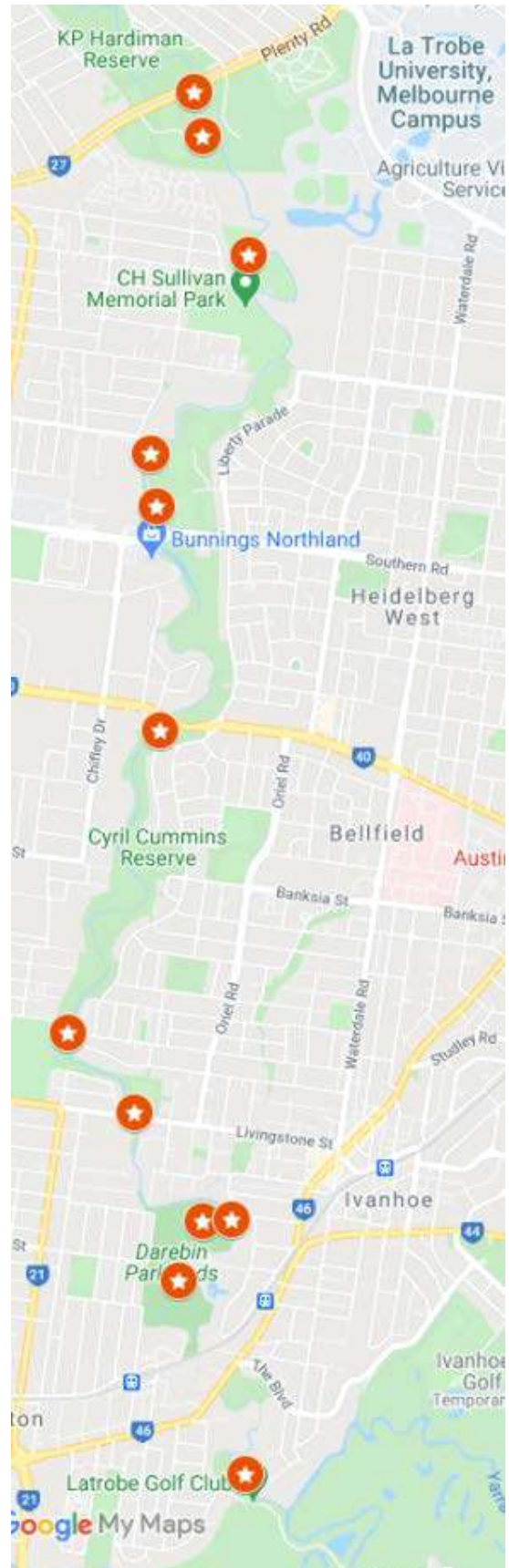
C. C. Bailey, 'Bruce Bailey by Darebin Creek', State Library of Victoria, H2012.35/51

This walk takes you from the intersection of Plenty Road and the Darebin Creek and heads south, following the Creek path all the way. You will eventually cross under Heidelberg Road and continue meandering along the Creek path through the Latrobe Golf Course until the Darebin Creek meets with the Yarra River.

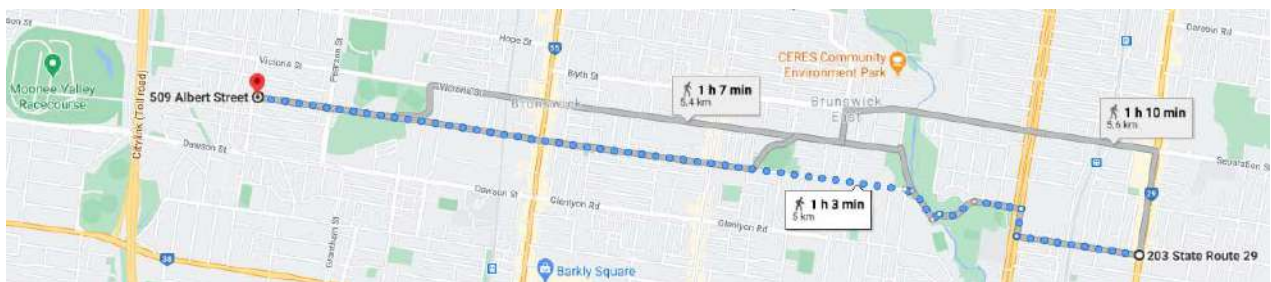
We hope to write about the stories of the Yarra Bend and Merri Creek soon so you can continue discovering your 'hood's waterways.

Length: 7.6km

Difficulty: Intermediate (in parts)



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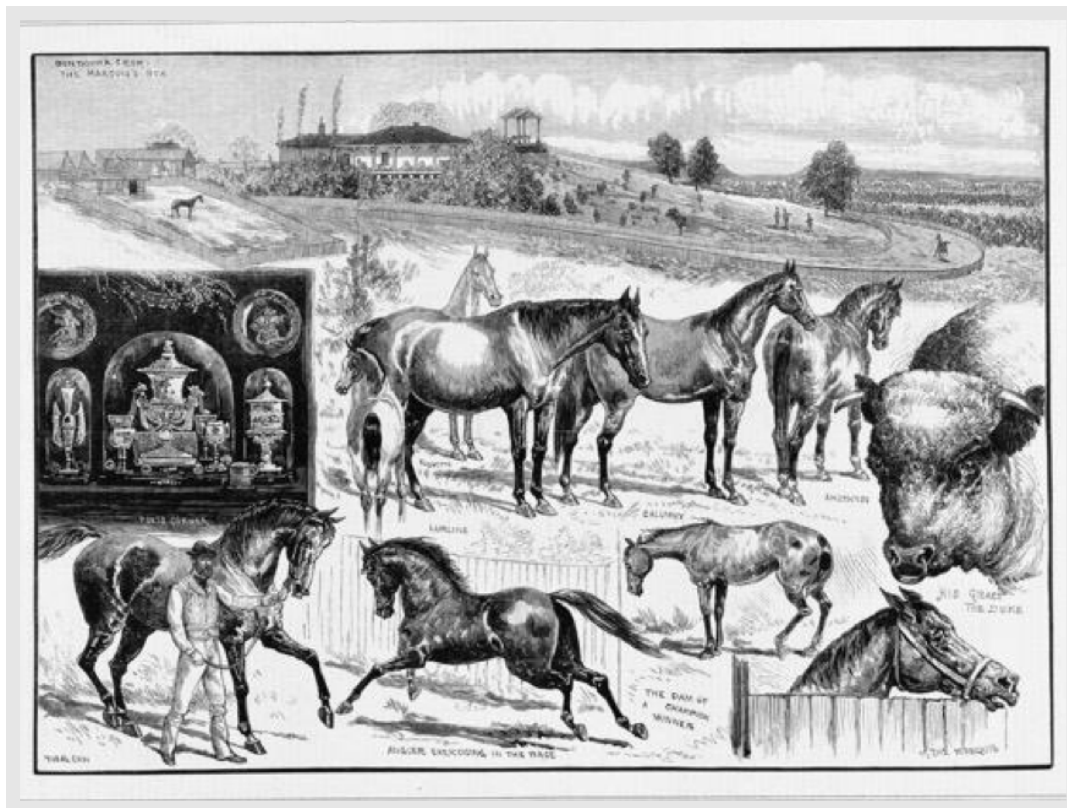
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Henry Thomas Alken, 1785-1851, British, Scenes from a steeplechase: taking a hedge, c.1845, oil on canvas, Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection B2001.2.52

1 Bundoora Park



In 1973 a stone tool was found near the Creek at Bundoora Park a little to the north-east, prompting a search for more archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation that found 125 stone cutting and scarping implements nearby. The whole of the Merri and Darebin Creek valley area is underlaid by basalt rock resulting from volcanic eruptions several million years ago. The quartz quarried from this basalt rock enabled the Wurundjeri to fashion a variety of tools and constructions, and when the Europeans arrived in the local area around 1837 they soon began to quarry the basalt rock far more

extensively to build farmhouses and estates, roads and bridges. The land was purchased by Samuel Gardiner for a racehorse stud, and named Bundoora Park (1877); Bundoora Park homestead was sold to the Commonwealth for use as a Mental Repatriation Hospital – Mont Park (1920); transferred to the Victorian Government (1924); the land used again for horse breeding and a riding school by the Victorian Police Remount Depot (1930-50); the park was established as crown land for public recreation (1969); and the Repatriation Hospital was decommissioned in 1993.

1. Text – Kelly Watson, Recollections of the Darebin Creek Valley, p.14; 'Bundoora Park Homestead', Victorian Heritage Database Report; Darebin
2. City Council, 'Bundoora Park Precinct Draft Master Plan', August 2012, p.1
3. Image – 'A visit to a stud farm: Bundoora Park', The Australasian Sketcher, February 14, 1883, State Library of Victoria A/S14/02/83/32



2

Defining borders



The word Darebin is thought to be an Aboriginal word for the 'Swallow' and the City of Darebin have taken this as their logo.

The Woiwurrung (language group) Aborigines lived right across the northern landscape of Melbourne from around Mount Macedon in the west to around Baw Baw in the east, shown in yellow in the map. The Wurundjeri balluk clan occupied the land from the Maribyrnong River to the Darebin Creek.

Since Europeans settled here the Darebin Creek has also been the boundary for local government administration, dividing the Parishes of Morang and Wollert in what is now the City of Whittlesea, and later the Cities of Darebin and Banyule.

The Creek begins in the City of Whittlesea, near Donnybrook Road in Woodstock and ends at its confluence with the Yarra River in Alphington.



The Children's Creek

The Creek has always been a place for families in so many ways. The Australian Birth Index for 1788-1922 lists 248 babies born at 'Darebin Creek, Victoria', which, in the days when it was easier to identify a place by its landmarks, could mean anywhere from the Yarra River upstream towards Woodstock.

The first of these newborns was Isabella McKinnon, born in 'about 1840' to Duncan and Mary McKinnon. It hasn't been possible to trace Isabella's life any further.



For Wurundjeri-willam children over thousands of years and even more so in the last two hundred years with the sudden increase in population after Europeans settled, the Creek

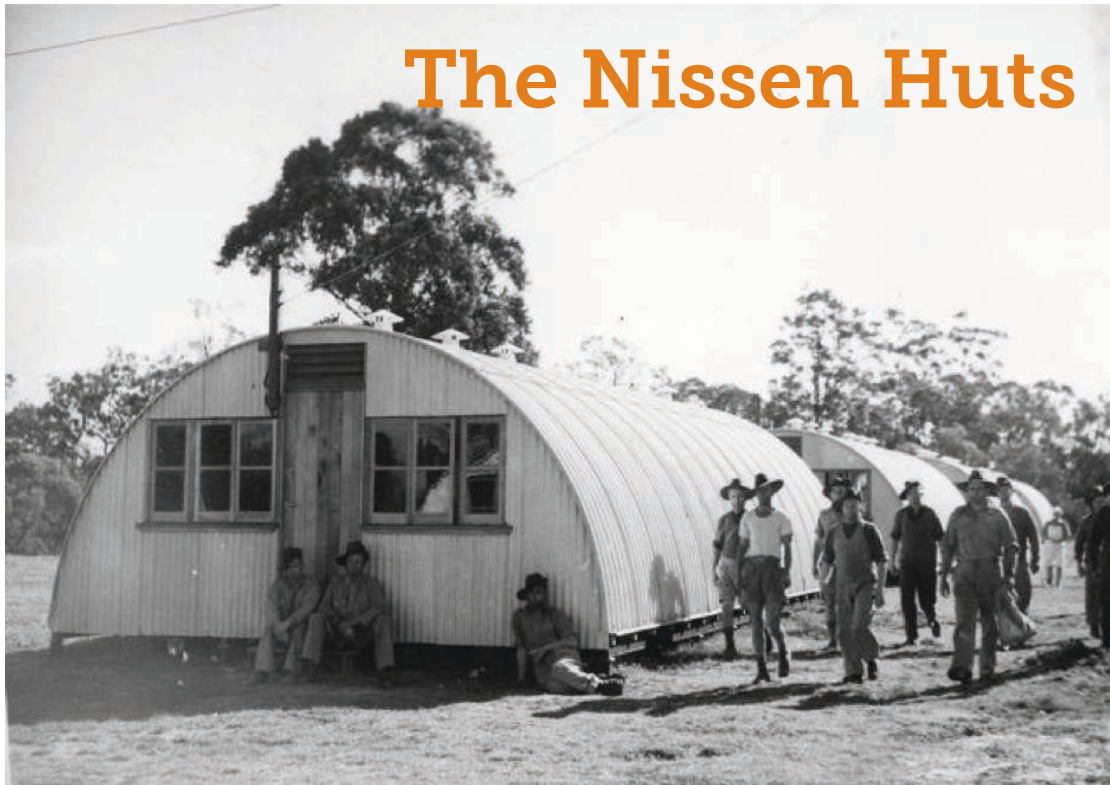
"provided a natural adventure playground for local children...the creek was a retreat, from which to escape the boredom of chores, siblings and school."

Many children remember it as
 “ the perfect place to wag.”

In the Ivanhoe section of the Creek Winston Miles remembered:

“ We used to scale the underside of the railway bridge and then climb along until we were over the creek, x metres below, then we would get out on the centre of the bracing angle irons and be bounced up and down as trains went over.”





Rows and rows of Nissen huts, like these in the picture, were constructed in 1952 where Northland Shopping Centre now is to accommodate thousands of families seeking a new post-war life in the 1950s. Accommodation had to be provided quickly and the Nissen huts – a British army WW1 design made from corrugated iron, plasterboard and cement into a semi-circular shape capable of deflecting shrapnel – were quick and cheap to produce. Nissen huts were built in many places around Australia and here they accommodated thousands of people during the 1950s.

One family were Joan and George Foster with 8 yr old June and 6 yr old Brian, who left from Ipswich in Suffolk, England in May 1955 as 'Ten Pound Poms' - an assisted passage scheme costing adults ten pounds each but free for children - to settle in Australia. Their ship, the MV Georgic, arrived at Station Pier in Melbourne on 13 June 1955 after a month at sea. They were accommodated at the Exhibition Buildings for 3 days before being taken to the Preston Migrant Hostel where they lived for six months until January 1956 when they were able to buy a house in Thornbury.

“Living at the Hostel was quite basic and at the time Joan didn't know whether to laugh or cry about it. Their accommodation consisted of two bedrooms and a small central room with a table, a couple of kitchen chairs and one power point. Many paths were unmade the communal showers and toilets were down the road and round the corner. The food was very ordinary consisting of tough steak, chops and some offal, with fish and chips on Fridays. The Hostel supplied only the basics: toilet rolls, blankets and crockery (which could only be used in the dining halls), and Joan regretted not bringing an electric jug.”



A suburban shift - Northland

Northland Shopping Centre opened on the old post-war-migrant Nissen hut site as one of the first in Australia to embody the new, American, concept of an enclosed shopping centre: modern, sophisticated, contemporary, air-conditioned and removed from the bustle of the street.

In the lead up to opening of Northland in 1966 journalist Rohan Rivett wrote about this 'Suburban shift' taking place in Melbourne: Chadstone had opened in 1960; Southland was due in 1968; Eastland around the same time; and Westfield Doncaster had just been announced.



Northland opened on 4 October 1966 as 'a 51-acre, \$18 million shopping centre – with 2,000 staff, a 35-stall market and 105 shops... (it) includes medical and dental services, a petrol station and a child minding centre. About 430 buses will operate to and from the centre each day.'

It is all designed for the Mums of Melbourne – that backbone of family, nation and (not least) of the retail trade. We now have a clear picture of the shopping future of Mrs Melbourne... for 40 years she was drawn to the centre of the retailers' web, Bourke Street, dominated by the Myer Emporium... (until) the whole happy complex was endangered... by the parking problem. The little shops of the major suburban shopping areas began to thrive as never before. Where her mother in the twenties and thirties had spent 12/- of every shopping pound in or close to Bourke Street, the Melbourne housewife of the sixties was spending more and more along Chapel Street, Sydney Road, around

Moonee Ponds or Camberwell junctions, which offered better parking than the golden mile of the city's centre. So the wise men of Myer Emporium... with other major retail groups...launched their strategic counter to the parking problem.

They set out to ring Melbourne with a series of reconstructions of the Bourke Street ensemble...The whole planning should delight carmakers, oil companies and all their subsidiaries and acolytes. Just what the effect will be on the small clusters of neighbourhood shops along the tram routes is another matter.

Text – 'Northland opens next Tuesday', Herald, 1 October 1966, p.10; '\$18m shop centre opens', The Canberra Times, 4 October 1966, p.17; Rohan Rivett, 'Suburban shift', The Canberra Times, 11 July 1966, p.2

Image – Wolfgang Sievers, 'Northland Shopping Centre, Murray Road, East Preston, 1967, State Library of Victoria, H98.30/288



Around Thornbury - learning to swim and finding new homes

“

'Nearer to Bell Street there was a deep pool that we ventured into at times... I may never have learnt to swim if it wasn't for that creek.'

”

The Creek supported people in many ways; 'During the Great Depression of the 1930s 'as people lost their jobs and couldn't pay rents or mortgages, evictions became frequent and many people resorted to camping in makeshift shelters. The creek banks proved popular with their ready supply of water and relative isolation from prying eyes. "... Seddon Reserve was a paddock, with the odd house popping up, it was like this all the way to Bell St, some people were camped on the creek between Ford and Banksia Streets... there were little humpies there and one of them had a bath on legs outside it. One of them was growing vegetables..."'



Ford Street & Green Street – early 1950s

Ligsma Kirpe, a refugee from Russian occupied Latvia and a displaced person for nearly five years, settled with her husband in Green Street attracted by

“ the creek... It was beautiful, a lot of rocks, there was a ford at the end of Ford Street [one street north of Green Street] but I made a special bridge of rocks so I could get to the bus stop. It looked like a farm out in the country... it used to be an orange sky when the sun is low, all the sky was orange. Now it is pink all the night through, some people say pink is beautiful, but it is just pollution. ”



An alternative view is offered by Lloyd Deer, also of Green Street, Ivanhoe, whose house is shown above. His opinions spring from the quarrying activities when

“ they cleared everything because it was quarried and they were blasting for about five years when we moved in... when we bought here the creek was not at all attractive in fact the attitude was that the creek detracted from the value of our properties. ”

Ford Street was also the location for the new parish of West Ivanhoe established in 1951, and the opening of the new convent for the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition in June that year by Archbishop Mannix. The convent no longer exists but the school they established, St Bernadette's primary school, still does.



Darebin Road / Livingstone Street

There was a small island in the creek just above Livingstone Street opposite a stone quarry. A former local resident remembers 'when the quarry men were ready to blast they walked along the top of the quarry ringing their bell, it was like a large school bell, and the men would stand on the bank and wait until you had walked back up the hill on the other side to what is now Green Street and then boom, boom, boom and you'd see all those stone fly, and we would watch them raining into the creek.'

It was around here that 'if you got the Yellow bus that ran along here to Northcote, as you crossed the bridge and started to come up the rise, near the Chinamen's gardens you got a full view of [the local lads who swam there naked] all down on the bend in the nuddy. Just a fleeting view mind you, but enough of a glimpse to know that there was a mob of them down there.'



Seddon Reserve, on the corner of Livingstone Road and Darebin Creek, was once a tip of great convenience for local children who

“ got iron from the tip in Belmont Road, Ivanhoe, and made mud slides down the slope below Livingstone Street. The trick was to stay on the iron, but they always came off, then into the creek to try and wash off before going home.’ ”



Separation St - Rockbeare Park

NATIVE CAT CAUGHT AT IVANHOE.



Native cats are now very rare in Victoria, and a specimen is seldom seen near the city. This cat was caught on Sunday at Ivanhoe by Mr. O. Gunther, who was staying at Misses Kendall's Rest Home in Ford Street. Six of the animals have been trapped at the home. Four of them are now inmates of the Zoological Gardens.

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Locals remember quolls (native cats) living in the cliffs behind numbers 8 and 10 Rockbeare Grove and a Presbyterian minister at number 8 who paid children threepence to trap the cats, which he then sold to the zoo. Others remembered the horseshoe bend just above Rockbeare Park as like an island. 'It was shallow and we girls played there while our mums shelled peas or did beans for tea that night.'

In 1934 native cat expert and scientist David Fleay wrote in *The Argus* that he knew of only three isolated locations that had escaped a 'mysterious scourge ... about which nothing is known': 'on the shores of Lake Corangamite at South Dreeite... at Gelantipy... and the third, strangely, is Darebin Creek at Ivanhoe...' The following year 'as a result of Orders in Council... wallabies, native cats and tiger cats are protected in Victoria for the whole of the year. Up to the present they have been protected for only part of the year.'

Not all the memories were good however. One woman remembers being barred from swimming because the overflow from Mont Park Psychiatric Hospital [1912-1994] flowed into Darebin Creek and her mother believed she could catch something. A deputation of councillors from Heidelberg, Preston and Northcote in 1933 declared 'that in the winter the effluent [from Mont Park], instead of soaking into the ground, was washed down into the creek. As there had been an outbreak of typhoid at the hospital it was feared that the effluent in the creek would spread the disease...

Dr Catarinich said that the system now in use had been in existence for 20 years and the deputation's was the first complaint...the effluent was treated before being discharged ... The creek was in much greater danger of contamination from piggeries on the banks of the creek and from swagmen who camped there....' The councillors agreed to call in an expert to examine and recommend whether Mont Park should be connected to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works system.



Shaw Street and dairy cows roaming freely



Children were expected to help with milking the cows before and after school

The Darebin Creek valley, having been cleared by the early settlers, was a perfect place for dairy farming and milk delivery by horse and care and cows roaming freely around the parklands was a common sight. 'I remember coming home from shopping with mum one afternoon and as we came down Shaw Street mum went bonkers and rushed off the rest of the way – four or five creek cows (as they were known locally) were standing in the front-yard munching cabbages.'

Cows were banned from the area by the early to mid 1950s as the urban sprawl crept further north.

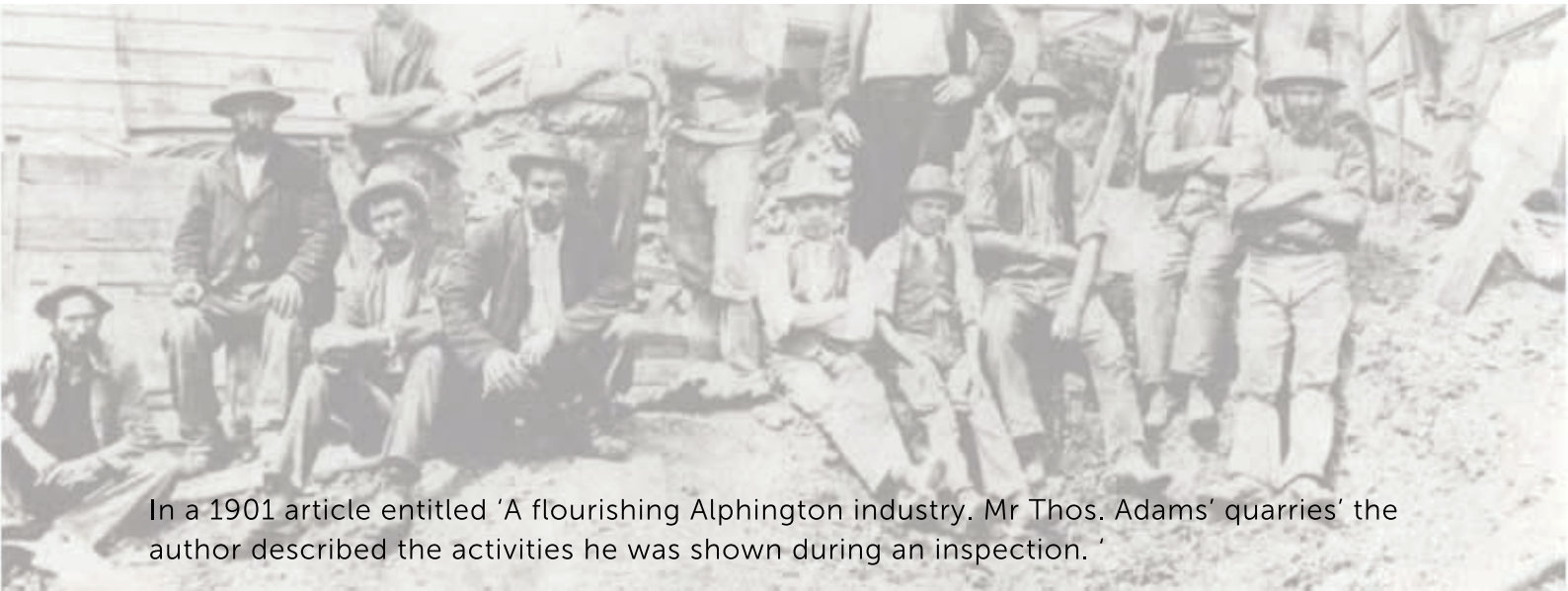
Text – Kelly Watson, Recollections, p.33
 Image – 'Schooldays', Darebin Heritage,
<http://heritage.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au/page/752/schooldays>, date, photographer and location unknown. Caption reads "Children were expected to help with milking the cows before and after school".



From stone to rubbish to parkland

The Darebin Parklands was once a farm and orchard bought by John Adams in 1873. About twenty years later Adams' son Thomas began excavating part of the land towards the south near the railway line to quarry stone for roads and railways. The quarry was taken over by his son Percival [Jack] who eventually sold it to Associated Quarries in 1939.

This quarry was a main source of employment for Alphington families, hard though the work was: 'the men endured dust and unhygienic conditions and were laid off without pay when it rained. In the quarry hole itself working in hot conditions was equally hard on the men and the horses used to haul the quarry skips.'



In a 1901 article entitled 'A flourishing Alphington industry. Mr Thos. Adams' quarries' the author described the activities he was shown during an inspection. '

“ The noise created by the machinery crushing boulders into road metal is a familiar one to all householders in Alphington, but perhaps all do not know the extent and magnitude of the industry which has been so successfully established in the heart of the shire... Nearly all the workmen are local residents so that Mr Adams causes L4000 per annum to circulate in the district. There are 40 employed on an average throughout the year... judging by the great quantity of magnificent stone – solid and blue as indigo – which is yet to be unearthed he has a claim better than a Klondyke gold mine. The boulders of stone are fed into crushers, and the broken metal falls into a pit, from whence it is conveyed by elevators to a revolving screen, which separates the material into five different sizes.

There is also another apparatus for manufacturing toppings and screenings. Mr Adams is now engaged quarrying a splendid formation of stone which he considers will run down for 40 or 50 feet. A large trade is done with municipal councils, the Railway department and others and metal is forwarded in trucks to all parts of the colony. A lot of tramways are laid down in the quarries and trucks are hauled from below to the mouth of the crushers by machinery. A broad gauge railway line is laid from the Alphington station siding... and thus the railway tracks... are loaded by machinery and shunted back onto the main line for transit to different parts of the state.’ ”

When the quarry closed in 1965 it was leased to the Northcote Council for use as a tip; disused quarries across Melbourne commonly became tips or parks. The Age reported in January 1967 that 'a deputation of Alphington and Fairfield residents lodged a protest with the Health Commission against the proposed tipping of Northcote's garbage into a disused quarry... [alleging a] rise in vermin and bad odors which the tip would bring... Northcote's City Engineer said the council would take every precaution to ensure rubbish was covered every day by bulldozer. The tip would be locked at night to stop people dumping rubbish after hours...The tip would take about 20 years to fill, but this could be considerably less...'



It was in fact full to capacity by 1975, after less than 10 years, and the land was reserved for a freeway. In 1973 the Rockbeare Park Conservation Group was formed in response to the MMBW's bulldozing of trees on the Ivanhoe side of the creek and, when the Northcote tip and surrounding land on the Alphington side came up for sale, assistance was provided by the Dept of Urban and Regional Development and a plan by Premier Dick Hamer to provide a \$1 for \$1 subsidy to help Northcote council buy the quarry, floodplain and surrounding land. From that point it became known as Darebin Parklands and its rehabilitation and development was in the hands largely of volunteers.



DAREBIN PARKLANDS

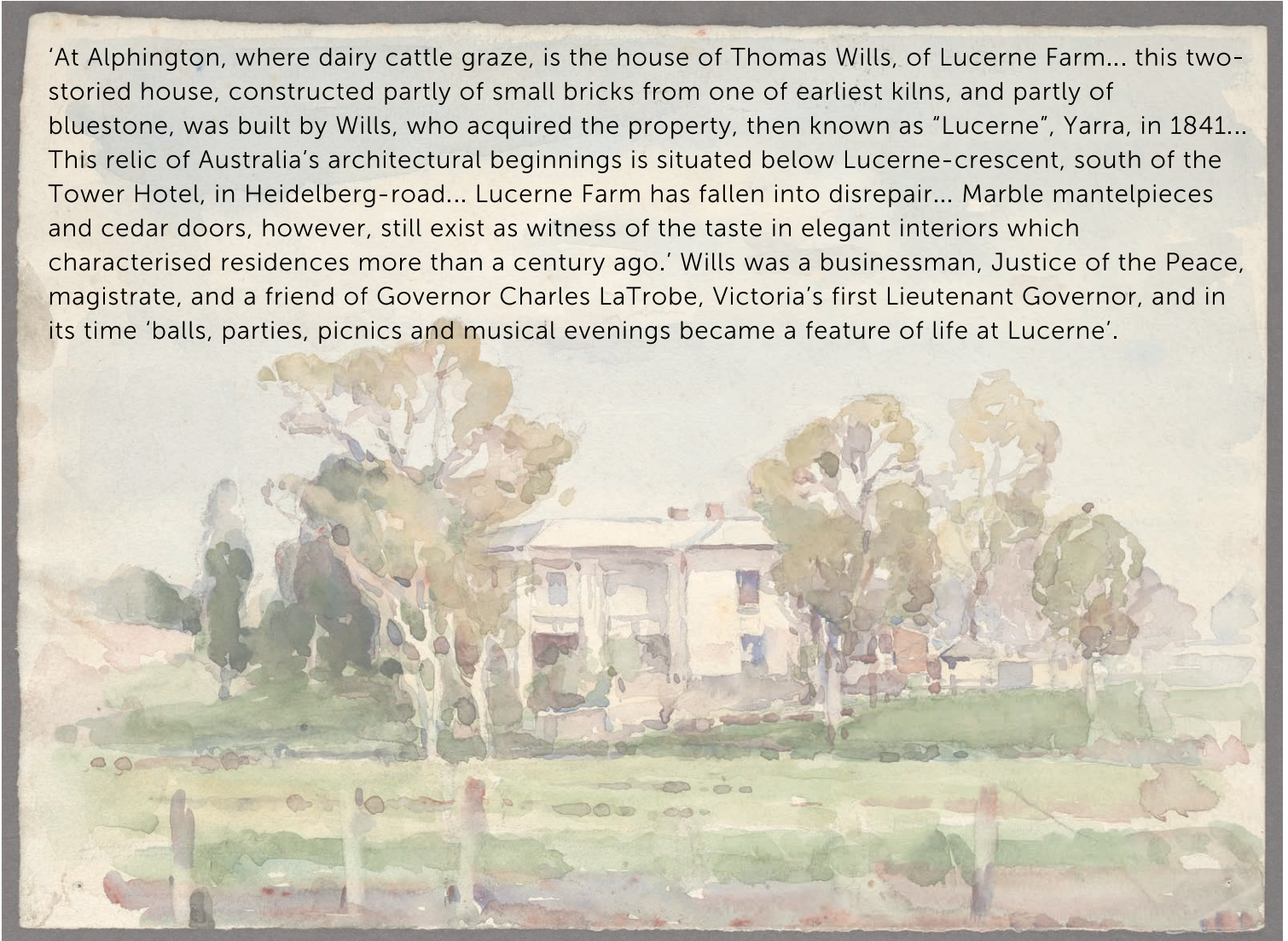
Text – Kelly Watson, *Recollections*, p.40; Michael Smith and Associates, *Darebin Parklands Masterplan Project*, September 2008, p.2; 'A flourishing Alphington industry', *South and East Bourke Record*, 7 June 1901, p.6; 'Petition protest on tip plan', *The Age*, 18 January 1967, p.10;

Image –<https://dcmc.org.au/learn/darebin-parklands-creek-history/> (no source or date); Laurie Course, 'Northcote Tip 1976', *Darebin Parklands Association*, *Victorian Collections*; *Darebin Parklands Association*, 'Darebin Parklands', c1990s, *Victorian Collections*



Lucerne Farm & the La Trobe Golf Club

'At Alphington, where dairy cattle graze, is the house of Thomas Wills, of Lucerne Farm... this two-storied house, constructed partly of small bricks from one of earliest kilns, and partly of bluestone, was built by Wills, who acquired the property, then known as "Lucerne", Yarra, in 1841... This relic of Australia's architectural beginnings is situated below Lucerne-crescent, south of the Tower Hotel, in Heidelberg-road... Lucerne Farm has fallen into disrepair... Marble mantelpieces and cedar doors, however, still exist as witness of the taste in elegant interiors which characterised residences more than a century ago.' Wills was a businessman, Justice of the Peace, magistrate, and a friend of Governor Charles LaTrobe, Victoria's first Lieutenant Governor, and in its time 'balls, parties, picnics and musical evenings became a feature of life at Lucerne'.



“ Don Blackie, an Alphington resident, remembered 'two Chinamen leasing part of Lucerne Farm to grow vegetables' and there were Chinese owned market gardens all the way up the Darebin Creek as far as Thornbury. "The shops weren't open on Sunday, so if we needed extra, mum would send me and one my aunties to the Chinese gardens.. Whatever you wanted they would cut fresh from their garden, spring onions, lettuce... It was about threepence for a lettuce and some spring onions.' ”



Lucerne was bought and sold a handful of times over the years and parts of the property sold off along the way. In the mid 1930s 50 acres was bought by Mr J Ford Paterson and leased to a group of businessmen to build a nine-hole public golf course. It was a failure as it was 'carved out across what was basically a flood plain, it was virtually treeless and the soil was of a poor quality for golf turf.' They nonetheless established a club with 50 members but struggled for a good game and couldn't convince the course owners to upgrade the facilities.

With a post-war boost in membership brought about by a group of Northcote RSL ex-servicemen keen to play golf locally, a renewed sense of purpose and determination, and the purchase by the Club of occasional pieces of Lucerne until the final 24 acres was bought in 1956, the Club finally owned its course.

It built a two-storey club house behind the original mansion, which, given its historic nature combined with its dilapidated condition, was 'an obvious problem for the club'. Eventually it was given permission by the Northcote City Council to demolish the old house 'so, in January 1960, what was Melbourne's oldest grand mansion was reduced to rubble, and Latrobe Golf Club now boasts probably the most historic car park in the country'.



Darebin Yarra Bridge



It took 24 years but on Sunday 25 March 2018 the Darebin Creek to Yarra Trail was opened. It effectively connects walkers and cyclists from as far north as Epping North in Whittlesea deep into the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

“After one of the most controversial, protracted, and hard fought campaigns in the history of Melbourne’s bike riding community, the Darebin Bridge is set to open.”

The Darebin Creek Trail had finished in a ‘dead end’ at Heidelberg Road. But after battles with a number of different state governments and Ministers for Planning; a VCAT appearance in 2009; purchasing land from the LaTrobe Golf Course; building a fence to prevent access to Alphington Grammar School; and building five bridges to negotiate floodprone parkland areas, the final 1.8km from Sparks Reserve in Ivanhoe to the Main Yarra Trail in Kew East was completed and open to cyclists and pedestrians.

