

Welcome to the Westgarth Strip

The heart of
'Lower Northcote'

Neighbourhood Postcards

Bringing you the curious & the everyday [hi]stories of local people & places



From Ruckers Hill the eye can roam from east to west and back again taking in a broad Melbourne landscape. Once, you could peer south all the way to the Bay but by 1900 your focus would be drawn to the Merri Creek bridge, and soon after to the increasing bustle on the short strip 500m closer in.

Welcome to the Westgarth Strip

is a collection of illustrated stories about Westgarth shopping strip's people, places and events.

Only eleven residents or businesses were there in 1900: on the east side there was only James Boulton, a carpenter near Candy St. The more built up west side had an estate agent, builder, produce merchant, newsagent, two greengrocers, a bootmaker, a woodyard, and a couple of residents.

What forces have been at play since to produce the lively strip we know today?



Practicalities

From outside Westgarth:


- 1. Tram route 86, Stop 27 - Westgarth St*
- 2. Train to Westgarth Station on the Hurstbridge Line*


It's otherwise best to walk or cycle


The strip itself runs from Westgarth Street to Union Street and is only a few hundred metres long.

1. Becoming Westgarth
2. Boatbuilding in Westgarth
3. The entrance to Northcote
4. Who is Westgarth?
5. Lighting up the whole of Northcote
6. The Hales Bros.
7. Westgarth Theatre
8. Indigenous fauna
9. Westgarth Station
10. Myra Bostock & Arthur Shands
11. First peoples
12. The new kid on the strip



 The numbered stories to the left match numbers on the map that follows, and on the top right corner of each postcard.

 Additional information

 Quote


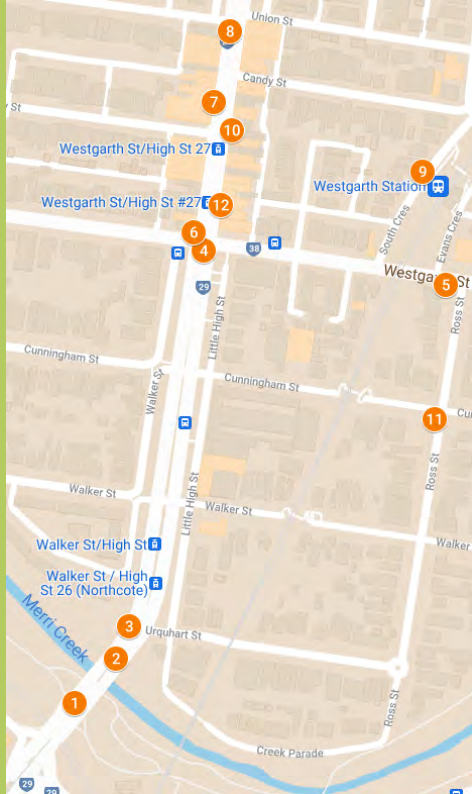
 This table of contents links to each postcard. Click on the stamps to get back here.

Image credits and references are in the final postcards.



West
Garth
VILLAGE



Most of the land rising north away from the Merri Creek was reserved in the 1840s for subdivision into small blocks. It was known as the Government Township Reserve. In his 'Recollections of Melbourne' William Westgarth remembered north of the town of Melbourne as being very quiet and "the platypus, also, was [sic] quite plentiful, especially in the Merri Creek."

In 1853 enough people had settled in the area for Surveyor-General Robert Hoddle to instruct the Reserve be sub-divided into quarter-acre allotments, and a new town was created.

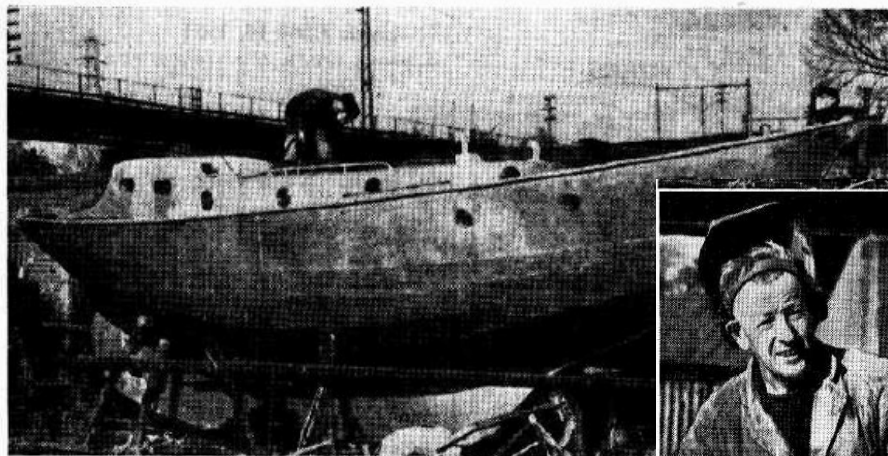
With Clifton Hill to the south and the increasingly popular Ruckers Hill high up to the north this township had some identity issues to begin with - it was called Northcote, Northcote South, Lower Northcote and Northcote Bridge for many years. Eventually it settled on Westgarth in around 1912 and the name stuck.



north of the Merri Creek and the Clifton Hill bridge

High Street was originally known as Government Road (as described in Robert Hoddle's survey) or Plenty Road, as in 'the road to the Plenty River', as it's described on this postcard.

Ketch Built Beside Suburban Railway Line



“ Train passengers, looking down from Merri Creek bridge between Clifton Hill and Westgarth stations, have watched the 41-foot long steel ketch in these pictures making progress towards completion. The builder is Mr H. Blake, of Northcote, who has been working on the vessel as a spare time task for two years.

The Age, 17 June 1954, p.5

Harold Blake, an engineer, lived at 2 Little High Street, right on the river where he was building his boat.

? If readers know what Mr Blake did with his boat and how he got it out of the creek side, please email us at the address on the back of this postcard collection

2



i A ketch is a two-masted sailboat

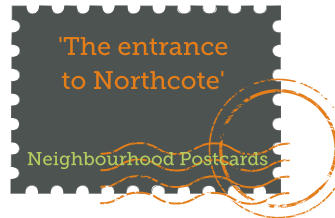


A long time resident at Northcote's 1933 jubilee celebrations remembered the timber bridge over the Merri Creek at Plenty Road (High Street), constructed in 1850, as nothing more than a 'log crossing'.

Westgarth was not sought after until the mid 1880s when the cable tram was extended down High Street from Ruckers Hill, and a bluestone viaduct was built from Clifton Hill to replace the log crossing. To mark the 'entrance to Northcote' (the title the photographer gave to his image overleaf) elm trees were planted on both sides of High Street, and 'the Rockeries' were constructed between High and Little High Street.

“ Around 1920 the cable trams used to run down Ruckers Hill. Sometime we could almost walk faster than them... we used to put pieces of lead on the tram tracks and when the tram ran over them there would be a loud bang, much to our amusement.

Margaret McDonald, interviewed in the 1980s



 the bridge from
Clifton Hill



MR. WILLIAM WESTGARTH,

THE WELL-KNOWN "OLD COLONIST," THE FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE MELBOURNE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.



Caption:

*'Mr William Westgarth. The well known "Old Colonist",
the first Chairman of the Melbourne Chamber of
Commerce'*

William Westgarth left Leith, Scotland for Australia at the age of 25 to search for business opportunities. He was pleasantly surprised when he arrived in Melbourne not long before Christmas 1840, and wrote to his mother on Christmas Eve that

“ *the grand bent of all is the making of money, and I do think some is to be made here.*

He was 'a merchant, financier, politician and historian...a spokesman for the broad radical front..., indefatigable supporter of all good causes [and] the type of conscientious citizen Victoria desperately needed in the period of gold-rush opportunism' He was also 'intent on mobilising the mercantile community as an enlightened political force [and] formed the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce ... and became its first president in July 1951.'

i *Westgarth never actually lived in Westgarth and had little to do with the area, but the street was named after him by an admiring local population.*



i *Westgarth Street / High Street intersection*

“ *Few men in Australian history can have led more useful lives*

Geoffrey Serle, Biographer

i *Very early on Westgarth Street extended to the west across the Merri Creek and along what today is Holden Street.'*

FIRE AT NORTHCOTE.

A FACTORY DESTROYED.

DAMAGE £15,000.

AGAIN NO WATER!

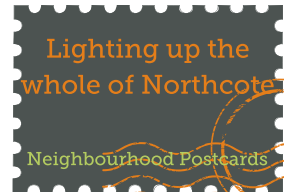
A DISGRACEFUL FAILURE.



On 16 June 1910, a fire at the Exhibition Boot Factory just to the east of the strip 'lit up the whole of Northcote' and the entire place was gutted. The factory was about 12 years old and supplied boots and shoes to shops across Melbourne and in Bendigo and Ballarat. 'About 70 or 80 employees worked at the factory, and these, as the result of the fire, will be thrown out of employment for some considerable time.' The fire began in the west of the building 'between the luncheon rooms of the male and female employees'.

“*It was a fine sight, and drew a large crowd, who arrived on foot, on cycles, in horse vehicles and motorcars and stayed until the flames died down. 15,000 people warming themselves in the destruction.*”

i *Firefighters had problems with curious crowds, but also with access to water and adequate water pressure*



i *Cnr of Ross Street and Westgarth Street, to the east of High Street and the railway intersection*

i *The fire was large enough to attract the interest of newspapers across Australia, as well as the supposed '15,000'-strong crowd.*



In 1914 the Hales family arrived from England and farmed in Rochester, northern Victoria, for a couple of years before settling in Westgarth where Sam Hales bought a grocery shop at 83 High Street. By 1925 the Hales Bros, Sam's sons, had established a grocery at 55 High Street. They were still operating in 1974, as was the grocery at 83 High Street, although long since run by grocers other than the Hales.

Len Hales, one of the brothers, also successfully entered local politics and was elected Mayor of Northcote in 1947/48, 1954/55, and 1963/64.

- i It is thought Sam Hales bought his business from the then grocer John Cain Snr, who became even more successful as a politician than Les Hales. He was Premier of Victoria in 1943 (4 days); 1945-47; 1952-1955.*
- i The Hales' latest successor, Neighbourhood Books, has just moved up the road to 79 High St., two doors from Hales' first shop.*



- i 55 High Street (cnr of Westgarth St)*
- i Moran & Cato, established 1882, was the largest chain grocery store in Australia for decades with 120 branches. A branch was opened in Westgarth by 1900 at 75 High Street, operating until cWW2.*

WESTGARTH
THEATRE

WESTGARTH THEATRE

WESTGARTH
THEATRE

CRAIG

The Westgarth Theatre was locally financed and locally built in 1921 by 26-year-old architect John Seccull who lived round the corner in Barry Street. The three directors were also locals, one of them Arthur Shands the tailor at 88 High Street (see postcard #). Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures bought the theatre in the 1960s to provide Greek-language films for the large numbers of post-war migrants that had settled in and around Northcote. As local demographics changed in the 1980s so did the theatre, which became the Valhalla Cinema offering art-house movies, and finally the Westgarth Cinema, as part of the Palace Group since the late 1990s.

Newspaper reports at its opening were effusive about its spacious, ornamental and imposing design.



89 High Street



that which will most attract the attention of the public is the lighting effects, the electric lights being within the ceiling itself, diffusing their radiance through flat and angle glasses in a novel manner



-Westgarth st-
 54-8 North-Pass Mtrs
 serv stn
 60 Nthc South P.O.
 62 Jackson W & M
 chmsts
 64 Merlo S dictsn
 66 Jonas H.J plmbr
 68 Spotless Ld
 70 McKenzie GW
 Rfrgrtn Co
 engnrs rfrgrtn
 72 Liberatos D btchr
 74 Nancarrow's Self
 Serv Strs P/L grcrs
 76 Sulmona Radio &
 TV Serv tlvsn
 78-80 Pettolino & Ryan
 est agnts
 82 Goyen Control Sales
 P/L valve mkrs
 84-6 Westgarth Hrdwre
 hrdwre rti
 88 Nthc Dry Clnrs
 90 Efremogou J snack
 bar
 92 Salon Vert gift shop
 94 Christines Bty Sin
 96 Laundrette
 98 Fraccara A &
 Son btchrs
 100 Apostolou T
 est agnt
 102 Gaston BA bicycles
 102a-4 Greek Club
 -Candy st-
 106-8 State Savings Bank
 of Victoria
 106-8 Hodge A
 110 P.V. Artgraphic
 Press lithogrphs
 112 Robintex clthng
 mnfrs
 116 Northcote Glass &
 Mirrors glass mnfrs
 118-22 Indent Buyers
 P/L indentors
 120-2 Eva Styles P/L
 kntd gds
 -Union st-

1974

More than half of
 the Westgarth
 shopping strip
 community was
 Greek in the
 1970s and a
 Greek Club was
 established on
 the corner of
 Candy Street.

-Westgarth st-
 55 Hales Bros grcrs
 55 Brown Mrs P
 57 Nthc Meat Spply
 59 Bettiol E frtr
 61 G.M.L.S. chldrns
 wr-rtl
 63 T.A.B. of Vic
 65-7 Anagnostopoulos J
 confr
 69-71 Lakakis P tlr
 73 Walker JR wtchmkr
 73 Hanrahan Mrs K
 75 Caleo SM chmst
 77 Hagistiliadjis J hrdrsr
 79 Christopoulos J
 confr
 81 Magounakis T cakes
 rtl
 83 Voulgaridis N frtr
 85 Kent Mrs BG drpr
 85 Kent J
 -Barry st-
 87-93 Westgarth Picture
 Theatre
 93 Sardo S hrdrsr
 95 Pliatsiari K frtr
 97 Vadaia Bros P/L
 grcrs
 99 Westgarth Fish Shop
 101 Chef Croquettes
 (factory)
 103 Don's Pet Shoppe
 103 Warren MR
 103 Coluccio D grdn spls
 105 Greek Club
 107 Vinings Nws Agncy
 109 Grosdoulis S cakes
 rtl
 111 Vardavakis J & M
 confrs
 113 Sanders J bt rpr
 113 Zoccoli E
 115a Madden & Candy
 solrs



RUCKER'S HILL

LOOKOUT

200M



Indigenous fauna is represented across Westgarth shopping strip. Dragon fly wings top a pole at the corner of Union Street, and sculptures at street level are in the form of body or skeletal parts of indigenous animals. They also function as bicycle racks. Inlaid into the footpath are mosaics of stainless steel, glass and ceramic.

These were created in the Westgarth precinct public art program in 1998 by Helen Bodycomb, Chris Rak & Enver Camdal.

Some of the many animals and birds that thrived around and north of the Merri Creek include:

Echidna

Platypus

Groiling Grass Frog

Bougainville's Skink

Southern Boobook

Fat-tailed Dunnart

Rufous Whistler

Imperial Hairstreak Butterfly

Golden Sun Moth

Red chested Button Quail



From Westgarth Street to Union Street

These artworks are depicted throughout the postcards





Westgarth station was built in 1912 and replaced the old Northcote South station that was on the opposite side of Westgarth St. In its first few years newspapers reported many difficulties and bitter complaints by local residents and shopkeepers:

“ *great inconvenience had been caused to railway passengers at the Westgarth station, owing to the absence of a crossing. Some of them in the morning, including ladies, had climbed the fence and walked along the railway reserve, to save a walk a quarter of a mile. The railway men had covered the place with barbed wire.*

The footbridge was constructed in 1913

“ *The station was an island in a sea of mud*



West of High St, via Candy St., and the easiest way to get to the shopping strip if you're not walking or on the 86 tram.







**QUALITY
TAILORING
AT A GLANCE**

One glance at the young men here pictured and the style-story of our tailoring is told.

Note the excellence of fashioning and finish—the superiority of the fitting—and the distinct distinction.

The high-class workmanship that we obtain here is responsible for these features.

You can have a suit tailored in your measure just like this one— a suit that will be readily appreciated by your friends.

Come and inspect the New Spring and Summer Suitings—their stylish patterns—and their smart dressy effects. An inspection costs you nothing, places no obligation upon you. Come today.

ARTHUR SHANDS
Fashion Tailor
88 High St., Northcote

Arthur Shands provided tailoring services to the Westgarth community from c1910 to c1950

“ I worked for Arthur Shands the tailor in Westgarth, and to save our money we used to walk to Separation Street to save a penny on the tram... and often, if we were extra early, we would walk right down from Darebin Road to Westgarth to go to work.

Myra Bostock



88 High Street




Myra Bostock was interviewed in the 1980s. She spoke of growing up in Darebin Road the youngest of 7 children and doing her tailors apprenticeship with Shands in Westgarth in the 1910s



The first people to live here are the Woi-wurrung [language group] people, traditional owners of country from the Macedon Ranges, across Hume, Whittlesea, Nillumbik and Manningham, to the Yarra Ranges. The Wurundjeri willam are one of the Woi-wurrung clans and their country goes from the Maribyrnong to the Darebin River, including Merri Creek [translates as 'stony']. When Europeans arrived in the 1830s their leader was Billibellary. Despite the incalculable damage caused to first people's culture and society since then, there have been many strong and vibrant leaders in the Aboriginal community, some of them honoured around Westgarth.

Lady Gladys Nicholls (overleaf) and her husband Sir Doug Nicholls did tremendous work in the 1950s and '60s when there was no government support because they weren't citizens of Australia (until the referendum of 1967). Her portrait is on the wall of the hostel they opened in 1958 in Westgarth for Aboriginal girls from the country who needed a home while looking for work.



 *Everywhere*



BAKETICO

BAKERI & LARDER



PANDY




Made from plants, with love

'Pivot' and 'the new normal' will forever be terms synonymous with the year 2020. The Covid19 pandemic caused some shops in Westgarth to close, others to adapt, and the way locals engage with the strip has changed in some respects - mask wearing, sometimes keeping distances, other times locked out, use of QR codes, and more often than before, a reliance on take away. In Westgarth as always, new businesses find new ways to fit with these changes.

Having been a chemist with just three owners and operators since 1905 #62 was taken over by Baketico for their Wonder Pies take away product, with an eye on utilising the back of the shop for a mentoring project to assist others deal with the disruptions experienced by the hospitality industry.

Pandy Bakeshop is their mentee and new kid on the strip - 'looking for new beginnings with plant based cooking' . It sits well with the 21st century Westgarth.



 62 High Street

This shop was a pharmacy for over 100 years:
Louise Ziebell 1905-1915
Henry Ackery 1915 - c1960
William & Margaret Jackson c1960 to c2019





Be Free



Postcard 1 - Becoming Westgarth

- Image - Plan of the township of Northcote on the Merri Merri, 1871, Vale Collection, SLV
- Andrew Lemon, The Northcote side of the river, p.17; 39
- William Westgarth, Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne & Victoria, 1888, p.13

Postcard 2 - Boatbuilding in Westgarth

- The Age, 17 June 1954, p.5

Postcard 3 - The entrance to Northcote

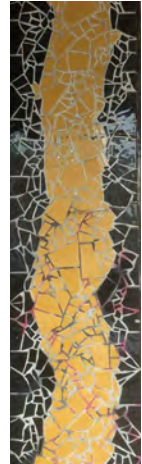
- Image - 'The entrance to Northcote', Rose Stereograph Co., SLV
- Northcote Jubilee Celebrations 1883-1933' p.3
- Darebin Heritage

Postcard 4 - Who is Westgarth?

- Image - Melbourne Punch, 18 October 1888, p.7
- Carmine Sellitto, 'The origins of Streets in the the Westgarth area of Northcote', undated
- Geoffrey Serle, 'Westgarth, William (1815–1889)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/westgarth-william-4830/text8057>, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 31 July 2021.

Postcard 5 - 'Lighting up the whole of Northcote'

- A boot store on fire', The Bendigo Independent, 17 June 1910, p.6



Postcard 6 - The Hales brothers

- Image: Beth Macdonald, <https://australianfoodtimeline.com.au/greengrocers/>
- Robert Murray and Kate White, 'Cain, John (1882–1957)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cain-john-9661/text17045>, published first in hardcopy 1993, accessed online 2 August 2021.

Postcard 7 - The Westgarth Theatre

- Darebin Heritage
- Wikipedia - 'Westgarth, Victoria'
- 'Westgarth Theatre', Table Talk, 3 November 1921, p.41

Postcard 8 - Indigenous fauna

- Merri Creek Management Committee website
- Victorian Collections
- <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/60c1acc90f3bea487ac7cdc9>
Accessed 2 August 2021

Postcard 9 - Westgarth Station

Postcard 10 - Myra Bostock & Arthur Shands

- Image - Public Domain Pictures
- Darebin Heritage
- Preston Leader, 26 October 1918, p.3

Postcard 11 - First peoples

- Portrait is by portrait and mural artist Adnate in 2020
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation



OUR PEOPLE
 STOP TAKING
 OUR SITUATION
 10:30 AM PARLIAMEN
 SPRING ST, MELBOURNE
 PLEASE COME WITH FACE MASKS, HAND SANITISER
 AND PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

DEEP PEACE

THE PERFECT SELF-CARE PACKAGE

Large ITA rooms available - Private practice Northcote

A really tranquil, on the corner of a busy street yet small size of office, 50sqm 60sqm, 100sqm

I am a thoughtful and social worker. I strive to create a safe, calm and beautiful environment for clients, and would love people of the same mind set to be fully.

The practice is a 2 story building, with a beautiful view on road front. Access to public transport - across on "Natural Therapy" office

- Water view 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

Exam room 100sqm 120sqm 140sqm 160sqm 180sqm 200sqm 220sqm 240sqm 260sqm 280sqm 300sqm 320sqm 340sqm 360sqm 380sqm 400sqm 420sqm 440sqm 460sqm 480sqm 500sqm 520sqm 540sqm 560sqm 580sqm 600sqm 620sqm 640sqm 660sqm 680sqm 700sqm 720sqm 740sqm 760sqm 780sqm 800sqm 820sqm 840sqm 860sqm 880sqm 900sqm 920sqm 940sqm 960sqm 980sqm 1000sqm

LIFE DRAWING WITH A DIFFERENCE

Life Drawing Medicines to show offering
 Create life drawing classes for those who
 like to draw something more than a usual
 figure poses.

Themes including: Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Spirit, Chakra, and more

All 100 seats per session

Very well thought out and structured - friendly like

Complementary refreshments

Adult sessions \$20 (children \$10)

100% materials on use date for a \$10 donation

ETHNO SOUND HEALING JOURNEY

MEDICINE FOR MIND-BODY-SOUL

KAMILINDO WILL TAKE YOU ON A GROUNDING AND RELAXING JOURNEY INTO YOUR INNER SELF WITH THE HEALING FREQUENCIES OF INSTRUMENTS FROM INDIA, TIBET AND SOUTH AMERICA.

EVERY THURSDAY 7.30PM
 K ROAD RUGS AND TOUR
 ST, NORTHCOTE, MELB
 KAMILINDO 0404727025



Neighbourhood Postcards probe the memories of our local streets for [hi]stories of the people whose lives, play, work and pre-occupations have shaped our communities today.

www.historyatwork.com.au

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