Fishermans Bend Historic Account

Prepared for Places Victoria

13 June 2013
Summary

Places Victoria has engaged Biosis Pty Ltd to undertake a limited heritage assessment and historical account for the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area (FBURA).

The heritage assessment and historical account will form part of the strategic planning work that Places Victoria is coordinating for Fishermans Bend. The Fishermans Bend project involves a planned progressive rezoning and redevelopment of a very large already developed urban area, rather than a greenfields or brownfields site or infill.

The Urban Renewal Area straddles the former municipalities of Port Melbourne and South Melbourne, extending from the foot of Emerald Hill to Todd road and between Williamstown road and the West Gate Freeway. It includes some parts of Port Melbourne which are known as Fishermen’s Bend, but other distinct regions such as Montague and the old South bank industrial area.

The existing mix of nineteenth and early twentieth century low scale residential, commercial and industrial development includes some early historic sites related to the growth of Melbourne’s port, riverside industries and earliest workers suburbs. Layered over this is the late twentieth century remodelling of old heavy industry into service and communication, with newer warehousing facilities.

In addition to the thematic history and historical account, a brief tabulated and illustrated list of historic places has been compiled, which includes places both currently identified on heritage registers and overlays, as well as other places considered to have heritage potential, or which help to understand the character and historic themes of the study area.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 6
Summary Chronology .................................................. 6
The landscape ............................................................. 8
First residents ............................................................. 9
Discovery and survey .................................................. 11
Early settlement ......................................................... 12
Formation of towns and local government ....................... 13
Wasteland, wetland and wildlife .................................... 15
Port development ....................................................... 17
Roads and rail ........................................................... 24
noxious trades and industry .......................................... 28
Humphies and slums .................................................. 37
Wartime and post war industry development .................... 42
Post war and transformation ......................................... 48

## Figures

Figure 1: Map Shewing the site of Melbourne, Russell 1837 8168-P1-312-SYDNEY-M20 ........................................ 12
Figure 2: Melbourne and its suburbs compiled by James Kearney, draughtsman; engraved by David Tulloch and James D. Brown, Melbourne, Andrew Clarke, Surveyor General, 1855 .............................................................. 15
Figure 3: "Plan of the City of Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay: shewing the proposed ship canal and docks Melbourne: Collins & Co., [1853?]." http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/117444 18
Figure 4: Plan for proposed Ship Canal, 1860 John Millar ................................................................. 19
Figure 5: Plan of ship canal & site for docks [cartographic material] / submitted by Robert Adams Melbourne: Photo-lithographed by J.W. Osborne, at the Dept. of Lands and Survey 1860 .......................................................... 20
Figure 6: Proposed ship canal and docks, port of Melbourne Victoria. Dept. of Lands and Survey Melbourne: Photo-lithographed at the Dept. of Lands and Survey by J. Noone 1875 ..................... 20
Figure 7: Coode Plan for Melbourne's Docks State Library Victoria, note "Fishermans Bend" in top left. 21
Figure 8: View across Australia Wharf to the south bank, note huts (Lewis 1994:21 cited in Duncan) 22
Figure 9: Yarra River and Port of Melbourne showing widening operations downstream of swinging basin. Between 1930 and 1948 State Library of Victoria H91.160/524 http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/airsyglass/0/0/0/em/a1000525.jpg 23
Figure 10: Cox 1864 Plan showing swamps in section of Fishermans Bend and Sandridge 23
Figure 11: 'Sandridge Road as it will be', 1860 by R. Shepherd ................................................................. 24
Figure 12: Williamstown Ferry (Photo Frank & Wendy Rouse) ................................................................. 28
Figure 13: Kitchen & sons Factory, from a company brochure ................................................................. 29
Figure 14: 1894 MMBW Plan and current image of Kitchen & sons showing changed road pattern. 30
Figure 15: View to east from near Port Melbourne Football Ground showing Kitchen & Sons and warehousing/timber yards beyond ................................................. 30
Figure 16: MMBW Plan 18 showing Stone Works - distortion from GIS registration 32
Figure 17: Dunlop factory from the air looking east along Normanby Road .................................................. 32
Figure 18: Beginnings of Johns & Waygood works (State Library Vic) .......................................................... 33
Figure 19: Melbourne Theatre Co Store Railway Place and Douglas Street since 1977 ................................. 34
Figure 20: Sands & McDougall Port Melbourne Map 1887 – note spelling of Fishermans Bend and area of loose sand .......................................................... 35
Figure 21: MMBW 400ft -1 in. c1897, Plan 18. ......................................................................................... 35
Figure 22: Plan of Port Melbourne Parish of South Melbourne1914 ............................................................. 36
Figure 23: "Portuguese man living at Fisherman's Bend, Sandridge," "Police news", 14 April 1877 .............. 37
Figure 24: Fisherman's Bend Albert Tucker ................................................................................................. 38
Figure 25: The Sandridge train-Keeping the line clear: A scene in North Sandridge, Illustrated Australian news. 25, 9, 1988 http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/208269 39
Figure 26: Floods Along City Road near Montague, The Argus, Thursday 6 March 1919, page 8 40
Figure 27: Lancaster Bomber demonstrated at Fishermans Bend Airfield .................................................. 43
Figure 28: 1945 Aerial Photo Fishermans Bend (Melbourne University Library) ......................................... 43
Figure 29: Aircraft factories Fishermans Bend, with runways beyond ......................................................... 44
Figure 29: Plan of race tracks at Fishermans Bend Runways ........................................................................ 44
Figure 31: Plan of race tracks at Fishermans Bend Runways ........................................................................ 44
Figure 32: GMH looking over the empty expanse of Fishermans Bend c 1940. State Library Victoria H91.160/259 45
Figure 33: Rootes Factory looking west, Williamstown Road on the left http://www.sunbeam.org.au/?page_id=1119 46
Figure 34: Rootes factory on the corner of Salmon Street and Williamstown Road .................................. 46
Figure 35: One of the surviving Rootes buildings on Salmon St ................................................................. 47
Figure 36: Linemer's Training School Fishermen's Bend in 1945 ................................................................. 47
Figure 37: McPhersons South Melbourne Show Room, Wolfgang Sievers c 1960 ............................................ 48
Figure 38: Plan of Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel 1969 ........................................................................ 49
Figure 39: Ampol road Map Melbourne 1956 ............................................................................................... 50
Figure 40: Sands & McDougall Map 1956 ..................................................................................................... 51
Figure 41: Mosaic of Melway 1966 Street directory showing mostly developed land, the Migrant hostel and large industrial sites .................................................. 51
Introduction

History and heritage conservation have been able to encompass varied narratives moving beyond the circles of privilege associated with political, social and economic establishments. The stories of the everyday, underclasses and commonplace events, often missing from traditional historical narratives, have taken their place with those of “the big men of the past”.

At Fishermans Bend, the history of working people, fringe dwellers, industrial entrepreneurs, and the original Aboriginal inhabitants, is intricately woven with the landscape, the floods, swamps, dunes, river banks, waste ground, and the social, economic, political and cultural development of Melbourne and Victoria.

Here is a history of the fringes, where the wastelands and industrial landscapes on the edge of Melbourne, gave a living to a distinctive community and formed the character of a neighbourhood.

Summary Chronology

40,000 years ago - Aborigines arrive in Australia, rapidly spread around the coast and across the continent. Oldest evidence of occupation near Melbourne at Dry Creek near Keilor.

10,000-5,000 years ago - Rising sea levels flood Port Phillip Bay. Yarra Delta formed, Aboriginal economic patterns stabilised around lower Yarra and Sandridge Flats.

1700s - Yalukit willam, one of the five clans of the Bun wurrung (known as the coastal tribe) and members of the Kulin Nation occupy bay shore camping on freshwater swamps, near Emerald Hill.

1802 (November) - Charles Grimes and John Fleming survey the Port Phillip coastline and row up the Yarra (Freshwater River) and Maribyrnong (Saltwater River) rivers.

1803 - William Buckley escapes from Sullivan’s Bay (Sorrento) penal settlement, passes through Lower Yarra, and lives with Wathaurung Aborigines near Geelong for 30 years.

1824 (15 and 20 December) – Hume & Hovell pass about 20km west of the Yarra mouth on their voyage of exploration to Westernport, miscalculating and reaching Corio Bay.

1825 (30 August) – George Evans lands on Yarra bank near Custom’s House site on behalf of John Pascoe Fawkner, and plants crops.

1826 (6 June) – Batman crosses lower Yarra and later records: “This will be the place for a village”.

1835 – John Batman and Port Phillip Association Travel around western shore of port Phillip Bay to claim the Port Phillip area.

1836 (February) – Batman Returns and Fawkner moves to south side of Yarra - the first resident of white South Melbourne.

1836 – Surveyor William Darke prepares maps of the shoreline of Port Philip Bay names the Port Melbourne area “Sandridge”.

1839 – Wilbraham Liardet settles on Sandridge Beach and establishes jetty, hotel and mail service - location referred to as Liardet’s Beach.

1840s – Beach now referred to as Sandridge and becomes main arrival point for ships, with jetty and track along what became Sandridge Road then City Road/Bay Street.

1850-54 – Crown Land Surveys and sales at Sandridge and Emerald Hill.

1850s - Sandridge flourishes through the Victorian gold rush and becomes a thriving transport hub Bay fisherman erect huts along coastline.

1854 - Hobsons Bay railway line was opened, connecting pier at Sandridge to Flinders Street Melbourne across first Sandridge rail bridge takes.

1855 (26 May) – Emerald Hill declared a municipality.

1856 - Kitchen & Sons soap and candle works commences.

1860 – First of several proposals for a direct shipping channel between the bay and Melbourne.

1860 – Sandridge severed and made an independent borough.

1861 – South Melbourne abattoir commenced.

1863 – Emerald Hill proclaimed a borough.

1870 – Felton Grimwade commences manufacture at their chemical works.

1870s – Montague hosing area established and quickly filled with workers cottages.

1872 (28 March) – Williamstown Steam Ferry commenced and ‘Short Road’ in use.

1872 – Emerald Hill proclaimed a town.

1872 (28 March) – Williamstown ‘Short Road’ proclaimed a main road.

1877 – Creation of the North Port Oval.

1879 – Serious flooding Montague, Fishermans Bend and South Melbourne.

1883 – Emerald Hill proclaimed a city - name changed to South Melbourne.


1884 – Sandridge changes name to Port Melbourne.

1886 – Frederick Laycock mills erected in Normanby Road.

1886 – Coode Canal constructed forming Coode Island and repositioning “Fishermans Bend”.

1892 – Victoria Dock (now Victoria Harbour) was completed.

1893 – Port Melbourne in proclaimed a town.

1899 – South Melbourne abattoir rebuilt.

1900s – Sandridge, Fishermans Bend and Coode Island popular field naturalist destinations and wildlife refuges.

1901 – Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company factory complex on Normandy Road.

1905-11 – Enamelled steel street signs installed.

1908 – Union Can Company commenced in Ferrars St.

1909 – Johns and Waygood established their head offices and works on City road and Cecil Street.

1910s – Extensive street tree planting undertaken buy councils (oriental plane, poplar, elm, oak, pine, sugar gum, currajong and pittosporum).
The nature of the landscape in the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area has had an important characteristic landscape was one of sand ridges and swamps.

1913 – Station Pier replaces former Railway Pier.
1913 – Dunlop became South Melbourne’s largest employer employing both men and women.
1919 – Port Melbourne in proclaimed a city.
1920s – Yarra widened and south wharves reconstructed.
1922 – New Princess Pier completed.
1925 – SEC electricity supply provided.
1927 – Malcolm Moore Pty. Ltd. on Williamstown Road.
1927 – Kellow-Faulkner had its showrooms on City Road.
1929 – Sandridge lagoon filled.
1930s – Early industries prospered in the area including soap production, chemical works, rubber factory, blanket mills.
1930s-50s – Montague Slums cleared and residents rehoused – many to Garden City.
1936 – Major companies including GM Holden, BHP and Broken Hill Associated Smelter commenced operations in Fishermans Bend.
1937 – The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation opened a factory At Fishermans Bend with test facilities and the first runway in Melbourne (built the Wirraway warplane).
1939 – Garden City public housing commenced to provide low-cost housing for the ‘working class’.
1946 – Rootes Group start assembly plant for Hillman and later Chrysler.
1949 – Australian Motor Industries erect large auto assembly works.
1954 – Malcolm Moore Pty. Ltd. on Williamstown Road.
1960s – Webb Dock constructed for containerized terminal and Tasmania Ferry.
1968 – Westgate Bridge construction commenced.
1974 – Westgate bridge collapse.
1975 – South Melbourne abattoir closed.
1977 – Port Melbourne and St Kilda lines converted to light rail.
1990s – Fishermans Bend evolved into a light manufacturing and industrial precinct.
1994 – Port Melbourne and South Melbourne become part of City of Port Phillip.
2012 – Victorian Government rezones 248 hectares to Capital City Zone to kick-start the Fishermans Bend renewal and declared it a project of State Significance.

The landscape

The nature of the landscape in the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area has had an important affect on how the area has developed and its history. Lying to the west of the slopes of Emerald Hill, a prominence of the Older Volcanics which stands proud of surrounding swamps and flats, the characteristic landscape was one of sand ridges and swamps.

The Sandridge Road (City Road) ran along the higher ground at the foot of the hill, and then along the dry ridge between the Port Melbourne Lagoon and swamps and sand ridges to the west.

Further downstream was a large tidal marsh on the south side of the Yarra, commencing opposite the gasworks. To the east were a series of sand ridges and intervening swamps, formed by the progressive shift as the Yarra meandered across its estuary, and the accumulation of sand as former beach ridges, left behind as the shoreline receded. At the west, beyond Todd Road, was another marsh.

The lower reaches of the Yarra, from the junction of the Maribyrnong River to the mouth was known in the past as Hobson’s River. This section of the river has been the location of some of Melbourne’s largest early industries, but it was also one of the richest habitats for wetland flora and fauna, and consequently an important food resource for Aborigines.

The basement rocks around Melbourne are folded and faulted Ordovician and Silurian marine sediments. They are overlaid by Tertiary sands and gravels and older volcanics and west and north, the lava flows of the newer volcanics, only a million years old. The Pliocene ‘Red Bluff Sands’ lie over the older volcanics and outcrop north of the Yarra estuary at Kensington and North Melbourne. Batman’s Hill near Spencer St. appears to be the southern edge of this exposure.¹

Slumping of the Port Phillip basin resulted in the formation of the bay and drowning of the river mouth which was subsequently filled by estuarine and fluvial sedimentation including the Coode Island Silt. These recent and Pleistocene sediments now form the estuaries and flood plains of the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers and the lower reaches of Moorooduc Ponds Creek. The flats extend between Melbourne and Footscray, and south from the basalt ridge of Kensington to the Bay including Fishermans Bend and most of Sandridge/Port Melbourne. Soils on these floodplains included silt deposited by floodwaters and swamp deposits of fine sand and silty clay. The Coode Island silt and Fishermans Bend Silt goes down as much as 36 metres, creating special problems for foundations of large buildings, and demanding heavy piling. Raised beach ridges from wind-blown and wave-deposited sand were formed south of the Yarra River over much of Port Melbourne forming the geological unit known as the Fishermans Bend Sand. ²

First residents

The first inhabitants of the Sandridge Flats and Yarra River estuary would have moved into the area around 5-10,000 years ago only when the water level in Port Phillip Bay became stable, and the regular floods had deposited sufficient sediment to form dry land. What is now Port Phillip Bay was once a grassy plain, transformed in a dramatic flood when the sea breached the Point Nepean barrier. Fishermans Bend would then have become an important resource-rich environment for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal occupation of the Yarra Delta is presumed to have been relatively intensive, and an important part of their overall natural and cultural resources. This is based on speculation and extrapolation rather than solid archaeological, ethnographic or historical evidence.

¹ Geological Survey of Victoria, Melbourne Sheet SJ 55-1
² N.J. Rosenreng, Sites of Geological and Geomorphological Significance in the Western Region of Melbourne, Conservation Forests and Lands, Victoria, 1986
However, William Thomas, Assistant Aboriginal Protector, noted in 1840 that: ‘
By what I can learn, long ere the settlement was formed the spot where Melbourne now stands and the
flats on which we are now camped is the south bank of the Yarra was the regular rendezvous for the
tribes known as Wurrung, Bunurong, Baraburra, Nilgungya, Gouldburns twice a year or as often
as circumstances and emergencies required to settle their grievances, revenge deaths….’

Similarly, when John Pascoe Fawkner came across a group of Aborigines near Batman’s Swamp he
noted: ‘…the Biackat at first alarmed, the women in particular. When I drove towards them they threw themselves
into strange but pleasing positions and bellowed loudly.’

Aboriginal people in the Central Victoria had a social, political, economic and cultural structure and
organisation based on familial links and totemic associations or Moieties held together in a loose
coalition of five tribes (or language groups) which formed the Kulin Nation. Kulin was their word for
human, and the tribes were distinguished by their dialect or ‘wurrung’ meaning tongue (Taung
wurrung, Wadda wurrung, Woi wurrung and Bun wurrung) formed a loose coalition known as the Kulin Nation. The language groups were divided into a series of clans probably
comprising extended families and social groups. The Yolukit william clan of the Bun wurrung (or Bunurong as it is often referred to) occupied land which encompassed the coastal areas extending
eastward from the Werribee River, through Williamstown and Sandridge to St. Kilda and therefore
also incorporating Fishermen’s Bend, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne.

Robinson first listed them in his 1840 journal. Later, in 1900, Howitt and Fison refer to a difference
between Aboriginal groups at St. Kilda and Sandridge. According to Howitt and Fison, the group at
Sandridge had Bunji as their moiety, and the St Kilda group had waa as their moiety.

The preferred camping places of the Woi wurrung and Bun wurrung clans were along the south bank
of the Yarra River, opposite the settlement of Melbourne and Government Paddocks (between
Princess Bridge and Punt Road). A Government reserve run by George Langhorne was established in
1837 on an 895-acre site, south of the Yarra River to the east of Anderson Street near the present
Botanic Gardens. The presence of a rock bar near Market Street on the Yarra had held back the tidal
inflow and so maintained fresh water above the falls providing the most reliable drinking water in
the area.

South Melbourne was first known as Emerald Hill, after the hill where the Town Hall stands, a green
island surrounded by swamps. This was a traditional social and ceremonial meeting place for a
number of Aboriginal tribes. A great gathering had been witnessed there in 1840 by a number of
the early European settlers. Corroborees were also recorded and painted by Wilbraham Liardet at
Emerald Hill. In 1840 Richard Howitt described fifty men dancing, assisted by the musical
accompaniment of women in a performance to ‘hault the soul for years afterwards’.  

Aboriginal Melbourne: the Lost Land of the Kulin People

3 Thomas in Presland, G. 1985 Aboriginal Melbourne: the Lost Land of the Kulin People. McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 35
5 Clark I. Aboriginal Languages and Clans 1990: 365
6 Clark I. Aboriginal Languages and Clans 368
7 Ian D. Clark, & Toby Heydon, 1984, A Bend In the Yarra: A History of The Merri Creek Protectorate Station pp.
25-7
8 Howitt, 1904, The Native Tribes of South Australia


10

Aboriginal languages and clans

Aboriginal Melbourne: the Lost Land of the Kulin People

A Bend In The Yarra: pp. 34-5, 40, 49
9 Clark & Heydon 1988, A Bend In The Yarra: pp. 34-5, 40, 49
10 Presland, Land of the Kulin 1985.
12 Flinders, First Voyage, Book 4, Part 1, 249

The accounts of the area either did not inspire confidence among the Sydney adventurers, or else the
time was not ripe for further expansion of settlement as nothing more was heard from Port Phillip
for two decades, until Hume and Hovell passed west of the Bay, initially believing they had reached
Westernport. Another decade was to pass before an attempt at permanent settlement was made.
The name "Sandridge" was given by Surveyor William Darke when he prepared maps of the shoreline
of Port Phillip Bay in 1836, although Edward Curr recorded the area along the beach where surveyors
had laid out allotments with stringlines, as "The Beach".14

When the Government survey of Melbourne was carried out under Hoddle’s supervision the streets
were laid out around the existing huts to the east of Batman’s farm on the north side of the Yarra
river to take advantage of the high ground and avoid the swamps altogether. This geographic
influence continued to determine all future land use in the area. As land around Melbourne was
surveyed and sold, the higher and more fertile areas were given preference and the swamps and
riverbanks were reserved for future public purposes.

14 Curr, E.M., *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria Then called the Port Phillip District* (from 1841-1851), MUP,
pp.9-10.

Early settlement

The Port Phillip Association, with John Batman as their agent, undertook a reconnaissance expedition
in May-June 1835, followed by a permanent camp from late June on the Yarra and Batman laid claim
to Aboriginal lands north and west of the Yarra on behalf of the Association, erecting his own house
in May-June 1835, followed by a permanent camp from late June on the Yarra and Batman laid claim
to Aboriginal lands north and west of the Yarra on behalf of the Association, erecting his own house

John Pascoe Faulkner arrived a little after Batman’s men in August 1835, but made a more
substantial landfall on the north bank of the Yarra. Batman moved to this site in November 1835.
However, in November Faulkner was persuaded to move to the opposite bank in deference to
Batman’s prior claim, becoming the first settler of South Melbourne. This pattern of settlement,
focussing on the higher ground north of the river and upstream along the river was to continue for
many years.

Melbourne’s first white settlement in the vicinity of Batman’s Hill, can be located today only from
documents and no physical evidence of the first period of settlement is likely to be found because of
the extensive excavations and reclamation associated with river improvements, railway construction
and city buildings. However, the topographic features which identified the site such as the high
ground adjacent to the river and swamp can be identified by the informed observer. Russell’s 1837
map of Melbourne shows three long narrow buildings at the top of a ridge which led down to the
river with paddock a garden and cultivated ground.15

Wilbraham Liardet, was the first white person to establish themselves permanently at the Sandridge
beach, arriving in 1839 and setting up a hotel, jetty, and mail service. Previously the area had been
occupied only by two fishermen, who lived in a hogshead cask.16 The area was initially known as
Liardet’s Beach, before the name changes to Sandridge, and then Port Melbourne.17

Formation of towns and local government

Melbourne’s initial settlement occurred at a slow pace – a few dozen huts and some more substantial
buildings on the hill opposite the falls, some more huts along the beach at Sandridge – but the bulk
of the settlers fanned out to the pastoral hinterlands to raise sheep and cattle. However, this
dramatically changed with the discovery of gold in 1851 at Ballarat and Bendigo. Thousands came to
Port Phillip, disembarking on the beach at Sandridge and walking across the flats to Melbourne. In
1852 94,664 people arrived in the colony by sea, and within months of the announcement of the
discovery of gold, a tent city had sprung up on the south side of the Yarra, between Emerald Hill and
St Kilda Road known as ‘Canva Town’ where the area was laid out in streets with shops, residences
and hotels, all under canvas.

Creation of the Melbourne Corporation in 1842 initially provided local representation and services
throughout the colony, but as suburbs grew, and Victoria became a separate colony of from New
South Wales, suspicion of the power of Melbourne councillors among the colonial government, saw
the subsequent fragmentation of local democracy in many small councils.

The prominent rise of Emerald Hill attracted initial settlement because of its views and the land being
permanently dry when much of the surrounding area was swamp or flood prone.18 Edmund Finn,
who wrote under the name “Garryowen”, is credited with naming Emerald Hill, when he described
the area as an: “…eminence … green as the freshest shamrock … encircled by shining lagoons, the

16 Liardet, Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn (1799-1878), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of
Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/liardet-wilbraham-frederick-
17 The Liardets: a Famous Family’, the Evening Post, Wellington, New Zealand, 1 July, 1933.
sparking sea, and growths of scrub and ti-tree in October 1845 in an advertisement for a temperance society picnic.\textsuperscript{19}

Surveys in advance of Crown land sales were conducted in 1850 at Sandridge and in Emerald Hill in 1852 to 1854 at the time when Robert Hoddle, and then Andrew Clarke headed the survey office. The layout of the Emerald Hill survey was based on a grid bounded by Eastern Road, Park Street, Montague Street and the diagonal Sandridge Road (City Road). The South Melbourne grid was aligned with the original orientation of the CBD grid, with the line of Spencer Street continuing down as Clarendon Street. In 1854 the grid was extended to include the Three Chain Road (Albert Road) and Nelson Road.\textsuperscript{20}

The diagonal track to the beach along what became Sandridge Road, and renamed City Road and Bay Street, pre-existed the grid survey, and so was retained. Like Williamstown Road which came a little later, it was also the shortest distance between two important points. The Sandridge Survey was also on a grid, but aligned parallel with the beachfront, to avoid awkward triangular lots.

However, development west of the Sandridge road was constrained by swamps and from 1854, the railway. A Crown Lands Department plan of 1855 confirmed the reservation of the land west of the railway and so prohibited development. At the same time a wide landscaped reserve was provided along the railway itself. A much later plan included a "permanent reserve for stormwater channel and other public purposes",\textsuperscript{21} on the alignment of Millers 1860 proposed ship canal. The first land sales were held in at 1850 Sandridge and in 1852 at Emerald Hill. In 1854, the Canvas Town was dispersed and many of the inhabitants moved up to the Hill. Also on 14 December 1854, a residents' meeting was called to lobby for independence from Melbourne. On 26 May 1855 Emerald Hill became the first suburb outside of Geelong, to be declared a municipal district, taking the motto 'Ordine Primum', 'first in the field'. When the council met for the first time the July 4, James Service, later to be Premier of Victoria, elected chairman.

\textsuperscript{20} Streets of South Melbourne, http://streetsofsouthmelbourne.wordpress.com/introduction/
\textsuperscript{21} Port Melbourne, Parish of South Melbourne, County of Bourke, Department of Lands & Survey, Melbourne, T S Button, 13.2.1914

Wasteland, wetland and wildlife

The isolation and limited use of the Fishermans Bend and the larger Yarra estuary resulted in preservation of natural values long after much of Melbourne was urbanised. Coode Island, created by the excavation of the Coode Canal in 1886, was effectively isolated from major human impact from the 1880s to 1950s. As such it became a sanctuary for wildlife. Fishermans Bend enjoyed a similar status, but protected by reputation more than physical barriers.

The original vegetation as described on early survey plans was dominated by Tea-tree scrub, salt marsh, swamp and sandy waste with a small stand of trees, possibly swamp paperbark, which was destroyed when the canal cut through it. The swamps harboured a variety of species of plant, animal and insect life. Of the latter, new species of mosquito, \textit{Culex labeculosus} and scale insect, \textit{Pulvinaria salicornae}, were described early this century along with some more common scale insects. Of native plants, Black Wattle, and Coast Wattle, \textit{Acacia longifolia}, Climbing Igrum, \textit{Muehlenbeckia adpressa}, New Sparkling sea, and growths of scrub and ti-tree in October 1845 in an advertisement for a temperance society picnic.\textsuperscript{19}

Surveys in advance of Crown land sales were conducted in 1850 at Sandridge and in Emerald Hill in 1852 to 1854 at the time when Robert Hoddle, and then Andrew Clarke headed the survey office. The layout of the Emerald Hill survey was based on a grid bounded by Eastern Road, Park Street, Montague Street and the diagonal Sandridge Road (City Road). The South Melbourne grid was aligned with the original orientation of the CBD grid, with the line of Spencer Street continuing down as Clarendon Street. In 1854 the grid was extended to include the Three Chain Road (Albert Road) and Nelson Road.\textsuperscript{20}

The diagonal track to the beach along what became Sandridge Road, and renamed City Road and Bay Street, pre-existed the grid survey, and so was retained. Like Williamstown Road which came a little later, it was also the shortest distance between two important points. The Sandridge Survey was also on a grid, but aligned parallel with the beachfront, to avoid awkward triangular lots.

However, development west of the Sandridge road was constrained by swamps and from 1854, the railway. A Crown Lands Department plan of 1855 confirmed the reservation of the land west of the railway and so prohibited development. At the same time a wide landscaped reserve was provided along the railway itself. A much later plan included a "permanent reserve for stormwater channel and other public purposes",\textsuperscript{21} on the alignment of Millers 1860 proposed ship canal. The first land sales were held in at 1850 Sandridge and in 1852 at Emerald Hill. In 1854, the Canvas Town was dispersed and many of the inhabitants moved up to the Hill. Also on 14 December 1854, a residents' meeting was called to lobby for independence from Melbourne. On 26 May 1855 Emerald Hill became the first suburb outside of Geelong, to be declared a municipal district, taking the motto 'Ordine Primum', 'first in the field'. When the council met for the first time the July 4, James Service, later to be Premier of Victoria, elected chairman.

\textsuperscript{20} Streets of South Melbourne, http://streetsofsouthmelbourne.wordpress.com/introduction/
\textsuperscript{21} Port Melbourne, Parish of South Melbourne, County of Bourke, Department of Lands & Survey, Melbourne, T S Button, 13.2.1914

Wasteland, wetland and wildlife

The isolation and limited use of the Fishermans Bend and the larger Yarra estuary resulted in preservation of natural values long after much of Melbourne was urbanised. Coode Island, created by the excavation of the Coode Canal in 1886, was effectively isolated from major human impact from the 1880s to 1950s. As such it became a sanctuary for wildlife. Fishermans Bend enjoyed a similar status, but protected by reputation more than physical barriers.

The original vegetation as described on early survey plans was dominated by Tea-tree scrub, salt marsh, swamp and sandy waste with a small stand of trees, possibly swamp paperbark, which was destroyed when the canal cut through it. The swamps harboured a variety of species of plant, animal and insect life. Of the latter, new species of mosquito, \textit{Culex labeculosus} and scale insect, \textit{Pulvinaria salicornae}, were described early this century along with some more common scale insects. Of native plants, Black Wattle, and Coast Wattle, \textit{Acacia longifolia}, Climbing Igrum, \textit{Muehlenbeckia adpressa}, New

\textsuperscript{22} Barrett, Bernard, The civic frontier: The origin of local communities and local government in Victoria, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979

Emerald Hill was proclaimed a borough in 1863, a town in 1872 and city in 1883 when its name was also changed to South Melbourne. Sandridge was severed and made an independent borough in 1860 then changed its name to Port Melbourne in 1884 becoming a town in 1893 and city in 1919. \textsuperscript{22}
Holland Daisy, Vitadina australis, Sea Blight, Myoporum viscosum, Smooth Sea-heath, Franklinia pauciflora, and, Angular, Rounded and Small Pigface, Mesembryanthemum australis, M. arquiquatrat, and M. tegens, were found by Tovey in 1908 and 1909, along with a vast array of exotic plants probably introduced from ships ballast which had been dumped on the island. The Small Pigface was apparently more common on the north side of the old river course around the West Melbourne Swamp.  

In regards to the exotic species, there were also many introduced species of rock found on the south east portion of the island from foreign ships dumping ballast. The locality was noted as a good site for obtaining geological specimens which were otherwise unprocurable elsewhere in Victoria, some examples being gneiss banded with crystalized red garnets, granite porphyries, schist, limestone crowded with fossils, varied sandstones and quartzite. It was remarked that they “would constitute handsome educational cabinet specimens of types of rock difficult to procure otherwise except at some expense.”  

One of Coode Island’s few residents Bill Lemanquand, who was born on the island in 1901 and lived there until the 1940s, recalls how,  

“The sky was ablaze with skylarks…every few yards there were nests on the ground. Springtime was full of their music. Sometimes there were dolphins in the river. The most beautiful thing I have ever seen was the pigface growing on the island in spring. It was a swamp in the middle before they drained it. I will never forget that pigface.”  

As a boy, Bill caught bream, mullet and eels in the rivers as well as rabbits, and he recalls that wild ducks were abundant.  

Local ornithologists such as “gerygone” (Jack Jones), Margaret McKenzie, Lawrence O’Conner and Ralph Kenyon recognized the area’s importance, as a significant breeding and feeding ground for thousands of wader and other birds. Many field naturalists and bird watchers made regular club excursions to both Coode Island and Fishermans Bend. The area was of sufficient note for the head of Severn Wildlife Trust, Peter Scott, to visit it during a trip to Australia.  

Over 40 species of Australian birds were found breeding at Coode Island while many more species found food, shelter or rest there, either as part of a wider range, or during stop-overs on continental migrations. Footscray’s First Hundred Years provides lists of breeding species as well as frequent and rare visitors, making particular mention of the almost extinct Australian Bustard, and several other rare birds. The brightly coloured Blue Winged Shoveler was often seen in spring on the Coode Island swamps and occasionally on the Maribyrnong River.  

The preponderance of wildlife at Fisherman’s Bend even came to the notice of the Government bureaucracy when in 1909 the Governor in Council authorized the proclamation of the ground of the Victorian Golf Club at Fisherman’s Bend as a sanctuary for animals and birds. The area comprised about 130 acres, near the south bank of the Yarra, leased by the club from the Crown. The club intended to plant the area with trees for ornament as well as providing shelter to native birds. This scheme eventually faded when the land reverted to other Government uses, eventually becoming part of the Aircraft factory and runways.  

Port development  

As Melbourne was founded by sea and for much of its history has depended on shipping for its prosperity and livelihood, port and harbour facilities have been paramount. The first options were either to haul up the river by rope, to the ‘Pool’ at the bottom of Market Street, or anchor off Sandridge and lighter ashore, then walk the 2½ miles into town. The Yarra River was narrow, shallow, winding and littered with snags, so that days could be spent getting ships up to the settlement. While the beach landing at Sandridge was only about 2 miles (3.2 km) away, but water it was more than 4 miles to the open water of the bay.  

Fishermans Bend, was originally that part of the former course of the Yarra river where it made an almost 180 degree turn, located north of where Swanston Dock is now. The spelling has varied between “Fishermans” and “Fishermens” Bend, with some maps such as Coode’s from the 1870s having “Fishermans”, although according to Allan Meiers, the term “Fishermens” Bend with an ‘e’, was in popular usage in the 1920s for all the area west of about Graham Street including Garden City, while “The Bend” referred to the beach west of the Sandridge pier to the river mouth. The name was officially gazetted as Fishermans Bend in 1998.  

Numerous plans for improvements to the river situation were proposed, including several for a ship canal directly from Hobson’s Bay, across the Sandridge flats to Melbourne. Hoddle himself proposed a pier, railway, water supply pipeline, road and settlement at Sandridge in 1839, pre-empting the eventual solution by 15 years.  

The option for a ship canal directly between the settlement on the Yarra and the bay was first proposed in the 1850s, and revived several times. A number of reviews, Royal Commissions and investigations were held into the issue. The Argus reported in January 1851, even before the announcement of gold discoveries changed the whole basis of trade and shipping in Port Phillip, that: “...Public Meeting, according to the requisition, of such of the inhabitants as are favorable to the formation of a Company for the purpose of constructing a SHIP CANAL. This appears to have been well attended and shortly afterwards, was answered with the publication of a scheme employing a canal straight to the South Bank area along with a large wet dock, but not having these connected to the river.  

26 Vines, G. Industrial Land & Wetland  
27 “15,000 Water fowl were shot “for the table,” Footscray’s First Hundred Years. p.93  
29 Allan Meiers, Fisher Folk of Fishermans Bend, Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society October 2006  
Another complex and sophisticated design for ship canal or “tidal harbor” and docks was proposed along with an extension of the city west-ward. This was laid before the Royal Commission by John Millar in December 1860.32

The Melbourne Ship-Canal and Dock Company was formed in 1864, by a group of prominent Melbourne businessmen, with a commercial scheme to construct a canal and dock, again on a direct alignment. It was intended that it would have the added benefit of relieving the problem of flooding in the low lying areas of West and South Melbourne.33

---

32 Design for ship canal or “tidal harbor” and docks for the Port of Melbourne: with proposed extension of the city west-ward / laid before the Royal Commission by the author, John Millar; lithographed at the Office of Lands and Survey, Melbourne, 21st December 1860. SLV

was to commission John Coode, an eminent British Harbour engineer, to prepare a plan for improvements to Melbourne’s port and navigable rivers in 1878. His plan included widening and straightening the river entrance, excavating the Victoria Dock on the swamps immediately west of the city, and cutting a new canal to remove the long and difficult passage around Fisherman’s Bend from Humbug Reach to near Yarraville. This commenced just to the west of where the Bolte Bridge now crosses the River.

As part of the Coode Scheme, a turning basin was proposed on the south bank of the river just above the gasworks to enable river shipping to be swung around as well as providing additional wharf space. An upper swinging basin had previously been created at the pool, by dredging and widening the river, and another swinging basin was formed at the mouth of Victoria Dock again by widening the river. The canal cutting off the former Fishermans Bend shortened the route to the bay, and by forming a regular curve and widening and deepening the channel, shipping of the largest tonnage at the time could reach the main port immediately west of the city and railway terminal.

Other works continued to the bay piers, which were still dealing with over 30,000 tons in 1899. Deeper draft ships were accommodated at a rebuilt Station Pier (replacing the former railway Pier) in 1913, augmented a few years later by the new Princess Pier in 1922. 35

Improvements to wharves and jetties have been continuous, with the initial major early development at the ‘pool’ where a wide and deep section of the river was situated opposite Flinders Street near the customs house, which became known as “Queens Wharf”, then new wharves being built across the river at ‘South Wharf’ spreading down stream from the natural pool at the bottom of Market Street. By the 1860s there was continuous wharfage along both sides of the Yarra from Queens Bridge (then called the falls bridge) to near Spencer Street, and continuing further to the gasworks on the North Bank where the “Australia Wharf” was constructed in the 1880s and 90s. 34

The Melbourne city was initially in control of the waterfront, but the need for improvement eventually resulted in the formation of the Melbourne Harbour Trust in 1877. One of its first acts


In the early 1900s, further improvements were carried out to the upper parts of the wharves, including widening the swinging basin, which had by this time become known as the Interstate Swinging Basin, due to the nature of the shipping using the river wharves. This was needed because the former Turning Basin below Queens Bridge and the river wharves would be cut off from shipping but the construction of the proposed Spencer Street Bridge.

The Swinging Basin involved excavation of the low swampland on the south side of the river and creation of a large timber piled wharf as an extension to the existing south wharf. In the 1920s and 30s, further widening was carried out downstream of the swinging basin, and new wharves constructed along this stretch of the river. As a result the existing industries, storage yards and other port related activities were pushed further south, with timber storage, ballast yards and other maritime warehousing concentrated in the triangle between Lorimer Street, the Port Melbourne railway and Ingles Street.

Figure 8: View across Australia Wharf to the south bank, note huts (Lewis 1994:21 cited in Duncan)
Roads and rail

Liardet's hotel and jetty at Sandridge was the focus of the first track across the flats from the beach to Melbourne. This remained a sandy track for the first decade or so, with little impetus of funding available to undertake improvements. However, in 1853 construction of the road to Sandridge was undertaken by the Central Roads Board, which used extensive sections of ‘timber viaduct’ (probably corduroy road where logs are laid side by side and chained together) to cross swamps.36 The Sandridge Road was formally proclaimed as a Main Road in 1854,37 while a toll bar was in place for much of the 1850s, to raise revenue for improvement and maintenance. As a result it was considered for a time as one of the best roads in the colony.38

In 1839, only a few years after the first European settlement of Melbourne, consideration was already being given to a railway to link the main centre of habitation with the bay side where shipping arrived. Difficulties of navigating the shallow and tortuous lower Yarra saw many ships stand off in Port Phillip Bay, and transfer their cargoes of supplies and immigrants by lighter up the river or across the swamps of Sandridge. In the 1839 Government Survey, Robert Hoddle made provision for a railway linking Melbourne and Hobsons Bay. Nothing came of this due to lack of capital or motivation, but on September 7th 1851, a public meeting called for a railway linking Melbourne to Sandridge (Port Melbourne). The Government approved the establishment of the Melbourne and Hobsons Bay Railway Company on January 20th 1853 (followed shortly by the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company and the Melbourne, Mount Alexander and Murray River Railway Company).40

Construction of the first line of rail from near Flinders Street to a wharf on Hobsons Bay was rapid and on September 12th 1854 the Melbourne and Hobsons Bay Railway was opened using a locally constructed locomotive. This was possibly the first locomotive hauled train in the Southern Hemisphere. The line ran for about 2½ miles (3.6 kilometres) between the Sandridge Pier and Flinders Street, incorporating a sharply skewed timber trestle bridge over the Yarra River, the only major structure on the line. The railway achieved sufficient success over the next twelve months that the company, having returned an eight per cent dividend to its shareholders, decided to construct a branch line to St Kilda.

A public meeting was held in December 1855 to consider possible routes: A proposal to locate the line to the south and west of the hill known as Emerald Hill was rejected by residents, who considered that it would hinder their access to the beach, and it was subsequently decided that the line should be on the east of the hill, along Moray Street. Early the following year, this option was also dropped when a select committee deemed it too expensive. Instead, it was decided that the new line should neither follow the east or west of the hill but, rather ran through the centre of it, parallel to Ferrars Street.

In the mean time, the Victorian Government Railway Department was established (on April 1 1856) as part of the Board of Land and Works. George Christian Darbyshire was appointed as Engineer in Chief. Soon after the Government took over the struggling Murray River Company. However, the Hobson’s Bay line was still privately operated.

Construction of the branch line commenced in spring 1856, with 200 workmen under the direction of the company engineer, William Eldon, who had replaced its original engineer, James Moore, in December 1854. The new line turned off the main Sandridge railway soon after the Flinders Street terminus, extending 3 miles (4.8 kilometres) to a purpose-built station building on Fitzroy Street. Completion of the project was delayed due to difficulties with the original contractor, who was eventually replaced by another from Sydney, and the new line opened on 13 May 1857.

Over the next few years, the Melbourne & Hobson’s Bay Railway Company upgraded both of its lines, which included the duplication of tracks and the opening of new stations. On the St Kilda branch, stations were opened at Emerald Hill (now South Melbourne) in September 1858 and at Butts (now Albert Park) in November 1860.41 An extension was built by the St Kilda and Brighton Railway Co. in 1859, joined by a loop line from St Kilda to Windsor, and extended further to Brighton Beach by 1861. However a more direct route from Windsor to the city was built 11 months later, and the loop line was dismantled in 1867. In 1878 the private operator of the line was taken over by the Victorian Railways.

40 National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Classification Report FN 84794 St Kilda Railway Road Over Rail Bridges
41 City of Port Phillip Heritage Review, Railway cutting and road bridges, Heritage Alliance
William Elsdon, C.E., came out from Newcastle, Northumberland in the 1850’s and was the Chief Engineer of the Melbourne & Hobsons Bay Railway from 1854-1878, and then Chief Engineer of the Victorian Railways until 1882. He was responsible for a large number of railway works in Victoria from the 1850s to 1880s. He designed the Rosedale Railway Station Complex dating from 1881, among many other Victorian Railways works, and was engineer for the Royal Gymnasium Baths and Sea Bathing Company which was formed with G. H. F. Webb as the chairman of the company in 1861. He retired from his position as Engineer in Chief of Victorian Railways in 1882, moving to Sydney in 1888 to practice in that city.

A telegraph from Melbourne to Sandridge was constructed in 1854, the first in Australia, following Sandridge Road and the railway line. This provided shipping intelligence and synchronised signalling to set chronometers (via a time ball at Williamstown), with the observatory near the botanic gardens.

Williamstown Road and Ingles Street were practically the only other roads of any substance in the area north of the Sandridge railway line and west of Emerald Hill until quite late in the 19th century. They were both still considered impassable in the 1880s, in part due to the carts to the sand ground cutting up the surface.

Williamstown Road was known as the “Short road”, as, in combination with a ferry or punt at Greenwich (near the end of North road Williamstown), it considerably shortened the road from the city to Williamstown, compared with the alternative route around the north of Batman’s Swamp crossing the Maribyrnong at Footscray. Substantial work was undertaken to the Short Road in the 1870s, with £400 from the Williamstown, Sandridge and Emerald Hill councils and £600 from Victorian Government. The road was proclaimed a main road on 28 March 1872.

A ferry was briefly operated in 1857-9 from the temporary northern terminus of the Geelong Railway at Greenwich, running up river to Melbourne, and a ferry to Williamstown (the “Gent”), was operating from before 1870, but this is likely to have only run between north wharf and one of the Williamstown Piers.

Williamstown Council launched a steam ferry called ‘The Link’ in Construction started on, which became known as Clough’s Short Road Ferry. This operated until 1907 when a new steam ferry was commissioned, and it in turn was replace in 1931 by the third ferry built by Thompson’s engineering.

The first ferry at this point began in 1873 (fees were: - Foot passenger, one penny; Vehicle with one horse or animal, six pence; with two horses or animals, nine pence; with three animals, one shilling; Vehicles with four wheels, 2 shillings).

The Short Road appears to have always been subject to neglect, and uncompensate lobbying for improvements. A conference of relevant authorities in 1888 seems to have come of little. A proposal for a tramway along the route was given approval by the government, but the ‘Astra-Arlo Tramway Company’ did not manage to either raise the capital or undertake any works towards the project. Williamstown Council offered to contribute to the project and the penal department even offered convict labour to undertake works. In 1896 a committee with representatives of Williamstown and Port Melbourne Councils and the Harbour Trust, met on several occasions to address the condition and repair of the road.

More substantial repairs were carried out by the Country Roads Board in 1926. The ferry ceased operating on 15 November 1978, when the Westgate Bridge opened.
operate into the 1960s, but was closed about 1975 and leased for less disagreeable uses, before being demolished to make way for warehouses and showrooms in about 1990.

One of the earliest of the noxious trades was Kitchen & Sons soap and candle works on Ingles Street. Established initially in 1856 as a backyard concern, but forced to move by the council, the company acquired the Ingles Street site in 1859 manufacturing candles, washing blue, soap, soda crystals, glycerine and baking powder.63 Kitchen had acquired the Apollo Company in 1883.65

Noxious trades and industry

The proximity to the Yarra and swampy wastelands of Fisherman’s Bend and Sandridge initially attracted the activities and industries that were shunned from the commercial and residential parts of Melbourne. Low lying areas on the south bank of the Yarra saw the development of ships chandlers, dry docks and repairers, stevedores and Melbourne’s first iron foundries and engineering works. Related industries gradually spread westward. Further downstream boiling down works, fellmongeries, abattoirs and other noxious trades crowded along the river bank and discharging their wastes into the river. In the 1870s moves to clean up the river and move most of the worst noxious industries away from the city, generally to Footscray and Yarraville, saw most of this area cleared.61

A pipe factory, asphalt plant, timber yard with drying sheds were located in Brady Street, in the 1890s, while the Port Melbourne Abattoir was in in Lorimer Street, and a boiling down works was in Boundary Street.

The abattoir was a subject of concern from its establishment in about 1861. It was completely rebuilt in 1899 to the same plan as the Melbourne City council abattoirs in Flemington62 It continued to

---

Felton Grimwade & Co was established in Melbourne in about 1867, soon after moving from Russell Street to Flinders Lane where its importing business flourished. The firm operated as wholesale druggists but developed into a large manufacturing enterprise with products including acids, salt, glass bottles, fertilisers and eucalyptus oil. In 1870 they were operating a chemical works at their Port Melbourne manufacturing site and as early as 1872 the Port Melbourne Council opposed the manufacture of sulphuric acid at its plant. Nevertheless, company activities from the outset were to include the manufacture of sulphuric acid and other mineral acids including bi-sulphide of iron. By 1894 the Ingles Street building was the principal manufactory at Felton Grimwade and Co.’s. chemical works.

The works was extensively damaged by fire in 1895, but was rebuilt and continued to operate into the mid twentieth century. The complex was later occupied by Arthur Vale and Co. Pty. Ltd., oil stores, Cotton Dressing Pty. Ltd. and the United Oil Co. Pty. Ltd. oil store. And more recently became part of AMI and then Toyota. Alfred Felton is remembered for the generous bequest he gave to the National Gallery of Victoria, which continues to fund the purchase of artworks for the state collection.

Ballarat Brewing Company run by Coghlan & Tulloch’s had three premises in Ballarat and in order to better establish themselves in the Melbourne market, erected a modest building in Cecil Street, South Melbourne in about 1910, for storage or distribution. Like many of the regional breweries, the company was subject to merger and takeover. In 1953, it acquired the Volum Brewery in Geelong and, five years later, was itself taken over by Carlton & United Breweries, although public pressure at that time ensured that the “Ballarat Bertie” logo was retained on the new beer bottles produced by CUB. After the takeover, the company’s former building in Cecil Street was used by CUB for storage until at least the mid-1970s.

A stone works in Smith and Tarver streets was the sole occupant west of the football ground in the 1894 plan. This had been commenced in 1883 as the “Patent Victoria Hydraulic Freestone works” of R. Holden Stone. A detailed description of the works indicates substantial galvanized iron sheds with tanks, steam boilers and engine house.

In 1962 J. Kitchen & Sons Pty Ltd joined fellow soap manufacturer Lever Brothers Pty Ltd, forming Lever & Kitchen Pty Ltd. The firm was later restructured as Unilever in 2000, and later taken over by Pental and very recently Symex Holdings Limited. The Ingles Street works progressively expanded with its southern boundary street moving twice. Initially this was “Kitchen Street”, which aligned with White Street on the west side of Boundary Street, then opposite the ‘Unnamed govt road’ (1950s photo) and finally becoming Munro Street to align with the through route to Montague Street.

66 Sands & McDougall directories.  
67 City of Port Phillip Heritage Review Citation No: 2315
Frederick Laycock mills were a little further along the road, initially started in 1884, and later considerably extended. Frederick Laycock moved to South Melbourne from Yarraville after his factory there was burnt out, opening flock mills in about 1886 on the south side of Normanby Road. In 1904, they built a new mill on the south west corner of Normanby Road and Doran Street to produce blankets with the brand name Laconia. A store yard was located on the opposite side of Doran Street in 1910. In 1906, the owners were described as bedding and wire mattress makers supplying local furniture industry including Maples and Andersons. By 1916, the business operated as Laycock and Son and Co continuing on the site to at least 1974.75

Johns and Waygood pioneered the development of the lift in Melbourne – along with Austral Otis, and so contributed to the engineering which permitted the construction of multistorey office buildings. They established their head offices at the corner of Cecil Street in 1909, erecting extensive workshops behind. New plant for the manufacture of structural steel was installed.76 A further works on the corner of Gladstone and Kerr streets manufactured mortar bomb cases in 1938-39 as a part of the war effort.77

The land along Ferrars and Douglas Streets, backing on to the railway was first sold for small timber cottages in the 1860s, but appears to have been opened for redevelopment in 1888, when more than 50 existing cottages were sold in one auction.78

75 City of Port Phillip Heritage Review citation 45
77 National Trust citation, 10/1989.
Union Can Company Pty. Ltd., grew from a small manufactory in 1908 to occupy a three acre site in Ferrars Street. This was the administrative and technical headquarters of its nationwide offices as well as its production facility manufacturing food packaging articles. Interestingly, the location of this large manufactory had been determined by the need to import mild steel sheeting from Wales via the riverside wharves. The works expanded to cover most of the block between Ferrars and Meaden Streets, with a complex production line process installed by 1938.

In 1921, Homewood and O’Neill Pty. Ltd., Vulcan Engineering Works at 117 Ferrars Street, was advertising “malleable and cast iron, brasswork, of all descriptions”. This appears to be the same site as the Union Can Co, but ceased operating in 1929, when the Melbourne Branch closed.

80 Pratt, A., pp.325-27 and Priestley, p.259
Humpies and slums

The wastelands of Fishermans Bend became a refuge for the dispossessed and homeless as much as wildlife, somewhat like the better known 'Dudley Flats' north of the river. As well as the rambling fishermen's camps along the beach, and on the remaining undeveloped stretches of river banks, humpies and shacks were thrown up at different times by people making a living scrounging from the rubbish dumps, or just taking advantage of the quite undisturbed locality. For example a Portuguese man was living at Fisherman's Bend in 1877, and despite his diminished circumstances, was considered a subject worthy of the Police News, when it featured an illustration of him "...sitting at table, with his trained rat standing on the table on hind legs and dancing".  

![Figure 22: Plan of Port Melbourne Parish of South Melbourne 1914.](image)

The famous Australian artist Albert Tucker also looked to Fishermans Bend for inspiration, and evidence of the social deprivation and depression which he was to feature strongly in his paintings. He took several photos of what it is assumed he regarded as "picturesque shacks" in preparation for some paintings in the 1930s.

![Figure 23: "Portuguese man living at Fisherman's Bend, Sandridge," "Police news", 14 April 1877](image)

A contributor to the Argus in 1881 described the Montague area, known colloquially as “Salt Lake City”, as a poorly drained sector with a terrible stench in which typhoid was rife.

[It is] “wonderful how people can live there; yet new houses are going up there daily in thick clusters, evidently intended for persons of the artisan class. Children are being reared...in great numbers. Their chief amusement here is to play in the horrible liquid surrounding their homes.”

Floods exacerbated the problems with one description of the 1880 flood noting:

Pedestrians could proceed along the footpath in Flinders-street to a point a short distance beyond William-street, where the flood barred all further progress The houses from this point to the corner of Spencer-street were flooded on the ground floors and cellars. The water could be seen stretching from a short distance below the Falls Bridge to Sandridge Bend on the one hand, and from Emerald Hill to Footscray on the other.

The Montague area was a notorious slum, with rows of decrepit terrace houses along Gladstone, Buckhurst and Thistledown Street and adjoining lanes. William Buckhurst had bought many allotments at the original land sales, and while he also promoted beautification of the gardens and development of nearby Albert Park, his own subdivided allotments became the locations of many inferior dwellings.

The 1880s were a period of rapid growth in Emerald Hill with a population of 25,000 by 1880, rising to 43,000 at the end of the decade Port Melbourne saw a similar growth, but from a smaller starting point. A number of the municipal councilors were prominent real estate developers and financiers including Matthias Larkin, James Page, J.R. Buxton and W. Thistledown, or were land speculators such as Buckhurst. As a result subdivision and street construction (although rudimentary) went ahead rapidly.

The Montague area was promoted as for ‘persons of the artisan class’ and this was reflected in the advertisements for houses for sale such as “neat two roomed cottage and land, plastered £110, Stoke Street, off Gladstone Place. By 1875, there were 560 households and by 1900, there were 1,000 in the district, with 200 in the lanes and little streets. Many of the people attracted to the low cost housing were labourers, fisherman, boilermakers, mariners and shipwrights, probably drawn to the area because of its proximity to the docks and metal works along the river, and the noxious trades on the Sandridge flats. Owner occupation was approximately 33 per cent and most of the houses in the smaller streets were made of timber and had two or three bedrooms. Almost no houses had a bathroom or washroom. By the 1920s, much of the housing stock was falling into disrepair due to regular flooding and inundation and little maintenance, particularly among the rental properties. However, the Montague was renowned for its close knit community. The self contained suburb had its own, school, church, police station, kindergarten, football team, hotels, post office, bank and shops.

86 Ward 2011 p.54
87 Ward 2011 p.35
a loan raised to cover the cost of the house. The Housing Investigation Board, however, was critical of apparently generous terms to purchasers who were required to buy the land at site value and pay off nine pairs of semi-detached concrete and brick houses. These were then made available on houses in Gladstone Street, demolishing them, raise the ground level above the floods and construct local MLA and Councillor, pushed forward the idea that council purchase about twenty dilapidated appears to be the first attempt under the Housing Reclamation Act at slum reclamation J. L. Murphy, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article67503717 all built of wood and iron…’ where most did not have baths, and were small and in poor repair.90

The first inquiry into the condition of housing in Victoria was conducted in 1913 by a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly. This first slum commission paid special note to the Montague district, noting the area between Ferrars Street and Boundary Street, and from City Road to the Port Melbourne railway, ‘…was very flat and the drainage bad. … with very few exceptions the houses are all built of wood and iron…’ where most did not have baths, and were small and in poor repair.90

A number of testimonials for cures were recorded from the area for example residents of 100 and 116 Buckhurst Street praised of “Zam-Buk Balm” curing all manner of ailment. The manufacturer, Marshall’s Chemical Co., was listed at 167 Buckhurst Street.91

By 1931 second major economic depression with its associated poverty and deterioration in living standards. Some efforts were made by the council to address the conditions in the slum. In 1930 the mayor of South Melbourne (Councillor H. A. Layfield) officially declared open a new children’s playground in Thistledewaite Street and personally introduced many children to the new swings and slides.92 This was part of a larger plan to construct council houses on the British model. In what appears to be the first attempt under the Housing Reclamation Act at slum reclamation J. L. Murphy, local MLA and Councillor, pushed forward the idea that council purchase about twenty dilapidated houses in Gladstone street, demolishing them, raise the ground level above the floods and construct nine pairs of semi-detached concrete and brick houses. These were then made available on apparently generous terms to purchasers who were required to buy the land at site value and pay off a loan raised to cover the cost of the house. The Housing Investigation Board, however, was critical of the Council’s efforts, as it considered the efforts would only suit the better off residents, able to afford the purchase price.93

Despite the poverty in Montague, Port Melbourne was not the primary focus of the slum abolition activities with only 464 houses 0% of the total slum dwellings identified in the enquiry. It was related that in Port Melbourne: “the slum problem is not as acute as elsewhere. A few slum pockets exist as well as narrow residential streets. There are, however, many substandard houses and remanling to eliminate narrow streets is appropriate”.94

The Montague area, was however, subsequently earmarked in the 1930s for demolition by the Slum Abolition Board. In 1936 the establishment of a Housing Investigation Board considered housing conditions in Victoria. The Board’s found numerous slum pockets and narrow residential streets with poor houses, at times subject to flooding in South Melbourne. The resulting Slum Reclamation and Housing Act in 1938, facilitated the clearance of the majority of the houses were cleared and the relocation of the residents, many of whom eventually moved to new housing at Garden City.95

Garden City began as a concerted attempt to address overcrowding and slum conditions by designing and constructing housing suitable for working classes, which in itself was thought to lead to improved social and health conditions.96

The Town Planning commission, which presented a far-reaching report in 1929, identified the Fishermans Bend area as having opportunities, not only for social housing, but for integrated transport and employment. In a prescient comment it identified the:

“The plan includes provision for an arterial road two chains wide, westerly across this area to join with Bay View Avenue, Spotswood, which would make an extremely valuable direct route to the city from the Geelong road and the whole of the area west of the River Yarra. The road will be of much value to the Fisherman’s Bend area, but its great usefulness will lie in providing a main “through” road, connecting the western suburbs with the city and the eastern suburbs by a much shorter route than at present exists.

This was the proposed Howe Parade, which although only constructed within Garden City Area, can still be identified in property boundaries and parkland across Fishermans Bend. What the commission predicted of course was the West Gate Bridge.

The Port Melbourne Council had previously petitioned the government to unlock land at Fishermans Bend and sponsor workers housing from 1906. It identified Fishermans Bend as a possible future housing site from as early as 1912.97 The Harbor Trust, however, was not willing to unlock land it wanted for future port facilities. In 1920 the Housing and Reclamation Act authorized the building of homes by public bodies and shortly after the Victorian State Savings Bank became the first agency to participate in this scheme with loans from its Credit Foncier Department. 45 acres of land were

90 Suburban slums, Evidence of Police, Hovels and Shelter Sheds: The Age - Nov 20, 1913 p.6.
92 Mayor as Play Leader. The Argus, Tuesday 13 May 1930 p 5
93 Port Phillip Heritage Review – Gladstone Street public houses.
95 Alom Lovell Sanderson Pty Ltd, Port Melbourne Conservation Study Review p.4/20
aircraft factory on Coode Island, and with the war, the Government Aircraft Factory (later Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation) erected a large works just beyond GMH. Runways were constructed on the flats, and after the war became the venue for motor racing in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Because of differences in the perceived social strata, with many of the families from Richmond, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne relocating to the area. The Commission area became known as “Bagdad” after a magistrate’s description derived from a reference to the “forty thieves” who lived there, while the Savings Bank area became known as “Nob Hill” 99

Port Melbourne council and residents recognised the need for civic improvements in the Sandridge flats area and in particular along the boundary of the residential areas. A recreation reserve was provided for in early surveys on Williamstown Road by about 1880, with the creation of the North Port Oval, which was developed substantially in the 1900s. A focus of the working class industrial community, the ground was renowned for its rough play and fights among both players and fans, while it hosted a semi-final in 1903, the “rouging up” of an umpire in a 1907 game saw VFA games moved away from the oval for the rest of the season. Unruly crown behaviour and on-ground incidents occurred regularly over the next 40 years and were subject to several VFA investigations.

Regardless the Port Melbourne club enjoyed considerable success in the 1920s with a winning streak of 33 games from July 1920 to June 1924. The £80000 grandstand was opened to much fanfare by the Mayor Cr A Tucker in 1928, later renamed the Norman Leslie Goss stand after the long time club secretary and player. The ground was taken over by the army in 1942 and used to grow vegetables, and subsequently lost its high quality playing surface when the Harbour Trust banned removal of sand (which had been used for many years for top-dressing. 100

Tommy Lahiff, put it bluntly: “you were either a wharfie or you worked in one of the factories. Swallow and Ariel’s, Kitchen’s, Dunlop’s, Laycock’s”.101 “Of Unilever’s foremen in the 1950s recalled that Port Melbourne was a close knit community, rough but honest: “once you were in you were right”128. The people of Port Melbourne suffered enormously through the 1930’s depression when between 75 and 90 per cent of young people are thought to have been unemployed.”

Wartime and post war industry development

Larkin’s Aircraft factory and airfield, the motor racing track which also used the airfield runways, General Motors Holden, other car manufacturers and the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory, were the major 20th century industries at Fishermans Bend. Larkin had previously operated a runway and

98 Andrew Ward, Port Phillip Heritage Review, Version 14, 2009 Port Melbourne - The Garden City Housing Estates - HO2, City of Port Philip
99 Ward 2011
101 Tommy Lahiff, quoted in “They can carry me out” Memories of Port Melbourne, (1991), p.57. cited in Ward 2011 p.52
General Motors Holden constructed a vast factory on Salmon Street (outside the FBURA) in 1936. During World War Two the factory produced more than 30,000 vehicle bodies for the Australian and United States forces and manufactured a wide range of equipment, including field guns, aircraft, aero and marine engines. Partly in response to import tariffs, Holden commenced manufacture of a fully-Australian product in 1948, the 48-215, nicknamed the X with the second version the more famous FJ.  

This was the first of a number of automotive works in the area, attracted to the availability of large manufacturing sites close to rail and sea transport. Australian Motor Industries were the other important automotive assemble at Fishermans Bend. Together with the port they sustained the area’s working class population residing to the south of the Williamstown Road. Australian Motor Industries (AMI) was established in 1954 as the successor to the Standard Motor Company, a Melbourne based vehicle assembler for “Rambler” cars and the British “Triumph”. This took over the former Felton Grimwade building in Ingles Street around this time and was still there in 1973. It also carried out some finishing operations on “Mercedes Benz” cars and was the first to make a connection with a Japanese manufacturer with a view to assembling Japanese vehicles. The Japanese partner was Toyota, which was ultimately to absorb AMI and continues to occupy the Ingles Street offices and manufacturing plant. Rootes Australia was the third large car manufacturer in Fishermans Bend. It was the Australian division of the British Rootes Group and assembled Hillman Minx vehicles at Port Melbourne in 1946. This was the first instance of a British motor manufacturer establishing a production line in  

Figure 29: Aircraft Factories Fishermans Bend, with runways beyond.  
Figure 30: Motor Racing in the 1950s.  
Figure 31: Plan of race tracks at Fishermans Bend runways.  
Figure 32: GMH looking over the empty expanse of Fishermans Bend c 1940. State Library Victoria H91.162/259
Australia. In December 1965, Rootes Australia was merged with Chrysler Australia and assembly was gradually moved from Port Melbourne to the latter’s existing facilities in Adelaide, South Australia. Chrysler Australia ceased production of Hillmans in 1973.

The linesman depot training center and workshops of the PMG (Precursor to Telecom and later Telstra) were located in Plummer Street during 1940s-60s and possibly later. Plummer Street named for councillor in late 19th century. Possibly Kames K B Plummer a Port Melbourne Solicitor from the 1880s, and on council in 1890s.  

In the South Melbourne and Montague Area, some further industrial development came as more of the Montague slums were cleared and converted to other uses. Many small factories and warehouses were erected in Thistlethwaite, Buckhurst and Gladstone streets, and some of the City Road properties changed from retail to manufacturing. Among them was W. H., Johnsons Jams in

In the 1950s, the Fishermans Bend area became a major venue for both accommodation and employment of migrant workers under a vastly increased post war migration scheme. Garden City had been completed to its present extent and the former army barracks were converted to become the Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel. Local industries such as GMH and the aircraft factories expanded, absorbing many migrant workers. The Rootes Group/Chrysler, AMI/Toyota and several associated manufacturers arrived and grew to create a major concentration of automotive industry. Montague was rapidly converted to commercial and industrial uses.

As well as the more famous Bonegilla Migrant Camp, another large facility for housing new Australians was opened at Fishermans Bend in 1952, accepting new arrivals up to 1975. Located at the corner of Hall and Turner Streets in Port Melbourne, the Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel contained former army huts, and large warehouses erected during the war. In 1952, residents at the hostel were among 1000 protesters who marched through the city protesting evictions from migrant hostels, with men, women and children singing patriotic songs and carrying banners stating: “We fight for British justice” and “For six years we have fought the gestapo. We fight again.”

No buildings survive on the site, although one structure appears to have been relocated to Oakleigh and remains as the former Australian Air League headquarters. Another hut was relocated in 1973 to Essendon where it was used for the sea scouts at Fairbairn Park.

Meaden St. Next door was a paint manufacturer Brolite Pty Ltd., which had a spectacular explosion destroy much of the factory in 1947, but it continued to operate at least into the late 1950s. The Moderne factory on the corner of Douglas Street still survives. This was probably located here because of associations with the nearby Union Can Company, or would at least have used their product.

One of the more recent manufacturers to move into the Montague area was Holvex Pty Ltd, “an old and highly reputable roofing and sheet metal firm” which was acquired by Steeldeck industries P/L in the 1970s, to become Holvex Barden Roofing, later forming Barden Steeldeck Industries, with the Holvex name continuing for the sheet metal workshop and manufacture of architectural waste bins and ashtrays that Holvex were synonymous with for many years.

McPherson’s Machinery Merchants erected their International modern warehouse and showroom, at 6 Buckhurst Street, South Melbourne in 1964. Having previously upgraded their city showroom with a streamlined moderne design it is appropriate that their new building featured the latest architecture which was photographed by Wolfgang Sievers. It included a large rooftop car park, suspended floating stair, cantilevered mezzanine off ice, and double height showroom. Thomas McPherson & Sons was founded in 1860 and in 1880 a plant was set up for the manufacture of jute wool packs. The company was also a long term producer of nails, dies, gauges, and all sorts of tools. Later upper story office added in similar style.

Post war and transformation

From the 1940s, displaced persons and a government policy saw a new phase of mass migration with over 30,000 new arrivals in Australia every year from 1947 to 1961, with a large proportion from Britain, by significant numbers from Greece and Italy, as well as the other war torn countries of Europe.

---


---

110 Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel, Facebook Page: http://goo.gl/9RQ6Nh


A working class and radical political climate developed around a number of unions and other associations. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers was prominent at the Port Melbourne Railway Workshops from the 1890s while the Port Philip Stevedores Labour Association, Hobsons Bay Fishermans Union and Melbourne Wharf Labourers Union all formed in the 1880s. They were all active participants in the 1886-7 maritime strike which was a major formative event in the Australian Union movement.\(^{115}\)

Some more conservative factions in the local community formed the Temperance Hall, while the Licensing Reduction Board was responsible for closing 18 hotels in the district in the early twentieth century.

By the 1960s, the character of Fishermans Bend had consolidated. While the Harbour Trust kept the western end locked up, and the Westgate Bridge cut a swathe through both South Melbourne and Fishermans Bend, industrial development progressed, and took on an air of maturity.
Port Melbourne, perhaps because of its still industrial character and working class roots, seems to have missed the gentrification trend of the 1970s and 80s, which swept through the inner northern and eastern parts of Melbourne.116

The Port Melbourne and St Kilda Railway lines were closed and converted to light rail in 1978-8, with the connection into Flinders Street over the Sandridge Bridge severed, and the newly-laid tracks instead linked to the Clarendon Street tramline.117 The 1915 Montague Shipping Shed was demolished, making room for the future Melbourne Exhibition Centre, which became known as "Jeff's Shed".118

In 1994, under the Kennett government, a review of municipal government led to the amalgamation of most councils, with the former cities of South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St. Kilda, combining to form the City of Port Phillip (apart from the strip of land north of the Westgate Freeway, which went to the city of Melbourne).

The most dramatic changes in the area have come in the last two decades, perhaps building on the redevelopment of the bay-side pier, where former rail yards and industry became the upmarket Beacon Cove development and the industrial sites converted to apartments. Such development has accelerated with the most recent apartment boom at both ends, moving up Bay Street from the beach, and down City Road from Southbank. The Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area can then be seen as the logical continuation of an established trend.

116 Logan, William Stewart The Gentrification of Inner Melbourne: A Political Geography of Inner City Housing
University of Queensland Press, 1985