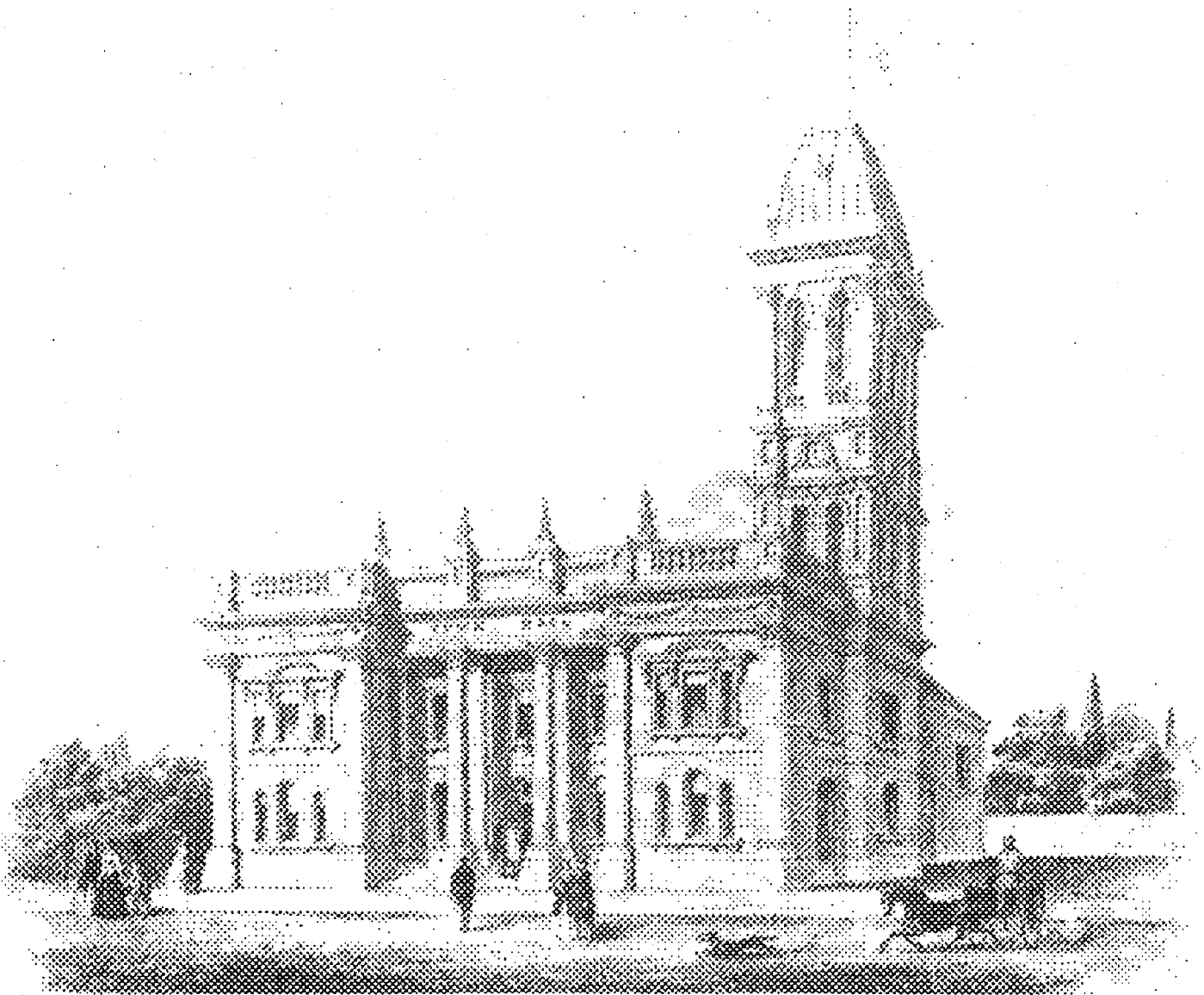




# Prahran Conservation Study

## History of the Development of Prahran

by George Tibbits



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The urban area comprising South Yarra, Toorak, Prahran, Armadale and Windsor has a complicated history. The social and architectural diversity within it, and the divisions which separate one area from others, have their origins in its complex past.

The overall area bounded by the Yarra River, Kooyong Road, Dandenong Road, Wellington Street and St Kilda Road, was early divided by the line of Punt Road with the western portion becoming part of the Town of Melbourne and the eastern portion becoming the Municipality of Prahran. This division still separates South Yarra into two municipal sections, one part in the City of Melbourne, and the other in the City of Prahran. In the earliest days of the white settlement at Melbourne the line of this division was nothing more than a surveyor's section line indicated by marks on trees. With the extension of the Melbourne township reserve to the south side of the river in 1844 the section line became a municipal boundary.

The topography of the area also played a part in establishing and determining the general character of development. The more elevated, well drained and wooded areas of South Yarra and Toorak were occupied by people of a higher social status than those who moved onto the lower lying areas of Prahran. Permanent settlement began on the high land closest to the river to the north of Toorak Road. Parts of this area were not liable to flooding as were parts of the lower lying flatter land to the south towards Commercial Road and High Street. The area of central Prahran where the Town Hall now stands was referred to as a swamp in the early days and has always been a working class area. The slightly higher ground to the south-west became the suburban area of Windsor. From its earliest days its inhabitants held Windsor to be somewhat superior to Prahran.

The nature of the early survey of the area by the Crown and the sale of the land in large agricultural allotments, ranging from about 9 acres in parts of South Yarra to some 60 acres in parts of central Prahran, created a framework for speculative subdivision by numerous landowners. The legacy of the government survey in Prahran is the rectangular grid of north-south and east-west roads which divide or bound the area: Toorak Road, Commercial Road/Malvern Road, High Street, and Wellington Street/Dandenong Road running east-west, and Punt Road, Chapel Street, Williams Road, Orrong Road and Kooyong Road running north-south. The original survey and sale by the Crown made no other contribution to the character of the area. There were no reserves for parks, churches, civic buildings within the Prahran area and all such features of present day Prahran are fortuitous in their location and came into being by private initiatives. The complexity and variety of the street pattern across the whole of Prahran is entirely the result of speculative subdivision within the broad framework of the major government roads. Even the land originally in the hands of those settlers who created large estates has been gradually broken up by piecemeal subdivision. The process of subdivision started early in some areas but in others it is only quite recently that larger areas have been subdivided. The result of this process is that very old buildings will stand among quite recent buildings and a variety of building styles and dates are found within the whole area of Prahran.

Within the town reserve west of Punt Road much of the land was withheld from sale by the Crown. Large areas between St Kilda Road and Punt Road were eventually reserved for Government House, the Domain, the Botanic Gardens, and Fawknor Park, while other sections were reserved for various institutions and churches. The small residential area of South Yarra within the town reserve west of Punt Road was initially laid out by the government as cultivation allotments of about 9 acres each. Only later were they privately subdivided for closer residential settlement.

The long process of urban development has also seen many transformations of particular parts of South Yarra and Prahran. By the 1860s the Prahran of the late 1830s was disappearing. By the early decades of this century the Prahran of the 1860s around the Town Hall had virtually disappeared as redevelopment changed the face of Chapel Street. The same was the case with apparently more stable areas such as the public parkland of the Domain where buildings and paths which were there in the 1850s have been so completely obliterated that not a trace remains. All these buildings and features are the hidden face of South Yarra and Prahran which can only be known by reconstruction from old photographs, maps and descriptions.

## **2.0 THE PRE-SETTLEMENT PERIOD**

The first known European sighting of the Prahran/South Yarra area is recorded in the diary of James Flemming, a member of a survey party sent from Sydney by Governor King in late 1802 with orders to walk around Port Phillip.[1] The expedition was led by Charles Grimes, the acting Surveyor General of NSW. Flemming's job was to observe the nature of the country explored. The party ventured up what is now the Yarra River, and on 4 February 1803, landed at the present site of the Botanic Gardens to examine the country for a mile inland. An extract of Flemming's diary reads, "Monday 7th... Proceeded onto a creek (Gardiner's Creek) where we dined. Saw some natives. The land in general is a fine black soil. Timber; Gum, Banksia, Oak and Mimosa of sorts, but not large except the gum ... went alternatively into the land on both sides of the river." [2] Flemming also noted evidence of flooding south of the freshwater Yarra River.

The party returned to Sydney with maps of Port Phillip,[3] but apart from a brief settlement near Sorrento by Collins, no further European exploration occurred at Port Phillip until 1835.

Those parts of South Yarra and Prahran which were low lying and swampy were of great importance to the aborigines. A series of thickly wooded lagoons and swamps stretched along the south side of the Yarra; another in the valley of the Botanic Gardens, another extensive swampy area stretched diagonally from near the sites of Melbourne High School, across River Street, and towards Hawksburn Railway Station, and a fourth one was around where Como Park now is. Gardiner's Creek was the eastern extremity of this undulating sequence of swampy valleys and rising hills of bushland.

Further to the south over the ridge of South Yarra and Toorak the land fell away to become flat, sandy and marshy and covered with scrub and trees in the vicinity of the Chapel Street and Commercial Road intersection. The lower lying swampy areas attracted large numbers of waterfowl, as well as kangaroos, wallabies and possums which grazed or foraged in the surrounding bush. As a result of them being good hunting grounds the areas of South Yarra, Toorak and Prahran were more thickly populated with aborigines than other parts of the Melbourne area.[4]

With the arrival of the Batman and Fawkner parties in 1835 a small illegal squatter settlement was established on the north side of the river on the ground around William Street and Market Street. From this small nucleus all the surrounding country was to be occupied, its character changed, and its aboriginal occupants dispossessed.

The rival parties both settled on the north side of the Yarra, but not before Batman had proposed an area on the south side downstream towards Port Melbourne "to be reserved for a township and other public purposes." [5] He probably chose the area for negative reasons; it was not within the large expanse of country he had negotiated to occupy when he made his bargain with the aborigines. He showed the site of his proposed township on a map he sent to England as part of his claim for the recognition of his land treaty with the aborigines. That both parties eventually settled on the north-side of the river meant that, for the time being, the south-side was left to the aboriginals.

Following official recognition of the settlement by the Government in Sydney, a township was surveyed and laid out on the north side of the Yarra, where the ground was more favourable than the swampy and flood-prone land on the south-west side. Starting on the 1st June, 1837 the Crown held a number of public auctions which disposed of the town allotments to private buyers.

### **3.0 THE EARLY SQUATTING PERIOD**

All the land on the south side of the river remained as Crown Land and could only be occupied on licence. As a result the few early white settlers on the south side were squatters who did not establish any permanent settlement or construct substantial buildings. In these years the Government did not seem to have a clear plan for the occupation or development of the area and allowed squatters to move unhindered on the south side of the Yarra. Some of the squatters were pastoralists, others were brickmakers, quarrymen and timbergetters, and some were small scale farmers. Many must have made their living servicing the small township of Melbourne.

#### **First European Settlement**

The Prahran/South Yarra land was first used by Europeans for pastoral purposes. In late December, 1836, the overlanders John Gardiner, Joseph Hawdon and John Hepburn, arrived at the Melbourne settlement with three hundred head of cattle they had driven from the Murrumbidgee River.[6] They crossed the Yarra at the only ford they could find, just above the point where Dight's Mill later stood, and

took up the ground on the south of the Yarra, the run extending over what is now Brighton, St Kilda, Prahran, Hawthorn (Boroondara) and Bulleen. Gardiner built a house at the junction of the creek named after him (Gardiner's Creek) and the Yarra. After Hepburn and Hawdon sold out, Gardiner moved onto richer pastures on the Upper Yarra. Gardiner's run then seems to have been taken up by two other squatters, George Goggs and Edward Atkyns Walpole. They ran cattle in the area which was called the Callitini Run which included the site of the Botanic Gardens. Walpole and Goggs were insolvent in 1842 and their run passed to Major Alexander Davidson.

### 1836 Captain Lonsdale

After the arrival at Captain William Lonsdale, the first Police Magistrate of the settlement, on 1st October 1836, a stricter supervision was made of lands leased by the Crown on licence to squatters. Lonsdale, using the names of his nephews, Alfred and George Langhorne, also took up a run south of the Yarra in the autumn of 1837.[7] This run was perhaps further east than Walpole's and Goggs' Callitini Run. In April, 1839, David Hill arrived from New South Wales, purchased the Langhorne stock and licence rights and held the land until the first Crown Land sales in June 1840. Hill built a house on the eastern end of the billabong which became known as Lake Como (where Como Park is now). The location of Hills' station is marked on an early plan of proposed allotments surveyed by T.H. Nutt.[8]

### Surveying

The intrusion of squatters with their cattle probably did not much change the appearance of the South Yarra and Prahran area or seriously affect the traditional ways of the aborigines. In 1838, when the area saw the start of permanent settlement, it was estimated that the district of Melbourne contained between 500 to 600 aborigines, divided into three tribes. Wawoorong tribe inhabited all the district extending from the Yarra Yarra, taking in Prahran as far as Western Port. However a seemingly innocuous activity which came with official recognition of the white settlement was eventually to bring major changes to the appearances of the area. After a short period of time its consequences were to dispossess and alienate the aborigines from their land. The apparently harmless activity was this systematic surveying of the bushland around the Melbourne township. From the east-west survey line along what is now Victoria Street, the northern boundary of the township, and the north-south line along what is now Hoddle Street, the eastern boundary, being one mile north and two miles east of a point fixed on Batman's Hill, section lines and proposed government road widths were surveyed and marked out for miles through the bush. South of the river the line that became Punt Road was surveyed. Eastwards from there, along where High Street now runs, a large rectangle extending over to the site of Williams Road and up to the Yarra was marked out by axe cuts on trees. This great rectangle in the bush, 895 acres in area, was to become an aboriginal reserve, within which it was hoped to contain the aborigines, teach them English social habits, and convert them to Christianity.

George Langhorne had arrived at Port Phillip in January 1837, and established an aboriginal mission station on behalf of the Episcopal Church Missionary Society of Sydney. Governor Sir Richard Bourke, during his official visit to the Port Phillips district in 1837, wrote in his diary on 23 March; "Inspected the spot proposed for a Missionary Station. The situation is very good in every respect. A reserve should be made here of from four to six sections. A small building is erecting partly by the labour of the natives and of the Overseer and Missionary himself." [9]

James Backhouse, the Quaker, visited both the missionary station and Gardiner's home when he came to the district in late 1837. On 11th November he met Langhorne at the ferry crossing: "When we met he was setting out for this Missionary station, two miles up the Yarra-Yarra River, in a boat managed by four native boys ... We accepted a pressing invitation to accompany this party ... After dining with George and Mary Langhorne, we were conveyed four miles further up the river to the dwelling of John and Mary Gardiner ... "[10] Langhorne's camp is also remembered by the Hon. George Frederick Belcher. He remembers that Langhorne knew that the aborigines liked wandering about, so he lived in a moveable tent and accompanied them when they migrated. The mission often had its centre at Gardiner's Creek, but seemed to have been permanently centralised on the site of the future Botanic Gardens.[11]

### Naming of the District

It was Langhorne who was responsible for the naming of the district. While Robert Hoddle was surveying south of the Yarra in 1837, he called on Langhorne to ask if there was a native name for the district which was to become part of the County of Bourke, and a separate parish. Langhorne replied that the natives called it Pur-ra-ran meaning land partially surrounded by water. In his notes to Governor Gipps, Hoddle wrote it was "Prahran".[12] Hoddle was dividing the area around Melbourne into Parishes, each of which contained a reservation for a village. On the south side of the Yarra two parishes were created, one on either side of the survey line that was to become Punt Road. The Parish of Prahran was on the east of the line and the Parish of South Melbourne on the west. The village reserve in the Parish of Prahran was to be where Elsternwick now is.

The Aboriginal Missionary Reserve of 895 acres and the name 'Parish of Prahran' both appear on an 1837 map prepared by Hoddle. Also marked is a proposed road from the main settlement commencing at the Yarra falls and running towards Toorak. To the east of the aboriginal mission an agricultural subdivision was to front onto the Yarra. Eight portions were surveyed on land described as 'good pasture, soil sandy', of which six would fall with the present municipal boundary of Prahran. These six portions on the east boundary of the Mission were not immediately sold and eventually six of them became lots of 13-18 in the subdivision sold in the first Prahran land sale in 1840. They indicate that the best land was chosen for this agricultural subdivision.

## **Brickmaking**

As well as the pastoral and missionary activities on the south side of the Yarra, brickmaking had been started very early near the present site of the Alexandra Gardens. The general location of these brickfields is shown on early maps of the area. The brickmakers were also squatters and had to pay 10 pounds a year for being on Crown Land, 5 pounds for erecting a tent and 2 pounds 10- for using the clay.[13] The brickmakers are reported to have been a rough lot. Garryowen describes the brickfields settlement as the resort of a drunken, blood-thirsty, thieving crew, by whom several nocturnal depredations were committed.[14] Brickfields were soon to extend around the Yarra, down Chapel Street and into Prahran. There were also some quarries on the south side of the river in the vicinity of the present Huntingfield Lawn in the Botanic Gardens. The quarries are shown on early maps and may be the quarries from which the stone for St James' (Old Cathedral) was taken.

## **Firewood**

The South Yarra, Toorak, and Prahran areas also quickly became the principal sources of firewood for the Melbourne settlement. Itinerant timbergetters took the wood to the township either by boats along the river or on bullock-drays which struggled along bush tracks with their loads. Before the surveyors had clearly established the rectilinear grid of proposed government roads, the tracks passed obliquely across Prahran on either side of where Commercial Road now runs. The tracks ran out through present day Malvern towards Dandenong. They probably originated as stock routes through the bush which may in turn have followed tracks used by the aborigines.

## **Small Farms**

In the late 1830s some small farms were also established just over the river from the Melbourne township. The site of the Domain was once "covered with small farms, from which came some of Melbourne's supply of milk, butter and eggs. The farmers seem to have been squatters without any legal title, and later were compelled by the Government to vacate their holdings".[15]

A description of the area in 1838 is given by the Rev. William Waterfield. His diary reads "25 Wed.: This morning I returned to town with Mr Gardiner. On the southern side of the river the road led through a thickly wooded country with constant alternation of gentle hill and dale. I like this side, and found many pretty spots for the erection of houses".[16] The road Waterfield refers to would have been a stock route to the Melbourne township, and perhaps roughly followed the future alignment of Gardiner's Creek Road, later renamed Toorak Road. The southern parts of Prahran towards St Kilda were less attractive. William Westgarth recorded his impressions of the area in 1844 when he lost his way between Toorak Road and St. Kilda. He described the area of Prahran towards St Kilda as a waste land of sand and scrub.[17]



## Punts

The pastoral, brickmaking, quarrying, farming and timber getting activities on the south side of the river induced improvements to the crossing of the Yarra. The first crossings were made by small row boats or over the hazardous outcrop of rocks across the Yarra near where Queen Street now runs. In March 1838 a punt service was established. Other punts followed, one giving the name to Punt Road. Several punts were started by Alexander Sims who transported stone from the quarry near the Botanic Gardens for the building of St James' Church.

While Hoddle's map of 1837, only showed the division of Melbourne by the Yarra into two parishes, North and South Melbourne (the parish of Prahran was to the east of Punt Road), and indicated little habitation on the southern side,[18] each improvement to access across the Yarra immediately encouraged further development on the south side.

## **4.0 CROWN LAND SALES**

During the time the area south of the Yarra was held by the Crown and occupation of it could only be leased on the payment of a licence fee, no permanent settlement was established. As the surveying into parishes of an extensive area around the small Melbourne township proceeded, the government began a somewhat piecemeal disposal of Crown Lands by auction. The areas of South Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond were sold in 1838-39 and the sale of Brunswick land began late in 1839. These areas were sold in large sections (20 to 100 acres) for agricultural purposes or the development of large "suburban" estates. No clear appreciation seems to have been had by government that these large sections would be subdivided by private individuals and speculators to create close urban areas. A somewhat different and more varied, but nevertheless piecemeal, sequence of Crown Land sales took place on the south side of the Yarra. They saw the end of the squatting period and the beginning of the permanent urban settlement. Five sequences of sales took place in the South Yarra, Toorak, Prahran and Windsor area.

### **4.1 PRAHRAN: THE FIRST SALE (SOUTH YARRA AND TOORAK EAST OF PUNT ROAD)**

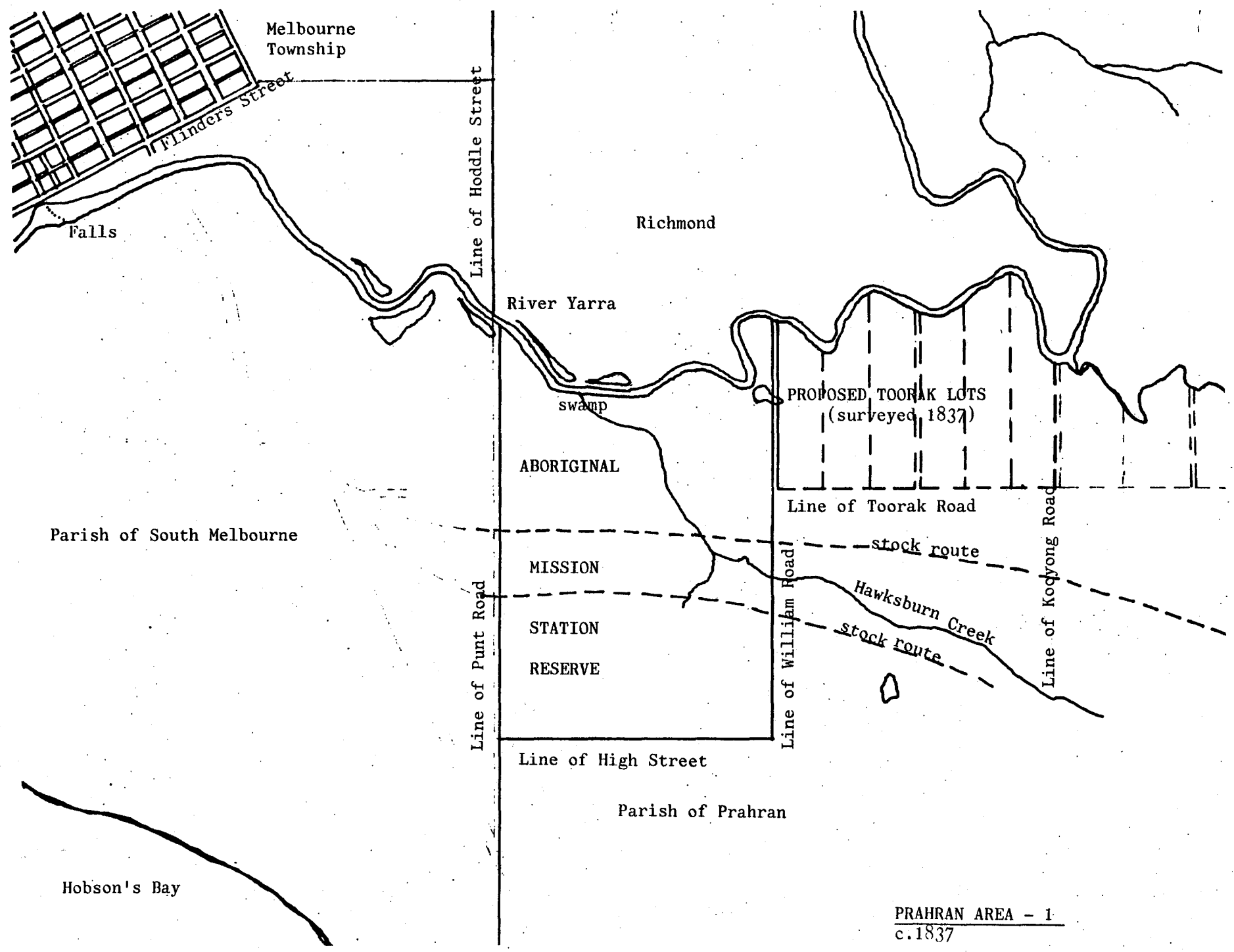
Late in 1839 the extensive area of land eastwards from Punt Road in South Yarra and Toorak was considered for sale. Robert Hoddle forwarded the plans for these "suburban allotments on the south side of the Yarra Yarra River" to Sydney on 1st February 1840.[19] Twenty-two large allotments were provided for, bounded by the River Yarra, Punt Road, Toorak Road and Kooyong Road (and included the 6 allotments shown on Hoddle's 1837 map of the area). The long narrow allotments ran from the proposed Government Road following the stock route from Gardiner's Creek, now Toorak Road, to the Yarra with allotment numbers commencing at Punt Road. A large ti-tree swamp extended over parts of lots 5-8, but the major part of the land was on high ground and had step banks down to the river, so it rarely suffered severely from the effects of heavy floods. The

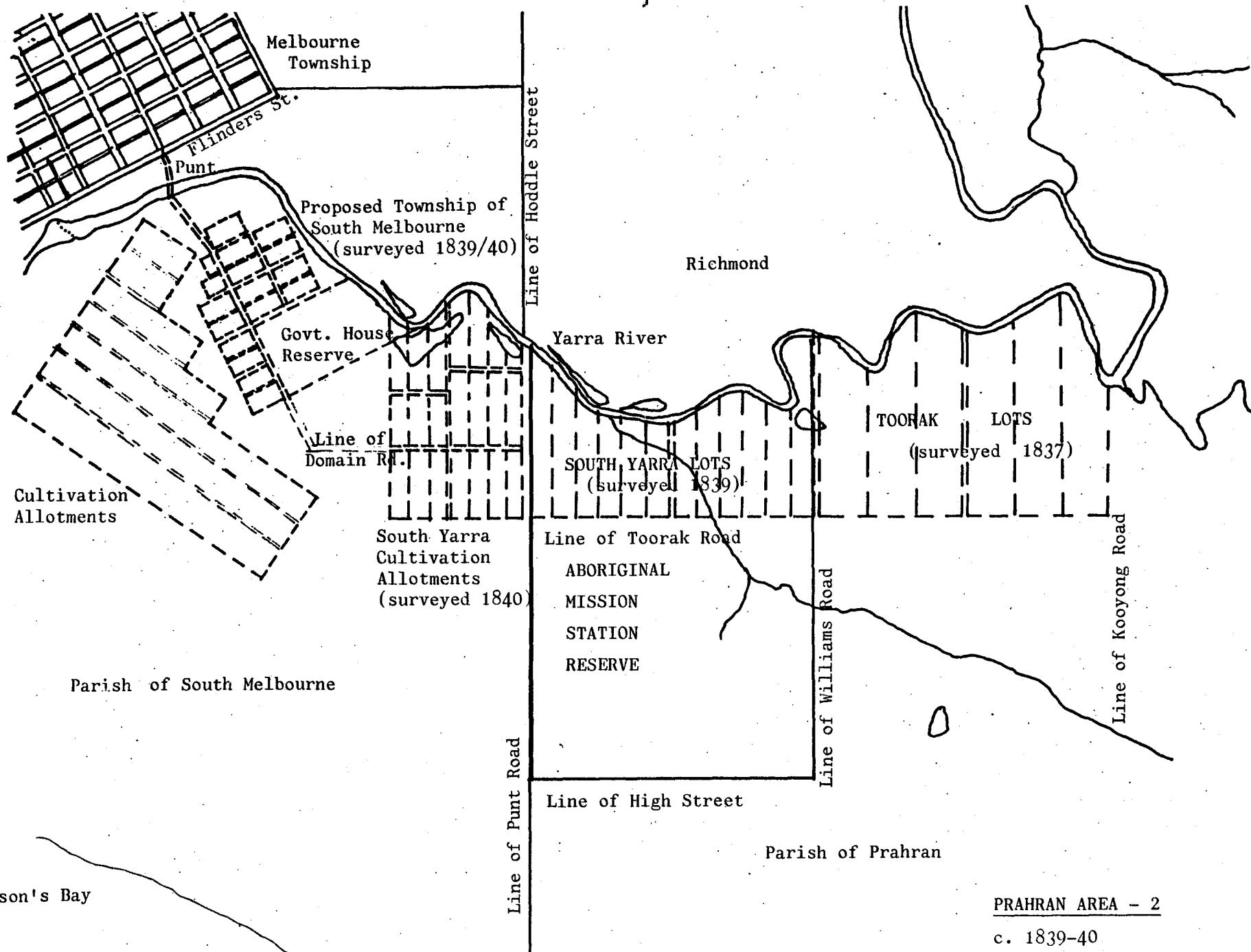
decision to sell this land required the Aboriginal Mission Reserve to be abandoned. It was transferred to the west side of Punt Road and included the site of the future Botanic Gardens and was called the Nakham Reserve. Part of this new reserve would have been on the Callitini Run occupied by the squatters Walpole and Goggs.

The sale, held on 6th June, 1840, created great excitement in the settlement, and intending purchasers came from all over the district and also from Sydney and Hobart. The competition for the land was keen, and the twenty-two allotments, totalling 911 acres 3 roads, realised over 17,600 pounds. A description of the auction is given by Richard Howitt: "Immense was the crowd of people; a goodly and respectable assemblage ... All was excitement and eagerness; vigorous was the competition; ... they bought up land at enormous prices".[20] The sale dispossessed the aborigines of part of their traditional hunting grounds.

The first twelve lots had frontages to Gardiner's Creek Road, and the prices per acre ranged from 24 pounds for Lot 1 to 40 pounds for Lot 77. The remaining lots, to the east of Williams Road, were considerably larger but commanded less per acre. Lot 13 was of 60 acres, and was bought by Jane Hill, daughter of David Hill who had previously occupied the land as a squatter. It was purchased for only 7 pounds per acre, while the top price range of 20 pounds per acre was paid for lots 14, 15 and 17.

*How the pattern of subdivision was established. Robert Hoddle's grid pattern was set out from Hoddle Street and Punt Road. It was surveyed and sold in the following sequences.*





Melbourne Township

Punt

Line of Hoddle Street

Richmond

River Yarra

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

South Yarra Cultivation Allotments

Line of Toorak Road

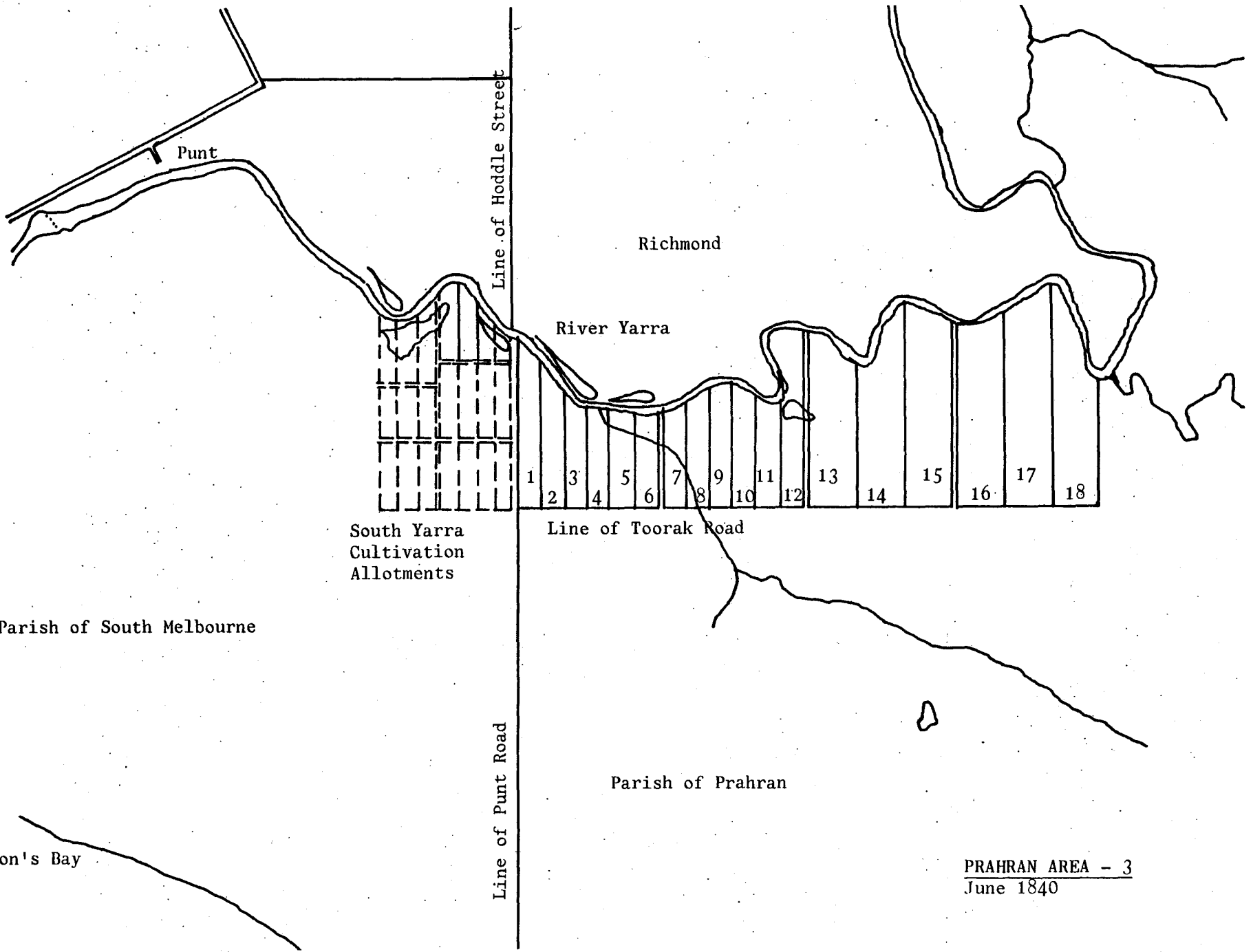
Parish of South Melbourne

Line of Punt Road

Parish of Prahran

Hobson's Bay

PRAHRAN AREA - 3  
June 1840



Melbourne Township

Bridge

Hoddle Street

Richmond

River Yarra

Botanical Gardens

Line of Domain Rd. 10 9 8

(Lots 1-18 sold 10/6/ 1840)

South Yarra

Lots Sold:

5 : 20/8/1845

8,9,10 : 25/3/1846

6,7 : 21/7/1847

15-21 : 14/3/1849

16	18	20	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	
15	17	19	21	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18

(Lots 27-36 sold 27/6/ 1849)

Parish of South Melbourne

		36	35			32	31	30	29	28	27
(38)	(37)			34	33						

Kooyong Road

Punt Road

(39)	(40)	(41)	(42)	(43)	(44)	(45)	(46)	(47)	(48)	(49)	(50)
------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

(Lots 37-66 not sold until 15/5/1850)

(58A)	(57A)	(56)	(55)	(54)	(53)	(52)	(51)
(58B)	(57B)						
(59A)	(60A)						
(59B)	(60B)	(61)	(62)	(63)	(64)	(65)	(66)
(59C)	(60C)						

Dandenong Road

Parish of Prahran

PRAHRAN AREA - 4  
June 1849

## 4.2 THE FIRST SOUTH MELBOURNE PLAN

As early as March, 1839 Hoddle had submitted the first design for a town at South Melbourne including a reserve for a Government House.[21] The site Hoddle selected for the town included the rising ground now occupied by the Alexandra Gardens and the Domain, extending to just behind Government House on the east. He chose this area because the land directly opposite and south-west of the Melbourne settlement was a large marshy plain subject to flooding and therefore not suitable for a township. However, these plans received a setback when even this higher ground was inundated during the Yarra's first great flood since the settlement had been established. The flood, on Christmas Eve 1839, "flooded out all the brickmakers on the south bank and carried their dwellings and belongings in a tangled heap of ruins out into the bay".[22] Garryowen, who recorded the event, adds "It was several days before the flood subsided. Before this occurrence it was the intention of the Government to extend the township over the river, but this deterred them from doing so, for the whole of the proposed extension lay for more than a week buried feet deep in water".[23]

Despite this setback, parts of Hoddle's 1839 design for a town at South Melbourne were surveyed and pegged out by Hoddle in 1840 and on the 7th December, 1842, some of the allotments were put up for auction, at an upset price of 150 pounds per acre. Hoddle thought the town, as proposed, would be eagerly bought up, and even anticipated a ready sale of the marsh land to the south-west and subdivided it into allotments of about 5 acres. However, no bids were received for either of the first two town lots submitted, so under orders from Superintendent La Trobe the whole area was withdrawn from sale.[24] The present site of Government House is the only remnant of the proposed township to have survived. Had the subdivision gone ahead the area would have developed as a rather elite suburb surrounding the north and west boundaries of Government House.

A small part of the land withdrawn from sale was reserved as a Houseless Immigrants' Home after the collapse of the land boom in the early 1840s, when the population had increased dramatically and unemployment was widespread. The land was used for a similar purpose after the second surge of settlers following the gold rushes in the early 1850s. A long row of wooden buildings was built below Prince's Bridge for the goldrush Houseless Immigrants' Home, and tents were placed on the land south of the river near Prince's Bridge and on the borders of the Domain. The establishment of Canvas Town on the west of St Kilda Road towards South Melbourne saw the removal of immigrant settlers from the Domain.

The development of the south side of the Yarra was aided by the building of a wooden bridge to the south of Swanston Street in 1845. The bridge was built by the Melbourne Bridge Company, and was to serve temporarily until a permanent government structure (then under consideration) should be erected. It became known as Balbirnie's Bridge, as he leased the bridge and made large profits from the tolls he charged for crossing. Thus, the St

Kilda Road - Swanston Street artery was established. The wooden bridge was a "poor - rickety - looking affair,[25] and, "was crowded every evening by a close packed herd of cows being driven in from the 'common' on the south side by the herdsmen, who collected them again in the morning after milking, and took them out to the pasture during the day".[26] The wooden bridge was replaced by a beautiful single arch stone bridge, opened 15th November, 1850. This stone bridge was later replaced by the existing Princes Bridge which was opened in 1888.

#### **4.3 SOUTH YARRA: ANDERSON STREET, DOMAIN ROAD, AND THE BOTANIC GARDENS**

In August, 1845, another land sale was held in the South Yarra area, with three allotments being offered for sale to the west of Punt Road. These allotments were Lots 5, 6 and 7 of a subdivision of twenty-one cultivation allotments surveyed by T.H. Nutt in 1840, and adjoining the town of South Melbourne laid out by Hoddle. The subdivision was situated on the Yarra River, extending over part of the site of the Botanic Gardens to Punt Road. The western part of Nutt's subdivision was later included in the Botanic Garden Reserve following Superintendent La Trobe's 1842 direction to Hoddle to reserve a suitable block to lay out a Botanic Garden.[27]

With the timber bridge across the Yarra and a Botanic Garden in the vicinity, the allotments laid out by Nutt would have become more attractive to buyers. Lots 8, 9 and 10 all ten acres, were sold on 25th March, 1846. David Ogilvy purchased Block 8 for 140 pounds, and Joseph Anderson purchased lots 9 and 10 for 140 pounds and 147 pounds respectively. Joseph Anderson also purchased lots 6 and 7 when they were re-auctioned on 21st July, 1847.[28]

The remaining allotments in T.H. Nutt's survey west of Punt Road were sold in 1849. Lots 15 to 21 were sold on 14th March, the allotments of 9 acres 2 roads extending from Toorak Road to Domain Road, with Lot 15 bounded on the west by Park Street and Lot 21 bounded on the east by Punt Road. Prices ranged from 180 pounds for Lot 16 to 399 pounds for Lot 18, with the Lots towards Punt Road fetching more than those to the west.[29]

#### **4.4 PRAHRAN: THE SECOND SALE (BETWEEN MALVERN ROAD AND TOORAK ROAD)**

A map published by T. Ham in 1847, does not mention Prahran, but names South Yarra, St Kilda and Brighton.[30] These habitations had collections of houses and huts, but Prahran remained a bush of gums, wattles, native cherry trees and sheoaks with ti-trees in the swamps. Prahran is described by Joseph Crook in 1849 as "a dense bush of big trees, full of birds, kangaroos, possums and wild fowl, with no roads".[31] Means of passing from one part to another was by means of cattle tracks.



In the South Yarra area of Prahran north of Toorak Road building development began almost as soon as the area had been sold by the Crown in 1840. By the late 1840s a well established settlement was there. But this was not so in Prahran which in the late 1840s was still a grazing and timber-getting area. John and William Payne, owners of Cobart Station in Western Port, were accustomed to bringing mobs of fat cattle from the station and grazing them over Prahran lands before they were driven into the Melbourne market. Portions of Prahran land were also let out on what were termed "cultivation leases" for small scale farming.

After the area was surveyed the rectilinear framework of main roads was decided on. They were intended to be farm roads bounding large agricultural blocks of about 60 acres each. With increasing public pressure for more and within the rectilinear framework, the land bounded by Punt, Toorak, Kooyong and Commercial Roads was the subject of a Crown land sale on the 27th June, 1849. With that sale the permanent settlement of central Prahran began. The allotments (number 27 to 36) ran in depth from Toorak Road to Malvern (Commercial) Road, starting with Lot 27 at Kooyong Road, and Lot 36 being the first block west of Chapel Street.

#### **4.5 PRAHRAN: THE THIRD SALE (WINDSOR AND NORTH OF DANDENONG ROAD)**

The remaining Prahran land was auctioned on 15th May, 1850.[32] The two blocks between Toorak Road and Commercial Road were sold, and the remaining Prahran lots sold were bounded by Commercial Road, Punt Road, Wellington Street, Dandenong Road and Kooyong Road. The Prahran lands thus passed into private ownership. Their sale ushered in the long and complex period of gradual and piecemeal subdivision of the large blocks.

Something of the confused intentions of both the subdivision and the sale can be seen in the change of size in allotments 57 to 60 (bounded by High Street, Punt Road, Wellington Street and Chapel Street). The four northerly ones were 15 acres each (57A, B; 58A, B) and the other six were of ten acres each (59A, B C; and 60A, B, C). The blocks immediately south of Wellington Street (in East St Kilda) were likewise of a small area. It would seem that these smaller allotments were regarded as cultivation or suburban allotments adjacent to the township of St Kilda, much in the same way as Nutt's Survey of the Domain Road/Anderson Street area was of 10 acre allotments adjacent to the proposed township of South Melbourne. The smaller allotments in Prahran became the urban area of Windsor. At the time of the Crown Land sale they were outside the town reserve of Melbourne and thus not within the municipal area embracing St Kilda. That early municipal boundary, the first on the south side of the river, contradicted any planning intention of the subdivision being an extension of or related to the St Kilda township. Nevertheless, the occupiers of these allotments in Windsor early regarded themselves as part of St Kilda, and the confused intentions of government planning leading up to the Crown Land sale of May, 1850 was adversely to affect the efforts to create a

Prahran Municipality in 1855/56. The residents of Windsor were opposed to being part of the Prahran municipality, and for a long time maintained an aloofness towards Prahran and an identification with St Kilda.

A strong prejudice against speculators developed from the first days of the Melbourne settlement. It was expressed most strongly against absentee land owners, especially those from Sydney. But a person who bought in an area, lived there and gained through the speculative subdivision of the land, was regarded in a quite different and positive way. Residence and the personal development of property was the most important favour a land owner could bestow on adjoining landowners. The cleavage of opinion favouring resident landowners against absentee land-owning speculators was very strong throughout Prahran. It went so far as to taint an area subdivided by an absentee landowner. The resident land owners in the South Yarra and Toorak area who subdivided parts of their estates were regarded as benevolent guardians over the fate and fortunes of the subdivided areas within their original estate. This state of mind would have its origin in conservative social attitudes towards guardianship on manorial and landed estates. Those who bought into speculative subdivision from absentee landlords were denied or would be bereft of this intangible guardianship. Strange as these notions are they seem to lie behind attitudes towards speculation, subdivision, and the development of small congregations of houses, shops and other building types.

The majority of the original purchasers of land in Prahran were speculators, some even from Sydney, and some were buying for syndicates. Prahran and South Yarra land holders profited from the land shortage after the influx of settlers following the discovery of gold in 1851. William Kelly reported that he heard "divers and sundry stories told, and instances specified of the fortunes made in land speculations and the enormous profits extracted out of small patches of ground in incredibly short spaces of time." [33]

However, by the early 1850s the northern area of Prahran in South Yarra and Toorak had been under development for about ten years. The time lag in development between different areas, the diversity of development and the various concentrations of buildings throughout Prahran requires a more detailed description of the development within each of the areas sold by the Crown.

## **5.0 EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN PRAHRAN IN THE 1840S AND 1850S**

Municipal records are a principle source in the reconstruction of the development of an urban or suburban area. As the municipal records of Prahran did not come into existence until 1856 detailed year by year records are not available for the early years following the Crown Land sales. However other records are available, such as maps, written remembrances, diaries, letters, photographs and surviving details of buildings. The oldest sections of close settlement in Prahran were established on some of the first eighteen allotments north of Toorak Road sold on

10th June, 1840, fifteen years before municipal government embraced the area. These allotments will be considered first, followed by the earliest subdivision in central Prahran and Windsor.

### 5.1 SOUTH YARRA AND TOORAK: EAST OF PUNT ROAD

The long narrow allotments running from Toorak Road to the river and the undulating nature of the country influenced the form of closer settlement and type of street pattern introduced into the area. On these large estates, various cottages and residences were to be built, and later some impressive residences were to appear. Along Toorak Road parts of some of the lots were soon subdivided. The most extensive early subdivision was on Lot 1 at the intersection of Toorak Road and Punt Road. However, not all the land was fit for residence. The swampy land in the gully near the present Yarra Street was used for a tannery very early in South Yarra's history. The remainder of the area continued to be used mainly for pastoral purposes.

The settlement south of the Yarra was too scattered to be included within the area covered by the Melbourne Corporation Act which was passed in August, 1842. This act proclaimed Melbourne a town, but its boundaries at that time included only a small area north of the Yarra. However, an amending Act was passed in 1844 to include the parish of South Melbourne in the town of Melbourne. The eastern boundary was Punt Road, so none of the area sold in the June 1840 sale was included within the town boundary.

In 1844, William Westgarth lived in a little cottage in South Yarra on the Gardiner's Creek Road, "then only a bush track". He writes "I had not many neighbours. Mr Jackson, at the far end, had bought Toorak, but not yet built upon it; and the near end was graced by Mr R H Browne's pretty villa,[34] in its ample grounds, sold shortly before to Major Davidson, and constituting the palace of its time along the road. There was a trackless forest opposite us, and more than once I missed my way in trying to make a straight cut to the present St Kilda".[35]

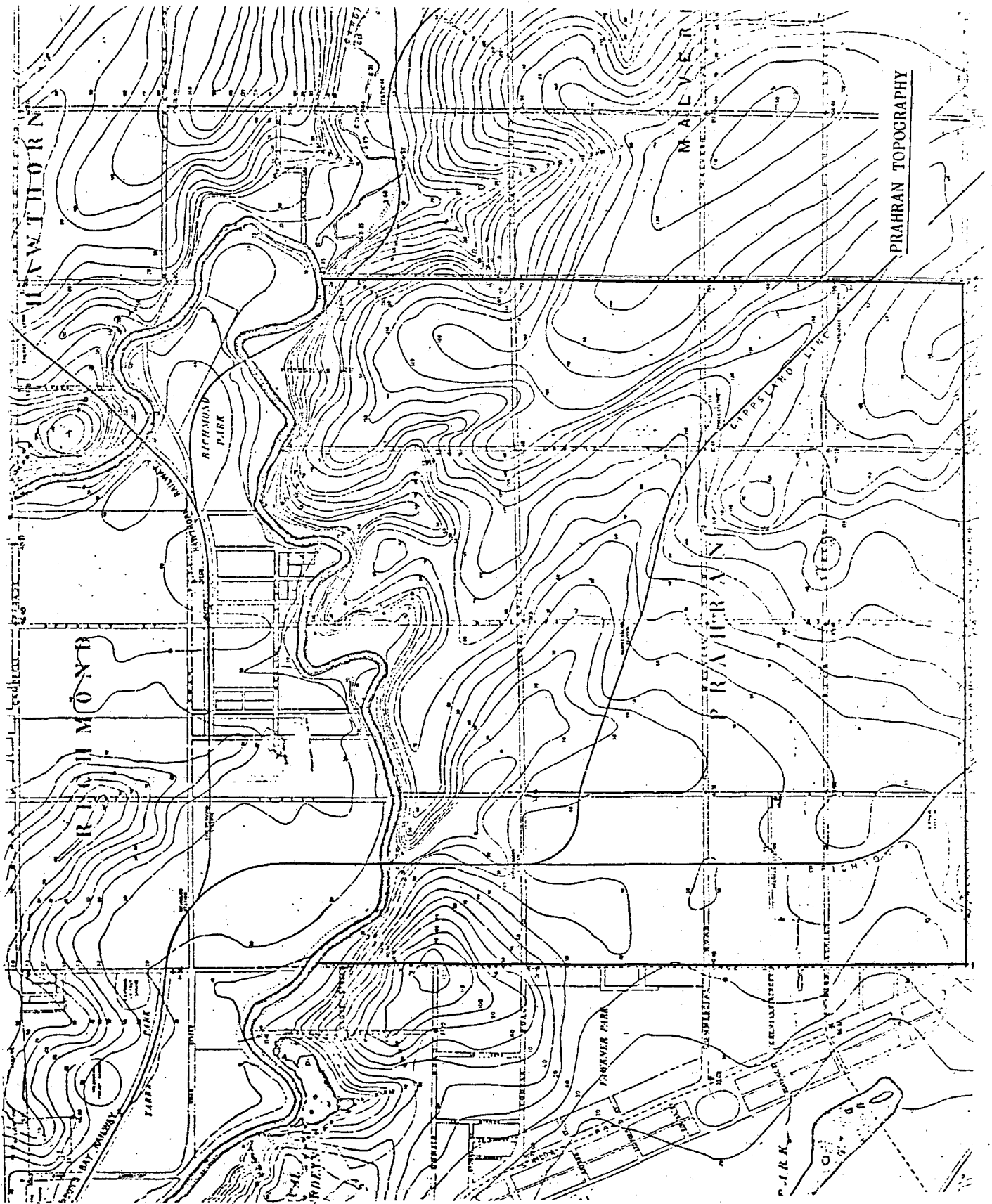
The area is also remembered by Rold Bolderwood: "Bridge there was none in those days", he writes, "not even the humble one with wooden piers that spanned the stream later, and connected Melbourne people with the sandy forest of South Yarra, then much despised for its alleged agricultural inferiority: still, there was a punt".[36]

A number of the early owners of these blocks built a villa residence well in from Toorak Road and on the edge of the high ridge overlooking the Yarra Valley. The subsequent subdivision of those blocks began at Toorak Road and were laid out on either side of a long access street which ran into the block. In some cases the original villas remained within their grounds overlooking the Yarra and survived until recent times. One of these, Bona Vista, now known as Grantham, is probably the oldest surviving building in the area. This type of subdivisional process is quite different from that which was followed in parts of Prahran, south of Toorak Road.

The 27 acre allotment on the corner of Punt Road and Toorak Road (lot 1) was bought by R H Browne. Within a month of the Crown sale he called tenders for the erection of cottages on his land which he called the "Estate of Metternich". The house Browne built for himself and called Yarra House was described by William Westgarth, who lived nearby, as a "pretty villa, in its ample grounds ... and constituted the palace of its time along the road." [37] In about 1843 Browne sold his property to Major Alexander Davidson who also bought the 22 acre allotment next door (Lot 2) from its original Crown purchaser, E J Brewster. Davidson was an interesting and eccentric gentleman settler in South Yarra. he was a retired Major from the Indian Army and brought with him to South Yarra a number of Indian servants, as well as Indian customs in food and social behaviour. His daughter Caroline has her name given to the first street penetrating into Lot 1, and Davidson's name remains in the small street running off Punt Road into where Browne's original villa, and later Davidson's house once stood.

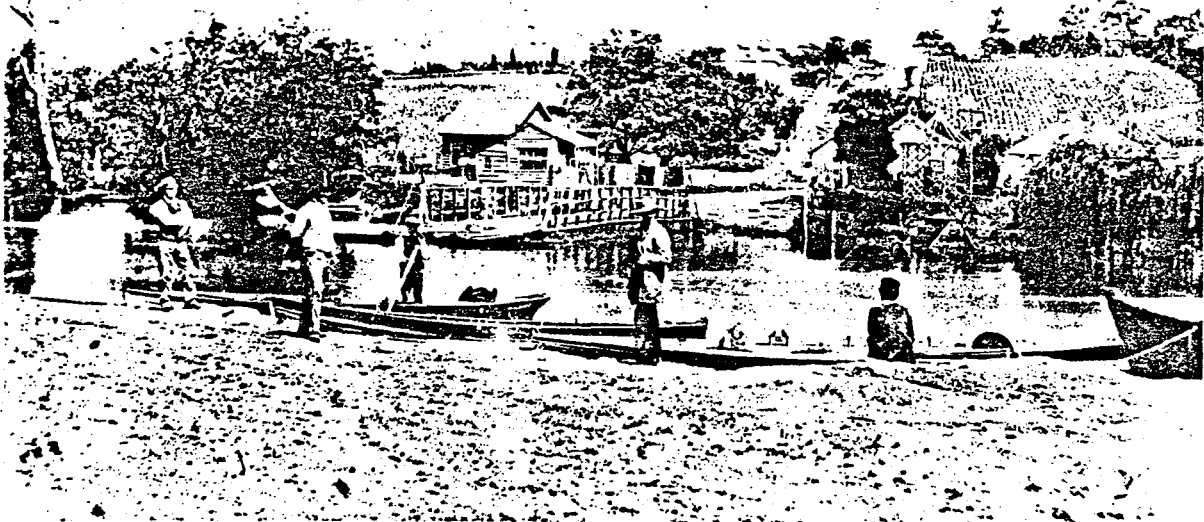
The subdivision of the first two allotments contained a number of interesting historic houses. One was Shipley House built before 1847 and demolished in 1969. It stood on the north west corner of Caroline Street and Shipley Street. In 1854 it was bought by Hugh Parker who had the house remodelled by the architect John Gill. [38]

Another historic house from this early period is Avoca, built c.1848 for the merchant William Montgomery Bell who bought the land from Davidson. Bell is credited with establishing the first vineyard in South Yarra which was on the east side of where (today) Caroline Street meets Alexandra Avenue. Avoca stands on the river side of the ridge, and running back towards Toorak Road, Avoca Street was created along which several interesting old houses were built: Avoca Lodge (65 Avoca Street, dem.) was built for Charlotte Butler in c.1855, a prefabricated wooden house; Richmond House, 56 Avoca Street (formerly Lindisfarne then Pately built c.1858-9 for Edward Wheelock, a Melbourne importer of American stoves and hardware, and extended by its next owner G W Selby between 1861-8. This restrained and elegant house conveys the architectural rectitude of post gold rush suburban villas. The adjacent Caroline Street also has an early single storey villa (75 Caroline Street) which was built about 1851 or earlier. Although the house was altered and extended in 1969 it is a significant link with the earliest years of this oldest part of South Yarra. Fortunately, the subdivision of Lots 1 and 2 continued the line of the Government Road (Domain Road) which was part of T H Nutt's survey of South Yarra west of Punt Road. Eventually the extension of Domain Road was continued through Lot 3 into Lot 4 to meet Darling Road. Like Caroline and Avoca Streets in Lots 1 and 2, Murphy Street and Darling Road had penetrated into Lot 3 and 4 respectively from Toorak Road. However neither Lot 3 or 4 had a gentleman's villa occupying the river side of the ridge and part of these two lots by the river has become a park. This low lying area was to be chosen for the crossing point of the railway which opened in 1860.



*The topography of Prahran determined the desirability and extreme diversity in social status of the different sections of the municipality. Elevated areas were originally subdivided into mansion allotments whilst the flat swampy areas were subdivided into small workers' tenements; many from the earliest period of development.*

On the boundary of Lot 4 a private road (Yarra Street) was run from Toorak Road down to the river where bordering Lot 5 at the head of the low swampy ground of the hollow was the Victoria Tannery. The Victorian Tannery site has been obliterated by Alexandra Avenue: it was immediately east of where Yarra Street confronts the Avenue and part of it would have been on the Melbourne Boys High School site. The tannery was established by Kirk and Burchett in 1846. George Kirk bought Avoca from W M Bell in 1860. The tannery was flooded out in 1848 after which it became Kirk and Smith and was then taken over by Aitken.



*'Avoca' in Gordon Grove once occupied the entire suburban allotment adjacent to Punt Road and the river. The north facing part of this hilly allotment was taken up with vineyards when this photograph was taken in 1856.*

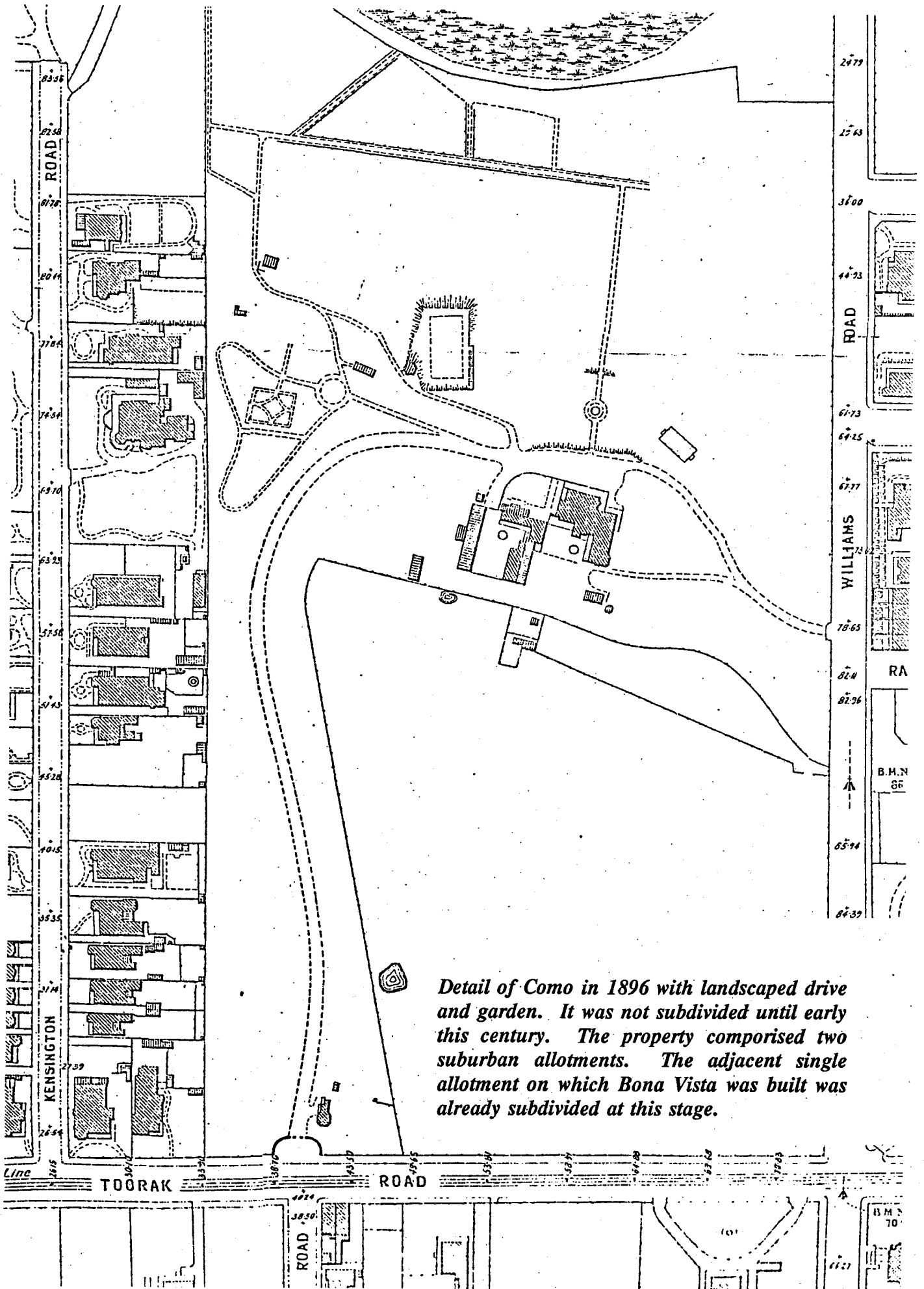
The first house to be built after the Crown Sales was Waterloo Cottage, put up in July 1841 by Charles Forrest who bought Lot 6 running along the east side of Chapel Street. It was a timber cottage and survived until at least the 1920s. Forrest was born at Cawnpore in India in 1809. He was commissioned in 1827 at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and served in the 35th Royal Sussex Regiment. By 1839 he was serving in Mauritius

when he decided to resign his commission and settle in New South Wales from where he bought the 27 acre allotment in South Yarra. It is presumed that his cottage was named after the battle of Waterloo at which his father had fought. By August, 1842 he had started another house, Hermitage Cottage, named after his house in Mauritius. It was a brick house and stood at the corner (north west) of Chapel Street and Toorak Road. Charles Forrest perhaps gave his name to heavily timbered ridge (Forest Hill) which ran across Chapel Street near the river. Forrest was trained in surveying and it is claimed that "a large portion of Prahran lands were plotted and surveyed by him".[39]

Other gentlemen's villas, and houses were built on the ridge which rose from Chapel Street near the river and ran eastwards towards Williams Road: Tivoli built by G.A. Robinson which gave its name to Tivoli Road; Rockley built by John Howey, which gave its name to Rockley Road; Bona Vista renamed Grantham), built for Dr E.C. Hobson C.1846-8, which still stands, though much altered, at the end of Kensington Road; Como, begun in 1847 as a single storey brick house for Edward E. Williams (after whom Williams Road is named), was then extended in 1855 as a two storey stucco faced brick house for John Brown, master builder and merchant who owned it from 1854 to 1864. It is from Brown's time that the earliest photographs survive showing the fine Regency revival house much as it appears today (in 1874 the ballroom wing was added during the tenure of the pastoralist Charles Armytage); Mount Verdant overlooking the Yarra east of Williams Road, built in 1850 for John Glover, married Jane Hill, daughter of the early squatter David Hill. She bought Lot 13 upon which Mount Verdant stood. The house gave its name to Verdant Avenue; Balmerino, built for R.A. Balbirnie who ran punts at Swanston Street and then leased and charged tolls to cross the first timber bridge across the Yarra. Balmerino Avenue and Burnie Street are the reminders of this early gentleman's residence; and Toorak House built c.1848-51 for the Melbourne merchant James Jackson and designed by Samuel Jackson.

Jackson was drowned at sea in 1850 before the house was finished. Perhaps the most significant event for the entire district was the decision to lease and extend the house as the residence for the Governor of Victoria (1854-74). Not only was extensive work done on the house, but the entire length of the old Gardiner's Creek Road (Toorak Road) was graded and surfaced to become the finest road in the district. Adjacent to Toorak Road and Kooyong Road was Heyington (initially called Sussex House) built for the artist James Turner. In 1881 the house was bought by Sir William Zeal who made extensive alterations in 1882 to the design of the architect E.G. Ovey. The house gave its name to Heyington Place which ran on its western boundary of Toorak Road.

During the 1840s and 50s, apart from the concentration of development in Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 west of Darling Street, and the number of residences along the ridge overlooking the river, there was virtually no concentrated development on the north side of Toorak Road.



*Detail of Como in 1896 with landscaped drive and garden. It was not subdivided until early this century. The property comprised two suburban allotments. The adjacent single allotment on which Bona Vista was built was already subdivided at this stage.*



Toorak House helped attract other wealthy residents to the area. During the 1840s, the fashionable district of Melbourne was in the east end of the township and to the north east of the township in Fitzroy, an area then known for its rural seclusion. The large influx of population following the poorer residents, and the eastern part of the city and the area of Fitzroy became infiltrated by more plebeian housing. The wealth residents began migrating to the rural areas of Toorak, South Yarra and St. Kilda.[41].

The South Yarra and Toorak area in 1853 is described by William Kelly. "I have no doubt it was the proximity of the Government demesne and the Botanic Gardens that induced the 'bon ton' of the Metropolis to establish their suburban headquarters at South Yarra, a high-lying district ... running in a quick but lovely slope on the one side down to the Yarra. The land in the South Yarra district, fortunately for its abiding pre-eminence, was originally in the hands of wealthy and respectable classes, free enough from the vice of avarice to resist the prevailing temptation of cutting up their properties into small allotments ... On the contrary, wishing to keep the profane multitude at a distance, paddocks, instead of patches of land, were put into the market, and the purchasers, who were mostly of the settling class were thus enabled to build fine dwellings and surround themselves with gardens and pleasure grounds. The region was even then a delectable spot, and the price which the land fetched debarred anyone but persons of means from invading its exclusive neighbourhood".[42]

The first speculative residential subdivision in Toorak north of Toorak Road was set out on part of Lot 13 and across 14. It introduced the street network of Wallace Avenue, Jackson Street, Douglas Street, Washington Street and Bruce Street, behind where the Toorak Village now is. C.H. James the financier and speculator was associated with this early villa subdivision. A small subdivision was also laid out opposite on the south side of Toorak Road, and both these subdivisions may have induced a few shopkeepers to settle in Toorak Road in the 1850s where the Village now is.

The Victoria Tannery was not the only industrial activity to be located in the valley running diagonally from the railway bridge on the Yarra, across Chapel Street, and across Toorak Road by River Street and Tivoli Road. By the 1850s brickmakers had moved to the river area of Chapel Street. When Charles Forrest's second house Hermitage Cottage was built, it is supposed to have been built from bricks made near the site by a brickmaker Ned Eames. The main brickfield was developed on Lot 7 in the swampy gully which ran across Chapel Street towards the river. By the 1890s a large clay pit had been excavated between the gully and Toorak Road. The site is still a brickworks occupied by the South Yarra Fire Brick Consolidated Pty Ltd.

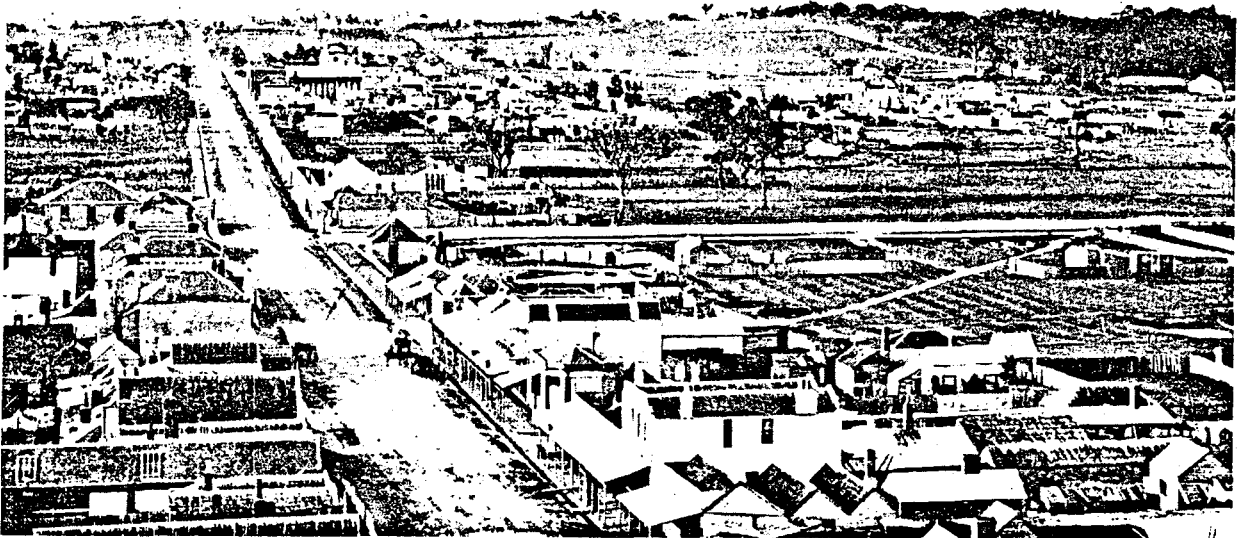
## 5.2 PRAHRAN: SOUTH OF TOORAK ROAD

The two land sales of June, 1849 and May, 1950 released from the Crown all the land of Prahran south of Toorak Road. In the eastern section of the municipality land on the two ridges, one the Armadale ridge running diagonally from the south east towards the present Hawksburn railway station, and the other, the Malvern ridge in the east running into the ridge on which Toorak House stands, became salubrious middle and upper class suburbs. They are separated by a shallow gully which runs diagonally across the municipality just to the north of the present Armadale, Toorak, Hawksburn railway line. In its lower parts the gully became the swampy area across Toorak Road and Chapel Street. The Armadale and Toorak areas developed slowly and a small number of villas and larger houses were built on large estates similar to those north of Toorak Road.

A quite different development took place in the western sections of the municipality where the large 60 acre blocks were split into small segments within which dense subdivisions were created. One of the earliest of these subdivisions was made on the south side of Toorak Road between Punt Road and Chapel Street. The three lots in this area were about 52 acres each and they were all bought by one purchaser, Peter Davis, who immediately advertised smaller farm allotments for sale.[43] Some of these small farm holdings were then quickly subdivided for close residential development, with narrow streets and small house lots. The well established development north of Toorak Road seems to have prompted Davis's speculation as he described the land as "unquestionably the finest location in the vicinity of Melbourne for respectable residences" being near Colonel Anderson's, Major Davidson's, Mr Ogilvy's and Mr Bell's residences, as well as near the Botanic Gardens." The land also had the advantage of being outside the control of the Melbourne Town Council and the Melbourne Building Act (which had come into force on January, 1850 but didn't apply outside the municipal boundary east of Punt Road). Davis's reference to the Melbourne Building Act suggests he had an eye for the prospects of subdivision into very small blocks for working man's cottages. Two areas developed rapidly, one around the corner of Punt Road and Toorak Road within the area marked by Fawkner Street and Powell Street, and the other east of the railway cutting and around into Chapel Street embracing Arthur Street and William Street. The middle part of the block from Osborne Street westwards to Powell Street was then a hollow which drained down into Chapel Street swamp near the river. Apart from along Osborne Street there was no development in the hollow, which of course has been completely obliterated by the raising and regarding of Toorak Road where it crosses the railway line.

It is still possible to make out this development from the early 1850s. A number of the very small weatherboard cottages are still standing along the original narrow streets such as Alexandra (which was Victoria) Street and Lang Street. It is probable that some of the working people from these houses worked on the large estates north of Toorak Road.

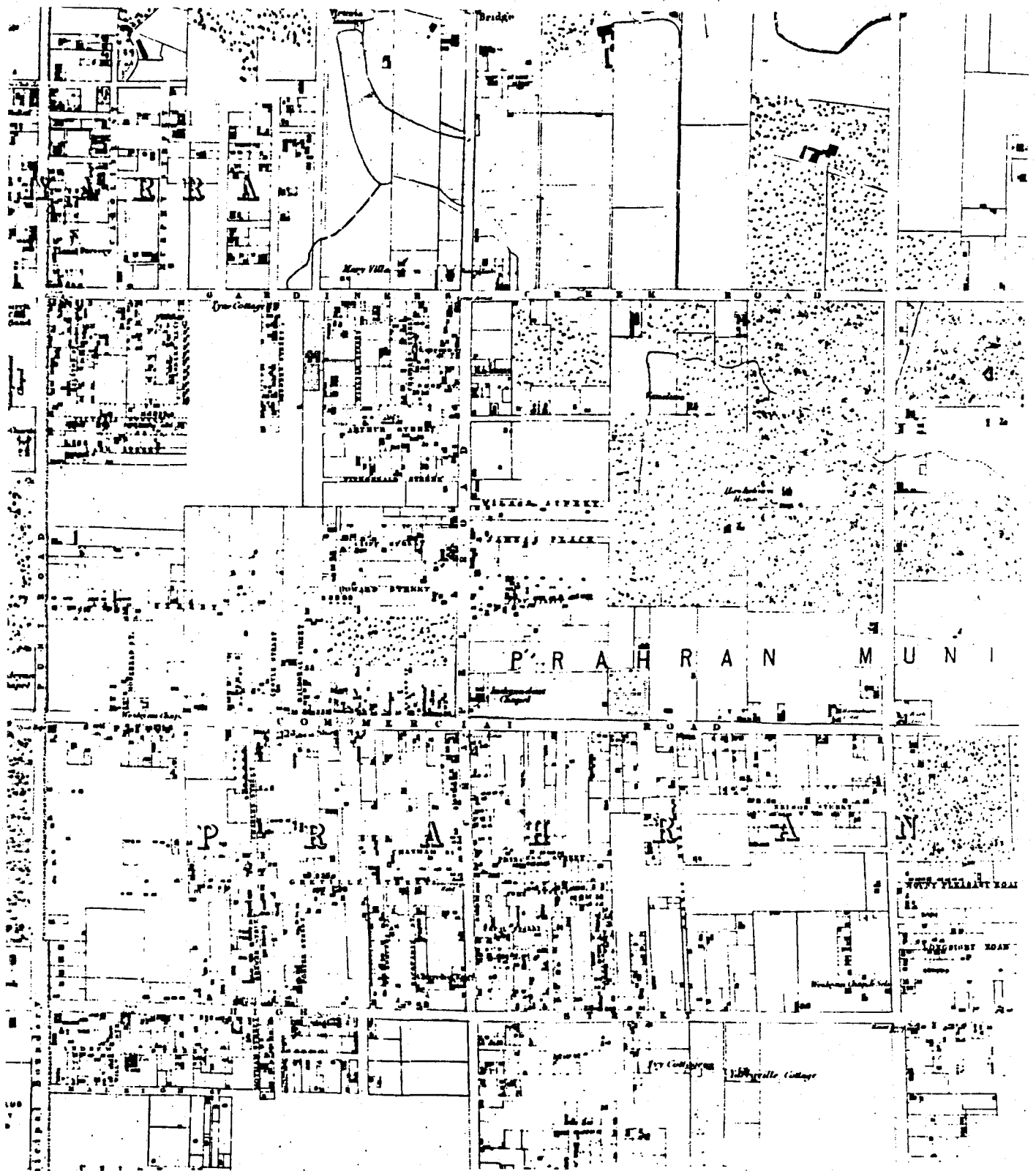
However, in contrast to the larger and more affluent developments to the north of Toorak Road, those to the south were much smaller and subdivisions much meaner. Coburg Place (now Myrtle Street) was typical of these smaller subdivisions. Ten identical small cottages were built and these are clearly shown on Kearney's map of 1855. Today, however, none survive and Myrtle Street remains as a lane with Powell Street being the principal frontage of the allotments.



*Chapel Street looking north in 1867. This view from the Town Hall tower contrasts the difference between the flat and hilly areas in terms of scale of subdivision and building types.*

By the mid 1850s similar narrow streets with small houses on either side were appearing on other parts of the large Davis subdivision, especially along Commercial Road near Chapel Street. There were also a number of large blocks with more substantial house on them, but there is no trace left of them today.

The other large allotments on either side of Chapel Street (lots 35, 41, 42, 56 and 61) were also broken into smaller blocks and then further subdivided for close residential and commercial development. Each had a distinctive set of narrow streets penetrate them from the old government roads around their perimeter.



*Development pattern established by 1856. Note the extensive development of housing in small allotments amid the mansions set in spacious allotments which were still wooded at his stage. Como is the complex in the top right hand corner of this section.*

## 6.0 THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY

Central Prahran along Chapel Street grew rapidly in the 1850s although it did not have the topographical and social advantages of South Yarra and Toorak. Much of it was flat and the low lying areas became swampy in wet months, so much so that this part of Prahran became known as 'Swampy Poor Anne'. What is now Toorak and Malvern were on higher ground to the north and east and their surface water drained across the Prahran flats as it found its roundabout way to the low lying Albert Park lake area. A recollection of the area as it was in 1852 states that "Prahran at the time was all bush, with any quantity of swamps and crab holes, and not a single road formed - nothing but bush tracks. All the roads at this period were on paper only ... Prahran at this time had anything but good character, and when speaking of where they lived, people were ashamed to own up that they lived in Prahran".[44]

The emerging commercial development along Chapel Street and at the intersections of Commercial Road and High Street was dependent on the surrounding market gardens, brickworks, tanneries, and firewood yards, as well as the growing residential population along either side of Chapel Street. All this private development took place without the support of any public works improvements to roads and drainage. However, by the mid 1850s the need for road improvements and for a system of draining the lower lying areas had become a cause for inducing local action. Between 1853 and 1856 a series of public meetings eventually saw the determination of precise boundaries to Prahran and the creation of the Prahran Municipality.

The earliest public meeting was held on the 11th April, 1853 when a call was made for the proclamation of a government township[45] and the definition of boundaries. It was hoped that a proclamation would involve the government paying for improvements, and lead to the removal of nuisances, give protection to life and property, establish sanitary regulations, improve roads and drainage, ensure the proper naming of streets and aid business. There was substantial opposition to the proposal by those who opposed local taxation and the meeting was adjourned for a fortnight. At the reconvened meeting on the 27th April a petition[46] to the Colonial Secretary had been drawn up but the meeting ended without any positive result.

Another public meeting was held in August, 1853 to petition[47] for the building of a bridge over the Yarra between Chapel and Church Streets (a bridge was built in 1857). The meeting also took up the issues of drainage and roads and called on the government to survey the Parish, and repair and drain all the (government) roads in the area. Those opposed to local taxation were again strongly represented.

These meetings were held before any municipal structure had been created by the Victorian Government. However, the Government had passed an Act for the making and improvement of roads (February, 1853) which brought into being the Central Roads Board and gave local areas the right to petition for the creation of a District Road Board.

On the 19th May, 1854 Prahran was declared a Road District and a local committee was formed to marshal support for the creation of a Prahran Road District Board but the efforts of the committee were not rewarded with the necessary support for the creation of a local hazard. The proclamation of the Prahran Road District was published in the Victorian Government Gazette where the boundaries were described as: on the west, the Richmond Punt Road; on the north, the River Yarra; on the south, the main Dandenong Road; on the east, the road running from the Main Dandenong Road east of Mrs Chomley to the River Yarra (now Kooyong Road). These were to become the boundaries of the future municipality of Prahran but not before much local dissension over the creation of a municipal Council had divided the community.

Late in December, 1854 the Victorian Parliament passed a Municipal Act by which, on the petition of house holders in an area, a municipal district could be proclaimed and a Council elected. There then followed in Prahran a series of petitions and counter petitions to the government over the boundaries of any proposed municipality in the Prahran area.

In January, 1855 a petition in favour of the creation of a municipality[48] was forwarded to the Chief Secretary of the Government. It was ambitiously argued for the municipal area to include the part of South Yarra west of Punt Road that was within the Melbourne Corporation, and the area south of Windsor stretching down to Alma Road. But the proposal met with stiff opposition. A counter-petition was presented on 17th March combining Windsor with East St Kilda (Balaclava and Elsternwick). In addition, the Melbourne Corporation and residents in South Yarra opposed the inclusion of South Yarra west of Punt Road in the proposed Prahran municipality. Finally, a third petition was sent to the Government calling for a twelve months delay in the creation of any municipality in Prahran. In this messy and divisive situation the Government acted firmly and sensibly, imposing boundaries on Prahran (and five other areas as well) making municipal government possible. The boundary chosen for the new municipality was the same as the Road District boundaries of May, 1854.

Under government supervision a public meeting to elect a Council was held on 17th May, 1855, presided over by a government appointed Chairman (Claud Farie), at which opposition was so strong that a motion was carried postponing for nine months the appointment of a Town Clerk and other Council officers.[49] The meeting was adjourned and reconvened a few days later with the intention of appointing Councillors. Again, opposition was so strong that the meeting was postponed for nine months.[50] A picture of Prahran can be gleaned through the many arguments over the election of a Council.

Those against incorporating a Council believed that Prahran was less able than its neighbours to bear taxation. It was argued that Prahran was not on the high road to any place and as it was originally intended by the government for market gardens, to market gardens it should go. Another negative view was that for the few old wood carts which went through Prahran, the streets were good enough. It was suggested the south-west part of the Prahran area (Windsor) should be joined to St Kilda rather than Prahran, as "it would not be wise for them (in Windsor) to have anything to do with the (Prahran) swamp down below. Prahran was fit for

nothing but kitchen gardens".[51] Garryowen expressed a similar opinion some years later: "Windsor", he wrote, "never seemed to me a fitting description for a district that got wedged between St Kilda and Prahran. In one of the dialects of the aborigines, 'Prahran' means sandy, and a miserable sand-blinding slush making and rarely visited region it was in the good times".[52]

One of those at the meeting was John Goodman, a squatter and businessman who lived in Orrong Road between Toorak and Malvern Roads. He was opposed to the imposition of rates within the proclaimed municipality as he would not deprive much personal benefit from paying them. He lived near Gardiner's Creek Road which had already been cleared and made good as the road to Government House. He claimed that more than half the houses of Prahran were at times empty and in consequence, he argued, the owners of the remaining occupied houses would have to pay higher municipal taxes to provide services for the absentee owners. Goodman "and the seven other spirits as wicked as himself to condemn Prahran to a continuance of neglect and filth", [53] was criticised by the Argus: "we feel the greatest indignation at finding a gentleman of some ability and education committing himself to such advice to a community, many of the component parts of which are not so favoured in those respects as himself". Once more, the social differences between swampy Prahran and the choicer area of South Yarra and Toorak is highlighted.

On the expiry of the nine months adjournment, a meeting was held on 21st February, 1856, at which a motion was carried that the elections proceed. The first Council meeting was held on 25th February, 1856.

The dissipation of strong opposition to municipal government may have been the result of other Government legislation affecting areas such as Prahran. In 1854 a Public Health Act had been passed which created a Central Board of Health and made provision for local boards of health to be appointed. Where an elected municipal Council existed it would be the local board of health but where there was no municipal Council a local board of health could be appointed by the government. The possibility of the government appointing an unelected local board of health in Prahran, whose powers would enable it to control matters which a local elected Council would control, is perhaps the reason for those so strongly opposed to local government giving ground in the second half of 1855 and dropping their opposition.

Central Prahran in these early years of its development had few substantial buildings as against a greater number of weatherboard cottages. But the clay from the swamp ground came well into use when brick villas commenced to be built.

Despite the high cost of building materials, and the high rate of wages, building operations proceeded "with restless activity ... the pleasant hill slopes of South Yarra and the sandy neath-clad plains of Prahran began to be dotted with small and villas, for the most part of timber, with here and there what might in comparison be called a mansion of more enduring material".[54] The first two-storeyed brick building in Prahran was the Ayres Arms Hotel, on the south-west corner of Chapel Street and Gardiner's Creek Road.[55]

The irregular street pattern within the larger grid of the survey roads were developing. Unlike the suburbs within the Melbourne Town Reserve which were from the first laid out with all their streets as part of the government survey, the Prahran street network gradually evolved as larger portions were subdivided into smaller portions. With each subdivision a part of the diverse street pattern would come into existence. Parts of Prahran had already been closely subdivided by 1856 with a concentration of settlement along Chapel Street and in the area between Chapel Street and Punt Road.

As mentioned previously, agitation for a bridge between Prahran and Richmond gained momentum in 1856. The punt on the Yarra at Punt Road was at the municipality's extreme north-west corner, and the road to the river was so steep that the way was both difficult and dangerous. Chapel Street ended abruptly in a large cutting, and was not connected even by a punt to Church Street, its continuation of the north side of the river in Richmond. By the later 1850s it was believed that Commercial Road was destined to be the business centre of Prahran. An early Inn, the Bush Inn, had been built at the corner of Williams and Commercial Roads, and became a popular stopping place for wood carters and other incoming vehicles from the east towards Dandenong.[56]

A major change came in 1857 when a bridge that had been fabricated for the Crimean War was built across the Yarra to connect Chapel Street with Church Street. It was opened about October 1857. Such was the hurry to use the bridge that traffic was going across before the riveting of the sides was finished. Cattle were driven in from Gippsland, through Prahran and across the bridge to the Melbourne stock-yards. The opening of the Church Street Bridge had the effect of causing the traffic to flow northwards along Chapel Street rather than continuing further westwards to Punt Road or St Kilda Road. This change in the route of traffic led to Chapel Street becoming the dominant commercial thoroughfare over that of Commercial Road. The selection of a site for the Prahran Town Hall in Chapel Street consolidated its position as the leading street.

While the Town Hall was to become a symbol in unifying the diverse and divergent interests within the Prahran municipality, the decision to build a Town Hall, and the choice of its site, roused opposition and created conflict. After the stormy creation of the municipality the Council met in the Mechanics' Institute Hall which stood in Chapel Street on the west side between Chatham and Greville Streets. In May, 1860 the Council decided to have built a Town Hall and Council Chambers and to call tenders for a site. An architectural competition was held and a design by Crouch and Wilson was selected and displayed in the Mechanics' Institute Hall.[57] The design met with the approval of rate payers who were in favour of the building of the Town Hall, but stimulated opposition from parts of South Yarra and Windsor as well as from within central Prahran. The selection of the site from among six tenders offering various sites in Commercial Road and Chapel Street also stimulated strong opposition, especially among various business interests.

The chosen site was made available by T.B. Payne and was next to the Prahran Court House, long since demolished to allow the Town Hall complex to expand. The location of the Town Hall was seen to be an important stimulus to the



commercial life of which even sections of either Commercial Road or Chapel Street was to be favoured for site. In the face of local meetings of ratepayers in various parts of the municipality and against complaints from business interests, the Council, with greater courage, went ahead with the project. On 31st October, 1860 the foundation stone was laid and the first stage began, and by March, 1861 the Town Hall, with its brickwork not yet stuccoed with cement render, was opened.

The municipal and judicial functions in Prahran have remained on this tight site right up to the present day, despite a disastrous fire in the Town Hall in January, 1914, and the rebuilding and relocation to the rear of the site of the Police Station and Court House. These noble buildings are testament to the civic energy of Prahran in the nineteenth century, for the site of the Town Hall before it was drained and filled had been a long lagoon, a favourite place for wild fowl.

## **7.0 THE RAILWAYS AND DENSE DEVELOPMENT**

Photographs of Prahran taken from the Town Hall tower in 1867 show both how sparse development was at that time and how small in scale each building was. By the 1880s all this had changed. A principal agent for this change was the introduction of railway lines through Prahran.[58] As with land for public purposes such as the Court House and Town Hall sites which had to be bought from a private owner, so the railway ventures in Prahran were dependent on the land required for the routes being bought back from the many private owners.

In 1857 the St Kilda and Brighton Railway Company was incorporated and authorised to run a line from Brighton to Windsor and then, by a loop across Punt Road and St Kilda Road, connect with St Kilda Station and then to Flinders Street. The first train into Prahran on this line ran on 3rd December, 1859 and on 13th December the service was opened to the public.

Another company, the Melbourne and Suburban Railway Company, introduced a line coming from Princes Bridge through Richmond and across the Yarra River to South Yarra with its terminus at Windsor. This line is now the Brighton line through South Yarra and involved the destruction of property and buildings. The first train ran on 24th November, 1860.

In 1862 the Melbourne and Suburban Railway Company bought out its rival, the St Kilda and Brighton Railway Company, and discontinued the loop service through St Kilda. The Brighton line through Windsor and South Yarra was thereby created and with its success came the diverse residential, commercial and manufacturing development of Prahran from the 1860s onwards.

The line changed hands in 1865 when it was bought by the Hobson's Bay Company which changed its name to the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay United Railway Company. This company after some thirteen years of service was sold to the Government in 1878 and with the sale came the connection through South Yarra, Toorak and Armadale of the suburban network with the Government's country service into Gippsland. As with the Brighton line through Prahran and

Windsor, the line through Toorak and Armadale stimulated close subdivision and the development of dense concentrations of housing from the 1880s onwards.

The railways and then the tram routes along Chapel Street, Toorak Road, Commercial Road, and High Street stimulated the ribbon of commercial development along each of those roads which date back to the earliest survey and subdivision of the area. Chapel Street in particular became an imposing architectural entity of substantial and varied designs and its commercial vitality was the result of the densely developed residential areas which came with the success of the railway and then the trams. The Prahran Market came into existence in 1867 because of the railways and was first located in Grattan Gardens before being established on its present site in 1881. But not all of Prahran was so markedly changed and the old estates of Toorak both north and south of Toorak Road were only subdivided in the most generous ways to admit an increasing number of gentlemen's residences into their midst.

Small scale industrial development accompanied the expansion of the commercial life of Prahran. In addition to the early brickmaking works some light industrial plants were established such as the foundry operated by Enoch Chambers which stood in the vicinity of Charles, High and Perth Streets with its rear along Foundry Lane near Greville Street and the Town Hall.

The traditional style of industry and commerce in Prahran was as a community of small manufacturers serving the local population. Prahran's commerce and industry rarely had a market orientation much beyond the boundaries of the City. This was by way of contrast, for example, with the early experience of Fitzroy and Collingwood, and to some extent Richmond and South Melbourne where tanning, shoe making and other trades exported their output to the metropolitan area, country and overseas.

By the early 1860s a large portion of the land on the west side of Prahran had been subdivided and a pattern of streets (from 30 feet to 66 feet in width) created. The division between East and West Prahran was marked. The land east of Williams Road was very thinly populated, with about one-third of the land having not more than a dozen houses upon it. Then persons owned 800 acres, and 500 of those were in the hands of trustees and could not be sold.[59] The land north of Toorak Road was being developed as large estates.

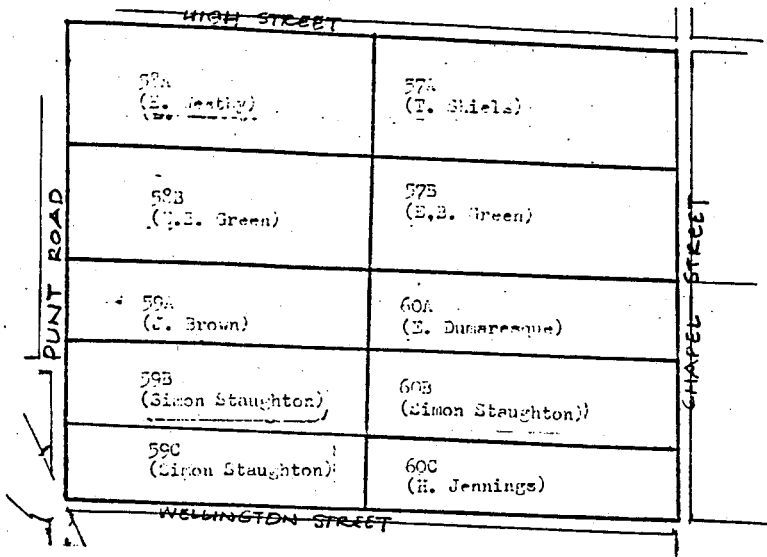
Frederick Chapman remembers that "from Toorak Road, Williams Road passed partly through open country and partly by houses, but the country was so thinly inhabited that it marked the outermost limit of the suburbs, even at times considerably later than 1855 ... The land was scrubby and of little intrinsic value, but there were in it patches or better grass land where the cows of the residents pastured." He also describes Prahran as "a suburb which grew rapidly, especially when it came to be tapped by the Brighton Railway, and by 1864, it was already a place of some importance".[60]

Typical Subdivision Process in the Low Lying Areas of Prahran

1850 Land sale into suburban allotments pre gold rush

1856 Subdivision and early settlement post gold rush population boom

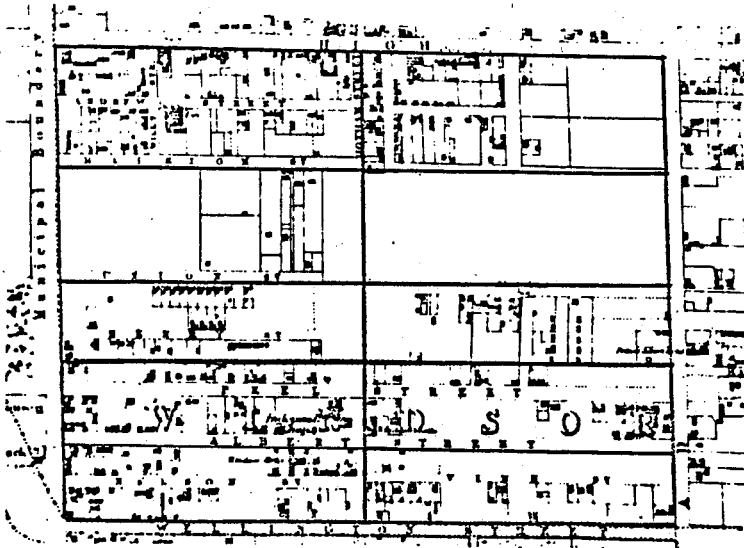
1976 Current subdivision pattern



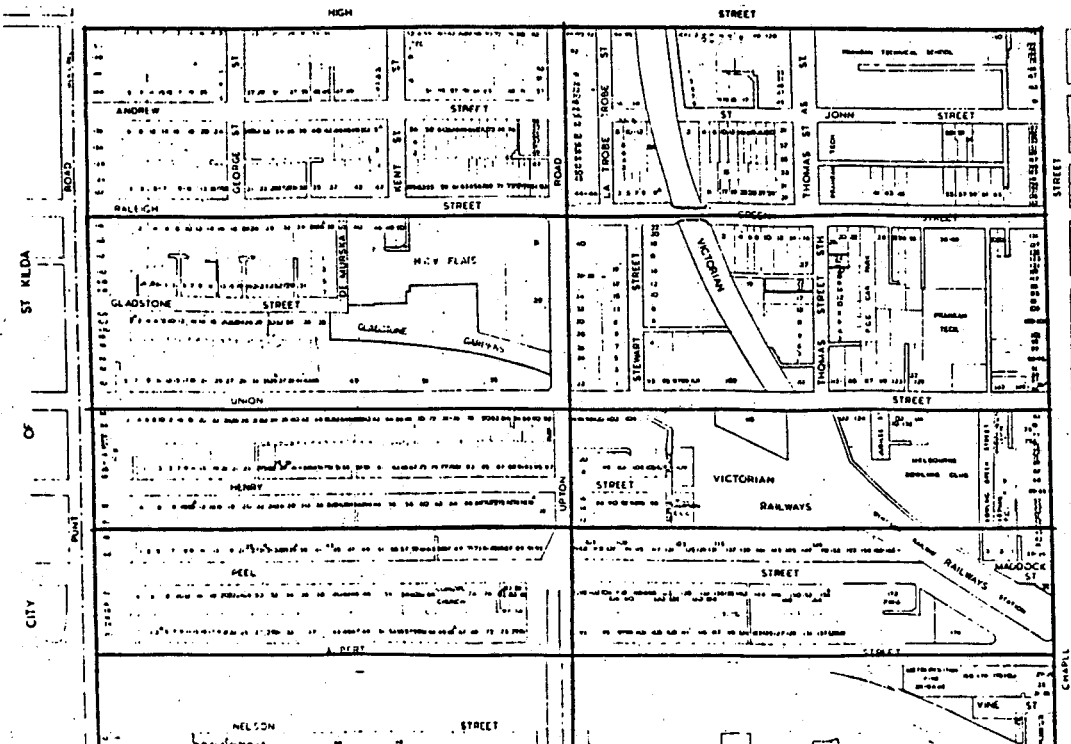
**WINDSOR**

(All lots sold 15/5/1850.)

**1850**



**1856**



**1976**

## 8.0 THE LAND BOOM

By 1855 when Prahran was first incorporated and the present municipal boundary adopted the population was about 6,000. The population continued to grow at a rapid rate fuelled firstly by the gold rush prosperity and then the land boom of the 1880s. Between 1881 and 1891 the population of Prahran almost doubled from 21,000 to 40,000. However, the net gain over the next ten years to the turn of the century was less than 1,000.

Land in the Prahran east of Chapel Street and more especially Williams Road was intensively developed in the 1880s and 90s, continuing until the First World War. In 1880 surplus railway lands were auctioned in Cromwell Road, Surrey Road and Barnsbury Road while two years later the Bush Inn Estate (Evelina Road, May Road and Williams Road) was offered for sale. The Hawksburn Estate was progressively released for auction with lots in Motherwell Street and Luxton Road being sold in 1898.

The railway line through this Hawksburn and Armadale area dates from 1879 when the section from South Yarra to Oakleigh was constructed. The extension was of great importance as it completed the link between Melbourne and Gippsland. When the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust were erecting their electric tramway in High Street, the State government imposed stringent conditions, demanding a grace separation at the railway and thus causing the extensive excavation of the railway cutting from Armadale back to Hawksburn Railway Station.

The three allotments bounded by High Street, Malvern Road, Williams Road and Orrong Road were sold at the Crown land sale of 15 May 1850. By 1855 when Kearney produced his map of Melbourne, the westernmost allotment had been subsequently subdivided and the small present day streets comprising Aberdeen Road, Bayview Street, Pridham Street and Wrights' Terrace had been formed and partially developed with small cottages. However, the two large eastern allotments of the block remained entirely undeveloped.

Mr Moffat's estate, Mount Grand View, was auctioned with frontages to Grandview Grove and Chatsworth Road and by the 1880s Grandview Grove had been subdivided and large villa allotments created. Large prestige dwellings were soon erected and by the turn of the century over twenty mansions had been erected in this street. However, not all residents in this vicinity were as such as those living in Grandview Grove. Piecemeal subdivision of Allotment 47 to the east, meant that over the rear fence of numbers 14 to 28 Grandview Grove, tiny allotments were created in Woodfull Street ignoring both the topographic characteristics of this land (it being situated on a prominent rise) and the size of neighbouring allotments.

Land in the Armadale area was first sold at the Crown land sale on 15th May, 1850. Five years later when James Kearney compiled his map of Melbourne and Suburbs very little development had taken place in the area. A sprinkling of about 15 cottages covered the area, predominantly towards Kooyong Road and a pump was located to the north of Commercial Road (now Malvern Road) near the

intersection of the present day Densham Road. Subsequent subdivisions took place and Clendon Road and Densham Road ran along the borders of the original allotments 48, 49 and 50. In 1876 James Munro, a prominent businessman and later infamous Premier of Victoria during the land boom, erected his residence 'Armadale House' in Kooyong Road. It was his Scottish childhood town of Armadale which gave its name to the suburb.

Typical of the land sales in this area was the Allanvale Estate, auctioned on 11th February, 1888, which included Beatty Avenue, Malvern Road, Clendon Road, Rose Street and Clarke Street (presumably now Watson Street). Northcote Road was subdivided parallel to the railway and this imposed a disruption to the normally geometric grid of roads in this area. Other roads such as Royal Crescent later contributed to this character.

A bowling club, on land donated by James Munro, was established in Northcote Road after the construction of the railway on land donated by James Munro. A primary school was erected in Densham Road in 1886 and with the rapid development of the area additional accommodation was added in 1891 and 1899. The original Toorak railway station was erected in 1879 although after the railway cutting was formed a new station was erected in 1913. Because of the large railway cutting the goods yard was unusually located at a different level. The lift for the conveyance of goods from the platform still survives on the south side of the line and this appears to be a unique construction for the Victorian Railways. The erection of shops around the railway station consolidated in this 1913-14 period coinciding with the construction of the railway station and today the general high level of intactness of these commercial premises is noteworthy. Subdivision of the land in this Armadale area resulted in uniform small allotments and in the period 1880-1910 the area was highly developed with residential building activity.

Further south the four allotments bounded by Dandenong Road, Kooyong Road, High Street and Orrong Road were sold at the Crown land sale of 15th May, 1850. Allotment 66 (part of which now forms Cambridge Street) was purchased by James Jackson. This allotment was resubdivided several times starting with a sale on 15th October, 1881 with allotments becoming successively smaller until the tight layout of Cambridge Street was established. The thirty-two allotments were all developed simultaneously by the erection in 1887-88 of identical single storey detached timber cottages. The street, known at this stage as Oxford Street, thus achieved a degree of architectural unity not found elsewhere in the municipality. Oxford Street was renamed Cambridge Street in 1892, presumably to avoid confusion with Oxford Street, South Yarra.

Other land sales in this vicinity included the Auburn Vale Estate, which included lots in Hampden Road, Auburn Road, Denbigh Road, Sutherland Road and High Street. This was auctioned on 15th January, 1887 and the generous sized allotments resulted in a fairly uniform development of late Victorian free-standing residences combined with a number of later Edwardian houses.

## 9.0 EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

### Chapel Street

By the turn of the century development of Chapel Street was complete. No vacant allotments existed and the area was a thriving commercial centre. However, in the next 15 years this commercial centre was to see an even larger degree of commercial interest and redevelopment than the replacement of single storey shops by double storey premises in the 1870s and 80s. Several developers amalgamated large sites and one of the first emporiums was the Big Store, opened in 1902. Osment Buildings were erected in 1910-11 and Holt's Building (1912), Love and Lewis (1913) and Moore's, Conways' and the Colosseum were all erected in 1914. In 1910 one commentator observed Chapel Street as the 'shoppers paradise'.

So popular has the street become as a shopping centre that extensive alterations and buildings are being carried out by many firms. The Big Store is being made bigger by the erection of a building at the rear which will cover a floor space of 6,000 sq. yards and employ another 200 hands. This will bring its total floor space to 20,000 sq. yards with 750 employees. The Reed Stores are about to rebuild the whole of their premises extending to Commercial Road and adding to the 375 hands already employed. Messrs. Love and Lewis (400 hands) are also about to begin rebuilding operations; the Colosseum (330 hands) has a floor space of 4,500 sq. yards, and the greater number of important business houses find it imperative to make alterations to accommodate increasing trade. The London Stores have just opened tailoring business, and Miller's feather factory is to take possession of the whole of the first and second floors of a fine three storey brick shop they are building. The future of the 'shoppers paradise' is made all the more secure by the ease and time with which shoppers can come and go on the electric cars.[61]

The central business district in Melbourne regained popularity after the First World War and Chapel Street declined. In recent years Chapel Street has moved towards catering more for popular needs and the luxury trade, whilst it left Chapel Street many years ago, did not leave Prahran altogether but moved to the emerging shopping centres in Toorak Road which were in closer proximity to the homes of many patrons.

### Civic Improvements

Various government and Council improvements also altered parts of the municipality in the early years of the twentieth century. The most notable change was the formation and landscaping of the Alexandra Avenue along the River Yarra between Punt Road and Chapel Street.[62] Alexandra Avenue was formed by the Government in 1903 but owing to the South Yarra Railway Line the Avenue was unable to be completed. In 1917 the Prahran Council decided to make a

temporary diversion of the drive under the railway bridge in order that the roadway could be linked between Punt Road and Chapel Street. Avenues of trees were planted at this date and with later alterations to the railway bridge the present wide boulevard was established. In 1914, as part of this scheme of development the Prahran Council negotiated to acquire some 31 acres of the Como estate fronting the river, and by the early 1920s the Council was developing the old Como swamp as a park planted with Australian trees.[63]

With the construction of an electric tramway along Dandenong Road between Chapel Street and Glenferrie Road immediately after the first World War the Council's of Prahran, St. Kilda Malvern and Caulfield co-operated to transform the broad stock route which became Great Dandenong Road into the tree lined boulevard that exists today. Funding for these improvements was shared between the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust.

Soon after the construction of Alexandra Avenue the present Church Street bridge was designed by noted architect Harold Desbrowe Annear in conjunction with Thomas Ashworth and engineer John Laing. This new graceful reinforced concrete bridge erected in 1923-24 replaced a much earlier iron bridge and soon after its construction the carriageway was utilised for the electric tramway which ran down Chapel Street.

At the time of the completion of the Church Street Bridge in 1924 the adjacent Forrest Hill site was the subject of much heated debate as the possible site of a state high school to be established in the southern suburbs. Many local Councils were competing to gain the School in their municipality although the Forrest Hill site was eventually selected and in 1928 the present Melbourne Boys' High School was erected. West of the school site the area between Domain Road, Punt Road and Darling Street became the scene of a remarkable burst of residential flat development. The creation of Alexandra Avenue also saw the development in the 1920s of the South Yarra land facing the river east of Punt Road as a unique enclave of flats all of which were designed in exotic architectural styles.

### Flats

The development of flats throughout the municipality has been, since the First World War, the most distinctive change that has taken place in the residential areas of Prahran, and particularly in the South Yarra and Toorak sections of municipality. Some of the most interesting and important inter-war flat developments occurred in these parts of Prahran.

Howard R. Lawson and partner Reginald W. Biffen bought the whole of the land from Punt Road to the South Yarra railway bridge, (bounded by the river on the south and Domain Road on the north), in approximately 1922 and commenced development of the site shortly afterwards. The early buildings on the site included small scale Californian Bungalow style maisonettes designed for easy conversion to flats. Today a number of those two to three storey Californian Bungalow style flats remain in the area.

It appears that the site was not developed rapidly and there was most likely little building done in the last half of the 1920s. When Lawson, who advertised as "The Architect who builds", recommenced work after the depression, he became more ambitious and abandoned the small scale Californian Bungalow style flats in favour of large multi-storey blocks designed in a Spanish Mission/Exotic manner erected in the period 1934-35 and included 'Beverley Hills' (blocks 1 and 2). The Beverley Hills blocks dominated the steeply sloping site, and Lawson included a swimming pool on a terrace between the two blocks. The integration of flat blocks, the surrounding gardens, terracing and the exotic style of the development retains its unique character today, despite some deterioration in some of the flat blocks.

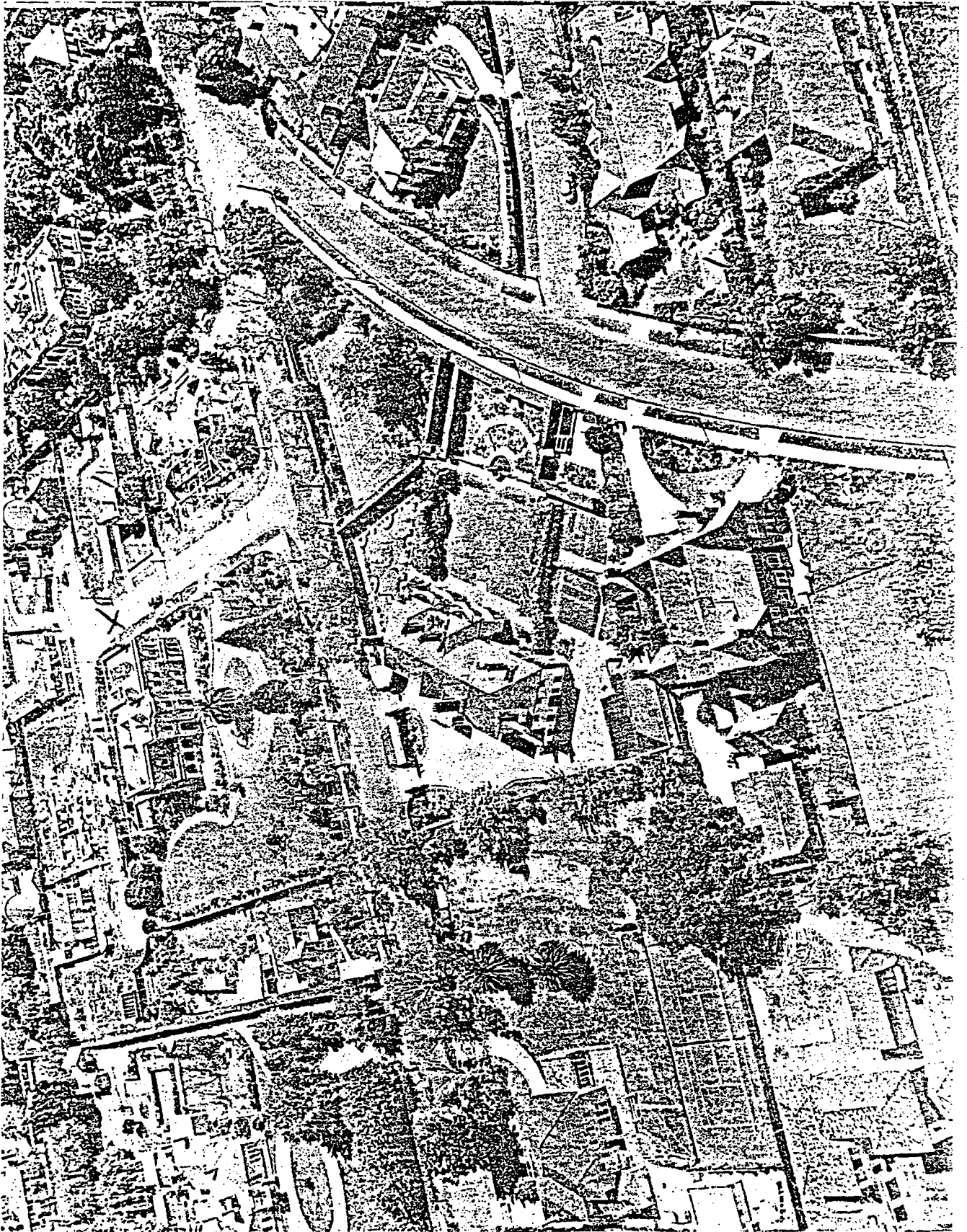
In the three years prior to September, 1935, Lawson had built 175 flats on the subdivision and local residents objected to proposals for further development of the site. Lawson responded by reducing the height of his blocks and in 1936, obtained a building permit for three storey flats at the corner of Alexandra Avenue and Darling Street. In this next phase of building, Lawson designed the outstanding 'Maritama' and 'Stratton Heights' (both c. 1940) which were similar in form to his earlier 'Beverley Hills', but stripped of the highly decorative stucco work of his exotic style blocks. At the magnificently sited 'Stratton Heights' Lawson encompassed modernism by using the roof terrace, which had been enjoying increasing popularity. Beverley Hills also had a flat roof, but this had been used only as a laundry and drying area, and was hidden behind a slopping tiled parapet, which appeared from below to be a conventional pitched roof.

The whole development is without equal for the period in Melbourne. The variety in buildings, the integration of the well-landscaped site and the excellent Spanish Mission/Exotic style flats in particular make the precinct unique. Lawson went unrecognised in professional circles, due most probably, to his development activities. The Alexandra Avenue flat precinct is arguably the zenith of the career of the man who was probably Melbourne's most prolific flat building.[64]

### Development in Toorak

The Toorak area was also the scene of intensive development in the period of 1920 to 1930. An important group of residences were erected near the corner of Heyington Road and Toorak Road, designed by architect Harold Desbrowe Annear. Annear also designed the garden for Sydney Myer's 'Cranlana', 62 Clendon Road in 1930. Annear employed the Italianate style with the inclusion of fountains, ferns and statues. Nearby in Clendon Road, Walter Burley Griffin's office had designed 'Clendon Lodge' in 1923 for Mary Williams. Three years later Griffin designed the Langi flats also for Mary Williams. Another contribution to the architecture of the 1920s in this area was 'Mullion' (6 Stonehaven Court) designed by Eric Nicholls in 1927-28 for W H Smith. The building was erected when Sir Francis Ormond's property at the corner of Clendon and Orrong Roads was subdivided and many of the mature trees from his garden were retained on the site of 'Mullion'. South of 'Mullion' another subdivision, Stradbroke Avenue was developed at a slightly later period. Buildings were all constructed of rough cast and masonry and today the feeling of the road conforms very much to its original appearance although recent exterior redecoration to many residences has slightly lessened the overall effect.





*The large allotments in the elevated areas of Toorak have seen two major subdivisional stages after the first large mansion allotments were created. This view in 1950 of Irving Road shows the first pattern of subdivision of the original allotments which took place mainly from the 1880s - 1920s. The 1960s and 70s have seen a further subdivision of many of these allotments.*

Throughout its history Prahran has not been a significant industrial and manufacturing area apart from in its early years when brickmaking was one of the principal activities. Until the First World War Prahran's small manufacturing base mainly served the local market, but the residential, commercial and small business character of the whole suburb has not ever been markedly changed or affected by any of the manufacturing activities. However, some of the small enterprises worked for a wider market outside Prahran and developed significant plants which have left their mark, one such example is the old IXL Jam Company. After the First World War a number of large manufacturing plants were established, among which was the Hecla Company (later Electrolux). The most significant and noticeable change in the manufacturing base of Prahran occurred after the Second World War when clothing, food, and light-engineering activities expanded. These newer developments are concentrated into a number of small areas, but their size within the areas has transformed some of the old parts of Prahran such as the area between Greville, King, and High Streets.

As with the other old inner suburbs of Melbourne, a part of Prahran was transformed by the Housing Commission of Victoria during the 1960s. The old housing and street pattern was destroyed and homogeneous public housing estates were developed. The intension to transform old suburbs by government sponsored renewal favouring both public and private redevelopment was halted by the emerging awareness of the unique character of these older areas. That awareness is now shared by all sections of Prahran's diverse community.

Prahran has always been socially diverse, containing not only some of the wealthiest Melbourne residents on their large estates in the higher areas near the river and to the east, but also the dense residential areas of the poorer classes on what was once the swampy Prahran flats. The entire Prahran and South Yarra area has developed from the early pastoral uses of the time before the land sales in the 1840s, then agricultural and some industrial activities in the 1850s, to close residential subdivision in the western portion during the speculative gold rush days. In the eastern portion the residential subdivision of the large old estates continued almost up to the present time. The present diversity of the whole area can be traced back to the early years of the white settlement throughout the district.