

ALTERING THE ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 2

Chapter 2





ALTERING THE ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter follows on from Chapter 1 as it focuses on the impact of settlement by non-Aboriginal people on the natural environment. These impacts in Victoria generally are well documented and the non-Aboriginal settlers in the study area followed the same pattern of modifying the landscape to make it more suitable for urban development.

As this chapter shows through describing changes to the indigenous vegetation, fauna, waterways, and landforms, environmental impacts of European settlers were immediate and dramatic when compared to the gradual changes across previous millennia. Forests were cleared and indigenous flora and fauna were decimated. Remarkably, there are some survivors and this chapter describes them. Waterways came under dual attack from pollution created by the ever-expanding city of Melbourne and from efforts to control man-made problems of flooding and erosion. Today, little of Gardiners Creek remains unaltered and its water, along with that of the Yarra, is of poor quality and supports less wildlife than it once did, although as we shall see steps are being taken to redress this situation. Nonetheless, the grossly modified landscape that exists today is a stark contrast to the pre-settlement landscapes described in Chapter 1.

This chapter incorporates the following theme:

Australian Heritage Criteria (AHC)

Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment.

HISTORY

2.1 Changing the landscape

This section considers how activities associated with the urban development of the study area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in physical changes that, in some cases, quite dramatically altered the landscape. This ranged from the immediate impact of the loss of vegetation to the more gradual changes that have resulted in new courses of waterways, the loss of swamps and the levelling of hills.

2.1.1 Clearing of timber

Timber of course was initially the primary fuel for the new settlement, as well as the most widely used structural building material. The study area wasn't rich in tall straight timber, being mostly woodlands, and evidence suggests that most of the suitable timber for construction was cut down by the mid-nineteenth century. A map prepared by Collis and Couchman in 1857 includes annotations, which suggest that much of the municipality east of Tooronga Road was still forested in 1857. Selwyn (1860), however, shows almost all the study area being cleared, with the exception of Toorak, which was cleared in the succeeding decades as the land was subdivided.

Little is known of any early timber industry in the study area, but presumably the better timber would have been used in local buildings and fences by the early European settlers, as clearing took place. Much of the forest was cleared for grazing and burnt. Wattles were valued for their bark, which was used for tanning, but the removal of the bark killed the tree. The remaining poorer quality timber would have been cut for firewood, and what was too small for firewood (such as the thickets of tea-tree along Gardiners Creek) was cut for brushwood fences and garden brush houses (Burns, unpubl., p.41). Firewood was in great demand fuelling the kilns of the study area's brickworks and Tibbets (1983:6) also believes that the South Yarra, Toorak and Prahran areas 'quickly became the principal sources of firewood for the Melbourne settlement'. Itinerant timber gatherers are said to have taken wood to the township either by boats along the Yarra or on bullock-drays.

As well as active clearing, the use of the land for grazing compounded the effects on the native vegetation not only because of the clearing necessary to create good grass, but as a result of the trampling with sharp hooves so different to the native grazers, and also of the intense and close grazing which sheep and cattle do. Native plants struggled to survive the higher soil nutrient levels resulting from sheep and cattle grazing. Often graziers deliberately introduced exotic grasses to compete with the native vegetation to 'improve' their pasture. It is not clear how much of the municipality was grazed, but grazing began from the first years of settlement of Melbourne, and John Gardiner is known to have moved herds of cattle into Gardiners Creek in 1835, having brought them overland from Sydney (Cooper, 1935).

Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century very little remained of the original vegetation. However, a number of reserves were set aside very early (Collis and Couchman, 1857). These included a reserve on Gardiners Creek each side of where High Street crosses and the Police Reserve around present-day Malvern East Station. These reserves were supplemented by acquisitions by the City of Malvern, which aimed to create parkland with a boulevard road all along the creek. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.8.

The indigenous vegetation was often replaced by trees and gardens using exotic species in an attempt to 'civilise' the landscape and make it more European in appearance. The three scenes in Illustration iv and photographs v at the start of Chapter 1. show the beginnings of this gradual transition from the natural to cultural landscape in the area surrounding the property known as *Avoca* in South Yarra.



2.1.2 Quarrying

The study area was naturally endowed with deposits of alluvial clay suitable for making bricks. With the high demand for building materials in early Melbourne, particularly in the gold boom years of the 1850s, large quarries were established throughout the study area and brickmaking became the chief industry.

From at least the early 1840s small operators were working in the low-lying parts of South Yarra, Prahran and Windsor, however the northern end of Chapel Street from Toorak Road to the river became the major centre of brick production. As we shall see in chapter 6.3.1, the longest-running works was on the corner of Toorak Road, where Robert ‘Daddy’ Davis quarried the clay for three decades (Malone, 2000:8–9).

The quarrying at the north end of Chapel Street profoundly altered the landscape in that area. Illustration xi (opposite) is an impression of the cutting that once existed at the north end of Chapel Street where it passed through what was known as ‘Forrest Hill’. Quarrying to exploit the clay and stone deposits had all but removed the part of the hill on the east side of Chapel Street by the early twentieth century as shown in photograph xii. This left a crater at the side of the road with a cliff behind, threatening the foundations of nearby houses. This was in turn filled in by later industrial development and now is the site of high-rise residential buildings.



xii View c.1915 looking south-east toward South Yarra showing the quarry that removed Forrest Hill on the east side of Chapel Street. The image also shows the first stage of construction of Alexandra Avenue. The chimneys show the brickworks associated with the quarry. [SLHC Reg. No. 7101]

xi (left) View c.1860 showing the cutting through ‘Forrest Hill’ at the north end of Chapel Street. [SLHC Reg. No. 2353]

Altering the environment

2.1.3 Making roads and railways

The construction of roads and railways also had a significant impact upon the landscape in the form of cuttings and embankments. In 1860, the construction of the railway to Windsor via South Yarra required major earthworks to create an embankment where the bridge over the Yarra entered the study area as it passed through the swamp at the foot of Forrest Hill, and then to form cuttings where it passed through South Yarra and Windsor. Cooper (1924:181) cites a report, which states that in the construction of the line 200,000 yards of earth were removed.

In the early twentieth century the construction of Alexandra Avenue resulted in dramatic changes to the Yarra bank. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Alexandra Avenue was a late addition to the study area's road system and unlike most of the other roads did not follow the straight lines of Hoddle's grid, following instead the serpentine curves of the Yarra. In 1903 work commenced on cutting through the steep Yarra bank from Punt Road, but by 1918 it had only reached Chapel Street. Prahran Council continued the work during the 1920s, partly as a way of employing unemployed workers. The project was stepped up in the early 1930s, when various sources of unemployment relief funds, including a large contribution by Sidney Myer, enabled Alexandra Avenue to be extended to Grange Road. The construction of this stage required deep cuttings into the side of the Yarra bank, creating steep walls as shown in photograph xiv. Soil from Como Park was used to create a levee that formed the basis of the roadway connecting Alexandra Avenue with Williams Road. As we shall see in Chapter 8.8 Alexandra Avenue developed into a pleasant boulevard and a cause for civic pride (Wilde, 1993:13 and 34–36), but it forever changed the character of this part of the study area, which until then had remained largely undeveloped.

2.1.4 Taming the waterways

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the Yarra and to a lesser extent Gardiners Creek were important features for Aboriginal people and the European settlers. The Yarra provided reliable drinking water, was navigable by small boats upstream to Dight's Falls and provided fish and waterbirds for food. Gardiners Creek was a reliable freshwater resource invaluable for the cattle grazing it allowed John Gardiner. Both waterways were barriers to land movement and so it is not surprising that they have historically formed the northern boundaries of the study area. However, the waterways were also prone to flooding with disastrous consequences for the developing urban areas.

The following section describes how the waterways in the study area have been modified since the late nineteenth century. The extent of the changes is shown on Figure 3. As shown on this map, all waterways in the study area, other than the Yarra River and Gardiners and Scotchmans creeks, have been converted over the years into underground pipes collectively known as the stormwater system, managed now by Council and Melbourne Water. The changes to the Yarra River, Hawksburn Creek and Gardiners Creek are described below.

Yarra River and Hawksburn Creek

According to the Yarra River Precinct Association (2005), severe flooding was a regular feature of the Yarra River's original narrow and twisting watercourse. The first flood was recorded in 1839. The biggest recorded flood – in 1891 – saw the water rise 14 metres higher than normal. It destroyed 200 houses in Collingwood and Richmond.

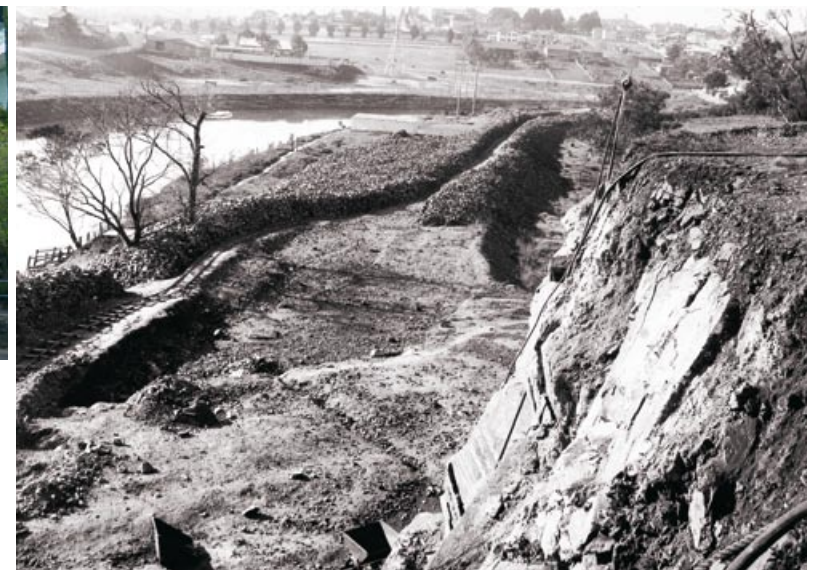
A bar of rock, just downstream of Princes Bridge, banked up water which regularly flooded South Melbourne and kept much of the land south of the Yarra as permanent swamp. A lengthy program of works was carried out from the late 1880s to help alleviate the flooding. The rock bar was blasted and the river was widened and straightened, including construction of the 1.5 km Coode Canal at Fishermans Bend. This led to the river becoming brackish as far upstream as Dight's Falls.



xiii View c.1915 looking south-east from Richmond showing the gently sloping land on the south bank of the Yarra east of Chapel Street prior to the construction of Alexandra Avenue [SLHC Reg. No. 7101] and (right) c.2005 a similar view today. [Context 2005]



xiv (right) View c.1931 showing excavations to allow construction of Alexandra Avenue east of Chapel Street [SLHC Reg. No. 6151] and (above) c.2005 the cutting as it appears today. [Context 2005]



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xv Floodwaters in Toorak Road (looking east near River Street) during the 1934 flood.
[SLHC Reg. No. 7394]



The 1896 *Yarra Improvement Act* enabled the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) to carry out major widening and realignment works between the city and Chapel Street, including removal of the billabongs on the north bank upstream of Princes Bridge, near the Botanic Gardens. However, flooding was not really controlled in the Yarra until a series of dams in the upper catchment caught the peak flood flows. In addition, between 1924 and 1929, the MMBW removed 24,400 items of natural debris from the river to improve flood control and navigation. In 1929 a new river channel was cut at Burnley opposite Como Park, to make a straight, wide section, creating Herring Island in the process. These works did not prevent another disastrous flood occurring in 1934 when floodwaters reached Toorak Road.

xvi *Regrading works at Como Park c.1932. This view looking south-east shows the sweeping curve of the new levee bank road connecting Williams Road with Alexandra Avenue* [SLHC Reg. No. 6144.11] *and (right) a similar view today.* [Context 2005]



Fringing swamps were less suitable for settlement, but were gradually drained and filled. As shown in the photograph xvi, the swamp between the Yarra and Williams Road became Como Park and was regraded after floods in the 1920s and 1930s, with excess material used to form a levee between the park and the Yarra to carry what is now Alexandra Avenue. Another swamp, upstream on Hawksburn Creek from its confluence with the Yarra adjacent to Yarra Street, was drained and filled and now forms the grounds of Melbourne High School. During the 1960s the construction of the South Eastern Freeway (now the Monash Freeway) further altered the course of the river, removing a point of land near Yarradale Road.



xvii *(right) View looking south from Hawthorn toward Kooyong showing the Gardiners Creek floodplain. Glenferrie Road is on the right, 1912* [SLHC Reg. No. 82] *and (above) a similar view today.* [Context 2005]



Hawksburn Creek was a tributary of the Yarra, which as shown on Figure 3 crossed the study area from a point near what is now the corner of Wattletree and Glenferrie roads and joined the Yarra near what is now Melbourne High School. In the lower reaches of the Hawksburn it formed a series of swamps around what is now Toorak Road and Chapel Street. The low lying land around these swamps was progressively developed for housing and industry and the water in the Hawksburn increasingly carried sewage and industrial waste, creating a major health hazard. The creek was converted into an open drain in the 1870s and gradually ‘improved’ until the underground Main Drain was completed about 1915. The swamps were drained and filled and part of the land now forms the grounds of Melbourne High School. (*A Place in History*, No. 14)

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Gardiners Creek

The route of Gardiners Creek through the study area has been almost completely altered. Once tree clearing and brush removal along the valley and on surrounding hills commenced, a self-reinforcing chain of events happened. With less vegetation to absorb rainfall and help it soak into the ground, rainfall ran off into waterways much faster, leading to higher peak flows. These flows were no longer slowed by the dense tea-tree thickets on the valley floors, and with the trampling by cattle of the creek banks, soils erosion commenced. Concern about flooding and erosion led to efforts to speed flows safely downstream to the Yarra. The areas that were treated and straightened only exacerbated erosion problems elsewhere, and by the 1930s much of the creek had become an erosion gully cut by the raging water and straightening works tens of metres down into the flood plain (Burns, unpubl., p.41). Ironically, with the natural retarding qualities of the creek removed, the MMBW had to construct ten retarding basins on the upper Gardiners Creek to slow somewhat the flow of floodwaters down the creek.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries river flats along the creek were often used as rubbish dumps, or filled to create more useable land, often for industry. One example is downstream of Burke Road where Gardiners Creek once had two channels, but the northern one was filled in and became part of the Melbourne Brick Company land.

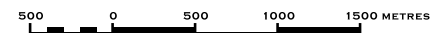
Another use of the creek was for open space. In Malvern East, the alignment of the creek was altered in the inter-war period by the works to create the Malvern Municipal Golf Links. The course of the creek, which consisted of a series of streams surrounded by swamps, was drained and filled and a new creek bed was cut by sustenance workers from Scotchman's Creek to Warrigal Road. Despite these works, flooding on the course was frequent and Malvern Council undertook further works to straighten deepen and widen the creek.

In the later twentieth century a new threat to Gardiners Creek emerged in the form of roads or, more particularly, freeway construction. The *Gardiners Creek Valley Study Drainage Study Team Status Report* (February 1977) describes re-alignment and erosion control works over the length of the creek between Toorak Road and Warrigal Road, as does Burns (1984). These studies were carried out at the request of councils and the community to understand the impact of the construction of a freeway along Gardiners Creek, which was subsequently constructed as an arterial road, now the Monash Freeway. Roadworks of this kind have had major detrimental effects on Gardiners Creek, especially downstream of Burke Road.

From these descriptions it is evident that little if any of the creek banks were left undisturbed. Nonetheless remnants of the original vegetation survive and, as we shall see in chapters 8 and 10, steps are being taken to restore some of the original vegetation.

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FIGURE 5-REMNANT VEGETATION SITES



CITY OF STONNINGTON BOUNDARY



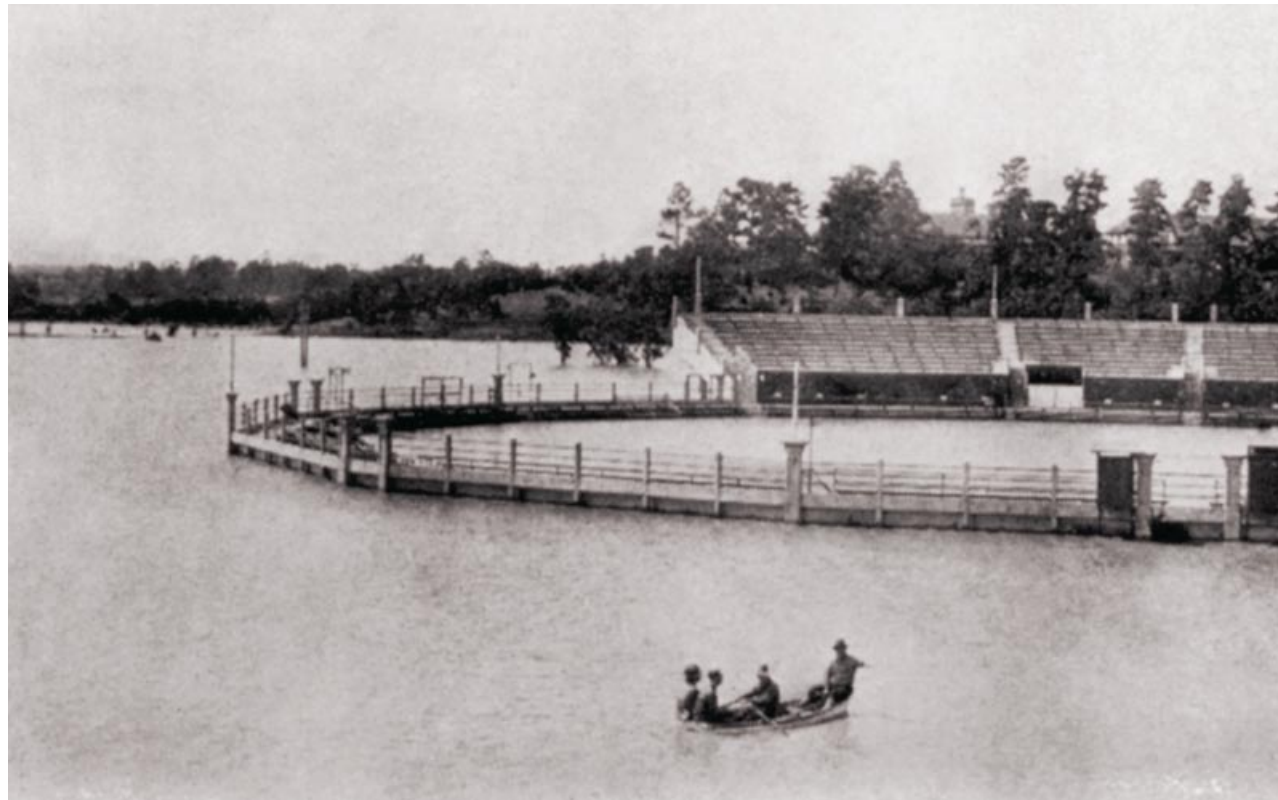
LEGEND

- REMNANT VEGETATION (SITE OR TREE)

SOURCE: REMNANT VEGETATION INFORMATION PREPARED BY TONY FAITHFULL 2005.

NOTE: INDICATIVE ONLY. INFORMATION ON REMNANT VEGETATION HAS BEEN GATHERED FROM A RANGE OF SOMETIMES INCONSISTENT SOURCES AND SO THIS MAP SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON FOR ACCURACY.

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xviii A submerged Kooyong Tennis Stadium during the 1934 floods.
[SLHC Reg. No. 620]

2.2 Environmental impacts

Although the flora and fauna communities of the study area were still subject to dynamic change at the time of settlement by non-Aboriginal people, the speed of change increased enormously during the nineteenth century. As we shall see in later chapters, urban development in Stonnington began early and was effectively complete by the early twentieth century. The environmental impact of the modifications made to the landscape since the mid-nineteenth century have been dramatic, with few surviving remnants of the pre-contact landscape. This section considers the environmental impacts of changes to the landscape brought about by non-Aboriginal settlement in the nineteenth century.

The known sites of remnant indigenous vegetation in the study area are shown in Figure 5. This map is based on the limited surveys and studies described in the following section and should not be considered as complete, particularly in relation to isolated remnant indigenous trees.

2.2.1 Reducing biodiversity – effects on flora and fauna

Today the indigenous vegetation of the study area has been almost totally removed, with only one site recorded on the Oates and Taranto (2001) mapping of remnant vegetation. This site is a narrow strip along either side of the railway line adjacent to Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club and Warra Street, Toorak. This constitutes less than 0.1% of the original indigenous vegetation. Even this small area is unprotected and under threat. The site is actually larger than indicated on the map and extends from Glenferrie Road to the Yarra River.

A very significant omission from the Oates and Taranto (2001) map is the remnant vegetation site on a very steep escarpment above the Yarra River below Heyington Station. This is recorded on Biosites mapping (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2002) as being regionally significant. It is the only site recorded in the study area on the Biosites mapping, and the only site recorded for the study area in the *Society for Growing Australian Plants Maroondah Inc* (1993), which mentions a 1945 plant list for the site. The site includes at least one massive remnant *Eucalyptus globulus*, now rarely found as remnants in Melbourne. It occurs along with at least 13 other remnant species. These sites have been protected by default by the rail reserve.

A number of small sites along Gardiners Creek and railway lines were not recorded on DSE's maps, including at Glenburn Bend, either side of High Street, Hedgeley Dene Gardens, north of the Malvern East Tennis Club, and at the Malvern Valley Public Golf Course. These sites typically have three or four species, commonly including River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and Tea Tree (*Melaleuca ericifolia*).

An unknown number of isolated remnant indigenous trees occur in parks and private property across the municipality. Only one is listed on the National Trust's Register, being the *Bursaria spinosa* at 391 Toorak Road, South Yarra, which is listed as being of regional significance. Four indigenous trees are listed in the *Prahran Significant Tree and Garden Study*, all identified as River Red Gums. The study deliberately did not focus on indigenous remnants, or on public parkland, and as a result makes almost no mention of the significant number of remnant indigenous trees in the Heyington area. One that is mentioned, the Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) at the northern end of Kooyong Road is misidentified as *E. camaldulensis*. Casual observations even in private land have turned up a number of other records. Other undocumented isolated trees undoubtedly occur scattered throughout the municipality.

The known remnant indigenous vegetation sites in the study area are shown in Figure 5. However, this list has been compiled from the incomplete surveys as described above and should not be relied on for accuracy.

Of the approximately 280 indigenous plant species thought to have occurred in the study area at the time of settlement, only 19 were known to remain in 2005. Of the 140 species recorded in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's (DNRE) Flora database (which includes records from soon after the time of settlement), only three taxa have Victorian rare or threatened species status and only one of these is listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*. The reliability and locational accuracy of these important records requires confirmation and should be treated with caution. The records of *Callitriche palustris* and *Lepidium pseudohyssopifolium* are based on apparently unvouched lists generated by Jim Willis in the 1940s and the specimen records of *Thelymitra X merraniae* are undated with the collector unknown. It is highly unlikely that these species still survive in the study area.

Since the early 1970s a movement to restore native vegetation has emerged in the study area. As will be discussed further in chapters 8 and 10, sites where significant revegetation work has occurred include the Gardiners Creek Valley, the Malvern Urban Forest, and a small patch above Heyington railway station known as WM Dane Park.

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The loss of indigenous vegetation has had a predictable impact upon indigenous fauna in the study area. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Flora Database records 140 indigenous species occurring in the study area (DSE, pers. comm.). As discussed in Chapter 1.3 it is estimated that at least double that used to occur. The DSE estimate is based on surveys at various key sites in the study area. A more detailed picture is provided by two surveys carried out within or close to the study area:

- ✦ The first was a survey of fauna of Herring Island (which is just outside the study area within a bend in the Yarra opposite Como Park) carried out by Larwill (1994), which listed 18 indigenous bird species, three indigenous mammal species, three indigenous reptile species, and no amphibians. Fish were not surveyed
- ✦ Secondly, the *Malvern Urban Forest Masterplan Report* lists 25 native bird species, four species of native mammal, no reptiles, no amphibians and no native fish.



xix View c.1931 of construction of Alexandra Avenue east of Chapel Street, which exposed the cliff face in that location. [SLHC Reg. No. 6153]



xx View in 2005 of Gardiners Creek near Toorak Road showing the remnant c.1940 bluestone-lined channel. [Context 2005]

Combining the lists compiled by these surveys provides a representative list of the following species:

- ✦ 33 birds (out of the 300 estimated to be present at settlement)
- ✦ four mammals out of 51
- ✦ three reptiles out of 41
- ✦ no amphibians out of 22
- ✦ no fish out of 26.

The Grey-headed Flying Fox recorded from both the sites is listed as vulnerable under the *Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, and listed as threatened under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* (DSE 2005). Unfortunately it is not clear from the reports whether this species roosts at the Urban Forest or Herring Island (which would be significant) or was just seen flying overhead (which would not be significant).

Some improvement to these numbers would be expected with additional survey effort, but it is clear that much of the fauna of the study area has been decimated.

2.2.2 Geodiversity

Few areas within the study area retain significant geodiversity values today. Most of the exposures of bedrock or geomorphological features have been excavated, levelled, filled, smoothed, straightened, built over or otherwise removed. As we have seen, the northern end of Chapel Street provides just one example, but there are many others.

One exception is the Yarra River bank below Heyington Station, which retains the Silurian outcrop to water level. This assists in understanding the processes described in Chapter 1 that formed the distinctive landscape in that area.

On the other hand, the cuttings created by road and rail and other urban development have also exposed some of the underlying geology of the area. This can be seen in Alexandra Avenue, (refer to photograph xix, opposite) and in the railway cuttings through South Yarra and Prahran. These may be significant from an educational point of view if they provide good views of the geology, geomorphology or soil development.

2.2.3 Turning rivers into sewers – impacts on waterways

As the development of Melbourne progressed its waterways carried not just rainwater run-off, but sewage and industrial waste. From the nineteenth century until well into the twentieth industry viewed the waterways as little more than convenient dumping grounds for all manner of industrial waste. The lower Yarra in particular received a heavy load of toxic and organic pollutants. Finn (1967:37) eloquently describes the Yarra of around the 1870s:

... a fetid, festering sewer befouled midst the horrors of wool-washing, fellmongering, bone crushing and other unmentionable abominations ...

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the MMBW started construction of sewers to reduce the pollution of rivers and improve public health. Construction of sewers in Prahran commenced in 1897 and the first house connections were made by 1898. By the middle of the twentieth century the study area was almost entirely connected and this led to an improvement in water quality. With the creation of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in the 1970s less industrial waste was disposed of into the Yarra and its tributaries and the health of the waterways has steadily improved. However, stormwater run-off continues to degrade water quality, particularly because of illegal sewer connections to stormwater pipes.

Today, Melbourne Water (2005a) rates the lower Yarra as having moderate water quality, poor aquatic life, moderate habitat and stability, poor vegetation and poor flow characteristics, while it rates Gardiners Creek as having poor water quality, poor aquatic life, good habitat and stability, very poor vegetation, and very poor flow characteristics.

Altering the environment

HERITAGE

The modified natural and cultural landscape associated with the themes of *Creation* and *Altering the Environment* within the study area has important natural and historic values. These values are sometimes expressed in tangible ways, such as by surviving fabric (for instance, buildings, structures, trees and landscapes), but are also apparent in the associations and meanings embodied by the place for different communities. This chapter provides a summary of values associated with these places and provides a representative list. It should, however, be noted that the places described in this history are based on limited surveys and it is probable that additional sites would be identified if a comprehensive study of the places of natural and geological significance of the study area was to be undertaken.

Creation

The remnant parts of the natural environment and landscape within the study area are important for their contribution to biodiversity values of the region and for providing valuable habitat for native fauna. They are also important as they provide valuable and now rare evidence of the landscape as it would have appeared prior to non-Aboriginal settlement.

The confluence of the Yarra River and Gardiners Creek and the area around Heyington Station provide evidence of the creation of the present-day course of the Yarra, and the draining of the lake that was formed by lava flows blocking the course of the Yarra and Gardiners and Hawksburn creeks. This site provides an important opportunity for further research that would increase our understanding of this process. Examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Creation* include:

- ✦ The landscape and geological formations along the banks of the Yarra at the confluence with Gardiners Creek.
- ✦ Remnant indigenous vegetation sites including:
 - The sites between Kooyong Tennis Club and Warra Street, Toorak, and along Gardiners Creek (Glenburn Bend, High Street, Malvern Golf Course and other locations) and the Yarra River
 - The cliff site adjacent to Heyington Station
 - The site adjacent to the rail line east of Gardiner Station.
- ✦ Remnant indigenous trees including the *Bursaria spinosa* at 391 Toorak Road, South Yarra (listed on the National Trust Tree Register), River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) Yellow Gums (*E. leucoxylon*) and others scattered through the study area.

Altering the Environment

The modifications to waterways in the area have historic significance as they provide evidence of the measures taken by European settlers to promote settlement by controlling the effects of flooding and reclaiming swamps for various forms of land use. The exposed cuttings formed by activities such as road and rail construction or quarrying have natural significance for their ability to provide further information about the geological development of the study area. Examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Altering the Environment* include:

- ✦ Como Park and the adjacent levee bank/roadway that connects Williams Road with Alexandra Avenue
- ✦ 'Exposures' of geological formations such as along Alexandra Avenue, particularly the cliff and levee formations between Chapel Street and Williams Road, and railway cuttings in Armadale, Prahran and South Yarra
- ✦ The Prahran Main Drain (formerly part of Hawksburn Creek), created between c.1870 and 1915
- ✦ Herring Island (created as a result of Yarra River straightening), which is just outside of the study area
- ✦ Remnant c.1940 bluestone pitchers that that line part of Gardiners Creek downstream of Toorak Road, which provide evidence of the efforts to straighten the creek and reduce flooding impacts.

SETTLING THE LAND



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SETTLING THE LAND

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the displacement of Aboriginal people, migration, links with pastoralism and the central role of land speculation in the study area's development.

The first Europeans to arrive in the Port Phillip colony came mainly from Britain and Ireland and settled the north bank of the Yarra. Aboriginal people tended to settle on the south bank and this area became associated with Aboriginal camps, missions and stations. In particular, this chapter describes the 'native village' supervised by missionaries, which was on an 895 acre site beside the Yarra from 1837.

Migration is a central theme in the study area's development and this chapter looks at who the immigrants were, where they came from, why, and what they did when they got here. Almost all were seeking a better life and the grand mansions and villas in the area show that many fulfilled their dreams. This includes the man who is, perhaps, the most famous of the study area's immigrants: Simcha Baevski, a penniless Russian Jew who founded the Myer department store. Also noted is the fact that post-war migrants provided much of the labour for the study area's, mostly Prahran-based, industry.

Although pastoralism was not itself a key feature of the study area's developing landscape, pastoralists were central to it as they built their mansions and town houses here with money made in the bush. So too did land speculators and many of Melbourne's most notorious sub-dividers called the study area home. Their demise in the 1891 financial crash mirrored that of 'land boomers' everywhere and is described in the last section of this chapter. So too are government schemes to make home ownership accessible to the working man through closer settlement and war service homes.

This chapter incorporates the following themes:

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)

Associations with settlements and towns.

Australian Heritage Criteria (AHC)

Peopling Australia – Migrating, Promoting settlement;
Building settlements, towns and cities – Planning urban settlements.

HISTORY

3.1 Aboriginal associations with settlements and towns

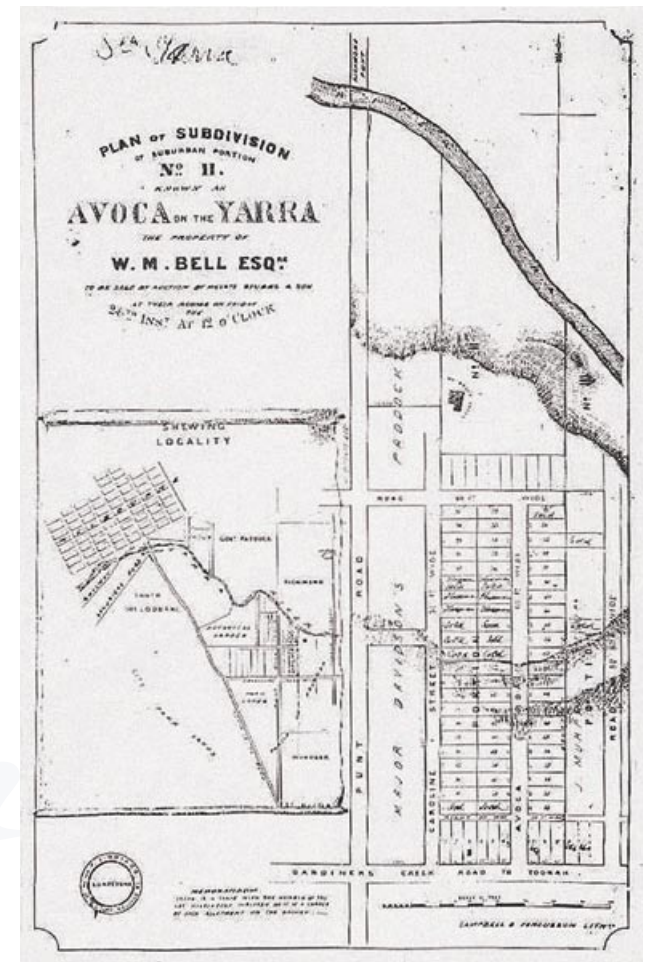
When European people first occupied Melbourne, they primarily settled on the north banks of the Yarra while the Aboriginal population generally chose to occupy the south side of the river. The south side provided both open grassy woodland and swamps and would have been rich in game and resources (Presland, 1985: 32). The first government policy initiatives in relation to the Aboriginal people of Port Phillip were centred along the south banks of the Yarra River and in the first years of the European settlement of Melbourne this area was associated with Aboriginal missions, stations and camps.

The first government policy objective in relation to Aboriginal people in the newly settled Port Phillip district of the Colony of New South Wales was the establishment of an official mission under the supervision of George Langhorne. Governor Richard Bourke hoped to 'civilise' Aboriginal people by creating native villages under the supervision of missionaries. Langhorne had previously acted as Anglican catechist to Aboriginal prisoners on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour and had reservations about the creation of such villages. He felt that Aboriginal people were unlikely to stay in one place and adopt a lifestyle so different from their traditional ways. Ultimately, however, he accepted the commission and upon arriving in Melbourne was asked to work with Captain William Lonsdale to establish a 'native village' (*Historical Records of Victoria* Vol. 2A, p.153).

As shown on Figure 6, Langhorne and Lonsdale selected a site of about 895 acres on the south side of the Yarra River extending between two surveys that eventually became Punt Road and Williams Road (Barwick 1984:115). The mission encompassed some of the land that is now the Royal Botanic Gardens and met the western edge of John Gardiner's pastoral run. As we shall see, parts of the mission land were later alienated as land was surveyed for sale at the Crown land sales in 1840. Langhorne's mission started in 1837 and managed its residents by 'rewarding' them with food, clothing and land if they were deemed to be co-operative and hardworking. Conversely, these inducements were withdrawn for 'poor behaviour'. In the first few months Langhorne was surprised by the mission's success and was particularly pleased by the fact that parents often left their children at the mission when they left its grounds. This may have been a result of the punitive measures he employed, denying children a meal a day if they left without permission (*Historical Records of Victoria* Vol. 2A, pp.153-154).

Plans to extend the mission were drawn up in the year it opened and were met with enthusiasm by Governor Bourke. English was being taught to a number of boys and young men who had been persuaded to live there and initially their teacher was 21-year-old John Thomas Smith who later became a prominent publican and Mayor of Melbourne. Smith's successor quickly resigned, however, dispirited by the failure of the young men to participate in a strict program of education. A number of the children were taken away by their parents in the summer of 1837-38 to learn traditional skills. Some of them did not return (*Historical Records of Victoria* Vol. 2A, pp.205-207).

xxi Subdivision plan c.1865 for 'Avoca on the Yarra' subdivision.
[SLHC Reg. No. 10384]



Settling the land

In mid-1838, Aboriginal residents on the mission came to grief in two incidents. The first involved the theft of potatoes from the land occupied by John Gardiner at the eastern edge of the mission. This incident is one of the few recorded instances of conflict between Aboriginal people and settlers in the present-day study area. Langhorne went to Gardiner's home after a number of mission residents told him that three people had been shot while stealing potatoes from Gardiner's field. Gardiner's men confirmed that a number of men had indeed been fired upon. Two of the men escaped across the river but one, Tullamarine, was knocked down with a musket-butt and captured. Tullamarine and another man involved in the theft, Jin-Jin, were subsequently arrested and committed to trial in Sydney. While in gaol, Jin-Jin and Tullamarine set fire to the prison's thatched roof, enabling Tullamarine to escape. Tullamarine, his wife and children left Melbourne and Langhorne recounted that two other families who had been resident on the mission intended to join them (Langhorne, G. 1838, *Mission Report for April 1838* reproduced in *Historical Records of Victoria* Vol. 2A, pp.213–14).

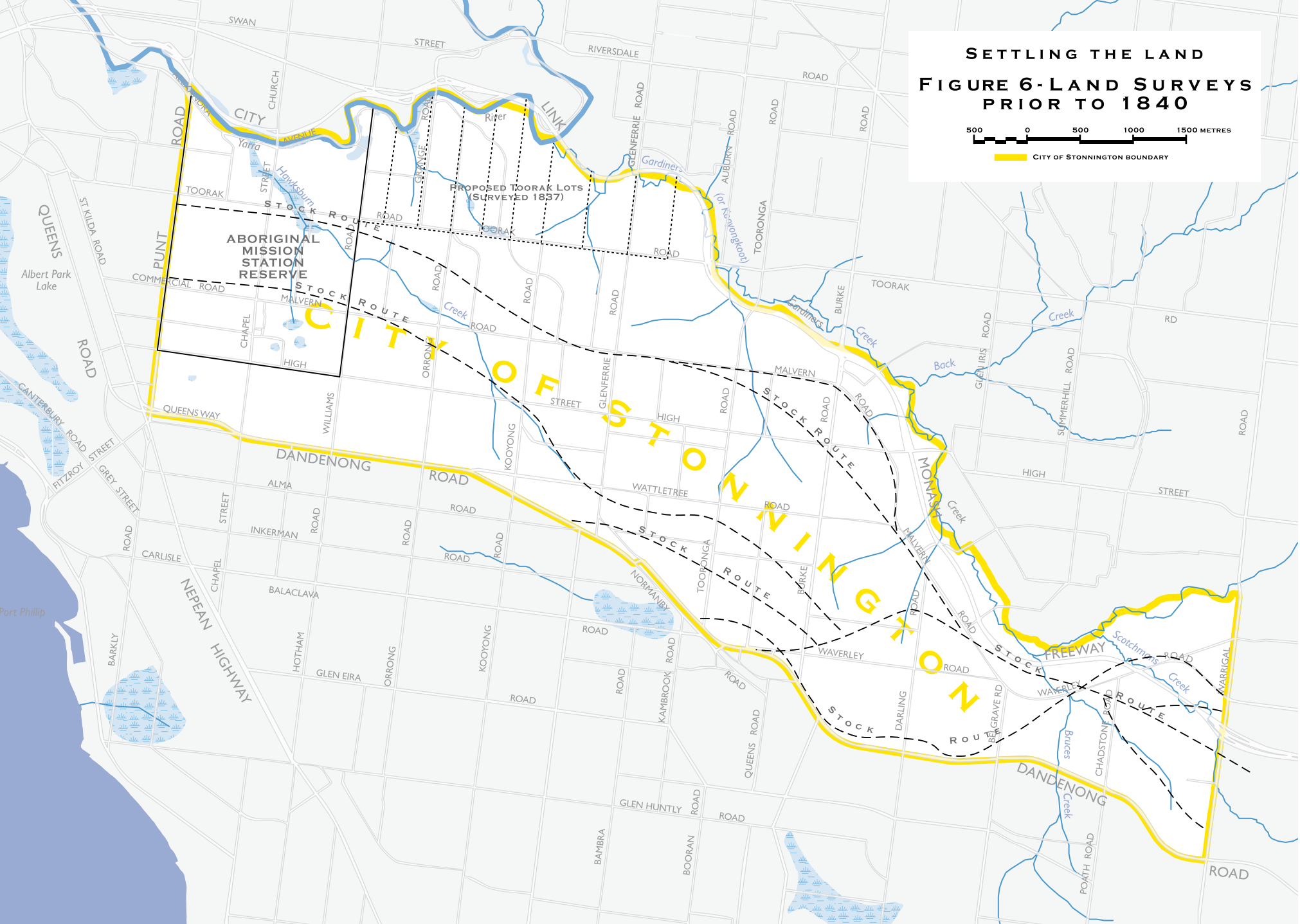
In another example of conflict, the involvement of some of the mission's residents in the theft of sheep and their subsequent arrest led Langhorne into dispute with Lonsdale and caused a number of Aboriginal people to leave the mission. By late 1838, staff losses and funding cuts were resulting in the winding down of mission activities and in 1839 Langhorne resigned. The site itself, however, was to continue to be of importance, with the mission buildings becoming the headquarters of the Aboriginal Protectorate. The story of the Aboriginal Protectorate is told in Chapter 5.1.



xxii W.F.E Liardet c.1875. *Escape from the first gaol*. Water colour with pen, ink and pencil. This iconic image from Liardet depicts the escape of Tullamarine and Jin-Jin from Melbourne's first gaol after being arrested for the theft of potatoes from John Gardiner.

[La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. Accession number: H28250/4. Image number: b28156]

SETTLING THE LAND
FIGURE 6-LAND SURVEYS
PRIOR TO 1840



Settling the land

3.2 Pastoralism

Victoria's pastoral industry was established in the 1830s and 1840s by people who brought livestock, mainly sheep, across Bass Strait from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) or overland from the Riverina District of New South Wales, following Major Thomas Mitchell's successful expedition south of the Murray River to find new pastures. The first pastoralists grazed their animals on vast areas of land illegally, thus acquiring the name squatters. (Over time the term 'squatter' became synonymous with wealthy pastoralists.) In 1836 the government formalised their occupation of the land by means of pastoral licences, for which pastoralists paid £10 per year. The pastoral industry was a precarious economic pursuit, and many pastoralists failed, but there was huge wealth to be made, particularly from wool production and stock breeding.

Although the study area was only fleetingly part of the squatters' domain, it has had a strong connection with Victoria's pastoral industry, as the place chosen for the city estates of many wealthy squatters.

3.2.1 Pastoral occupation

The first occupation of the study area by a pastoralist occurred when John Gardiner arrived with his cattle in 1836. Gardiner was a member of the first party of overlanders, who brought sheep and cattle overland to the Port Phillip District from the Riverina. For about two years Gardiner occupied a large area around the junction of the Yarra River and the creek that was then known as Kooyong Koot, but now bears his name. This run is believed to have extended to the edge of the Aboriginal mission as shown on Figure 6. Cooper (1935:1–3) believed that Gardiner's homestead was on the corner of Toorak Road and Elizabeth Street, Kooyong, but later research suggests that it was in Hawthorn. In 1838 Gardiner moved to a better run at Mooroolbark.

Another overlander, David Hill, arrived with his family and livestock in 1839 and briefly held a pastoral licence on land near the study area, but died soon after. His family remained to take up residence in the study area. Hill's widow, Jane, purchased land in the first Crown land sale in the study area held in 1840, and their daughter and son-in-law, Jane and James Glover (another pastoralist) built a villa, *Mount Verdant* (demolished) in South Yarra (Malone 2002:3–5). As we shall see, the beginning of the Crown land sales in 1840 signalled the end of the brief pastoral age within the study area; however, it was not the end of the strong association between the municipality and the pastoral industry in other parts of Victoria.

3.2.2 A 'woolly aristocracy' – squatters and their town houses

Some squatters who prospered in the bush purchased properties in the study area, where they established town residences, convenient to their business and political interests in the city, while they maintained their principal residences at their country homesteads, thus creating the impression of what Dingle (1984:82) describes as a 'woolly aristocracy'. The Armytages of *Como* were the most prominent in this category (the story of *Como* is told in detail in Chapter 6.1). Others, having made their fortunes, employed managers on their pastoral runs or retired from pastoral activities altogether, to take up permanent residence in the best parts of the study area. At first their houses were relatively modest, but as Victoria's prosperity increased, so did the inclination to identify with such prosperity by building mansions and enjoying extravagant lifestyles. Alexander Landale of *Aroona* (demolished) presented an interesting self-portrait of a squatter living in Toorak:

... the 'squatter' as we know him now, is an educated gentlemen who maintains an establishment in town and spends his money freely on those thousand-and-one luxuries which cause the circulation of money and benefit the classes who supply the luxuries which they are not wealthy enough to enjoy (Victoria's Representative Men at Home, cited in Malone, 2002:7).

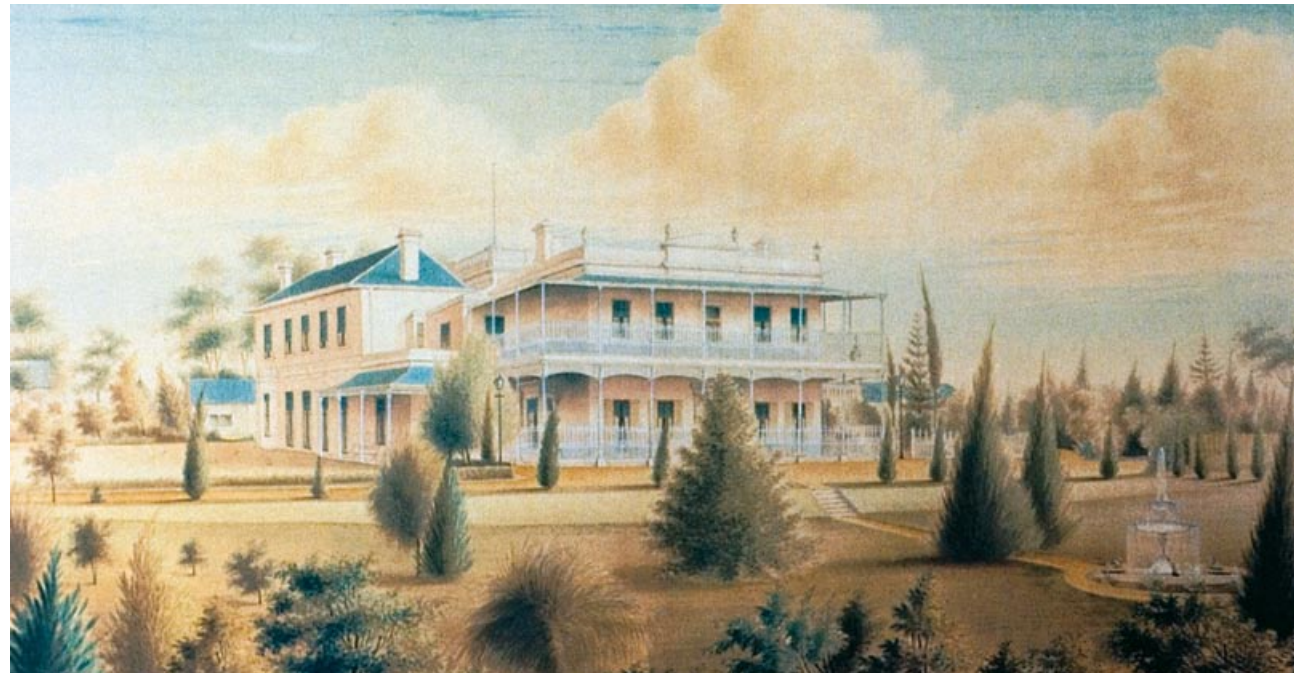
xxiii Aroona, c.1890.
[SLHC Reg. No. 2407.1]



Settling the land

John Goodman, a squatter who had pastoral interests in central Victoria, lived at *Miegunyah*, a ten-acre property in Orrong Road in the 1850s. His modest six-roomed house was enlarged by a later owner. Goodman was a member of the Legislative Council and the Prahran Council, and briefly served as Commissioner for Customs (Cooper, 1924:76–77, Malone 202:32–33). Another squatter with interests in the city was Archibald Fiskin, who in 1879 built a mansion on the corner of Kooyong and Malvern roads. The house was later purchased by another pastoralist, Colin Simson, who renamed it *Carmyle* (Foster, 1999:54–5). Simson's brother, John, bought a 20-roomed mansion in Toorak – *Trawalla*, built in 1867 for a Melbourne merchant – and enlarged it by 30 rooms (Malone, 2002:24).

xxiv *Como*, from a painting by William Tibbits, c.1875.
Courtesy National Trust of Australia (Vic). [SLHC Reg. No. 2364.1]



xxv *Mount Verdant*, overlooking the Yarra, (date unknown).
[SLHC Reg. No. 2366]

3.3 Land speculation

The close proximity to the village of Melbourne and the favourable topography of the high ground overlooking the Yarra quickly established it as a desirable place for settlement. As we shall see, the first land sales in the 1840s quickly established a cycle of speculation and subdivision that was to culminate in the feverish atmosphere of the 1880s land boom when land was taken up, subdivided and re-sold (often many times over) by entrepreneurial settlers and speculators, many of whom were migrants, as Melbourne boomed in the wake of the riches brought by the gold rush. It was during the early land sales in the 1840s that a pattern of ownership emerged with wealthy and influential people acquiring more favourable sites on the high ground, while the lower swampy areas of Prahran and Windsor were set aside for the farming industry and working-class houses.

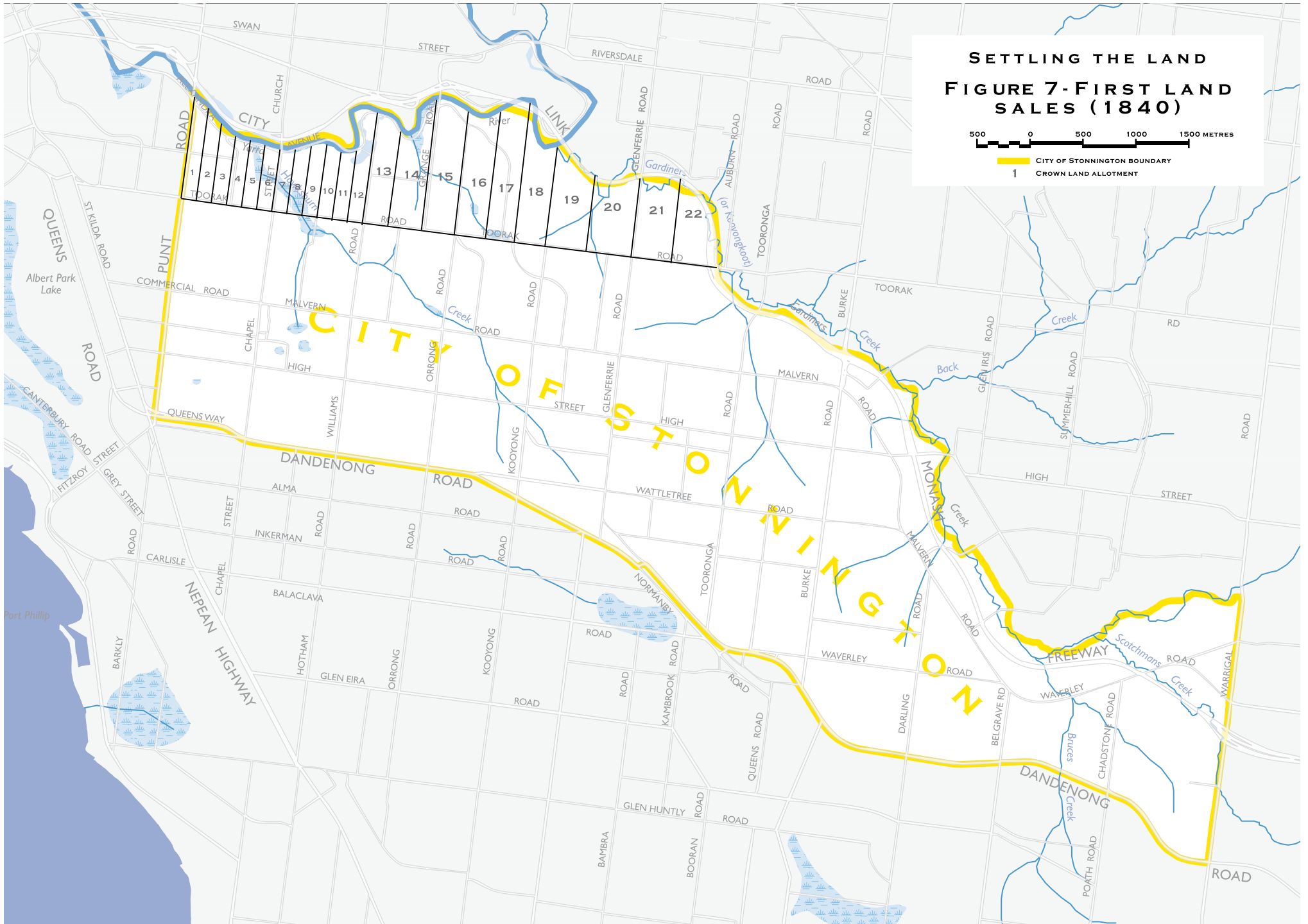
Speculation in land led to fortunes being made and lost in the study area, from lands both within and outside the area. Within the study area there were early indications that its land would be highly valued, but demand rose and fell with each boom and recession, as did the fortunes of speculators. Although speculation is a common theme running through the history of buying land in Victoria, it is of particular significance in the study area's history. It was here that a number of the most notorious 'land boomers' built their own boom-style mansions, only to lose them in the financial collapse.

As we shall see, this cycle of land speculation and subdivision reached its frenzied zenith in the 1880s before coming to a spectacular end with the financial crash that resulted in the 1890s' depression. This halted further development for many years, until it was revived again in the early twentieth century and ushered in a new, and somewhat less frenetic, period of land sales and subdivision. Nevertheless the trend was upwards, as metropolitan Melbourne expanded, particularly in the preferred undulating country to its east.

By the end of the 1930s the subdivision of the study area for suburban allotments was almost complete. While many years of subdivision and new development would build upon these early divisions, the die was largely cast and the almost continuous cycle of speculation and sales is revealed in the patterns of subdivision in many parts of study area today.

3.3.1 Crown land sales 1840–1850

Sales of Crown land in and around Melbourne commenced in 1837. Robert Hoddle, the Government Surveyor, subdivided the land according to a grid plan, paying no attention to the natural topography. The first sale of land within the study area took place on 10 June 1840, when 22 allotments in the western part of the Parish of Prahran (comprising the northern section of the former Prahran municipality and the north-west corner of the Malvern municipality) were offered. As shown in Figure 7, the agricultural allotments, ranging in area from 19 acres to 65 acres, were north of Gardiners Creek Road (now Toorak Road) sloping down to the Yarra River and Gardiners Creek. The elongated blocks were designed to give each allotment access to water. The sale attracted considerable interest and most allotments were bought by speculators looking for future profits as Melbourne expanded. Few of the initial purchasers actually settled the district. (Cooper, 1924:14; Malone, 1998:1)



SETTLING THE LAND
FIGURE 7-FIRST LAND SALES (1840)

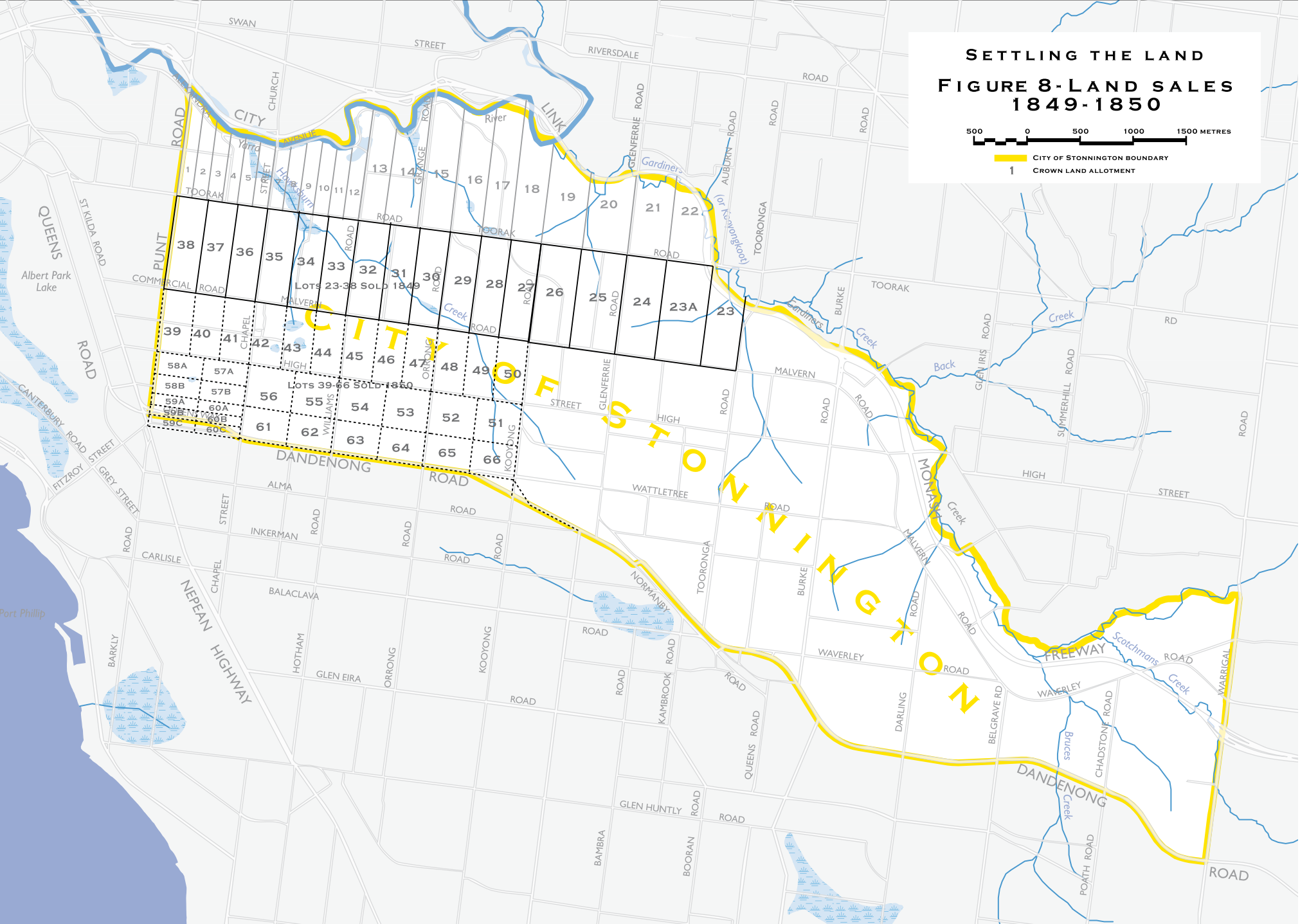
500 0 500 1000 1500 METRES

1 CITY OF STONNINGTON BOUNDARY
1 CROWN LAND ALLOTMENT

SETTLING THE LAND
FIGURE 8-LAND SALES
1849-1850

500 0 500 1000 1500 METRES

1 CITY OF STONNINGTON BOUNDARY
1 CROWN LAND ALLOTMENT



Settling the land

Update 1

Edit/Additional words inserted

One original grantee who did remain to settle on his allotment was Lieutenant Charles Forrest, who bought allotment 6. In 1841 Forrest built *Waterloo Cottage* on the high ground overlooking the Yarra River at the northern end of Chapel Street. This house, believed to be the first erected in the City of Prahran, was still standing in 1923 (Cooper, 1924:14–16), close to the site of Melbourne High School, but has since been demolished. Another grantee was Peter Ferrie who purchased allotment 21, which he named ‘*Glen Ferrie*’. Ferrie is thought to have constructed a house by 1841.

Most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale, with the better parts purchased fairly quickly by merchants, pastoralists, professional men, government officials and former army officers like Forrest, who established estates in the best locations. Some purchasers, including Chief Protector of Aborigines George Augustus Robinson, built more than one house, to become landlords. Robinson’s own house, on part of allotment 8, was called *Tivoli*. Sales of the low-lying ground was slower, and generally resulted in areas of poor quality housing for rent, such as ‘Daly Town’ near the northern end of Chapel Street (Malone, 1998:19). East of Kooyong Road, allotments 19 and 20 remained in the hands of speculators until the mid 1850s (Foster, 1999, ch.2).

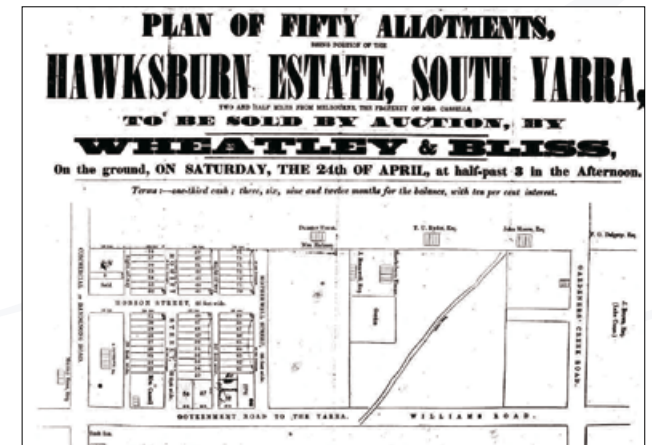
When the study area’s second and third land sales took place in June 1849 and May 1850 (refer to Figure 8) the process of speculation and subdivision for resale was repeated, with the best land on the high ground selling as estates for the wealthy, and the slower resale of the poorly drained low areas. Purchasers included local residents G.A. Robinson, Dr E.C. Hobson and R.A. Balbirnie, who were obviously aware of the potential of the land. In the early 1850s Balbirnie sold most of his allotment 33 to the Cassell family, who established the Hawksburn estate (Malone, 2000:34 and 36). Balbirnie also bought allotment 24, east of Glenferrie Road, which he divided into seven allotments (Foster and Stefanopoulos, 2001:11).

The purchaser of the whole block bounded by Punt Road, Toorak Road, Chapel Street and Commercial Road was Peter Davis, an estate agent, who immediately subdivided the land for resale as small farms, although only the well drained parts were sold before the 1860s (Cooper, 1924:11, 12 and 32; Malone, 1998:23–26, 2000:34).

At Windsor on the south-west corner of the study area, the blocks were smaller and brought the highest price per acre, presumably because of their proximity to the already developing suburb of St. Kilda, from which settlement was expected to flow. This corner was soon subdivided for working-class housing and small shops (Cooper, 1924:13–14; Malone, 1999:26–29).



xxvi View c.1870 looking north-east showing early development around Malvern Hill Hotel. [SLHC Reg. No. 1239]



xxvii Auction notice c.1858 for Hawksburn Estate.

[SLHC Reg. No. 11970] [La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. Accession number: unknown]

It is interesting to note how the subsequent subdivision of land in the study area created a street pattern that strongly reflected the shape and orientation of these original allotments. Hence, we see that the earliest streets to the north of Gardiners Creek (Toorak) Road ran north-south, while the streets in the south-west pocket of Windsor ran mostly east-west. This can be seen in a map reproduced in Malone showing Prahran in 1856. While later subdivision and changes have blurred some of these distinctions this pattern remains largely evident today.

One speculator who did make a huge profit was John Sullivan, Colonial Surgeon to the Port Phillip District. Sullivan purchased Allotment 25, the most remote of the allotments on offer at the 1849 sale, for £151 and sold it in 1853 for £10,972. The new owner, barrister (later County Court Judge) Charles B.C. Skinner, planned an estate in the style of an English village, and named it Ledbury after a town in the English Malvern Hills. To attract land buyers Skinner built the Malvern Hill Hotel on the corner of Glenferrie and Malvern roads. Skinner's Malvern Hill Estate along with this hotel, was to give the suburb of Malvern its name. The estate failed to attract wealthy buyers looking for suburban villa sites, and was initially settled by a few workers, market gardeners and brickmakers. Eventually the small allotments were consolidated into larger blocks that attracted wealthy purchasers (Foster, 1999:28–32).

3.3.2 Crown land sales 1854–1879

Apart from the nine blocks in the north included in the 1840 and 1849 sales, Crown land sales in what became Malvern municipality did not commence until February 1854, when the first twenty allotments to the south of Malvern Road and east of Boundary (Kooyong) Road were sold as shown in Figure 9. Further sales soon followed and by the end of the 1850s most of Malvern's land had been sold. By 1879 almost all the land in the study area had been alienated from the Crown (McLaren, 1987). The allotments were smaller than those to the west, with the largest of them situated along Gardiners Creek.

One of the few original Crown grantees to settle on his estate was Michael Keeley, who in 1857 built his mansion (later called *Brynmawr*) on nine acres in Charleville (Burke) Road (Raworth and Foster, 1997:3–4). Located so far out of town, with no good roads or transport systems, the land beyond Kooyong Road attracted little urban development before the 1880s, apart from a small concentration of houses and shops around Skinner's village and the *Balbirnie* subdivision at the Glenferrie and Malvern roads intersection. A small cottage from this time survives today at 1225 Malvern Road (*Malvern Heritage Study*). Further out, the country east of Tooronga Road remained sparsely settled until the twentieth century (Bower, 1995).

Update 1 Renaming of 3.3.3

Although development spread generally from west to east, there was some early settlement in the south-east along Dandenong Road, especially after two railway lines to Oakleigh opened in 1879 and 1890. There was a subdivision made west of Chadstone Road in 1901, but little housing before 1911 (Bower, 1995). While awaiting suburban development, much of the land in the east of the study area was leased or sold for productive pursuits, mostly brickmaking or fruit and vegetable growing. These industries were gradually displaced by urban development in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

3.3.3 Speculation and land boomers - Subdivision from 1880 onwards

During the 1880s Melbourne experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity, growth and development. The urban boundaries were pushed out as people, sharing in the general prosperity and the new ideal of home ownership, sought new residential lands. An illustration of this growth is the doubling of the population of Prahran municipality in the decade between 1881 and 1891 from 20,000 to almost 40,000 (Tibbets, 1983:34).

U1

Settling the land

The study area had many acres of vacant land, held, as we have seen, by speculators waiting for the right time to sell. Malvern in particular experienced a burst of suburban development as land developers busily subdivided and auctioned choice building sites on housing estates, and builders rapidly covered them with houses. Most of the residential streets running into Glenferrie Road and High Street were created at that time, along with the main-street commercial development (Raworth and Foster, 1997:7). At Armadale the sale of George Taylor's *Auburn Vale Estate* in 1887 resulted in new residential development (Malone, 2005:22).

Land companies were floated to buy land for quick resale at large profits, offering large dividends to unwary investors. As land prices spiralled, banks and building societies over-reached their lending capacities, and borrowers borrowed beyond their capacity to repay. Eventually in December 1891 the whole structure began to collapse. People lost their savings, building stopped and new estates remained vacant. In Malvern, *Coldblo Estate* was released in June 1892, too late to catch the boom, and remained unsold, as did the *Gascoigne Estate*. The collapse resulted in a disastrous depression that brought unemployment and misery to many thousands, and halted further development in the study area – and everywhere else in Victoria – until the end of the nineteenth century.

Land dealer and financier Sir Matthew Davies built his mansion, *The Towers*, in Toorak. When his empire crashed, his household contents were auctioned, but there was no buyer for the house. *The Towers* stood empty for many years. The property was reduced by a subdivision, which formed Towers Road in 1911. The house was demolished in 1927 and the remaining property subdivided (Cannon, 1972:306-10; Malone, 2004:10–11). *Valentines* was built in Glen Iris just before the crash by Matthew's brother John Mark Davies, who was a lawyer, land developer and Attorney General. The mansion survived its owner's financial ruin, and is now part of Caulfield Grammar School in Willoby Avenue (Cannon, 1972:311–14).

One of the most notorious land boomers was James Munro, who, according to Cooper, was a grocer in Prahran shortly after his arrival from Scotland in 1858. Munro's career as a financier and land dealer commenced when he started the Victorian Permanent Building Society in 1865. He entered Parliament as Member for North Melbourne in 1874, and in 1876 built *Armadale* (117 Kooyong Road) on a large estate. The house is modest compared with the later boom-time mansions such as *Valentines*. Munro became Premier of Victoria in 1890, and was responsible, with Attorney General John Mark Davies for the *Voluntary Liquidation Act* 1891, which in effect took away the rights of minority depositors in banks and building societies. When his business empire collapsed in 1892, Munro left the country to become Agent-General in London. *Armadale* was sold and continued as a private home until its purchase by the Melbourne Bible Institute in 1944. It later became part of the King David School (Cooper, 1924:97; Cannon, 1972:242–48; Malone, 2005:8–9).

Update 1
Inserted new sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5,
plus additional words

Prahran Mayor George W. Taylor of *Wynnstay* (demolished) and Charles H. James of *Illawarra* were also local land boomers caught by the crash.

3.3.4 Uncontrolled and unplanned development
3.3.5 Recovery and infill 1900-1940
3.4 Government assistance



3.4.1 Closer settlement

During the depression that followed the crash of the 1890s the Victorian government attempted to settle more people on the land by acquiring large estates and breaking them up into small farms for sale to people of limited means. *The Closer Settlement Act* 1904 provided for compulsory acquisition of freehold land. The intention of Closer Settlement was to sell, at prices that covered the government's costs of purchase and subdivision, to genuine settlers, thus cutting out speculators. Occupation was by 31½ year lease, with a £50 deposit, and a requirement to reside on the property. A Crown Grant could be issued after 12 years upon full payment of the balance of purchase money. By 1917 about 4500 settlers were occupying farms throughout Victoria. In addition, 1046 small workmen's allotments were made available, mainly around Melbourne (*Victorian Year Book*, 1973:10–11; Bower, 2001).

In 1911 the Land Purchase and Management Board (later known as the Closer Settlement Board) purchased the Belmont Estate in Glen Iris. The property was subdivided into about 200 quarter-acre allotments, named 'Tooronga Estate' and promoted as a future 'model portion' of the new City of Malvern. *Tooronga Estate's* main selling point was its proximity to rail and tram routes. Those who purchased the blocks were generally clerks, salesmen, tradesmen, tramway and railway workers, who earned around £3 to £4 per week. A few years earlier Justice H.B. Higgins (a Toorak resident) had determined an amount slightly above £2 as the minimum wage upon which an unskilled worker could support his family. The majority of the Tooronga settlers moved from rented accommodation in the inner suburbs, though some were from Prahran and other parts of Malvern. Having saved up a deposit, they grabbed the opportunity to fulfil the Australian dream of a home of their own in a pleasant eastern suburb. They built modest four to six roomed houses, mostly weatherboard. A considerable number of the original lessees did succeed in paying off their land and remained as long-term Tooronga residents (Bower, 2001). Few of these houses remain today.

xxviii *Valentines*, the house built for John Mark Davies, pictured soon after its purchase by Malvern Grammar School, c.1930. [SLHC Reg. No. 290]



xxix *Armadale House*, c.1888. [SLHC Reg. No. 7197]

Settling the land

3.4.2 War service homes

After World War I the government again stepped in to assist people to buy land – this time to settle returned soldiers and their families in affordable houses. In 1920 the War Service Homes Commission compulsorily acquired land between Serrell Street and Belgrave Road and developed the *Carnegie Estate*, with a capacity for 500 houses. The original plan was to provide generous recreational space on ‘garden suburb’ principles, but although the returned soldiers built their houses, the only part of the garden suburb plan to eventuate was a pair of grassy areas called Villers Square and Brettoneaux Square (Strahan, 1989:71–73).

Also in 1920, sixteen houses were constructed in Victory Square, Armadale (off Ashleigh Street) for war widows. The houses, which cost £500 each, were funded by popular subscription.

3.5 Migrating to seek opportunity

The settlement of the study area is closely linked with immigration, which is a key theme throughout the study area’s history, as waves of immigrants from overseas arrived in the study area seeking a better way of life. The early immigrants were almost entirely from Britain and Ireland, although there were some notable exceptions. Later the study area became host of many post World War II immigrants from continental Europe and later still from other parts of the world, generally reflecting the waves of immigration to Australia.

3.5.1 Fortune seekers – nineteenth century immigration

The fulfilment of opportunities for many pastoralists, land speculators and gold seekers is displayed in the study area’s mansions and villas. As Cooper pointed out, ‘These early men turned their hands to almost anything that promised to return money’ (1924:35–36). One such fortune seeker was R.A. Balbirnie, descendant of a noble Scottish family, who operated a punt across the Yarra River at the site of Princes Bridge. He made a fortune in land and lived for many years at *Balmerino* in South Yarra before returning to Britain. The study area attracted many professionally trained men (women then being denied access to the professions), particularly in the legal profession, who were ready to step into leading positions as the colony’s administrative systems were established. Edward Eyre Williams, *Como*’s first owner, arrived in Australia as a young barrister in 1842, to become a judge in the Supreme Court ten years later (Fox, 1996).

xxx R.A. Balbirnie, c.1840.
[SLHC Reg. No. 2396.1]



On the other hand immigrants with more humble trade origins are exemplified by the Woodmason family of market gardeners who arrived from England in the 1840s, worked hard to build local enterprises, and took a prominent role in municipal affairs in Malvern.

Cooper relates an amusing but very telling anecdote about Major-General Edward Macarthur, who was Acting Governor of the colony in 1856. Macarthur happened to be chatting with Sergeant Dowling, an Irish immigrant, and suggested that the Sergeant was ‘better off in Prahran than if he had remained in Ireland’. Dowling replied ‘Faith, and had your Excellency remained in Scotland, it would indade (sic) have been a long time before you would have become a governor’. For the record, Macarthur was actually born in Bath, England (Cooper, 1924:111).

The gold rush of the 1850s brought the first groups of Chinese settlers to Melbourne. A well-known Chinese immigrant living in nineteenth century Malvern was Kong Meng Lowe, a wealthy merchant and leader in Melbourne’s Chinese community. Kong Meng, his English wife and their family were well-known in the community. They lived at *Longwood* (demolished) where they had a tobacco plantation employing Chinese workers (Cooper 1935:124–26). A number of Chinese men, having tried their luck on the goldfields, established laundries in the area. Malone notes a couple of Chinese laundries in Prahran (1984:16–17) Win Vears remembers one in High Street, Armadale, in the 1930s:

There was a little shop that was a Chinese laundry, and you could see the little, tiniest man with his pigtail (Vears, interview, 5 July 2000).

xxxii Longwood, the residence of Kong Meng Lowe and his family, Elizabeth Street, Malvern c.1890. [SLHC Reg. No. 90]



xxxii High Street shops, including Sam Lee’s Chinese Laundry. [SLHC Reg. No. 11745]



Settling the land

3.5.2 Creating a cosmopolitan society – twentieth century immigration

Before World War II, immigrants settling in the study area were predominantly Anglo-Celtic (as in most parts of Victoria), but there were some exceptional examples of immigrants of non-English speaking background who, having prospered in business, settled in prestigious parts of the municipality.

Perhaps the most famous ‘rags to riches’ resident was Simcha Baevski, the Russian Jew who arrived penniless in Australia in 1899, and as Sidney Myer founded the huge retailing empire. In 1920, having made his fortune, Myer settled with his wife Merlyn at *Cranlana* in Toorak (www.myerfoundation.org.au).

Jupp (1988:644–45) notes that there were some Jews from Eastern Europe living in Prahran from the 1920s, close to the larger communities in neighbouring St. Kilda and Caulfield, and to the synagogue built in 1929 in South Yarra, just outside the study area’s border. The Jews were strongly identified with the clothing industry, an industry that was an important part of Prahran’s economy (see chapter 5). The Nathan family of furniture manufacturers established the well-known Maples store in Chapel Street in 1906 (Malone, 1983:26).

An early Greek immigrant to settle in the study area was successful hotelier and businessman Anthony Lucas, who bought the Toorak mansion *Whernside* in 1918. Lucas established the Australia Hotel in Melbourne and was a leader of Melbourne’s Greek community. *Whernside* later became the home of Jewish immigrant and business tycoon, Solomon Lew (Strahan, 1989:58–59; Jupp, 1988:647). Almost every town in Australia had a Greek café, and this tradition was carried on in Prahran with a number of restaurants and cafés in Chapel Street run by Greek or Greek Cypriot families (Jupp, 1988:510; Malone, 1984:25).

Prahran’s cosmopolitan character really developed in the 1950s and 60s, as immigrants arrived from all parts of Europe. They occupied the old working-class houses and newly built Housing Commission flats in the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor abandoned by Australian-born residents moving out to new suburbs. Post-war immigrants provided much of the workforce for the study area’s thriving industrial sector, then based in Prahran. One of the largest European groups was the Greeks. Their strong presence in the study area is evidenced by the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church, which was converted from the former Mt Erica Methodist Church, and the Greek community centre in High Street (Malone, 2001:39).

By the 1980s many Greeks had moved out to Malvern. This pattern of migration is demonstrated by St Catherine’s Greek Orthodox Church in Epping Street, Malvern East, which has a large congregation, and a Greek Senior Citizens Club meets at the Malvern Town Hall.

Since the 1970s the European immigrants have been joined by people from Turkey, the Middle East, Asia and South America – many of them once again escaping the effects of war and oppression. Many of these immigrants were initially housed at the Housing Commission estates in Prahran. One significant group in Prahran is the Khmer, most of whom came as refugees from Cambodia. The Khmer Language Cultural Centre was established in Prahran in 1980s (Wilde, 1993:230; Jupp, 1988:657–58). From the 1970s a strong Indian community has formed in Prahran and Malvern (Wilde, 1993:70–73; Jupp, 1988:546).

xxxiii (right) During World War II members of the Greek community present a Greek flag to Prahran Mayor Alfred Woodfull. The flag was flown from the Town Hall on the day of appeal for contributions to the war effort in Greece, c.1941.

[SLHC Reg. No. 8657]

