

Vermont Heritage Walk - Notes

Welcome everyone. Thank-you for attending this morning's, Vermont Heritage Walk.

Today, we will be walking the 3.5 km long stretch of land (7.0 km return) known as the 'Healesville Freeway Reserve', which has a total area of about 35 hectares (so just over 86 acres or 0.35 square kilometres).

This reserve stretches from Davy Lane Reserve ahead of us, all the way to Boronia Road, and set aside in 1969 by the Bolte Government as part of a planned freeway (of 18 km) to link Riversdale Road in Box Hill South, to Maroondah Highway in Coldstream (near Healesville).

The freeway was intended to pass through Vermont and other suburbs such as Forest Hill, Blackburn South and Box Hill South. However, only parts of the freeway were built.

The section between Vermont South and Lilydale was never built and was then permanently abandoned. The freeway land between Terrara and Springvale Roads was 'deleted' from the plan by VicRoads in 2009.

In 2012, discussions began about what to do with this land, and the community was of a mind to retain the area as open green space rather than losing the area to residential development.



VicRoads still owned around 95% of the reserve land in 2018 and from October 2018, this land began to be transferred back from VicRoads to the 'Crown'. The reserve is now mostly 'Crown' land which provides some long-term assurance that the land will remain public green space into the future, as changes to zoning would need to be passed as an Act of Parliament which is quite an involved process.

Prior to this, much of the land was used for walking, recreation, horse and cattle agistment.

It has now been agreed that this area will become a new park. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, the recognised Traditional Owners of the land on which the HFR is situated, were approached in 2018 to be consulted about the development and naming of the new park.

The reserve is currently managed by Parks Victoria, and over the lockdown period and in more recent months, much of the vegetation we will pass today has been subject to fire management clearing activities by the 'Forests Fire Management' Victoria team.

The budget for the new park is \$10.5 million from the Victorian Government and will include establishment of a shared walking and cycling trail running the length of the park, linking the Bellbird Dell and with an expected completion date in 2024. The Metro East Bicycle User Group (MeBug) has also been involved in the planning process and they wish the cycle track to connect the Eastlink/Dandenong Creek Trail to the Syndal to Heatherdale Pipeline Trail.


	<p>Healesville Freeway Reserve Concept Plan (Published 2018)</p>
	<p>MeBUG cycling user group article on the HFR Article by the Metro East Bicycle User Group (MeBug) outlining their goals for the cycling track through the Healesville Freeway Plan. They want it to connect the Eastlink/Dandenong Creek Trail to the Syndal to Heatherdale Pipeline Trail.</p>

Site 1: Strathdon Orchard

‘Strathdon’ is the last remaining fruit orchard in the City of Whitehorse with plantings dating from the early 1920s. The house itself, originally three bedrooms, was constructed in 1894 by Walter (Jack) Fankhauser and extended by subsequent owners the Matheson family.

The property was set up as an orchard – and various fruits were grown including lemons, oranges, figs, plums, gooseberries, raspberries, black and red currants, cherries and apples (Matheson, 1992). Apples were the main output and recent restoration works at Strathdon have seen new trees, grafted from the original plantings, be reinstated on the property, with plans to restore the orchard to working order to complement the community garden located behind the house.

More history on this property can be found on our website and in brochures we have at the house.

	<p>History of Strathdon House and Orchard URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/strathdon-house--orchard.html</p>
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Davy Lane Reserve

This open field area is known as ‘Davy Lane Reserve’ and marks the start of the Healesville Freeway Reserve land. There are current plans to redevelop this area into a sports precinct, and community submissions for ideas closed on 24th June 2022.

	<p>Whitehorse Council Page with Updates and Information on the Development of Davy Lane Reserve</p>
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Site 2: Vermont Horticultural Centre

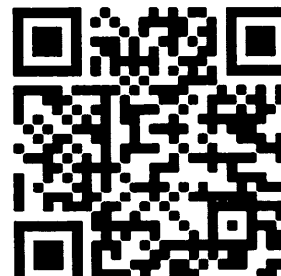
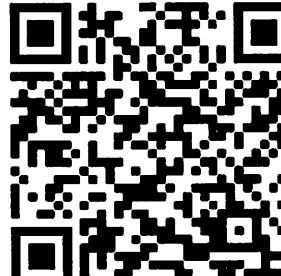
The property we see here is the Vermont or 'Whitehorse' Horticultural Centre, which opened in March 1982. The Nunawading Community Garden next door was the first community garden to be established in Australia in 1977. The land is made available to rent by Whitehorse residents for organic gardening and vegetable growing. There is a waiting list for those interested in reserving and maintaining a vegetable plot.

	<p>Nunawading Community Gardens Listing on the Whitehorse Council's Website Their website is: https://ncg.org.au</p>
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We are now going to continue to walk along the section of the reserve towards Terrara Road.

Site 3: Wildersleigh

Much of Vermont from the 1920s to the mid 1970s, consisted of lots of orchards (particularly apples, pears and lemons), flower farms and poultry farms, and was considered as a rural township. This is the site of 'Wildersleigh', built in the 1930s and featured a former lemon orchard on seven acres of land. This was owned by Frank, Ethel and Janet Smith and is representative of a typical small holding of a family in the area.


	<p>History of 'Wildersleigh' URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/wildersleigh.html</p>
	<p>Map of Orchards, Flower Farms and Poultry Farms in Vermont circa 1945 URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/map-of-vermont-1945.html</p>

We are now going to continue to walk along the section of the reserve crossing Terrara Road and linking up with the Bellbird Dell.

Site 4: Greenways

This site was once part of 'Greenways'- a large estate, property and stables occupied by Sir Eric Speed, Private Secretary to British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin from 1949-1955, and afterwards, Sir Maurice Hutton, head of the British Food Mission. Much of the properties

along Terrara Road were once large estates, and had some interesting high-profile residents, from former athletes, politicians, well known medical doctors, such as Dr. Stephens of Stephens Reserve on Canterbury Road who worked at the Epworth Hospital and maintained a cattle farm called the 'Uplands' on 22 acres of land on Terrara Road opposite the Vermont Football oval.

	<p>History of 'Greenways' URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/greenways.html</p>
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Site 5: Plumstead

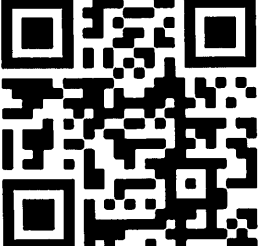
The property over the fence line here is called 'Plumstead' and was built in 1939 by former Terrara Road resident and architect, James Frederick Wilson Ballantyne, who also designed the 'St. Luke's' church on the corner of Mitcham and Canterbury Roads as well as other large homes commissioned in Terrara Road.



We are now going to enter the Bellbird Dell which features areas of remnant bushland that serve as an important wildlife and habitat corridor. It is hoped the biodiversity of this area will be enhanced by re-vegetation of the Healesville Freeway Reserve as it transitions into a new park.

The Bellbird Dell

The Bellbird Dell is a 1.4 km linear park with an area of 17.5 hectares (smaller than the 35 hectares of the Healesville Freeway Reserve) that is home to many bell birds. It features areas of remnant bush, walking trails, wetlands and ornamental lakes.

For those who are interested, a list of common flora and fauna that can be found in the Bellbird Dell is available. We have reproduced the lists here in a brochure format. It is also worth checking observations on 'iNaturalist' and 'eBird' for what others have observed in the local area and online identification services, such as 'VicFlora' to assist you to work out what you are seeing.

	<p>Bellbird Dell Advisory Committee Homepage URL: https://www.bellbirddell.org</p>
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	<p>iNaturalist Australia URL: https://inaturalist.ala.org.au You can record your observations of flora and fauna and receive and provide identifications to others. You can also view observations posted by others of flora and fauna observed in the local area.</p>
	<p>eBird URL: https://ebird.org/australia/home Birdwatching and observations.</p>


We will now continue our walk through the Bellbird Dell and reenter the Healesville Freeway Reserve. The planned walking and cycling path run along the back fence of properties along Morack Road.

Site 6: NADRASCA

Our next site of interest is the farm operated by NADRASCA that provides employment and workplace opportunities for people living with a disability.

NADRASCA is NDIS Registered Disability Support Organisation that was established in 1967 and has operated this 3.5-hectare property at 64-80 Morack Road for a number of years. Participants in the program propagate plants in onsite greenhouses, grow and harvest produce, engage in woodworking activities, and look after animals on the property such as the sheep we can see here.

This is a fantastic site for the local community and will be adjacent to the new park developed in the adjacent Healesville Freeway Reserve.

	<p>History of NADRASCA URL: https://www.nadrasca.com.au/our-history-1</p>
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Site 7: Vermont High School

Vermont Secondary College opened in 1962 on the former 7 ½ acre orchard of Gerard Alfred Highton, who donated the land in a bequest to the Walter and Eliza Hall institute when he passed away in 1956, at the age of 77.

We will now continue our walk through the Healesville Freeway Reserve. We can see the view above here over the former Livermore orchard property, this view gives a glimpse into what the orcharding families might have seen looking toward the Dandenong Creek in the early 20th century. Some remnant orchard trees have remained, such as lemon trees from the former Lynwood homestead.

Site 8: Lynwood

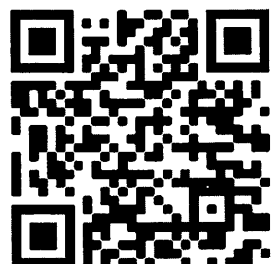
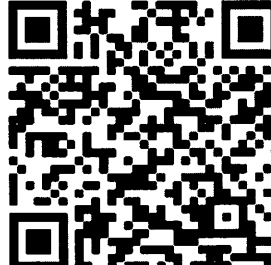
This was a former historic home and lemon orchard situated on 2 acres of land off Morack Road. The house was built prior to the 1940s and demolished in 2020.

	<p>History of Lynwood URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/lynwood.html</p>
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Site 9: Winswood

'Winswood' was the home of the Livermore family, built in 1923. They operated the largest and last remaining orchard in Vermont, specialising in apple growing. They also had their own cool store, which is where fruit would be stored following harvesting prior to being transported, originally by horse and cart to markets in the city. Like many orchards in the area, large dams were constructed to provide essential infrastructure for irrigation.


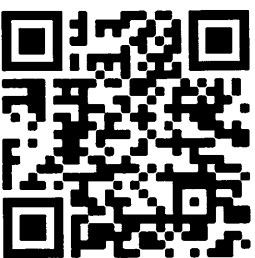
The orchard was around 35 acres in size, and remained the last remaining orchards in Vermont, until increasing land values and the proposed Healesville Freeway forced the Livermore family, like many other orcharding and farming families in the Vermont area, to sell their property. Much of the former Livermore Orchard is now part of the Morack Golf Course. Nearby 'Livermore Close' and 'Winswood Close' are named in honour of the family's impact on the area's orcharding industry and employment.

	<p>History of Winswood and the Livermore Family URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/livermore.html</p>
	<p>Map of Orchards, Flower Farms and Poultry Farms in Vermont circa 1945 URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/map-of-vermont-1945.html</p>

Site 10: Mirrabooka

This property, at the end of Moore Road, was built in 1957 by Roy Grounds, an Australian architect who is famous for designing the National Gallery of Victoria and the Victorian Arts Centre – both in 1959. The Arts Centre also features Hamer Hall of he designed and for which construction began in 1973. Roy Grounds was born in 1905 and died in 1981. He also

spent time working alongside fellow Australian architects Frederick Romberg and Robin Boyd, with whom he formed a partnership in 1953. He designed this house, Mirrabooka, whilst part of this partnership. As a partnership, the three also designed the Australian Academy of Science domed structure in Canberra and Grounds later designed buildings for the CSIRO, such as the Phytotron building.



	<p>Brief Biography of architect Roy Grounds</p>
	<p>History of Mirrabooka URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/mirrabooka.html</p>
	<p>Picture of the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra</p>
	<p>Picture of the National Gallery of Victoria</p>

Site 11: Moore Road

Moore Road intersects the former 76-acre property acquired in 1865 by Isaac Moore and his wife Elizabeth recorded as part of 'Crown Allotment 122c' in the Parish of Nunawading. Several of Isaac's sons attended the Vermont State School No. 1022. The family home, 'Willowbank', that was previously located at 29 Moore Road, was built in the early 1880s. After Isaac's death in 1889, the property was subdivided into four large lots, and Moore Road was created.

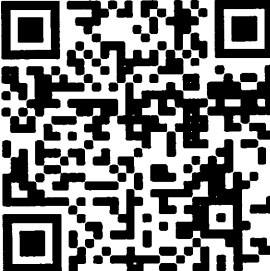
Several acres at the south end of Moore Road were sold by VicRoads to private buyers in 2020. Since February 2021, there has been a push by Council to have these three properties, which border onto the park, re-zoned to 'Neighbourhood Residential Zone' so the maximum dwelling height is limited to 9 metres (2 storeys) instead of the previous 11 metres (3

storeys) for 'General Residential Zone'. Hearings for this amendment (c231) took place in February 2021 and a final report was released on April 11, 2021.

	<p>History of the Moore Family URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/moore.html</p>
	<p>Whitehorse Council Page Explaining Amendment c231 for the three properties at the southern end of Moore Road</p>

Site 12: Airlie Vale

Site of former poultry farm and homestead, 'Airlie Vale', built between 1936-1937 on 9 acres of land in Boronia Road. Home to George Nethercote and his family, the property supported a poultry farm from the early 1930s until 1945-46.

	<p>History of Airlie Vale URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/airlie-vale-poultry-farm-nethercote.html</p>
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Site 13: Weston Favell

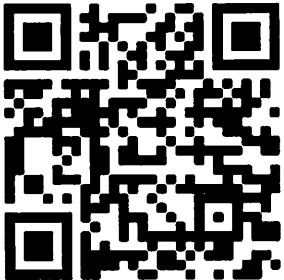
Site of former homestead 'Weston Favell', the oldest house in Vermont, built circa 1883 on a 25-acre property located at present-day 142 Boronia Road, Vermont. It was acquired by George Augustus Goodwin, a real estate agent, farmer, and former councillor for the Shire of Bulleen in 1877. Some of the successive owners included the Plumridge family who established a flower farm with Daphnes and ninety camelia trees. It was sadly destroyed in a fire in 2014.

	<p>History of Weston Favell URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/weston-favell-greenways.html</p>
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Site 14: Hall Property

Site of the former Hall property which featured an apple and pear orchard. Several members of the Hall family resided across two dwellings from 1938 which included William Hall, his wife, and their children Alan, Jean, and Charlie.

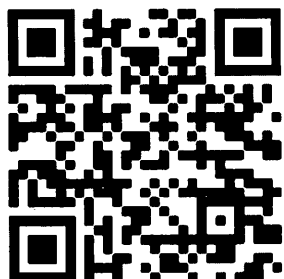
The area is still owned by VicRoads and has been used as horse agistment for a number of years since the freeway plans were abandoned.

	<p>History of the Hall Property URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com/hall.html</p>
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We are now going to walk back to Strathdon House and Orchard.

Thank you very much for accompanying us on the Vermont Heritage Walk today. We hope you have learnt something new and will continue to enjoy exploring the Healesville Freeway Reserve and neighbouring parklands in our local area on future walks.

If you would like to learn more about the local history of Vermont, feel free to explore other pages on our website, which we continue to update as we discover new information.

	<p>History of Vermont Homepage URL: https://vermonthistory.weebly.com</p> <p>We also have a Facebook page called the 'History of Vermont, Victoria' where you can view other updates on local history and the heritage walks.</p>
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