

A WALK  
ALONG THE  
UPFIELD  
RAILWAY LINE



Pterabull Designs '93



**Funded under the Northern  
Area Improvement Program  
1992**

**Our thanks to . . .**

Preparation of this guide was made possible by a grant from the *1992 Area Improvement Program*, the assistance of Brunswick City Council and the support of the Brunswick Community History Group.

Thanks to Ann Laffan who organised it all, and Chris Johnston (Context Pty Ltd) who wrote the text. Pterabull Designs created the cover and internal maps.

K.S. 8-7-94

## **Upfield Railway Line: a guide**

The Upfield railway line is part of Brunswick's heritage and a vital public transport link.

### **Using the Guide**

The guide introduces the history and heritage of the Upfield line. It can be used by walkers, cyclists and train travellers. A map of the Brunswick section of the line is contained in the centre of the guide.

You can start anywhere along the line and take it at your own pace. There is a shared bicycle and foot path along much of the line.

Travelling along the line, especially on foot or by bike, allows you to see hand-operated gates in action and meet the gate-keepers, to watch through the signal box windows while railway staff swung the large wheels and open the gates, to see simple but effective signalling technology, and admire the fine Gothic station buildings.

**Brunswick Community History  
Group**

1993

# History

Upfield railway line is arguably the most outstanding nineteenth century railway complex in Melbourne. It represents the development and flowering of the railways during the later part of the nineteenth century. A remarkable range of building, gates, signals and other features remain, making the Upfield line of great heritage importance to the whole State.

Upfield railway line was opened in 1884 to provide transport for the predominantly industrial and working class northern suburbs of Melbourne. Construction started in 1881 and was completed in 1884, with the line opening on the 9th September.

Several large companies, such as Hoffmans brickworks and Cornwells potteries, had their own sidings linking the works with the railway. The line also encouraged housing development, even in locations then predominantly farming; one example is the two storey Moreland Terrace in Moreland Road.

Brick stations were built at South Brunswick (now Jewell), Brunswick, Moreland and Coburg in a late Victorian Gothic style using a similar, standard plan. This building design has been used for other stations (eg. Maldon), but the grouping of four along the Upfield line is unique.

While most suburban lines have been modified and updated, the Upfield line retains a remarkable collection of hand and wheel operated railway gates, and their associated buildings and installations, reflecting a safe working procedure more typical of the nineteenth rather than the twentieth century. These include the biggest group of hand operated gates and gate keepers' cabins in Victoria.

## A time line

- 1880** Railway Construction Bill proposed suburban lines including that from North Melbourne to Coburg.
- 1881** Construction contract let to Robert Thornton.
- 1884** Line opened - 9th September.
- 1885** Safe working system (Winters Block Telegraph) introduced. The remains of the system on the Upfield line are the oldest in the metropolitan area.
- 1886** Opening of sidings to Cornwells Pottery and Hoffmans Brickworks.
- 1888** Contracts let for construction of brick stations.
- 1891-2** Timber shelters constructed at South Brunswick, Brunswick and Moreland.
- 1920** Line electrified.
- 1926** North Brunswick station opened (renamed Anstey in 1942).
- 1954** South Brunswick renamed Jewell.
- 1992** Historic Buildings Council recommend listing of parts of the Upfield railway line on the Historic Buildings Register.

Since the early 1980s, the line has been threatened with closure, but it still remains, a testament to all of those who have worked and travelled on the line over the last 109 years.

Its future continues to be uncertain.

# 1

## Royal Park - Brunswick Rd

*You can walk or ride along the bike path beside the line between Park St and Brunswick Rd.*

### The gates

Just the right swing is needed to open and close the gates in a single movement. Hand gates like those at Park St and Brunswick Rd were once on every controlled crossing in Melbourne. Today few remain. A bell alerts the gatekeeper to an approaching train, the gates are closed to pedestrians and vehicles, the signals set and a warning message passed up or down the line.

The cabins where the gatekeepers spend their working day are small, functional structures. The Park Street gates are hung on heavy wooden posts, and when closed to traffic they are locked into position by levers next to the cabin. The same mechanisms lock the pedestrian gates, preventing people from crossing into the path of a train.

### Fine houses

Once Park Street was part of Royal Park and in the City of Melbourne. The Council decided to subdivide a few allotments for "villas" along Royal Parade and Park Street. Most of the fine terraces that line Park Street date from the 1880s. Their elaborate decoration is a reflection of these boom years.

### Cable Trams & the Sarah Sands

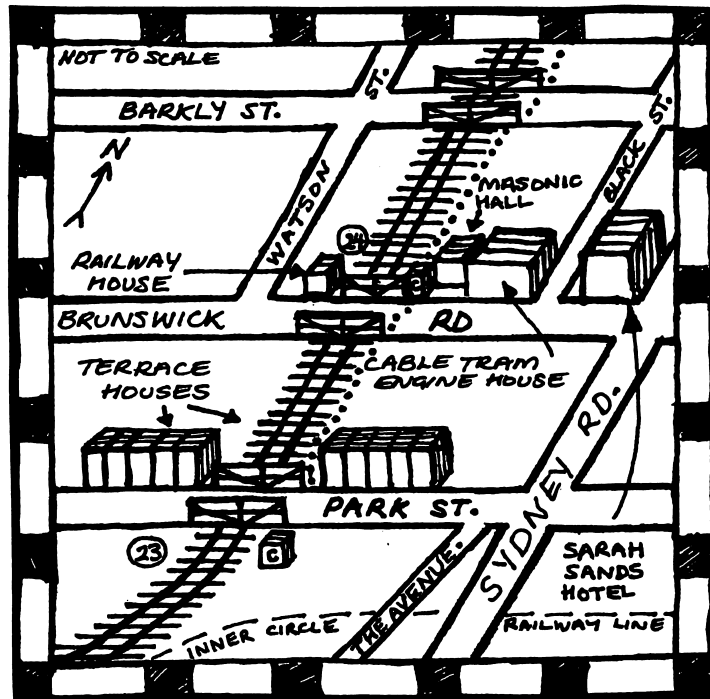
A Brunswick landmark, the Sarah Sands, has refreshed travellers on the route north since the 1854. Next door in Brunswick Road is the cable tram engine house. It's a relic of the 1880s cable tram system. There were 17

routes on the network, with the engine house near the mid-point of a route. This engine house handled the longest cable on the whole system reaching from Flinders Street Station and north along Sydney Road. The engine's long gone, but the building remains.

West of the gates on Brunswick Road is a timber house once owned by the Railways and lived in by the gatekeeper. It dates from 1884 and is the earliest railway house left along the line.

### Travelling to town

Travelling to town, just south of Park Street is the junction with the former Inner Circle railway. Then there's the Royal Park station and the Zoo. The Manningham Street bridge is crossed slowly. North Melbourne station and the broad expansion of the Spencer Street railway yards demonstrate the importance of railways as public transport.



**2**

## The Jewell

*Between Brunswick Rd and Jewell Station  
follow the bike path.*

### Barkly Street

Barkly Street has another set of hand operated gates like those on Park St and Brunswick Rd. If you head west along Barkly Street, you'll come to Philipstown, Brunswick's earliest brickworks and potteries area. A few early buildings remain.

### Jewell Station

Jewell Station is a real gem. Community energy is transforming the lawns into an indigenous garden. And combined with the efforts of station staff, the whole place has come alive. The station is one of four on the line built by McConnell and McIntosh, all in a Gothic design and referred to as the Maldon style, the design having been used first there. While altered over the years, the station retains its charm. Enter under the tall gable, and stand on the platform. Above you is a standard 1880s Victorian Railways verandah.

Next to the station is a goods shed, probably dating from the 1940s.

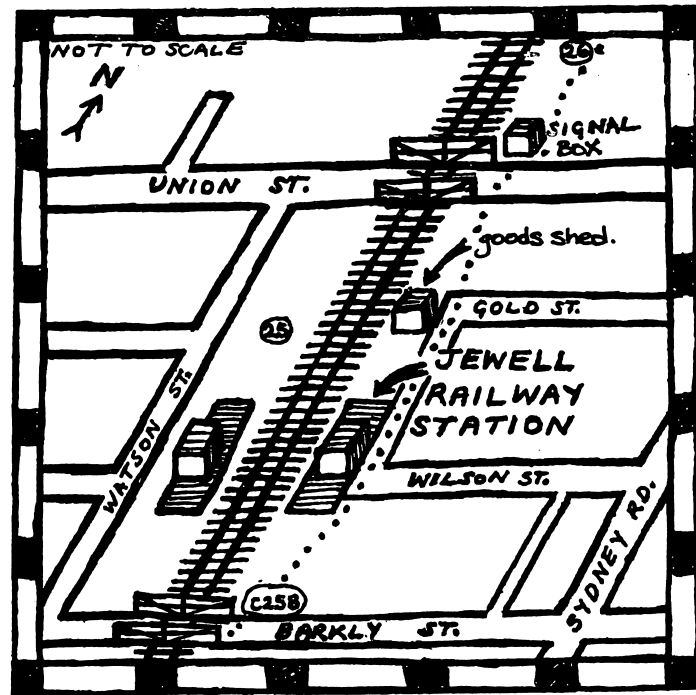
The South Brunswick station was renamed in 1954 to honour James R. Jewell, Brunswick Councillor (1905-14) and Parliamentarian (1910-49).

### Union Street Signal Box

This two-storey signal box replaced the hand operated gates in 1889, only a few years after the line was opened. Already the increased railway traffic at the Jewell yards required a more efficient system.

There were sidings serving Cornwells Pottery and Hoffmans Brickworks. From a lofty position in the signal box, the operator gets a clear view along the line in both directions. They operate the opening and closing of the gates with a large wheel and the signalling system with a series of levers. This signal box contains a thirty-one lever cam and tappet machine, installed in 1889 and expanded with additional levers up until the 1920s. It's now the oldest operating signal box on a metropolitan line, with the box at Victoria Street running a close second.

The Jewell signal box and gates are regarded as a rare example of the once common 'safe working' system.



## Brunswick Station

*Between Albert and Victoria Streets follow the bike path.*

### Albert Street

The Railway Hotel towers over the Albert Street intersection. One of Brunswick's grand hotels, the Railway was built in 1890 at the end the 1880s boom years. Its grandeur expresses the economic optimism of that period.

On the opposite side of the line is a tiny brick building, the office of the Ferry Pottery. Its elaborate chimney pots are no doubt examples of Ferry's wares.

The gates at Albert Street are hand operated. The cabin remains and the complex is like that at Park Street. Next to the cabin is a metal lattice signal mast, controlled by the Albert Street gates. Like most signals on the line, the light is still fuelled by kerosene.

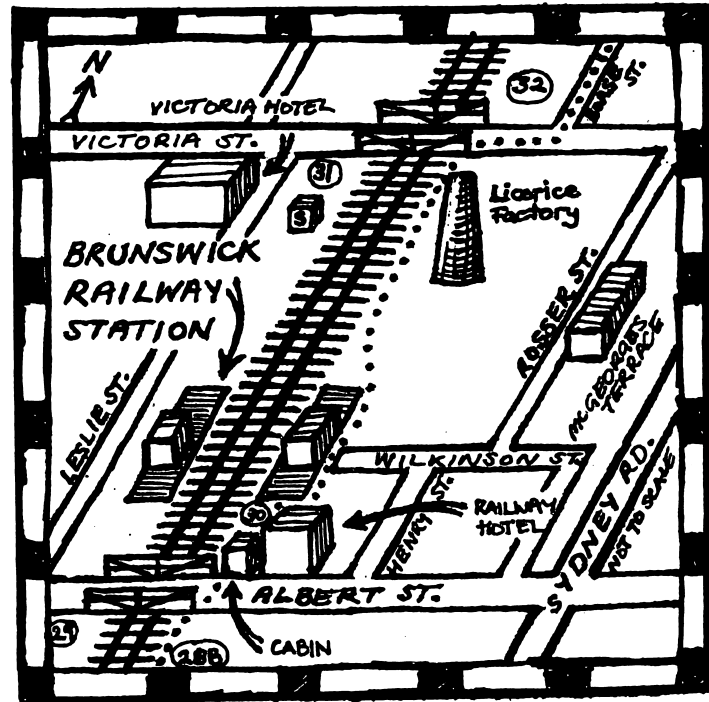
### Brunswick Station

Once a prize-winning railway garden, the setting of Brunswick Station remains a leafy oasis. The 1888 station is one of four Gothic stations on the line - Jewell, Brunswick, Moreland and Coburg. Until recently it was very intact.

Look east from the station entry. The tall chimney stack is part of the 1922 Licorice factory, a joint venture between rivals Hoadleys and MacRobertsons. If you go around to Rosser Street to get a better view of the chimney, have a look at McGeorges Terrace, a group of tiny terraces houses with a very grand facade.

### Victoria Street

Victoria Street gates are interlocked and operated from the signal box. Originally hand-operated, these gates were replaced in 1890, soon after the Union Street crossing was also interlocked to cope with the amount of traffic on this busy section of the line. The mechanisms were manufactured by McKenzie and Holland, and their stamp can be seen on the Union Street gate posts.



## 6

## Grainstores

*Between Albion and Tinning Street, the bike path runs on the east side of the line. Between Tinning Street and Moreland Road follow the bike path or use Colebrook Street.*

### Grainstores & silos

Three bluestone grainstores and tall concrete grain silos dominate this locality. The southern grainstore, now altered, was occupied by Melville & Co. grain and wool merchants in 1887. They also had an iron grain store opposite (since demolished). A year later they built the large bluestone grainstore on the corner of Tinning and Colebrook Streets, and three years later built the adjacent grainstore. Donald Melville was an influential local figure, serving on Brunswick Council (1878-84) and in State Parliament (1882-1917). After 1932 the grainstores were acquired by the SEC and used as a briquette depot. During the Second World War they were occupied by the US army and the Commonwealth Customs Department.

Railway sidings were built to the stores in the late 1880s. The sidings have gone but the rails across Colebrook Street and into each building remain.

### Substation

The small brick substation is one of many throughout Brunswick built by the Brunswick Electricity Supply soon after its creation in 1916.

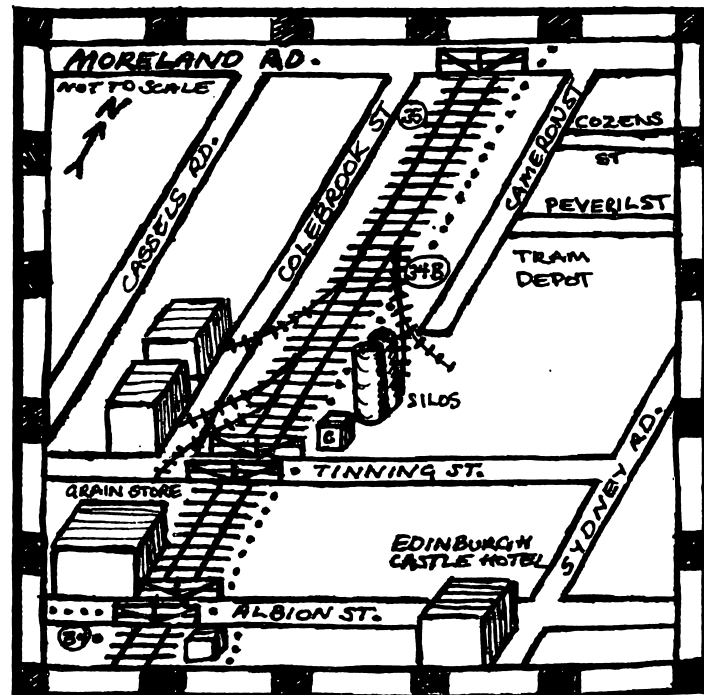
### Trams sheds

On the east side of the railway, the tram sheds behind the Sydney Road depot are usually a hive of activity.

These tram sheds were first used as part of the cable tram operation between Sydney Road and Flinders Street Station. Then, the sheds were on Sydney Road. After the tram line was converted to electricity in 1936, the site was redeveloped, with stylish offices on Sydney Road, and the tram sheds rebuilt on Cameron Street.

### Signal for sidings

Both the wide railway reserve along Colebrook Street and signal no. 35 indicate the past location of sidings. The signal now has a single semaphore linked to the Moreland boom gates. In the past it held a shunting signal, and the mountings remain.



# Conserving Upfield

Recognising the significance of the Upfield railway line means keeping all of the elements and the whole line functioning. Brunswick Community History Group believes this can be achieved within an upgraded line, and successfully negotiated these options with the PTC in 1992.

Key elements that should be retained include:

- sidings and siding alignments which provide important evidence of the historical inter-dependence of industry and the railway
- the hand-operated gates and associated cabins and lever systems
- the operating signal boxes, with wheel-operated gate opening systems and Winters block telegraph equipment
- a series of signal masts including several timber masts, with their connections
- the four Gothic station buildings.

## For further information

### Reading

The following sources are in the Brunswick Public Library's Local History Collection:

*Keeping Brunswick's Heritage*, 4 vols. 1991.

*Upfield Railway Line Heritage Study* (draft), 1990.

*The Upfield Railway Line: Assessment of Historical Significance*, PTC submission to Historic Buildings Council.

### Community action

To become involved in caring for stations and other buildings along the Upfield line, contact the Jewell Station Community Group through the staff at Jewell Station.

For extra copies of this Guide contact:

*Brunswick Community History Group*

Mechanics Institute, 230 Sydney Road, Brunswick,  
3056

or

*Jewell Station*