

Town of North Melbourne 1905

Notes for Teachers

Students who investigate the past of their local area or town have an opportunity to unearth many rich and multifaceted stories about the place where they live. While history is at the core of such study, there are also interdisciplinary learning opportunities for the study of Civics and Citizenship, Health & Physical Education, Graphics and Art.

The exhibition provides a simple example of the stories and information that can be discovered about any local area even with a minimum of resources. Students can observe how the photographs come from a variety of sources. They could use similar resources and also arrange to interview long term residents or traders to gather information for their own project. Students could choose streets in their local area, find maps of the streets and then research a few of the buildings on the street. Additional suggestions for activities are presented in [about the exhibition](#).

Victorian Essential Learning Structure

Levels 1–6. Younger students can observe the concept of time, change and continuity as they look at the pictures and stories on North Melbourne. They can observe the differences in occupations and clothing worn by workers and footballers, changes to shops and other buildings. They could make basic comparisons with their own area.

Level 3 students can learn about the stories and evidence from the past. They can observe in the stories and pictures changes to the social life, geography, landscape and built environment of North Melbourne. The MMBW plans also illustrate these changes.

Level 4 students will be able to focus on events and people in North Melbourne that illustrate change and continuity over time.

Level 6 students can observe the impact of changes in technology, housing and communication in North Melbourne. They could begin to discuss whether similar changes have occurred in their local area or might in the future.

The exhibition

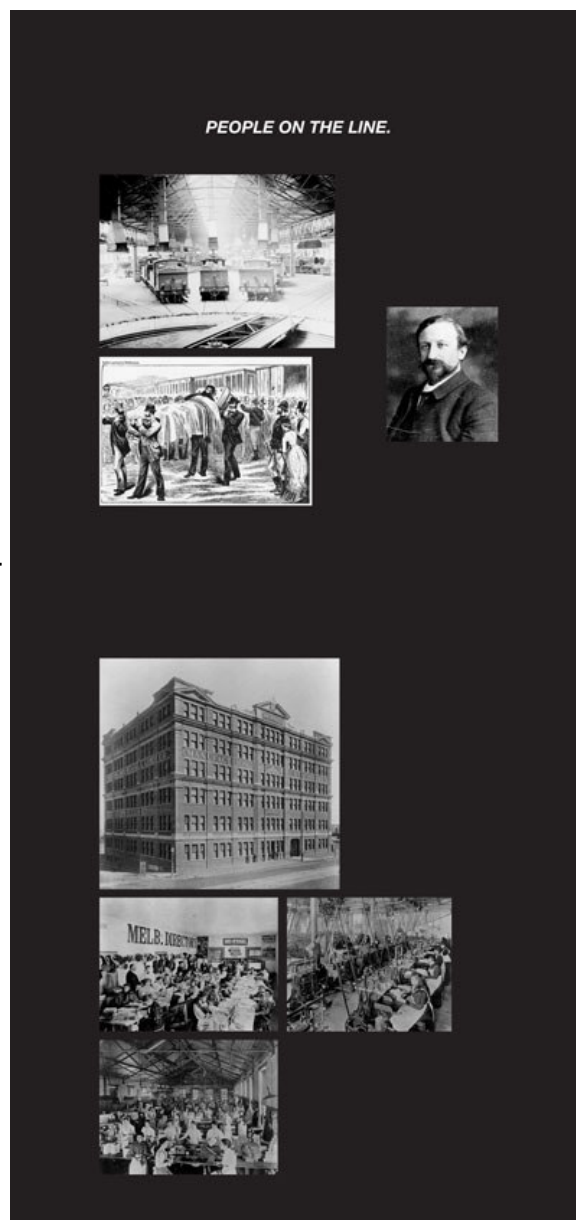
The following is a brief synopsis of the exhibition. It also provides some ideas for students doing their own local history research.

In 1905 the Town of North Melbourne voted to merge with into the Melbourne City Council. The City of Melbourne and PROV developed an exhibition together to commemorate the centenary of this event. The stories feature the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) base plans of North Melbourne held at PROV. Using these plans as a guide, the researchers then delved into a number of other resources to put flesh onto the maps – to discover those who lived and worked in the streets the maps depict.

* Students can use similar resources from their own local libraries and read local newspapers to gather information and photos.

The researchers used:

- Documents from Public Record Office Victoria, the [City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection](#), the [University of Melbourne Archives](#), and the [State Library of Victoria](#).
- Assistance and documentary materials were also received from the local history librarian at [North Melbourne Library](#) and members of the [Hotham History Project](#). They have conducted many interviews with local residents over the years to record their stories about living in North Melbourne.
- Sands & McDougall directories and various local history books were used to discover the occupations and names of people in the area.



The exhibition examines five areas:

1. **Meat and Markets**

The district around the North Melbourne Metropolitan Meat Market, Queen Victoria Market near Elizabeth Street and Flemington Road areas.

2. **Asylum, Town Hall and Shops**

Errol Street, Victoria, Curzon, Abbotsford and Queensberry Street precinct.

3. **Hotham Hill**

The area near the intersection of Flemington Road and Dryburgh Street, Curran and Melrose Streets.

4. **The Railway**

The areas near North Melbourne station and the Arden Street oval.

5. **Football and Gas**

The areas of Shiel Street and Macaulay Road.

Each of these precinct studies provide a vivid insight into the changes and developments that occurred in different localities of North Melbourne over time. As industries ceased and employment patterns changed, so did the town. North Melbourne was once a centre for local markets, industries and welfare agencies. Now only one market survives. Old factories and warehouses have been converted into accommodation. The railway footy team is long gone. The Town Hall has become a model for rejuvenation of old buildings and is now a live theatre complex. Many Errol Street shops survive. The gas works have been demolished and the building that PROV now occupies was built on the site.

* Students could choose a local street and investigate its development and history.

The Town of North Melbourne grew out of the need to house the large number of immigrants coming to Victoria as a result of the discovery of gold in 1851.

The land was surveyed and cut up into allotments and sales took place in September 1852.

With its proximity to Melbourne's many markets, abundant water supply for industry, and port and rail terminals, the town of North Melbourne became the storehouse, transfer depot, and processing and manufacturing centre for much of Victoria's produce. These activities and the associated trades radiated into the immediate community.

* Students could write a timeline of what they consider to be important developments in their municipality.

The following is a summary of the topics covered in the exhibition and demonstrates what students could discover in their own street or town.

1. Markets and Metal

The North Melbourne Metropolitan Meat Market building is located in the vicinity of the Elizabeth Street and Flemington Road intersection. Nearby is the Queen Victoria Market and the location of the now defunct Horse, Cattle and Pig, and Corn and Hay markets. Trades in this area were mainly those associated with animals and agriculture: saddlers, corn merchants, carters, carriers and iron workers. Rate books and citizens rolls show the identities of butchers, horse brokers, horse harness and collar makers, carriage makers, small goods manufacturers, engineers, tinnerns and wireworkers, blacksmiths and hay, grain and produce merchants. The factory of Buncle & Sons (known as Parkside Iron Works) produced iron work for several large bridges in Melbourne, including the Johnson Street Bridge.



2. Asylum, Town Hall and Shops

This area, bordered by Victoria, Errol, Curzon, Abbotsford and Queensberry streets, is the centre of North Melbourne's identity. The busy shopping strip precinct featured two of North Melbourne's most imposing landmarks: the 1851 Benevolent Asylum and the North Melbourne Town Hall.

The huge asylum for the homeless and destitute dominated the area but was demolished in 1911.

The 1876 North Melbourne Town Hall was designed by architect George Johnson. The design became a model for many other town halls. (eg Fitzroy and Northcote)

The Errol Street shopping strip, which was the town's social and commercial hub, offered unique goods and services from colourful local retailers. Among them was Brettana Smyth, who had a health shop in Errol Street where she sold a wide range of birth control devices as well as more orthodox medicines. She was a tireless campaigner for equality of the sexes and a friend of Dr William Maloney. The pair often addressed large gatherings on the topics of women's rights and the need for better working conditions.

Dr Maloney opened a general practice in Melbourne in 1887 and a year later was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly. Dr Maloney was instrumental in introducing one of the first Bills in the English Empire for women's suffrage in 1889. The 'Little Doctor' as he became known, established the Medical Institute which provided treatment and counseling to the poor and needy. Dr Maloney was elected to the federal seat of Melbourne in 1904, which he held until 1940.



The Benevolent Asylum, North Melbourne, circa 1875. It sometimes housed up to 890 homeless and destitute men and women. Courtesy of Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

3. Hotham Hill

Bordered by Dryburgh, Curran, Brougham, Melrose streets and Flemington Road is the area known as Hotham Hill. The detail of the MMBW plans shows a cross-section of the activities going on in the homes and backyards of the local residents. Details show fowl sheds, a cow and carriage shed, a coach house, a hen house, ferneries, a shoeing forge and a summer house.



The Children of Erskine Place photographed by F. Oswald Barnett. One of a series illustrating a government report on slum housing during the depression of the 1930s. Courtesy of the Barnett Collection, North Melbourne Library.

Incomes and diets were supplemented by the production of food and other produce from the backyards. The well-to-do had gardens that were more decorative in nature. Rotting debris and effluent in open drains caused a major problem within the borough. Whenever heavy rains occurred the problem was only washed into the residential area of 'the valley' that bordered the Moonee Ponds Creek. A major landmark of this area was the house Milton Hall built by local entrepreneur and one-time Mayor of Hotham, Robert Langford.

4. The Railway

With its proximity to Spencer Street rail terminal, goods sheds and port facilities, this locale was a clearing house for Victorian produce entering and leaving the city by train and ship. The railway yards, engine sheds, workshops, kitchens and laundries of the Victorian Railways were major employers of the local men and women of North Melbourne. Another employer of local residents was the West Melbourne printers Sands & McDougall.



In 1880, a wounded Ned Kelly arrived from Benalla at North Melbourne station. He was escorted to Melbourne Goal where he awaited his trial, and afterward, his execution. David Syme & Co., Illustrated Australian News, 3 July 1880.

Ned Kelly taken to Melb.

Went strictly Confidential

30.6.80 on envelope

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

This dispatch has been received for delivery subject to the Regulations and Conditions under which Telegraphic Messages are authorized to be transmitted in Victoria.

No. Words 60 **NO FEES TO BE PAID UNLESS STAMPED HEREON.** 29.6.80
 Check OK 29th June
 By FC Time recd. 8.54 From Benalla Dated 29.6.1880

** No pecuniary liability is incurred by the Crown by reason of any delay, default, or omission, in relation to any Telegraphic Message sent or received, or omitted to be sent or received, in Victoria.

Telegram for W B Montford Esq
Officer in charge of Police

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32

Ned Kelly in charge of your men leaves Benalla per train at nine this morning. He will be taken out at north Melbourne station. Have ambulance there to convey him to Melbourne gaol to which he is remanded. Keep this dark so that there may be no crowd or public excitement. Let it be believed that he will go on to Melbourne.

(Signature) F. C. Standish
C. C. Police

Time lodged at the Sending Station 8.30

ALL COMPLAINTS TO BE ADDRESSED IN WRITING TO THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

This is a copy of the telegram sent by authorities transporting Kelly from Benalla to Melbourne. In an attempt to deflect public attention, the officer instructs that he should be taken to North Melbourne train station whilst making it publicly known that he should be taken on to Melbourne (Spencer Street Station).

Transcribed Text:

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS. 29.6.80 Time recd. 8.54

From Benalla

Dated 29th June 1880

Telegram for W B Montford Esq Officer in charge of Police

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F. C. Standish

C. C. Police

Time lodged at the Sending Office 8.30

North Melbourne locomotive football team, premiers 1906.
VPRS 12800/P1, H 2642.

5. Football and Gas

The local landmarks of the area around Shiel Street included the site of the old gasworks and the Arden Street oval, home of the North Melbourne Football Club. The Metropolitan Gas Company supplied gas to the area and surrounding country.



The North Melbourne rate journal of 1874 lists Albert Mattingley living in a property on Shiel Street. The Mattingley family established the Errol Street School. In 1915 Albert Mattingley, in his recollections of early North Melbourne, described what was once Batman's swamp:

'On the waters of the large marsh or swamp lying between North Melbourne and the Saltwater River graceful swans, pelicans, geese, black, brown and grey duck, teal, cormorants, waterhen, sea-gulls and other aquatic birds disported themselves; while curlews, spur-winged plover cranes, snipe, sandpipers and dottrels ... waded in its shallows ... Eels, trout, a small species of perch about 2 inches long, and almost innumerable green frogs inhabited its waters, and the last-named on warm nights held a regular serenade that could be heard over the greater part of the town.'

PROV is located on Sheil Street the building goes through to Macaulay Road. So when students visit the exhibition they can easily observe the enormous changes to the landscape that have happened since Mattingley wrote his idyllic description above.

The exhibition can provide a stimulus for students to explore and discover their own local town.

Students could go for a short walk and observe evidence of the enormous changes that have happened in the area, such as the construction of high-rise Housing Commission blocks.