

TRUGO LANE
Off Irving St (near 56 Irving)

Many of the shops in the business centre originally had residences above – the shopkeepers traditionally lived at their premises. Their residential nature is more evident at the rear of the Nicholson Street properties, which can be viewed from Trugo Lane.

People still live there, and Trugo Lane was given its name in 1999 to provide a street address for what are now separate dwellings at the rear of Nicholson Street shops.

The name derives from Trugo – a game invented locally, that epitomises a ‘make-do’ attitude. It is believed that Trugo began in the 1920s at the Newport Railway Workshops as a lunchtime pastime for the workers. Resembling bowls, it is played with the equipment at hand – large rubber washers.

The Victorian Trugo Association has a men’s and women’s league which run separate competitions for the five women’s teams and 13 men’s teams. The local clubs are at Yarraville and Footscray.



George Gordon & Son Pty Ltd, Barkly St c1945

RAILWAY STATION & GARDENS
McNab Ave - btwn Irving & Hyde

A good view of the station can be gained from the pedestrian bridge which is accessed via the ramp off Irving Street.

The architectural style of the station buildings is free classical (Federation Freestyle) and is the precursor of the ‘Footscray Style’ of station buildings which is also evident at Jolimont, West Richmond and Williamstown Beach Stations.

The central building, which forms a V shape, features elaborate stucco decoration at the arched entry. Note the cantilevered platform canopies, the signal box, cement banding, bluestone quoin work around the doors, arched windows and stucco cornice bands.

The interesting configuration of buildings results from construction over the period 1899 to 1908. It replaces former stations south of the present site – one on the Sunshine (Bendigo) line and one on the Williamstown line.



Railway Reserve looking to Footscray Station c1920

GRAND THEATRE
10 Paisley St

The Grand was Footscray’s first purpose-built cinema, opening on 15 November 1911. By 1936, the poor ‘old Grand’, which had been silent for years during the depression, was resurrected as the ‘new Grand’. It was gutted and refurbished with sand-blasted glass doors, a terrazzo foyer, a marble staircase, new seating encased in vermin-resistant Dunlopillo sponge rubber, British carpet in the aisles, acres of fancy plaster lit by subdued lighting and a glorious golden stage curtain. The ‘New Grand’ was the Cinderella of Footscray’s cinemas.

These were the years of fullish pockets, bulging shopping bags and, if you were youngish, dashing out after the evening meal to the bright lights of the cinema or dance hall. Footscray shopping centre developed an entertainment precinct. Cinemas were the temples of popular culture and the cinematic entertainment was the opiate of working people. Adults could go to the pictures or a dance any night of the week except Sundays.

The Grand was screening films until 1987 but had before that given up its foyer and stalls for adaptation to ground level commercial areas.



1930 O’Shea’s Victor Ballroom, Irving St

MASONIC HALL
42A Leeds St

Footscray’s friendly societies, trade unions and social clubs gave life to the business centre in the evenings and on weekends. Committees met in pubs and in lodge rooms. Annual balls, smoke nights, fellowships, missions and breakfasts filled the four large public halls in Footscray – the Federal, Royal, Irene and Masonic.

Dances were held here in the ground level hall, upstairs was the Masons’ meeting venue.



Cnr Hopkins and Leeds St, Bon Store c1940



c1920 postcard view down Nicholson Street

LA SCALA
19 - 29 Leeds St

La Scala, the last picture theatre to open in Footscray, was built in five months during 1957.

By this time, general prosperity had transformed popular culture, producing highly specialised markets in dress, music, dance and film. The La Scala illustrated this new trend: it screened popular Italian films that appealed to Footscray’s migrants.

The staircase to the projecting room and the upper level is still evident though the main entrance at street level now forms the interior of a shop.

TROCADERO THEATRE
119 Hopkins St

The Trocadero first opened as a theatre on 4 July 1914 and for many years played a role in the night life and glitter of Footscray.

During the early 1920s, the Trocadero Theatre was the hangout of a push called the ‘Troc Eagles’. The local pushes roaming about were threatening and they ‘gave the place a bad name’. During 1920, long-standing Footscray-Yarraville animosities were expressed in pitched battles between the ‘Troc Eagles’ and the ‘Checkers’, with Charles Street as their boundary. But within these two territories there were sub-districts each with its mob, such as the ‘Moore Street’ push, the ‘Royal’, the ‘Victoria Street’ mob and Yarraville’s ‘Ranch and Cut Throats’.

The ‘pushes’ were deplored by respectable citizens, who urged action by the police and the courts. Footscray believed in itself as the abode of clean-living, industrious, and self-respecting men and women.

In 1939, the Mitchell family and Hoyts completely remodelled the Trocadero as the ‘acme of modernity in picture theatre construction’.



Trocadero Theatre, Hopkins St c1924

FOOTSCRAY MARKET
Hopkins, Leeds and Irving

The market was built by Gheorghe Herscu, a Romanian immigrant who arrived in Yarraville in 1950 and made money through a series of retail renovations. He also built several other shopping centres. The \$20 million, 220 stall, Footscray Market opened on 19 March 1981 and was soon attracting 70,000 shoppers per week. More than half of the local population of Footscray were overseas born, and many of these were already market-type people.

The market was previously the site of the Orama dance hall and the Victor dance hall (see the 1920s aerial view). The Victor offered ‘Old Time’ dance while the Orama offered ‘Modern’ – but the two were connected so a walk through was available and patrons could enjoy both for only one ticket price. Each of the dance halls had an academy attached to teach the new dances.

During WW2, the Department of Munitions took over the Victor Palais and other theatres despite the Council protests that people must have some pleasure. The war was feeling closer. By mid-1942 advice was being given as to “What actually happens when a bomb drops”.



Tram at terminus in Leeds St

SHOPS AND RESIDENCES
141-147 Hopkins St

Three shops and residences were constructed 1889-90 for Hopkins Street storekeeper and boom-years councillor, Hugh Morris. Morris was a baker with a sideline in land speculation. When the bottom fell out of the land market in the 1890s depression, Hugh Morris lost heavily and left for Western Australia.

This set of shops forms the most distinctive group of shops/residences in the centre. The stepped height emphasises the symmetry of the façade design. The cement finish is original.

One long term occupant was Norman Griffin the jeweller who made the first Footscray Mayor’s Chain at these premises in 1936. It was used that year at the advent of the new Town Hall.

The street level shop fronts have been replaced and a cantilever canopy added where a post verandah would have been, but at first floor level, much is original.

The arched arcade design and ornamentation, such as swags, shell and fleur-de-lis motifs, are typical of its boom-era origin.



Women walking Nicholson St approx c1930

HOOPERS STORE
199 - 207 Barkly St

Footscray’s commercial centre arguably never possessed a more impressive façade than that of J. H. Hooper & Co.’s store and factory, constructed progressively from the mid-1890s. The western end was demolished for the ring road in 1989-90.

The Hooper brother’s commercial enterprise had been built up from a small drapery business begun in 1885. By 1905, two factories, one for tailoring and dressmaking, another for women’s underclothing and millinery employed almost 400 workers.

J. H. Hooper & Co. had shares in the local Australian Woollen Mill at West Footscray, owned a store and clothing factory at Brunswick and built up the largest mail order drapery business in Victoria.

The Hooper brothers, along with Christopher Forge – the People’s Draper – worked hard to obtain earlier closing times and fixed half-day holidays for retail workers.

In the early days of Footscray many industrial and retail employers and managers lived in the community, often building quite substantial villas for their families. The Hoopers house, though now altered, still stands at 10 Geelong Road.



Hoopers Emporium, Barkly St c1910

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Footscray Trail Guide, 2006 is the first in a series of walks around the City of Maribyrnong.

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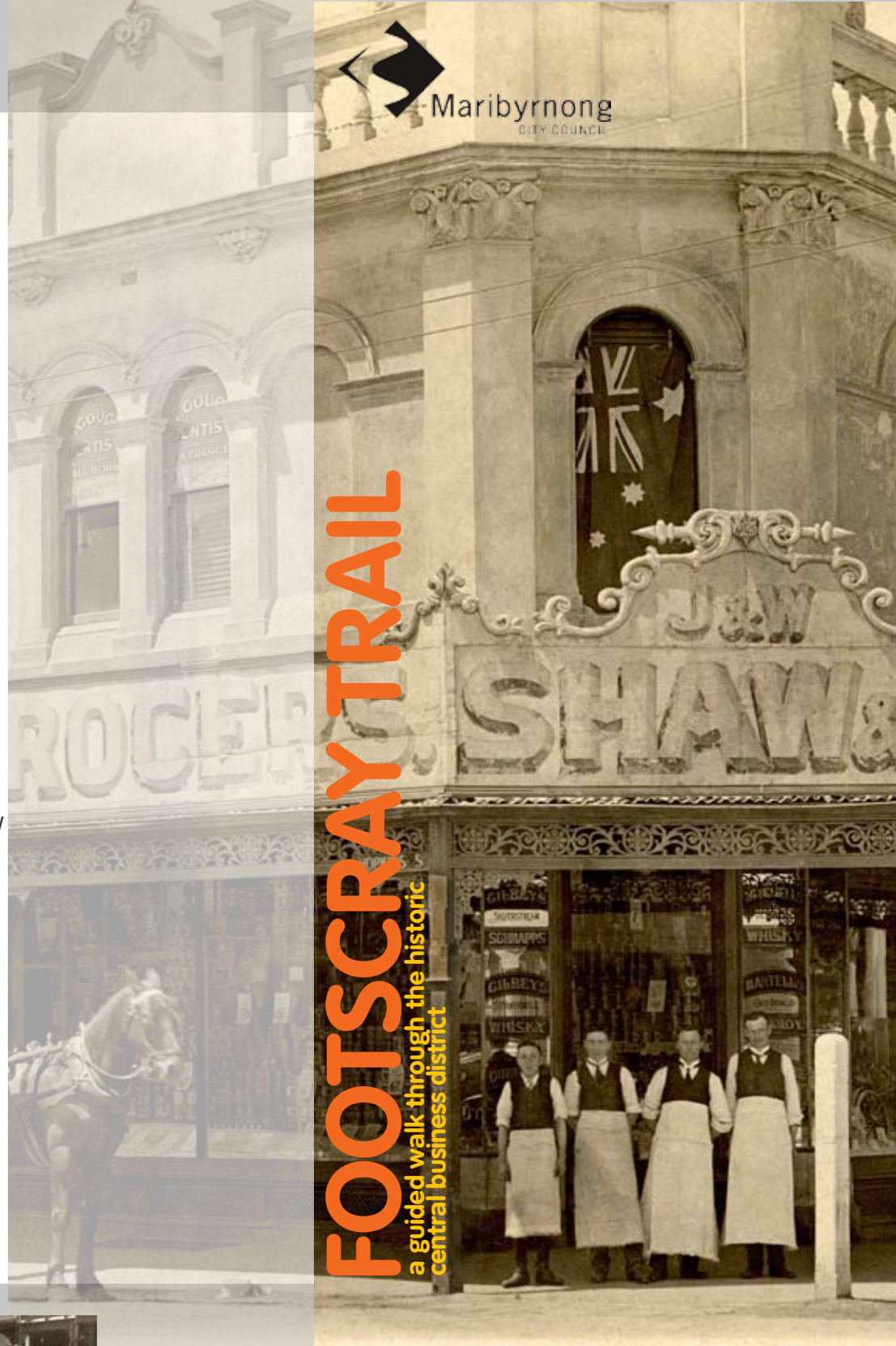
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If you require further information please contact: Footscray Historical Society, cnr Napier and Hyde Streets, 03 9689 3820 Maribyrnong City Council, Strategy and Economic Development (03) 9688 0277 www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au



FOOTSCRAY TRAIL
a guided walk through the historic central business district



Start

1



2



3



4



5



6



6



THE PRESENT IS SHAPED BY THE PAST A look at historic Footscray today

This walk follows a 1 kilometre loop starting at the corner of Droop and Barkly Streets (1 The Royal Hotel) and finishing at the corner of Barkly and Albert Streets (15 Hoopers Store). It takes around 45 minutes to complete.

The numbers refer to buildings and locations. Stop, read the text and look around you. Buildings described exemplify the periods of the Footscray Shopping Centre, including Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts, theatres, hotels and station, "Moderne" style makeovers and the post-WW2 redevelopment.

This area is a place of continual change. Prior to European settlement it was a gathering and camping place for the Aboriginals of the Woi wurrung and Bun wurrong. While early European businesses such as pubs, shops and government offices were first located on the river's edge, with the decline in river transport and the growth of the railways they moved here in the second half of the 1800s. Over the years the appearance of the shopping centre has been influenced by European, Vietnamese and African migrants who now call Footscray home.



Nicholson St, 2006

ROYAL HOTEL 154 Barkly Street, Cnr Droop St

In its earliest form, the Royal Hotel was built in bluestone in 1872 to a design by James Falla, but it has been reconstructed several times. Its current form dates from 1940-1941.

The Hotel is a bold and simple example of the streamlined Moderne architectural style. The building's most prominent attribute is its rounded corner at Droop Street rising to a third level parapet.

In earlier years the Royal Assembly Hall sat beside the Royal Hotel. The entrance from Barkly Street led to the large hall and lecture rooms. The Royal Hall was often the venue for dances, balls, political and social gatherings and later became a venue in the vaudeville performance circuit. It was also used as a relief depot during the big seamans' strike in the winter of 1919 when unemployment was widespread in Footscray and families went to the hall for food and fuel handouts.

During the 1920s a mob or 'push' called the 'Royal', made up of young men aged in their early 20s, was based here.



Fire Brigade drill at Royal Hotel c1880

ES&A BUILDING 176 Nicholson Street, Cnr Droop St

The E. S. and A. Bank first moved to this commanding site on the corner of Nicholson and Droop Streets in 1925. The building was originally constructed the previous year.



Perspectives for the 1950's alteration to a "Drive-in and Walk-up" service at the E.S. & A. Bank

In the late 1950s the bank was altered to provide a combined "Drive-in and Walk-up" banking service. The traffic entered from Droop Street and exited to Nicholson Street. A wide verandah protected the two drive-in teller windows. Staff provided service from behind armour plated glass using a two-way communication system which was said to provide more privacy than is possible at the ordinary tellers window.



The drive through from Droop St

FOOTSCRAY MALL Nicholson St, Hopkins St in the north, Paisley St in the south

The Nicholson Street pedestrian mall originally extended south to Irving Street but is now open to traffic south of Paisley Street.

While walking through the mall it is worth looking up to the parapet facades above the verandahs. Note the rhythm of the regular-width parapets and decorative detail of surviving Victorian facades, some with a Spanish Mission influence.

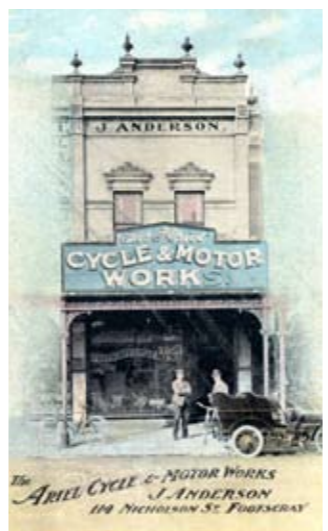
On some parapets old and faded signage can still be seen, such as "Kidds Hardware" at No 91. Some shop fronts, such as the former Edments store at No 112, feature Moderne-style refurbishments.

For more than 100 years, Footscray has been a hub for shopping. In its heyday the Footscray shopping centre featured grand rows of emporium style shops – shop terraces – a collection of shops posing as one vast emporium with clothing goods being made in factories behind. Some of the famous Footscray retail businesses through the years were Hoopers, Forges, Maples, Wittners, Andersons, Laundries, Patersons and Bon Store.

Friday night shopping was the rage and 'See ya down the street!' signified the social importance of dressing up and going shopping.

MAPLES FURNITURE WAREHOUSE 109-111 Nicholson St, Cnr Paisley St

This warehouse/store is one of only a few three-story buildings in the Footscray shopping centre. The building is a major corner element with ornamentation demonstrating the earlier development in the commercial centre. Its style is typical of its architects, the Tompkins brothers. The walls are painted face brick and stucco. The piers, which feature rock-faced stonework, protrude above the wall with cement ball capping and dentillated caps. Most of the façade ornament is at the parapet above the projecting cornice, in the form of articulated façade bays shaped in ox-bow scallops. The splayed corner wall once featured an oriel (bay) window at the upper level.



Ariel Cycle & Motor Works 121 Nicholson St

NICHOLSON ST Paisley St in the north, Irving St in the south

The ANA clock sits like a beacon at the corner of Paisley and Nicholson Streets – it was erected in 1986 to mark the centenary of the Australian Natives Association in Footscray. Forges historic window in Paisley Street displays antique office equipment, old newspaper articles and advertising catalogues from the earlier days of Forges in Footscray and is worth a side trip to visit. The store was founded in the 1890s by John Forge who had begun his drapery career in country Victoria and NSW.

Continuing down Nicholson Street, notice the shop at No 117 – Griffiths Jewellers. The family rebuilt the 1890s shopfront in 1936 to a Tompkins brothers Moderne style design. The gleaming brass-framed and vitrolite shopfront is a faithful expression of the 1930s and the Moderne art form. Note the terrazzo flooring and apparently original internal fittings. Griffiths was for a long time the most stylish shop in Footscray.



Nicholson Street c1910, Looking south

MECHANICS INSTITUTE 205-209 Nicholson St

The gated laneway between No 117 and 119 serviced the rear of those shops and led to a stable.

Numbers 128 – 136 are notable 19th Century shopfronts at the upper level, particularly 134 -136 which possess distinctive ornamentation associated with the designer Polain, including rare cast-iron finials (decorative posts). These shops originally had iron post verandahs (see example in front cover photo).

People who visited Footscray before the 1970s will recall that Coles department store was once where the Metro Centre is now.

At 143 -145, the ground floor shop/offices have been rebuilt in timber framing to a design sympathetic to the original Victorian era shopfronts.

The richly ornamented pair of shops at 155 -157 Nicholson Street have upper levels which demonstrate their former residence function. They are designed in the manner of the Boom-era architect, Hitchcock. Look for the lions head at each upper pilaster.



Hudson & Douglas, Nicholson St c 1920

A small committee promoted the establishment of a Mechanics Institute in 1861 saying it promised "all classes and creeds will be equally benefited and the district placed on a par with other suburbs by the possession of an Institute as a means to foster the spread of knowledge and further the intellectual development of the rising generation."

The triangle of land was permanently reserved for the Mechanics Institute use in 1886 but financial recession prevented construction of a new building until 1913. The first stone was laid by Cr Alex McDonald in November 1913 for a design by CW Vanheems constructed by Stahl Brothers.

The Queen Anne style building, with upper walls in rough-cast stucco, is roofed with Marseilles pattern terra-cotta. The ornamental porch on Nicholson Street features eastern motifs.

The Cypress Row along the east side of the building is contemporary to its construction.

The building is historically important as the city's main library for many years. The local Johnstone family played a prominent role as librarians there over an extensive period.



Postcard of Mechanics Institute c1920

aerial view of cbd C1920 looking south-east along droop

