
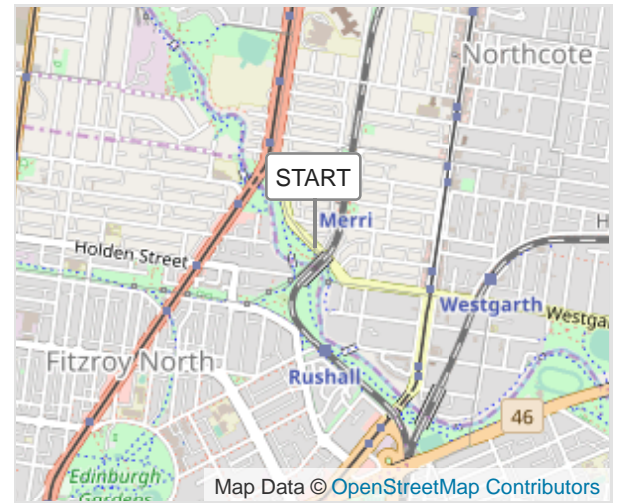


History Ramble 1 - St Georges Rd / Northcote West

ROUTE INFORMATION



LENGTH	1.995 miles
ASCENT	88 ft
DESCENT	68 ft
HILLS	↑ 48.6% ↓ 31.4% → 20.0%
TERRAIN	Mixed 
START	LAT: -37.779690, LNG: 144.991630



NOTES

Route: Merri Pde, north along St Georges Rd (west side) to Gumbri (Batman) Park, then retrace steps on east side to finish at Albion Charles Hotel. A diversion into Merri Park and the Merri Creek is recommended

Approx. distance: 3.2km round trip (short alternative 2km)

Terrain: Footpath and park pathway; flat to gentle rise heading north.

Easy Access: Tram No 11 - Clarke St stop - then head east along Merri Pde.

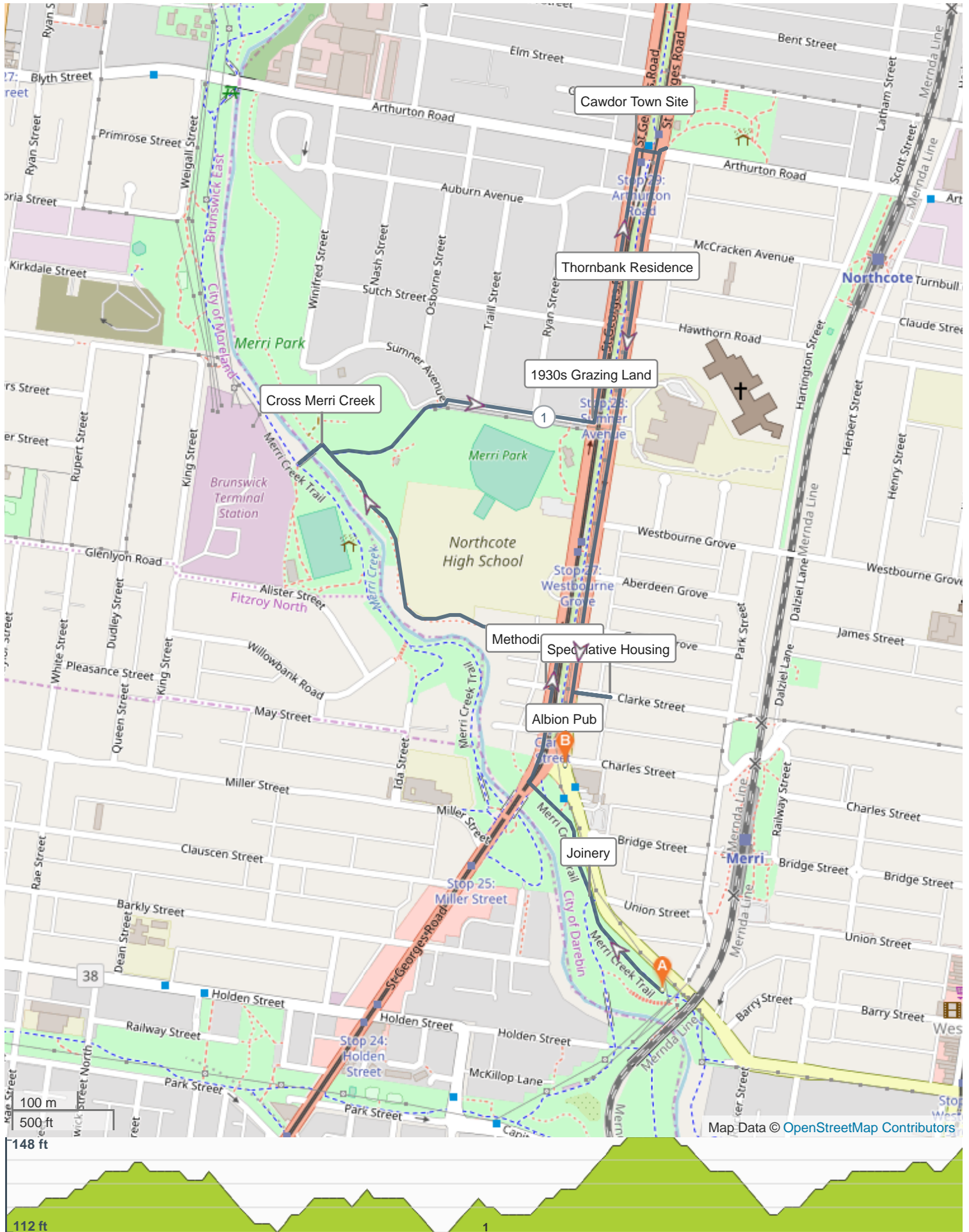
The route explores earlier settlers and diverse settlement: from grand houses and farming to speculative developments and Cawdor Town. A settlement divided by the Yan Yean water pipes, then in 1888 the new Whittlesea railway cut many roads west of High St.

West of St Georges Rd was the Merri Creek, flat and flood-prone, though good for farming and livestock. The Merri creek-bed was straightened in 1930s, removing eastern bends (the MCG was famously lined with the rich fertile Merri Creek mud).

Eastwards was initially Dr. Peter McArthur's extensive holdings and 'Arthurton' farm. After McArthur's death, Brunswick Gentleman T J Sumner acquired all the land west of St Georges Rd as well.

In the mid nineteenth century, the side of the hill had some grand houses with orchards and vineyards.

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START ON MERRI PDE BESIDE MERRI CREEK - ON BIKE PATH OPPOSITE SOUTH PARK ST

Whittlesea Railway Bridge crossing the Merri Creek (1889) & Proposed Grand Junction Station. This was the costliest structure in the construction of the Whittlesea railway line. Planned Grand Railway Junction between here and St Georges Rd.

Former C A Groves Wood Joinery (c1925-1950s). West of Railway Bridge beside the creek. Fire severely damaged the site accidentally lit by two schoolboys whilst boiling yabbies.. Now open area. Note domes for pipeline inspection / control, towards St Georges Rd.

HEAD TOWARDS ST GEORGES RD

St Georges Rd (Merri Creek) Bridge – 1850s / 1886. For decades this was not a public road. Early access was via Merri Pde. One of the few northerly roads in Melbourne.

Yan Yean Pipeline / Tramway (1853 – 1857). This was known as The Pipetrack, Yan Yean Tramway. Original water pipes from Yean Reservoir to Melbourne. Largest construction in the southern hemisphere. Pipes are in center, thus trams run on the side. Yan Yean water pipes deviate to the east and south before the Creek

SAFELY CROSS ST GEORGES RD AND HEAD NORTH

Clarke St – West. Captain Andrew Clarke was the Surveyor General for Victoria from 1853-8 replacing Robert Hoddle. He built a two-story house near the Merri Ck. Later James Eunson, glass merchant and manufacturer, moved in. He was wounded during the Eureka Rebellion of 1854.

Former Methodist Church between Clarke St & Eunson Ave (1891 – c1975) Wooden church. Around 1918 this was moved and turned to face Clarke St to accommodate electric tram. The Sunday school had over 150 students and the Kindergarten had around 60.

HEAD WEST ALONG EUNSON AVE THEN ONTO PATH ALONG MERRI CK, HEADING NORTH. (Note: If fitness is an issue head north along St Georges Rd.)

Northcote High School (1928). Built on the site of an Inebriate's Retreat (1873-92), set up for the treatment of alcoholics. Northcote High was one of very few high schools in Melbourne pre-WWII. The school is famous for its alumni, which include: many past AFL footballers, Norman Banks (radio), Jac Nasser (industry), Bruce Dawe (poet), Suzanne Wilkinson (law), Max Lay (historian) and politicians including Jim Cairns, John Cain and Don Chipp.

Merri Park (1909). Merri Creek used to have an eastern bend, which almost reached Sumner Ave. A small watercourse still feeds in here creating the wetlands. A footbridge crosses the creek.

CROSS THE BRIDGE OVER THE MERRI CREEK

Former Stony Park Mansion (1840 – 1970s), now large electric substation. Across the Merri was T J Sumner's 'Stony Park' estate, built by William J Rucker of Rucker's Hill fame. The later was bankrupt by mid 1840s and T J Sumner, the new owner, set up a farm with the first Alderny (milking) cows in Victoria. From here to Arthurton Rd were paddocks where Sumner pastured his cattle. As this area was west of the Yan Yean Tramway, housing was established quite late.

RETURN TO ST GEORGES RD VIA SUMNER AVE AND HEAD NORTH TO GUMBRI (Batman Park)

Until the 1930s the area between here and Arthurton Rd was farming /grazing land. There was another former eastern loop in Merri Creek. The creek, however, attracted many rich people, who built houses on the Northcote Hill slopes east of St Georges Rd overlooking the fields

Corner of St Georges Rd and Arthurton Rd. Dr. Peter McArthur bought all of the land in this area in the 1850s. He had grand plans for this being Cawdor Town and built a substantial house on a large farm - Arthurton. At its peak it had 10,000 vines and 500 fruit trees under cultivation.

Houses and businesses were established along Arthurton Rd from High St, though the original road was only a narrow lane. Little was developed beyond St Georges Rd except some quarrying.

McArthur's death in 1862 saw the Cawdor Town development effectively stymied.

Gumbri (Batman Park) (1907) corner of St Georges and Arthurton Rds.

Until 1907 the only public green space in the area was Northcote Park. Then two parks were added – Penders Park and Batman Park. Originally the site for Batman Park was not a great choice as small rivulet ran across the site and it was often described as a ‘bog hole’. This was renamed in 2018 to honour former Aboriginal presence in the area.

Cawdor Town east along Arthurton Rd to High St, had a number of gentleman’s estates. One of these belonged to Dr. Peter McArthur – set in 15 acres, the house included drawing rooms, six bedrooms, kitchen, servants’ hall numerous bedrooms and a stable and coach house.

HEAD BACK SOUTH ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF ST GEORGES RD

Former Northern Gas Co site (south side of Arthurton Rd). This company was established to supply district with gas. Local Directors included: G C Clausen, John Robb, Peter Langwill and Peter McCracken.

As you head along St George Rd, there were three imposing structures that had the grand views of the Merri Creek valley. Only one remains – Little Sisters of the Poor.

STOP AT HAWTHORN RD

North of Hawthorn Rd was the former ‘Thornbank’ Residence built by Beilby Hawthorne (merchant in 1856). This was to become the residence of Peter McCracken who was a director with Carlton & United Breweries. In late 1880s this was turned into housing blocks.

STOP AT ST JOSEPH’S ENTRANCE

St Josephs, former Little Sisters of the Poor (1889)

The site was supposedly where the first tobacco was grown in Victoria it was owned by a prominent businessman William Woodville’s and was initially used for the care of the aged and destitute. It was demolished after the north/south annex was built. The first of the wings on the current building were begun in 1889.

STOP AT ABERDEEN GROVE

Former Turret House & Estate (1854- 1930s) – between Westbourne and Gordon Grove. This is a stone mini-grand house with tower, grottoes and lake. It had a three-acre kitchen garden, vineyards and a 250-tree orchard. Former owners included Nehemiah Guthridge (early politician), the Robinson family and Joseph A Angus (Angus & Co in Arthurton Rd, the makers of Clag). In the 1880s with the death of Mrs. Robinson most of the land was divided into housing blocks. House still standing in 1930s.

62 St Georges Rd. Melbourne Anarchist Club, social and political group with long history against injustice.

TURN LEFT INTO CLARKE ST HEADING EAST

Speculative Housing Estates (1880s). In anticipation of the Grand Junction Railway station planned for 1884, there were many speculative estates including the Fitzroy Extensions – however, the railway Junction did not eventuate. The houses along Clarke St are good examples of the developments.

24 Clarke St (1887), ‘Moravia’. Two story Victorian villa, early baker’s shop with residence.

RETURN TO ST GEORGES RD

Albion Charles Hotel (1887)

This and the Little Sisters of the Poor are the main still existing large developments along St Georges Rd at the end of the nineteenth century. Unusually grand three-story design. Built with gusto in anticipation of the Grand Railway Junction Railway Station and its expected population rush. Despite this ‘minor’ problem the hotel somehow has survived.

Here the tour ends. Why not a drink in celebration of your endeavours and Western Northcote’s earlier times!

P. Michell, 2019

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
1	0.000		Start near 1 S Park St, Northcote VIC 3070, Australia
2	0.109		Turn left
3	0.111	➔	C A Groves Wood Joinery: This is now an open area. Joinery
4	0.113	⬅	Turn left onto Merri Creek Trail
5	0.193		Slight left to stay on Merri Creek Trail
6	0.220	↗	St Georges Rd / Merri Ck Bridge.
7	0.334	➔	Former Methodist Church: 1891-1975 Methodist Church
8	0.344	⬅	Turn left onto St Georges Rd/State Route 45
9	0.387		Captain Clarke former house:
10	0.710	⬅	Cross Merri Creek Cross Merri Creek
11	0.715	⬅	Turn left
12	0.730	⬇	T J Sumner & Stony Park.
13	0.781	↖	Turn left
14	0.911	➔	Turn right onto Sumner Ave
15	0.993		Head north along St George Rd - Former Sumner Grazing Land
16	1.049	⬅	Turn left onto St Georges Rd/State Route 45. 1930s Grazing Land
17	1.309	⬅	Turn left onto Arthurton Rd. Cawdor Town Site
18	1.330	➔	Turn left onto St Georges Rd/State Route 45
19	1.334	⬇	Turn right
20	1.334	↘	Gumbri - (Batman Park & Cawdor Town).
21	1.345	↖	Turn left onto St Georges Rd/State Route 45.
22	1.429		Hawthorn Rd - Former Thornbank Residence. Thornbank Residence
23	1.567		St Josephs / Former Little Sisters of the Poor.
24	1.740		Aberdeen Grove -
25	1.796		Melbourne Anarchists - 62 - 64 St Georges Rd.
26	1.855	⬅	Turn left onto Clarke St
27	1.855		Head east along Clarke St
28	1.887		24 Clarke St - Moravia / Speculative Housing . Speculative Housing
29	1.953		Slight left

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
30	1.988		Albion Charles Hotel (1887). Albion Pub