

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUBURB

EAST PERTH

The portion of the suburb of East Perth within the City of Vincent is bounded by the Graham Farmer Freeway, Lord Street, East Parade, Pakenham Street and the Swan River.

HISTORY

Pre-1829

The first inhabitants of East Perth were the Aborigines who camped periodically along the foreshore, attracted by the abundance of food and fresh water of Walter's Brook. Today their descendants call themselves "Darbalung Nyoongar". The stretch of land between Claisebrook and Walter's Brook was known to them as "Warndoolier" and Walter's Brook itself was possibly known as "Jal'yeendip".

1829-1870

European settlement began with the establishment of the Swan River Colony in 1829 and Swan Locations A4 and A5 (parts of which were in East Perth) were allocated to WB Andrews and AH Stone. Walter Boyd Andrews, a large landholder in the Colony, took over the position of Chairman of the Perth Town Trust in 1842 and Alfred Hawes Stone practised law in the Colony. He became Clerk to the Civil Court and later the first Master of the Supreme Court. John Summers was another early grantee in the area; he owned land on the southern side of the street later named after him. Summers was a coachbuilder and built Perth's first horse-drawn hearse. He later became a Perth City Councillor.

The main track to Guildford (now Lord Street and Guildford Road), which is believed to have followed an old Aboriginal track, ran through East Perth and Swan Locations A4 and A5. Before 1900 it was known as the Guildford Track and around 1908 it became the Old Guildford Road. It was just a rough track used by pedestrians and people on horseback in those days as the river was the main means of transport. However, due to increased traffic on it in the 1880s and 1890s, it was transformed into a proper road and macadamised in 1900.

1871-1890

In 1881 part of Swan Location A4 was resumed by the Railways Department for the construction of the railway line to Guildford. Known as the Eastern Railway, it originally ran from Fremantle to Guildford, passing through the Vincent suburbs of East Perth and Mount Lawley. It was officially opened on 1 March 1881. East Perth Station (now Claisebrook Station) 1.3 kilometres from Perth was opened in 1883. This railway later extended to Midland and the name was changed to Midland Railway. This station also serviced the Armadale line after it was opened in 1889.

1891-1899

In the 1890s a syndicate consisting of GF Sala, CHD Smith, CW Garland and Zebina Lane and then later Lane's own company began the subdivision of the land in the northern section of the district, parts of Swan Locations A4 and A5. The subdivisions known as East Norwood and Westralia covered the area between East Parade, Summers Street, Joel Parade and Gardiner Street. One of the streets was named Zebina Street after the developer.

During this period the southern part of East Perth (around Claise Brook) developed into an industrial area with much of the waste products finding their way into Claise Brook. In that area workshops, saw mills, factories and poor quality housing were all mixed in together. Consequently, rents were cheap and it attracted a class of "battlers" and "transients".

1900-1919

The construction and opening of the East Perth Powerhouse in 1916 and the establishment of the Railway Locomotive Depot (the site of what is now the West Parade Transport Complex) meant further industrial development at the southern end of the district. These two facilities were large employers of male residents and the availability of jobs also attracted new people to the district.

While a good proportion of the smaller homes in the residential housing estates to the north were sold off, in 1904 Mr Lane (East Norwood, Westralia, etc.) had a number which were leased out and at least one local shop. Because the developments were north of the East Perth industrial area and the main northern drain (which had become severely polluted), they attracted a "better class" of tenants than the area further south. Most of these tenants were small businessmen and government clerical workers. The tenants of the smaller houses were a gardener, a printer's assistant and a foundry worker. These residents had more in common with those of Highgate than they did with those of southern East Perth, which was a mix of factories such as soap works, brickworks, saw mills and foundries alongside poor quality housing.

Initially the sewage works were located on the edge of the river to the south near Claise Brook. Then in 1906 filter sewage beds were installed at Burswood. This affected the area when an easterly wind blew, and particularly in the height of summer when the stench was very noticeable in East Perth and other nearby suburbs.

1920-1946

When Perth was declared a prohibited zone to Aborigines in the 1920s, the area along the river became a refuge for them as they were virtually banned from the City after 6 pm. They needed a pass to go in to work in the City and if they had not departed again by 6 pm, they could be put in gaol. At this time it was also an offence for European people to associate with them.

Europeans (many from southern East Perth) who were unable to find work and had been evicted from rental houses or had their house sold over their heads, camped along the water's edge during the Great Depression, their diets aided by what they could catch in the river. There were also gilgies in the two brooks (Walter's and Claise) and tadpoles for the children to catch. The river was also a favoured place for local children to swim. It was known as "The Mucks" because the shoreline was muddy and smelly. There was also a spot where the water was warm due to outlet pipes from the Power Station's boilers being pumped into the river.

1947-1970

Immigration, particularly post war, meant that by the 1950s East Perth inhabitants included Polish, Greek, Croatian and Italian families attracted by the cheaper rents but even so many families shared houses.

There were also Aborigines, the restrictions on their movements having been lifted after 1948. They were also attracted by the cheaper rents but the majority congregated on the southern side of the district where unskilled work was available. There was an empty paddock near the East Perth Railway Station which was known as the "bull paddock" and Millar's Cave, part of the old Millar's timber yard. These had long been camping sites for homeless people.

General deterioration of the houses led to a number of residents leaving the district. Some of the properties were then converted into commercial premises such as bakeries, warehouses, offices, factories, showrooms, etc. In the 1960s and 1970s there was an exodus from the southern part by local commercial industries and many remaining residents, as other reasonably priced suburbs became more attractive. Local manufacturers and building suppliers (such as Brisbane & Wunderlich of 105 Lord Street) moved out and the old Railway Depot closed in 1968 to make way for the new Transport Complex on West Parade.

East Parade was listed as a Regional Road under the Metropolitan Regional Scheme (MPS) and properties along it were purchased by the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority. Some of these were rented out and those that had deteriorated too far were demolished. There was also a new northern bypass under consideration which was to change the character of the southern area considerably.

1971-2014

The East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA) was established in 1991 to guide and stimulate the development of an area which covered the southern portion of Vincent's East Perth, an area bounded by the Freeway, Lord and Summers streets and the Swan River. This Authority exercises control over building and design as part of the urban renewal. It is involved in the redevelopment of Government land, the Claisebrook Revedelopment Project and in smaller civic activities such as a 2001 project in the Claisebrook Road north area which included underground power, pavement upgrades, new turf and parking bays.

On 1 July 1994 the Perth City Council was divided into four separate entities, and a small part of East Perth was within the new Town of Vincent boundaries. Initially the City of Perth-Vincent Border in East Perth was through the middle of Summers Street but it was later moved further south to the Graham Farmer Freeway.

The Graham Farmer Freeway, constructed in the 1990s along the southern side of the district, was the city's northern traffic bypass which had been on the drawing board for many years. It was finally constructed in the 1990s and officially opened in April 2000. Named after Graham (Polly) Farmer, a high profile Aboriginal footballer, it is made up of the Freeway, the Northbridge Tunnel and the Windan Bridge.

In 2007 Vincent Council gained jurisdiction over East Perth land that was previously in the City of Perth. This section of land stretches from the eastern side of Lord Street, north of the Graham Farmer Freeway to Summers Street and the Swan River and thus includes the former East Perth Power Station site. It was also under the control of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority until it was abolished in 30 December 2011. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) was established to continue the work of the former redevelopment authority.

Although some portions of the district are undergoing a general gentrification, there are still factories remaining in the area today.

PLACES OF INTEREST

1. Banks Reserve, Joel Terrace



Known as Warndoolier (or 'Warndulier') in the Nyoongar community, this was one of several foreshore areas popular as campsites because of the easy access to food and water sources. These benefits later also attracted Chinese market gardeners to the site. The presence of clay in the area also attracted brick makers and evidence of the pits remains today.

Situated between East Perth and Mount Lawley, the area officially became Swan Street Reserve c.1900, taking its name from the road that entered the park. It was renamed Banks Reserve c.1963, after 1950s Perth City Councillor, Ronald Banks. The reserve includes Walter's Brook, named after local landowner and 1842 Perth Town Trust chairman Walter Boyd Andrews. This brook, which

originally traversed private land, was identified in the 1800s as a useful means of releasing stormwater into the Swan River. It was included in metropolitan drainage system maps from 1913 and then resumed by the Government in 1935. It remains part of the Mount Lawley stormwater system to this day.

In 2000 work began on an upgrade which included reticulation, 1,500 native shrubs and plants, an amphitheatre with terraced seating (where summer concerts are held), extra lighting, a half basketball court and a new rubber-based surface for the playground. Public art in the form of three limestone sculptures by Central TAFE indigenous students was also installed as part of a joint project involving TAFE, City of Vincent and Department of Training and Employment.

A shared-use path between Banks Reserve and Bardon Park in Maylands was constructed in 2006. The Vincent section was named the Tony Di Scerni Pathway, after founding chairman of the Banks Reserve Precinct Group.

In 2010 it was the site of a Reconciliation Ceremony with representatives from the local Nyoongar population, City of Vincent, Vincent Reconciliation Group and other local residents. During the ceremony, which was held on the river bank, those present heard Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal memories of the area and other related stories. In 2012 the park was officially marked as a Place of Reconciliation.

2. East Perth Power Station, 16 Summers Street

Originally a popular Aboriginal campsite and meeting place, this land was allocated in 1830 to Alfred Hawes Stone. By 1912 it had become a residential area and featured a row of modest cottages which were later resumed by the Government for planned improvements to the Eastern Railway line.



At that time the supply of electricity, gas and tramways were all operated by local councils or private firms but new Premier John Scaddan pushed for state ownership. The West Australian Government and Perth City Council each bought up various utility companies and, after much negotiation, they merged their interests to plan a central, large-scale power station supplying the entire metropolitan area. With easy access to coal and water through the adjacent railway and Swan River, the East Perth site was ideal. Construction began in 1914 and by 1916 Australia's first state-owned, public power station began operations.

East Perth Power Station generated all of Perth's power until 1951, when a larger station opened in South Fremantle. Thanks to technological upgrades, East Perth continued operating until 1981.

Following the station's closure, the future of the site became controversial, with its buildings deteriorating while the East Perth Redevelopment Authority, National Trust, State Government and Western Power debated its future use. The site and those buildings considered worth conserving were classified by National Trust in March 1997. Steam turbine generation units and other equipment have been retained but debate continues over how to sustainably preserve the heritage of this large industrial site. In 2004, the Government cleaned and stabilised the 8.5 hectare site. After rejecting demolition, parkland, museum, gallery and stadium proposals, plans are now underway for its transformation into a vibrant, mixed use development. It is currently under the Heritage Council's Assessment Program.

3. Graham Farmer Freeway

The Freeway was named after Australian Rules footballer Graham "Polly" Farmer, whose impressive career began as a teen when spotted by an East Perth Football Club talent scout in 1953. He helped the club to three premierships, was recruited to Geelong then West Perth in 1968, and later coached at all three clubs. The dual Sandover Medal winner was honoured as a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1971, one of 150 West Australians acknowledged in

bronze tablets on St George's Terrace in 1979, inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996 and WA Football Hall of Fame in 2004. Having overcome adversity in childhood, he founded in 1995 the Graham Polly Farmer Foundation to provide Aboriginal youth with greater educational opportunities and support, and remains its patron.

The Graham Farmer Freeway was built between 1996 and 2000 at a cost of \$374 million but was actually 40 years in the planning. The project included: a 6.5 kilometre northern bypass freeway linking Belmont, Kewdale and Cloverdale in the east with West Perth, Subiaco and the Mitchell Freeway in the west, a six-lane bridge over the Swan River, partial relocation of the Midland rail line and creation of the 1.6 kilometre Northbridge Tunnel, which emerges above ground at its eastern portal close to Lord Street. The diamond shape vehicular entry/exit ramps for the Freeway for east and westbound traffic to/from East Perth were constructed on East Parade plus a Lord Street eastbound only entrance and a westbound only exit via the East Parade ramps.



The tunnel was built by Clough Ltd in partnership with Baulderstone Hornibrook using the "top-down" construction technique whereby the walls and roof are constructed first, then the soil is excavated from the tunnel and the tunnel floor constructed. There were two vehicle lanes and an emergency breakdown lane in each direction, which changed to three lanes in 2013, with a two-tiered corridor between for services and emergency evacuation, and a computerised control room. It cost in excess of \$374 million.

Artwork was used to decorate the retaining walls at each end of the tunnel, with Ron Corbett's design in the east featuring a 130 metre 'Wagyl' and other Aboriginal imagery while Joanna Lefroy Capelle depicted the history of Northbridge for the western portal.

The Windan Bridge, a 406 metre, six-lane bridge over the Swan River, was completed in 2000 as part of the Graham Farmer Freeway. It was named after Aboriginal leader Yellagonga's wife who was buried in the area in the 19th Century.

4. 38 Joel Terrace (Ledger family homes and iron foundry)

The Ledger family's long association with East Perth began with convict Joseph Sowden Ledger's arrival in 1863. Around the time he gained his ticket-of-leave, nephew Joseph Edson Ledger arrived with a wife and daughter (1880) and younger brother David Sowden Ledger with his wife, eight children and other relatives (1882). Settling in East Perth, they began plying their metal trade, having brought their tools from England. In 1887 Joseph Edson Ledger and younger brother Edson, established the J & E Ledger iron foundry at 235 Pier Street, Perth constructing pipes and fittings for the goldfields. The female family members also helped the business by tin-smithing at their Cheriton Street premises.



Joseph Edson Ledger set up home at 266 Lord Street (the iron fence railing remains) before building a large riverfront home at 38 Joel Terrace c.1906. He later became a Perth City Councillor. His sons Frank and Edward ran the company after him, winning lucrative World War II contracts by being first to move into the manufacture of machine tools, which were then in high demand. The company, J & E Ledger, was sold in 1970. Frank (later Sir Frank) chaired the WA Chamber of Manufacturers, served on Government committees and as President of the Committee at Gloucester Park (1969-1976). He was later honoured with a stand at Gloucester Park for his involvement in the harness racing industry.

5. Public Transport Centre, 116 West Parade

This centre, which incorporates the East Perth (Transperth) Station, East Perth Interstate Terminal and Public Transport Centre, was constructed in 1969.

The complex was built on the site of the 30-acre East Perth Locomotive Depot. In the period after 1900 several parcels of private land were resumed by the Government to create this depot for steam trains, which opened in 1918. It featured railway lines, a locomotive turntable and workshops for repairs. Major infrastructure works ensured sufficient water and coal supplies for the many locomotives housed on site, which amounted to 69 in 1932.

The depot operated until the late 1960s, when planning began for a major transport hub. A new terminus was required to manage the passenger influx once the interstate rail line from Perth via Kalgoorlie to Adelaide was finally made standard gauge all the way.

The Public Transport Centre (originally known as the Westrail Centre) was designed by architects Forbes & Fitzhardinge in the late 20th Century Brutalist style. Built in 1976, the new facility featured an early passive solar technique, with angled vertical piers over the windows. It subsequently won an RAIWA Award of Merit for its interior design. Today the centre includes an exhibition on the history of rail travel, which features a red timber passenger carriage. A steam locomotive is displayed outside. At the centre's northern end is a bus station; the arrival and departure point for inter- and intra-state coach (railway bus) services. A Government bus wash and service facility was constructed north of the bus bays in 2001.



A footbridge links the terminus to the adjacent East Perth train station, enabling passengers to complete their journey via the metropolitan rail system. This Transperth station, 1.9 kilometres from Perth Station, is on the Midland Line. It became known as East Perth after the previous East Perth Station (on both the Armadale/Thornlie and Midland Lines) was renamed Claisebrook Station in 1969. In 2006 the platform was relocated and the footbridge replaced, car park upgraded and disability facilities installed.

A new \$10m control centre for the rail network was completed in 2005. This enables operators to find the exact location of each train at any time and to manage the movement of 200,000 passengers daily.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING IN THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Books

- Gregory, Jenny, *City of Light: a History of Perth since the 1950s*
Perth: City of Perth, 2003. 994.11 PER
- Layman, Lenore (ed), *Powering Perth: a History of the East Perth Power Station*
Perth: Black Swan Press, 2011. 621.313132 POW
- Souvenir of the Centenary of the City of Perth 1829-1929* 994.11 PER
- Stannage, CT, *The People of Perth*
Perth: Perth City Council, 1979. 994.11 STA

Subject Vertical Files

Street Vertical Files

Real Estate subdivision posters

Oral History interviews & transcripts

City of Vincent Municipal Heritage Inventory: www.vincentheritage.com.au

Local History Image Library: www.vincent.wa.gov.au/library

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