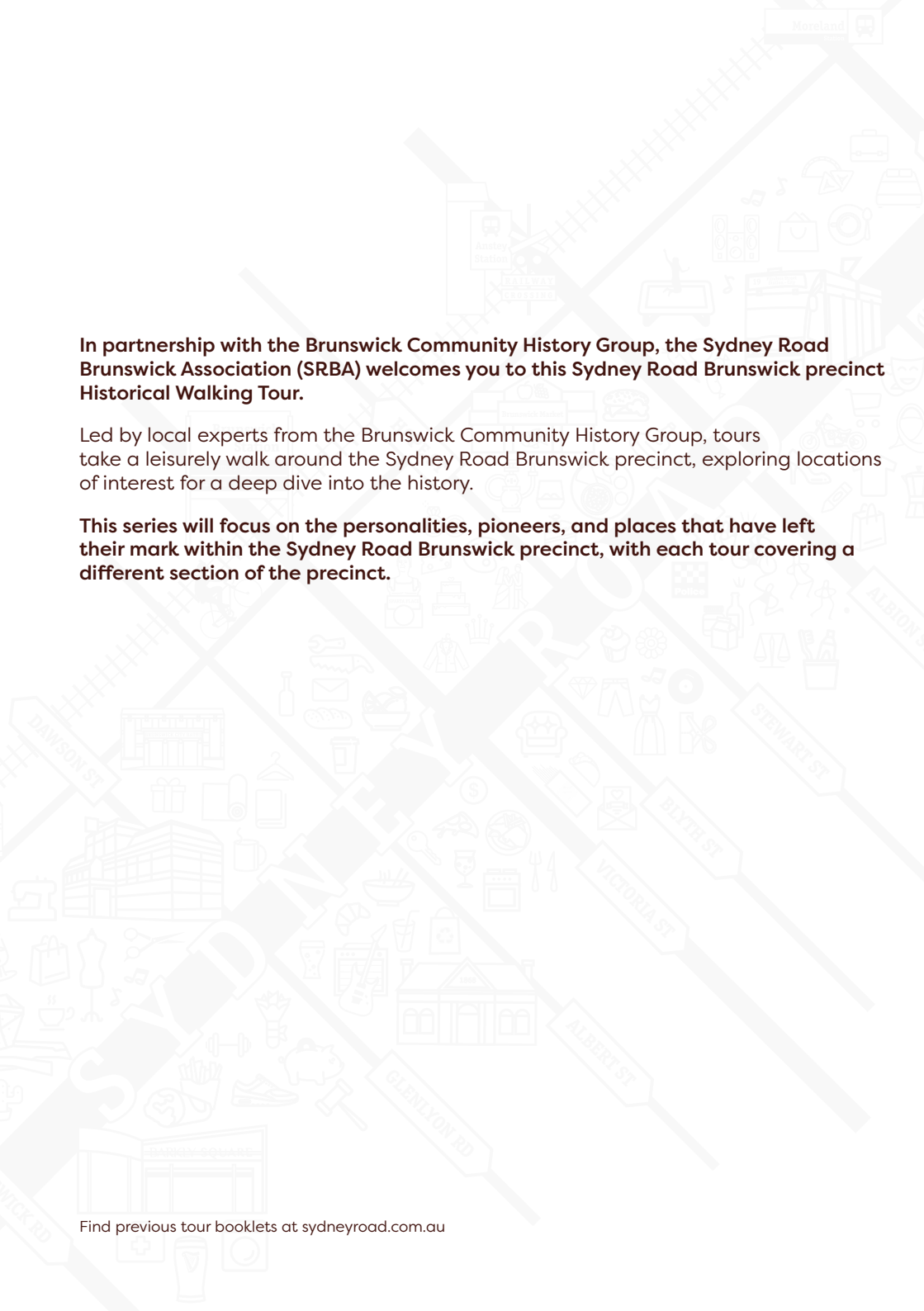


HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

1 and 15 November, 2025



SYDNEY EST. 1992
Brunswick **ROAD**
ASSOCIATION

The background of the page is a light grey map of the Sydney Road Brunswick precinct. The map shows Sydney Road running diagonally from the bottom left to the top right. Several streets branch off from Sydney Road, with their names written on street signs: Dawson St, Stewart St, Blith St, Victoria St, Albert St, and Glenison Rd. The map is populated with numerous small, light grey icons representing various aspects of life and history, such as buildings, shops, food, clothing, and transportation. In the top right corner, there is a small icon of a train and the word 'Newland'.

In partnership with the Brunswick Community History Group, the Sydney Road Brunswick Association (SRBA) welcomes you to this Sydney Road Brunswick precinct Historical Walking Tour.

Led by local experts from the Brunswick Community History Group, tours take a leisurely walk around the Sydney Road Brunswick precinct, exploring locations of interest for a deep dive into the history.

This series will focus on the personalities, pioneers, and places that have left their mark within the Sydney Road Brunswick precinct, with each tour covering a different section of the precinct.

Walking Tour 1 – Saturday 1 November August (Pages 2-10)

- Sebastiano Danielli – Don Bosco Youth Centre, 715-719 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Walshe and Whitelock, 701 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Laurie Larmer, Court House Hotel and founder of Sydney Road Brunswick Association, 615 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Sam Mihelakos, 477 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Mr J H Swinbourn, John Hooper, Mariana Hardwick, Hardwick Building, 459 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Franco Cozzo, 466 Sydney Road Brunswick
- The Penny Black and Scott Assender of Welcome to Group (former Brunswick Post Office), 420 Sydney Road Brunswick

Walking Tour 2 – Saturday 15 November (Pages 11-17)

- Various sites - Thomas Wilkinson and family
- Founders of the Sydney Road Community School, Former Wesleyan Church and Sunday School, 340 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Annie Hanson & Jenny Walker, Kaleidoscope Café, 295 Sydney Road Brunswick (now Magnolia)
- Retreat Hotel and its various publicans, 280 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Allan MacVean, Presbyterian minister of the Brunswick Uniting Church (previously St Andrews Presbyterian Church), 212 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Miss R. E. Yon, 159 Sydney Road Brunswick (now Record Paradise)
- Peter Russo of Russo and Russo, 150 Sydney Road Brunswick

Additional points of interest for you to inspect at your leisure (Pages 18-25)

- Balfe's Paint Shop, 58-62 Sydney Road Brunswick (now The Bergy Seltzer)
- Thomas Manallack, brickmaker and publican and licensee of the Cornish Arms Hotel, 163 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Michael Dawson, St Ambrose Church, 287 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Pyramid Chocolates, 293 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Brunswick Stitch House Alterations, 537 Sydney Road Brunswick
- Maxine Fensom, Maxines Gentlemen's Club, 672-676 Sydney Road Brunswick

Don Bosco Youth Centre

715-719 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Sebastiano Danelli

This site has long links to Brunswick's Italian community. Sebastiano Danneli was one of the first Italians to come to Brunswick – the forerunner of a future large and vibrant community. He arrived from Milan in the early 1850s and initially operated a quarry and stone mason business.

By the 1860s he had set up a macaroni factory on this Sydney Road site. His family also lived on the premise and continued to do so after Sebastiano's death in 1897. In 1939 his three daughters donated the property to the Catholic Church. Danelli was a parishioner of St Ambrose Church and is said to have suggested naming the church after the patron saint of Milan.

The church initially built shops on the site and constructed the Don Bosco Hostel and club for boys in 1945, and extended it in 1975. The facility is managed by the Salesian Order of Don Bosco, and continues to operate as hostel and youth recreation centre. It is named after Saint Don Bosco – a nineteenth century Italian saint.

The architect and builder have not been identified.



Walshe and Whitelock

701 Sydney Road, Brunswick

The Walshe and Whitelock business opened its doors on the corner of Sydney Road and Albion Street in 1889 as the population of Melbourne had began to spread north.

In the 'land boom' of the 1880's large tracts of land were opened up on the outskirts of Melbourne as purchasers, including many speculators, rushed to become land owners. The Victorian Parliament had provided for the full legal recognition of auctioneers in the early 80's and for Walshe and Whitelock business was brisk, very brisk, as the real estate agency specialised in selling and the re-selling land parcels and subdivided lots.

As homes and shops were built in Brunswick, Walshe and Whitelock commenced its well known property management business alongside its already established and very busy sales department. Brunswick was new, employment was available and businesses were quickly springing up along the famous Sydney Road strip.

Improved transport including the train line to Coburg in 1882 together with the cable tram line being laid along Sydney Road in 1887 attracted new settlers.

Gold Fever and opportunities further afield also helped to establish Brunswick and gave Walshe and Whitelock the chance to continue to sell, and rent properties as many families and speculators, keen to improve themselves, moved even further afield.

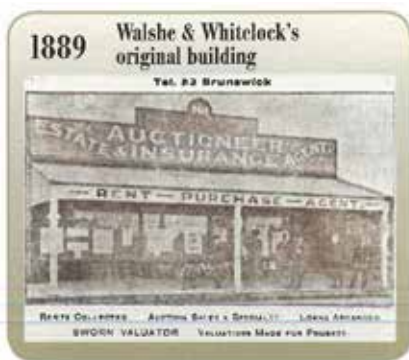
The large double shop allowed for the monthly auctions of furniture and estate goods, another service provided by the real estate agents of the day.

Many of Melbourne's finest homes were built in Brunswick - many still in immaculate condition today. Over a century and a half later these fine examples of Victorian, Federation and Edwardian homes are still Brunswick's most sort after and most expensive properties to own or rent.

It is also so very pleasing and deserving that Walshe and Whitelock continues to sell and rent many of Brunswick's best period homes and shops year in and year out.

Walshe and Whitelock has continued to trade successfully through World Wars, the Great Depression, land boom periods, the rises and falls in the economy and the constant changes and movement patterns of the inner city population.

Today Walshe and Whitelock, by embracing the ever changing property market and adapting the latest innovations of the business world, successfully provides its clients with the best real estate service and practices.



Walshe and Whitelock, 1889



Walshe and Whitelock, 1933

Court House Hotel

615 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Laurie Larmer

Laurie Larmer OAM (1923-2023), over his nearly a century of life, achieved in various fields. He was born in Moonee Ponds, in the shadow of Moonee Valley racecourse. His father worked in the jockeys' rooms at Moonee Valley and Flemington racecourses on Saturdays, and brought home the jockeys' silks to be washed. He recalled seeing Phar Lap's silks on their clothesline, and perhaps this was the start of his lifelong interest in horseracing. Later his parents became publicans of hotels in Windsor, Ballarat and Port Melbourne.

At the age of 18 he was called up for war service and joined the air force. After a period of training he was commissioned as a Captain to fly Halifax with Bomber Command.

In 1945, he flew nine raids over Germany with the 51st Bomber Squadron, the only Australians in Bomber Command flying out of Snaith at that time.

In 2015, Laurie was one of 106 war veterans in Australia to be awarded the France's highest military decoration, the Legion d'honneur, for his part in liberating France. After this he wrote to the mayors of three German cities he had bombed expressing regret for the destruction caused.

After the war he returned to Australia, married Pauline Fitzgerald, and worked in the car industry and public service, before following his parents into the hotel trade. He and his wife Pauline ran the Athletic Club hotel in Ballarat, and later the Doutta Galla Hotel in Flemington, and finally at the Courthouse Hotel.

Laurie Larmer was a founding member and strong supporter of the Sydney Road Development Committee which was set up in the 1990s. At the time Sydney Road was in a depressed state due to the falling population and departure of many industries from Brunswick and the opening of the Barkly Square Shopping Centre. The Committee worked with Brunswick Council on various initiatives to improve



Certificate presented to Laurie, Ordre National De La Legion D'Honneur, 2015



the appearance of the road and attract business to the shops. It later became the Sydney Road Brunswick Association.

The hotel was built in 1858 opposite the Court House and the first Municipal Offices. These were on the site now occupied by the Police Station. It was originally a two storey brick building but was rebuilt in the 1920s. The building was converted to apartments in the early 2000s and only the façade still remains.

Excerpt taken from Larmer's obituary written by his daughters published in The Age



Court House Hotel, Sydney Road

Sam Mihelakos & Co

477 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Sam Mihelakos

Sotirios (Sam) Mihelakos was an important figure in Brunswick's Greek community. He was born in Laconia (Sparta) in Greece and migrated to Australia in 1955 at the age of 21.

Initially he worked in factories and quickly became involved in assisting other Greek migrants to settle in to Australia. He spoke some English so was able to help with dealing with bureaucracy. A lawyer suggested he use his skills and community connections to establish a real estate business. He did this in 1967. He and his Greek-speaking staff assisted numerous Greek immigrants to purchase houses in Brunswick and was credited with housing 6000 families.

Sam was closely involved with Greek Community organisations especially the Brunswick Pallanionian Brotherhood which had been founded in 1961. He served in many positions with the Brotherhood and was its president for several years.

He retired at the age of 85 but continued to assist the Greek community until his death in 2023.



Sam inspecting the renovations on the Greek club.

Images of Sam sourced on leonidas website.

Hardwick Building

459-475 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Mr J H Swinbourn, John Hooper and Mariana Hardwick

This building was constructed in 1908 for John H. Hooper, a Footscray businessman. It has an American style steel frame, manufactured in England. It was reportedly the first in Australia to use this style of construction. This site was previously occupied by J.H. Swinbourn, timber merchant.

Hooper used it initially as a warehouse and in 1937 it was extended and opened as an emporium. It was a key destination during the hey-day of Sydney Road as a shopping mecca.

Later it was occupied by various retailers including Treadways, Walton's department store and (briefly) Spotlight.

In 2005 the building was purchased by Mariana Hardwick – the doyenne of Melbourne's wedding dress designers. She renamed the building the Hardwick Building and set up her workshop, showroom, and shop here. She planned to turn the complex into a one-stop wedding destination with an arcade of related shops. Unfortunately, these did not succeed. Mariana Hardwick sold the building in 2014, leasing back sections of it and in 2018 re-located to South Melbourne.



J.H. Swinbourn, timber merchant

Franco Cozzo

466 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Franco Cozzo

Franco Cozzo immigrated from Sicily in 1956 and, after some other entrepreneurial ventures, set up a furniture store in North Melbourne.

Franco Cozzo became a cult hero in the 1980s due to his home-made advertisements shown on late night television. They starred the man himself urging people to visit his shops in “Nord Melbourne, Footscray and Brunsawick”. He delivered his enthusiastic endorsements in broken English, Italian and Greek. Successive waves of immigrant families made good have been his main customers – Italians and Greeks, then Turkish and Lebanese, and more recently Chinese. The furniture is made in Italy.

Franco Cozzo sadly passed away in 2023.

The building was constructed in about 1892 as a set of six neo-Gothic commercial buildings. The corner building was occupied by the Bank of New South Wales until 1896. From 1908 it was used by furniture manufacturers and retailers including Maples from 1913.

In 1980 the top storey was removed from the end section due to safety concerns, and the original facades and verandas at street level have been replaced.



Brunswick Post Office (now The Penny Black)

420 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Featuring Scott Assender of Welcome to Group

This building was the Brunswick Post Office from 1909 until it was sold and converted into a hospitality venue in the 1990s.

Brunswick's first post office operated unofficially from 1852 from Thomas Wilkinson's home on the east side of Sydney Road, between Glenlyon Road and Albert Street. Later Wilkinson's son in law the chemist Joseph George set up a chemist shop/post office next door. Mrs Sara George was the first qualified female chemist in Victoria.

By the 1880s a separate post office was set up adjacent to the chemist shop and in 1909 this substantial building was constructed with the foundation stone laid by the local member of Federal Parliament – J. Hume Cook.

The fountain at the front commemorates the Australian Natives Association – a mutual friendly society founded in Melbourne in 1871 to provide assistance to white Australian born people. The ANA merged with Manchester Unity in the 1990s to form Australian Unity. It was one of the last organisations to support the White Australia Policy.



Fountain presented to the City of Brunswick.

Scott Assender is the Director and Co-Founder of Welcome to Group and Australian Bar Holdings. Over the past 25 years, he's launched and operated more than 42 hospitality venues and 10 food trucks, employing over 5,000 people across 3 countries.

His ventures include some of Melbourne's most well-known spots; Welcome to Thornbury, Penny Black, Mr Burger, Mamasita, Belles Hot Chicken, and more.

But for Scott, the real success lies in the people, giving young individuals their first job, helping them build careers, and watching many go on to do amazing things in hospitality and beyond.

He and his partners bought 'Don't Tell Tom' (420 Sydney Road) in 2008, renaming it 'The Penny Black' in honour of the first adhesive stamp and the post office links. They sold the business in 2013 and after much trying bought it back in 2021.

The partners also bought 'Warwick Thai' in the old Masonic Hall at 400-406 Sydney Road in 2011, reopening as 'The Brunswick Mess Hall' in 2012.

They then bought 'Bar Etiquette' (408 Sydney Road) shortly after the Jill Meagher murder (it was the last place she drank at) and operated it as 'Little Mess' and these days it's an entrance to Welcome to Brunswick at the rear of 400-408 which they built and opened in 2019.



Scott Assender on right.

Thomas Wilkinson and Family

Various Sites

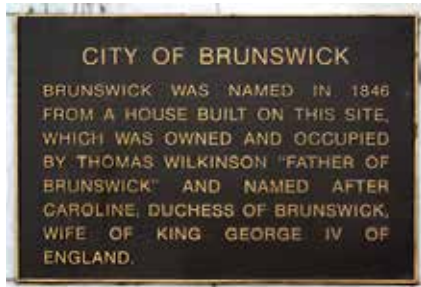
Thomas Wilkinson (1799-1881) is known as the Father of Brunswick. He was one of the first Europeans to buy land and settle in the area. He purchased his property on the east side of Sydney Road, between Albert and Victoria Streets, in 1840 and named it 'Brunswick' - this gave its name to the suburb.

The name was after Princess Caroline of Brunswick – the estranged wife of King George IV. Wilkinson was a supporter of the Whig Party in England which had backed Caroline against the King. Wilkinson was born in England and migrated to Tasmania in 1833, and then to Victoria.

In 1851 he was elected to Victoria's first Legislative Council as the member for Portland. He was a devout Methodist and donated the land for the first Methodist chapel, where the former Wesleyan Church now stands. In 1857 he was elected as the first Chairman of the new Brunswick Council. Among his other activities Wilkinson also published the first Brunswick newspaper the Brunswick Record in 1852.

Thomas Wilkinson's daughter, Sarah (1839-1919), eloped when she was 17 with Joseph George, a pharmacist. She also trained in this profession and was reportedly the first female pharmacist in Victoria. The pair operated a post office and pharmacy on Sydney Road, and Joseph also served terms on Brunswick Council.

Unlike her parents, the Georges were Anglicans, and Sarah was engaged in a lot of philanthropic work through the church. She gave birth to, and raised, twelve children - of whom nine survived infancy. All while working as a Pharmacist and Post-mistress.



Mr. T. Wilkinson and Mrs. Wilkinson



Sarah George

Wesleyan Church, Sunday School and Sydney Road Community School

340 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Gil Freeman and Bill Hannan, Founders of Community School

The Sydney Road Community School (SRCS) was started in 1972 by well-known educators and community activists Gil Freeman and Bill Hannan. Gil Freeman was also instrumental in the founding of CERES. SRCS was originally an annex of Moreland High School. It was, and still is, a very small secondary school with teams of teachers working systematically with smaller student year level groups. The students were involved in school decision making, and goal-based assessment was used rather than traditional tests.

The School was based in the former Sunday School of the Wesleyan Church on Sydney Road. Later it was linked with Brunswick East High School and then Brunswick Secondary College. In 2023, it moved to a new purpose-built facility attached to Christ Church.

The Wesleyan Church was constructed from 1872 and is the third church on this land, which was originally donated by Thomas Wilkinson. It was designed by Percy Oakden and is a wonderful example of polychromatic brickwork.

It ceased operating as a church in the 1970s and the building has been allowed to decay. However it is now being restored.

In 1886 young architect, Alfred Dunn, was engaged to design the Model Sunday School. It is architecturally significant for its innovative design incorporating a central gallery and radiating classrooms. This made it ideal as a teaching venue for both the Sunday School and later the Sydney Road Community School. At one stage it had as many as 900 students. The building is being converted to offices with minimal changes to the internal architecture.



The interior of the school with past students and families attending a farewell function in 2021.



One of the school founders, Gil Freeman with one of its first students Justin Oakley.

Kaleidoscope Café (now Magnolia)

295 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Annie Hanson and Jenny Walker

In 1990 local community workers Annie Hanson (later Cohen) and Jenny Walker opened Kaleidoscope café in the building formerly occupied by the Empire Café – associated with the Empire Cinema across the road at the time.

The opening of the café was delayed by an objection lodged at VCAT, by the nearby St Ambrose Church. Church figures objected to two women in business together – suggesting that they were clearly either prostitutes or lesbians, and as such would detract from the tone of the area. These completely baseless claims were rejected and the two women cleaned up the building which had been unoccupied since the last tenant died in 1960, and opened their café.

They styled it as a community-based café and quickly established links with local schools, the Brosnan Centre and artists of all sorts. There were regular music nights where they hosted Archie Roach among others, art exhibitions and film nights where the Brunswick Film Society held screenings. The idea for the Counihan Gallery was hatched at the café. In addition to this, it was a great place to hang out with its superior coffee and snacks.

Jenny Walker left the business after a couple of years, but Annie Hanson continued to operate it with her husband, artist Gus Cohen, until 1999. At this stage problems with the lease and disagreements with the operator of the neighbouring Bombay Rock nightclub meant that they had to move. The café continued for several more years in premises closer to Brunswick Road.

Annie was an early member of the Sydney Road Development Committee which later became the Sydney Road Brunswick Association.

There are now many fine cafes on Sydney Road, but nothing with quite the character of Kaleidoscope.



The café in 1994. Photo courtesy Annie Hanson Cohen

Retreat Hotel

280 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Various Publicans

The Retreat Hotel was Brunswick's first hotel and had a number of interesting publicans over the years.

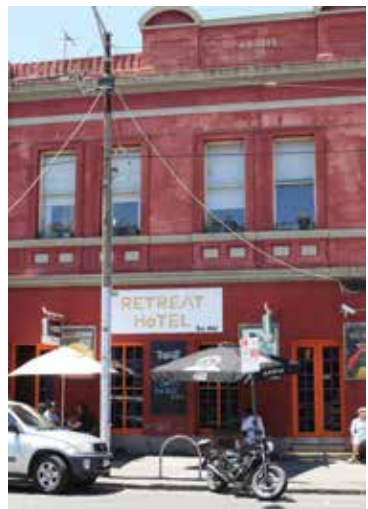
The first hotel was built in 1842 by W F A Rucker as the Retreat Inn. It was a single storey building and Amelia Shaw was the first Innkeeper, holding the licence for only a year. She was possibly Brunswick's first businesswoman and is commemorated in the name of the upstairs bar.

During the gold-rush era of the 1850s, the licensee was George Stanway. Stanway died in October 1852 and his widow Catherine took over until 1862, when she became insolvent. By this time she had remarried and had changed her name to Catherine Clinton.

In the 1860s the hotel was owned by the land developer and member of parliament, David Blair, who made over the ownership to his wife Lydia in 1865. During his ownership he made available the land behind the hotel for the newly formed Cricket Club. Best Overend, local builder and architect, donated and erected the fence around the ground. Michael Dawson, who owned a large tract of land west of Sydney Road, donated the pavilion. Later public baths were reportedly on this site – prior to the opening of the Brunswick Baths in 1913.

Around 1879 the name of the inn was changed to Retreat Hotel, and rebuilt in 1892 as a two storey building. It was at this point in time that the weighbridge disappeared.

In the 1980s and '90s the hotel was managed by the Trikaliotis family and was well known for the Greek Rebetika music.



St Andrews Presbyterian Church (now Brunswick Uniting)

212 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Allan MacVean, Presbyterian Minister

The first Presbyterian minister in Brunswick was Rev. Allan MacVean who served the area from 1854-1896. Over this period, he oversaw a huge expansion of the congregation and the construction of the two church buildings now on the site.

MacVean was born in Scotland, and was part of a large family, many of whom migrated to Australia in the 1850s. A memorial tablet to him is on the front of the church with the epitaph "He ever did what he could". Another memorial inside the church describes him as "Faithful Pastor, Sincere Friend, Loyal Colonist".

The first Presbyterian Church in Brunswick was built in 1855 and was situated at what is now 276 Brunswick Road. It was a bluestone building which was later converted into a house. The house now on this site may have been built on the foundations of the original church.

In 1865 the church was donated some land by William Dods in the more central location of Sydney Road, and the bluestone church was built. It was designed by Charles Webb and is particularly notable for the cream brick spire. The bricks were manufactured in Brunswick by John Glew.

By 1885 the church was too small, so a larger church was built. It was designed by Evander McIver who was a local resident and member of the church. The older church was later used as a school and is now the church hall.

With the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches in 1977 the Church became Brunswick Uniting Church. It continues to play an active role in the Brunswick community.



Presbyterian Church and College, Brunswick.



Rev. Allan MacVean

Miss R. E. Yon (now Record Paradise)

159 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Ruby Ethel Yon, Dressmaker

This is an interesting story of Chinese migration. Ruby Ethel Yon (1835-1937) was a dressmaker of Chinese heritage who lived and ran her business from this shop, from 1915 until her death in 1937.

Her grandfather Ah Ket had migrated from Southern China during the gold rush of the 1850s, where he did well at the diggings, and became a tobacco farmer in the Wangaratta district. He had a number of daughters, one of whom was the mother of Ruby and a son, William Ah Ket, who is notable as the first Chinese Australian barrister. In his life, he was notable in defending the rights of Chinese Australians and in opposing the White Australia Policy.

Ruby Ethel Yon was born in Wangaratta. She began her working life as a dressmaker, and by the outbreak of World War One, had set up businesses in Northcote and then Sydney Road, with modernity as its selling point. She chose to call herself a Costumier, her advertising noting the 'smart' coats and outfits in 'the latest style', manufactured under her direction at the Sydney Road premises.

Within a year of opening her Sydney Road business, Ruby married William Alexander Hoyling, a grocer. The couple lived and worked at 159 Sydney Road, Ruby trading under her maiden name while running her high-end women's clothing factory and retail outlets in Brunswick and Northcote. The Northcote shop was closed in 1916, when her first child was born.

In 1923 a new shop was built for her, and due to a property dispute that went to court and was widely publicised, we have one of the few glimpses of Ruby Yon herself, entering the court as Mrs Hoyling, 'a neat little Chinese lady, who wore a heavy fur coat'.

Ruby continued to operate the business until her untimely death in 1937, combining her career with bringing up two children.



Russo and Russo

150 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Peter Russo, LL.B B.Juris Dip. Ed., Principal and founder of Russo and Russo

Peter Russo's grandfather migrated from the Aeolian Islands in 1895. He established a fruit shop on Sydney Road and raised his ten children in the residence at the rear.

Peter's father was a real estate agent and set up his business in Sydney Road in 1952.

Peter has run his own successful law firm in Sydney Road since 1984. When he started the business the shop next door was a 'massage parlour' and generally believed to be a brothel at the time.



Russo and Russo team, 2019

Balfe's Paint Shop (now The Bergy Seltzer)

58-62 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Matthew Balfe, Councillor and 5 times Mayor

The shop occupied this site from 1888 until the 1980s.

Matthew Balfe (1860-1936) was born in England and arrived in Melbourne as a young man in 1879. He was a Councillor, with some breaks from 1895-1930, and Mayor five times over that period.

He was Mayor at the time of the Orange Riots in 1896 when he refused to read the Riot Act at the behest of the Orangemen. He was encouraged to stand for federal parliament at the time of Federation, but preferred to stay in local government where his main interest was supporting sporting clubs. His sons played for Brunswick Football Club.

Matthew Balfe founded the shop in 1888, where he manufactured and sold dyes and paints. The business was carried on after his death by his sons. After the youngest son, Norman, retired in 1978 - the business was purchased by Michael and Estelle Goldman, who developed it as an art supplies shop and it continued for several years.

The shop is now The Bergy Seltzer, but there are still ghost signs on the rear referencing M. Balfe and Son.



Matthew Balfe and his wife Sarah during one of his Mayoral terms.



Sign for Balfe Paint and Varnish Merchant on the rear of the shop.

Cornish Arms Hotel

163 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Thomas Manallack, Brickmaker and Publican

Thomas Manallack (1806 - 1891), a Cornishman, arrived in Melbourne in 1849. He owned land in Little Collins Street, Melbourne and also in Brunswick.

He opened a brickyard and pottery in Phillipstown, West Brunswick, and is believed to be the first brick-maker in Brunswick. Manallack operated the brickyard until 1851, when he went to the goldfields with his son, Thomas Jnr. They returned in 1855, having been successful, and purchased the licence for the Cornish Arms Hotel. The hotel had been established by Henry Ivey, who was likely related by marriage to the Manallacks.

Like many early European settlers in Brunswick, Thomas Manallack was a Methodist and a teetotaler, though his beliefs did not prevent him from profiting from the sale of alcohol. He held the licence for the hotel for 39 years and at the time of his death, was the oldest publican in Victoria.

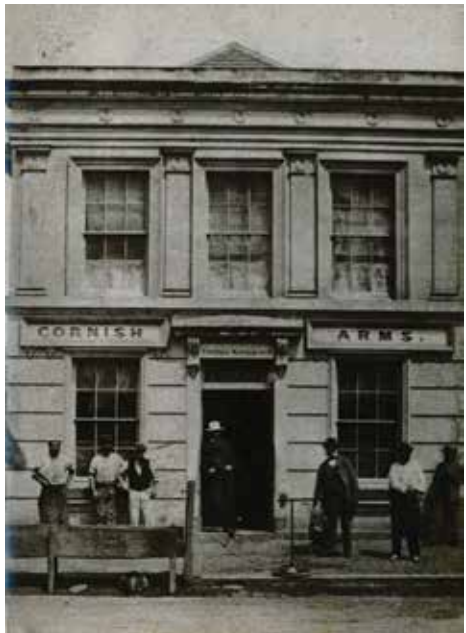
Thomas Snr was married three times, not all at the same time, and all wives died of natural causes. Many of the streets in the neighbourhood are named after the wives, and Trinity Street commemorates the fact that there were three of them.

The first Brunswick Council meetings were held at the Cornish Arms Hotel.

The hotel was re-built in 1925 with the distinctive coloured tiles.



Mr. Thomas Manallack



The original Cornish Arms building.

St Ambrose Church

287 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Michael Dawson

Michael Dawson (1811- 1875) is said to have been the first Irishman to settle in Brunswick. He arrived in Victoria during the goldrush and made his fortune selling groceries to the diggers. With his fortunes he eventually owned numerous hotels and land holdings, one of these being the Phoenix Park estate – a large allotment extending from Sydney Road to the Moonee Ponds Creek.

His mansion, Dawsonhurst, near the corner of Smith and Daley Streets was a local landmark, but was demolished soon after his death.

Dawson sold the land for St Ambrose church, which was founded in 1871.

The name of the Church is said to have been suggested by Sebastiano Danielli, an Italian macaroni manufacturer who lived in Brunswick and proposed that the church be named after the patron saint of Milan. Danielli was also the founder of the Don Bosco Hostel and Youth Centre.

The church was designed by J.M Robertson and constructed in a number of stages, being completed in the early 1900s. St Ambrose School started in what is now the Hall – a single story brick building. The building includes a significant organ and stained glass windows.

The mansion in Saxon Street at the rear of the church was purchased from the Cornwell family in 1895 and was used as the presbytery until 1969, when it became part of the Trinity College.

St Ambrose became the centre of community life for the large Irish Catholic community in the area. During the 1890s it was targeted by Protestant extremists in actions which culminated in riots outside the Sarah Sands Hotel in 1896-7, as the Protestants conducted an Orange Day march.

St Ambrose was a centre for the anti-conscription movement during the World War One.



Dawsonhurst mansion in West Brunswick

Future Prime Minister John Curtin was a parishioner and conscientious objector.

Archbishop Mannix, a leading anti-conscription campaigner, had strong links to St Ambrose.

Frank Little, who later became Archbishop was the parish priest at St Ambrose early in his career.

The demographics of the congregation has changed over the years. In the early period it was composed largely of Irish migrants but since World War Two, Italians and later Vietnamese people have been prominent.

A notable parishioner was B.A. Santamaria who was one of the founders of the Democratic Labor Party, leading to a split in the ALP in the 1950s.



Michael Dawson's grave in Melbourne General Cemetery

Pyramid Chocolates

293 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Karl Retz

In 1927, Karl Retz, a qualified butcher, arrived in Melbourne from Germany with his sister Marie. On the ship to Australia, Karl met Norman Smorgon, and together they went into business upon arrival. But the partnership soon soured, and Karl was left disappointed and in search of a new path. The Smorgon family went on to become the household name Smorgon's Meats, while Karl looked elsewhere for opportunity.

Fortunately, Marie had knowledge of chocolate making and taught Karl the craft. Together they soon established Pyramid Chocolates at 293 Sydney Road, Brunswick. By the late 1930s, the business was already operating when Marie returned to Germany to gather more tools and supplies for chocolate making. She intended to return to Melbourne to help further with the business, but with the outbreak of the Second World War, she was unable to come back.

In 1933, Frida arrived in Melbourne. Karl had always admired her back in Germany, though she had once fancied another man, who was a Nazi soldier and married someone else. Upon her arrival in Australia, Karl and Frida married, and she joined him in the business. They lived above the shop for 10 years, working tirelessly together, and later built a beautiful Art Deco home at 6 Grammar Street in Strathmore where they began a family.

In 1939, as war was breaking out, Karl and Frida's applications for Australian naturalisation were refused. Classified as "Aliens", they faced restrictions on their movements and activities during those difficult years. It wasn't until 1943/44 that they were finally granted naturalisation.

The shop became a beloved community fixture. As fashions changed, so too did Pyramid Chocolates, which expanded from handmade chocolates to milkshakes, spiders, and knicker-bocker glories. With a cinema across the road, Friday and Saturday nights brought bustling trade from crowds of young people.

Their son, Dieter Retz, worked in the shop as a teenager. He later became engaged to Pamela Retz (née Russell), who also helped in the business. Dieter, however, chose another path, studying Radio Engineering at RMIT and later founding Datatel, an early computer assembly and software writing business. He often joked that if he'd taken over Pyramid Chocolates instead, he'd have been driving a Porsche by age 21. He always said the shop was so admired and respected that it rivalled the popular chocolate brands of the day and perhaps could have become another Cadbury.

The business was sold in the late 1960s, though it continued under new ownership until the mid-1990s. For years after, the Retz family kept the tradition of buying Pyramid Chocolates' beautifully hand-decorated Easter eggs, which opened to reveal bespoke foil-wrapped, handmade chocolates.

Though Pyramid Chocolates is gone, its story remains a treasured part of the Retz family's heritage - a legacy of resilience, ingenuity, and sweet success.



c1934 Karl and Frida Retz at 293 Sydney Road Brunswick



c1930, Karl Retz, Pyramid Chocolates proprietor stands in the centre.

Brunswick Stitch House Alterations

537 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Jenny Tran, Owner

Proprietor Jenny started the Stitch House clothing alterations in 1994.

How did she come to Australia? Her voice was cheerful, but the story was traumatic. She left Vietnam by boat in 1987. The memories of that journey are still vivid. She remembers when the engine failed and they ran out of food and water. They were just drifting on the water for ten days. She feared for her life when they encountered pirates off the Thai coast.

Eventually, they found their way to an island that belonged to Malaysia. “We couldn’t walk. After 13 days, all the muscles are frozen. My sister had to carry me on to the sand.” They were rescued in the morning and taken to a refugee camp.

After two years, they were sponsored by a cousin in Australia and Jenny arrived in Melbourne. But it was June, and she wasn’t used to a “European” city. All the leaves had fallen from the trees. “I was so scared back then.”

Jenny found a job as a machinist in a Springvale factory and then she started a family. But work dried up when textile manufacturing went offshore. So she established her own business making alterations, eventually moving to North Carlton and then Sydney Road Brunswick.

Without formal training, Jenny had to teach herself. “I had to learn on the job, often working backwards.” To gain the know-how to make a suit, she went to Savers to buy a second-hand suit and pick it apart. She learnt by experience how a suit is constructed.

“It was very stressful. I sometimes worked 38 hours straight.” A large increase in rent after lockdown forced her to move to her current shop on the opposite side of Sydney Road.

Now she wants to pass on her knowledge. “I don’t have any certificates, but I have experience.” She has opened a sewing school that operates on Sundays and Mondays. Jenny wants to work with textile students to provide skills that are missing from their formal education.

Excerpt and image sourced from Brunswick Voice, article by Kevin Murray



Maxines Gentlemen's Club and Maxine Fensom

672 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Maxine Fensom, Owner and Entrepreneur

Operated by Maxine Fensom - a well-known figure in the adult industries. She also has an event agency, topless bar, online adult merchandise store and adult party services. Previously, she also presented the daily horoscope on Channel 9's Melbourne Today show.

Fensom is a strong supporter of female empowerment and helping women exit the adult industry, more regulations around employment in the adult industry and increased sentences for perpetrators of violent crime against women; running as an independent candidate in Victorian State elections in 2002 and 2010.

Her biography *Maxine Stripped Naked: Tales From the Sex Industry* was released in 2004.

She is currently based in Los Angeles where she runs Las Vegas Cannabis Tours, Sin City Foodie Tours, Las Vegas Cannabis Weddings, VIP Las Vegas clubs and Vegas Baby Weddings.

Outside of her international ventures, Maxine is also a sex expert and Founder/CEO of Maxines.com.au, Australian Adult Industry Awards, Tinsel Glamour, Elevate Jayne, Melbourne Bucks Parties, Aussie Hunks, and Miss Erotica Pageant

The building, where Maxines is located, was earlier a strip club (male and female strippers) called Crystal Ts, operated by Dominic Tenuta who was also involved with the Juventus Soccer Club. Tenuta planned to build a skyscraper in the shape of a T on the site, but this did not eventuate.



SYDNEY EST. 1850 Brunswick ROAD



Enjoy festive shopfront windows, painted by local artists, within the Sydney Road Brunswick precinct!

Over 30 festive creations painted onto participating shopfront windows from Saturday 22 November, and on display until January 2026.



Scan the QR Code for more information, and enjoy a stroll within the iconic Sydney Road Brunswick precinct this festive season.

