

5.3 RECREATION / MEETING PLACES

Gertrude St has a special significance to the entire Community, which must be acknowledged. Many people said that the whole street was significant to them. It was known right across Australia, as a place to go and meet Aboriginal people. Many people told stories of being reunited with members of their family for the first time after childhood separation on Gertrude St. Archie Roach talked of travelling all over Australia and when he mentioned that he came from Melbourne, people recalled Gertrude St. It was colloquially known as 'dirty Gerty' and had an identity of its own. Several people said that all of Gertrude St should be marked as significant.

Although we have included the Church locations in the category of Recreation and Meeting places, it should also be noted that they also took on the role of organisations.

1. Builders Arms Hotel

Cnr Gertrude St and Gore St, Fitzroy

The Builders Arms is widely reported as being the most significant meeting place for the Aboriginal Community in the City of Yarra. Its role as a meeting place was not based on the fact that it was a hotel, rather it was a place where people could justifiably meet in large groups. Joel Wright described it as "the front line", between the Aboriginal Community, and the police and government of the day. Many people, who came to the Builders, met up with their relatives for the first time. Family stories were passed down and people discussed the common problems that existed in the community such as inadequate, often non-existent, services. In fact the beginning of many organisations seemed to begin with discussions in the Builders. In post war times the police would come into the builders usually twice a month, and load everyone into the back of the big black police cars called the 'Big Morias', and take them to the Fitzroy police station and lock them up. This happened whether people were drinking or not.

1a. Lane Behind Builders Arms

Many memories and stories were associated with the Lane behind the Builders. Blues were sorted out in the lane and sometimes two up games were held there. In the past the beer garden opened onto the lane and people used to enter the pub from the lane.

2. Royal Hotel

187 Gertrude St, Fitzroy

The Royal Hotel at the other end of the block from the Builders, was also a popular meeting place. There is a story of the local police entering the Royal one night and throwing everyone, whether they were drinking or not, out on the streets. When they were all standing around on Gertrude St. they were arrested for drinking in a public place.

2a. Lane behind the Royal Hotel

In the 50's, 60's and 70's, a place where people met, drank and disputes were settled. It has been said that when disputes were settled, the parties shook hands and that was the end of the matter.

3. Church of Christ Aborigines Mission

258 Gore St, Fitzroy

The building came up for sale and Pastor Doug Nichols approached the Victorian Aborigines Committee of the Federal Aborigines Mission Board of the Churches of Christ, with the request that the board take over the church. The board agreed in October 1944 and Doug Nichols was appointed missionary. According to Alick Jackomos, the church opened in 1942. It was used as a meeting place and famous people were often invited to talk to the congregation including William Warfield, Tom Duncan, Harry Belafonte and Winifred Atwell. Pastor Doug's wife Gladys Nicholls formed a committee which was called the 'Mrs Nicholls Womens' Committee' and they ran street stalls outside the Northcote Town Hall, to raise money for the Gore St. Mission.

4. Sqizzy Taylors Hotel (now the Renown Hotel)

Cnr Gertrude St and Napier St, Fitzroy

Another popular meeting place until the late eighties.

5. Site of Exhibition Hotel (now demolished)

Cnr Young and Gertrude St. Fitzroy

In the park opposite Young St there used to be a Hotel called The Exhibition. It was demolished when they built the Housing Commission Flats. It was also a popular meeting place until it was demolished.

6. 120 Gertrude St

"Danny's Hamburger Joint"

This was a popular meeting place in the 50' and 60's after the pubs shut at 6pm. People would congregate here until 12pm or so and then go to a nightclub in Carlton.

7. Carlton Gardens,

Nicholson St at the junction of Gertrude St.

This was a place where the people met and drank before the Housing Commission flats were built and Atherton Gardens became popular. There was a Moreton Bay Fig tree, which was known as 'the fig tree', which became part of the rounds. Earlier on in the 40's and 50's every Saturday and Sunday and sometimes during the week, the Aboriginal Community would meet here.

8. Fitzroy Primary School

Cnr of Napier and Chapel Sts

Popular meeting place on the corner of the school yard.

This was also the school where a lot of Koori kids went to school in the 50's and 60's.

9. Champion Hotel

Cnr Gertrude St and Brunswick St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place until the late 80's

10. Rob Roy Hotel

Cnr Gertrude St and Brunswick St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place until the late 80's

11. Church

144 Fitzroy St, Fitzroy

Pastor Doug Nicholls held Church services here after they left the Gore St. Mission and in later years Pastor Neville Lilley held services here for the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship.

12. The Grace Darling Hotel

Cnr Smith St and Peel St, Collingwood

Popular meeting place

13. Carlton Club

18 - 22 Gertrude St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place

14. Rainbow Hotel

Cnr Young St and Moor St. Fitzroy

Popular meeting place

15. St Marks Church

270 George St

Many families who came to Fitzroy in the 30's were Church of England and they would attend Church here. In more recent times it has been a place where funerals have been held.

15a next door at 268 George St

Popular meeting place. A place where in the depression you could get a penny meal. You could get a dinner, hot roast and a sweet or soup and a roast for one penny. They also ran silent movies, called the 'flickers', one night a week.

16. Gerry's Soup Kitchen

Gertrude St, Fitzroy - Macedonian Restaurant

Was a soup kitchen that was frequented by the students of Koori Kollij where cheap and good soup could be had - 1982

17. Old Peppercorn Tree behind Union Hotel

Gore St Fitzroy

A place where people met and drank under the tree.

18. MU Hall - Manchester Unity Hall (known as Emu Hall)

Hoddle St Collingwood

Now demolished for the Hoddle St. walkover, near the cnr of Vere St.

Merle Jackamos, Eric Onus and Winnie Onus used to run dances for the Aboriginal Community. They charged 3 shillings to get in and Harry Williams played guitar and Alice Young, daughter of Jack Connelly who lived in Gertrude St, played the piano. The money raised was spent on Aboriginal Welfare.

19. Collingwood Town Hall

Hoddle St, Collingwood

A place where dances, cabarets and debutant balls were held.

In 1948 Aunty Marge Tucker MBE and Cora Gillson organised debutant ball. They trained about 20 Aboriginal girls and boys in the Church of England hall in Fitzroy St for the ball in September 1949.

20. Old Collingwood Post Office

Smith St. Collingwood

Site where Doug Nichols and Alick Jackomos had a table collecting signatures for the 1967 referendum.

21. Atherton Gardens

Gertrude st, Fitzroy

A popular place for people to meet and as with all the meeting places, it was a place where families were reunited and stories passed down. It was also a place where people from out of town would come to find friends or family. Everyone could be traced from Atherton Gardens. There used to be picnics held for the people known as the 'Parkies' with food and bands etc. The Parkies were respected and were often held up as people who had strong values and had not sold out to the system. They also often had cultural knowledge and were the place for the young to find out about who they were and where they belonged. * when were the Flats built??? – from what year?

22. Old Pawn Shop

Cnr Gertrude St and Napier St, Fitzroy

Was once a place where Aborigines pawned their belongings when they were short of money.

23. The Marquis of Lorne Hotel

Cnr George St and Kerr St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place

24. The Rose Hotel

Cnr Leicester St and Napier St, Fitzroy

Place where people would go if they wanted to avoid the hustle and bustle.

25. The Napier Hotel

210 Napier St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place

26. The Moonee Valley Hotel – formerly known colloquially as 'The Punters' now named The Punters Club.

Cnr Brunswick St and Rose St, Fitzroy

Popular meeting place. It was called the Punters because SP Bookies would go there and it was a place where you could make an easy bet.

27. Site of the old Regent Theatre

104 Johnston St, Fitzroy

An old theatre where Aborigines used to go in the 50's and 60's.

28. Masonic Hall

Gipps St. Collingwood

A place where functions were held and also the place where members of the Wharfies Union would pick up families in big furniture trucks and take them to out for the day for picnics.

29. Bethesda Aboriginal Mission

406 - 408 Fitzroy St

A church run by Sister Maude Ellis Deaconess for the Methodist Church in 1938. It was closed by 1942 due to the war.

30. Sister Maude Alice's Office

Cnr of Little Victoria St. and Smith St. Church services were held her in the early 50's. Now 3CR Radio Station.

31. Peter's Café (now demolished) (no photograph available)

Opposite the Renown Hotel - Gertrude St

Popular meeting and eating place.

32. Chris's Hamburger Shop also known as Lucky's Hamburgers

(no photograph available) No longer standing. Brunswick St Fitzroy, opposite Brotherhood of St Laurence, where the flats are now. Popular meeting and eating place. People would go from Danny's to Lucky's.

33. Merri Creek under High St Bridge

Near intersection of High St and Punt Road, Northcote

Small groups of Koori's camped under bridge in 1974 - source Kelvin Onus

34. Fitzroy Football Ground

Cnr Freeman St and Brunswick St, Fitzroy

Pastor Doug Nicholls; played 54 games for the Fitzroy Football Club between 1932 and 1937 earning best and fairest in 1934 - 35

It was also the Fitzroy Stars Football Club home ground.

35. The Koori Club

41 Gertrude St Fitzroy

Established in the early 60's by Bruce McGuiness as an Aboriginal social club. Alick Jackomos said that it was the first place that the word Koori was used as a name for Aboriginal people. Prior to that Gippsland people were Kurnai, Cummeragunga people would call themselves Woongies and the Western District were called Mara. Bruce McGuiness published a magazine called "Koorier"

36. Site of 'Hole in the Wall'

Now a car park behind 5-7 Smith St Fitzroy

A meeting place. It was called 'Hole in the Wall' because it used to be a vacant block that was fenced and the way in was through a hole in the wall. It was a place where people could meet in relative private.

37. Possible site of 'Charcoal Lane'

Thought to be the lane running behind the old Cambridge St Primary School off Cambridge St.

A place where people met, called charcoal lane because there was a charcoal factory at the end of it where people sometimes got work bagging charcoal and briquettes. It was made famous by Archie Roaches Song 'Charcoal Lane'.

38. Edinburgh Gardens

Brunswick St, Nth Fitzroy

A place where picnics and concerts were regularly held and is well known for the infamous cricket matches of the 'Parkies' versus the 'Darkies', and the Parkies and Darkies versus the Cops. Johnny Mac told the story of the day when the Parkies won against the Cops upon which the Police proceeded to 'pinch' (arrest) some of the Parkies. - source Kelly MacGuiness.

39. Koorie Garden

At the confluence of the Merri Creek and the Yarra River.
Planted by the Koori Revegetation Group in 1992.