



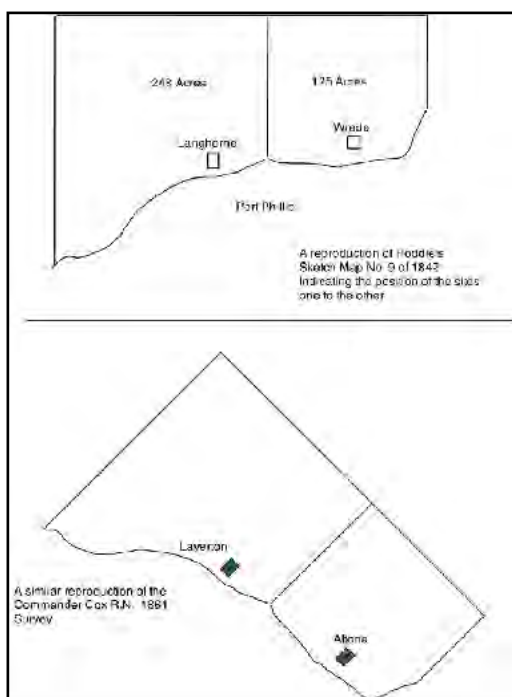
# Altona Laverton Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 236 Altona 3018

# NEWSLETTER

December 2018

## Land SubDivision—Altona & Laverton Area 1886-1888



**Altona Laverton Historical Society Members Bob Hawkins and Graeme Reilly have been researching the first land sales of the Laverton and Altona Estates beginning from 1886.**

*As mentioned in our Newsletter Number 42 the first mentions of the name "Altona", appears as that of the home of this name occupied by Robert Wrede in 1842, and "Laverton", in the same year when Alfred Langhorne is recorded as having a dwelling of that name, "near Williamstown".*

(The book 'Altona - A Long View' by Susan Priestley 1988 contains reproduced images of two plans, one a reproduction of Hoddle's sketch map Number 9 of 1842, and the second a similar reproduction of a sketch map drawn by Commander Cox RN, in 1861. These have in part been redrawn as shown to give an understanding of the two properties one to the other.)

Graeme Reilly comments:

'The years following the great international Exhibition of 1880 signalled a decade of unparalleled prosperity in

Victoria and Melbourne. Miles of railways were built at this time and the cable tram put in its appearance.' The years following the great international Exhibition of 1880 (sketch of proposed site on right), signalled a decade of unparalleled prosperity in Victoria and Melbourne.

# The Development of Altona

The Williamstown Advertiser of 17 September 1887 contained an article stating that, 'Altona' had been bought by A. T. Clark, for development as a suburb. The article also made mention that gas and water were to be laid on.

During October 1887, the area was surveyed for sub-division. A statement appeared that Altona was to be a second *Margate*, piers were to be built as well as the railway was to be extended from the Williamstown racecourse through the Estate to Altona Beach.

The ever-enterprising A. T. Clark then floated a private company, 'Altona and Laverton Freehold and Investment Co.' and a prospectus appeared in the Williamstown Advertiser on 12 November 1887.

This Estate was the large property that Alfred Langhorne had been sold to the Phelps' brothers some years prior. So, the Estate covered about 2,720 acres including the Laverton Homestead (Alfred and Sarah's original residence), with its large garden area, stables and about 2 and a half miles of beach frontage to Laverton Bay.

Areas of the Estate consisted of rich loamy soil the greater part is used to grow Lucerne and English grasses. There were ample quantities of bluestone, white clay, a limestone ridge, and therefore considered to possess a natural advantage for home building.

Being only six miles from Port Melbourne by sea, large excursion steamers were advertised as being able to berth safely at the pier the promoters intend to build. The natural beach was also considered very suitable for sea baths. The Estate is only nine miles from Melbourne and a railway station was to be built at a site, to be advised, but would be in walking distance of the beach.

In December 1887 tenders were called for a railway line to the beach at Laverton Bay. Tenders were advised to close 13 January 1888 but were extended to the 22 January. During January and February, a water main was laid on to the estate.

In March it was announced that the first land sale would take place on Saturday 5 May. Two weeks later David Munro and Co. was announced as the firm to build the railway to Altona and that the line would then continue on to re-join the Geelong railway, forming a loop. It should be remembered that David Munro was also a Director of the Altona and Laverton Freehold and Investment Company.

A short time after this announcement, and before any individual sales were made, A. T. Clark sold the entire Estate to another syndicate for £180,000, this was £15,000 more than the A. T. Clark syndicate had paid for the Estate. The new syndicate was the 'Altona Bay Estate Co. Limited' of which David Munro was the only person of the former syndicate to join the new syndicate. The other members of the new syndicate were John Blyth (who appeared to be the leader of the syndicate), James Seves Hosie, Henry Upton Alcock, William H. Peryman and Ross K. McCartney. It should also be mentioned that the land surveyor, of the Estate, was Nathaniel Munro who had been employed to survey a number of new Estates across Melbourne during the preceding period. He was also the brother of David Munro and a well-known acquaintance of the Premier, Mr (later Sir) Thomas Bent.

The first sale took place on 8 September 1888, with special trains running from Spencer Street railway station and steamers leaving from Queens Wharf and from Sandridge (Port Melbourne). A vast multitude of about 3,000 people arrived at the sale and just after 3 p.m., the advertised starting time, the Auctioneer and Company Director, Mr. Peryman mounted the rostrum and commenced the sale. The first lot sold (No. 19) situated on the corner of the Esplanade and Pier Street was sold for £13 (\$26) a foot frontage, after the bidding started at £5.

It should be remembered that wages at this time averaged between £3 and £4 a week. In all 114 lots were sold, realising £25,442/5/9 (\$50,884.58).

The second sale took place the following Saturday, and on the prior Tuesday and Thursday the steamer 'Hercules' was hired to transport prospective buyers to Altona. On the Saturday of the sale two trains were scheduled to run to Altona whilst the boat brought their quota of people. Over 2,000 attended and sales of lots were again brisk.

There appeared to be eight individual days of selling with the first six realising the following figures:

Sale	Date	Lots Sold
1	8.9.1888	281
2	15.9.1888	169
3	22.9.1888	184
4	29.9.1888	141
5	6.10.1888	117
6	13.10.1888	106



Building operations, including a post and telegraph office started on 7 October, however the land boom which had now reached enormous proportions burst just before the 7th sale on the 27 October. On 8 October the 'S.S. Active' commenced a daily service from Port Melbourne to Altona. About the same time efforts were made to have a regular train service.

They may have succeeded in this as mention was made in a local article, that all regular passenger trains being cancelled after 14 August 1890. It also shows that their efforts to sell the land were to no avail.

W. H. Peryman, the auctioneer, sold his interest in the company to J. S. Hosie who now held a large share, whilst D. Munro sold his to a Henry Jennings a Solicitor.

**Graeme Reilly (ALHS)**



**References**

- Cannon, Michael, The Land Boomers, 1967, Melbourne University Press, London, New York
- Williamstown Advertiser, 1885 to 1888
- Priestley, Susan, Altona A Long View, 1988, Hargreen Publishing Company
- The Argus, 1888 to 1889
- The Age, 1888 to 1889
- Williamstown Chronicle, 1887 - 1889

## Laverton Estate

This land was originally owned by the Chirside's, Andrew and Thomas, and the land tax register shows that they held the land until a land syndicate bought it in the early 1880s. The name of this land firm was the Federal Investment Co. of Australasia, but the well-known businessman A. T. Clark was mixed up in it somewhere because this man persuaded the State Government to build a station, at public expense, at the site of the proposed land development on the Newport-Geelong line, even though there was only one house anywhere near the spot.

The station was to be called Truganina but those in authority soon realised there already existed a town of that name, within the proximity, so the name was changed to 'Laverton.'

The estate firm, Staples, Wise & Co. oversaw the sales, so they issued a booklet 'Laverton — the new and model suburb' in 1886. It firstly dealt with the history of Melbourne up to the date of publication and stated that the population of greater Melbourne was 325,000. Due to the fact that the population grew 18,000 the-previous year and was likely to reach 500,000 in 10 years.

A large number of new estates were needed to be developed to house the expected population growth, this then justified Laverton. The booklet then went on to praise the new suburb's virtues, compared it with such suburbs as Brighton, Caulfield and Surrey Hills.

For example, it took only 28 minutes to reach Laverton by train whilst other suburbs took longer, commanding views in all directions, the bay, the Dandenong ranges. Plenty ranges, Mount Macedon and the You Yangs, in fact every prominent landmark within a radius of 30 miles is plainly visible.

On 10 April 1886 this advertisement appeared in the Williamstown Advertiser: 'Auction 17 April. Laverton: New and model suburb of Melbourne grand demonstration and opening of the railway station, auction sale of 66 choice township allotments adjoining the railway station. At the opening sale and as a guarantee that every lot will be sold a price has been fixed at the nominal figure of 5 shillings per foot, our wonderful terms are £1 per lot deposit and the balance £1 per lot per month with interest at 6 per cent. However, buyers of 2 or more lots will not be charged any interest on the unpaid portion of purchase money. Purchasers of three lots get free deeds.

Wonderful building terms of 70 per cent of the cost of the house would be advanced for four years without any interest whatever. It went on to say, that all of the Laverton streets are 66 feet wide, 25 acres of land has been reserved for recreation purposes including a Town hall, State School, Churches, etc.'

A second sale was held 1 May of this year when 46 allotments were put under the auctioneer's hammer. Whether any more sales were held is not known, but it would appear that enough people built houses to form a small town for by October 1886 the 'Laverton Board of Works' a type of progress association had been formed and a daily mail service was being conducted. In May 1888 tenders were being called for the building of school No. 2857, to be built at Laverton.



The school is pictured on the right.

The resulting rise in rates, as a result of the development, was welcomed by Werribee Council, but difficulty was experienced in collecting the money for some because many of the owners couldn't be tracked down.



**Bob Hawkins** in a Members report at a recent General Meeting confirmed the research carried out by Graeme Reilly, and that a 1200 foot pier was built at Altona as part of the development.

Land sales involved two Titles ,that of Altona-Laverton Estate and Altona Bay Estate

The early plans of the Altona Bay Estate (the area around the Homestead) envisaged Homes and a Hotel Site, the Hotel never eventuated.

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# Epsom Estate

About 1884/5 a syndicate of which the Hon. Alfred Thomas Clark seems to have been the brains behind, purchased a tract of land north of the Williamstown Racecourse, fronting onto the south side of Kororoit Creek Road.

When the Government announced that a large railway workshops was to be built at Newport in the mid-1880s Mr. Clark decided to develop Newport (at the time was little more than a village with a number of quarries) into a residential suburb for the expected inflow of people who were to work at the new rail works. This he did, parts of Newport's layout today are a result of A. T. Clark's land company's work.

Seeing that the Newport sales were successful this enterprising man then looked further west of Newport and bought the land near the racecourse already alluded to.

The sale of this 'famous property', the Epsom Estate, was placed it into the hands of Gemmell Tuckett & Co in conjunction with A. T. Clark & J. Morgan to sell by auction without reserve.

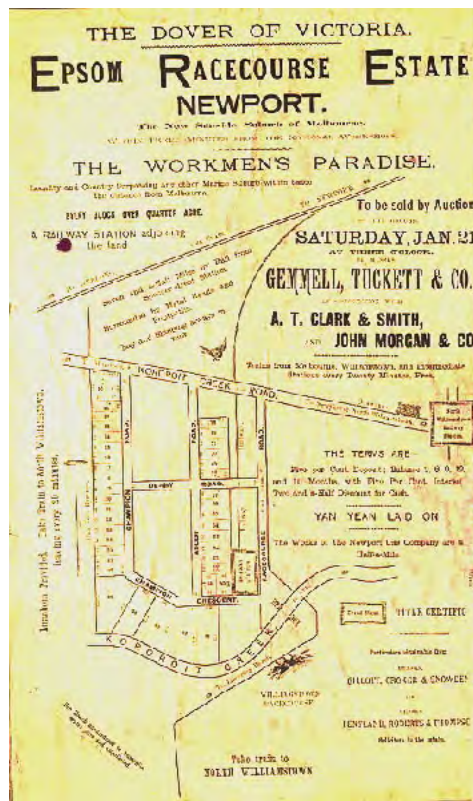
This grand estate had been subdivided into 120 allotments and was close to the Williamstown racecourse, which is said to be the prettiest racecourse in and about Melbourne. It is within 10 minutes' walk of the national railways workshops which was erected at a cost of over £250,000 (\$500,000) by the government and which must necessarily give employment to over 3,000 artisans (tradesmen).

The railway station of the branch line to the racecourse was within 100 feet of the celebrated Epsom Estate, Newport. The land was described as being "high and dry and commanded a grand view of the bay, Melbourne, Williamstown and the racecourse."

Roads were planned to be all nearly 60 feet wide and a splendid sea beach was described as being within a half-mile of the estate. Five special trains left Melbourne on day of sale, and patrons provided with a free railway pass and luncheon was served in large marquees.

On the day of the sale, the potential buyers would have found a large paddock with perhaps a Street sign or two, and surveyor's pegs marking out streets and individual blocks. They would not have found made roads, footpaths, drainage or water supply connected.

The streets of this estate were given horse racing names being close to the course such as Ascot, Derby, Champion and Racecourse roads. The racecourse railway was extended in November in 1887 and cut the estate in two but had the effect of placing the new station in the middle.



The promoters took advantage of this and another 40 allotments were put up for auction on November 20 followed by another sale on January 21, 1888.

At that time the sales would have been quite successful but within three or four years when the bottom had dropped out of the land market the land was virtually worthless to those who owned it.

In later years some houses were built, but these were removed or demolished when the refinery acquired the land about 1950. Part of the original estate east of the railway now in Williamstown has been made into an industrial estate.

### South Newport Estate

This land between the railway and Kororoit Creek Road, previously known as Knight's paddock, was promoted in the Williamstown Advertiser on January 16, 1886, that later that month 88 by quarter-acre allotments would be put up for sales. This area, diagonally opposite Epsom Racecourse Estate, north-easterly between Kororoit Creek Road and the Geelong railway and boundary on the east by Maddock's road was of a swampy nature.

On that day of the sale, the paper stated that three trains would run to the sales scheduled to start at 3 pm. The usual trimmings were provided — namely free lunch — rail passes.

A second sale, of some 40 by quarter acre blocks took place on March 13 the proceeds being £3,250 (\$6,500). Subsequently, a third sales was held on 9 October 1886 with further sales taking place on the 28 January 1888 and 21 April of the same year.

This land was sold by the same Estate group, Gemmell Tuckett and Co. Most of the Estate was low lying swamp-ground and the only building that took place on this land was industrial.

When the next land boom occurred in the 1920's the Estate was now called 'The Millington Estate' and was again put on the market, this time by Frank J. Harris. One of the inducements made to sell the property was that an electric tram line was to be built to run down Kororoit Creek Road and serve the Estate.

However, these grand schemes never eventuated as with the onset of the depression in the period 1929 to 1939 and land development again lapsed. In 1962 the portion of this estate in Altona Shire was annexed by the then Williamstown City. Another event at the time of advertising the Estate, however, had just taken place which compensated the land group somewhat. This was the opening of the first section of the racecourse branch railway on 6 April 1885.

This was due to the persistent efforts of racing club committee of which A. T. Clark was a member. This had the effect of providing the proposed estate with a railway station, so the company put an asphalt path from the new station to the new bridge which spanned the Kororoit Creek — officially to help the racecourse, but in reality, to help boost the sale of their estate.

The area today is now an industrial estate and a portion of the Altona Refinery.

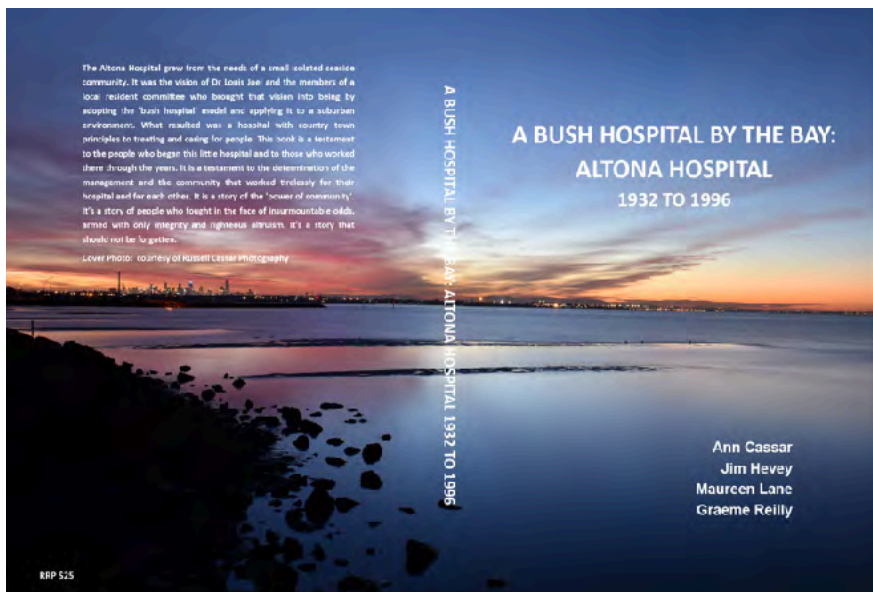


## December News

The latest book to be released by the Altona Laverton Historical Society, envisaged and edited by member Maureen Lane will be launched at the Louis Joel Centre on December 8.

Title: Altona & Surrounds - A Patchwork of Memories

It includes interviews with various present and past Altona Residents and will be available at a cost of \$20



Also available are copies of "A Bush Hospital by the Bay - Altona Hospital 1932 to 1996 Cost \$25