

Reshaping the Yarra

unrealised plans and visions for the Port of Melbourne

'Reshaping the Yarra: unrealised plans and visions for the Port of Melbourne', *Provenance: the Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, issue no. 21, 2023–24. ISSN 1832-2522. Copyright © Sebastian Gurciullo.

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Abstract

Government archives, like those held at Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), provide documentary sources that allow us to visualise changes to natural and built environments over time. Using maps and plans from PROV's collection, this article explores plans and decisions associated with the Yarra River and the developing Port of Melbourne from the 1850s to 1973. The article explores changes to the course of the river and the surrounding area, as well as proposals for changes that were never implemented.

Government archives, like those held at Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), provide us with documentary sources that allow us to visualise changes to natural and built environments over time. Through PROV's vast holdings of survey maps, plans for development and associated documents, it is possible to visualise these changes as they were discussed and approved, or not, by government authorities. As well as tracing the history of actual changes, it is also possible to examine some of the ideas for changes that never eventuated, either because they were too fanciful or because circumstances changed, rendering them unfeasible, undesirable or otherwise invalid.

While the documentary evidence of the changes that actually took place can allow us to understand the choices and decisions that have led to the natural and built environment we have today, and what may have been lost forever as a consequence, looking at those that never eventuated can tell us a great deal more. First, it can show us an alternative urban landscape (both natural and built) that might have been. Second, it can tell us about the concerns and ideas of those who envisaged a future urban environment, about what they saw as desirable or possible at the time, and the reasons for why these were not transformed into reality.

One of the sites that we can use to explore this approach is the lower Yarra River, which became the site for the developing Port of Melbourne. A natural feature shaped by centuries and millennia of natural forces

and the First Nations people who interacted with it, the river and its surrounds was suddenly disposed to the ambitions of civil engineers deploying the technological capacity to literally plan the course of major waterways and transform the natural environment for purposes such as more convenient shipping, trade, industry and commerce. This landscape, because it is so central to the city, also attracted visions and plans for broader urban and infrastructural development that was dependent on reclaiming land and altering the waterways that would serve this development. Most of these plans or proposals originated from within the colonial and state government, but others originated from enthusiastic individuals with interests or skills in urban planning, transportation or shipping who submitted their ideas to government officials for consideration.

Various histories have been written on how the Yarra has seen relatively rapid transformations all along its course in the past 200 hundred years that have been, in one way or other, brought on by colonists and immigrants seeking to impose a new order on this natural landscape. Kristin Otto has covered much of this in her 2005 book, *Yarra: a diverting history of Melbourne's murky river*.^[1] Other historians and writers have focused on changes to the lower Yarra, including the development of the port and the draining of the swamplands to the city's east. David Sornig has mapped the psychogeography of Dudley Flats and the swamplands west of the city in *Blue lake*, Judith Buckrich and Olaf Ruhen have written extensive histories of the



Figure 1: Early plan of Melbourne and South Melbourne by Robert Hoddle (left), dating from 1839, with detail of area showing waterfall (right), PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, SYDNEY M7; MELBOURNE SOUTH; HODDLE.

development and operations of the port, and historians such as Seamus O'Hanlon have explored the area within broader contexts of demographic and social change.[2] The lower reaches of the Yarra—roughly from the banks closest to the central business district and the heart of the city's commerce, shipping and industry, through to the mouth of the river at Hobsons Bay, roughly coinciding with what has been referred to as the Port of Melbourne—is the area where the most dramatic of changes have generally taken place.[3] It is in this landscape, too, that many unfulfilled proposals were also conjured up at intervals. This article examines some of the major transformations to this landscape and some of the ones that languished.

Birrarung and early Melbourne

Before Melbourne was established as a city and the earliest maps were drawn of its street layout, the Yarra River had a shallow waterfall that separated the freshwater river from the tidal river, roughly where Queens Bridge crosses the river today (see Figures 1 and 2).[4] Port Phillip Bay was known by the local Aboriginal people as Nairn,[5] and was surrounded by Boon Wurrung, Wurundjeri and Wathaurung Country. The Yarra River, which was called Birrarung, was a significant place for the traditional owners of the lands surrounding it and the bay, particularly for hunting and fishing.[6]

Commencing in 1883, the waterfall was blasted away with explosives to make way for Queens Bridge, which opened in 1890. With the memory of the 1863 flood still fresh in people's minds, the main benefit that was sought by the removal of the falls was to obviate the likelihood of future flooding in Melbourne and its suburbs.[7] One of the environmental effects of removing the falls was that it destroyed the natural habitat for freshwater fish above the falls and made the water undrinkable at this location. The presence of drinking water was arguably one that became Melbourne. The basalt ledge that formed the



Figure 2: Early plan of the Yarra River, dating from 1841, showing the waterfall where Queens Bridge now crosses the river, PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, SYDNEY Y9; YARRA YARRA RIVER; TOWNSEND.

falls had also been a natural rock bridge, both for the Aboriginal people who had inhabited and interacted with this environment over centuries and millennia and the newly arrived Europeans who followed the path from Hobsons Bay to reach the settlement on the other side. Interestingly, John Batman's surveyor, John Wedge, had mistakenly attributed the Aboriginal name for the falls, 'Yarrow Yarrow', to the river itself, only realising this 20 years later, by which time the name Yarra had become generally accepted.[8]

Canal visions

The removal of the waterfall was not the only change that was made to the river in this phase of burgeoning growth in Melbourne. To begin with, the course of the river was indirect and narrow, making it a difficult and lengthy passage to reach the docks near the city. In addition, there were concerns about silting of the river and Hobsons Bay, which had posed a persistent threat to commerce and shipping for decades. After much discussion and investigation, which had been ongoing since the late 1850s, a channel was cut to the west of the city to deepen, straighten and widen the course of the river to make it much easier for ships to reach the heart of the city from the bay.[9] This cutting ran in a graceful curve from the point where the Moonee Ponds Creek flowed into the Yarra to its confluence with the Maribyrnong River. Later, new docks were dug out of the swamplands of the inner west (Victoria Dock completed in 1893, Appleton Dock in 1956 and Swanson Dock in 1972), forever changing the wetlands and swamps that had been a feature of this area.[10] These large civil engineering projects began in the 1880s with the digging of the Coode Canal, named after engineer John Coode who devised the plan. It was completed in 1886 and opened to shipping in the following year (see Figures 3 and 4).

Before Coode's plan was given the go ahead, other ideas were proposed. For several decades, various royal commissions and investigations were carried out and many reports written. These generally fell into one of three categories: modest improvements to the existing river course, cutting a new canal west of the city and cutting a new canal south of the city direct to Sandridge (now called Port Melbourne). One such Sandridge canal was envisaged by Nathaniel Munro in 1875 (see Figure 5).[11] It featured new docks on either side of the river connected by new canals, one of which would connect directly to Hobsons Bay near Sandridge. It also featured an extensive expansion of the city road system to the south and west.[12]

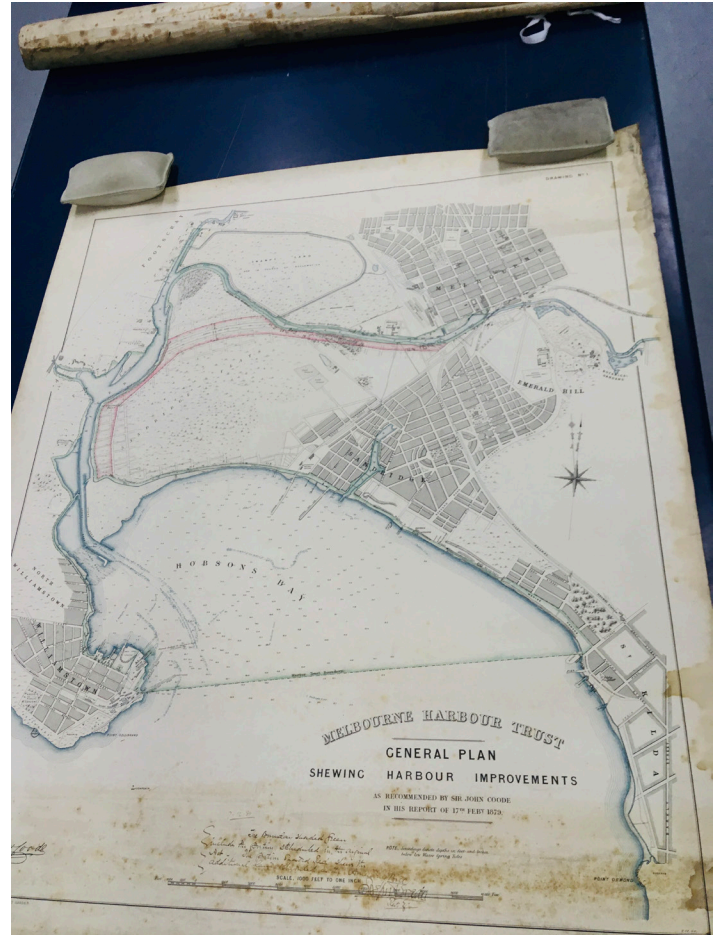


Figure 3: This plan shows the course of the Coode Canal relative to the natural course of the river and the swamp west of the Melbourne city grid as proposed by John Coode in 1879, PROV, VPRS 7664/P1, Melbourne Harbour Showing Harbour Improvements (1879).

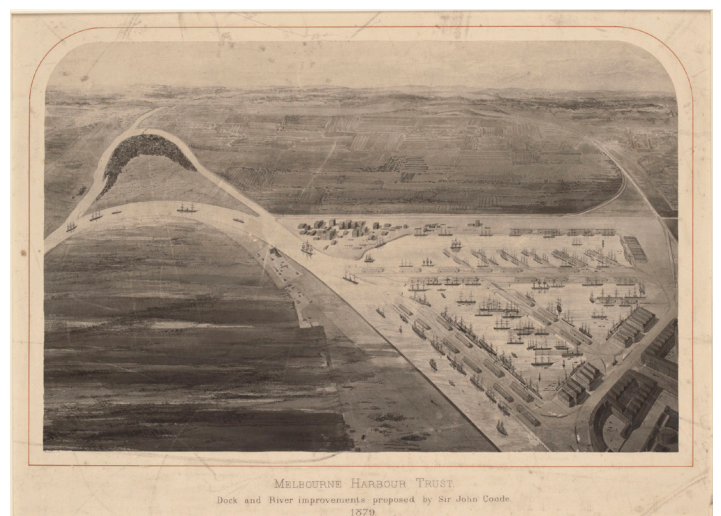


Figure 4: Melbourne Harbour Trust: dock and river improvements proposed by Sir John Coode, c. 1879, State Library Victoria.

An even earlier proposal by John Millar in 1860 featured a similar westward expansion of the city streets and a canal and dock system connecting to Hobsons Bay at Sandridge. This was in addition to an ornamental lake in the swamplands west of the city that would feature the British Isles in miniature and 'botanical gardens for the preservation and cultivation of plants indigenous to England, Scotland, [and] Ireland'.^[13] Millar explained that the choice of a canal leading directly to Hobsons Bay was because this area had the deepest water in the northern part of Port Phillip Bay, making it easier to maintain a shipping canal compared to the actual river mouth, and was the shortest distance from the bay to the city centre. The practicalities of an efficient shipping canal juxtaposed with a fanciful tribute to the 'homeland' in the form of landscaped islands and botanical gardens make this particular plan an emblem of nostalgia linking the new city back to a distant point of origin, to be recreated in miniature in reclaimed swampland.

Millar's proposal was presented to the Royal Commission on Harbor Improvements and a River and Harbor Trust, which issued its report in late 1860. In a written submission to the commissioners dated 21 September 1860, we learn that Millar had been the engineer-in-chief of the Geelong Water and Sewerage Commission. Millar believed that:

an open tidal cut, of about 2 miles long by 400 feet wide, and average depth of water of 25½ feet, is the best mode of improvement to be resorted to. And these dimensions would render such ship canal or cut of a size suited not only to the present but to the future requirements of the city and port.^[14]

In Millar's view, the best location to start the canal was near Sandridge, where, as mentioned, the water in Hobsons Bay was the deepest. The 'New Tidal Dock', as he preferred to call the canal, would reduce the distance from seven and a half miles to two. The extension of the city layout west of the existing Hoddle grid was to make provision for future 'building sites' in neighbourhoods on either side of the canal for 'such mercantile and maritime purposes as may hereafter arise'.^[15]

Though the existing course and depth of the Yarra River was widely seen by this time to be inconvenient and an impediment to commerce, the commissioners had to consider a number of different possible solutions. One of these was the excavation of a shipping canal to create a more direct, wider and deeper water course from the city's wharves to Hobsons Bay, but the other was to propose a governance organisation that would oversee harbour



Figure 5: This plan shows Nathaniel Munro's 1875 proposal for an extensive system of docks west of the city, tentative street and railway layouts in West Melbourne and Fisherman's Bend, a canal leading straight to Hobsons Bay and the retention of the natural course of the Yarra to the Salt (Maribyrnong) River, PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, MCS51; PORT OF MELBOURNE; MUNRO.

operations in general. The tenor of the commissioners' recommendations in the report was mainly frugal, reflecting a view that the city did not yet warrant the construction of any kind of canal, let alone elaborate plans for westward city expansion and botanic gardens on reclaimed swampland; instead, the commissioners advocated a deepening of the existing river for the time being.^[16] That view held sway, being reconfirmed in the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Low-Lying Lands in 1872.^[17] Further reports were commissioned throughout the 1870s, and various proposals for canals continued to be debated and advocated, either with a direct shorter route to Port Melbourne, or a more direct route to the Maribyrnong. There was even one proposal that involved closing the existing mouth of the river altogether and digging a canal around the perimeter of Williamstown, such that the Maribyrnong and the Yarra would both empty into Port Phillip Bay at a location west of Point Gellibrand, which was referred to as the 'Back Bay Scheme'.^[18]

Dock expansions

After the Coode Canal was completed, construction of Victoria Dock took place between 1887 and 1892. Grand plans for adding more docks to the port persisted well into the twentieth century as can be seen in the 'Plan of general development: Melbourne', a 1929 report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission (see Figure 7).^[19] By this time, the consequences of Melbourne's

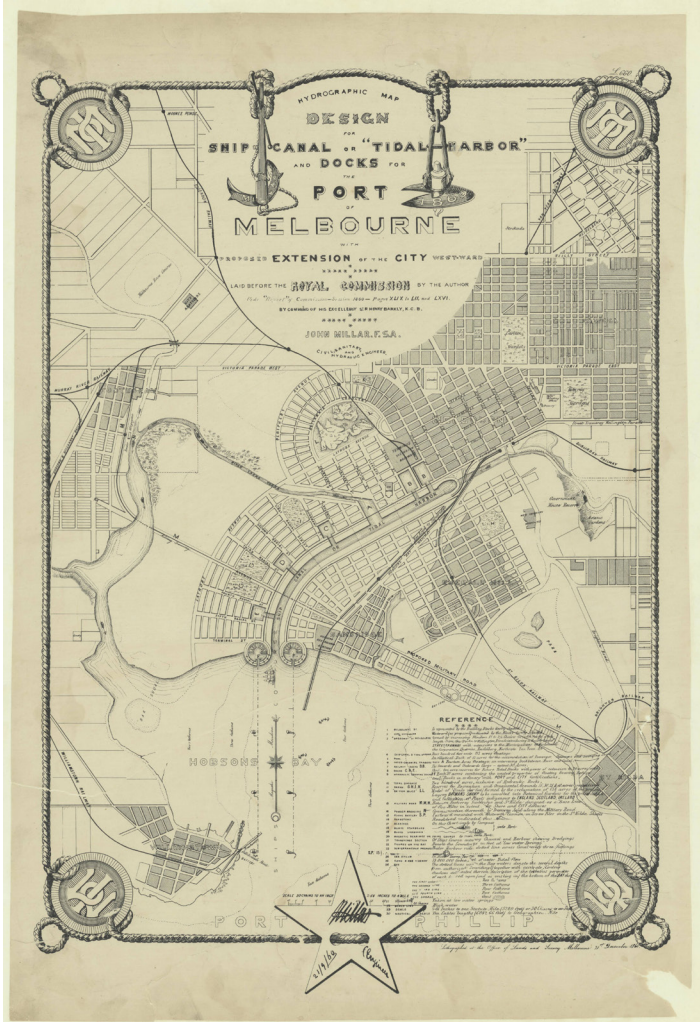


Figure 6: John Millar's elaborate and highly ornate proposal for a westward expansion of the city, including botanical gardens and lake, also featuring a direct channel to Hobsons Bay, PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, MCS62; PORT OF MELBOURNE.

unregulated urban growth were being felt and this report constituted the first attempt at a coordinated metropolitan planning strategy. It highlighted traffic congestion, haphazard land use and the provision of recreational open space.

The legislation to implement this planning strategy, introduced into the Victorian Legislative Assembly in December 1930, made provision for local planning schemes and a town planning board. The Bill lapsed thereafter, with the onset of the Great Depression and political reluctance to impinge on the powers of local councils; consequently, much of the strategy was never implemented or had to await later planning initiatives.[20]

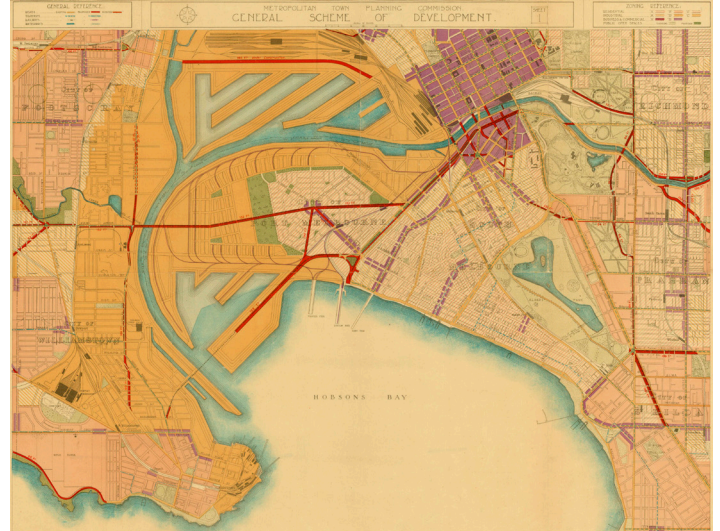
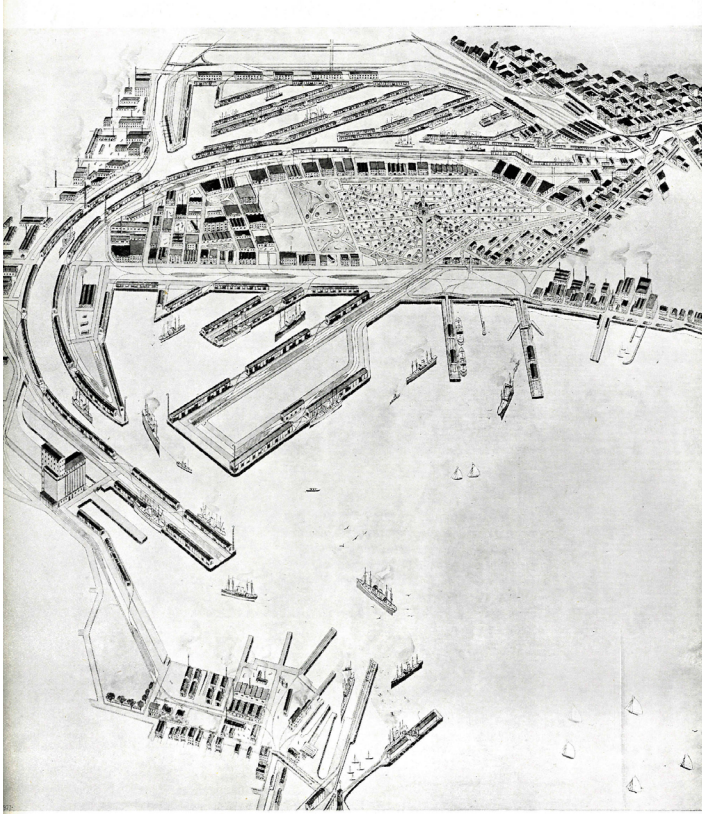


Figure 7: Plan for the port area and surrounds from the 1929 'Plan of general development', PROV, VPRS 10284/P0 Reports, Report 1929 Volume (unit 3A).

Among the features of the plan was a recommendation for a massive expansion of docks westward towards the Maribyrnong River, but also a new geometric street layout for a suburb in Fishermans Bend, and a new highway system through the port area. This was the dawn of the era of coordinated urban planning in Melbourne, with the 1929 report covering the entire metropolitan area. The proposals were all long-term and featured road upgrades and multiple regional proposals for improving the urban form throughout the city.

These port proposals had already been presented in the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission's first report in 1925, as improvements of existing capacity were seen to require urgent action and planning for future growth. The plan published in the 1925 report was largely based on existing plans supplied by the Melbourne Harbour Trust. It made provision for at least 50 years of expansion, such that capacity could be 'gradually increased as demand warrants'. [21] The general idea was that new docks would be added to the north bank of the Yarra, gradually extending westward of Victoria Dock all the way to the Maribyrnong River, and also at the mouth of the Yarra River through land reclamation and river widening at the entrance to Hobsons Bay. Dredging to deepen channels and widening of the river at various points had been part of the ongoing improvement works for some time, and further provision was made for these in the plan. The low-lying lands and swamps north and south of the Yarra would be reclaimed with the material acquired from dredging operations. Provision was made for the construction of dock facilities along all navigable river



Birdseye view of the Port of Melbourne, showing contemplated Port Improvements and Town Planning Commission's scheme for Sub-division of Fisherman's Bend land.

Figure 8: Artist rendering of the dock expansion proposal from 1914, Benjamin Hoare, *The Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners jubilee report 1877–1927*, Melbourne, Peacock Bros, 1927, plate between pp. 304 and 305.

frontage, which would otherwise be reserved for public use.[22]

Most of these plans first surfaced in 1914 (see Figure 8); however, due to wartime conditions, the Harbour Trust was unable to progress or implement them in any significant way. The plans made provision for expansion for up to 30–35 years into the future and were costed at over £6 million.[23]

By the time the 1925 report was published, Appleton Dock was already under construction, but it never reached the full extent of the design shown in the plan. Only one other dock in this plan was built (out of the four depicted)—Swanson Dock, which was completed in 1969. Changes in ship sizes and technology (particularly containerisation) meant that the proposed extra docks were no longer feasible, as modern shipping logistics required more land adjoining the docks than these plans provided. Likewise, and for the same reasons, the docks foreshadowed at the mouth of the river were also largely unrealised, even though proposals for the port's development

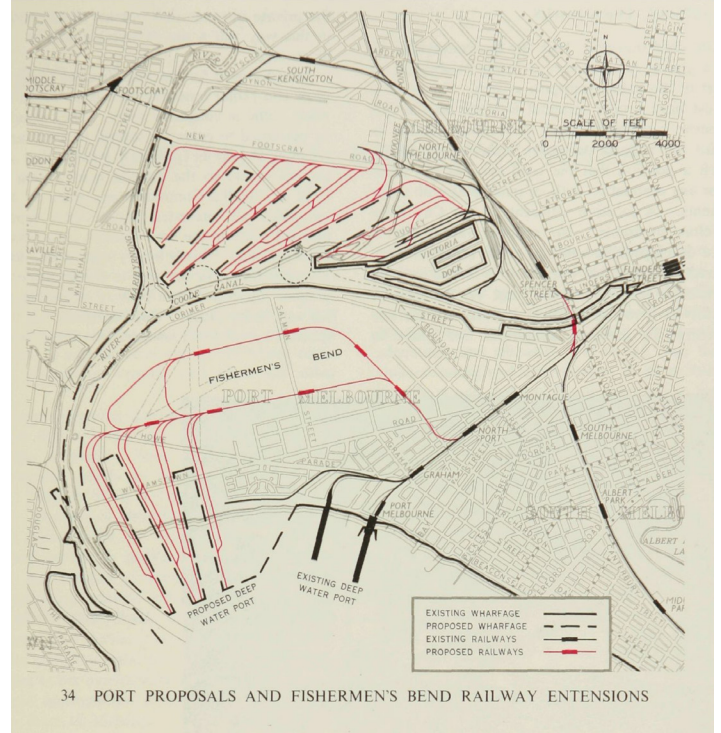


Figure 9: Map 34 from the 1954 Melbourne planning scheme report, showing the slightly revised port plan (proposed wharfage overlaid in bold dashed markings) and associated railways, Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, *Melbourne metropolitan planning scheme 1954: report*, Melbourne, Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, 1954, p. 113.

shifted to that location in the plans put forward in the early 1970s (see discussion below). While Webb Dock emerged in this area from reclaimed land, and has been gradually expanded since the 1960s, the road and railway configuration of the 'industrial suburb' in Fisherman's Bend on the 1925 plan was also never implemented.

Draining Birrarung

The thinking behind the 1925 port plan continued to be mostly unrevised by the time of the 1954 Melbourne metropolitan planning scheme, despite some slight changes to the dock layouts (see Figure 9). In the intervening years, a more radical proposal was brought to the attention of the Victorian Government in the months before Australia became involved in World War II. This enthusiastic proposal, seeking to address a number of perceived deficiencies in the existing port plan, was put forward by town planner Frances Edward Dixon (see Figure 10). He presented his proposal as a way to not only expand the port around Hobsons Bay but also to reclaim under-utilised Crown land, draining the lower Yarra

completely, and constructing an underground centralised railway where the Yarra had once flowed. The waters of the Yarra would have been rechannelled from Richmond to St Kilda via Albert Park Lake.

In his accompanying letter to Minister for Transport HJT Hyland, Dixon introduced his proposal as a potential solution for alleviating increasing annual deficits in railway finances by freeing up Crown land held by the railways for commercial purposes. Dixon also claimed that his proposal would rectify the ‘fundamental defects’ of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission’s 1929 report.[24] A proponent of modern motor transport, Dixon envisaged that only ‘long haul and heavy bulks’ would continue to be carried by rail transport. His remedies to the 1929 plan included:

- a diversion of the Yarra River through the Botanic Gardens and Albert Park Lake to St Kilda beach
- reclaiming the Yarra River bed, from the Botanic Gardens to its confluence with the Maribyrnong River, for various purposes such as the creation of a central railway station below street level
- another railway station below street level parallel to Spencer Street and to its west
- relocating the parliament, and a new stadium with ample parking space, to reclaimed land from the Yarra canal and existing port facilities
- reducing heavy, slow-moving traffic through the city centre by placing goods sheds in Cremorne (through the removal of a ‘decadent housing district’ there) in the area bounded by Punt Road, Swan Street, the railway and the river
- all shipping to be restricted to Hobsons Bay, presumably with berths on the reclaimed land that would replace beaches from Elwood around to Point Gellibrand
- restricting shipping on the lower Maribyrnong River to the bay to barge traffic only allowing for the construction of fixed bridges across the river
- an airport in Williamstown.

With this revised layout, all city streets could be through-routed, whether north–south or east–west. Among the many virtues of the plan extolled by Dixon were the possibilities of increasing land values in the west of the city and making a better environment to live in by reducing densities through the creation of garden suburbs to the west and south of the CBD. These would feature the new civic centre and parliament, and offices and industry

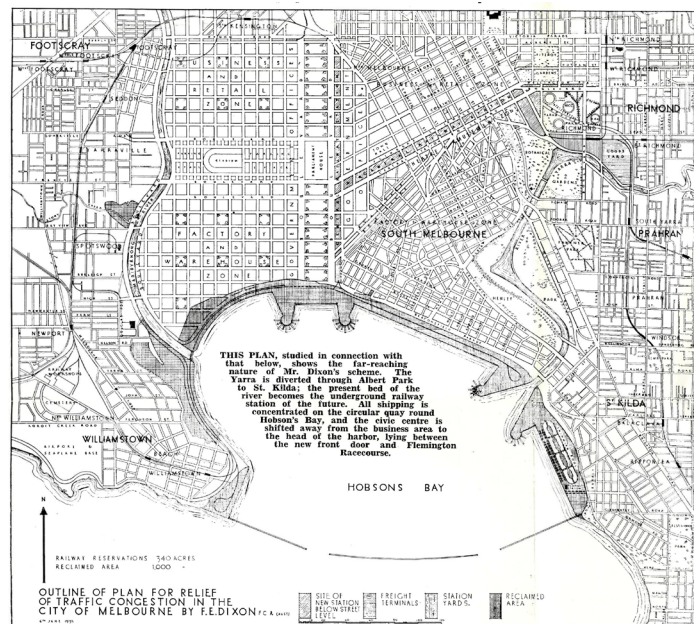


Figure 10: Outline of plan for relief of traffic congestion in the City of Melbourne by FE Dixon, 1939, PROV, VPRS 10217/P0 Minister’s General Correspondence Files, 26–728 (Unit 27), 41/161, excerpt from ‘Planning Melbourne for prosperity’. The caption within the centre of the plan makes reference to the 1929 ‘Plan of general development’ (see Figure 7) which was included for comparison.

closer to the bay, where new docks would be created around its rim. Healthier citizens enjoying life in a less congested city would be the result. Dixon decried the construction of underground railways due to the awful working conditions that are required to build them and what he considered to be a detrimental effect on those who would use them. The benefit of permanent green wedges (which would later become a reality) were also put forward as an idea.

Dixon’s analysis was that, in its present form, Melbourne was ‘hemmed in on two sides by parks and gardens, and on the other two, by river and railway terminals for the want of something better’. This layout, Dixon contended, was:

like a box with two small holes each side for the street traffic to get in and out, when there should be no sides at all, and the flow of traffic is so unevenly distributed, as to be the chief cause of a few city blocks of land acquiring a value out of all proportion to the remainder.[25]

The minister eventually noted in reply that, though interesting, there was little money available to fund such an ambitious scheme in the midst of the war effort, and, in any case, he was still awaiting the outcome of the Ashworth report, which was looking at the future of

Melbourne's transport system. Dixon contended that his scheme would eventually yield a profit through the uplift of value in existing zoned land and through the sale of under-utilised Crown land for commercial purposes.

Island city

The final port expansion proposal that I would like to look at comes from 1973. With the ongoing rapid expansion of containerised freight and the increasing size of ships carrying them, forward planning for the Port of Melbourne had to make room for much more space. The Yarra was no longer considered the place for this expansion because it was too narrow and there was insufficient space alongside for the scale of staging and back-up facilities that containerised shipping now required for efficient operations. As a consequence, future expansion plans concentrated on the mouth of the river and Hobsons Bay and involved land reclamation. There was concern that the neighbouring suburb of Garden City would become unviable once the full expansion of the port was completed, and that residents might want to leave once their suburb was completely surrounded by port and industrial facilities. Consequently, a proposal was put forward by consultants Grahame Shaw and Partners, and Alan J Brown and Steven Pty Ltd that envisioned a chain of four islands enclosing a lagoon to be built in Hobsons Bay, offshore from Middle Park beach, that would become residential suburbs (see Figure 11). These island suburbs, connected by road and rail, would house the 3,410 people displaced from Garden City and have room for a further 50,000 residents.[26]

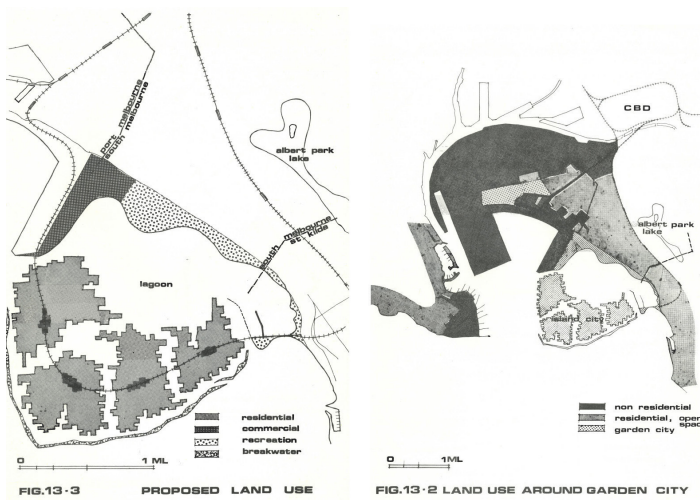


Figure 11: Figures 13.3 and 13.2 from the 'Island city' proposal by Shaw, Denton and Corker, c. 1973 [unpublished]. The figure on the left shows the proposed land uses, including a railway connecting the four islands; the figure on the right shows the land use around Garden City.

The consultants presented the idea when the Harbour Trust Commissioners discussed their 'Forward development plan' for the port with the Cabinet of the Victorian Government. The plan and the island proposal were presented separately to the media, possibly because there was some anticipation that the proposal to relocate residents from Garden City onto artificial islands in the bay would attract controversy. Media reporting conflated the long-term plan and the 'Island city' proposal, with most of the attention going to the artificial islands, rather than the plan for the port's long-term development and expansion. To be fair to the media, the island proposal did seem to be a logical extension of the 'Year 2000 plan "B"' in the 'Forward development plan', which indeed showed the Garden City waterfront transformed from a beach into shipping berths, which would have made the suburb a less attractive place to live.

Within a few days of the announcement, AS Mayne, chairperson of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, distanced the trust from the proposal, which he maintained was not their idea but was instead put forward as a 'supplementary proposal' by a firm of independent architects and town planners, which the trust had commissioned. Minister for Public Works Robert Dunstan responded by stating: 'I'm not the author or promoter [of the island proposal]. The Government's record is that where the public is adamant against some scheme, it is discarded.'[27] Within a week, the community response had killed the 'Island city' proposal, and it disappeared forever.[28]

The full extent of 'Year 2000 plan "B"' never eventuated. Indeed, as Kristin Otto has observed, the future of the port turned out quite differently, effectively undergoing a contraction that saw the majority of the old docks situated upriver either in ruin or having been already removed and replaced by high-rise apartment towers in residential redevelopments during the first two decades of the twenty-first century.[29]

Conclusion

The Yarra River and the developing Port of Melbourne provide a site for exploring the vicissitudes of planning and urban development. Visionary, if sometimes fanciful, schemes have been proposed for this locale ever since the 1860s. While the governing authorities in early Melbourne tended to err on the side of caution and conservative expenditure, a shift in thinking occurred in the early years of the twentieth century. By this time, the Melbourne Harbor Trust was entertaining a phase of long-term planning for major and costly expansions, as the pace of anticipated growth, in their view, seemed to warrant it. However, the ambitious proposals advanced by John Millar (1860), Nathaniel Munro (1875) and Frances Dixon (1939) do not seem to have been given serious consideration. Their visions for the river and the port were embedded within broader city-shaping schemes that would have seen the developing port better integrated into a master plan for urban development in the surrounding areas. The 'Island city' proposal of 1973 is the exception here, for even though it was carefully presented as a 'supplementary proposal', it seemed to be the logical corollary for the ambitious planning scenario that the Harbor Trust envisioned and put forward at that time. As with a number of other statutory Victorian Government agencies that advanced ambitious plans during the 1970s, it was, possibly, a moment of overreach, presaging the impending economic and social changes that swept most of them away in the decade that followed.

Endnotes

- [1] For a discussion of the many transformations of the Yarra further upstream, see Kristin Otto, *Yarra: a diverting history of Melbourne's murky river*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2005.
- [2] David Sornig, *Blue lake: finding Dudley Flats and the West Melbourne swamp*, Brunswick, Victoria, Scribe Publications, 2018; Judith Raphael Buckrich, *The long and perilous journey: a history of the Port of Melbourne*, Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2002; Olaf Ruhen, *The Port of Melbourne, 1835–1976*, Cassell Australia, Sydney, 1976, pp. 304–309; Grahame Shaw and Partners, 'Island city', c. 1973 [unpublished]; Seamus O'Hanlon with Tony Dingle, *Melbourne remade: the inner city since the 70s*, Arcade, Melbourne, 2010; Seamus O'Hanlon, *City life: the new urban Australia*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2018.
- [3] The boundaries of what might be considered the Port of Melbourne have shifted over the years, gradually moving further westward as port functions progressively shifted downstream.
- [4] PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, SYDNEY Y9; YARRA YARRA RIVER; TOWNSEND.
- [5] There are a number of phonetic variations for the name of the bay. Recently, Dr Guy Holdgate from the Geological Society of Australia and the University of Melbourne and two colleagues published an article detailing the findings made by a team of researchers trying to explain river channels meandering across the bay floor, leading them to conclude that most of the bay may have been a dry plain as recently as 1,000 years ago. GR Holdgate, B Wagstaff & SJ Gallagher, 'Did Port Phillip Bay nearly dry up between –2800 and 1000 cal. yr BP? Bay floor channelling evidence, seismic and core dating', *Australian Journal of Earth Sciences*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2011, pp. 157–175.
- [6] For a brief description of the Yarra prior to the arrival of Europeans, see 'Indigenous perspective: the Birrarung, "a river of mists and shadows"', blog post 25 January 2018, Environment Victoria website, available at <https://environmentvictoria.org.au/2018/01/25/indigenous-perspective-birrarung-river-mists-shadows/>, accessed 8 June 2023.
- [7] 'Removal of Yarra falls', *Age*, 25 December 1883, p. 6; 'Removal of the Yarra falls', *Argus*, 24 May 1883, p. 7.
- [8] See Chapter 5 of Anthony Webster, *The foundation of Australia's capital cities: geology, landscape, and urban character*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2022, esp. p. 164.
- [9] WW Wardell (Chairman), T Higinbotham & RW Larritt, *Report of the board appointed to advise as to the best means of preventing the flooding and improving the navigation of the river Yarra*, 31 August 1864, in PROV, VPRS 1226/P0 Supplementary Inward Registered Correspondence, D8821 Royal Commission on Low Lying Lands; South & West of Melbourne – papers.
- [10] For a recent social history and psychogeographic study of this area, detailing the natural environment and the various incursions that progressively transformed it, as well as the people who inhabited its liminal spaces, see Sornig, *Blue lake*.
- [11] PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, MCS51; PORT OF MELBOURNE; MUNRO.
- [12] Robert Bowden also submitted a plan to the Royal Commission on Harbour Improvements in 1860 that featured the addition of a canal from the CBD directly to Hobsons Bay (but retention of the original river) and street grids in the inner west and south-west, land that would be sold to raise capital for the operation of a Harbour Trust, effectively seeking to create a number of new waterfront suburbs. See PROV, VPRS 3253/P0, 1, Plans; Plan of Ship Canal and Harbour Improvements Hobsons Bay and River Yarra (Unit 477).
- [13] PROV, VPRS 8168/P2, MCS62; PORT OF MELBOURNE.
- [14] Report from John Millar, 21 September 1860, in the appendices of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Harbor Improvements and a River and Harbor Trust*, p. xlix, PROV, VPRS 1183/P0 Reports of Royal Commissions, Select Committees and Boards of Inquiry, Volume 3.
- [15] Report from John Millar, p. li, PROV, VPRS 1183/P0, vol. 3.
- [16] *Report of the Royal Commission on Harbor Improvements and a River and Harbor Trust*, pp. v–ix; PROV, VPRS 1183/P0, vol. 3.
- [17] PROV, VPRS 3253/P0 Original Papers Tabled in the Legislative Assembly, 85, Report; Low Lying Lands South and West of the City.
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- [18] *Age and Argus*, various reports 1870–1880. A discussion of the various options raised up until 1875 can be found in the *Age* and the *Record and Emerald Hill and Sandridge Advertiser*, 20 May 1875, p. 2, and the *Argus*, 17 April 1875, p. 6.
- [19] PROV, VPRS 10284/P0 Reports, Report 1929 Volume (Unit 3A).
- [20] Cael James Leskovee, 'The historical development of the provision of certainty in Melbourne metropolitan planning', PhD Thesis, RMIT University, 2019, p. 94, available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/187735071.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2023; Infrastructure Victoria, *Learning from the past: a history of infrastructure planning in Victoria*, Infrastructure Victoria, Melbourne, February 2016, available at <https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Learning-from-the-past.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2023.
- [21] PROV, VPRS 10284/P0 Reports, First Report 1925, pp. 24, 46. See also 'Port of Melbourne', *Argus*, 14 March 1925, p. 10.
- [22] Buckrich, *The long and perilous journey*, p. 133.
- [23] 'Port Improvement', *Argus*, 16 July 1914, p. 10; Buckrich, *The long and perilous journey*, p. 115.
- [24] FE Dixon, 'Planning Melbourne for prosperity', in PROV, VPRS 10217/P0 Minister's General Correspondence Files, 26–728 (Unit 27), 41/161, FE Dixon to Minister for Transport HJT Hyland, 9 June 1939. The pamphlet indicates that it was a reprint of an article published in the *Truth*, 6 July 1935. Despite politely acknowledging the receipt of his proposals and assurances that it would be brought to the attention of the minister, the file contains no indication that Dixon's persistent approaches were ever given serious consideration, perhaps partly due to the fact that Australia was about to become involved in World War II and there were other pressing priorities.
- [25] Dixon, 'Planning Melbourne for prosperity'.
- [26] Ruhen, *The Port of Melbourne*, pp. 304–309; Shaw and Partners, 'Island city'.
- [27] 'Island suburb not our idea: Harbor Trust', *Age*, 1 February 1974, p. 3.
- [28] Ruhen, *The Port of Melbourne*, p. 306; Melbourne Harbor Trust Commissioners, *Port of Melbourne Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, April–June 1974, pp. 10–16; various reports, letters to the editor, and editorial, *Age*, 30 January – 2 February 1974.
- [29] Otto, *Yarra*, p. 128. Similar observations about the fate of the Port of Melbourne within the context of inner Melbourne's deindustrialisation have been made in O'Hanlon with Dingle, *Melbourne remade: O'Hanlon, City life*.
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