
INNER CIRCLE RAILWAY LINEAR PARKLANDS (also known as Park Street - Janet Hillman Reserve)

Location

PARK STREET BRUNSWICK AND PARK STREET BRUNSWICK EAST, MERRI-BEK CITY

Municipality

MERRI-BEK CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO133

Heritage Listing

Merri-bek City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 17, 2023

What is significant?

The Inner Circle Linear Parklands, including the alignment, physical remnants and historical memory of the former Inner Circle Railway in Yarra, Merri-bek and Melbourne.

Within the City of Yarra, the former North Carlton Station, remnant footings, earthworks and Peppercorn trees at the former North Fitzroy Station site, remnant rail crossings and sidings, retained electrical power stanchions throughout the corridor, the formal council tree plantations, and the contiguity of the parklands as a continuous public open space.

Within the City of Melbourne, the Parkville railway cutting including the bridges at Royal Parade and the Avenue, two intact overhead power supporting structures, the remnant power stanchions, and the remnant signal post within the cutting; and the remnant timber crossing fences on the west side of Bowen Crescent.

Within the City of Merri-bek, remnant rail crossings, retained electrical power stanchions, the former Melbourne council tree plantations along the municipal boundary, and the contiguity of the parklands as a continuous public open space.

The former North Fitzroy Electrical Railway Substation at 863 Brunswick St N, Fitzroy North

(state-significant VHR place H0939) and the former Gatekeeper's Cottage at 70 Bowen Crescent, Princes Hill (individually significant in HO329 precinct) are significant both individually, for their associations with the history of the Inner Circle Railway and for their visual relationship to the parklands.

How is it significant?

The parklands are of historical significance within the three municipalities as evidence of the former Inner Circle Line railway, as developed in the boom period of the 1880s in response to local council lobbying, and electrified in the 1920s.

Initially an essential connection for the Whittlesea and Heidelberg lines before these later ran south through Collingwood, the Inner Circle Line's local passenger services were discontinued after 1948, after which the corridor operated as a goods line through to its closure in 1981.

Why is it significant?

The Inner Circle Parklands are of historical and social significance to the City of Yarra, the City of Melbourne and the City of Merri-bek.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moreland - Keeping Brunswick's heritage: A Report on the Review of the Brunswick Conservation Study, Context Pty Ltd, 1990; Inner Circle Linear Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Lovell Chen, 2022;
Other Names	Inner Circle Railway (Former), Park Street - Janet Hillman Reserve,
Hermes Number	60447
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Inner Circle Linear Parklands are 3.5 kilometres of passive open space, amenities and a shared used path established on the former railway corridor of the Inner Circle Line and the Fitzroy Branch Line through the suburbs of Princes Hill, North Carlton and Fitzroy North.

The former Inner Circle Line began at the then-Coburg Line (now Upfield) in Royal Park, and passed under Royal Parade in a cutting, surfacing in Princes Park and then crossing Bowen Crescent into North Carlton. The corridor then ran north-east and east through stations at North Carlton and Fitzroy North, to connect to the Whittlesea Line (now Mernda) where it crossed the Merri Creek. At St Georges Road, a branch line swung south through the Edinburgh Gardens to terminate at a short-lived station just north of Queens Parade, where a goods yard would continue to operate until 1981.

Today, much of the former railway corridor has been retained as public open space. The Capital City Trail, a major off-street bicycling route and shared use path, follows the corridor, with the balance of the reserve utilised for passive open space, a number of modest recreational amenities and native habitat plantings. Some parts of the corridor were repurposed for other uses while remaining in public ownership: public housing was constructed on the former railway alignment in Merri-bek, as was a commercial building at Nicholson Road; housing was also constructed on sections of the former Fitzroy Goods Yard south of Edinburgh Gardens. Former railway buildings were also repurposed for other uses, including the former North Carlton Station building, which still stands in the corridor, as well as the Park Street substation (constructed for the electrification of the line, completed in 1921) and a Gatekeeper's Cottage at Bowen Crescent.

Besides those buildings, the physical evidence of the former railway corridor is often fragmentary. In the development of the parklands, the original rails, ties and ballast were removed from the corridor, with much of the material taken to Moorooduc on the Mornington Peninsula and to other museum railways. However, rails were retained at most of the road crossings where they extended outside of the boundaries of the park development project and would have required a reconstruction of the road surface to remove at the time.

Similarly, the rail sidings at the former storage silos east of Brunswick Street N were left in place. Most of the traction power equipment had previously been removed after passenger services ceased on the corridor,

however a series of original stanchions and vertical supporting piers for the overhead lines were retained throughout much of the corridor and reused as stanchions carrying an active power interconnection between the current Upfield and Mernda lines. Two relatively complete overhead support structures remain in the Parkville cutting, as well as fragmentary fixtures mounted to the bottom of The Avenue bridge.

Other fragments of railway features exist in the corridor, including concrete footings, remnant timber palisade fences and gates at former pedestrian crossings, and a remnant semaphore signal pole in the cutting west of Royal Parade. The two original road bridges over the corridor at Royal Parade and The Avenue were also retained, and the cutting repurposed for the bicycle path.

Along the corridor, other buildings and open spaces also reflect the former shape and history of the Inner Circle Railway. The former Metropolitan Fire Brigade building at St Georges Road occupies a triangular site formerly lodged between the main railway line and the branch line, while parts of the Janet Millman Reserve and an undeveloped Director of Housing property were formerly occupied by a goods siding and the aforementioned set of towering steel grain bins. An Electric Light & Power Company substation was permitted to be constructed at the edge of the railway reserve at St Georges Road in 1912 with an ornamental design; this structure also remains extant. Down the branch line, the Mark Street Hall was constructed on a wedge-shaped property expropriated for the railway construction, while the layout of Edinburgh Gardens was required to respond to the branch line's construction through the site in the mid-1880s, a project which also resulted in the filling of a former creek in the gardens.

At various locations, small numbers of trees represent the remains of ornamental plantings undertaken on the southern reserve lands by the City of Melbourne and City of Fitzroy in the 1910s and 1920s. At other sites, trees reflect the history of use and disuse of the corridor; for instance, the former Fitzroy North Station platform is the site of a line of Peppercorn trees which likely represent a mix of intentional plantings and trees which were self-sown in the decades following the station's closure, in which the platform was fenced from public access. Most trees in the parklands have been planted since the 1980s.

Two of the contemporary park areas established on parts of the linear reserve are named in honour of campaigners who fought to ensure the railway reserve remained a public open space; these are the Hardy-Gallagher Reserve in the west and the Janet Millman Reserve in the east. A third, the Thomas Kidney Reserve, is a revegetated, mounded site located within the triangle of the former Northcote loop lines at the eastern end of the Inner Circle route; the form of the reserve and adjacent trail facilities still reflect the sides of the loop that have been removed (service continues on the east side of the loop as part of the contemporary Mernda railway line). The remnant railway fabric, major features of the contemporary parklands and overall extent of the parklands and their notable adjacencies are identified on Maps 1-6 of the Inner Circle Parklands Conservation Management Plan (2022).

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>