

South Yarra

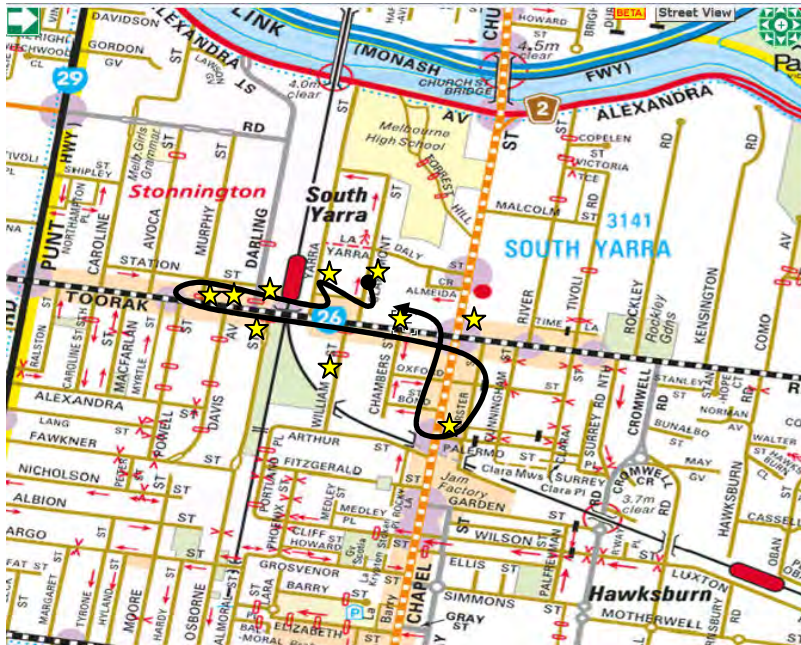
Australian Lesbian and
Gay Archives
2011 History Walk

South Yarra

2011 History Walk Guide to Places and Acknowledgments

★ indicates stopping points Total distance is about 2 Km

Copyright Melway Publishing 2011



And nearby

Freddie Asmussen's house early 70s at 86 Punt Road West
Mae West's Coffee Lounge, 12 Oban Street (near Hawksburn Station)
Daughters of Billitis' early 70s home at Skorus Books, 409 Chapel Street.

ALGA in 2011

Thanks to the many people who donated money and expertise to help us refit the extra space generously made available at the Victorian AIDS Council. In 2011, we will be busy filling up the space ... relocating and rehousing material that's been offsite for many years, preparing for new acquisitions, and (high priority) developing an online catalogue.

If volunteering for ALGA interests you, we'd love to hear from you. All skills welcome ... archiving, IT, fundraising, promotions, design, data entry, admin ... We try to match up volunteers with projects that fit their interests and time available.

The Secret Histories of Queer Melbourne

The book that grew out of ALGA's history walks is now with the designer. Stay tuned for the launch early this year.

Stop 1

Victorian AIDS Council

6 Claremont Street, looking to Melbourne High School

Stop 2

South Yarra railway station

cnr Yarra Street and Yarra Lane

Stop 3

Darling Street,

near cnr Toorak Road

Stop 4

Maisies and Val's Cafe Ad Lib,

cnr Toorak Road and Davis Street

Stop 5

Kevin O'Neill, Melbourne florist

cnr Toorak Road and Murphy Street

Stop 6

The lost cafes

cnr Osborne Street and Toorak Road

Stop 7

Bachelor life

William Street, half way down

Stop 8

Imperial Hotel

cnr Palermo and Chapel Streets

Stop 9

Capitol Bakery

cnr Toorak Road and Chapel Street

Stop 10

The old Regent Theatre

cnr Toorak Road and Chambers St

Thank-you

... to the State Library of Victoria for permission to reprint photos on pages 1, 2, 3 and 4; and to Melway Publishing for permission to reproduce their online map.

Front page graphic: Kevin O'Neill, *Harpers Bazaar*, October 1985

ALGA's 17th annual lesbian and gay history walk



Stop 1: Melb. High School 6 Claremont St

How gay kids are treated tells us a lot about how a society works. In the 1940s, 50s and 60s, camp young men met others like themselves at school and found strategies to live their lives, in the closet, with clandestine sex, enduring the bullies. Today, Melbourne High has proclaimed itself a safe place for queer students and their friends.

AEU News (Victorian Branch), March 2010.

Stop 2: South Yarra Railway Station cnr Yarra St and Yarra Lane

Queer folk have always been quick to put public places to good use (that is, to find ways to turn it to sexual ends!) Trains and trains stations provide opportunities for loitering, meeting and getting off.

South Yarra Railway Station, State Library of Victoria Collection



Stop 3: Darling Street Darling St near cnr Toorak Rd

Before the 1960s, most camp social life took place in people's homes – quiet dinners, smallish parties that were careful not to draw the attention of the neighbours. Except for the night of 6 September 1969, which really went off! Including right here in South Yarra.

And then things really started to move. When Jan Hillier discovered in the 1960s that Melbourne's camps were crying out for Places to Go and Things to Do she launched herself into an entrepreneurial career that was to last for forty years. Jan's Dances were held all over Melbourne but south of the river was her heartland

Jan's Next Dance (Poster, ALGA Collection)



Stop 4: Maisies and Ad Lib Toorak Rd, cnr Davis St

We take the existence of venues for all kinds of queer folk for granted today. But one of the earliest pubs to welcome camp people was Her Majesty's. In the 1960s, Ron Philp (Maisie to his friends) provided a place where the queens could let down their hair – and the Beautiful People of the swinging sixties started to flock there too. Camp was becoming cool.



Meanwhile, across the road, Val (famous for her cafe in central Melbourne in the 1950s) was continuing her cafe career with Ad Lib.

Maisies (State Library of Victoria Collection)

Val Eastwood in the kitchen at Cafe Ad Lib (ALGA Collection)

Stop 5: Kevin O'Neill, Melbourne's florist Toorak Rd, cnr Murphy St

Camp men were notorious for their sense of style, their flamboyance, their business acumen. Sometimes it was even true. Kevin O'Neill operated a florist store from here that all Melbourne embraced. Like Freddie Asmussen, of Myer's, he manoeuvred through a society that preferred not to think too carefully about what all this flamboyance meant – he delivered beauty, and sometimes that was enough.

Kevin O'Neill (ALGA collection, courtesy John Graham)



Stop 6: The Lost Cafes Toorak Rd, cnr Osborne St

From our oral histories, we know that South Yarra was sprinkled with cafes that welcomed camp customers. Some of these we know about – Val's cafes, for example, and Mae West's. Others are just names: The Devil's Inn, The Other Place, Flowers. But cafes provided a place to meet friends and make friends, to relax, to drink that most sophisticated of beverages – coffee.

Mae West Cafe (ALGA Collection)



Stop 7: William Street and the Bachelor Life

William St (half way down)

Flats – which developed in Melbourne from the 1920s on – were an intrinsic part of camp life. Living alone, or sharing with a ‘friend’, camp women and men found refuge from the prying eyes of family. They could entertain and decorate to their heart’s content. But even in these sanctuaries could be breached if you were not careful – and *Truth* would be there to tell (almost) all.

‘Bachelor Living in Melbourne’, *Australian House and Garden*, December 1962



Imperial Hotel (Graham Willett)



Stop 8: Imperial Hotel and Skorus cnr Palermo and Chapel Sts

For much of its history, Melbourne’s pub scene in Melbourne – gay and straight – was largely a male scene. What, after all, would a respectable woman be doing outside the home? And while there is a secret history of lesbian bars waiting to be told, here is one of the earliest places where women who liked women (and beer!) could meet. And down the road a bit, Skorus Bookshop where Melbourne’s first camp political organisation, the daughters of Bilitis, had its home for a while.

Skorus Bookshop flyer (ALGA Collection)

Stop 9: Capitol Bakery cnr Toorak Rd and Chapel St

South Yarra wasn’t always charming little boutiques and PE queens. The Capitol Bakery once actually produced bread, which working class folk made and delivered. Among them, Jan Hillier – a bread carter before she was an entrepreneur and queen of the scene. It is a reminder of the often unspoken secret – class mattered.

Capitol Bakery (State Library of Victoria Collection)



Stop 10: The Regent Theatre cnr Toorak Rd and Chambers St

Long gone now, before the Regent Theatre was replaced by this attractive seventies blockhouse and before there were gay films to show, Friday night at the movies was an experience. The stars filled the silver screen and in the audience camp people and their friends escaped their often-harsh everyday life. These dark places were one of the sources of our sense of community.

Regent Theatre (State Library of Victoria Collection)



South Yarra

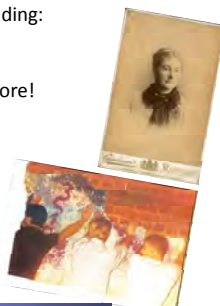
History Walk on Sunday 30 January 2011

was conducted by Graham Willett, with Gary Jaynes, Wayne Murdoch and Helen Pausacker. Gary Jaynes, Helen Pausacker and Graham Willett produced this programme. This is the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives' 17th History Walk of Melbourne.

Coming soon from the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives

Secret Histories of Queer Melbourne

Fifty-two episodes from Melbourne's very queer history, including:
the lady squatters, homo bushrangers, the Tasty raid,
ASIO, kiss-ins, Myers windows, the floral clock,
radicalesbians ... And much, much more!



The history they don't teach you at school

A dozen authors, 170+pages, 120 illustrations
Publication date: March 2011

To be on the mailing list for future announcements:
algarchives@hotmail.com



Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives

For over 30 years, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives has been collecting and preserving Australia's very queer history. From camp life in the 1950s, through Gay Liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, to the vibrant queer communities of today – all of this is part of our heritage. The Archives has no government funding and is volunteer-run, not-for-profit and community-based. We have regular working bees to bring order to the collection. Why not join in? You can become a member for \$20 per year – and if that's not enough you can donate as much as you like (it's tax-deductible).

What we collect and preserve

Books, badges, posters, t-shirts, gay and lesbian newspapers and magazines, newspaper clippings, photographs, court transcripts, newsletters, videos, scrapbooks, banners and placards, postcards, party tickets, theatre programs, flyers, personal memorabilia. The collection has been used by students, filmmakers, novelists and historians, researchers and activists – as well as the just plain curious

Want to know more?

Email: algarchives@hotmail.com
Postal: PO Box 124 Parkville 3052
Website: alga.org.au

Australian Lesbian and Gay
Archives