

Walks in Port Phillip

# TO MARKET TO MARKET

the heart of a village

Early Morning Market. South Melbourne.



A guide around the historic  
South Melbourne Market precinct



## TRAIL KEY

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (1)  
 152-156 CECIL STREET (2)  
 148 CECIL STREET (3)  
 GEORGE HOTEL (4)  
 CECIL AND  
 COVENTRY STREETS (5)  
 DELI AISLE (6)  
 CENTRE AISLE (7)

121 CECIL STREET (8)  
 MARKET TAVERN (9)  
 VICTORIA HOTEL (10)  
 YORK STREET (11)  
 FOOD HALL (12)  
 WARD STREET (13)  
 MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (14)

Markets have always been central to the life of a town. In 1856, one year after the formation of the Municipality of Emerald Hill (renamed South Melbourne in 1883), a petition from local householders was sent to the Emerald Hill Council highlighting the need for a general market.

From 1855 to 1879 the administrative centre of Emerald Hill was on land bounded by Dorcas, Cecil, York and Ferrars Streets (from 1857 the St Kilda railway line). In addition to the municipal offices, there were a number of other buildings on the site including the Mechanics' Institute, Police barracks and gaol, and Court House. These buildings were clustered to the south eastern side of the site, facing Cecil Street, with a Police Sergeant's residence in Coventry Street.

In 1858 the site adjacent to the municipal offices was selected by the Council for a market and an application was made to the Government for its reservation.

On 1 May 1867 the Market was officially open to the public. This followed a trial which ran on the site for some months when market gardeners from as far away as Heidelberg and Cheltenham came to sell their produce.

In February 1869 the *Emerald Hill Record* reported that a small nugget of gold had been found in a cutting in the market reserve. Whether this was true or not, there was no gold rush!

From the 1870s the area near the corner of Dorcas and Ferrars Street was reserved for a local primary school. This opened in 1881, after the Council had moved to the new Town Hall in Bank Street in 1880. The old Council reserve was then subdivided and sold.



South Melbourne Market, 1888. Photographer: David Wood.  
sm0458.1-5

The **Mechanics' Institute (1)** at 170-172 Cecil Street was built in 1857 to the design by architects Knight and Kerr (designers of Victoria's Parliament House). Mechanics' Institutes were prominent in the cultural and social life of towns. One of their main functions was to provide a library, accessible for a small fee, to all citizens. This was Emerald Hill's first library. The building was used for public, municipal and political gatherings. In 1880 the Institute moved to new premises in the Town Hall. The old site was sold in 1881 and a new façade designed by architect Frederick de Garis was erected in 1884. It was then renamed Mayville Hall. From the 1920s to 1980 it was owned by the Italian Club Cavour.

Mount Durand Terrace at **152-156 Cecil Street (2)** was built in 1884 and designed by architect Frederick de Garis, who purchased the land in 1883. He named the terrace after his birthplace in Guernsey. For several years number 156 was his home. Frederick de Garis' work was known for its ornamental embellishments. He also designed 'Hughenden' in Middle Park.

Frederick Lindrum a renowned billiards coach and father of world famous billiard player Walter Lindrum lived at **148 Cecil Street (3)** in the 1920s. Frederick Lindrum operated a well-known billiard hall at 317 Flinders Street from 1912-1943.

In 1865 Patrick Reardon, a produce merchant, was the first licensee at the **George Hotel (4)** at 139 Cecil Street. A new hotel designed by local architect Sydney W Smith, was erected on the site in 1875. This was altered in the 1930s. In 1866 the George advertised that 'it offered free hot coffee at 3am on market mornings and a free counter lunch'.



South Melbourne Market, 1920s.  
sm2735

The South Melbourne Market rooftop car park, visible across Coventry Street, was erected in 1972 and the new roof added in 2012. This roof provides the Market with solar power, captures rainwater and regulates the temperature in the building.

Since 1867 South Melbourne Market has provided the community with a diverse range of products from seasonal fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, dry goods and other merchandise.

*As you travel through time and place around the Market precinct, take a moment to enjoy the ambience and maybe sample some produce or wares. Look out for the large portrait murals, created by Cam Scale for the Market's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017.*

The first market sheds were erected in the 1860s at a cost of £727. They were open to the elements and were little more than a roof held up by posts, and open to the weather. Stall holders would sell their goods from trestle tables, and others without actual stalls could sell their wares from baskets on the ground. Two new sheds were built in 1883. These extra sheds were to accommodate the increased volume of produce. This was the same year that the sale of cattle and pigs was introduced. In 1884 a fish market opened within the Market.

A weighbridge was purchased in 1872 and was located on the corner of **Cecil and Coventry Streets (5)**. It weighed 5.5 tons.

*Walk down Coventry Street and enter the Market at the Deli Aisle.*

The **Deli Aisle (6)** was for dairy produce, meat and poultry. Rabbits were down near York Street, hung with their fur on, or laid skinned on a slab.

*Walk down Deli Aisle, turn right at Aisle E and walk down to Centre Aisle.*

In December 1867 a market bell was ordered and installed. It was to be rung at 5am to let people know the Market was opening. It was also rung at closing time. The Market opened on Tuesdays and Fridays from sunrise to 1pm and on Saturdays from 6pm to 11pm. A reproduction bell was installed in the **Centre Aisle (7)** in January 2017.

In 1867 some of the things that could be purchased at the Market included green horse fodder, black swans, pigeons, wild ducks as well as poultry and rabbits. In 1868 water and gas were laid on to the sheds. In 1869 the Council decided to lease the Market under contract but regained control in 1904.

*Turn right down Centre Aisle then left at Aisle D to exit the Market at Cecil Street.*

From its establishment the Market site underwent regular improvement and expansion to accommodate the growing need of vendors and the community, as well as the changing regulations for cleanliness and sanitation. By January 1918 extensive improvements had been made. There were new sheds in Coventry and Cecil Streets with iron verandahs. Stalls in the Deli Aisle for poultry, meat and fish now had brick benches with marble-like counter tops. Because of hygiene concerns fly wire screens were fitted in the area, and a rat proof concrete floor was installed. In 1924 the sheds were wired for electricity.

In 1912 there was a serious fire. Stalls in 'D' shed were gutted. In 1981 two gelignite bombs hit South Melbourne Market and a nearby hotel. The bombs wrecked two market stalls and blew out thirteen windows of the Council Club Hotel (now the Market Tavern). A takeaway food stall and a dress shop were the main casualties. Six months later fire broke out in the Market destroying 'A' and 'B' sheds.

Alfred Withers established the 'Great Iron Store' at **121 Cecil Street (8)** in 1853. It was not only a general store but used as a public hall until the Mechanics' Institute was built in 1857. The first Emerald Hill municipal elections took place here on 29 June 1855. Alfred Withers came to Victoria in 1851 hoping to find gold. He did so, and went back to England, married and returned to Melbourne. On his return he imported a corrugated iron building in kit form. It was demolished in 1940. An existing example of this type of imported building can be seen at The National Trust site at 399 Coventry Street.



View of South Melbourne, 1870s. *South Melbourne Jubilee Book*.  
sm1276

The **Market Tavern (9)** at 139 Cecil Street was originally called the Court House Hotel. Established in 1864, the first licensee of the 13 room hotel was William Litton. It was renamed the Council Club Hotel in 1871. In 1927 it was purchased by architect Harry R Johnson who carried out extensive alterations, adding an extra storey.

The former **Victoria Hotel (10)** at 111 Cecil Street (corner of York Street) was built in 1873. Henry Foreman, a local wheelwright, was the first licensee. The Licenses Reduction Board had the hotel closed in 1920 on the grounds that there were too many hotels in the area. Compensation was paid to the owner.

The ground level car park on **York Street (11)** is on part of the original South Melbourne Council yard and storage depot. South Melbourne Rifle Club was granted a section of the Market for a miniature rifle range. Their meetings were held in a building alongside the railway line on the depot land. A ladies rifle club was formed in 1911. By 1920 both clubs had gone from the Market.

*Walk through the Food Hall to Coventry Street.*

The **Food Hall (12)**, erected in 1991, was on the site of a small cottage which faced Coventry Street. It was demolished in 1924 to be replaced by stabling for seventy horses. This area was later used for the Council Depot.



Great Iron Store, 1880s.  
sm1604

On Dorcas Street, on either side of **Ward Street (13)** stood two wooden houses, part of the old municipal reserve. One was the Town Clerk's residence and the other the Municipal Offices. The wooden cottages came from Canvas Town in 1856. This settlement of predominantly tents, established near St Kilda road for the overflow of gold rush immigrants, had been disbanded in 1854.

Visible from Dorcas Street (near the corner of Cecil Street) is the side wall of the original **Mechanics' Institute (14)** showing the basalt and sandstone brickwork.

For the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung, the South Melbourne area, known as Nerre nerre minum, has been a place of significance for many, many generations. In more recent times, the South Melbourne Market precinct has formed the heart of a village for those who live, work and shop here.



South Melbourne Market, 1976.  
sm0787



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**START AND  
FINISH**

Corner Cecil and Dorcas Streets,  
South Melbourne

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**LENGTH**

1 kilometre

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**TIME**

About 30 minutes

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**REFRESHMENTS**

There are numerous cafés along the route

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**MARKET HOURS**

Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday 8am – 4pm;  
Friday 8am – 5pm

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Visit [southmelbournemarket.com.au](http://southmelbournemarket.com.au)  
for information about the Market,  
traders and events.

Visit [heritage.portphillip.vic.gov.au](http://heritage.portphillip.vic.gov.au)  
for more information about cultural  
heritage programs and activities in  
the City of Port Phillip.

You can also contact us by phone via  
our ASSIST centre on **03 9209 6777**.

*Cover Early Morning Market,  
South Melbourne. Colour  
postcard, c1905. sm0543*

*Images are from the Port Phillip  
City Collection.*

