alga’s
midsumma history
walk, fitzroy, 2015
Fitzroy
2015 History Walk Guide to Places and Acknowledgments

Start
Exhibition Building, Nicholson Street

Stop 1
Key Club
22 Gertrude Street

Stop 2
Cyclorama, corner Gertrude and Fitzroy Streets

Stop 3
Mansions and boarding houses
Corner Gertrude and Brunswick Streets

Stop 4
John Wilson, corner Gertrude and Young Streets

Stop 5
Gertrude Street, corner Gertrude and Gore Streets

Stop 6
Northside, corner Smith and Peel Streets

Stop 7
St Marks, corner George and Moor Streets

Stop 8
Gordon Lawrence, 274 George Street near corner St David Street

Stop 9
Fitzroy Town Hall, 201 Napier Street

Stop 10
Women’s Cultural Palace, 74 Moor Street

Stop 11
Gay Lib HQ, 259 Brunswick Street

Stop 12
Correct Line Graphics
256 Brunswick Street

From whereis.com

Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives
For over 35 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 eighties, to the vibrant queer communities of today – all of this is part of our heritage; and all of it is represented in the holdings of the biggest such collection in Australia. The Archives is volunteer-run, not-for-profit and community-based.

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 ...

The Archives has no ongoing government funding and relies entirely on the support of its members and the community. You can become a member for $20 per year ($5 concession) plus $1 joining fee – and if that’s not enough you can donate as much as you like (it’s tax-deductible).

We have regular working bees to bring order to the collection. In 2015 there will be six – three for inducted volunteers and three for people who’ve not volunteered before.

For more info, check out our website – alga.org.au

We acknowledge with thanks
o the State Library of Victoria for photo on page 1 (Cyclorama).
o Graham Willett for the cover photo, 2015

ALGA’s 21st lesbian and gay history walk of Melbourne
Start – Exhibition Building

Fitzroy. Long one of Melbourne’s smallest suburbs it has had a remarkable history. From posh to perverts, buggery to bohemia, mansions, public parks and laneways. From discretion to courage. Just made for a queer history walk.

photo: Graham Willett, 2007

Stop 1 – Key Club

22 Gertrude Street

From discretion to courage wasn’t always an easy thing to do. There were many half-way steps. In the 1970s, Mama Seka opened the Key Club, a members-only club that offered safety and a chance to meet others. We were on the way.

L to R: Mama Seka, Michael Jamyn and Paul Mathews at the Key Club (photo: Ivan Polson - ALGA collection)

Stop 2 – Cyclorama

Corner Gertrude and Fitzroy Streets

The Cyclorama: a panorama of thrilling episodes from history – and from the marvellous life of Marion-Bill Edwards, the notorious man-woman.

photo: 1889, source: State Library of Victoria

Stop 3 – Mansions and boarding houses

Corner Gertrude and Brunswick Streets

Fitzroy went from boom to bust and back again in the 19th and 20th centuries. Nowhere was this more visible than in the way mansions, boarding houses and flats appeared.

photo: Graham Willett, 2015
Stop 4 – John Wilson
Corner Gertrude and Young
Poor John Wilson – one minute he is chatting up some bloke, trying to make some money for himself. Next minute he is in full fight down Victoria Street, a policeman in hot pursuit, his frock in one hand to stop him tripping. But getting caught was only the beginning of his woes. In 1863, his was an occupation that attracted the death penalty.

The Argus, Friday 23 October 1863, p 7

Stop 5 – Gertrude Street
Corner Gertrude and Gore Streets
Lesbians, queers, Aboriginal people… Pleasures, politics, pints … What a very checkered history Gertrude Street has.

Advertisement from Gay Community News, February 1980, p 25

Stop 6 – Northside
Corner Smith and Peel Streets
Northside, a gay world of its own. In the last couple of decades a distinct gay sub-culture has emerged here.

The Peel, the Laird, Sircuit. And before them Ashleys and cafes, and Hares and Hyenas.

Stop 7 – St Marks
Corner George and Moor Streets
The churches have not always been queer folks’ best friend – to say the least. But there is, as well as the oppression and discrimination, another story – refugee and friendship and support. St Mark’s has long been in the second camp. Let’s talk about both.

source: St Mark’s website

Stop 8 – Gordon Lawrence
274 George Street
This story begins at the Exhibition Buildings, but let’s take it up here – where Gordon Lawrence lived and where his possessions – articles ‘of a suspicious nature’, oil used ‘for a certain purpose’ damned him before the law.

The Age, 2 October 1888
Stop 9 – Fitzroy Town Hall
201 Napier Street
Fitzroy has the honour of having, in 1984, elected Australia's first (openly) gay mayor – Ralph McLean, a gay man, art lover, eccentric and activist. His courage, and that of the LGBTI community, is remembered and celebrated in Whitlam Square.

Source: Obituaries page of the website of Kendall Lovett and Mannie De Saxe, www.josken.net/sp-obit2.htm#ralph – original source OutRage, Sep 1985

Stop 10 – Women’s Cultural Palace
74 Moor Street
It is no surprise that the women’s movement was full of stroppy dykes who worked hard to make the world a better place for all women, but especially for their Sapphic sisters. And the Women’s Cultural Palace was just one of the places where this work went on.
Photo: Graham Willeit, 2015

Stop 11 – Gay Lib HQ
259 Brunswick Street
Opinions vary – rather bohemian, or a rat-hole? But no one doubts that Gay Liberation’s activities laid the foundations for the world we live in where pride and equality are well and truly happening things.
Source: ALGA collection

Stop 12 – Correct Line Graphics
256 Brunswick Street
Correct Line Graphics and Gay Community News seem, in retrospect, to be a stepping stone, from one gay world to another.
The Fitzroy History Walk on Sunday 25 January 2015 was conducted by Graham Willett, with Gary Jaynes and Helen Pausacker. Graham Willett, Gary Jaynes and Helen Pausacker produced this programme. This is the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives’ 21st History Walk.