

St Albans Melbourne Victoria Australia

St Albans is a suburb 17 km north-west of Melbourne located within the City of Brimbank local government area.

Population = 37,000 in 2016

33% of people were born in Australia.

Most common ancestries = Vietnamese 21%, English 7%, Australian 7%, Chinese 6%, Indian 6%

43% of families = couples with children,

30% = couples without children,

24% = one parent families.

Average number of people per household = 3.2

Religions = Catholic 27%, Buddhism 15%, and Islam 6%.

Christianity was the largest religious group reported overall (50%)

Connection with St Albans London ...

St Albans Melbourne was named by Alfred Henry Padley who was a land speculator and developer in the 1880s. He paid for a railway station to be built and named it St Albans, so the neighbourhood became known as St Albans.

The connection with St Albans London was probably through his wife, Caroline Jeffs. The Jeffs family had connections with the St Albans Abbey since the 1500s through marriages and births being registered there.

Another link occurred in 1906 when the Anglican Church was built and named St Alban The Martyr. Frederick Charles Stenson was from Somerset England and migrated in 1888. He was a main leader in the building of the local church.

People connected to the St Albans History Society visited St Albans London in the 1980s to research documents re Padley-Jeffs family connection. They checked parish records in Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Oxford.

Some more recent visits have occurred e.g. Stuart Rodda went to St Albans London in 2011 and 2013. He was impressed by the antiquity, connection with Roman era, the Abbey/Cathedral and memorial to St Alban.

Connection with English royalty ...

Mary Aiken baked a cake for HRH the Queen in 1963 and 1966.

Edwin Galea (professor at Greenwich University, London) met the Queen, Prince Phillip and Princess Anne c.2003.

Les Thurgood met Prince Charles by coincidence in Singapore and guided him to the barber. Also spoke to him briefly in Dunedin and Wellington NZ.

Also spoke with Prince Phillip in Hobart.

First Nations People ...

40,000 BC – Marin Balluk clan = original Aboriginal population around St Albans.
Aboriginal population of Victoria declined from 60,000 in 1780 to 800 in 1880.
The St Albans clan of about 100 people were dispossessed of their land, died of European diseases, and moved out of the district by the 1860s.

Brief history of St Albans ...

- 1836 – first known Anglo settler = Joseph Solomon the younger
- related to Judah & Joseph Solomon of London who came as convicts in 1819
 - Marin Balluk of the Woiwurrung speakers = St Albans clan = 100
 - died rapidly due to European diseases, loss of cultivation and hunting lands.
- 1850 – Keilor & Braybrook shires being formed.
Population = 78% British-born, and 18% Australian-born. Very few non-Brits.
- Woiwurrung Aboriginal population = 22
 - remnants of clans sent to reservations out of district
- 1868 - Birth of St Albans
- Keilor-Braybrook Farmers Common sold for 68 small farms.
 - population = 200
 - area known as Keilor Plains.
 - St Albans was never very good farming land, because the area was too rocky and the rainfall unreliable. Grazing of sheep and cattle = most common, also some horses, piggeries and poultry farming. Crops were sown in areas where cultivation was easier.
- 1886 - Naming of St Albans
- Alfred Henry Padley buys 1,000 acres and pays for a railway station to be built.
 - he names the station St Albans and name is adopted for district
 - recession comes 1890 and investors lose money
- 1910 - St Alban The Martyr Anglican church built.
- population about 200
 - St Albans in the 1900s was mainly a rural village development.
 - The local quarry was the only “industrial” enterprise.
- 1920 – 1940 - population increasing to 700 because of post-WW1 economic growth.
- main attraction of St Albans was cheap land, about half the cost in neighbouring areas.
 - Railway line to work in factories at Sunshine and Footscray.
- 1950s – post-WW2 migration.
- population increases to 7,000 by 1960 and 20,000 by 1970
 - 80% of population = new migrants
 - Main groups – former Yugoslavian, Maltese, Polish, German, Russian, Baltic states
- 1980s - population now 44,000
- Asian – Vietnamese migration after the end of Vietnamese War.
 - now a major sector of local business

What is your connection with St Albans Melbourne and why are you interested in its history?

Grew up in St Albans - migrated to Australia in 1949 and moved to St Albans in 1951.

Became interested in local history in 1990s because of MRC work with ethnic communities – started researching and documenting their settlement histories.

St Albans Community Youth Club started oral history research in 1985. I edited and supplemented their work for publication in 2004.

St Albans History Society started in 1986 to celebrate 100 years of railway station. They were very active in the 1990s but output declined after 2000 – small membership was “old & tired”.

Ribarow & Szwed history interests developed in 2004 through St Albans Secondary College. Led to major efforts in collecting stories and photos. Decision to go digital to expand access to such information. Now have interstate and international links. New model of history promotion.

What exhibits do you have?

Website & Facebook page re history of St Albans.

Published 10 books about history of St Albans from the 1860s to 1960s – mostly available online for free.

Website for history of St Albans Secondary College promoting collection and dissemination of local history images and publications free to download..

What is the extent of the general interest?

Most interest is from the people who were in St Albans during the 1950s - 1970s. They enjoy seeing photos of the neighbourhood of their youth. They want to know what happened to their neighbours and friends.

Facebook sites are very popular for sharing images. Photos are often copied and published on other websites. Individual stories also circulated. Slide shows at the library and the youth club have been popular.

Written documents are less popular, possibly because of printing/ mailing costs and not as easy to circulate. Photos are more popular than books – people are more visual than text driven.