

VANTAGE POINT

POINT

HISTORY IS THE VANTAGE POINT FROM WHENCE TO UNDERSTAND THE FUTURE



BRIGHTON ROAD, THE MAIN STREET, C1960 AND 2023

The following presents two views of the main shopping centre on Brighton Road, taken from the same Vantage Point. They are starkly different, and highlight aspects of life in the Sandgate community on two days separated by approximately 63 years of considerable social and economic change.

The black and white photo was taken around 1960, from adjacent to the Police Station looking back towards the Town Hall. The photographer was out and about on a winter mid-morning, judging by the shadows, and maybe a Sunday, if the volume of traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular is any indication.

The population of Brisbane was approximately 600,000 - less people and, by extension, less cars leaving more room for us to ride our pushbikes, walk or catch Sandgate's own Black and White bus to school.

First Lagoon, as it was called then, was much more expansive, stretching all the way from Keogh St, adjacent to the Police Station, to Bowser Parade. While it was partially infested with water hyacinth, the water looked clean and supported a variety of wildlife. The large building to the far right is the Sandgate Post Office, now the Post Office Hotel. The shop to the left, on the corner of Fourth Avenue, is Lyons Men's and Boy's wear, formerly Barden and Lyons, now the Professionals Real Estate office.

Yes, there were clothing stores, including Bayard's drapery at the far end of Brighton Road adjacent to the Town Hall, and a shoe retailer, an electrical and white goods store and two major grocery and household items stores, many butchers and not forgetting "Been there forever and having another sale" Russel's haberdashery, which sadly, has recently closed its doors, forever.

In those times it was also, generally, just a short walk to your friendly corner store, where you could buy an ice cream, the vegetables for the evening meal and the morning or evening paper but that's another story.

The colour photo taken in November 2023 from the same vantage point, tells a very different story. The photographer, this time, was out and about late Sunday afternoon. The most obvious differences between the two periods are, more cars, many more trees and less lagoon.

Today the lagoon takes the name Einbunpin, a reed with an edible root familiar to both the Turrbul and Gabi peoples. Sadly, the lagoon has been reduced in size to make way for a carpark and is also in very poor health, requiring constant oxygenation and regular treatment for blue-green algal blooms. While the lagoon hosts turtles, eels and some water birds, it attracts nowhere near the diversity of wildlife as the nearby Dowse Lagoon.

As mentioned above, the nature of the shopping centre has also changed, with fewer specialty shops. For Brisbane's current population of approximately 2.5 million, it is more convenient to shop in major chain supermarkets than family-owned, corner stores and local specialty shops.