South West CBD/ Corporate Towers and Mercantile Warehouses.

The evocative lanes in this area were lined with warehouses, factories, shipping offices and pubs frequented by sailors during the Victorian era. Today many are dominated by skyscrapers, generic car parks, and are frequented by office workers pouring in and out of modern cafe’s and corporate lobbys. Where post-modern towers like the Rialto spared much of Collins Street by retaining and re-using the ornate facades of the precinct, they also obliterated a number of less visible and largely disregarded laneways and smaller buildings.

Some lanes in the area do retain original heritage character, particularly those closer to Flinders lane where during the 1980’s a number of abandoned warehouses were converted by the early pioneers of inner city apartment living and dining. The growth of the Docklands means this part of the city is becoming part of the geographic centre of the CBD again, raising the opportunity to rejuvenate a number of under-utilised and character-filled lanes in the area.
1. Bond Street (Class 3)

On the edge of the Flinders Lane Heritage Precinct, Bond Street displays re-laid bluestone guttering, and a soaring Victorian warehouse containing a laneway bar in it’s basement. While this building is within the precinct, it is ungraded and thus unprotected. A Brutalist car park takes up the rest of the eastern side of Bond Street while the western side displays stunning heritage facades from listed buildings on Queen St. such as the remarkable and iconic Art Deco building, ‘Alkira House’. Cafes and lobbies from these buildings connect the lane to Queen St. in an unofficial way during business hours, similar to many lanes that appear on the map as dead ends. These access points in fact offer a number of ‘secret’ through-block pedestrian options for those willing to take the time to explore.
2. Tavistock Place, Moylands and Samuel lane. (Class 3)

Tavistock Place (first page) takes its name from the Art Noveau ‘Tavistock Hotel’ on the Flinders lane end. Further down the lane the backs of heritage listed Victorian offices on Queen St. provide atmosphere, as does an Edwardian Baroque substation located on the lane (un-graded and a prime example of an historic laneway building which has been completely ignored by heritage reviews). At the Flinders street entrance, pedestrians are greeted by Art Deco styled tall figures in period suits set into the rustic stone walls of Fletcher Jones. The lane is concrete with bluestone channel in the centre.

Across Flinders lane, Samuel lane (bottom left on next page) lays to the east of the 1940’s Telecom building, which housed Melbourne’s first Atomic Bomb shelter. Between the Telecom building and a tall, recently restored 1880’s building (with no heritage protection) Moylands lane (more images on next page) is lined with heritage structures, and has bluestone channel down the centre of the roadway.
3. Highlander Lane (Class 2)
One of Melbourne most picturesque lanes with converted 1850’s Gold Rush era bluestone and brick warehouses lining it’s western side, this lane is a remnant of Melbourne’s early riverside heart, centred around the western CBD and Yarra River. A mix of historic and postmodern street furniture lines the lane, which is paved in modern bluestone. Surprisingly only one of the bluestone buildings is heritage listed (2 storey building at centre bottom), being the back part of listed structure on King Street. Neither of the two historic buildings with exclusive laneway frontage – a rare and remarkable 1854 four-storey stone building with gothic entrance arch (C-graded) and a red brick Victorian era building (D-graded) have any official protection at all.
4. Mercantile and Hay Place, Geddes Lane. (Class 3)

Mercantile Place (top 2), Hay Place (4 images in middle) and Geddes lane (bottom 2 images) all represent lanes with strong links to this area’s past as a shipping centre. These lanes have bluestone guttering and display the evocative back facades of pubs, shipping offices and stone warehouse buildings. Names such as Mercantile and Hay also bring strong associations with the two industries (gold and agriculture) that turned a small collection of shacks into a thriving ‘marvelous’ metropolis during the 19th century.
5. Downie Street (Class 3)

Downie Street is in what was until recently, a neglected part of the city and positioned behind three hotels (the Markilles, Charles Hotham, and Great Southern) that are currently under assessment for heritage protection in the C186 Amendment. On the corner of Flinders St, the derelict Victorian era ‘Baltic Imports’ building lies mostly covered in green mesh awaiting demolition. This building retains the only material link with the iconic Fish Markets, since demolished, that once formed the western bookend to Flinders Street Station, and vista down this lane. Two buildings face only the lane, a 1920’s annexe to the Markilles Hotel, with decorative windows, historic advertising signage, a restaurant entrance and a classical facade. Further north is a 1950’s Art Deco garage with flagpole and unique window treatment (ungraded). The eastern side of the lane no longer has any identifiable heritage fabric.
6. Francis Street

One of Melbourne’s wider laneways and a rare west-to-east through-block connector, Francis Street derives much character from the backs of its main street buildings. These include the heritage-listed streamline modern ‘McPherson’s Building’ on Collins St., and a row of Victorian industrial buildings, one of which is heritage listed, (mainly for it’s bluestone facade) but which has an equally important brick rear forming a key part of the lanescape, featuring old signage and brickwork. Francis street’s gritty character was celebrated by Melbourne musicians ‘Something For Kate’ as the location of the well known film clip for ‘Monsters’, which came second in the Triple J Hottest 100 countdown, 2001.
7. Private carriageway behind Union Bond Storage.
(Not mentioned in current policy)

Behind a heritage listed warehouse now used as the Melbourne City School and a Victorian era building with stone and brick side walls and original windows (1874, D graded), lies this fascinating lane. Although now paved in concrete, this early carriageway contains highly intact heritage fabric from the age of the horse and cart. Brick walls and iron doors flank one side, and on the other a stable building with superb brickwork, wooden doors, and timber ceilings evokes another era. This is truly another ‘hidden gem’ of Melbourne’s laneway network.
8. Gallagher Lane (Class 3)

Named after a 19th century publican, much of its character comes from the varying heights and unpretentious brick-work behind the heritage listed ‘Wool Exchange’ building. Stone foundations are visible along the bottom edge of buildings on both sides, and bluestone guttering can also be seen on both sides of the laneway. This is yet another lane within the west end which is characterised by a disjointed mixture of human scale heritage buildings and modern skyscrapers.
9. St James Lane and Temple Court. (Class 3)

St James Lane (first page) forms an interestingly shaped network largely dominated by the rears of 1970’s corporate towers and car park entrances. Much bluestone guttering remains, either re-laid or in its original state. Temple Court lacks any historic paving, but the rears of heritage listed buildings on William St. and Lt. Collins St, as well as human scale materials used in the lane walls of the modern towers lend it character. Through their names, St. James Lane and adjacent Church Lane recall St. James Church, one of our city’s oldest buildings which once stood here and was re-built stone by stone in West Melbourne over 100 years ago.