

# LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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*An irregular one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy*

## Lex watches where he steps at the Haymarket Roundabout

**Lex is at the top end of Elizabeth Street, just where it branches into Flemington Road and Sydney Road. He catches a faint whiff of something he wouldn't want to stand in.**

There's a huge flagpole here, in the middle of a huge traffic island. Google maps tells Lex that it's the 'Haymarket roundabout.'

There is no hay market here: the name survives from the century before last. Where we now find the Royal Melbourne Hospital, related medical establishments, and the University High School, there once stood the Melbourne Hay, Straw and Horse Market.



Photo: Lenny Brown

This horse-head sculpture once marked the entry to the horse market pavilion.

It was here that horse dealers plied their trade – buying and selling delivery cart nags, light harness horses, extra-heavy draughts, pretty saddle ponies, useful farm mares, and everyday hacks. And, depending whether it was a time of war or peace, they traded officers' stallions, Indian remounts and artillery pairs.

The horse-era is fast fading, but relics remain. When he walks down many bluestone lanes, Lex observes the ruts ground by the iron cartwheels. Here and there he still finds horse troughs, some

inscribed to their donors, Annis and George Bills. Just outside Seymour, Crown land is reserved as the Light Horse Memorial Park.

**But when Lex checks out his favourite Acts of Parliament, it seems the horse era has been virtually expunged.** The *Summary Offences Act 1966* still has something to say about horse drawn vehicles (and dog-drawn, and goat-drawn – but that's another matter). But the *Road Management Act 2004*, at section 128, extinguishes the long-standing common law distinction between carriageways, bridledways, and footways.

**In 1958 the *Local Government Act* usefully provided that horse-mounted ministers of religion were not to be charged road tolls on Christmas day – a provision which did not survive into the 1989 Act. Ah, well.**

But Lex does see an important relic of the horse-era whenever enters the Supreme Court, or Parliament House. Beside their doorways he still finds ornate cast iron boot-scrapers, whose purpose was to scrape off more than mere mud.



Boris at Number 10 Downing Street.  
What are those things behind him?

And so we return to the faint odour which Lex thought he detected at the haymarket roundabout. Sorry: for better or for worse it's been overwhelmed by diesel fumes.

**See you there!**  
*Lex Loci*