



June 2005

Mail to: PO Box 180 Fitzroy Vic 3065

Email to: m.moore@bigpond.com

FHS Activities: Dates for Your Diary

The Public Record Office of Victoria

On **Saturday, 25th June 2005** the Fitzroy History Society has planned a visit to the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV). This organization is responsible for holding the archives of the State Government of Victoria. It holds records from the European settlement of the Port Phillip district in the mid-1830s to today.

A search of their holdings on Fitzroy yields 292 series of documents ranging over Council minute books, original rate books and court records, tramway construction documents, school files, health records, etc.

We hope to have many of these original documents on display on Saturday, 25 June 2005.

Come to see these documents at 10am or noon. Also at 11am, a behind-the-scenes tour of the PROV has been arranged for the first 15 to register.

PROV is now located at its new modern home at 99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne. We are fortunate to have a direct link there via the No 402 bus, departing opposite St Vincent's in Victoria Parade at 9.30 (and at 20 minute intervals) and passing the PROV front door in Shiel Street.

PROV is a secure area, and we have to sign-in on arrival. We would prefer you to pre-register your intention to come by calling Tim Gatehouse (9489 2357) or Mike Moore (9416 1446) before 22 June.

FHS Show and Tell

We are planning to have a 'Show and Tell' on **Wednesday 20th July at 7pm** at the Fitzroy Library. You are welcome to bring along a few objects that relate to the history of Fitzroy and tell the others gathered at the meeting about them. Plan to speak for a few minutes: you should be prepared to answer any questions (and perhaps pose others!). The Library has promised to show us items from its extensive and valuable local history collection. This will be a great chance to see the extent of this collection and how easy it is to use it.

If you will like to bring along items, please contact Mike O'Brien (MikeOBrien@bigpond.com or 9417 1553) by 15th July. Access to the meeting room is available prior to 7pm if time for setting up is needed.

Our Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be on 17th August at the Mary of the Cross Centre (formerly Dodgshun House), at 7 Brunswick Street Fitzroy at 7.30pm. Please pencil this date in your diary. Our guest speaker will be Mary Sheehan who will speak on her recent historical research on St Vincent's nurses and their impact on Fitzroy.



FHS Visit to Rose Chong's

Our Visit to Rose Chong's & Harry Evans', 4th May 2005

What a fascinating and rewarding evening we had when we visited Rose Chong's costume shop and Harry Evans & Sons' billiard table factory in Gertrude Street in early May.

Mike Moore set the scene as he described the early development in the area around Gore and Gertrude streets: timber cottages in the 1850s gave way to prefabricated iron then stone and brick buildings. Gertrude Street has always been a commercial precinct and it seemed entirely appropriate to learn that over the years the shops surrounding Rose's were variously the domain of dressmakers, costumiers, hatters, bootmakers, dress and mantle makers and furriers. The costume shop was originally two shops (built in 1865) but an arch has been cut in the thick bluestone wall to make an expansive space in which to show, store, sew and iron the marvellous collection.

I know it's a cliché but no other words could describe Rose's shop better than 'treasure trove'. The part of the shop most people see was crammed with neat racks of costumes all clearly marked such as '18th century' & 'gangsters and molls'. Like excited children we trooped after Rose as she led the way through off-limit areas: the wig section, onto the period costumes, then up the stairs to the sewing room. We were fortunate to see some of Rose's exquisite original gowns and jackets (my personal

favourite being the slinky flapper dress with teensy beads atop). Past rows of shoes, each labelled with their decade. We peered into the rooms which would once have been the domestic quarters for the shopkeepers, windows and fireplaces still evident. We fingered satin gowns, gazed at the military outfits, and were astonished at the number of different head coverings. Down into the cellar—a wonderful find when the Chongs first moved in during the mid-1980s. Still visible were the steps down which the barrels of wine and food would have been pushed when the building was home to a grocer and wine merchant in the 1870s.

Rose's business now largely caters for people wanting party costumes but she was once responsible for costuming television mini-series such as 'All the Rivers Run'. Thanks Rose for inviting us to share your passion. We had a great time.

Then it was on to the billiard table factory where we were shown around by fourth-generation David Evans. (I was told that the fifth generation has now joined the firm!) Originally two small shops, the current premises were home to squatters when the Evans family moved in, in the 1950s—no running water, no electricity. With unbounded enthusiasm they set to, removed the wall to make one large space and added a period verandah. (The iron lace came from a building in NSW). While the verandah is visually pleasing it also serves the valuable purpose of shielding the French-polished tables from the northerly summer sun.

Family members explained the art of making the tables (Italian slate, Australian wool treated in England and returned as felt) that generally require at least two months labour. A major project at the moment is a commissioned piece involving kangaroo hide and opals that will take about six months. We were all impressed with the Huon pine table being built, with its massive carved legs, (and the little bags of shaved pine we were given to keep silverfish from our wardrobes). If I had a spare \$60,000, I could have walked away with an 1860 table they have had stored for a number of years.

David's father, Gordon, showed me a



Our Group Looks at Table Components

Victorian-era scoring board, explaining how a player could increase his wager by adding coins into a slot. When the game was over, the repository was opened and the person who had won would collect all the money, in other words they would ‘scoop the pool’.

Most of the business today comes from repairs through insurance claims and commissions for private homes. Thanks to David and Gordon Evans for giving us the opportunity to see a slice of Fitzroy life we barely knew existed.

Jill Robertson

U3A in Yarra City

The University of the 3rd Age has opened in Yarra City. It is an international organization that promotes life-long education and values the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. It is organized and run by people who can best be described as being active in their retirement. Its slogan is ‘informal learning for mature age people’. The classes are delivered in a range of local venues in the City of Yarra. If you would like details of their classes or would like to help U3A, call their office at the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Ground Floor, 253 Hoddle St, Collingwood 3066 or phone 9415 1769 or 9417 4856 or email yarracityu3a@internode.on.net. Office hours are 10am-12 noon and 1pm – 3pm in term

times (Term 2, 23 May to 24 June; Term 3, 18 July to 16 September and Term 4, 3 October – 25 November).

The Fitzroy History Society is cooperating with Yarra City U3A in the development of some classes on a local history theme, commencing in Term 3.

150th Anniversary of Fitzroy Primary School

On the 1st October this year, Fitzroy Primary School celebrates its sesquicentenary. FHS aims to assist the school to research its history prior to this auspicious event. Our early research has revealed the following outline.

School No 450, Fitzroy (George Street) opened in 1855. It was first called the North Collingwood National School. Its first Head teacher was Hugh L. Templeton. John Pascoe Fawkner was a member of the School Board five years later. The Education Department took over the school in 1872, By 1874 a new building was needed. It cost £3738 16s on land costing £1800.

In the depression of the 1930s Reverend F Nicholls (Brother Bill) supplied more than 100 free meals daily for those attending the school. A decade later, two local businessmen, Petroff & Wright provided free milk for the pupils.

Early pupils included Sir John Latham and Sir Robert Best. The Harvey family of cricket fame attended the school. It is also possible that Alfred Deakin was a pupil there.

Can you help us in our research efforts? Perhaps you have memories or records that relate to the school. Or you may be able to help search out records at PROV and other locations. Please contact Lina Favrin (9201 1540) or Tim Gatehouse (9489 2357) if you can help.
