



June 2006

Mail to: PO Box 180 Fitzroy Vic 3065

Our Future Activities: Dates for Your Diary

- **Our popular Quiz Night** on Thursday 6th July at the Purple Turtle, corner of Johnston & Napier Streets at 7pm. Test your knowledge of your favourite suburb at a most enjoyable evening. No bookings needed: make up a table beforehand or just show up! The really good news is that we have had prizes donated by the following sponsors (and we know you'd like to support them):
 - Babka, 358 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
 - Brunswick St Cellars, 409 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
 - Degani Bakery Cafe, 350 Queens Parade, Clifton Hill
 - Flower Flower, 523 Brunswick St North Fitzroy
 - Pane Provinciale, 402 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
 - Roy's Antiques, 410 Queens Parade, Clifton Hill
 - Scully & Trombone, 331 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
 - Bradstreet's Books, Railway Arcade, 660A Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
 - Trampoline Ice Cream, 381 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
- Our **Annual General Meeting** at Mary of the Cross Centre (formerly Dodgshun House), at 7 Brunswick Street Fitzroy on Thursday 10th August at 7.30pm. We have planned a talk by Laurie O'Brien on 'Brother Bob' Nichols, vicar of St Mark's in the 1920s and 1930s, and Father Gerard Tucker of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the 1930s. Remember, we would welcome your nominations for any Committee positions.
- Our **Annual Dinner** will be at Dante's on Friday 1st December at 7.30pm.

Reports on Our Recent Activities

St Vincent's Hospital Tunnel Tour 14th June

20 of our enthusiastic members were taken on a tour of the tunnels beneath St Vincent's by Barbara Citowitz, the Hospital Archivist.

The Hospital was founded by the Sisters of Charity and opened in 1893 on three terrace houses in Victoria parade for the treatment of the 'sick poor' of Melbourne. The opening coincided with the onset of the 1890s depression.

We saw the cavernous underground boiler room and the tunnels connecting the 1905 wing (built by funds raised by Mother M. Berchmans Daly¹ (1860-1924)) with the Nurses' Home and the Convent.

The tunnels provided safe passage for the nuns and nurses but unfortunately the grille across the tunnel to the Nurses' Home provided a difficult obstacle to surmount for nurses who had returned late after a night out!

We were also taken through the tunnel that connects St Vincent's with the Eye and Ear Hospital. It is 10 metres below street level and is used to transport patients and staff.

Our thanks to Barbara for a fascinating insight into Fitzroy's lesser known underworld!

¹ Mother M. Berchmans Daly has an entry in Volume 8 of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

Talk by Bhutan History Students 14th June

FOR the last two years we have heard with interest the activities of two students from Bhutan who have been studying for Masters degrees in Public History at Melbourne University. On the eve of their return to Bhutan, Pemma and Dechen gave us an account of their stay in Melbourne and a talk and film on Bhutan.

As a refreshing contrast to the economic rationalism of the western nations, the development of Bhutan is regulated by the concept of 'Gross National Happiness' which balances material well-being with the preservation of the traditional culture and Buddhist spiritual values of the nation. As a small country of only 650 000 people, bordered by China and India, Bhutan is determined to maintain cordial relations with its neighbours, while preserving its independence and cultural identity. Although the King is Head of State, the society is matriarchal with property descending in the female line.

It was a fascinating revelation of a society about which most of us knew very little. We wish Pemma and Dechen well on their return to their country.

150th Anniversary of the Birth of Alfred Deakin: 3rd August 2006

CAN you name Fitzroy's Prime Minister? Though Alfred Deakin, Minister of Australia from 1903-4, 1905-8 and 1909-10 is listed as being born in Collingwood on 3rd August 1856, his birthplace was actually Fitzroy (as the name was altered in 1857). His place of residence was 56 George Street, though with current numbering it would be No 90. Sadly, the original house has been demolished. He later lived in Gore St, adjacent to Rose Chong's Fancy Shop where his father operated in the firm of Hill & Deakin, Cab Proprietors. Deakin had a career in State politics before being elected Federal Parliament. You will find his name as State Chief Secretary on Foundation Stone on the Court House which is part of Fitzroy Town on its southern side. It is perhaps a pity that his early places of residence have no commemorative marking.



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Servants Wanted in Early Fitzroy

AFTER Peter Love's talk to FHS on the Eight Hour Day movement of 1856 and its connection with Fitzroy, I decided to try to find out more about the workers of early Fitzroy. Who were they? What sort of jobs did they do? The pages of, *Fitzroy Melbourne's First Suburb*, especially Appendix B: The Fitzroy Census, gave some answers.

The first census of Fitzroy was in 1854, after the initial impact of the gold rushes on Melbourne and when the suburb was growing rapidly northward towards Johnston Street. The population was a little over 9000 with a preponderance of males - 5000 males as against 4200 females.

Stonemasons – the driving force in the Eight Hour Movement – were 7.4% of the working male population; 246 out of 3307. Other prominent occupations were, "Workers in wood" (9.5%) and "Carrying: draymen, bullock drivers, cab-owners and cabmen, bargemen, water-carriers etc." (9.1%). Interestingly, the largest employment group in Fitzroy in 1854 was not male but female – women working in domestic service. Of almost 1100 women in employment 48.7% or 533 were in domestic service.

Little is known about the lives of these women or of the conditions in which they worked. Unlike the building-worker-leaders of the Eight Hour Day they were never memorialised by a grateful labour movement. They left virtually no written or material record. However some flavour of domestic service in Fitzroy in the mid 1850s can be gained from job advertisements placed in "The Argus". Two things strike the modern reader of these advertisements: the youth of the girls and women required (12 years old was not uncommon) and the emphasis on child-care and nursing duties. Here is a sample from *The Argus* of March to April 1856 (at the crescendo of the Eight Hour movement).

“Wanted good general servant for family of three. Good wages for fair work. 125 Gertrude-street. Collingwood.” (This was two years before Fitzroy was separated, and before its identity as an independent suburb was popularly recognised.)

“Wanted two nursemaids about twelve years old. Apply at number 70 George-street Collingwood.

“Wanted a female servant to wash and make herself generally useful. Apply to Mrs. Abrahams, Victoria Parade, corner of Young Street.

“Wanted a general servant and steady nursemaid. Apply at Mrs. Knight’s Evelyn House Nicholson-street Collingwood.

“Wanted young girl to take care of child two years old. 91 Kerr-street, Brunswick-street.

“Wanted a general female servant, Scotch preferred. Apply 205 Smith-street Collingwood.

“Wanted a wet-nurse; child 6 months old. George-street, Collingwood, brick cottage opposite the Bank.”

John Senyard.

Fitzroy Town Hall Architect Remembered

PRIDE OF HOTHAM: *a Tale of North Melbourne and a Red-Headed Architect* by Bill Hannan (Hotham History Project, c/- North Melbourne Library, 246 pages) has just been launched. The red-head in the title is George Raymond Johnson, who was also the architect for the major extension of Fitzroy Town Hall in 1887. As you might gather, Hotham (North Melbourne) Town Hall is another of this architect’s works, and Bill Hannan has extensively researched this building and many others that Johnson designed in Melbourne, the rest of Victoria and elsewhere. His credits are indeed extensive. They include three Melbourne theatres, the Fitzroy Cyclorama and perhaps ten other theatres in Victoria, other states and perhaps even New Zealand. Sadly most of his theatres have been demolished and we are all the poorer for it. His list of Town Halls and municipal buildings has survived better: as well as North Melbourne and Fitzroy, he designed Collingwood, Daylesford, Maryborough, Northcote and Kilmore Town Halls (all still there) but his Fitzroy Fire Station in Moor St has been demolished.



MR. G. R. JOHNSON,
Architect of the Melbourne Exhibition Building.

A copy of the book, which is very well illustrated by Gil Freeman, is available through the Fitzroy Library, or you can buy one for yourself!