



June 2009

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## Warm hearty fun in Winter Come to Fitzroy Trivia Night at the Rainbow Hotel

Tuesday 14 July at 7.00 pm  
27 St David Street (just off Brunswick Street)

The FHS Quiz Night returns – at a new venue, the Rainbow Hotel. Join a table, enjoy a drink, test your knowledge of your suburb's history – old and recent – and maybe win a prize! The hotel restaurant (see menu insert) will be open from 6.00 pm if you'd like to have dinner before or during the quiz.

**Annual General Meeting**  
**Thursday, 6 August 2009**  
**Fitzroy Town Hall, Reading Room**  
**at 7.30 for 8pm**

**The Greeks in Fitzroy**  
**Guest Speaker Joy Damousi**



Professor Joy Damousi is Head of the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Joy lived in Napier Street, Fitzroy from 1961 until 1972, and attended George Street School. In 1989 she authored the chapter "Growing up in a Greek Family" in our definitive history book *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb*.

The Annual General Meeting, at 7.30 sharp, will include a brief annual report, and election of a committee for the following year

### Researching Your House - using the library resources and the internet

**Wednesday, 16 September 2009**  
**Fitzroy Library Meeting Room**  
**7pm sharp**

The Fitzroy Library has an excellent collection of resources to assist in researching your house - directories, rate books, maps, heritage studies, indexes, etc. On the internet, we can access land records, probate documents, other databases, on-line newspapers, etc. This will be a 'hands on' event to get you started.



## John O'Brien's Fitzroy

There was standing room only in the fifth-floor common room of the John Medley building at the University of Melbourne on Monday evening, 11 May 2009. It was a fitting tribute to John O'Brien, university lecturer, resident of Fitzroy and enthusiastic photographer of his suburb in the 1950s and 1960s. Now over 50 years later, the combined efforts of Melbourne University Archives department, the School of Historical Studies and the Fitzroy History Society had enabled this first public showing of John O'Brien's photographs of the streetscapes of Fitzroy, many of these long gone: replaced by public housing.

There were many contributors to the success of the evening: Gabrielle Murphy of the School of Historical Society, whose background organisation was impeccable; Val Noone, who rose to the occasion admirably to create a friendly and warm welcome on behalf of the School Historical Studies; Ron Ridley, John O'Brien's successor as Ancient History lecturer, introduced to the man behind the photographs, with his personal reminiscences of the John O'Brien who had welcomed him to Melbourne and the Department of History over 50 years ago; Michael Moore, convenor of the Fitzroy History Society then led the audience on a visual walk through the street of Fitzroy as seen through John O'Brien's lens. He was supported with some commentary by Catherine Pugsley and Trudi Fraser based on the Fitzroy History Society's recent historical walks. Michael's presentation could include only 60 of the 300 photographs now available in digital form, and was just a brief glimpse into the black and white world of John O'Brien's Fitzroy. Perhaps, in the future, we can look forward to an exciting evening of John's colour photographs.

Trudi Fraser

### Fitzroy History Society hosted at the Catholic University

Gabrielle Mc Mullen FRACI, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) generously hosted the Fitzroy History Society to 115 Victoria Parade. She gave us a fascinating well researched talk with slides and over wine and cheese we enjoyed a pleasant evening. She walked us through the history of the site since settlement. Initially 115 Victoria Parade was home to the Grice family. There is a photograph in the local collection. The occasion benefited from the presence of one of Grice's grand daughters who shared details of the family with us. About 1850 Richard Grice (1813-1882), a well-known English-born pastoralist, businessman, philanthropist and churchman, came to Melbourne in late 1839. After only a few years in Victoria, "both singly and in partnership, he had become one of the principal pastoralists in the colony. He died at his home on 4 November 1882, survived by his wife and by three sons and four daughters and an estate valued at £320,000". Grice's philanthropy included "£1000 a year to cover almost the total cost of building St Mark's Church, Fitzroy. For many years he provided £1000 for the maintenance of home missionaries and £1000 for the general needs of the church. His name is also commemorated in several buildings at the Old Colonists' Homes.

The next occupant of 115 Victoria Parade was the Melbourne Deutscher Turnverein, i.e. Melbourne German Gymnastic Club. Originally founded in the 1860s, it was one of Melbourne's first clubs. The Club was closed down in 1916.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee's report recommended that new Note Printing Offices be erected on the site acquired [in June 1919] by the Commonwealth in Victoria-parade, Fitzroy. A member of this workforce was present also. Note production was undertaken here for 56 years during the remainder of the pre-decimal series and well into the decimal era.

The buildings of the former Note Printing Offices remained vacant for four years and were put to use for the filming of two movies and a 3-part series for television. The buildings were said to bear a resemblance to a prison at that time and portrayed accordingly; fortunately, this is no longer the case!

In the late 1980s when Australian Catholic University took the decision to amalgamate its two suburban campuses in Ascot Vale and Chadstone to an inner city site, 115 Victoria Parade housed a number of State Government Departments, which were in the process of being relocated. The University had looked at other major sites, including the Abbotsford Convent, but 115 Victoria Parade was the ideal site on which to consolidate the University's Melbourne-based activities.

**Report on the event with authors of  
Reflections on Fitzroy**

In 2008, 10 fourth year Honours and Masters students in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne conducted original research exploring an aspect of the social and cultural history of Fitzroy. Fitzroy was chosen as the theme by the students' supervisor, Mary Sheehan, to coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of Fitzroy as a separate municipality. On 30 April, in the Edinburgh Gardens Community Room, FHS members were privileged to hear first-hand from five of these young historians as they told us about conducting their research and the process of having it published as a book called "Reflections of Fitzroy".

"Depravity in Fitzroy – the road to ruin" was a headline in one of the newspapers used by Lucy Bracey as a source of investigating the trial of Amy Cramar in 1892 for keeping a disorderly house and attempting to procure underage girls. Lucy used the examination of the Cramar case to explore the relationship between prostitution, immorality and the community of Fitzroy in the late nineteenth century.

Veryan Croggon made extensive use of the St Vincent's Hospital Archives to research three case studies which provided a snapshot of the types of cases which hospitals dealt with over a century ago. Eighteen year old Ada Dickson was fortunate to survive typhoid in 1898 – a year in which 121 Melbournians died of the disease. In 1904 Mary Cousin was treated for an apparent "bad cold", indicating how serious such an illness could be in a poor, cramped and unsanitary area such as the Fitzroy of the time. Mollie George was a waitress whose death from heart failure aged only 36 was an example not only of the state of health care in the early twentieth century but also of the hard life led by the working class.

Jacqueline Beach told the story of her grandfather, Mick Bartley, who rose from an impoverished childhood to become "Melbourne Mick" – Australia's most successful ever punter. A particularly moving aspect of the story was the removal of Mick and his brother as young children from their family home in Fitzroy to an orphanage in Geelong – from which Mick soon ran away back to the streets of Fitzroy - as the family were living below the poverty line.

Marja Berclouw used the diary of 18 year old shop assistant May Stewart to describe the way in which residents used the Edinburgh Gardens for amusement in 1906. This included May's account of "snooging" (flirting) in the Gardens after work until 11.00 pm and then going to bed "very tired".

Sarah Hunt explored the experience of Fitzroy's female teachers in the late nineteenth century using two case studies which highlighted their low pay and status. The dismissal of Agnes Grant, a teacher at the Rose Street Common School who accused her head teacher of sexually harassing her and eventually forcing her resignation, caused a scandal in Fitzroy in 1866.

It was astonishing to realise that these impressive pieces of original research had been undertaken in the very tight timeframe of an extra-short university semester. And it was inspiring to hear Mary's account of observing her students experiencing the "thrill of the chase" as they became immersed in their chosen topics.

If you would like to buy a copy of "Reflections of Fitzroy", please contact us and we will put you in touch with the authors.

Catherine Pugsley

**Congratulations to Jill Robertson  
Gertrude Street Book wins a Commendation from  
2009 Victorian Community History Awards**

We congratulate our former long-serving committee member, Jill Robertson, on receiving a commendation in the 2009 Victorian Community History Awards in the category of "Best Walk/Tour" for her book "Gertrude Street Fitzroy". Jill's book, published by FHS, grew from her research for the walking tour of Gertrude Street which she conducted last year. The certificate of commendation was awarded at a ceremony in Queen's Hall, Parliament House Victoria, on 16 May. There has been strong demand for sales of the book, which is available to read or to purchase at the Fitzroy Library.

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