



March 2016

www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au

President: Peter Woods

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 180, Fitzroy, 3068

fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au

Secretary: Meg Lee

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 3 April 2016

'Always a Well Liquored Suburb'

**A Sunday Survey of Fitzroy's Pubs, Hotels, Grog Shops
and Dives.**

A FHS Walk led by Allan Willingham (with appropriate stops for refreshment)

Meet at the Former Devonshire Arms Hotel, 34-38 Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy, at 11.00 am.

Former Devonshire Arms Hotel. Photograph by Alan Jordan, 1970. (SLV Image H2010.105/767)



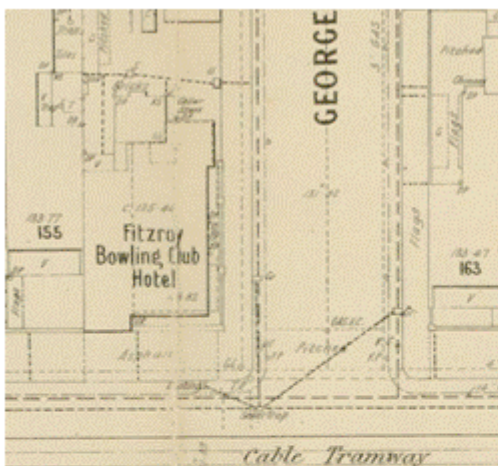
Sunday 1 May 2016

FITZROY: FROM THE BOWLING CLUB HOTEL TO THE FITZROY STADIUM

This is the FHS contribution to the National Trust Heritage Festival for 2016.

Join us for a morning walk around historic Fitzroy. Visit the sites of the Fitzroy Bowling Club Hotel, early homes, Larcher's dairy, the School of Domestic Arts, and finish at the Fitzroy Stadium.

Meet at the corner of Victoria Parade and George Street, Fitzroy at 11 am.



Left: Part of an 1899 MMBW map showing The Fitzroy Bowling Club Hotel at the corner of Victoria Parade and George St.

Right: The Fitzroy Bowling Club Hotel. Image held by Fitzroy Library.



Old Fitzroy Stadium, Brunswick St, 1948.

Image held by Fitzroy Library

FACEBOOK

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THE FITZROY SPORTING CLUBS AT THE TIME OF WORLD WAR I

The Sporting Clubs' War Memorial in the Edinburgh Gardens originally had brass plaques attached to the pillars with the names of Fitzroy sporting club members who died in WW1. All but one of the brass plaques has been lost. (The FHS July 2015 Newsletter had a photo of the surviving plaque which has 7 names on it). Yarra Council has asked the FHS to try and identify the missing names. While carrying out this research, Mike Moore and Peter Woods have come across some of the early history of the Edinburgh Gardens sporting clubs and the establishment of the memorial. The following is a summary.

The Fitzroy Cricket Club (FCC) was formed in 1863, when the Prince of Wales Cricket Club and the Collingwood Commercial Cricket Club, great rivals and co-located within the Edinburgh Gardens, merged and adopted a new identity. The other clubs were formed by the cricket club, which initially was the controlling body. On 10 Feb 1877 ground was set apart to form a bowling green and the North Fitzroy Bowling Club was formed. In 1893 the Bowling Club was at a low ebb, and at the suggestion of the FCC committee, an amalgamation was effected (with the Fitzroy Bowling Club), a step which has proved of mutual advantage. Also in 1877, a meeting of gentlemen favourable to the formation of a Football Club in connection with the FCC was held on 19 Apr. (Fitzroy Cricket Club, 50th Jubilee Annual Report, 1913)

On May 20, 1889, and it was resolved to form a baseball team in connection with the club (FCC). In 1913 the bowling members' pavilion was erected.

The FCC 1913 Annual Report states: *The fiftieth year of the club's existence has been one of exceptional activity, highly interesting, and one of the most successful yet experienced.* The cricket team were finalists, beaten by their friendly rivals, Collingwood. The North Fitzroy bowlers had a wonderful season winning A and B premierships. In league football the Fitzroy team won the 'minor' premiership.

The FCC Annual Reports over this period were very comprehensive, of about 100 pages each year, and copies are held by the Fitzroy Library. Lists of members were included in the reports of 1912-13 and 1914-15, with 1000 names in 1913 and 1250 members in 1915. Club membership subscriptions were scaled according to which team or teams a member participated in.

The FCC 1915 Annual Report recorded that *The committee joined in the local movement for volunteers during Recruiting Week, and the ground was used for meetings." The report then listed the names of 66 members who had been accepted for enlistment. A year later, the list of names totalled 125 members, and the 1916 report also recorded "Amongst*



those for whom we grieve are - Lieut. Beveridge, Sergeant Jones, Privates Doney, Murton, Prosser, Rosa, S. Perrottet, A. & E. Francis, and Polson.

The Fitzroy Tennis Club Annual Report of 1919 recorded that *Of the 28 members who enlisted, Messrs. G W L Banks, J F Commons, H H Jacobs, M L Marks, W McDonald and S H Perrottet are numbered among Australia's gallant dead.*

The FCC 1918-1919 Annual Report recorded in September 1919 the establishment of the memorial to the fallen members: *Unfortunately some of our Members will never return, having given all for their King and Country. It behoves every Member to cherish and revere their memory. Your Committee called a meeting of all committees controlling the various sports associated with the ground, and a com-*

combined committee decided, in order to memorialize and honor the heroism of those Members who fell at the front, to erect a cenotaph in the shape of a Pergola on the pathway leading to the entrance of the Members' Reserve. The work was designed by Mr. Twentymann, and carried out in cement concrete, under his supervision. That portion of the memorial has been completed, and forms an imposing cenotaph. The bronze tablets, with the names of fallen comrades, have been held up by restrictions against the use of power, necessary in their completion. When these have been finished the unveiling will take place. Note that the memorial commemorates club 'members who fell at the front', not restricted to players or team members.

The Argus of the 10 November 1919, in reporting on the upcoming opening of the sporting clubs' memorial stated that *the number of members who had enlisted was 189 and to commemorate their service honour boards will be unveiled at the same time.* These boards are assumed to no longer exist.

The Argus, Monday, 17 Nov 1919, page 5 reported that:

On Sunday afternoon Brigadier-General Lloyd, in the absence through illness of Brigadier-General H. E. Elliot, dedicated a cenotaph erected by the members of the Fitzroy Cricket, Football, Bowling, Tennis and Baseball clubs to perpetuate the memory of members who fell in the war. The Last Post was sounded by the bugle band. . . . An honour board containing the names of those who enlisted for active service from the combined Fitzroy sporting clubs was unveiled by the mayor (Councillor Miller) and Mr. J. W. Billson M. L. A. The names of 38 fallen comrades were engraved on bronze tablets fixed to the pillars of the cenotaph which is close to the entrance to the ground."

It is the intention of Yarra council to replace the missing names in a suitable manner.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE

The Oral History Project is focussing on those residents with a long history of living and working in Fitzroy The group working on the Project – Meg Lee, Mary Lewis, Marion Glanville- Hearst, Rosa Simonelli. Alison Hart, Hilary Mc Phee, Meryl Hyde and Marijana Vanevski, – have completed 11 audio recordings The recordings and their transcripts will become part of the Local History Collection based at Fitzroy Library and will be available for interested persons into the future. It is planned to produce a book on the interviews at a later stage.

If you are interested to join the project and/or can recommend a neighbour or local person who could contribute to the story of early Fitzroy please contact the History Society at fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au

The project is supported by the Bendigo Bank-Clifroy Community Bank

THE BREAKFAST CEREAL KINGS: The Spry family in Fitzroy

The following is a summary of material provided by Garry McGregor Spry:

William Henry Spry came to Australia as a 2-year old in 1854. His father, John, had been a stonemason in Devonshire, but set up as a bootmaker in Huntly, near Bendigo, and then later in Melbourne. For many years prior to his death in 1908 he lived at 209 McKean St. North Fitzroy (near the corner of Michael Street).

William and his brothers Samuel and John worked in the business with their father and took it over when he retired. At the turn of the 20th century the three brothers were running a boot manufacturing business called the "Boot Warehouse" in Smith St. at the corner of Council St., Clifton Hill. The factory is shown on the MMBW map of 1901. The factory was a twin factory and next door's business was run by Bob Creaser who had been to the USA where he had looked at Kellogg's making a new breakfast cereal called Korn Flakes. He had returned to Melbourne with the idea to make a cereal using wheat instead of corn. He was struggling to get it off the ground and needed an injection of money and his next door neighbour William H Spry decided to invest some money into this new business. Samuel and John were not interested in being involved. After a while William decided that there was a lot of money to be made from this new product, so he left the boot and shoe business next door to his brothers and put more money into the Breakfast Cereal Business and Spry's Weeties was born. Later the name became just Weeties and other products that followed were Crispies, Kornies and Vita Brits. William brought his sons Frank, Henry (Harry) and Horace into the business and started the companies Purina Grain Foods P/L, Cereal Foods P/L and Kornie Food Co., with HFH Spry Pty. Ltd. owning the factories. Purina Foods was at the Smith St site in 1920 and in the 1930s had a fac-

tory in Best St, North Fitzroy (later it was the Cadet Shoe factory and is now apartments).

These companies subsequently acquired or started other products such as Turban's Coffee Essence, Cordials and Lisbon Jellies, McLintocks Jellies and Deserts, The Macaroni Food Products with its Cavalier Pasta's and Milano Spaghetti's and Wonderwax floor polish. They owned Regal Cartons a packaging printing factory in Smith St. Clifton Hill that printed packages for all their products and some products for other companies.

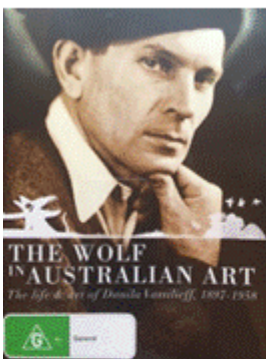
At the time of his death in 1915, William lived at 47 Alfred Crescent in North Fitzroy. His sons took over the running of the business and later on their sons ran the business.

Several times American Companies, such as the Post Cereal Co and General Mills who owned "Wheaties" were interested in amalgamating or buying the business during the mid fifties and early sixties. Finally in 1964 the business and all its products were sold to Nabisco (the National Biscuit Company of America) for what at the time was an Australian record price for the sale of a Private Company. Later on the Factories were sold off separately.

Today Weeties is over 100 years old and along with Vita Brits is now manufactured by Uncle Toby's and it's all because William H Spry helped his neighbour Bob Creaser out financially. It's no wonder that the King of the breakfast cereals depicted on the front of Weeties packets is called " Willy Weeties"

The Boot Warehouse that his father John started and his brothers Samuel and John ran when William left, and which was then continued by the sons of Samuel and John became Public Benefit Shoes (PBS).

DANILA VASSILIEF



Dania Ivanovich (Daniel) Vassilief (1897-1958), painter and sculptor, was born on 16 December 1897 at Kagalnitskaya, near Rostov-na-Donu, Russia. In July 1923 Vassilief and his wife had arrived in Queensland where they bought a sugar-farm at Yuruga, near Ingham. Although he was naturalized in 1929, he left Australia that year. He studied art in Brazil (1930-31) and exhibited in the West Indies and South America (1932-33), and in England, Spain and Portugal (1933-35). While living in England, he mixed in White Russian circles and began to see a relationship between the modernist movement and Russian decorative art. He returned to Australia in 1935, living firstly in Sydney, then in 1937, moved briefly to Queensland before settling in Melbourne, where he became a resident of Fitzroy and later the artists' colonies at Eltham.

Enthusiastic reviews of his paintings — often of children playing in the streets of Collingwood, Fitzroy and East Melbourne — established his reputation. He influenced a group of younger painters — Nolan, Boyd, Tucker, Hester, Perceval and Blackman — to paint their own original visions. Vassilief shaped the figurative nature of Australian art.

Felicity St John Moore is an art historian and a writer on Australian art who has also curated major exhibitions, including one of Danila Vassilief at Heide Museum of Modern Art in 2012. She published *Vassilief and his Art* (OUP) in 1982. Recently she commissioned a documentary DVD *The Wolf in Australian Art*, which is based on her book and includes archival film material.

The DVD is available from members of Committee of Fitzroy History Society for \$22.

TROVE

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) has advised us that the National Library of Australia, in order to meet its "efficiency dividends", is to curtail TROVE, especially its capacity to harvest new collections. In the last decade and a half TROVE has facilitated and revolutionised historical research through its marvellous provision of access to newspapers and a myriad of other material via the web. It has become an invaluable tool that is used by millions of researchers and is supported by an enormous community volunteer effort.

The "efficiency dividend" cutbacks imposed on the NLA are having a drastic effect on many of its services, but will have a particular impact on researchers who do not live in Canberra, which includes the vast majority of Australians. TROVE, it seems, will be somewhat more limited and in particular will no longer be able to aggregate or harvest new material from other collections, a decline in the service that is very disturbing for the hundreds of societies that have been digitising their collections in preparation for harvesting.

The RHSV recommends that all societies and supporters write to the federal Minister for the Arts, Hon Senator Mitch Fifield, to point out the backward step that this involves for an innovative nation, and to request that he ensure that NLA and TROVE are not jeopardised. You may also wish to contact your local federal member.