

## Re-opening of the Fitzroy Town Hall

**Sunday, 18 March 2007**

Over the last three years Council has carried out significant refurbishment works at the heritage listed Fitzroy Town Hall, including the restoration of the magnificent former Reading Room, Council Chamber and Mayor's Room. To celebrate the place this extraordinary building has in the hearts and history of the community, the City of Yarra is holding a community celebration in March 2007 and you're invited to join in!



photographer: Angela Bailey

A week of activities and celebrations will start with a family day on Sunday 18th March. Highlights include:

- Book launch of *'Fitzroy Town Hall: The Heart and Soul of Fitzroy'*
- Heritage tours of the Fitzroy Town Hall by the Fitzroy History Society at 11.30 and 1.30
- Memories of Fitzroy – take part in the Council's oral history project at 12.30 to 3.00
- A talk on the MacRobertson's confectionery and chocolate empire in Fitzroy by Jill Robertson at 3.00. Jill will describe Robertson's amazing rags to riches tale as well as explain the ups and downs of her research. A bonus will be listening to some 1950 MacRobertson radio commercials.

### **Monday, 19 March – Friday, 23 March**

For the rest of the week explore the Fitzroy Town Hall and take part in a range of activities including:

- Heritage tours by the Fitzroy History Society at 2.30 on Wednesday 21st and at 1.30 on Friday 23rd
- Sir Douglas Nicholls – Bev Murray presents photographs and memorabilia of the respected Aboriginal leader from Fitzroy, at 11.00 on Thursday, 24th

For more information about the Fitzroy Town Hall opening, log on to [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au) or watch the local newspapers.

## The Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room Restoration

When the former Fitzroy Library reopens after its authentic restoration funded by Heritage Victoria, visitors will again see books on the magnificent 19<sup>th</sup> century cedar bookcases as well as a series of displays being progressively installed to illustrate the history of the Fitzroy Library. Members of the FHS and the Friends of Fitzroy Library are working with Library staff to source suitable older material that will tell the story of the Library as it evolved in response to each period's changing tastes, interests and social and economic pressures. The first periods selected that will provide visually interesting information about the books typical of that time will be 1890-1918 and 1972-1995. It is

hoped that the display for the earliest 1877-1889 library will come next.

If you or a friend can help by donating or lending old books for what will be a permanent exhibition, you may deliver them directly to the Library addressed to Lina Favrin, or contact Louise Elliot on 9419-1480 to discuss what is required.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century periodicals and children's books would be of particular interest for the next stages. FHS members must surely have access to some of these! Your assistance will help commemorate the Reading Room we all loved.

## Recent Activities

### Visit to Newstead

On 18 November 2006 twelve of our members visited Newstead, a small goldmining town situated between Castlemaine and Maryborough, as guests of the Newstead Historical Society. Rose Chong, who is also a member of the Newstead Historical Society, and Dawn Angliss, President of the Society, made the visit possible. We saw their meeting rooms, the beautiful brick and stone former Court House dating from the 1860s, their computerised data base of historical records, and a number of rare books recently bequeathed to the society.

We also took the opportunity to go to the Newstead Craft Market held that day. Afterwards Rose very kindly gave us afternoon tea at her nearby property and showed us the Aboriginal wells in the rocky outcrops near her house.

We look forward to a return visit from the Newstead Historical Society when we can show them the sights of Fitzroy. T G



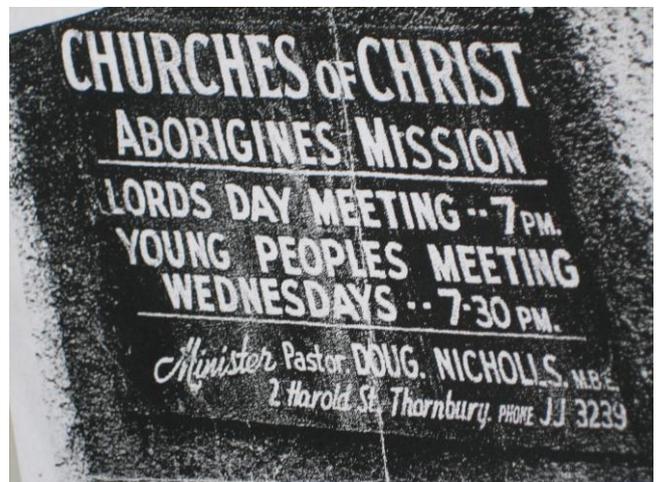
**Former Gore Street Church of Christ**

### Annual Dinner

Once again our annual dinner on 1 December 2006 was a great success. Sue Bradshaw arranged with Maria Frendo at Dante's Restaurant to provide us with another convivial occasion to end the year. The meal was excellent and the thirty-two members who attended all appeared to enjoy themselves immensely in the cosy upstairs dining room at Dante's. T G

### 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Sir Doug Nicolls

On 9 December 2006, the Fitzroy History Society joined the family of Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls in a Remembrance Service to honour and celebrate the centenary of his birth. Over several decades from the 1930s Doug played football for Fitzroy and later was pastor to the Aborigines Mission at the Gore Street Church of Christ. M M



**Pastor Doug Nicholls ministered here from 1943 to the 1960s**

## Yarra Community Day

Once again the society had a stall at the recent Yarra Community Day in Edinburgh Gardens on Sunday, 18 March. Being present at such an event gives us the opportunity to spread the word about what we do, meet people, answer their questions, sell our publications and gain new memberships. We did all of these things last Sunday and felt it was good to be there. The North Fitzroy Conservation Study publication, in particular, created a lot of interest as many of our visitors came from this part of Fitzroy. Unfortunately, we also sweltered as the temperature reached 35 ° which probably was one of the reasons visitor numbers were down on last year's attendance. We drank a lot of water!

Thanks to everyone who helped out, especially Heather for organising it all with the Council, Michael for preparing the posters and Lina for mounting our display.

J R



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## A Fitzroy-born First World War casualty

As a result of an enquiry made to Fitzroy History Society, we've been able to piece together some of the story of Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson who was born at Fitzroy in 1877. She died on 23 December 1915, aged 38, as a war casualty. It is not clear whether she died as a direct result of enemy action or of war-related illness. She is buried at Wimereux Communal Cemetery (about 5km north of Boulogne, France). She was a nursing sister in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (as several Australians were) and she had left Queensland to join that Corps in April 1915.

Her parents were Andrew Stevens Wilson and Catherine McNaughton Wilson (nee Craig) who were married in Victoria in 1866. Catherine Craig had been born at Glasgow in 1840 and died in 1923, when residing at Brisbane. Myrtle Wilson would

have lived at Fitzroy until the age of 6 or 7, then maybe at South Yarra, then at Bundaberg, Queensland by the age of 15.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records that Myrtle Wilson left Queensland in April 1915 to go to the wartime nursing service. At present her name is not included in the Roll of Honour for the First World War at the Australian War Memorial as it perhaps should be. Her name is also not on the Roll of Honour at Fitzroy Town Hall and perhaps this is appropriate as her last place of residence before her embarkation for service overseas was not Fitzroy but in Bundaberg.

Wilson Brothers, her father and uncle, built the large three storey building (originally a drapery warehouse) at 141-145 Brunswick Street in 1883.

M M / M O'B

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## Coming Events

We've got an exciting line-up of activities planned for this year including:

- Fitzroy's Italian immigrants
- Industrial Fitzroy walk
- Early Brunswick Street
- Our 25th anniversary celebration

If you have any ideas or suggestions for activities please contact a member of the committee or e-mail

[fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au)

## Your FHS committee this year is:

Convenor	Mike Moore	9416 1446
Secretary	Tim Gatehouse	9489 2357
Treasurer	Harold Mackrell	
	Paul Bevilacqua	Mike O'Brien
	Sue Bradshaw	Catherine Pugsley
	Lina Favrin	Jill Robertson
	Chris Friday	John Senyard
	Heather McRae	June Senyard

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Postal Address: PO Box 180, Fitzroy 3065