

***Francis Clark: a
man of his time
1820-1896***



by Alison M. Hart

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Fitzroy History Society, particularly Meg Lee and Mike Moore, for their help and encouragement in completing this project, and also Lina Favrin for her invaluable assistance and advice in utilising the great local history resources of the Fitzroy Library. Also many thanks to Julie Stratford who first got me started on this research by drawing my attention to a small piece on number 62 in Jill Robertson's book about Gertrude Street (2008).

Forward

This is still to some extent a work in progress, few family records survive for me to draw on. I have utilised many of the records kept at the Fitzroy Library, such as rate books, building records, electoral rolls and colonial directories, and also drawn on the State Library collection and some census and newspaper records available from the UK. I have tried to verify as much as I can from at least two sources, and also have tried to indicate when I am making suppositions.

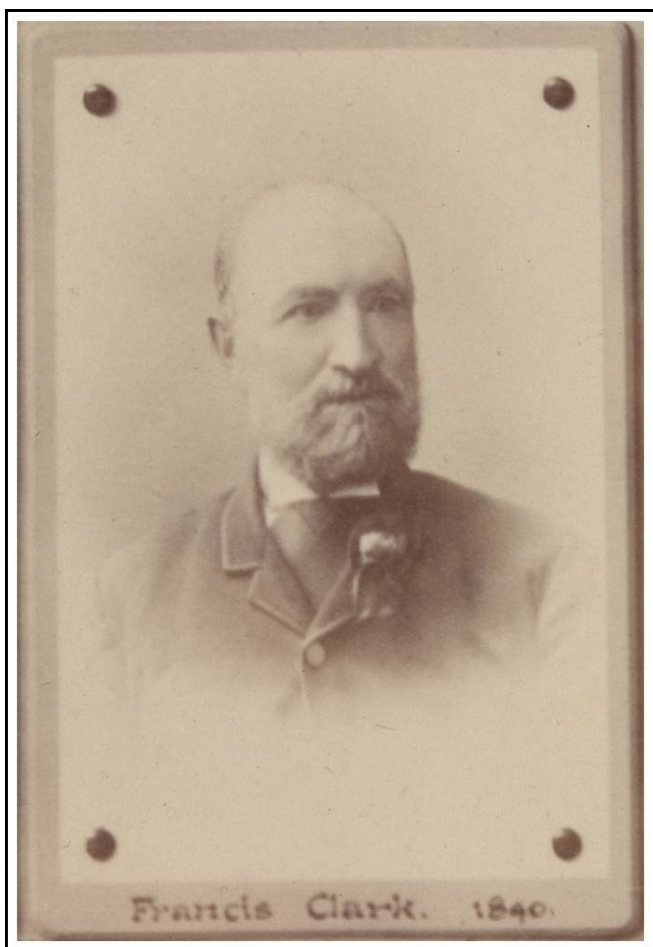
Francis Clark 1820 - 1896

Growing up I had been aware that my great, great grandfather Francis Clark had been an early settler in Melbourne and had owned a large property—Fairy Hills—on Heidelberg Road at Darebin Creek. However, it was only when I saw a piece on the old bakery in Jill Robertson's book *Gertrude Street Fitzroy* (2008) that I realised he had been connected with the early days of Fitzroy. And though he did not live in Fitzroy after the age of 34 (around 1854) when he had 'retired' from business, he continued to maintain close ties with the area until he died in 1896, mostly through property ownership. In the second half of the nineteenth century this

was quite common, as at times fifty percent of Fitzroy landowners did not reside in their properties (Robertson, 2008).

Francis' story to some extent parallels the story of early Melbourne. Less than five years after the establishment of the Port Philip colony, he arrived with little to a land of opportunity about to experience a massive boom and rise in wealth. Born the son of an illiterate butcher, his son would obtain a Master of Arts degree from St John's College Cambridge. But following the boom came the bust of the 1890s, which would have significant impact on Francis' fortunes. This recession was deeper and longer lasting in Australia—and particularly Melbourne—than in the most of rest of the world (Robertson, 2008).

This is the only photograph I have been able to find of Francis. It is in the State Library and is part of a commemorative board of previous council members, which was put together on the jubilee of the Melbourne City Council in 1892. Francis had been elected a Melbourne City Councillor for Bourke Ward in the early 1850s. I am unsure exactly when this photo was taken, but it does rather convey the appearance of a man at the height of his importance and wealth.



Portrait of Francis Clark
(State Library of Victoria)

White Roding Essex 1820-1839

Francis Clark was born in the Essex village of White Roding (or Roothing as it was known in his time) on the 10th of September, 1820. He was the second of seven children and the eldest son. The Rodings (or Roothings) are a

group of eight villages situated about an hour north east of London, midway to Cambridge. They apparently originate from a single Anglo Saxon settlement from around the Sixth Century (Rollason, 2008).

Over the 160 years from 1801-1961 the population of White Roding fluctuated between 300 and 500. In 1841 when Francis came to Australia, it reached its maximum population of 520. In 1831, 88 (75%) out of the 123 males over the age of twenty who resided in the village were engaged in agriculture—mostly as farm labourers, and a further 20 (16%) were involved in retail



The Main Street of White Roding showing The Black Horse Inn
(UK Pub History)

and handicrafts—referring to the many workers in small businesses who sold products at the front of their shop and made them at the back, including bakers and butchers. (A vision of Britain through time)

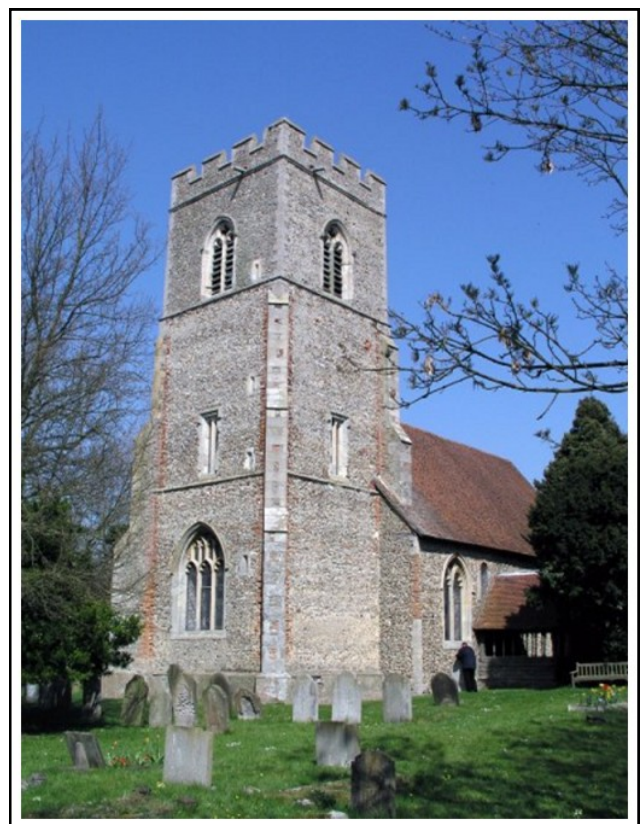
Above is a picture of the main street of White Roding taken in about 1900, showing the Black Horse Inn, which existed in Francis' time—having been built in the sixteenth century (UK Pub History).

White Roding has few claims to fame, however The Anglican church where Francis was baptised in January 1821—The Norman church of St Martin's—began construction in the late 11th century, with additions in the 13th, 15th and 16th centuries. The white stone the church is built from is said to have given White Roding its name (White Roding Parish Plan, 2009). It has been recorded that for reasons unknown, the grandeur of the church far outweighed the importance of the modest village of White Roding.

Melbourne 1840

In 1840 when the nineteen year old Francis arrived in Melbourne as an unassisted migrant, the settlement of Port Philip (Melbourne) was barely five years old. The population at the time was 4,500. As can be seen from the illustration of Melbourne below (Adamson, 1841), when Francis arrived it was very much a pioneer town.

At this time land for squatting in upcountry Victoria was readily available for those who could show they had occupied it and made improvements. It is recorded in Alexander Sutherland's *Victoria and its Metropolis* (1888) that Francis, on arriving in Port Phillip "went at once to the country, and took the management of a sheep run for



St Martins Anglican Church White Roding
(FamilySearch)

about two years” (Sutherland, 1888, p.514). It appears this was most likely in the King River area about 40 km south west of Wangaratta. *The Superintendent’s Correspondence Files 1839–1851* record him as a squatter in the Murray District on the Hurdle Creek Run (a tributary of the King River) in 1841 (McRae, n.d.) The Colonial Directory also lists him as a ‘settler’ in the Murray region, in 1843 and 1844 and 1847. Adding some weight to this Sutherland records him as having ‘held’ a station on the King River in 1850 (Sutherland, 1888). It would appear likely that while he lived and conducted business as a butcher in Fitzroy in the early 1850s, he also maintained a property



Melbourne 1840-1841
John Adamson (State Library of Victoria)

near the Murray.

About two years after Francis arrived in the colony—some time in 1842—he returned to Melbourne and was managing the soda water factory of James (later ‘Sir James’) Palmer. In John Adamson’s lithograph of Melbourne the soda factory is shown located near the corner of Queen and Flinders Streets (indicated by arrow). James Palmer had arrived in Port Philip around the same time as Francis and became a well known colonial personage. Initially a doctor, he was an original trustee of the Public Library, was involved in the foundation of the Melbourne Hospital and was mayor of Melbourne in 1845-46. In the late 1840s he went on to represent the Port Phillip District in the Legislative Council of New South Wales and then became first president of the new Victorian Legislative Council, a position he held for fourteen years (Gross, 1974).

Fitzroy in the 1840s

In 1839, the first blocks of land north of what we now know as the Melbourne CBD were sold in Fitzroy (initially called Newtown). These were purchased in the main by Sydney-based speculators and quickly subdivided and on-sold. Development in Fitzroy was rapid (Robertson, 2008). In 1841 the population was around 600, by 1850 it had grown to 3,000 and by 1861 it was 11,807. By 1881 the population of Fitzroy had reached 23,118 people (Cutten, 1991). This was not surprising, considering in the post gold-rush boom years Melbourne had become the richest city in the world, and the second largest city in the British Empire after London (Melbourne, 2015).

Two years after this sketch was drawn (looking north up Brunswick Street towards Gertrude Street) is the first recording I have found of Francis residing in Fitzroy (Moore, 2012). *The Colonial Directory* of 1843 lists him as a butcher in Little Brunswick Street, Collingwood (which was renamed Fitzroy street around 1853). From the rate



‘Brunswick Street – Newtown from the front of our house’ June 1841
 Sarah Bunbury, State Library of Victoria (Moore, *Brunswick Street—lost and found*, 2012)

records it is evident that this was at the southern end of Little Brunswick St next door to the Devonshire Arms, most probably on the south side.

On 28 July 1842, Francis married Martha Davies at the newly opened (though still unfinished) St James Old Cathedral on the corner of William Street and little Collins Street (since moved to the hill on King Street). On 27 May 1843 their first child, William Thomas (known as Thomas) was born. Over the next ten years there followed six more children, four daughters who

survived to adulthood and then a son and a daughter who died in infancy.

While Francis was seen as a land speculator, and may have bought and sold numerous properties over time, his ownership of some properties seems to have been remarkably stable—particularly in this southern part of Fitzroy where for over forty years, he retained much of what he had built in the 1840s and 1850s.

On this nineteenth century map of south Fitzroy (Fig. 1) I have located some of the properties that he owned. The

shaded areas represent the properties, at times numbering fifteen or sixteen, which I have confirmed he owned in this area, many of which he built. The map shows the Devonshire Arms on the corner of Fitzroy and Princes Street (no.1), his butcher shop and dwelling of “four rooms, kitchen, slaughter house, curing house and stable” next door (no.2) — most probably on the south side (Melbourne Rate Book, 1850). Both date from the early 1840s. On the South West corner of Gertrude and Fitzroy Streets (No.3) he owned a large block of properties and on the corner of Gertrude and Fitzroy Streets was a bakery (No.4), which dates from around 1854 and three cottages next door to it, in Gertrude Street (no.5).

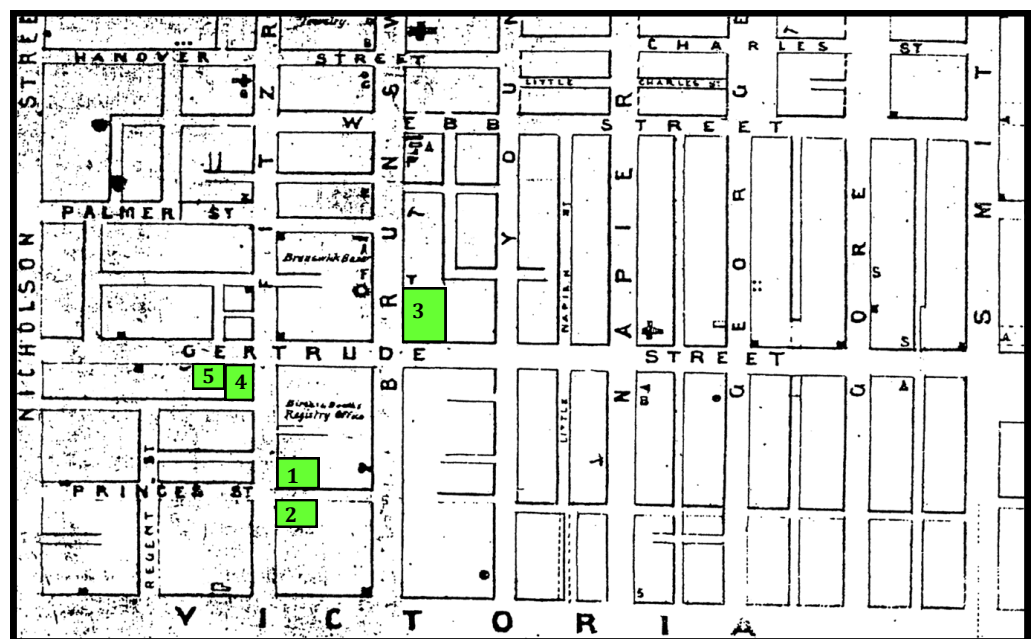


Figure 1: Nineteenth Century map of South Fitzroy showing Francis Clark’s properties.
 (State Library of Victoria)

The largest and most valuable group of property he owned was the block on the north east corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets, backing onto the former Atherton Street where the housing commission flats are today. This comprised at different times from 4-6 rateable properties fronting Brunswick Street extending round the corner and including another 4-8 fronting Gertrude street (Fitzroy Rate Books, 1858-1896).

As noted above, the first recording of Francis Clark in the area is as a butcher in Little Brunswick Street around 1843, a property which he seems to have owned till the early 1850s. In July 1849, *The Argus* reported that Francis Clark, butcher, appeared to answer an information filed against him by the Town Inspector for throwing blood up-

on Brunswick Street. The case was dismissed on an objection that the information did not set forth that the blood was on “a carriage or footway” in terms of the Act (Informations, 1849, p.2). He also had another butcher shop at this time on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Bourke Street in the Bourke Ward of the City.

The Devonshire Arms Hotel

It was around this time that Francis built the Devonshire Arms, considered to be Melbourne’s oldest extant licensed public house (and also Fitzroy’s oldest surviving building). Although he came from Essex, the hotel was apparently given the name Devonshire Arms owing to the pre-gold rush population of the area being mainly



The Devonshire Arms Hotel, Little Brunswick Street (Fitzroy Street)
Alan Jordan c1969 (State Library of Victoria)

from the south-west of England (Heritage Victoria, 2012). Francis was its first licensee from 1843 to 1845, but from then on it was run by other publicans. It was reported in the *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters Advocate* on December 10, 1845 that “The license of the Devonshire Arms, Collingwood, was transferred from Mr Francis Clark to Mr J. C. Passmore” — Passmore went on to be a well-known colonial publican (licensee of the Fawlkner Hotel and another Devonshire Arms in Brighton).

This photo is dated around 1969, when the building had fallen into some disrepair. The hotel is considered significant

for a number of reasons; architectural, social and historical. As well as being noted for its associations with Passmore and Francis Clark, who was seen as a prominent local businessman and land speculator, the Devonshire Arms hotel is considered of some historical significance as a very rare remnant of the colonial social fabric and built environment of early Melbourne and Fitzroy (Heritage Victoria, 2012). In the 19th century hotels were not just drinking places but both community and official gathering spaces—sites where community, political and council meetings were held. As well they served as coroner’s courts and electoral ballot locations. Additionally the building is of architectural significance as one of few remainders of pre-gold rush era Melbourne, demonstrating early construction techniques and materials (Heritage Victoria, 2012). It is now part of St Vincent’s Hospital—formerly De Paul House and now the Department of Addiction Medicine.

Francis Clark owned the Devonshire Arms Hotel for approximately fifty years, though it appears that he may have tried to sell it in the mid 1850s. Around this time there were a number of articles in *The Argus* which indicate Henry McGregor (later licensee of the Rob Roy Hotel) and his family lived at the Devonshire Arms and that he held the license (Family Notices, 1853). However he is also listed in the 1854 *List of Improved and Unimproved Property in the Fitzroy Ward* as being the owner. It is not entirely clear what happened with the sale, or how far it progressed, but in the August 1855 *Victorian Government Gazette* there was a report of what seemed a rather convoluted court case in which the Bank of Victoria was seeking to recover £2,600 from McGregor relating to a bill of exchange drawn by Francis Clark. This bill of exchange, which came due in April 1855, was endorsed by Clark to Edward Langton who in turn had endorsed it to the Bank of Victoria, which was seeking to recover the money. McGregor was apparently no longer locatable and by 1854/55 Michael Tobin was the licensee of The Devonshire Arms. At this time Edward Langton took over Francis’ butcher shop at 121 Elizabeth Street in the city and The Devonshire Arms is again listed as being owned by Clark. It would appear most likely that McGregor did not meet the payment and the sale fell through, Clark then retained the Arms until his death in 1896.

The Bakery — corner of Fitzroy and Gertrude Streets

The building permit for the bakery on the south west corner of Gertrude Street and Fitzroy Street is recorded on the Burchett index as being applied for in 1853, and Jill Robertson records the iron ovens as being cast for Francis Clark in Port Melbourne (then known as Sandridge) in the 1850s (2008).

Despite all the changes in Fitzroy over the years, this building remained a bakery for over 135 years and seems to have had remarkably stable tenancy, with only a handful of families baking here from the 1850s until the 1930s.

Originally listed as a “bakery, house, shop and stables” occupied by John Burke, Francis then rented it to William Shurey, it then passed to Jonathon McDonald and the Gearon family till the late 1930s (Melbourne Rate Books, 1845-1858). In the 1960s the Mooncrust Wholemeal bakery was based here. In the 1980s Potts Bakery—which had the distinction of being Melbourne’s largest commercial bakery still using wood-fired ovens (those installed by Francis over 130 years earlier) were baking here (Robertson 2008). These days it is the location of Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre. Francis also built, and for a time owned, three cottages in Gertrude Street next to the bakery.



Bakery at 62 Gertrude Street
(Collection of the author, 2014)



Bakers' ovens installed by Francis Clark in the 1850s
(Collection of the author, 2014)

It is noted by Alexander Sutherland that around 1851 Francis and a number of others went to New Zealand with the notion of taking up grazing land. However, by now the gold rush had begun in earnest—between 1851 and 1861 Victoria produced one third of the world's gold—and on their return to Victoria they had to abandon the project because they could not get sufficient men to go with them to provide labour for the project (Harper, 2011).

For a Little Brunswick Street snapshot of the rapid growth at this time, the Burchett index shows that between 1852 and 1855, ten new building permits were issued—five houses, a smithy, a hay

and corn store, two iron stores and a workshop—all opposite, or within a few doors of the Devonshire Arms Hotel (Burchett, c1980). Between 1850 and 1861 the population of Fitzroy quadrupled.

Gertrude and Brunswick Street corner

This is the most impressive looking of the buildings Francis is known to have built and owned. In 1858 Francis was rated as the owner of four properties in Gertrude Street and four in Brunswick Street at this location. The Burchett index records Clark as applying to build two double storey shops in Gertrude Street “Next to the Colonial Bank” in 1859, and Clauscen’s furniture store occupied the building in the 1880s (Burchett, c1980). An advertisement in the *Mercury and Weekly Courier* in 1886 proclaims GC Clauscen’s “Furnish Throughout Warehouse” at the corner of



Northeast corner of Gertrude and Brunswick Streets
Looking north up Brunswick Street, 1906 (State Library of Victoria)

Gertrude and Brunswick Streets Fitzroy, “This is the only house of its kind in the colonies where you can obtain at one establishment every article required for furnishing a house” (p.1).

Some of the other businesses which occupied these buildings included at various times: a pawnbroker, tailor, eating house, a number of confectioners, an oyster shop, a hairdresser, a tobacconist, a bootmaker and a fish shop. (Fitzroy Rate Books, 1858-1896). Edward Langton, later to become a free

trade politician and member of the lower house, had a butcher shop with his brother in 1858 until the mid 1860s—this was located in Francis’ highest rated property on Brunswick Street, and was likely the one on the corner (Cooksley, 1974). This building was demolished in 1969 to make way for the Atherton Gardens public housing estate.

Elizabeth Street butchery

As noted earlier Francis maintained a butcher shop at the corner of Elizabeth Street and Bourke Street in the City from about 1845 to 1852.

This property at 121 Elizabeth Street (pointed out here with the arrow) was opposite the GPO, the original of which was completed in 1852. The version we know today with colonnades, the early incarnation of which is depicted in this picture, was mostly constructed in the 1860s.

It was from this address that Francis, after an unsuccessful attempt to gain election in 1848,



Northwest corner of Elizabeth and Bourke Streets (butcher shop at 121 Elizabeth Street)
Looking west up Bourke Street 1866 (State Library of Victoria)

was elected to the Melbourne City Council in 1852 for Bourke Ward, and was thus able to more successfully agitate for the establishment of Fitzroy as a separate government entity to Melbourne—which occurred in 1858.

There was a case before the Supreme Court in 1853 involving the Bourke and Elizabeth Street property. The brothers of the deceased owner John Mills were attempting to oust the four lessees of the properties, one of whom was Francis Clark. The case had been heard twice in Melbourne where both times it was found “substantially in favour of the 4 defendants”, as it was again at the Supreme Court (Supreme Court, 1853, p.7).

In 1851 Francis Clark was awarded the first gold medal for cured beef at the Melbourne Exhibition—prior to refrigeration this was considered a valuable skill (Sutherland, 1888; Victorian Industrial Society, 1851). In about 1854, when he retired from business (apparently to the Fairy Hills property in Alphington) Edward Langton took up the proprietorship of the Elizabeth Street butcher shop.

Fairy Hills Alphington

Leaving Fitzroy after he retired from business, Francis bought two parcels of land in the early 1850s in Keelbundoora (Alphington) from the original owner, speculator Thomas Walker. He paid £2,600 for 55 acres in October 1852 and immediately sold nine acres on which the Darebin Creek Hotel stood (which is still there today) (Commercial Intelligence, 1852). In 1856 he then sold most of the land on the west side of Heidelberg Road for close to 100% per acre profit (Garden, 1972).



Fairy Hills property at Alphington
H.F. Holden, c1930 (Heidelberg Historical Society)

On the remaining 46 acres on the hill overlooking the confluence of the Darebin and the Yarra River he built Fairy Hills a “large and comfortable house” from local mudstone. “It was a typical homestead of the day situated amongst huge redgum trees, with ...a driveway ... [which joined] the main road where the present Boulevard now joins the highway” (Fairy Hills, 1980, p.6). Although a number of sources cite Francis as having ‘retired’ to Fairy Hills around 1853

or 1854, it seems he did not settle here permanently until after the mid-1870s. His son William Thomas resided at Fairy Hills at one stage in the 1860s and the house and land was also leased out at various times during this period (The Boulevard, 1982).

Trips back to England 1857-1877

According to Sutherland (1888), the reason Francis did not settle at Fairy Hills was because he made three trips back to England between 1857 and 1877. He left for the first of these in January 1857 on the *Oneida*, bound for Southampton (Shipping Intelligence, 1857). The United Kingdom census of 1861 records Francis Clark gentleman and his five children; William Thomas 17, Mary Ann 15, Elizabeth Susan 13, Catherine Hanna 11, and Armenia Martha 9, a housekeeper, a cook and a young housemaid residing at Goston Lodge, also known as Clock House, in Dunmow Essex.

This house dates back to 1580 and is said to have a resident ghost—Anne Line, who was the housekeeper at Goston Lodge in the late 1500s and was hung by the Elizabethan Government in 1601 for harbouring a Catholic priest. She was later made a saint (The Clock House, 1986).

The family lived at Goston Lodge until 1866, during which time Francis' wife Martha died (Deaths, 1862). In 1866 he sold up the household goods, stock and farm equipment, including "six acres of red wheat, and a capital



Goston Lodge (Clock House) Dunmow Essex

The Property of Sir G. Beaumont Bar.

Drawn and engraved by J. Greig (Higham, & Greig, *Excursions through Essex*, 1818)

chestnut harness mare, to remove to distant parts of the county" being Wellesley Villas in Wanstead, about 30 kilometres to the south (Classified Sales, 1866).

While the family were still living in England his daughter Catherine died at the age of nineteen (Deaths, 1869). A few months later his second eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was married to Richard Randall from Dunmow and subsequently made Francis a grandfather two years later (Marriages, 1869). The 1871 United Kingdom census shows him living with daughters Mary Anne and Armenia, now 25 and 20.

In August 1869 (William) Thomas, having gained his Master of Arts at St John's College Cambridge, returned to Australia with his elder sister, Mary Anne. After five months she sailed back to England, but Thomas remained in Australia staying in Heidelberg with family friends and future parents-in-law; the Stookes (Maxwell, 1870). When (William) Thomas married Louisa Stooke in Melbourne in 1875, Francis was still living in England, in Greville Road, Kilburn (Family Notices, 1875).

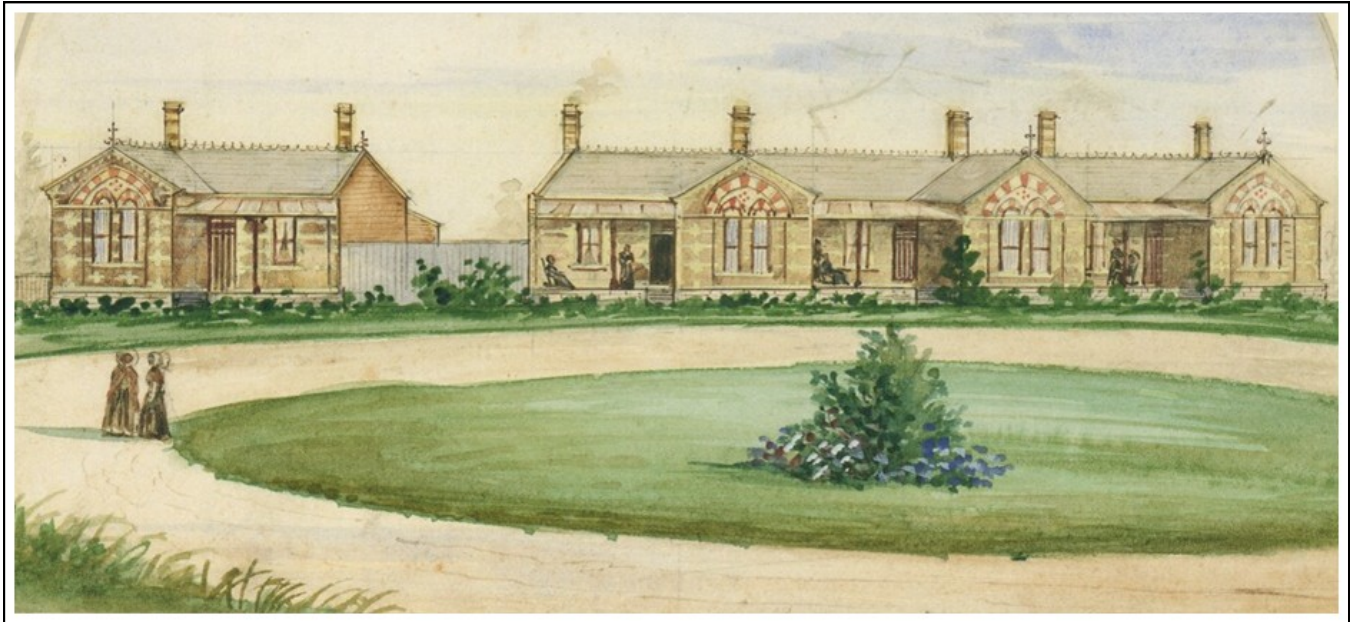
Return to Australia 1877

By 1877 Francis had returned to Melbourne and at the age of 57 married his second wife, Henrietta Morley, 30 years his junior. A year later they had twin daughters who were stillborn, but finally in 1887 after ten years of marriage Francis and Henrietta had a son, Harry Vivian, who though surviving his father, died in 1905 at the age of eighteen.

In 1886, a year before Harry Vivian's birth, William Thomas, Francis' only son from his first marriage, died at the age of 43 at his residence in Glenferrie Road Hawthorn, leaving his widow to raise their six young children.

After Francis' final return from England and marriage to Henrietta he settled at Fairy Hills, and though retired, continued to take an active part in colonial business. In at least 1892, 1893 and 1894 he was chairman of share-

holders for Cohn Bros Victoria Brewery Co. It was reported in *The Argus* that at the 1894 half-yearly shareholder's meeting, Francis Clark said the business of the company "continued to be of satisfactory character due to very careful management exercised at the brewery" (Cohn Bros', 1894). Over this period of time he was also the director of a number of other brewing and milling companies.



Old Colonists' Village, Rushall Crescent Fitzroy North
(State Library of Victoria)

In November 1887 at the 18th annual meeting of the Old Colonists Association of Victoria, money was donated to build the Jubilee Cottages at Rushall Crescent. His Excellency the Governor Sir Henry B Loch "generously offered to head a donation list for the first of [a number of group] cottages [to be built], with a contribution of £50. This



Jubilee Cottages, Rushall Park (built 1888-89, demolished 1969-70)
(O'Neill, *A place of their own*, 2005)

offer was immediately followed up by Messrs Francis Clark, AG Young and Reverend CT Perks volunteering to give similar amounts." John Halfey and Francis Henty promised £100 and £50 respectively, and Mr George Selth Coppin also donated. The memorial stone was set to be laid by the Governor on the 2nd of December (The Old Colonists Association, 1887).

Joseph Crook, who was responsible for a large number of

buildings around Prahran, Windsor, St Kilda and Malvern, designed the Jubilee Cottages as well as Sumner Hall, the caretaker's residence and a number of other components of the Old Colonists complex (O'Neill, 2005).

The Jubilee Cottages were built in 1888, but in 1970 due to maintenance problems six of these were demolished and replaced, though the foundation stones have been preserved.

It is clear from the grandeur of William Thomas's grave that Francis was indeed wealthy in 1886 when his son died. The inscription reads:

In memory of William Thomas Clark who died June 8th 1886, aged 43, the beloved and only son of Francis Clark, Fairy Hills, Alphington, and dear husband of Louisa Clark. Also of Louisa, the beloved wife of William Thomas Clark, who died 10th Jan 1902, aged 46 years. Also Francis Henry Clark beloved eldest son of the above [William Thomas] and dearly loved husband of Margaret Eleanor Clark [nee Cole] died 9th November 1938, aged 61 years.



Grave of William Thomas Clark, Melbourne General Cemetery, Parkville.

(Francis Clark's more modest headstone is visible to the right).

(Collection of the author, 2012)

The 1890s 'bust'

In the great Land Boom of the 1880s Melbourne grew rapidly, becoming Australia's largest city and as previously noted, for a while the second-largest city in the British Empire. In 1891, the Great Boom gave way to a decade-long depression which created high unemployment and ruined many businesses, with banks and building societies crashing and wages falling. There were a series of shearer and miner strikes in 1891 and 1892, over 130 companies went into liquidation in Victoria in 1892, and by 1893 the Federal bank collapsed and many financial institutions (including several major ones) suspended trading. (Economic History, 2015). By 1894 the worst of the crisis was over, but property prices were hit hard, rents were reduced and many properties remained vacant. It was not until the 1920s that property prices in Fitzroy really recovered (Robertson, 2008).

Fig. 2 shows the rate valuation and occupancies of the properties Francis owned in Fitzroy in 1895 compared to 1889.

Property	Occupier	1889	Occupier	1895
Gertrude St (south side, cnr Fitzroy St)	Bakery	£110	Bakery	£90
	Cottage	£22	Cottage	£12
	Cottage	£28	Cottage	£18
	Wood dealer	£36	Wood dealer	£18
Gertrude St (north side, cnr Brunswick St)	Pawnbroker	£80	Pawnbroker	£60
	Tailor	£100	Eating house	£55
	Eating house	£100	Eating house	£55
	Confectioner	£75	Confectioner	£55
Brunswick St	Furniture mart	£468	Vacant	£350
	Tailor	£100	Tobacconist	£50
	Oyster shop	£100	Vacant	£50
	Confectioner	£100	Vacant	£50
	Hairdresser	£100	Boot maker	£50
	Butcher	£110	Butcher	£100
Fitzroy St	Devonshire Arms	£220	Devonshire Arms	£180

Figure 2: Table of rate valuations for Fitzroy properties 1889 – 1895

Information compiled from Fitzroy rate books (Fitzroy Library History Collection)

As can be seen, by 1895 all the rents had fallen, some by as much as half of what they had been four years earlier. Additionally a number of properties, including the highest rated on the corner of Gertrude and Brunswick Streets, were vacant.

Francis Clark's death 1896

When Francis died in February 1896, various death notices alluded to his supposed wealth "Clarke (sic) appears to have made most of his wealth speculating in land and buildings in the Fitzroy and Alphington (now Ivanhoe) areas with the result that he died a wealthy man" (Heritage Victoria, 2012)

And this: "We regret to chronicle the death on Tuesday morning at the advanced age of 75, of Mr. Francis Clark of Fairy Hills. Mr. Clark was an old pioneer, and, at one time, was partner in a large business carried on in Brunswick St. Fitzroy ...He was supposed to have died a very wealthy man, as he was a large shareholder in several breweries and flour mills, and was owner of valuable blocks of property in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, and else where." (Heidelbergshire, 1896)

Francis left a long and complex will written in 1892, which attempted to provide various protections and trustees for his land and other assets.

In his will there were ten pieces of property described, the most valuable being that:

- "at the North East corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets" (see Fig. 3) which comprised numbers 52-62 Brunswick St and 97-101 Gertrude Street—this was "valued at £10,000".

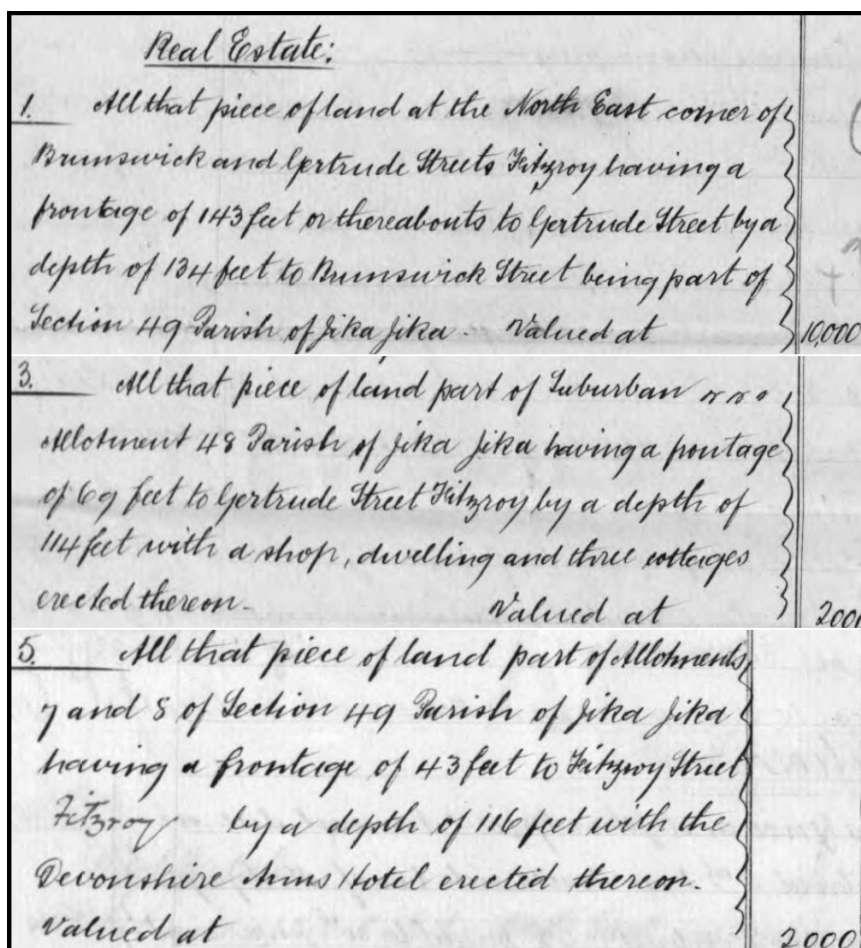


Figure 3. Excerpts from Francis Clark's Will
(The State Library of Victoria)

Also described in the will were:

- "a shop dwelling and three cottages" on the south side of Gertrude St and including the bakery at no 62 "valued at £2,000"
- The Devonshire Arms Hotel (in Fitzroy Street, measuring 43x116 ft) also "valued at £2,000".

In addition there was another £9,515 worth of real estate comprised of:

- two cottages in High St Northcote
- the Royal Hotel in Flemington Road (more recently called The Redback Hotel and now apartments) and two shops
- a block with a 123 foot frontage in Railway Street Alphington
- a 68 x 162 foot block in Heidelberg.
- 308 acres in Nilimbik
- Seven acres and the house at Fairy Hills
- 47 acres on Heidelberg Road Alphington, part of the Fairy Hills property.

At the time of his death he also left what at face value amounted to over £65,000 worth of shares, however £59,000 of these were valueless. His total assets on death amounted to £42,149—hence the “supposedly died a very rich man” (Heritage Victoria, 2012). However, with mortgage interest and overdrafts owing, overdue calls on shares, and even unpaid Hawthorn Grammar tuition fees (for his grandsons) he had liabilities totalling £77,128. Consequently he was actually £34,978.11.11 in debt at his death.

By the time Francis died in 1896, the economic climate was very different to what it had been ten years before. The comparison of Francis’ head stone with that of his son is glaringly illustrative of this.

Francis’ modest headstone reads.

In Loving memory of Francis Clark late of Fairy Hills Alphington who died 4th February 1896, aged 75 years. Also Harry Vivian, youngest son of the above and dearly loved only child of Henrietta Clark who died 3rd July 1905, aged 18 years.

Francis did however manage to provide enough protection for his widow Henrietta to remain in the Fairy Hills homestead until 1930, even if the surrounding land had by then been reduced to little more than two acres. By the First World War the area had become “very popular with home buyers” and Fairy Hills was “considered *the* desirable residential area” (Reidy, 2010). The house itself stood until 1956 when it was demolished to make way for further subdivision. Clark Road however still remains, and together with the western section of The Boulevard, it follows what was once the driveway from Heidelberg Road to Francis Clark’s Fairy Hills homestead, which was located on the west side of Clark Road, where Sylvan Court is today (Holden, n.d).



Francis Clark’s Headstone, Melbourne General Cemetery, Parkville.
(Collection of the author, 2012)

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