



October 2006

fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com

PO Box 180, Fitzroy 3065

Sunday, 22 October 2006, 2pm to 4pm Old Colonists' Open Day



Guided tours will be given by the residents of the grounds, Summer Hall, and a cottage. Home made produce will be for sale and notes on the history of the cottages will be available.

The organisers would like some assistance in setting up stalls and seating from 12 to 2pm. If you can assist please telephone Tim Gatehouse at 9489 2357.

Saturday, 18 November 2006, Visit to Newstead Historical Society

Newstead Historical Society will open its headquarters, the old court house, so we can see some of the large number of books recently bequeathed to the society, as well as the society's own records. A craft market is held in the town on that morning, and Rose Chong has kindly offered her garden for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch, before going to the court house at 1.30pm.

Newstead is 16 km from Castlemaine on the Maryborough road. If interested please telephone Tim Gatehouse at 9489 2357.



Friday, 1st December 2006, 7.30pm - FHS Annual Dinner at Dante's, 150 Gertrude Street



Our Annual Dinner will be held in Dante's function room (upstairs) at 150 Gertrude Street, corner of Napier Street.

We have arranged a two-course menu for \$35.

Please RSVP by 25 November to Tim Gatehouse on 9489 2357 or to Sue Bradshaw at bradshaw@rabbit.com.au

Dante's Gertrude Street building dates from the 1850s, and our function room is in the Napier St extension built in 1925 by William Beckett - look him up at <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>

Alfred Deakin's 150th Anniversary in Fitzroy



Members of the Deakin family and FHS at Alfred Deakin's Fitzroy Court-house

Alfred Deakin was born in George Street, Fitzroy, on 3 August 1856, the second child and only son of William and Sarah Deakin. Mike Moore, convenor of The Fitzroy History Society, organized a walk on Sunday 6 August, commencing at the grand Fitzroy Town Hall, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Alfred Deakin's birth.

Standing on the flight of steps that ascend to the former Fitzroy Public Library, Mike Moore welcomed Alfred Deakin's descendants, Councillor Annabel Barbara from the City of Yarra, and other interested people. Mike drew attention to the foundation stone of the Fitzroy Public Library which Robert Best, mayor of Fitzroy, laid on 18 December 1888, the same day that Alfred Deakin, then Chief Secretary of Victoria, laid the foundation stone of the adjoining court-house. On that day Robert Best presented Alfred Deakin with a silver trowel and thanked him for the 'substantial aid' which he and his government 'had ever extended to the Fitzroy Council'. Mike explained that Robert Best was born in Fitzroy six weeks before Alfred Deakin, and their paths often crossed as both pursued political careers.

During the walk Mike Moore provided the main story line, while Deakin descendants and other people contributed additional information, giving a contrapuntal effect. When the group moved into Condell Street to view the foundation stone of the court-house, Antony, husband of Miranda, a great-granddaughter of Alfred Deakin, recalled that the trowel used by Deakin to lay the foundation stone had been reinvented as a cake server by his descendants and used for numerous family celebrations!

The Deakin cottage at 90 George Street where Alfred was born has been demolished but the house next door to the left is similar in style. In 1926 the Historical Society of Victoria attached a memorial tablet to the cottage and Alfred Deakin's three daughters, Ivy (Mrs Brookes), Stella (Mrs Rivett), and Vera (Mrs White) attended the ceremony. J. Hume Cook, on behalf of the Australian Natives' Association, spoke of Deakin's campaign for Australian federation, while A.W. Greig, a founder of the historical society, referred to Deakin's work in the Victorian parliament and as Prime Minister of Australia. Various Deakin descendants attended another ceremony in 1956 to mark the 100th anniversary of Deakin's birth.

The engineer's department of the Fitzroy City Council issued a demolition permit for the Deakin cottage in 1978

without realizing its significance and without informing councillors. On hearing that demolition had started, the council tried to buy the cottage, but to no avail. The historic cottage was replaced by a stark red-brick house.

Nineteenth-century costumes in the window of Rose Chong's Costumes hire shop on the corner of Gertrude and Gore Streets set the scene for discussion about the Deakins' next place of residence in Gore Street. Alfred remembered this house as having 'a honeysuckle-covered window and a plot containing two peach trees... the toyshop around the corner'. In 1863 the Deakins moved to South Yarra and arranged for the removal of their Gore Street house to Adams Street, where it was 'bricknogged' and extended.

Mike Moore indicated that the Deakins' house in Gore Street was near the corner of Gertrude Street where in 1860 William Deakin conducted a cab, coach and dray business in partnership with his wife's brother Richard Bill. Alfred, a small boy with a vivid imagination, was interested in the theatre. Together with his playmates he put on plays, using one of the wagons in the stable of his father's coaching business as a stage.

Judith, a granddaughter of Alfred Deakin, mentioned that his first piece of legislation as a member of the Victorian parliament was a private member's bill 'to tighten the law for the prevention of cruelty to animals', and that this may have been prompted by his boyhood memories of cruelty to horses. In later life, when going for his customary early morning walk with his two dogs, Alfred always carried an apple in his pocket for the milkman's horse.

The walk ended at the old two-storey building now known as Dante's restaurant on the corner of Gertrude and Napier Streets – a favourite haunt of The Fitzroy History Society. The Dante's building dates back to the 1850s, to the time when the Deakin family lived nearby. Maria, the proprietor of Dante's, greeted the walkers in the upstairs function room, a handsome room with dark wood panelling and deep red walls. A display of Deakin memorabilia included press cuttings about, and images of, the cottage in George Street.

Three of Deakin's granddaughters and their grandchildren clustered round a splendid anniversary cake that Maria's mother, Val, had baked a few hours earlier. When the candles were lit, everyone sang Happy Birthday to Alfred and generally agreed that he was there in spirit.

Carole Woods

Quiz Night



The Quiz Night at the end of 2006 was an enjoyable and challenging event attended by 32 members, with Steve Robertson again as our very entertaining quizmaster. All aspects of Fitzroy's history were covered in the questions and photo identification segment.

Thanks to Catherine Pugsley, Paul Bevilacqua, Sue Bradshaw, Jill Robertson and Steve Robertson of PBS FM radio for organising the event. Generous prizes were donated by local businesses and by Steve and Jill.



T G

Our Annual General Meeting

OUR AGM was held on Thursday, 10th August. Our guest speaker, Laurie O'Brien spoke on Father Tucker and Brother Bill and gave us an interesting and well-illustrated talk on these two important figures in the history of Fitzroy. In the formal part of the meeting your new committee for 2007 was elected. It is:

Mike Moore (Convenor), Tim Gatehouse (Secretary), Keith Ross (Minute Secretary), Harold Mackrell (Treasurer), John Senyard (Membership), Mike O'Brien (Newsletter), Sue Bradshaw, Lina Favrin, Heather McRae, Jill Robertson, June Senyard, Peter Coyle, Catherine Pugsley, Paul Bevilacqua & Chris Friday.

Subscription Reminder

Please glance at your address label. **Members** that are **Financial** will have **2007** (or a later year) next to their name. If an earlier year appears on your label, could we ask that you send us your subscription of \$10 per person per year at your earliest convenience so that the cost of this Newsletter and our other outgoings can be met.

Re-Opening of the Fitzroy Town Hall

The City of Yarra has indicated that it plans a ceremonial re-opening of Fitzroy Town Hall in late March 2007. By that time, installation of the new lift (to facilitate disabled access to the upper level of the Hall) and interior restoration of the building will have been substantially completed. Celebrations for the re-opening are planned over a period of a week, with a range of historical and cultural activities planned. It has been suggested that FHS conduct some historical tours of Fitzroy Town Hall. There may also be the opportunity for us to run other events there during that week.

M O'B

Goldie Collins – vexatious litigant

Does anyone have any information regarding the notorious vexatious litigant Goldie Collins?

He was a champion Fitzroy footballer in the 1920s.

His legal battles which caused him to be declared a vexatious litigant commenced in the 1950s in a dispute with the Northcote council over a fence. He died at Panton Hill in 1982.

June Senyard is inquiring on behalf of a Ph.D. student who wishes to locate any of Goldie Collins' descendants.

J S

Fitzroy Fire Stations

We have recently been researching (South) Fitzroy Fire Stations. This came about because it was discovered that the architect of the major extensions to Fitzroy Town Hall, George Johnson, had also designed an adjacent Fire Station in Moor Street. The foundation stone (dated 1888) for that station is in the Melbourne Fire Museum: it was recovered from Merri Creek!

It looks as though this Fire Station may have been constructed (rather than just having a foundation stone!) because its outline appears on one of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works maps for the period. However, its period of usefulness would have been short: in December 1890 the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was constituted and it took over the functions of local brigades. In the MFB accounts for 1892 a cost of £88. 11. 0 is recorded for the Fitzroy Station, perhaps for building upkeep. We suspect the building was demolished soon afterwards: sadly, we have not yet been able to find photographs or plans but our search continues.

There were more Fitzroy brigades. *The Australasian Fireman* of 31st May 1888 records brigades at Fitzroy City, Fitzroy City No 1 and Fitzroy Temperance (the last being 'not associated'). So there is plenty of work ahead for anyone interested in this subject.

M O'B