



Fitzroy History Society Oral History Project 2015-2017

Transcript of interview with Anne and Paul Coghlan

(Interview conducted by Meg Lee and Marion Glanville from Fitzroy History Society on 12 December 2016)

Paul and Anne Coghlan lived in North Fitzroy and Fitzroy in their early family life. They became very involved in community matters and in 1974-75 Paul was Mayor of Fitzroy. Anne was instrumental in the reshaping and relocation of the Isobel Henderson Kindergarten among other community educational improvements.

The interview describes the community of Fitzroy and North Fitzroy in the early 1970s, the expansion of St Vincent's Hospital and the nature of Gertrude Street.

There is a wide range of Council improvements discussed. These include the opening-up of meetings to the community, the struggle to save Brookes Crescent from Housing Commission demolition, the dilemmas with old planning laws and developments, improvements to road and traffic management, Edinburgh Gardens, the F19 freeway, the transformation of the local library and the establishment of community based child care.

Discussion of Paul's Chinese ancestry and beginnings in Creswick are also interesting.



START OF TRANSCRIPT

- Facilitator: This is 12 December and Marion and Meg are interviewing, Anne and Paul Coghlan.
- Anne: We bought a house in North Fitzroy in 1969, just as we got married. It was all we could afford really, a small house in North Fitzroy. We didn't have a car, of course, and so we were looking to live somewhere close to town and public transport. We found our little house in Rowe Street, North Fitzroy. So, we'd either catch the tram, walk through the Edinburgh Gardens and catch the tram into town along Brunswick Street or up to Queens Parade and get the tram which went down to, Gertrude Street and up Bourke Street. It was a lovely position in the end block but just down near the Edinburgh Gardens.
- Anne: So we were there in 1969, then in 1976 we moved to Gore Street, the block between Gertrude and Victoria Parade because by that time we were about to have number three child. In those days people didn't build up on their little terrace houses of course. We were there until 1985 when we moved, so we haven't been in Fitzroy for 31 years ago.
- Facilitator 1: Well it's those early years, Anne, we're really interested in. So what was the community like around Rowe Street, for example?
- Paul: There was still then a lot of migrant families, a lot of Italian families and some Greek families. I can remember when we first moved in going up to Queens Parade, by then we had a car, and I drove the car to the Italian greengrocer who noticed leaves and things on the car. He said, 'Oh do you live here?' I said 'Yeah, I live around in Rowe Street'. He said, 'Oh! that's funny, when I moved here I was the only Italian and now you've moved here and you're the only Australian'!
- Now neither story is actually true but you can understand the point Nick was trying to make.
- We had a gentle battle with people to stop the alteration of the houses, to try and preserve the Victorian character when they would quite like to remove the windows and put bigger windows in the front and do all of that. But they were pretty good, by and large, weren't they?
- Anne: Yes, and just in our little block, on our side of the street, to the east we had an Italian family, just right next door to us they were Spanish, then next door they



were Greek. Several Greek houses and then a young Australian couple before you got to the corner. Then opposite there were older Australian families.

Facilitator 2: When you say stopping them putting big windows and things, was it a big meeting of residents?

Paul: Not at that stage... It was just a local sort of talking to your neighbours Although the Fitzroy Residents' Association was formed at the end of '69 or maybe 1970, and that was focussed around those sort of preservation type issues and so on. So we were both active in that from the very beginning. That was made up almost entirely of new young families moving back into the area, then.

Facilitator 1: What was the nature of the occupations of the neighbours in the neighbourhood?

Paul: Oh, it was beginning to become professional people, I think...

[5:18]

Anne: The Spaniard, was a carpenter, I think, and several members of the Greek family, were taxi drivers. Then next door, the Catanos, were into factory type of work.

Facilitator 1: Because there would've been a number of local factories around?

Anne: Yes, Best Street had shoe factories. Although the changes were coming really, a lot of those factories were closing down.

Paul: When they widened Hoddle Street, which they did in the sort of mid-'60s a lot of factories were lost along there. But the middle part, what we would've called central Fitzroy, the bit between, Johnston Street and Alexandra Parade, you had shoe factories. But they were beginning to wane a little bit even then.

Facilitator 2: Your ancestry, you say in the newspaper article you have Chinese ancestry.

Paul: Yeah.

Facilitator 2: Was that unique in Fitzroy?

Paul: No, my people come from Creswick up there near Ballarat. My grandfather was a storekeeper, my mother was born in Ballarat. There was no discernible Chinese community in Fitzroy, although just down here, at the back of St Vincent's, onto Nicholson Street, was the place where S.T. Goon who was a very famous Chinese herbalist. So St Vincent's and St Goons, were the pair.



- Facilitator 1: Now are you actually talking about Gertrude Street or Alma Street?
- Paul: In those days the use of that block which is now almost entirely the Hospital, was much more mixed use and there were quite significant buildings lost. There had been one of the very earliest buildings in Melbourne which had been a blacksmith's shop, just in off one of those little streets and that got knocked over and subsumed. The Hospital, and any part of it, which was zoned for hospital use. There are no effective planning controls, so they could really do what they liked.
- So yeah there were issues ultimately in subsequent years about trying to deal with, Hospitals or railways, because on railway land down in North Fitzroy in particular, they could do whatever they liked on railway land. The National Can Factory was built on railway land and there were no effective planning controls over that.
- Anne: Then there's another connection that you've got with that whole block.
- Paul: My mother, when she came down from Ballarat with one of her sisters, operated a café in Victoria Parade, effectively next door to St Vincent's Private. The building's still there but it's been converted into doctors' rooms. There's a florist there now, but she was there somewhere in the '30s.
- Facilitator: So, the whole area was really very familiar?
- Paul: Oh, no, not particularly.
- Anne: I think it was more familiar to me because my father was a medical practitioner and an honorary at St Vincent's Hospital. We might go in with him on the weekends when he was doing his rounds. So you'd park in the car park. There was a big red brick wall that ran around the corner, where there's now those consulting rooms on the corner of Fitzroy Street and there was obviously an incinerator in there and you could go in and park.
- So we used to often do that. Where the St Vincent's Private is now was Mount St Evin's, a private hospital run by a different order of nuns in fact. Both called Sisters of Charity but not the same. Quite a sort of an exclusive sort of hospital.
- They had like long term patients they were almost residents, that the nuns took in and looked after them.
- Facilitator 1: Of course, the Hospital wasn't as large as it is now?



Anne: Well, Mount St Evin's, no it wasn't nearly as large as that one is now and of course St Vincent's has grown exponentially. The maternity part of Mount St Evin's was on the East Melbourne side on Eastern Hill, I was born there, and our first child also.

Facilitator 2: I was too!

Anne: Well there you are, we've got something in common. Then Matthew, our eldest was born there in 1970 and in those days, of course, I think we went there during the evening and we get to the front door, and of course they let you in.

Paul: They said, 'Oh thank you Paul, we'll ring you up if anything happens'. We weren't even allowed to go inside in those days. were different later.

Facilitator 2: So, was it these planning issues the things that generated your interest to join council? What was council like in those days?

Paul: Well, it was a funny sort of combination of the planning stuff, on the one hand, was the Fitzroy Residents' Association, albeit it powerless in a way. There was Fitzroy Residents' Association, the Carlton Association, North Melbourne Association and some other people had formed a group called the Committee of Urban Action, as well. A number of publications were written.

Things like parking pointing out that you had schoolyards around inner Melbourne filled up with teachers' cars parked in them rather than being used. So people were interested in those sorts of issues. But almost in parallel, people were interested in politics and the Fitzroy Council was controlled by the ALP. I don't know but there were probably no Independents when we first came, although later on there were a couple of Independents. So there were 15 councillors, five wards, three councillors in each ward.

We were active in the North Fitzroy branch of the ALP which was reasonably active and nearly all the councillors, with the exception of perhaps one or two, belonged to the North Fitzroy branch. A couple belonged to the Fitzroy branch which was said in those days to meet in a phone box, there were very few members of the Fitzroy branch. Terry and Carol Carney became very active in that branch and that was rejuvenated after that.

Paul: Carol Carney was later on the Council. We joined when we came, because we'd come a little after the Pullens and a little after the Howes, by a couple of years almost. They were active - I don't know whether you could say active, because



you couldn't get anything much done in the branch. We used to meet in those days in the rotunda in the Edinburgh Gardens.

Anne: A bit bigger than a phone box then, but not much.

Paul: Yeah!, Not all that much bigger! I guess you'd have 15 or 20 people at a meeting at the most. But when the elections came along and I have the impression of people appearing out of the fog who you'd never seen before and would never see again who would simply come in and vote. A lot of them would've been council employees and others who'd been signed up over the years by the ruling group, I suppose you could put it.

So we battled on a bit and we'd move various motions about trying to get things done, directed to the caucus, and nothing would ever happen. I mean they'd just get filed. You could not move a motion that was binding on the members of the caucus in any event. But anyway, we moved various things and then thought we're not going to achieve very much if we don't get elected onto the Council. So Barry Pullen decided to run.

He got beaten the first time he ran in a tied vote, or we got it back to a tied vote. He'd been beaten by one, I think, or two or three or whatever it was on the Saturday night. We then had a recount in front of a magistrate on the Monday and we got it back to equal - or it might've been even the Tuesday. We imagined what would happen because the town clerk who was the returning officer had said - if it was equally decided by lot he'd simply draw a name out of the hat.

But Geoff Davies who was the Independent, a former wharf labourer, had been sworn in on the Monday night. So the Town Clerk said I won't do it anymore, because he's already been sworn in. We felt really badly done by arising out of that, but there was nothing much we could do about it. He seemed to have that power just as a - Geoff Davis had stood his trial for murder twice, if not three times, and succeeded on various appeals although his brother and a man called Cody who were pursued more significantly. But it's quite a famous case, Davies and Cody in the High Court.

But they'd been involved when Jim Cairns was on the tram as a police officer. One or other of them was armed and I think they pointed the gun at Jim Cairns on the tram and it got to this corner and he jumped off and ran into the Gardens and they pursued him. He finished up being a Fitzroy councillor, Geoff Davies. Then



Barry (Pullen) came around the next year and said are you going to run for the Council? I said, 'You've got to be stupid, I'm not stupid, I'm not going to do that'.

He said, 'Well do you agree with what they're doing? I said,' Of course I don't, and he said, 'Well, you better put your candidature where your mouth is', and hung up. So that's what got me, I found that persuasive. I then joined the Council and I had to go up for preselection which I got. One of the people from the South Fitzroy branch, or the Fitzroy branch, as I suppose it was, because it wasn't - I mean the only people who called South Fitzroy South Fitzroy were people from North Fitzroy. People who live in South Fitzroy call it Fitzroy as it is.

But just to make the distinction. In the year that Barry didn't succeed Ted Rush succeeded and he was a member of the Fitzroy branch. He lived down in Gore Street next door to where the nuns are. I think he had the nuns on one side and a brothel on the other, as was the way a bit in those days, although not many of the brothels were left. So, Ted was on for a year, then I got elected the next year with Barry. We both got elected. Glen Elias might've been elected that year as well.

Anne: I think he was at the same time.

Paul: I think who'd been in that seat had moved to Canberra in his work, he was a Commonwealth public servant. But he still maintained his position on the Council for some reason best known to him, I suppose. But Glen then won that seat. I think that Eileen Wheeler became the Mayor that year, she was part of the old group and she might've been re-elected that year as well, I think. I think Ted was Mayor the next year then Bill Peterson was the Mayor.

Anne: Jenny Miller was Mayor at some time.

Paul: and then I became the Mayor, I think, in 1974. So I'd got on the Council in '72 became Mayor in '74. Then we altered a lot of things in the Council framework. The meetings were basically closed meetings, except for the Council meetings. So you had committee meetings on Monday night, the Council met the next Monday. But all the Council did was to receive the reports of the committees which were then rubber stamped.

After the Council meetings there was a huge supper with all sorts of good things to eat which we ultimately did away with. Nearly all the committee meetings were closed so we made most of the committee meetings open. Except we closed



meetings for matters of finance and matters dealing with the staff, which was fair enough, the staff were entitled to have their affairs dealt with privately.

So what we regarded as being important was declaring war on the Housing Commission, really. By then two of the towers, at least, had been built and the third one might've been being built in Brunswick Street. There was a, this might've been before we got on council, a Methodist chapel just about on the corner of Brunswick Street and King William.

Paul: It was very, very early and we fought and fought and fought and lost the battle, really. It may have been later, But that chapel was demolished for the building of car park that's there now. Brian Howe had been connected, Brian was a Methodist Minister, it might've been his church even. It was probably before church amalgamation - before the Uniting Church.

So he was the Methodist Minister and that had been his church. But he, and the Howes lived up in North Fitzroy in McKean Street just down the road from the Pullens.

Anne: What was happening then was that the Housing Commission had earmarked Brookes Crescent for demolition.

Paul: Yeah, well they needed to as the Housing Commission of Victoria owned and operated the pre-cast concrete factory at Holmesglen. , I suspect it had been built there and was in operation immediately after the Second World War as they did a lot of development out along the Gardiners Creek which was exactly where the factory was. They later did Glenroy.

Facilitator 1: Royal Park?.

Paul: In Royal Park, the Flemington side of Royal Park. That shifted out to Glenroy and they needed more than 20 acres of urban clearance a year to build, for the economics of keeping Holmesglen going. All done in the name of slum clearance, of course. They'd taken the view that almost anything was better than the sort of conditions people were forced to live in and they were - well, they were partly right in a way. I mean a lot of the buildings were very bad.

They used to put notices on houses, I forget what they were called now, 'repair orders' I suppose. Or they could condemn them, 'condemned orders'., There were a lot of absentee landholders in this part of Fitzroy a lot of the time they were people who had inherited stuff within the family and had no connection with it.



I mean many families had unmarried aunts, largely a product of the First World War, when so many young men were killed, a lot of women didn't get the opportunity to re- marry and they had often inherited these properties. These were properties which sold in the '50s and early '60s for a few hundred pound. I mean the property value of them wasn't great, so people hung onto them so they got some rent out of them, but they didn't ever spend money on them.

The Housing Commission took a view that you could serve a notice on the basis that a house had an external toilet which wasn't something that most people would've worried about. The area off Brunswick Street had been called 'The Narrows' because they were all little streets. But there were communities where a lot of people had been in trouble with the police. But the families looked after one another so that if dad in one family went to gaol the other families looked after them.

People communicated with one another by being able to talk across the street. They're just little narrow streets. But we thought block clearance wasn't the way to go. You must be able to preserve these houses and we demonstrated that by looking at a number of little individual houses they'd tried to condemn. If people spent a bit of money on them they were perfectly good houses for people to live in. We got into Brookes Crescent and the work we were doing in Brookes Crescent was in a way Fitzroy Residents' Association type work rather than directly a council sort of thing.

But we were just people with our 'other' hats on. There was a man called Alan Jordan who was enormously influential. He was a social scientist. He had done a lot of work, very, very important work with homeless men in the Hanover Centre leading to stuff that's been done and elsewhere.

Facilitator 1: He was also a photographer, too?

Anne: A keen photographer- yes. He took a lot of photos

Paul: Yeah, a lot, of lovely, lovely photos. Both he and Barry (Pullen) took - an enormous number of photos. Yes, the girls and I have done a bit of work about cataloguing Alan's stuff. Alan designed some questionnaires that we did with the people at Brookes Crescent. We went around and talked to people about how they felt about losing their houses and so on.



They were very strongly opposed to it and we held public meetings and so on and people expressed very strong opposition. It led to the publication of various things which were published through CURA which was run, really, by Brian Howe out of the Presbyterian Church in Napier Street. It might've still been the Presbyterian Church, but they also had CURA.

Facilitator 1: CURA is an acronym?

Anne: Yes -Centre for Urban Research and Action.

Paul: Research and Action yes, I think. There's a famous publication with a picture of Daisy [Bates] on the front of it holding a shotgun, isn't there? The slogan is *THIS HOUSE NOT FOR SALE*.

Anne: Was it Daisy - I don't think, it wasn't Daisy Bates.

Paul: So that became, the *THIS HOUSE NOT FOR SALE*, that was the thing and that became a huge battle. We tried to run court cases to stop it and so on pretty unsuccessfully. But people hung on and hung in there. They had acquired a number of houses because people just couldn't bear it, really.

Then they came in one Saturday and demolished a whole lot of the houses that they owned, as a means of, they would never admit it, but it was really designed to put pressure on the people who wouldn't leave. They just turned it into, as though you were living in London in 1944, it was like a bomb site. But people still hung in there.

One of the local shoe factories which was managed by a man called Norm Yarr joined in the fight which was very important, because he provided a focus for trying to stop it, but eventually I think they made an offer that they couldn't refuse. So the residents and the Council were really left on their own.

Somehow, and we don't know quite how, the Housing Commission had commenced a bit of an urban renewal program and had an urban renewal commissioner. But they hadn't really achieved very much in the name of urban renewal, they just found it all a bit too hard. Because the hard core people in charge of the Housing Commission were committed to high rise being the solution and committed to maintaining the keeping Holmesglen factory going and everything else, even though we were able to demonstrate by then that, of course, it was an amazingly expensive way of constructing houses.



The high rise flats here are just enormously expensive. I mean a three bedroom unit, excluding land cost of which there are some, would then cost \$30,000 and we're talking about the early '70s, I mean it's a huge amount of money and you could've spent it much better doing urban renewal. But you wouldn't have got as much accommodation and you wouldn't have put Holmesglen to good use.

Facilitator 1: Are the houses still standing in Brookes Crescent?

Paul: Some of the houses are still there because people hung in there. Eventually they just sort of gave up. I've never quite understood the Housing Commission.

Facilitator 1: Do you see this work as a FRA effort or acts by council?

Paul: The people doing the work might've been more broadly the FRA, with the people on the ground working. The Council was intimately involved we'd taken the action in the Supreme Court and so on, we put up council money to do it. I mean, we'd taken several unsuccessful Supreme Court actions to try and stop them doing things. But they were not bound by any of the planning regulations and not bound by the building regulations, so they could just build whatever they liked.

We tried to stop them at various times in various ways but it didn't always work. So there was a committee formed. By then Kaye Hargreaves, was employed by CURA.

She was working with the local community quite directly and doing lots of work with people. The committee did the planning of what would be done for the infill and so on and how it would be. By then a man called Ashman was the acting chairman of the Housing Commission.

Eventually he said, under a bit of attack from Kaye he said, 'Alright, alright, if you want me to say it I'll say it. 'Brookes Crescent stopped high rise in Victoria'

Facilitator 1: Heady days, Anne!

Anne: Yes, I really liked that one. It was not just the Housing Commission, there were all sorts of new planning things. There was Social Planning Office.

Paul: When me and Barry and people were first on the Council we had a social worker, I'm not even sure that she was employed fulltime. But what you had was Fitzroy full of Charity. Yes charities, which were operated to a large degree by people who did not live in Fitzroy, it was a 'good works thing'. So, for instance, the Isabel



Henderson Kindergarten was built and maintained by Clyde Old Girls' School, Isabel Henderson having been the first headmistresses at Clyde, that's where the name had come from.

Anne was later, importantly, involved in the rebuilding of the Isabel Henderson which was another quite important thing that happened. It was on Alexandra Parade in the triangle at that stage, where Queens Parade and Alexandra Parade meet.

Facilitator 1: The Island, it's colloquially called?

Anne: Yes, and in fact the building that was the Kindergarten was left unused for some years and eventually, I think, burnt down. There's nothing there now. It was an impossible place to have a kindergarten.

Paul: What comes next in the phase of things you might regard as being a bit important. I mean, the Housing Commission stuff was enormously important. But at the same time it was a constant challenge about planning and trying to stop people building bad blocks of flats and so on because there were very few restrictions. It was zoned Residential C which meant in those days, provided you didn't build on more than 50 per cent of the block, you could build just about whatever you liked.

But that 50 per cent included all the driveways that didn't have buildings on. It didn't mean you had 50 per cent open space, it meant - so there was a constant challenge of trying to deal with all of that on a sort of weekly basis. But the big ticket thing was the Housing Commission. It was huge, and then that battle having in a limited way been won, because a lot of the houses were still lost in Brookes Crescent. Barry I think suggested a meeting one day because they'd just had a look at the difference in cost of building in precast concrete or building just bricks.

A young architect come in at a couple of meetings later and said that they had just worked out that it's actually cheaper to build in bricks. I think they could've gleefully killed him the bosses. So we thought infill brick was much nicer. Then the roads and traffic had always been another huge issue. The original plan of the F19 coming into Fitzroy, at least drawn on a map, to cut a swathe through Fitzroy and come out really at about the corner of Carlton Street and Nicholson Street, would perhaps even go a bit further.



There might've even been some sort of reservation, although they gave that up because it was entirely impractical. Then eventually they just decided that they would build the F19 and they did. We'd managed to achieve some things like there is a reservation built on the F19 so that there's a permanent way in the middle of it which is significant, which is built to take a railway. There's a lot of extra cost went into that. I don't think they ever thought that they'd build the railway. The Tramways Board suggested a light rail which we would've embraced a bit and that's how these dividers are out there that separate the trams from the traffic. They were the first ones in Melbourne, and of course, the Tramways Boards were thinking about light rail. When I was the Mayor would I recommended that as a means of keeping the cars off the tramlines.

I mean it was another one of the things people didn't like much at the time. But the interesting part about it was the trams didn't get up here very much quicker but the cars did. It improved the cars access because it made it more orderly. You didn't get people queue jumping by going out onto the tramlines and pulling back in. The trams ran about 10 per cent quicker and the cars ran about 15 per cent quicker.

Facilitator 1: Could you tell us more about the kindergarten?

Anne: Well, we were faced with what was happening with the F19, the Eastern Freeway. So, we couldn't stay on 'the island' because it was too difficult with all the access for building of the freeway. So, we moved to temporary accommodation, a Guide hall, in Mark Street, North Fitzroy that we rented from the Guides.

It took us several years negotiating with the Country Roads Board and Health Department because they controlled money for building kindergartens, Councils and Housing Commission.

Eventually we got a site in Rowe Street, North Fitzroy, and we engaged architect, Daryl Jackson. We had a Daryl Jackson design. The kindergarten principal we had there was very keen on modern sorts of configurations. So that kindergarten, the double unit kindergarten, it's still going there and very successful. But it took a long time arguing with politicians and ministers. Eventually the Premier I think just said, 'fix it up for them', so we were probably such a nuisance.

Facilitator 1: Three or four years, Anne?



Anne: Mm, at least. Because by the time my Georgina was ready to go to kindergarten, she'd started school. She went to the little kindergarten in Mark Street for all of their kindergarten time. Matthew had been in the old kindergarten. But one thing, the Health Department people wanted to do, they kept suggesting other places for us. So we just stuck our heels in and said no, not appropriate, it's not suitable!

[48:48]

Paul: When I was on the committee of the Isabel Henderson Kindergarten, as the Council representative, and there was also somebody from the Free Kindergarten Union at that stage.

Anne: The kindergartens, some of them were affiliated with the Free Kindergarten Unions. But on the committee we had Clyde Old Girls'. So we had a Miss Brown, we always called her Miss Brown. She'd kept the books for years and years and years and years. Then there was Mrs Chester Guest who was the chairman at various stages. Then we had Anne Cantor, she was a Murdoch also Richard Sealy.

Paul: But anyway, by the time all this was going on really it had become a local, largely a local committee.

Anne: Yeah, so yeah a lot of local parents.

Paul: So there'd been that change really, that was quite a big change.

Anne: But these women were very supportive of what we were doing. People take it on.

Paul: Take it on and take it over. But I didn't finish the sort of social effort that gets told in a few sentences. But it was just an enormous amount of work, Anne and Annella Staghole being the ones who were principally involved in doing all of that. Then we had various things with demonstrations with the kids getting ourselves in the newspapers and so on to try and put a bit of pressure on. Anyway one night we decided to narrow the F19 and we just narrowed the road. We'd just decided we'd put all these things in, that shocked them.

We had no right to do it but we did it and they probably came along and ripped it all up again. But it just sort of made the point of trying to restrict the amount of traffic.

Facilitator 1: The swimming pool was saved in that process?



Paul: No, that's later. That's after our time. So, I would think the swimming pool battle is either in the '90s. But it's after our time. I mean the swimming pool was just there and we used it and we had the elderly citizens there as well. There was an elderly citizens building and that's where the Meals on Wheels and things were prepared.

Anne: The new swimming pool was built up the top corner in Clifton Hill, so people then began to use the indoor one that's still there. So, all of our children had their swimming lessons, there, not down at Fitzroy because that was open.

Paul: Council had the one social worker and then we formed the social planning office with Jenny Wills in charge of that and we got a lot of federal money for things. Like child minding and we couldn't work out how to run the expenses of that. How did you pay the sort of support costs and so on? (there was no super to worry about)

We eventually got a bit of helpful advice from the Health Department, about running them as co-ops you'd run them as community based things and there were advantages about the ways that you employed people and so on. ...So we did all of that and that was pretty significant.

Facilitator 1: It was revolutionary.

Paul: It was about getting access to federal funds and so on to provide child minding. I mean we got a lot of money during that time.

Anne: RED Scheme, was it?

Paul: Yeah, there was a lot of money that came here. I don't know exactly when it would've been.

Facilitator 1: Was it community development about the time of Whitlam Government?

Paul: Yeah, it must've been under the Whitlam Government that we got the RED money, it was under DURD which was the Department of Urban and Regional Development. Barry worked for DURD and he eventually had to leave the Council because it was too difficult for him to be on the Council and do that as well. Then during one of the years of high unemployment they developed a scheme called the RED Scheme and you could put in the category, not quite as sophisticated as the one that was done after all the schools got all the money (GFC) for doing all the building works that they did.



Councils could apply and we were able to get various things done. We put irrigation systems into the Edinburgh Gardens and did things that we wouldn't have otherwise done.

Paul: We built quite an interesting pavilion, which has now been demolished, in that bit of the Edinburgh Gardens facing onto Alfred Crescent. Because the National Can Factory was there so you didn't have that open space- you just had from the Can Factory wall over to Alfred Crescent on that side and we built the Change rooms.

[56:39]

The pavilion was designed by Corrigan & Edmond because Maggie Edmond and her husband Robin, had lived up in Rowe Street. We built it out of – notwithstanding the fact that we had a council policy that you couldn't build anything out of second hand bricks, but that's an engineer's view of the world. They don't like the look of second hand bricks. But we built it deliberately out of second hand bricks because the National Can wall was built out of second hand bricks. So it blended in. It was rather quite clever in the way that they did it.

But then of course once the wall was demolished it stood out like a sore thumb and people didn't like it, I think. So it got demolished and it's been rebuilt in a more traditional form. I think we got RED Scheme money to do that and there were various other things that we did or tried to do. The library had been another sub battle going on.

Facilitator 1: Which turned over the unemployment?

Paul: That was another sub-battle going on. Can you remember the name of the old fellow who ran the library, before we got the librarian? Well I suppose it's still the library, is it? Ernie, was it?

[58:20]

The library was in two rooms, one underneath which had been the lower Town Hall, enter from Moor Street. Because town halls had an upper town hall and a lower town hall and you often did events in the lower, things like the mayor's fetes. But a good deal of that became what's now the library, only that was the children's library. If you went up the front stairs of the Town Hall on the left was the library, that's where the original library was.



There was an old fellow who had no training as a librarian, he was a local ALP identity, and he ran the library but he was quite old and he just had a set of cards that had things written on them. So we eventually changed all that and got a quite active librarian. He was a funny fellow. ...Laurie.

But he'd be off to these meetings where people say the things you should be doing -we should have pens and 'Textas' and things for the children to use. So, he would say, 'You'll be saying scissors and pots of glue next!' and they would say, 'Ooh, we hadn't thought of that!'.

[Laughter]

[60:15]

Paul: I mean he wasn't opposed to that sort of thing but I mean he was still a very traditional sort of librarian. So that was a big change. Then we had a branch library up in North Fitzroy. None of those things had existed before, and people weren't interested in it. I think the library council wouldn't have really thought we had a library!

Anne: Laurie James?

Paul: Laurie James was his name, yes, he was the librarian. So we had a Fitzroy Library promotion committee at one stage, so that must've been before because I was the chairman of that. We had fingers in many pies over what we were trying to do.

[Break...]

Anne: I have a picture, I think it must be my great grandparents outside their house in Creswick.

Paul: Oh, yeah. Well my grandfather - where, if you go to the end of township and the Lake.

[62:14]

Paul: Oh, there are actually two lakes in Creswick, but there was a Chinese camp and my grandfather was the storekeeper, or one of the main storekeepers in the Chinese camp. That's in about 1885 to sort of about 1900, I suppose, during that period. We know a little bit about it, because the Lindsay painting family were all born in Creswick.

Facilitator 1: That is Norman Lindsay?



- Anne: Yeah, and Daryl and Lionel. Their father was the doctor there.
- Paul: Daryl Lindsay in his autobiography writes about going down to the camp and dealing with my grandfather. Finishing with his mother saying she was worried about it, going down there with the Chinese. Her father said, he quotes it, he says and my father said it's alright, they're there with Ah Foo and Ah Foo's a gentleman, so that's my grandfather.
- Facilitator 1: When did he immigrate to the goldfields?
- Paul: He came in about 1875 or thereabouts, I think. Became a naturalised Victorian citizen, that's before Federation, and that meant he had a passport and I think there were many - I think he might've left Australia a lot of times that he didn't leave Australia and came back?
- Anne: And you only know that because you think - well, of some association with the stores in Little Bourke Street.
- Paul: We used to go to a particular store in Little Bourke Street, it's closed now, it was a Chinese store and I had visited all my life. When I was born in 1944 that meant it was mum and the four boys.

[64:52]

We had enough ration to get a bag of rice. Because we were Chinese we got a rice ration. I mean, we weren't particularly Chinese but we still got a rice ration. So nobody else got a rice ration. So we could provide the Flemington neighbourhood with some rice. But I was in there one day and there was a woman in there and the bloke in charge said, -Some of my cousins call me uncle, (and I don't, and we never called him uncle) And he's not an uncle!

He said, pointing at me, 'See that man over there - to this woman - his grandfather was responsible for bringing your father to Australia? So, and then she left. I went over and I said, what was all that about? He said 'Oh, there's some things that shouldn't be talked about' [laughs]. So we didn't ever find out, but that's what we think it was.

An academic from Canberra, who I didn't ever get a chance to take up with, wrote to me saying there was some question about some person arriving in Australia whose name was the same name as one of my uncles! Whether there were some



queries raised about it, but my grandmother went along and told some fanciful story about it all, not saying that person was her son.

So, I'm not ever quite sure what all that was about because you didn't have photographs and so on in a passport, or even if you did, nobody was going to think Chinese look much different from one another. So that's how that came about. We skipped a whole generation. My mother was the youngest of 10 and I'm the youngest of four and I was born when my mum was 42.- which was quite reasonably old in 1944....

[67:26]

Anne: Her father would've been about 50, I think when she was born.

Paul: So instead you're usually about 60 years younger than your grandfather as a rough estimate, (30 years a generation). It'll change now as people live longer and people are born later, but I'm born about 100 years after my grandfather, so we're at least a whole generation out, skipped a whole generation! So people of my age talking about their Chinese ancestors who came to Australia are usually talking about their great grandfathers, for me it's my grandfather. It's somewhat unusual.

My mother had nieces and nephews who were younger than her and my sense of it is in fact her sister, Florrie, who she had the café with, was rather like her mother, that sort of figure. It was Florence, Louise, Alice, Ruby, Myrtle, because my mum was Myrtle. So there's a good set of Victorian names.

[69:52]

[Break...]

Anne: Back to the National Can factory. So, we used to have fun because every so often there'd be some sort of production that produced the fumes which smelt. So we'd be ringing up complaining to the EPA

Paul: They won't deny that you could smell it. I think it was when they put the glue on the outside of the cans to put the labels on them.

When we were there, there was a big wood yard

Facilitator 2: Yeah, I remember the wood yard.



Paul: It was over the other side of the footbridge, there was also a big briquette works. Trains used to come, and deliver the briquettes. It was a sort of collection point. They'd come all the way up from Morwell with the trainload of briquettes to be collected by various industrial firms. We had left before the train line disappeared so we were not involved in the whole argument about all that in North Fitzroy.

[71:34]

Facilitator 1: Can you describe what Gore Street was like?

Anne: Well, we moved there in 1985 around about the first week when I got home one afternoon I had to step over a gentleman who'd sort of gone to sleep near the front door in the sun He then just sort of moved in it was no problem. But after we fixed the front gate and it never happened again.

On one side we had an old Australian family, Jack and Ivy, really fabulous neighbours. I remember once we went away and they'd look out and look after the place if we weren't there. They couldn't understand why the front door was left open, so we'd obviously gone off and forgotten to shut the front door. So Jack and Ivy were there and they had four kids, the youngest one, she used to babysit for us.

On the other side we had Frank Kranjig who was a Yugoslav, yes, he might have had a boarder and pretty decent sort of people.

Opposite, we had the vacant plot which I think was eventually been built on. You had things like a shooting over at the Builder's Arms. We were 64 Gore Street

[73:26]

Anne: Then there was a fire In the back of the property on the corner on the west, south west corner. There was a fire in that building, although the building's still there.

Paul Gertrude Street had a lot of Yugoslav restaurants for sale with a big, were big signs along there. It was not, you wouldn't have called Gertrude Street gentrified at all at that stage. Gore Street was certainly beginning to be

Anne: Yes, there were lots of breads you could buy, like that Turkish bread, just out of the oven, just fantastic food.

Paul: Peter Hollingworth had lived further down on the other side of Gore Street when he was at the Brotherhood of St Laurence.



Anne: Then after some years we found this fantastic butcher around in Smith Street called Jonathan's.

Facilitator 2: Yeah, still one of the best in Melbourne.

Paul: I went past and I looked in and I said, 'That's got very good meat in there', before anyone else had sort of discovered it. I was - and we used to take things down and get them to stuff things and they'd do it all for you. I don't know if they would now.

[74:49]

Facilitator 2: I used to get a bit of a discount on my meat for giving them rosemary.

Anne: Yeah, and Coles was, of course, we had a sort of a Coles variety store.

Paul: Because that's where the first Coles had been in Melbourne, in Smith Street. So you had the variety store which was bigger than the supermarket in those days.

Anne: We used was Sim's supermarket in Brunswick Street, or Sim's Market in North Melbourne just near the Victoria Market.

Paul: Because we'd always shopped at the Victoria Market as had a lot of people then who lived in Fitzroy. We would on Fridays.

Facilitator 1: The Sim's Market in Brunswick Street, where was that?

Paul: It was on the corner of might be Westgarth or Rowe. ...

[76:02]

Sims used to be north of Johnson Street. There used to be a Colvan Potato Chip factory there as well. In Queensberry Street, just around the corner from Errol Street I think. So we could go to the market and then you'd just drive up to that one. It was sort of easier to park. The one in Fitzroy, the parking was always very difficult.

Anne: Smith Street, had the Post Office and you had variety of bakeries including Turkish straight out of the oven, you had the bank.

Paul: Piedimonte's we'd gone to a bit when we lived up in North Fitzroy.

[77:17]



It's a big huge supermarket now. Well it would be one of the few, there are not many family, run sort of supermarkets that have survived around Melbourne. The locals are pretty faithful to them, too. It is convenient.

Facilitator 1: Is there anything in particular you want to put into the mix?

Anne: No, not really, but there were a few other families. The children started school at North Fitzroy, they went until 1986. So we had to either drive them or I shared driving with the Yule family. I don't know if you spoke to Fay and Sandy Yule?

He was a Uniting Church Minister and Fay was a social worker. They lived in Gore Street.

Paul: What was interesting about that was that it was a sort of community.

Anne: Yes, about three terrace houses and they ran it as a community, three families living there and sharing backyards.

Paul: That was a different sort of thing.

Anne: So when Georgina was born and Matthew was at school in the morning I would cross over Gertrude Street, meet Fay and [laughs].

[78:58]

There was a pie shop in Smith Street and we had to collect the pies for the canteen at North Fitzroy PS. That was my job.

Paul: There was always something to do locally.

Facilitator 2: Was it the Collingwood Pie Shop? I don't know how long it's been here.

Paul: It's about down near Jonathan's. They made very nice pies.

Facilitator 1: Was Johnson's Furniture Shop still operating in Gertrude Street?

Paul: There were various furniture places that were operating in Gertrude Street.

Anne: There was the billiard place that's still going I think.

Paul: Well what's - is the building that they turned into the artist's sort of studios?

Facilitator 1: Yes, the Contemporary Art Gallery.



Paul: Yes. Now, what was in there? Anyway, I'm not sure. There were quite a number of sort of furniture places as you went up Gertrude Street. Because there was a place I think called Fitzroy Auctions.

Anne: A second hand place, wasn't it?

Paul: Yeah, it wasn't an auction place at all.

[81:03]

Nathan Crafty's father ran that. Then there was another one a bit further up on the next corner that had antique furniture. ... The Rob Roy Hotel and the Champion Hotel

Anne: Then there was an old chemist shop - what was his name? The chemist there?

Paul: He was there for a very long time, Reilly.

Anne: Did he eventually stand for Council? I think he did, I think he was on the Council.

Paul: I'm not sure. Well, he was - because I knew - he used to sign all the warrants for the Children's Protection Society who used to be just up here in Gertrude Street. He was a JP. Reilly ?

Facilitator 1: I think he was generally very helpful to people in the Housing Commission.

Paul: Then next to him there'd been various sort of Antique or modern places that really came and went a bit.

[82:42]

There was the the Carlton Gardens, Rob Roy, The Champion, The Royal and The Builders Arms and So they were all the hotels - and the Aboriginal communities used them and/or didn't use them, because they got thrown out. They'd get there, they'd wear out their welcome at one and they'd be thrown out.

Anne: The coming of the modern bakery at the corner of Fitzroy Street and Gertrude Street, Pott's Bakery, and some young people wanted to take that on, and they wanted to make sourdough. I remember they had a terrible fight with the Council to be allowed to use this culture.

Paul: So that was that side, on this side which is the northern side, you had the Turkish or Yugoslav food places to a large degree, and furniture and other sort of things



on other side. The Glass Terrace was under threat at various times from a combination of the Hospital and the Housing Commission and Barry Pullen preserved it when he was the Minister for Housing and had it built within the way that it now is.

The Hospital owned various buildings along that Gertrude Street frontage, even though I'm not sure it's actually in the zoning. They just, I think, have got hold of them in case they ever want to do anything much with them. We used to have arguments with them about - I'd go to meetings and say to them how many beds will be in this hospital in 30 years' time and they'd just look at you as though you had two heads, really. They weren't interested in that sort of planning in those days.

[85:04]

They later did become interested. We used to try and rate various people because hospitals and things, and we rated St Vincent's Private because we said it wasn't, it was a financial institution. Then who was the old one, who was in charge?

Anne: Mm, I'm just trying to think. I'll think of it in a minute. Very famous, very famous.

Paul: Yeah, and she fought it, took us through the courts. Eventually the courts found she wasn't liable to pay rates. Every year she sent in a cheque the equivalent of the rates [laughs]. She'd pay if she could decide to pay, but she wasn't going to pay if we were going to try and compel her. It's an interesting different view of the world, really. Oh, what was her name? She was very famous and she knew Anne's father very well.

So when Anne was in hospital having Matthew in not particularly great conditions in the old private maternity hospital you were allowed to use her bathroom, weren't you?

Anne: Mm, something like that [laughs].

Paul: There were always arguments about car parking and so on and people worried about if Mietta started this restaurant where would people park. I got them to do a deal with Aquila who were over the road that they could use their car parking at the front and so on and that all seemed to solve it. So they were those sorts of things, a bit of lateral thinking.



But one of the other big, one of the enormous issues has always been the Brunswick Street Ground. What had happened, was that Fitzroy FC had left Fitzroy, had left Brunswick Street in 1965 it was before we came. Oh, no perhaps a little later, perhaps '67 or thereabouts. Because Barry Pullen can remember them.

Because people used to park in streets like McKean Street, those big wide streets, and they'd have cars parking abreast up the middle of the road. If you happened to go and park your car out there you could come out the next morning and be the one car parked out in the middle of the street, but they did all of that. They wanted to do a big development and virtually take over the Edinburgh Gardens and turn it into a car park.

Anne: I thought - but there was a proposal for a speedway.

[88:32]

I remember trying to doorknock people to get them to sort of oppose it all and Mr Keating, he wouldn't sign it.

Paul: No, but he probably wouldn't sign anything though, John Keating.

John Keating lived in a rented house in Alfred Crescent.

Alfred Crescent in one of the nice houses facing out onto the Crescent and he was, I think, a parole officer, wasn't he? John Keating. But he was an author. He wrote the books about *The Lambert Flame*, about gas lamps. ...

Another book about bills, a book about cable trams and so on. But there'd been huge. then after Fitzroy went, what was going to happen to the Ground? Fitzroy Alexander United Soccer Club came and applied to play there and we allowed them to, but there were very bitter arguments about it. The locals didn't want it. They would've had Fitzroy back again in a heartbeat, but they didn't want wogs playing soccer.

They used it for a while but then one of the grandstands burnt down and we were not ever quite sure that it wasn't done maliciously. There was another grandstand about the same size as the present grandstand. Then later, as things changed, people decided they wanted to pull the walls down which I was pretty strongly opposed to. It was just a sign of gentrification, that's all.



[90:35]

So as I said at the meeting it was the older trendyism that you pull down the wall around the oval so that you could walk out into the middle of the ground and look at the grandstand. Most of us would've thought you did it the other way around. But it's developed into sort of some reasonable community use. But I'd always thought, which is true, you're never going to do it again, you're never going to rebuild the wall. If you find some use you might want to generate income and so on.

Facilitator 1: But the soccer club never got a purchase on the use of the ground?

Paul: Oh, they had a lease for a while but I think it, once the grandstand burnt down which I think they used for one of the changing rooms, because you had to have two sets for the teams that sort of perished, and they went out to Heidelberg. So, they became, they might've become Fitzroy Heidelberg United, I'm not sure., Then it all changed, because they were one of the Greek teams. Hellas was the other Greek team down in South Melbourne, but they were really, Macedonian Greek rather than Greek ...

There used to be a big club in Smith Street called the Macedonian. it was the society and you'd go to things there and they'd make speeches about how they saved the Greeks from themselves and so on- Alexander the Great!

Facilitator 2: I was thinking maybe I was going too far out if I mentioned Alexander the Great...

[92:36]

Paul: No, no, no, that was Alexander the Great. I mean it's Macedonia, Greek Macedonia where Philip the Great and Alexander the Great came from. So they'd have pictures of Alexander the Great around....

Facilitator 1: I understood there was a Russian - as well as the Yugoslavs presence in Gertrude Street?

Paul: I'm not sure. I mean it was there and it was active because you'd have the ceremonies late at night at Easter because they go right through to midnight mass and they don't eat during that sort of 24 hours coming up to that and then have a big feast afterwards

[94:25]

Facilitator 1: There was a church in amongst the St Vincent's?



Paul: On the other side of Gertrude Street between Gertrude and Victoria Parade.

[95:17]

Well there was a Catholic school which was a Christian Brothers school, a scholarship school, probably called St Colman's, in Alma Street . The Christian Brothers, Scholarship School, the kids all would've gone to Parade because it was - where the Catholic Church is on the corner of whatever the continuation of Gore Street - what's that little street that's shut off now?

I reckon it is Young Street, which runs through the middle of the Australian Catholic University?

[96:28]

Eades Street. On one corner was the first building of Parade College which was the Christian Brothers College and on the other corner was the Presbyterian Ladies College which when they moved out Parade leased it for a number of years. I don't know what came first; whether the selling of the school and the Freemasons buying it drove them to go out to Bundoora or whether they having decided to leave and go out to Bundoora. That was on other side of Victoria Parade

So I think probably up Young Street. It was close enough, though, for us to be able to hear stuff going on there but at night the noise travels A lot of that's all been absorbed, absorbed into the Australian Catholic University and that building was the note issuing branch of the Reserve Bank, the older building is the Australian Catholic University. Over the road from that there was a big cartage company and that caused a lot of problems.

A company that had been there when they started off in horse and carts and by the time you started having huge trucks and so on and trying to get in and out using Young Street it was terribly difficult.

Facilitator 1: Just going back to council, it would've been council dominated by Labor Party members?

[99:30]

Paul: Yes, we never had - in our time we wouldn't have had more than two Independents out of the 15.



Facilitator 1: And just to summarise, I mean the big achievements were curtailing the work of the Housing Commission, the Social Planning Office?

Paul: Yeah, yeah, and I guess, the setting up of a bit more orderly planning. We employed a planner when that was unheard of, Harry Berchervaise, came and worked here as a planner. I think they were sort of the main things.

Facilitator 1: How would you describe the relationship between the Council and all the charities that were around?

Paul: Oh, well there was always a - by the time - they'd been very solidly embraced by the old Victorian Council of Social Affairs. Social Services had a big meeting and formed the Fitzroy Council of Social Services, and then - but a lot of the people who were associated with the sort of groups were fairly elderly and I think they, a number of them, just withered on the vine. But there were great problems when, for instance at the immunisations. Whoever the doctor was doing them, who was then the medical officer, we probably got somebody new because we had to replace, what's his name, and he had nurses assisting him. Then the local Red Cross ladies were very put out by it all. So there were all these tensions that went on.

[Tony Knox enters the room...]

Paul: I was just talking about getting the permit for Mietta's. Remember the dodgy thing we did about the car parking in Aquila?

[102:04]

Tony Knox: Yep, couldn't do that now. Since Aquila's gone.

Paul: No.

[Laughter]

Yeah, but anyway. It was all successful.

Facilitator 1: Well, if we think there's no more, Anne or Paul?

Paul: No, no. I'll just finish up. In the mid-'70s there was a bit of a view that if you were running a show you shouldn't depend too much on voluntarism. So instead of volunteers doing things like *Meals on Wheels* it was decided we should pay people to do it and so on. Of course that, created huge tensions with the groups that had



been voluntarily involved. But I think mostly they were probably elderly, and they were overtaken by history, really.

Well they'd always tensions with the Brotherhood and so on, because we didn't always have the same view about how you approach things as the Brotherhood had. But that was all just part of it really, just part of being changed.

Facilitator 1: Thank you very much, Paul, thank you Anne, thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT