

# The Fitzroy History Society Inc. Newsletter

## August 2001

### July's activity

Ann Polis and Tony Knox stimulated 20 of us with a talk on their reporting on Fitzroy in the early 1970s. Journalist Ann and photographer/writer Tony tackled the planning, council and heritage issues of the day. The early eight page issues were a 'labour of love' . . . 'we were part of that community' . . . 'we were interventionist' . . . 'we let our biases show.'

They had regular sources of inside information from the Housing Commission, the Country Roads Board, the Councils, the State Government . . . "we had leaks from everywhere.' Looking back three decades, there was no community consultation then, and society became politicised then. The Viet Nam war was probably the catalyst.

There were plenty of good causes to take on - slum clearance, the high rise developments, Lee Street, Blanche Terrace, Vic Market, freeways. There were plenty of provocative stories that could not be done now.

Many in the audience had also been involved in the issues of those days, and the resulting discussion provided other insights on those causes. In comparing past and current times the discussion then focussed on 'why have we lost the community activism that we had then?'

Trevor Huggard's closing comments were a fitting thanks to Ann and Tony.

*Michael Moore*

#### North Melbourne Local History database

A database of material held at the North Melbourne library is available via the library website at [www.ymrl.org.au](http://www.ymrl.org.au)

Material includes books, newspapers, journal articles, directories, unpublished essays, theses and ephemera relating to the North and West Melbourne area.

### Brunswick Street history continued...

*From the National Trust's classification of Brunswick Street report, December, 2000*

By December 1854, shops rivalling those in Bourke Street, Melbourne, were to be found in Brunswick Street. Here were John Ball and Joseph Moate, grocers, E. and D. Langton, butchers, Bennett the ironmonger, Wynmond and Vasey, drapers, as well as the Brunswick Hotel (Mrs Elizabeth Lusher) and the Labour in Vain [Hotel]. As well as being perhaps the earliest shop in Fitzroy, one of the businesses referred to here—Bennet the ironmonger—is noteworthy as one of the longest standing of Fitzroy's commercial enterprises. three-storey shop and residence had already been constructed by 1855.

Along with Bennett's store, the Melbourne Directory for 1857 shows the continued location in Brunswick Street of a wide range of other small retail shops, services and other businesses. Some of these sold imported goods, others made goods on the premises from where they also sold them. This retail category includes, for example, such businesses as small-scale and largely unmechanised tailors, milliners, bootmakers and some printers. These types of establishments are considered here to be distinct from the industrial manufacturing concerns which were established in Fitzroy slightly later.

Early retail buildings include the shops at Nos 155-159 and Nos 165-169 which possibly date from the 1850s. The former Brunswick Hotel which was sometimes known as the Brunswick Family Hotel (now the Old Colonial Inn No. 125) was constructed in 1852-53 by its first licensee Thomas Dennis. The building included a shopfront onto Brunswick Street with the shop premises intended for use as a chemist's shop. Similarly, the three storey bluestone design of the former National Hotel (No. 147) built in 1854 for John Wood and known as Wood's Hotel reflects the first heyday of Brunswick Street in the 1850s gold rush, during which Brunswick Street was more important commercially than Smith Street to the east.

The 1860s and 1870s were a period of consolidation in Fitzroy's commercial strip as the rude structures of the early decades were replaced with more substantial premises.

### Join the Committee

Positions on the committee are now vacant and we are calling for nominations. Being on the committee involves:

- attending a brief meeting (approximately once a month) on a Sunday morning
- suggesting ideas to promote the society
- planning and arranging the activities (approximately six a year)

All societies need new faces to keep them active and enthusiastic, so please think about nominating. The current committee can attest to the fun and enjoyment they have gained by sharing ideas with other interested people and helping promote the history of Fitzroy. If you are interested you can nominate at the AGM. Call John Senyard on 9417 2839 for more information.

### Fascinating new book

Did you know that in 1885 James Barry of Fitzroy was fined for a most 'disgraceful, dangerous, and disgusting fraud'. The crime? Selling margarine as butter. This and other glimpses into the past are contained in the section on the Fitzroy Court House in Michael Challenger's recent book, *Historic Courthouses of Victoria*. The book details every one of the state's remaining pre-1945 court houses with a photograph, description and some of the cases heard. Available from most bookshops for \$49.50 or Palisade Press 19 Georges Road Ringwood adding \$5.50 for postage.

### Life in 1860

Two cases appearing before the Fitzroy Police Court on 20 February 1860 illustrate the hazards of living in 1860. The cases were duly reported in the *Argus* the next day:

- John Larke, Alex Horne and Thomas Higginbotham were fined 5 shillings each for allowing their goats to wander at large in the public streets.
- John Connor was fined 10 shillings for neglecting to have his name painted on his dry.

### Executive Committee —2000-2001

Convenor: John Senyard  
Treasurer: Harold Mackrell  
Secretary: Shared role  
Publicity: Margaret Lee  
Editor: Jill Robertson (9419 8868)

# Fitzroy Treasures

## Your chance to show and tell

- Bring along photographs, objects, invitations, programmes, books, advertisements, in fact anything which is a piece of Fitzroy history. Everyone will have a chance to tell us about their treasure. So... search the attic, explore the basement, rummage in your cupboards!
- The Society's show and tell will be Dodgshun House (1864) where our meeting will take place. See the magnificent staircase, wood panelling and stained glass windows.



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- Plus, our **Annual General Meeting**.

**When:** Wednesday 15 August 2001

**Where:** Dodgshun House, 9 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

**Time:** AGM: 7.30 pm (sharp!) - 8.00

Meeting: 8.00 pm - 9.30 pm

**Entry:** Members \$2      Non-members \$3