

# The Fitzroy History Society Inc. Newsletter

## June 2000

### Heritage Week

Many moons have passed since the Society's March activity, but this is the first opportunity to recall the wonderful evening with June Senyard and her sporting guest speakers. An enthusiastic crowd turned up for the Heritage Week theme 'Our Sporting Heritage'.

Pamela McLure, secretary of the Fitzroy Tennis Club, Vincent Ballestra, of the Fitzroy Bocce Club and cricketer identity Ray Harvey, spoke about their memories of the Brunswick Street Oval and of their particular sport.

Chaired by June, the panel reminisced in turns, at the same time provoking fond memories from the audience. We heard of the fierce football supporter who would poke, prod and stab her umbrella through the wire fence at the umpires as they left the field; how the youngest bocce player is 76 years old; how the 1920s tennis clubrooms were rescued from decay and beautifully restored in 1980.

Ray delighted us with his tales of the Clydesdale horse, wearing leather boots, pulling the bluestone roller and wooden tray (often loaded with children for extra weight) to roll the cricket pitch, the hot dog sellers at the footy boiling the hot dogs in their kero tins with a fire underneath, and the men selling peanuts from hessian bags.

Vincent remembered the days in the 1950s and 60s when bocce was played in the streets and in backyards, before they dug and levelled the court in Edinburgh Gardens. 'Do you know, it can take champions 10-15 hours to play a game?' he told us.

We all agreed with Pamela when she said that playing tennis beside the heritage clubrooms, surrounded by the lovely old trees and with the city skyline as a backdrop is simply 'Beautiful'.

And there was so much more. A display of cigarette cards of footballers (Jimmy Sexton, Butch Gale), audience memories, and a tour of the tennis club, made this a memorable evening. Thanks to all who participated.

#### Executive Committee —1998-1999

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

### Thanks

Thanks to Society member Peter Yewer for writing and congratulating us on our Heritage Week function. It's always nice to know our efforts are appreciated. Peter also suggested that we might consider putting on an evening discussing 'Families of Fitzroy'. We think it's a terrific idea and it's definitely in the pipeline for 2001.

Please write to us with other suggestions. Remember, the Society is only as active and innovative as you, the members, make it.

### Community Health in Yarra

North Yarra Community Health is planning a number of activities around the history of community health in the Yarra area, one of which is a publication titled 'The Health of the Community'. Some of you may recall that it was a survey conducted by the Collingwood Health Centre in the late 1970s that ultimately led to legislation on leaded petrol. [The survey measured the level of lead in children's teeth and found they were higher in children who lived near a freeway compared with those living in other areas.]

If you have any information, stories to tell, memorabilia or photographs concerning community health, please contact Brian Stagoll on 9489 4188.

### Social Justice Walk

A record of the Social Justice walk the Society conducted in April last year is being prepared, and, when complete, will be a valuable addition to our publications. [The transcript describes the introduction of the first Opportunity Shop, Senior Citizens' Club and family planning clinic—all Fitzroy initiatives. We'll let you know when the publication is available.

### Reminder

Subscriptions for the Fitzroy History Society are from January to December. The annual \$5 subscription includes the cost of the regular newsletter, and reduced admission to the Society's activities. Please send your subscription to PO Box 180 Fitzroy 3065. You can pay yearly or \$10 for 2 years, \$20 for 4 years, etc.

### Book Review

With the launch of the Society's latest publishing venture *The Fitzroy Public Library 1877-1997*, we invited Keith Ross to write a review.

"This is an exciting read. The author, historian Carole Woods, presents the history of a single element of the fabric of Fitzroy society (the library) in the context of major international, national and local events of the past 120 years. The 1880s boom, two world wide depressions, two world wars, the arrival of migrants (firstly Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavs, then Turks, Chinese and Vietnamese) fluctuations in population, gentrification, a changing socio-economic environment in the 1970s and 1980s, amalgamation of councils and regionalisation of libraries have all had their effect on the history of the Fitzroy Public Library.

Woods also deals with the role of significant individuals: Cr Thomas Ewing, founder and patron, Mrs Margaret Ewing Cutten, granddaughter and benefactress, and various librarians, councillors and community activists. As well, she had unearthed humour in the reported words of former librarian Ernest Haridene and Laurie James.

In her final chapter, Woods points out that the future of the Napier Street 'chandelier room' is unclear. Woods concludes: The Fitzroy Town Hall building is of cultural significance to Australia and not least because it houses one of the first free public libraries in the nation.

One conclusion that might be drawn from reading Wood's book is that, in spite of the splendid newly-renovated library, it has taken a long while to reach this point. From earliest times to the present, Wood's records difficulties with finances, and obtaining agreement with councils and between councils and with other bureaucracies. In 1883, for example, 'the proposal for a lending library was defeated five votes to three and shelved for another 30 years'. I believe this points to the necessity for the community to be extremely vigilant if it wishes to see a well-maintained, improved and expanded public library in the future.

The book is an exceptionally well-designed publication with a very attractive front cover, meticulous attention to detail and includes a liberal number of high quality photographs. It is available for \$12 from Yarra-Melbourne Regional libraries or \$15 plus \$2.50 postage from 2 Fairmont Ave Camberwell."

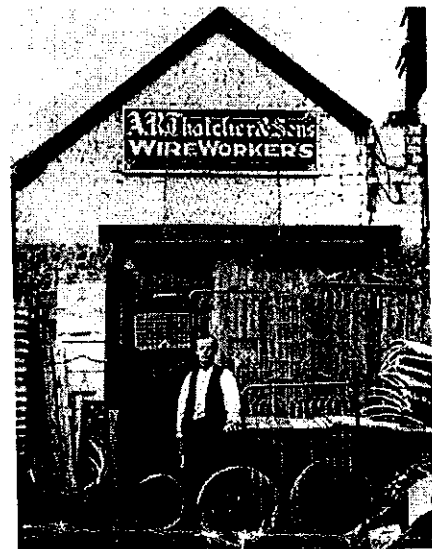
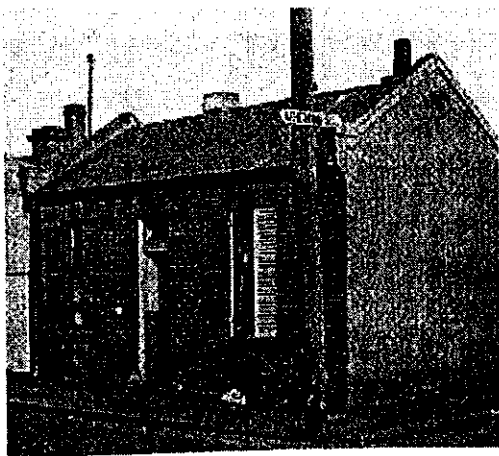


# A Flavour of Fabulous Fitzroy

## A walk

Join us as we stroll the streets of Fitzroy in this introduction to Melbourne's first suburb.

Along the way we'll pass the site of Mary Mckillop's birthplace, learn the history of the oldest surviving terrace in Melbourne, hear tales of houses long-since demolished, visit the Fitzroy Town Hall, discover decorative architectural detailing and peer down bluestone-cobbled laneways.



<b>When:</b>	Sunday 4 June
<b>Time:</b>	10.30 am – 12.30 pm
<b>Meet:</b>	At the corner of Princes and Fitzroy streets, Fitzroy.
<b>Parking:</b>	The walk starts in the vicinity of St Vincent's Hospital complex and on-street parking may be difficult. However, there is a multi-storey car park near the start of the walk in Fitzroy Street. You might consider parking near Greeves Street, where the walk ends.
<b>Cost:</b>	\$5 non-members    \$4 members