

# The Fitzroy History Society Inc. Newsletter

## November 2002

### Planning for the Future

On Sunday 22 September 2002 FHS had a planning day – 20 years after inception. Ten members attended the day, which was advertised amongst all FHS members, to discuss the past, present and future of the FHS.

A number of things were considered on the day including the achievements of FHS, its current and future identity, ways in which the FHS can record history, improve its publicity and promotion of local history, as well as local history issues specific to Fitzroy and Fitzroy North.

It was agreed amongst those who attended the planning day that a three-year strategic plan should be established to progress a whole range of projects and strategies identified. The roles and responsibilities of FHS Executive members were revised to consider five main themes to be tackled by the FHS in a 3 year plan:

- 1) Communication,
- 2) Activity Program,
- 3) Heritage Recording & Information,
- 4) Projects, and
- 5) Publications.

The FHS Executive will be working to develop the three-year plan and will keep all FHS members informed about its progress. All ideas and suggestions from FHS members are welcome.

Many thanks to the Fitzroy Learning Network for letting the FHS use its meeting room for such a productive day.  
A.B.

### Next Year

This is our final newsletter for this year. Next year's program is now being finalised. Our first event will be on Sunday, 16 February at the Edinburgh Gardens as part of the City of Yarra Community Day.

### Membership

Our membership now numbers 114 fully financial members, and some have even paid for several years ahead. A warm welcome is extended to Catherine Pugsley and Amanda Afflito who have joined recently.

### City of Yarra Heritage Review

The City of Yarra is now exhibiting, for public comment, Amendment 43 to the Yarra Planning Scheme.

The 300+ page document includes much historical information on the South Fitzroy, North Fitzroy, Brunswick Street, Smith Street and Queens Parade precincts, and on 28 individual buildings in our area. FHS has provided much comment on the earlier draft, and we expect to comment further on this version. These documents become accepted historical records of our suburb and we must ensure that they are accurate.

FHS members are encouraged to provide comments directly to the City of Yarra, or pass your comments to FHS by mid December.

The Heritage Review is on exhibition at the Fitzroy Library, the Richmond & Collingwood Town Halls, and at [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/planning](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/planning)

### Recently Received

Recent incoming mail has included

- Prahran Mechanics' Institute & Circulating Library (well worth a visit at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~pmiinc/> or at 140 High St, Prahran, where they have 53 references to Fitzroy history;
- The Conservation Centre, 23 Kerr St, re their program of workshop seminars;
- National Library of Australia, re their PictureAustralia Internet web service to locate and view half a million historical images in libraries Australia-wide.
- Royal Historical Society of Victoria, newsletters for October and November; plus the Victorian Historical Journal for September on the theme of "Governing Early Victoria"

(contact Mike Moore if you would like to borrow any of these)

#### Committee Contacts — 2002-2003

Convenor: Annabel Barbara 9419 6186  
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### For Better or Worse

On 27 October John Senyard headed the walk that was aptly named 'For Better or Worse?' It was based on the Fitzroy City Council's 1948 study of the suburb which was an attempt to formulate a rating system that wouldn't disadvantage development. In other words, the council wanted to encourage people to improve their properties. In the course of the study, they identified properties they considered should be demolished and those that could be improved.

John had assembled a booklet containing photographs of many of these buildings. Under each photograph was a report on its value. George & Murphy's second-hand building materials yard in Johnston Street was considered 'a poor use of a valuable business site', whereas the newly constructed McColl Electric Works in Brunswick Street earned the report 'an excellent factory'.

It was interesting to compare the 1948 sites with their current tenant. For example, the Brunswick Street factory is still there on the south-west of Moor Street but George & Murphy's was demolished and is now the Centrelink offices. The current Max Apartments site has surely the longest history, being variously a skating rink, an exhibition hall, the Waverly Picture Theatre, the Liberty Picture Theatre, the Fitzroy Stadium, the Olympia Stadium, a storage facility, a youth club and the Glo-Weave factory.

Along the way we learnt that Fitzroy's density in 1948 was 33 persons per acre (in about 1993 it was 18, but considering the recent warehouse developments, it may reach the 1948 number again); the suburb was referred to as 'a blighted slum'; and that there was a huge variety of industries ranging from footwear, knitting mills, car body builders, confectioners, boot polish makers, cardboard box manufacturers, fur dressers, timber merchants, iron foundries, industrial gas makers and cordial factories.

We were left to ponder, what is the future of the surviving buildings? What is an appropriate use for them? One thing I know, the vacant lot covered with hoardings in 1948 is definitely an improvement today—it's my favourite weekend haunt, the Fitzroy Nursery.

J.R.



The Argus  
Saturday,  
21 January 1854

Collingwood Ball,  
Assembly Rooms  
Brunswick Hotel.  
Monday evening.  
Admission being by  
ticket only and the  
number limited,  
immediate  
application must be  
made at the Hotel.  
Gentlemen's tickets  
10s.6d., introducing  
ladies.



The Argus  
Monday,  
23 January 1854

Grand Opening Ball,  
this evening,  
Brunswick Hotel  
Assembly Rooms.  
Under the direction of  
Mr Denning, the Band  
conducted by Mr  
Moore. The private  
entrance open on this  
occasion. Gentlemen's  
Tickets, 10s.6d.,  
introducing ladies.

FIG. 16 Brunswick Family Hotel (now Old Colonial Inn), 127 Brunswick Street.  
Photo c.1861, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Back in 1854, Fitzroy was still called Collingwood, and the Old Colonial Inn was originally the Brunswick Hotel. The third storey windows are visible in this 1861 photograph, and when viewed now at the rear from Fitzroy Street.

Do you know any stories or legends of the hotel's past, and of the mysterious third storey ?

Come and share them with fellow FHS members, including Amanda and Noel who now operate the hotel.

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Join us for the end of year **ANNUAL DINNER**  
and celebrate 21 years of the Fitzroy History Society

at the Old Colonial Inn, 127 Brunswick Street

Friday, 6 December 2002, commencing 7 pm

Cost \$20, for entrée, choice of mains, desert, and tea or coffee.

Drinks available at bar prices.

To assist with our planning for the evening, please book ASAP and well before 30 November.

Bookings please to Heather (9486 9643), Annabel (9419 6186) or Mike (9416 1446)