

The Society's 2003 AGM

Another year has passed for the Fitzroy History Society (FHS). The passing of the year was marked by the FHS AGM, which was held on the 13 August at the magnificent Mary of the Cross Centre (where Mary Mackillop was born) at the top end of Brunswick Street. The historically significant site added to the enjoyment of the evening, which was both a time for reflection of the Society's past events and a very productive occasion where constitutional changes were passed by members present on the night.

New Aims and Objectives for the Society

For those members who were not present on the night, the AGM saw slightly revised aims and objectives of the Society endorsed, compared with the original aims and objectives formulated in 1982. It is with great pleasure that I announce the FHS's new aims and objectives, which are as follows:

1. To promote and protect the diverse history of Fitzroy
2. To produce, encourage and/or assist in the completion of authentic and accurate records relating to Fitzroy
3. To support the collection and preservation of items of historical significance to Fitzroy
4. To promote the publication and distribution of information about Fitzroy
5. To encourage an interest in the history of Fitzroy and provide a forum for this to occur
6. To liaise with and co-operate with other historical Societies, governments and community groups.

The 2003-2004 FHS Committee

The FHS Committee looks forward to making these aims and objectives a reality for the Society in the year to come. The FHS Committee nominated and elected unopposed at the AGM will come as no surprise to long time FHS members. The same FHS Committee members will be involved in the running of FHS for this next year. They are myself, Annabel Barbara, Peter Coyle, Shelley Young-Coyle, Chris Friday, Harold Mackrell, Mike Moore, Heather McRae, Tom O'Brien, Keith Ross, June Senyard and John Senyard. It is great that the same enthusiasm exists amongst our Committee members, who each bring their own experience and interests to the Society. Of course the Society would welcome any new members who would like to take a more active role in the functioning of the Society. Next year will be a time to encourage other members to be involved at a Committee level, to ensure that new ideas can influence our engagement with the community.

Revised Membership Fees for the Society

At this year's AGM changes to the membership fees for 2003-2004 and beyond occurred. The annual

membership fee will be raised to \$10.00. Since the inception of the FHS, our membership fee was \$5.00. Due to increased costs such as postage costs, and an increased number of Newsletters that we have been sending out, there has been a need to increase the membership costs. The motion relating to this change was endorsed unopposed at the AGM and the FHS Committee is currently thinking of ways that it can utilise a small amount of savings and the money raised from our activities to increase the number of FHS publications. The Society is planning the publication of both the Social Justice Walk of North Fitzroy and the Nicholson Street walk. We look forward to launching both publications earlier in the new year. This is one of the six revised objectives of FHS that was endorsed on the night of our AGM.

Dr Rosemary Kiss's Talk: Reflecting on the Recent History of Local Government

Dr Rosemary Kiss was the guest speaker at the FHS AGM this year. As an inaugural member and long time resident and Councillor in Fitzroy, Rosemary's talk was most interesting. Rosemary spoke about the recent history of local government in Victoria, drawing on very local examples of the amalgamation of Fitzroy City Council into the now Yarra City Council. In her talk Rosemary reflected on the nature of voting in Victorian local government and alluded to issues that exist with current voting rules in Victoria that give voting rights to non-residents in local government areas. Rosemary spoke about the representation discrepancies that exist between Victorian local governments and their interstate counterparts. In Queensland local Councillors represent less than half the constituents that Victorian Councillors represent, making the 'representative' role of Victorian Councillors much less local than exists in other states of Australia.

Rosemary's talk was made more lively with the presence of local Councillors at the AGM and was useful for the Society in other ways. The FHS is constantly engaging with the Council and Councillors at Yarra City Council and Rosemary's talk identified many of the issues that the Society needs to be aware of in trying to ensure that the heritage interests of Fitzroy are not lost to competing interests in such an enlarged Council than existed before the amalgamations in the 1990s. The discussion made for an interesting end to a productive AGM night for the Fitzroy History Society. A special thanks to all the Committee members who helped organise the event, especially Mike Moore, as well as all those members who attended the night.

Annabel Barbara, Convenor

Our July mid-winter walk

In splendid mid-winter sunshine a group of 50 history lovers gathered outside the Royal Exhibition Building. We were about to view the famous Nuttall painting depicting the opening of the first Parliament in 1901, and in particular, to spot the faces of some of Fitzroy's many famous citizens, including Attorney General Alfred Deakin. This was a marvellous start to a two-hour walk through Fitzroy, guided by Society member Mike Moore, during which we listened to stories about the early settlers, marvelled at architectural gems, searched for clues of past lives and explored hidden laneways.

Royal Terrace in Nicholson Street, we were told, once housed a school with the wonderfully Dickensian name of Ebenezer Flint's School, while Jane Austen would surely have felt at home at the Establishment for the Education of Young Ladies at Number 6. Further along Nicholson Street the elegant terrace houses were home to a seemingly endless supply of doctors from the 1860s to the mid-1920s; Mike pointed out Dr Beckett's name etched into the glass above the door at Number 132 and we pondered the question of whether Dr Crooke ever felt he was hampered by his name.

Over the years a cluster of leading citizens lived in the area—in 1894 George Upward, Usher of the Black Rod in the first Federal Parliament lived on the corner of Nicholson and Moor streets; between 1881 and 1903 Senator Robert Best, one time Mayor of Fitzroy, Minister for Trade and Customs and later MP for Kooyong lived at No

132, "Langridge House 1881." Theodore Bach, formerly Governor of Pentridge, was another resident of Number 132. Down Bach Lane at the rear we went to see Robert Best's stables and hay loft, an impressive reminder of our early heritage and one that certainly deserves the cliché 'hidden architectural gem'. Make an effort to search it out next time you're in the area.

I was fascinated with the tale of the Apps family of undertakers who operated in Fitzroy for almost 100 years. Their large red-brick coach house on the corner of John and Moor streets once housed 30 horses, 20 carriages and 8 hearses. We debated whether the owners of the new apartments that are being developed inside the building would welcome this information.

A fitting end to the walk was at the Fitzroy Town Hall where John Senyard spoke about its colourful history followed by a tour. We marvelled at the former library with its elegant cedar bookcases, the magnificent hall with pressed metal ceiling, the council chamber's deep leather chairs and finally, the Mayor's Room, resplendent with its painted ceiling by Melbourne decorator J Ross Anderson. We had come full circle, for it was also Anderson who had executed the glorious ceiling paintings in the Royal Exhibition Building seven years earlier.

I'd like to thank everyone involved for offering a walk of such depth and knowledge, the obvious result of much research and a passion for bringing our past to life. Let's have more of them!!!!

Jill Robertson



from the Exhibition Gardens in winter



to the former City of Fitzroy Council Chamber

Subscriptions and Insurance

Now is the time to renew your membership of the Fitzroy History Society for 2003-04. 40 members are already "financial" for 2004, but over 100 are still to renew. Send your subscription to The Treasurer, Fitzroy History Society, P.O. Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065. The present \$10 subscription, together with other small income, just covers our low operating costs.

The Fitzroy History Society is an incorporated body to protect the legal liability of our volunteers. Accident & Public Liability insurance would be available, but at a cost of \$10 per member in 2004. Your committee has decided not to take out such insurance. Contact one of the committee if you have any concerns on this matter.



Name(s) Telephone

Address E-mail

..... Subscription Cash Cheque
\$10 per person, per year

Please forward your Comments, Feedback, Suggestions for future activities

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Brunswick Hotel Photo c. 1860
La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

Join us for the end of year
ANNUAL DINNER

at the

OLD COLONIAL INN
127 Brunswick Street

Friday, 5 December 2003
commencing 7 pm

Cost \$20, for entrée, choice of mains, dessert, 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 Annabel (9419 6186) or Mike (9416 1446 or by e-mail to m.moore@bigpond.com)

Migrations to Fitzroy

At our September meeting Michele Langfield, a member of the Fitzroy History Society, spoke about the migrant history of Fitzroy. Her topic, presented at Russian House in Greeves Street, provided an expose of the rich and diverse communities that have inhabited and built Fitzroy since the post war migration boom to Australia. From its English church spires to the Mediterranean pastel shades on its terrace houses, Fitzroy bears the marks of European life.

Greek, Italian, Macedonian and Yugoslavian communities have prospered in Fitzroy – the remnants of these communities still present today in the names of buildings and the aging populations that have remained in Fitzroy over the years. Michele, from the School of Australian and International Studies at Deakin University, has recently authored a published history on the

Ecumenical Migration Centre, located here in Fitzroy. In her presentation she drew significantly on the FHS publication: *Fitzroy – Melbourne's First Suburb*, outlining the migration patterns, flavours and scents that have existed in Fitzroy over the years.

Today the ethnic composition has changed, with growing Asian communities, but there still exists aging Italian and Greek families. What has changed significantly today is that the streets, churches and social clubs that once dotted the suburb no longer exist to mark the diversity of the suburb. Michele's talk offered insights into the composition of Fitzroy as well as providing valuable reflections on what was and what currently remains a remarkable diverse suburb.

Annabel Barbara

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