



FITZROY PEOPLE



The Fitzroy History Society

2022



FITZROY PEOPLE

Fitzroy People

Preface

The Fitzroy History Society has previously researched and published material to accompany seminars on the planning, development and architecture of Fitzroy and Fitzroy North. Namely, Brunswick Street, Lost and Found and Half Drowned Half Baked Essays in the History of North Fitzroy. Both publications are available at <https://fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/publications/books/>.

In this publication, Fitzroy People, our research has focussed on twenty personal stories of early inhabitants who lived and or worked in Fitzroy. The enthusiasm, commitment, and collaborative researching of volunteer members of The Fitzroy History Society has enabled this project to come to fruition.

The collection of stories reflects lives of ‘ordinary’ people living in Fitzroy. Most were not known to us prior to this project. All had died by about 1970.

The stories come from 5 English, 4 Irish, 3 people born in Australia (one in Fitzroy), 2 Scots, 1 Ukrainian (Russian), 1 Chinese. Of interest there are 5 publicans /restaurateurs; 2 labour activists; 3 health workers (nurse, herbalist and clairvoyant); 6 in the trades (baker, butcher, machinist, clothing; bricklayer; cycle manufacturer) and traders (grocer, clothing); 3 managed to develop land as part of their business operations.

The stories amplify a flavour of life in the suburb. Several were immigrants to Australia and their stories tell how they explored and utilised their skills in manufacturing and small business, others were owners and licensees/publicans. Not surprisingly several were strong women striving to maintain business and care for family. The impact of the World War One altered peoples’ lives, and some stories show the profoundness of its consequences.

Racism in 1900 Fitzroy is told in the story of Dr Sue Kee and his lifelong resistance to it coupled with advocacy for better conditions for Chinese immigrants.

Some individuals have left permanent and tangible markers in the suburb and elsewhere. The Cuttle family named Robinvale, Victoria after their son, and for others we offer this as a tangible reference to their lives in Fitzroy.

A special thank you to our editors; Mary Lewis and Donna Loveridge and publication designer, Taryn Loughnan.

Meg Lee

For the FHS Working Group

Photographs on the front cover left to right are Patrick Conway, Margaret Cuttle, Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson, Isaac Dabscheck, Bridget Conway and Herbert Cuttle.

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Introduction to the Beswicke Building¹

Authors

Michael Moore and Val Noone

Mike Moore is a retired engineer and has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for two decades. He enjoys researching the rich history of Fitzroy and its early settlement, buildings and people.

Melbourne-born and bred, Val Noone came to live in Fitzroy in 1971 to work in an open house for homeless people, married Mary Doyle and stayed. He is a fellow of the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne and a member of the Fitzroy History Society.

Most people familiar with Fitzroy know the Black Cat Café on the corner of Greeves Street: the following paragraphs are an introduction to the unusual three-storey building of which the café is part, and also to its early occupants some of which are profiled in this publication. The address is 236-252 Brunswick Street and the imposing terrace of eight shops takes its name from its architect John Beswicke (1847-1925).

It was started in 1888 at the height of the great Melbourne land boom and was barely finished before the mighty crash of 1893. It is a dramatic example of a speculative venture by Australian Property and Investment Company (API). While today's tenants tend to come from the creative arts, the building was then home to a wide variety of toilers, a good number of them in clothing, soft goods and footwear.

John Beswicke was born in the Port Phillip district, went to Geelong Grammar School, and was apprenticed to Crouch and Wilson. He worked on many prominent Melbourne building projects including the Deaf School and the Blind Institute in St Kilda Road, the main building at Methodist Ladies' College, the town halls of Brighton, Malvern, Essendon, Dandenong and Hawthorn and some churches.

The Heritage Register has highlighted the outstanding technical features of the Brunswick Street building: it 'was constructed of polychrome brick with rendered dressings and consists of three storeys facing the street with two storey wings at the rear. It has an asymmetric composition, with a central tower (with lunettes) and a corner turret topped by a lantern. Fine polychrome brickwork on the facade is highlighted by unpainted cement render detailing, arches, impost string courses, pilasters and bracketed cornices. The pedimental motif in the parapet (originally repeated twice on the west elevation) is unusual, with a scalloped motif in the tympanum. Stilted arches are employed above the windows on the upper floor. The central entrance is topped by an elegant fanlight'.

¹ Sources: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; Cannon, Michael, *The Land Boomers*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1966; *Fitzroy City Press*; *Fitzroy History Society Newsletter*; Website of FitzroyHistorySociety.org.au; *Heritage Buildings Register*, online at Heritage Victoria database; *Melbourne Directories Sands & McDougall*; *Trove*, National Library of Australia.

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The builder was Ralph Besant (1827-1905), an immigrant from Wiltshire, United Kingdom, husband of Phoebe Wood and father of ten, who lived at 5 Cambridge Street, Collingwood.

An elegant land boom speculation

To an earlier generation the API company was famous for its biggest effort, The Australian Building on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Flinders Lane, at 12 storeys the tallest in Australia at that time. Built in 1889, it was demolished in 1980 but photographs give the impression that the smaller Brunswick Street building shared similar designers. Beswicke had a reputation for having studied tall buildings and was an advisor on The Australian Building.

The API company was floated in 1888 by F. J. Derham, postmaster-general and managing director of Swallow and Ariell Ltd. Among its directors were Alfred Deakin, later a prime minister of federated Australia, and sometime Victoria premier James Munro.

The company collapsed during the bust of the 1890s and many investors lost their assets. In his ground-breaking 1966 book entitled *The Land Boomers*, Michael Cannon remarked “Ambition, if not desire for a quick fortune, makes strange bedfellows”. Many Australians grow up hearing about the Great Depression of the 1930s but not about the Depression of the 1890s, which was in many ways worse. If you study economics, you will be taught about the often painful cycle of boom and bust. Despite warning from all quarters, many humans of the modern era seem not to have learned the lesson.

Some early occupants

Let us now turn our attention to the people who lived and worked in the Beswicke Building. The following table alphabetically lists some of the panorama of industrious migrants who settled in early Fitzroy. Most occupants came and went quickly.

Name	Occupation	Period of occupancy
Baishont (nee Telfer), Agnes	Restaurateur	1903 - 1914, No. 242
Barnewall, Robert	Cigar maker	1897-1903, No. 240
Cuttle, Herbert Edwin	Wholesaler of undergarments, pinafores etc	1889 - 1893, No. 250
Dabscheck, Isaac	Tailor	1909 – 1915, No. 252
Harris, Henry	Boot manufacturer	1900 - 1912, No. 246
Holler, Mary	Dress maker	1890 -1892, No. 240
Jacobs, Henry	Boot manufacturer	1896 - 1904, No. 246 and 250
Monckton, Walter	Tailor	1890 - 1893; 1900-1903, No. 246
Murphy, Samuel	Straw hats factory	1918 - 1920; and to 1947; then by his son to 1955, No. 240
Portlock, Susan	Mantle manufacturer	1898 - 1908, No. 248
Rosalky, Morris	Hat and cap manufacturer	1891 - 1894, No. 252
Sebo, George	brush maker	1901 - 1907, No. 238
Silverman, Morris	Tailor	1890 - 1895, No. 252
Targett, Mary	Grocer	1895, No. 240

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A handful of occupants (Herbert Cuttle, Issac Debscheck, Samuel Murphy, Morris Silverman and Agnes Telfer) have been researched in some detail and are included separately in this publication.

Of the others, we currently know a little more about Henry Jacobs and Susan Portlock, and their families, as well as a dispute among neighbours.



Henry Joseph Jacobs, born in London, arrived in Melbourne in 1872, aged 16, already trained in the boot trade. From 1896 to 1904 his National Boot Factory was located at 246 and 250 Brunswick Street. In 1900 *Fitzroy City Press* reported that he employed 30 hands under the Factory Act and typically received orders for 2000 pairs to Collingwood and 1200 pairs to Bendigo. He was included in a series of articles on 15 leading bootmakers in the suburb. He also made the local newspaper on a couple of other occasions. In 1896 he claimed in court that 244 Brunswick Street ‘was frequented by low women and drunken men, and orgies were kept up nightly’. Henry moved to several other addresses before spending his last five years at 333 Canning Street, North Carlton. His residence and boot factory are extant at the Curtain Street corner.

Another early occupant was Susan Mary Portlock, of No. 248 who employed 19 females making mantles, now known as overcoats and capes. She and her family had come from London in the 1880s. Following the death of her husband Edward, she had earlier run a business at Geelong making capes, cloaks and mantles. In 1908, after her stint in the Beswicke Building, she registered her mantle-making factory at 44 Greeves Street, employing 60 females. She lived next door at number 48, which she named ‘Brixton’, probably after the London suburb from which she came. When her daughter Edith married Percy Cooper in 1909, the reception was held ‘at home’ at “Brixton” in Greeves Street. Percy and Edith Cooper lived at ‘Brixton’ until 1924 with their three daughters. Susan Portlock lived in Greeves Street until 1917. She died in 1936, aged 93.

In 1899, Henry Jacobs sued his neighbour Mrs Portlock ‘for making use of insulting words’ and she counter-claimed that he had ‘called her an infamous woman, and made use of several other objectionable epithets’. After two hours of ‘wearing’ evidence, the case was dismissed. A few days later, Mrs Portlock proceeded against Mrs Jacobs and her daughter for using insulting words, and the defendants were each fined 10 shillings.

In other cases, neighbours were more friendly. Morris Rosalky the hat and cap manufacturer at No. 252 married Morris Silverman’s 20-year-old daughter, Rose, in 1885.

Herbert Cuttle

1863 - 1945

Author

Peter Woods

Peter Woods has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for several years. A retired civil engineer he has had a strong interest in the physical development of Melbourne's oldest suburb and more recently in the inhabitants that made Fitzroy such an interesting place.



Source: Robinvale-Euston Visitors Centre

Herbert Cuttle came to Australia in 1863 and lived in Fitzroy for nineteen years. He had an important input into the manufacturing industry of women's clothing in Melbourne in the late 1800s. After a change in lifestyle and the death of a favourite son, for the next forty-eight years he and wife Margaret established the town of Robinvale in northern Victoria. His farm became the first to be augmented by irrigation from the Murray River.

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Herbert Edwin Cuttle was born in early 1863 at Kingswood, Bristol, England where his father was a Congregational clergyman. In July 1863, Herbert along with his six siblings and their parents the Rev William Cuttle and Mrs Amelia Cuttle and a servant arrived in Melbourne on the *Agincourt*¹.

Herbert's siblings on the ship were William Scott (b.1851), Amelia (b.1853), Ellen (b.1855), Charles Edward (b.1856), John Albert (b.1859) and Annie Laura (b.1861). Two more were born in Australia; Florence E (b.1865) in Geelong and George Frederick (b.1867) in Ascot Vale. Details of Herbert's life refer to him mainly as 'Herbert' but at times as 'Edwin'.

In September 1886 he married Margaret Weatherly (b. 1868) in St James Cathedral with a small group of friends in attendance. Margaret soon gave birth to their first child in 1887, Eva Leonora (later Widmer) who lived until 1963. Her birth was followed two years later by Herbert junior who later served in the first World War, returned to Australia and died in 1959. A further three children were born in Melbourne; George Robin (b. 1891) called 'Robin' by the family, Ronald (b.1899), and Marjorie (b.1904).

From 1885 Herbert in partnership with two of his brothers Charles and George, carried on in business as manufacturers, importers, and agents in the softgoods trade, initially in Collins Street Melbourne. He was obviously a firm believer in newspaper advertising with the first advertisement in 1888 for '*MACHINISTS, Improvers, Apprentices wanted; underclothing, pinafores, Herbert Cuttle, rear 41 Swanston Street*'². They moved premises to Fitzroy, at 123 Smith Street (the three storey Stanford Block), and later at 302 Brunswick Street (opposite Marios).

In August 1889 Herbert's company was one of the three early occupants in the eight shops of the recently completed Beswicke Building at 236 to 252 Brunswick Street and was the occupant of No 250 (the second from Greeves St) from August 1889 to June 1893. His parents were the occupants of No 248 Brunswick Street. His mother Amelia died there in July 1892.

Over his four-year period at 250 Brunswick Street he placed over 300 advertisements in the *Age* for his retail business selling such items as undergarments, pinafores and aprons. There were also advertisements seeking skilled employees for the manufacturing of these garments. In 1890 the *Age* included an advertisement '*MACHINIST wanted for Cornely embroidering machine*'³. These embroidery machines were developed in France in 1856 and allowed far more complex patterns to be employed on fabrics.

Herbert also had a need for domestic staff and in 1892 an advertisement appeared for a servant

*SERVANT, good general, wanted. Herbert Cuttle, 250 Brunswick st, Fitzroy*⁴.

The manufacturing and importing business was apparently profitable, but in 1893 he gave notice that he had:

... assigned all his estate and effects, whatsoever and wheresoever, to trustees in trust for creditors, who are requested to send PARTICULARS of their DEBTS, and debtors to pay the amounts due by them, to the trustees...⁵

¹ Passenger List *Agincourt* 18 July 1863

² *Age*, Monday 9 January 1888

³ *Age*, Melbourne Wednesday 22 October 1890

⁴ *Argus*, Saturday 15 April 1892

⁵ *Argus*, Friday 23 June 1893

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Examples of embroidery chain stitch utilising the Cornely machine

With the conclusion of his interest in the clothing manufacturing business Herbert moved house initially to Elsternwick then to Surry Hills. He is listed in 1900 as a ‘manufacturers agent’ in Collins Street Melbourne, but in 1905 in the Sands directory as ‘storekeeper’ in Ultima northern Victoria. Herbert’s two brothers established a new business as ‘modellers’ in Wellington Street Collingwood continuing for at least the following twenty years.

In 1907 Herbert and sixteen-year-old son Robin took a buggy, a pair of horses, a week’s supply of food and water, and with a compass set out for the Murray River. After a strenuous journey he arrived at an isolated location near an island named Bumbang where he encountered a land-owner keen to sell his 6300 acres of land suitable for grazing sheep⁶. Margaret and daughter Eva joined Herbert in 1909. They lived in the town of Ultima, where Eva for some time became the post-mistress, while Robin was appointed manager of the farming property. Herbert and Margaret continued in Ultima as ‘storekeepers’ until 1920.⁷

In 1915 after being refused enlisting in the Australian armed forces, son Robin sailed for England and enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery. After winning the Military Cross, he was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps but was killed in air combat over France in May 1918 near Villers-Bretonneux.

In 1921 Herbert purchased more land, the Bumbang Station pre-emptive right title and established a township on part of it. Herbert was the first farmer to be given permission to pump water from the Murray River for irrigation purposes in 1923. In 1924 he named the new town Robinvale in honour of his son Robin. A rudimentary log cabin was constructed within the town for Herbert and Margaret, and later replaced in 1926 of a substantial concrete homestead *Robinswood* where for many years the Cuttles held social gatherings. The homestead is now a centre for arts and crafts in the town.

⁶ Robinvale-Euston Visitor Centre Information

⁷ Robinvale-Euston Visitor Centre Information

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Source: Robinvale-Euston Visitor Centre

Life in Robinvale for the following twenty years appears to have been busy with Herbert holding several occupations including a real estate agent, a Councilor in local government, a general store owner 'Cuttlies Mallee Stores', a garage proprietor and as a commercial agent in rural products including wheat. Margaret was appointed as a Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages in Ultima. In 1936 Herbert and Margaret Cuttle celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.

Not all his ventures in Robinvale appear to have been successful as after his death in 1945 and Margaret's in 1961, his bankrupt estate was settled with his creditors.

Another son, Ronald, graduated in medicine in 1920 and took a position as a general practitioner in Junee NSW. He studied medical post-graduate work in England and Scotland during which he was elected as Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. Back in Australia he resumed his position as a general practitioner in Junee NSW, dying in 1963.

Isaac Dabscheck

1853 - 1928

Author

Peter Woods

Peter Woods has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for several years. A retired civil engineer he has had a strong interest in the physical development of Melbourne's oldest suburb and more recently in the inhabitants that made Fitzroy such an interesting place.



*Portrait from Isaac Dabscheck from his obituary
(Australian Jewish Herald 15 May 1928)*

Isaac Dabscheck lived a full life from his first 54 years in Ukraine then considered part of Russia in tumultuous times, and as an immigrant, owner of a costume and mantle manufacturing business in Fitzroy and as a prime driver of the establishment of a religious centre in Carlton. He lived in Fitzroy for twenty-one years, and his wife for much longer.

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Isaac was born in Loev, Gomel, near Kyiv in 1853¹. Isaac, his wife Rebecca, brother Abraham and his wife, their parents Woolf and Fanny and their families emigrated from the Ukraine through England and arrived in Australia on 4 November 1906 on the ship *SS Dorset*². At this time Isaac was 54 years of age. Isaac's children who accompanied them were Fanny (b.1886), Sarah (b.1887), Woolf John (b.1892), Abraham Meyer, and Esther (b.1899). Isaac's brother Abraham Meyer 48, and his wife Sarah had six children Louis, Nahum, Ephraim, Fanny, Israel and Woolf.

Why would an extended family of seventeen persons ranging in age between 14 and 78 years of age upend their lives and journey to the other side of the world?

A series of pogroms (violent riots incited with the aim of massacring or expelling an ethnic group, especially Jews) occurred in Russia on several occasions in the 19th and 20th centuries incited by the Tsarist police. The most violent occurred in the 'Russian Province of Ukraine' in October 1905 where an estimated 800 Jews were killed³. It seems highly probable that the violence and unrest in their country of origin was the reason why the Dabscheck family came to Australia a year later.

While few details can be located of the grandparents Woolf and Fanny following arrival in Australia, records show that the brothers and their families rented rooms in 60 Cardigan Street Carlton for a year, and a further year at 590 Lygon Street. Both sites are now large modern buildings. Isaac, Rebecca and three of their children Sarah, Woolf and Esther then rented premises at 252 Brunswick Street Fitzroy in the northern-most three levels of the Beswicke Building (where the Black Cat restaurant is now). Daughter Fanny was married only two years later in 1909 to her cousin Nahum who at that stage lived in Neerim, Gippsland⁴. Isaac's brother Abraham is recorded as owning or at least living on an orchard at Shepparton in central Victoria in the 'early war years'.

Isaac and his family operated a clothing business on three levels of the Beswicke building. The workshop and warehouse where clothing was manufactured on the ground floor, the mid-level the family living space and with the family's bedrooms on the top floor. Isaac and his mantle manufacturing business employed fourteen girls⁵ and remained at this address from 1907 until September 1914.

Despite having lived in Australia for four years, the standard of English spoken by Isaac was poor, as in a report on a court case where a man was charged with having broken into the workshop and stolen several items, the newspaper reporter claimed that in giving evidence, Isaac "...who's imperfect knowledge of English made him almost unintelligible..."⁶. In 1913 Isaac (Hebrew name Yitzhak Aizik Ben Zev) became a naturalised Australian and his Certificate quotes his occupation as 'costume maker'. His operating company name was *Isaac Dabscheck & Son. mantle manufacturers*⁷. A mantle (derived from the Latin mantellum) is described as a loose sleeveless cloak or shawl often with a hood and worn especially by women.

¹ Australian Jewish Historical Society

² Commonwealth Of Australia Application for Citizenship of Naturalisation 8th September 1913

³ *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa*, Page 164, Robert Weinberg

⁴ *Jewish Herald*, Friday 29 January 1909, Page 8

⁵ *Argus Melbourne* Thursday 24 September 1914 Page 10

⁶ *Argus Melbourne* Wednesday 2 February 1910 Page 11

⁷ *Victorian Sands Directory*, 1912

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Examples of 19th Century Mantles

There were several instances of robberies from the warehouse over the years of occupation. In 1909 in a police report that on 25th December, six ladies' blue mantles were stolen from his dwelling at 252 Brunswick Street⁸.

Early on the morning of 25 September 1914 flames were noticed issuing from the ground floor windows of the building and the Fire Brigades from Eastern Hill, Fitzroy and Hoddle Street were summonsed⁹. *"A motley crowd in night attire and dressing gowns assembled, and displayed considerable enthusiasm in directing the operations of the firemen."*¹⁰

At some stage during the fire firemen climbed a staircase at the rear of the building and found Isaac unconscious at the third floor and he was carried down to street level. Back at the third floor, upon entering the building they found Rebecca, Esther, Woolf and Fanny in a similar comatose state, with Rebecca and Woolf sustaining some burns. All five were carried to the ground and laid on the footpath on Brunswick Street. They were then taken to the Melbourne General Hospital where all were admitted. At the hospital the following day Mr Dabscheck told an Argus reporter *We went to bed about 12 o'clock. Suddenly my wife and I were roused by violent knocking at the door and woke to find the room full of smoke. We cried loudly for help, and tried to get down the stairs, but the heat and smoke were too bad. I remembered no more until I found myself in the hospital.*

⁸ *Victoria Police Gazette*, 28 December 1909

⁹ *Argus*, Thursday 24 September 1914 Page 10

¹⁰ *Australasian*, Saturday 26 September 1914

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Form A.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

NATURALIZATION ACT 1903.

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

I, Isaac Dabscheck,
 of 252 Brunswick St. Fitzroy, Costume Manufacturer,
 hereby apply for a Certificate of Naturalization under the Naturalization Act 1903.

1. I am by birth a Russian
 2. I arrived in Australia from Liverpool, England
 on the 4th day of November in the year 1906
 per the SS "Dorset" and disembarked at the port of Melbourne

3. Since my arrival in Australia I have resided at 60 Cardigan St. Carlton, 1 year, 1906-1907, 252 Brunswick St. Carlton, 1 year, and 252 Brunswick St. Fitzroy, 4 years

4. I have resided in Australia continuously for a period of two years immediately preceding the date of this Application.

5. I forward herewith a Statutory Declaration, setting forth the particulars required by Section 6, Sub-section (1), paragraph (a) of the said Act.

6. I am Married — 252 Brunswick St. Fitzroy
 7. I have five children: 2 sons and 3 daughters
 (one son & one daughter married; others resident with me.)

8. I am not a naturalized subject or citizen of any other country.

9. I forward also a certificate signed by Thurgood Reynolds
Police Constable to the effect that I am known to him, and am a person of good repute.

10. Dated at Fitzroy the 9th day of September 1913.

Signature of applicant Isaac Dabscheck

Signature of Officer of Police Thurgood Reynolds

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Form D.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

NATURALIZATION ACT 1903.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

I, Isaac Dabscheck do swear
 that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George V.
 His heirs and successors according to law. So HELP ME GOD!

Signature Isaac Dabscheck

CERTIFICATE.

I, Thurgood Reynolds
 Police Magistrate for the State of Victoria
 do hereby certify that on the 9th day of September 1913
Isaac Dabscheck
252 Brunswick St. Fitzroy in the State of Victoria
Costume Manufacturer an applicant for a
 Certificate of Naturalization appeared before me and took the Oath of Allegiance in
 the above form.

Signature Thurgood Reynolds

Name Isaac Dabscheck

Residence 252 Brunswick St. Fitzroy

Age (on date of naturalization) 60

Native Place Russia

Occupation Costume Maker

Date of Certificate 24.9.13

No. of Certificate 16644

No. of Papers 14042

Isaac's Application for and Certificate of Naturalisation from Australian Archives

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Four of the family recovered consciousness after a few hours but were retained in hospital for several days before being released. Daughter Sarah died five days after the fire from 'bronco pneumonia developed from asphyxiation'.¹¹

There were questions raised by nephew Woolf Dabscheck at the inquest held on 21 November where he believed that the firemen were slow in entering the building in search of any residents that could be inside¹² stating that the firemen were reluctant to attempt to enter the fiercely blazing building. Senior fire brigade personnel refuted this suggestion saying that the heat and smoke were too intense to attempt entry. New breathing apparatus had recently been acquired from America and was used here for the first time. The fire chief later said that the masks performed extremely well and it is doubtful that any member of the family could have been rescued but for the assistance the masks gave the firemen in such dense smoke.¹³

The fire severely damaged the ground floor of the building and most of the surviving stock was badly damaged. Many completed mantles ready for the spring sales were destroyed. The well-known Georges Department Store purchased much of the surviving stock from the building and four weeks later put on a special sale which included some completed items but mainly rolls of dress materials.¹⁴ Damage reported to the warehouse and contents on the ground floor was estimated at £1000.¹⁵

A short newspaper item appeared some weeks later. *Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Dabscheck, of Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, desire to thank all who have shown kindness and sympathy with them in their trouble caused by the recent fire which destroyed their business and their home, as well as making it necessary for the whole family to be taken to the hospital, where their daughter died as a result of the calamity. Mr. and Mrs. Dabscheck and family desire to thank especially all the kind friends who visited them in hospital, and all who sent letters of condolence and sympathy.*¹⁶

With their home and business destroyed, the surviving family members required a new residence. Sands and McDougall record that they were living at 17 Moor Street, Fitzroy in 1915 which had been the home and stables of their eldest son Nahum, a carrier and a taxi service operator since 1911. However it was not for some time that the costume making workshop was re-established.

In 1917 a Fitzroy City Council meeting minute contained an item *That the Chief Inspector of Factories has been informed that the Council has no objections to the registration of factory purposes as under:- ... I. Dabscheck, Costume making, No 340 Brunswick Street – 3 males, 40 females.*¹⁷ It seems that a substantial clothing fabrication workshop had been re-established at this new address.

Several newspaper advertisements appeared in August 1918 for:

*MACHINISTS and FINISHERS for mantles and costumes for good or highest wages to be employed with both. J. DABSCECK and SON and I. Dabscheck and Son at 340 Brunswick Street. Working conditions however were not always up to acceptable standards. Isaac was taken to court in December 1919 and fined for having worked a female employee for twelve hours per day on three days in contravention of regulations.*¹⁸

Isaac and Rebecca did not reside for very long in Moor Street. They appear on the Electoral Rolls in 1924 and 1925 at 123 Rae Street Fitzroy in 1926, and in 1928 at 42 St Georges Road. The St George's Road address was to be the home of Isaac and Rebecca for the rest of their lives, Isaac until 1928 and Rebecca until 1962.

¹¹ Doctors certificate to Coroner's Inquest 28 September 1914

¹² Woolf Dabscheck statement to Coroner's Inquest 21 November 1914

¹³ *Argus*, Melbourne Thursday 24 September 1914 Page 10

¹⁴ *Argus*, Monday 26 October 1914 Page 6 Advertising

¹⁵ *Argus*, Wednesday 28 October 1914, Page 14

¹⁶ *Jewish Herald*, Friday 6 November 1914 Page 10

¹⁷ *Fitzroy City Press*, Saturday 7 April 1917 Page 2

¹⁸ *Age*, Melbourne Saturday 6 December 1919 Page 18

Fitzroy People



The house in St Georges Road and the Isaac and Rebecca Dabscheck memorial in Fawkner Cemetery (Photos by author)

In addition to the management of the costume and mantle fabrication business, Isaac devoted considerable effort in achieving the construction of a synagogue in Carlton and in the raising of funds for its construction. While a congregation had been formed as early as 1912, meetings were held in halls owned by other organisations. On 25 September 1914 the first annual meeting of the Carlton United Hebrew Congregation was held and a committee was elected which included Isaac who was re-elected Gabbai (treasurer or honorary official) for the following year. Progress on the proposal however was slow and it was not until 3 June 1926 where a meeting of the 'Jews of Carlton' was held in the Carlton Picture Theatre. A committee formed to raise money for its construction included Isaac. Both he and Rebecca made a monetary promise. By October 1927 the 14th Annual General Meeting was held with Isaac as President in the chair. Construction had begun in 1927 with the Foundation Stone laid in June. On 6th October 1927 the first service was held in the Synagogue.¹⁹

Isaac lived for only seven months following completion of the Carlton synagogue, as he died suddenly at seventy-five years of age on 12 May 1928 at home. An article in praise of Isaac's life and his work in the Jewish community appeared in the Jewish Herald. *We regret to have to announce that the Jewish community has sustained a great loss in the death of Mr Isaac Dabscheck who passed peacefully away on 12th of May 1928, at the age of 74 at his residence He was one of the greatest orthodox Jews in Melbourne, and one of the originators of the Carlton Hebrew United Congregation, and a foundation member of the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha.*²⁰

Isaac was not the only Dabscheck member to have worked on the realisation of the Carlton synagogue. His wife Rebecca served for some time as President of The Ladies Guild of the Congregation. His brother Abraham's wife Sarah held several 'card evenings' and other money raising events at her home in Miller Street, for furnishings of the synagogue. Abraham was also a founding member of the congregation and on the board of management for many years.

¹⁹ References in Age and Jewish News

²⁰ *Australian Jewish Herald*, 15 May 1928

1879 - 1947

Mike Moore is a retired engineer and has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for two decades. He enjoys researching the rich history of Fitzroy and its early settlement, buildings and people.

Samuel and Agnes Murphy came from Belfast, Ireland to Melbourne in 1913. Samuel's occupation was a hat maker. They had nine children and members of the family lived at 240 Brunswick St for four decades from 1916 to 1955. In the 1920s at the Fitzroy Court, Samuel was convicted of offences involving gaming, liquor and domestic violence.

Samuel Murphy married Agnes Rainey at the Agnes Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Ireland on 24 September 1903,¹ and ten years later they migrated to Melbourne. Their departure from Ireland coincided with the growing industrial unrest in Dublin and Belfast, which culminated in the four month lock-out of workers from August 1913.² This may have prompted Samuel and Agnes to emigrate.

The *s. s. Irishman* arrived at Melbourne on 20 Nov 1913 with 550 immigrants for Victoria, including 147 adult farm labourers, 254 British lads, and ‘seven landseekers representing 31 persons’, with their own capital. The racial origins of the immigrants were English 437, Scotch 53, Irish 42, Wales 4 and small numbers from Manx, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. There were 36 family groups comprising 68 adults and 90 children.³ One such family was Samuel and Agnes Murphy and their five children aged 9, 6, 4, 2 years and an infant 3 months old.

Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839-1923 for Samuel Murphy									
British > 1913									
Murphy	Samuel	3rd						Hatter.	1
	Agnes		28					Wife	1
	Joseph				9			Child	1
	Robert				6				1
	Margt.					4			1
	Samuel				1 1/2				1
	James.					3/4		Infant.	1

Extract from Inward Overseas Passenger List, PROV.

¹ *Age*, 24 September 1943, p 5.

² <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/remembering-the-1913-lockout-its-sources-impact-and-some-lessons>

³ *Mount Alexander Mail*, 21 Nov 1913, p 2; Inward Overseas Passenger List, Oct-Dec 1913, PROV.

Fitzroy People

Samuel and Agnes Murphy lived at 240 Brunswick Street over the period 1916 to 1955. With four more children born here, the family at Brunswick Street eventually comprised:

Name	Year of birth	Other life events / details	Year of death
Samuel Murphy	1879	married Belfast, 24 Sep 1903	1947
Agnes May Rainey	1885	married Belfast, 24 Sep 1903	1971
Joseph Hillis	1904	confectioner (1931), driver (1943)	1968
Robert Rainey	1907	knitter, married Edie	1986
Margaret	1909	married Edward	
Samuel	1912	married Kathleen	
James	1913	boxmaker (1930s), married Violet	
Martha		boxmaker (1937), married Ken Noonan	
Agnes Louisa	1917		1935
Lorna Adelaide		married Flt Lt Betts RAAF (1945)	1952
Neville		married Kathleen Whitty (1954)	1987

Samuel's occupation was recorded on the ship's passenger list as 'hatter'⁴ and his later occupations were hat blocker and/or hat cleaner (1916 -1943).⁵



Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1916, at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1207/>

In March 1918, his straw hat factory, with three male and 10 female workers, was registered at 240 Brunswick Street.⁶ In February 1920, Samuel was advertising for Straw Hat Machinists at £2 per week but by December 1920 his machinery and stock in trade were being auctioned to pay his creditors.⁷ After a promising start with his hat factory, Samuel's business failed and his life took a downward turn. During the 1920s, Samuel was convicted of offences at the Fitzroy Court on three occasions:

In 1921 Samuel kept a gaming house at 240 Brunswick Street and a detailed report appeared in the *Argus*:

As the result of a raid made by the Fitzroy police on a two-up school at 240 Brunswick street, on Friday last, Samuel Murphy, aged 37 years, was charged at the Fitzroy Court yesterday with being the keeper of a common gaming house.

Plain clothes Constable Dunn said that at 11 o'clock on Friday night he and other members of the police force went to the rear of the premises in Brunswick street. A man without a coat or hat was at the gate, and as soon as he saw the police the gate was closed and fastened with an iron bar. The gate was forced, and the police rushed into a room where gambling was taking place. There was a padded ring, surrounded by seats. When the police were recognized, there was a scramble among the men, a number of whom escaped. Murphy occupied a place in the centre of the ring and told the police he was there to see "fair play." Dunn asked what game the players had been playing, Murphy's reply being, "Whatever game you like to take on." Dunn remarked that apparently two-up had been played, and Murphy said, "Probably so." He said that the school had been in existence for three weeks. All the windows in the room were frosted and the openings covered.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatmaking>

⁵ Australia, Electoral Rolls, at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1207/>

⁶ *Fitzroy City Press*, 9 March 1918, p 2.

⁷ *Age*, 28 February 1920, p 7; *Age*, 21 December 1920, p 2.

Fitzroy People

Murphy, a hat blocker, admitted the charge.

The bench imposed a fine of £40 on Murphy, with the alternative of three month's imprisonment.⁸

In 1924 Samuel was charged with an offence of illegally disposing of liquor. *The Argus* reported:

At the Fitzroy Court yesterday, before Mr A. A. Kelley, P.M., and Messrs. Rosen, Griffen, and McMahon, Justices of the Peace, Josephine Keogh, licensee of the Rainbow Hotel, was charged with having disposed of liquor during prohibited hours. Samuel was charged with having carried liquor away from the premises, and William Hart, an employee of the hotel, was charged with having unlawfully supplied liquor on January 19.

Senior Constable Hore said that in company with Plainclothes Constable Portingale he was standing in a right-of-way off Young street, near the rear of the Rainbow Hotel. They saw three men come to the back gate, and then saw the heads appear over the fence. One of the men was Hart. Later four bottles of beer were passed over the fence, and Murphy began to walk away with them. He was intercepted and taken back to the hotel.

The three accused pleaded guilty to the charge. Keogh was fined £3, Murphy £2, and Hart £2.⁹

By 1928, Samuel had reached an all time low and was charged with assaulting his wife while very drunk. He had been drinking a concoction known as "pinkie". The best reference to "pinkie" appeared in the Shepparton Advertiser in 1928, where it is described as: 'an atrocious type of local raw wine fortified by local raw spirits'. The following report appeared in *The Age*:

WIFE BRUTALLY KICKED.

Bench Yields to Appeals.

Samuel Murphy, 43 years, hatter, was before the Fitzroy bench yesterday charged with having on 7th March assaulted his wife, Agnes May Murphy.

Mr N. L. O'Connor, who announced he appeared for the wife, said she did not wish to press the charge against defendant.

Sergeant Simpson: This man deliberately kicked the woman, and from information given to the police, it is the culmination of a continued course of cruelty.

Mrs. Murphy, questioned by the sergeant, said she lived at Brunswick-street, Fitzroy. At 6.15 p.m. on the previous day defendant came home very drunk. He had been drinking "pinkie." He struck her and kicked her in the stomach. She collapsed on a chair, and the police were sent for. She added that he would never have done such a thing but for the drink. When sober there was no better husband or father.

Constable Souter said he found the woman in a collapsed condition.

Mr. Macnamara, P.M.: It was a most cowardly thing to do.

Mr. O'Connor: Perhaps the bench does not realise the wonderful effect of drinking the concoction known as "pinkie."

Mr. Macnamara: Are you appearing for the husband now. You do not want to separate them?

Mr. O'Connor: That is so.

Mr. Macnamara: Well, I propose to separate him from his wife for some time.

The wife and her sister made a tearful appeal to the bench.

A sentence of three months' imprisonment was imposed, to be suspended upon defendant entering into a bond to be of good behavior, to abstain from drink and places where drink was sold for two years.

Mr. Macnamara said defendant had his wife to thank for his escape.

⁸ *Argus*, 17 February 1921, p 9.

⁹ *Argus*, 8 February 1924, p 7.

¹⁰ *Age*, 5 March 1928, p 13.

Fitzroy People

Despite the extreme nature of Samuel's abusive behaviour, Agnes appealed for leniency and Samuel's sentence was suspended and he entered into a bond to abstain from drinking. It appears that he kept to his bond and family life returned to normal. Fifteen years later Agnes and Samuel celebrated 40 years of marriage, and the following notice appeared in *The Age*.

Ruby Weddings

MURPHY.—Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Murphy, of 240 Brunswick-street, Fitzroy, announce with pleasure the 40th anniversary of their marriage, which was celebrated at Agnes-street, Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Ireland, on September 24, 1903.

Source: Age, 24 September 1943, p 5

Samuel Murphy lived at 240 Brunswick St until his death on 25 June 1947. His eldest son Joseph and Agnes remained there as occupants until 1955.

Agnes and the children must have been a strong support for Samuel during his life and bore no ill after his death. In 1949 on the second anniversary of Samuel's death, Agnes and seven of their nine children (Joe, Margaret, Sam, Jim, Martha, Lorna and Neville) and their families inserted seven tributes 'in loving memory' of Samuel in the *Age*.

MURPHY.—On June 25, at his residence, 240 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Samuel, dearly loved husband of Agnes, loving father of Joseph, Robert, Margaret, Samuel, James, Martha, Louis (dec.), Lorna and Neville. With Christ, which is far better.

Source: Herald, 25 June 1947, p 6. and Source: Age, 25 June 1949, p 12

MURPHY.—In loving memory of my dear husband and father, passed away June 25, 1947. The sorrow I feel no words can explain. The ache in my heart will always remain. I loved you in life. I love you yet. You are mine to remember while others forget.
—Inserted by his loving wife, and son, Neville.

MURPHY.—In loving memory of my father, passed away June 25, 1947. Unseen, unheard, yet ever near. Loved, remembered, for ever dear.
—Inserted by his loving daughter, Lorna; son-in-law, Wesley; grandson, Rodney.

MURPHY.—In loving memory of my dear father, who passed away June 25, 1947.

A voice we loved is still.
A place is vacant in our home,
Which never can be filled.
—Inserted by his loving son, Joe; daughter-in-law, Peggy; granddaughter, Agnes.

MURPHY.—In loving memory of my dear father, who passed away June 25, 1947.

We miss you now, we always will,
But in our hearts you are with us still.
—Inserted by his loving daughter, Margaret; son-in-law, Edward; grandson, William.

MURPHY.—In loving memory of our father, who passed away June 25, 1947. Ever remembered.

—Inserted by Sam, Kath and family.
MURPHY.—In loving memory of dad, who passed away June 25, 1947.

—Inserted by his loving son, Jim; daughter-in-law, Violet; granddaughter, Lorraine; grandson, Malcolm.

MURPHY.—In loving memory of my dear father, who passed away on June 26, 1947.

I often look at your photo.
You are smiling and seem to say:
Do not grieve, I am only sleeping.
I will meet you all some day.
—Inserted by loving daughter and son-in-law, Martha and Ken.

Morris Silverman

1848 - 1930

Author

Peter Woods

Peter Woods has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for several years. A retired civil engineer he has had a strong interest in the physical development of Melbourne's oldest suburb and more recently in the inhabitants that made Fitzroy such an interesting place.

Morris Silverman, a tailor, arrived in Fitzroy in 1883 from Poland via England. His wife, Rachel, and children joined him in Melbourne the following year, but Rachel died only a few years later. In 1890, Morris remarried and then fathered several more children over the next decade. Morris initially had a shop in Carlton before moving to the Beswicke Building in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy and then to Flinders Street, Melbourne where he also expanded his businesses to include pawnbroking and jewellery sales. Morris regularly appeared in newspaper reports, sometimes in relation to thefts at his shop but other times in relation to minor misdemeanours or family events. Morris died in 1930, aged 82 years.

Morris (Moshe or Maurice) Henry Silverman was probably born in Poland. His early life is unknown but at the age of 35 he travelled from England on the *Cephalonia* arriving in Melbourne in 1883.¹ In 1884, his wife Rachel and their children travelled to Melbourne steerage class on the *Selkirkshire*.² Morris and Rachel had seven children: Abraham (b.1873), Esther (b. 1874); Rose (b.1875); Lazarus (b.1876); Katie/Kate/ Kit (b.1878); Tilly/Tillie/Matilda (b.1881); Annie (b.1884). When Rachel and the children arrived in Melbourne, Annie was a month old while the rest of the children aged between three and 11 years. Rachel died in 1887 at the age of 37, only three years after arriving in Australia 'leaving a large family to mourn her loss'. At the time Morris and Rachel lived in Cardigan Street, Carlton.³

By 1890, Morris had remarried. According to the *Australian Jewish News*, Morris had previously known a Hannah Rose Robota from Ciechanow, Poland⁴. Morris probably proposed to Hannah by letter and she arrived in Australia in 1890. Morris and Hannah had nine children: Myer (b.1891); Sarah (b.1895); Victoria (b.1896); Dorah; Jack (Jacob); Joe (b.1900); Dave (David); and Yetta. By 1896, the combined family consisted of 13 children, as three had died by this date.

Morris's occupation on arrival in Melbourne was given as 'tailor'.⁵ He set up business initially in Cardigan Street, Carlton and then moved to the newly opened Beswicke Building at 252 Brunswick Street in 1890.⁶ The large newspaper advertisements of 24 December 1890 and February 1891 identified the tailoring business at 252 Brunswick St as 'M. Silverman & Son', The son presumably was Abraham, then aged 17.

¹ *Australian Shipping Records* 1883

² *Australian Shipping Records* 1884

³ *Argus*, Wednesday 27 July 1887, p 1.

⁴ *Australian Jewish News*, Sydney, Friday 23 December 1994, p 21.

⁵ *Australian Shipping Records* 1883.

⁶ *Argus*, Wednesday 24 December 1890.



Advertisement for Silverman and Son, Argus, Friday 6 February 1891

Morris advertised for staff until 1895. Several advertisements appeared in the *Argus* for ‘MACHINISTS, and TAILORESSES, good, wanted at once’⁷. The advertisements continued throughout 1891 with a final request for a ‘Vest Hand’ in June 1895.⁸

By 1897, Morris had moved his business to 502 Flinders Street, Melbourne at the northeast corner of King Street. He expanded his venture to include pawnbroking and jewellery. Soon after opening his new shop, Morris suffered a huge loss when thieves broke into his shop on a Saturday night. They gained entry to the shop by removing bricks from a side wall and took much of his stock including ‘.... 70 coats and vests, several suits, 25 rugs and blankets, a quantity of jewellery and some Japanese coins. The value of the whole is set down at about 100’.⁹

Over the following decade, Melbourne’s newspapers record several events involving Morris’ business. In some cases, goods were stolen from his shop while in other cases Morris was a defendant for relatively minor offences. These events included:

- In 1899, an Inspector made a seizure at Morris’s clothing shop in Flinders Street with the result that a fine of £4 / 4 was inflicted or three times the amount of duty for the possession of uncustomed goods.¹⁰
- In 1900, Morris was prosecuted in the district court on a charge of having wilfully harboured a seaman named Bjork. Despite his declaration of his innocence, evidence was produced that Bjork was staying in the defendants boarding house. A fine of 20 shillings was imposed.¹¹
- In 1900, Morris reported several overcoats, with an estimated value of the stolen goods was £2 / 15, were stolen from his shop at 502 Flinders St. A warrant was issued for a person including a detailed description.¹²
- In 1900, Morris was summoned to the District Court for having carried on the business of a pawnbroker without a licence.¹³

⁷ *Argus*, Wednesday 14 January 1891

⁸ *Argus*, Tuesday 25 June 1895

⁹ *Argus*, Monday 29 November 1897, p 1.

¹⁰ *Argus*, Monday 23rd January 1899, p 5.

¹¹ *Argus*, Monday 5th March 1900, p 2.

¹² *Police Gazette* 1900

¹³ *Argus*, Monday 12 March 1900, p 2.

Fitzroy People

- In 1903, a person was in court accused of selling Morris a comb and looking glass belonging to an hotel. Morris was named as a 'second-hand dealer'.¹⁴
- In 1906, Morris reported another theft from his shop, '2 silver watches, 12 metal watches, a plain gold ring, a 9ct gold ring with dark stone, Value £16 / 10'.¹⁵

Outside the issues involving the law, life continued for Morris and his family. In 1904, a Barmitzvah was announced for Morris' son Myer.¹⁶ Meyer enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force during the Second World War, and later married a Miss E. Glance at the Bourke Street synagogue.¹⁷ In 1908 Morris' eight-year-old son, Joseph, was seriously injured when Joseph jumped off the back of a tram and was hit by another tram travelling in the opposite direction.¹⁸

Morris and Hannah moved house several times between 1908 and 1928. They lived initially at 409 King St, West Melbourne, then moved to 370 City Road, South Melbourne in 1914. It is probable that Morris ceased to own and manage the Flinders Street shop in about 1914 as he and Hannah moved to South Melbourne, where they remained until 1919. They then moved to 261 Amess Street, North Carlton where they lived until Morris died on 6 February 1930.

An obituary in the *Australian Jewish News* on 27 February 1930 states that Morris '... has been one of the most respected members of the community. An orthodox Jew, he kept alive in his home all the customs and traditions of Jewry, ...and will be sadly missed by his friends. He passed away in his full faculties chanting the last prayer...'. The obituary misquotes his death age as 84¹⁹. Hannah, also called Annie, died in August of the same year.



Morris and Hannah (Annie) headstone Fawkner Cemetery, and the final home of Morris and Hannah at 261 Amess Street North Carlton

¹⁴ *Argus*, Friday 17 July 1903, p 2.

¹⁵ *Police Gazette* 1906

¹⁶ *Argus*, Friday 29 April 1904, p 9.

¹⁷ *Argus*, Friday 19 November 1920, p 11.

¹⁸ *Argus*, Friday 28 August 1908, p 8.

¹⁹ *Australian Jewish News*, Sydney, Friday 27 February 1930.

Fitzroy People

A little more information is available about Morris' children:

Morris and Rachel's children:

Name	Date of Birth - Death	Other events
Abraham	1873 - 1919	
Esther	1874 - 1925	Was Mrs Goode, Perth
Rose	1875 - 1899	married Morris Rosalky
Lazarus	1876 – September 1955	
Katie/Kate/Kit	1878 - unknown	married Sam Rosen
Tilly/Tillie/Matilda	1881 - unknown	married L Rosen
Annie	1884 - 1964	Mrs Annie Rosalky and lived in Sydney

Morris and Hannah's children:

Name	Date of Birth - Death	Other events
Myer	1891 - unknown	served WW1 1914-15, was living at 484 Napier St in 1930
Sarah	1895 – 1934	Died aged 39, 'a patient sufferer at rest'
Victoria	1896 - 1931	
Dorah		married and became Mrs R Abrahams
Jack (Jacob)	No information	
Joe (Joseph)	1900 - 1980	
Alex / Alick Herman	No information	
David (David)	No information	
Yetta	No information	

Agnes Telfer

1844-1913

Author
Mike Moore

Mike Moore is a retired engineer and has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for two decades. He enjoys researching the rich history of Fitzroy and its early settlement, buildings and people.

Agnes Telfer arrived as a single mother in 1866 and later that year she married James Cooper. They lived in a three room shop at what is now 159 Brunswick Street. Their "eating house" was advertising there in 1870, and four years later they moved to larger premises at 314 Brunswick Street. James Cooper died in 1888 and by 1893 she had married Thomson Baishont. After five years at 300 Brunswick Street, the family moved to the larger shop with 11 rooms at 242 Brunswick Street in the newly completed Beswicke Building. Agnes died there in 1913 after 45 years as a restaurateur along Brunswick Street.

A heavily pregnant young woman boarded the Queen of the Mersey at Liverpool on 24 December 1865, bound for Melbourne. She was Agnes Telfer born in Scotland in 1844. Her son William Henry Telfer was born at sea and his birth was registered on arrival at Melbourne. She was unmarried as only her maiden name was given on her son's birth certificate. Why did she set out on this voyage on Christmas Eve? Was she banished? It was a brave thing to do. It was a perilous voyage. After experiencing southwest gales the ship put into Milford, Wales on 30 December, with loss of sails and lifeboat, and two passengers were dangerously injured. The journey resumed again on 11 January and they arrived on 5 May 1866.

Agnes arrived alone with a babe in arms in the bustling city of Melbourne. Within two months, on 21 July she had married James Cooper, a waiter aged 33. The marriage took place at the registrar's office in Gertrude Street. Agnes was described as a domestic aged 22. Agnes and James's first child, Janet Ellen, was born in 1869. Tragically William Henry, born on the voyage, died a year after in 1870 aged three.

Agnes and James Cooper are recorded as having eight children born over the period 1869 to 1884. Six grew to adulthood: Janet Ellen 1869-1912, James Telfer 1871-93, Henrietta Alice 1874-1934, Agnes Mary 1876-1910, Charlotte Louisa 1879-1956 and Charles Archibald 1884-1950. Two others died in infancy: Henrietta (1st) 1868-68, and Margaret Eliza 1881-82.

Agnes and James Cooper had two restaurants along Brunswick Street: the first, from 1869 to 1873, was on the west side, fifth shop north of Hanover Street; the second from 1874 to 1885, on the east side, third shop north of Argyle Street.

Fitzroy People



Cooper's eating house, fifth north of Hanover Street, over 1869 to 1873. The brick shop with three rooms attached is now, a barber shop named Saint Porres, the patron saint of barbers. (photo the author)

From 1869 to 1873, James and Agnes Cooper's eating house was at the fifth shop north of Hanover Street, then 145 Brunswick Street, but since 1885 it has been renumbered as 159. Five shops from the corner of Hanover Street were built over 1852-57 for William Bestwick, an early colonist from 1840. and a landowner at Broadmeadows. Their eating house was first advertised in Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory 1870, and was one of Fitzroy's first restaurants. A summary of early Melbourne restaurants is shown in Annex A attached below.

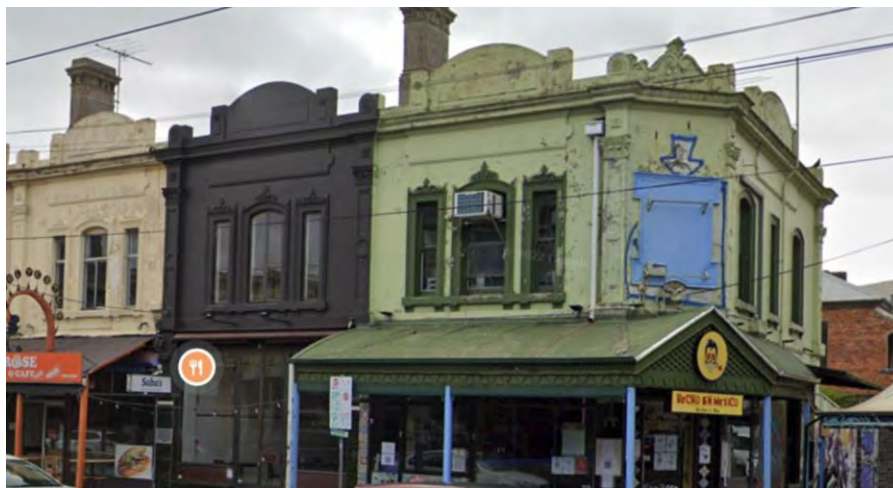
Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for James Cooper									
City of Fitzroy > 1865-1869									
1	Lefebvre	Louis D.	Drapier	Dunsmuir St.	137	Rate	11.00		130
2	McLean	Patrick	Chemist	Do.	139	"	11.00		104
3	Leib	George	Trangrover	Do.	141	"	3.00		65
4	Trotter	Richard	Greene	Do.	143	"	3.00		65
5	Cooper	James	Eating Ho.	Do.	145	"	3.00		65
6	Landells	James		Landells, Jas	147/9	"	5.00		78

¹ Coopers' eating house at 145 Brunswick St in 1869, one of five shops owned by Wm Bestwick at the Hanover St corner.

When they left this address in 1873, the Cooper family consisted of parents Agnes and James, daughter Janet aged 4, and son James aged 2. Two other children had died in infancy.

¹ <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

Fitzroy People



Cooper's second restaurant, Brunswick Street east side, third north of Argyle Street, 1874 to 1885: now Viet Rose bakery 330 Brunswick St; right view 99 Argyle St visible behind the shops.

Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for James Cooper						
City of Fitzroy > 1881-1882						
Kelly	James H	Shaper	Trehwella John	810 Bunko shop	50 .	
Beardsall	Edwin	Parker	" "	312 " " 5.	44 .	
Cooper	James	Waiter	" "	314 " " 5.	44 .	
Harris	Becker	Painbroker	" "	316 " " 5.	44 .	
			" "	hand 34x64	17 .	

² *Cooper's second restaurant, owned by John Trehwella. James's occupation is recorded as waiter.*

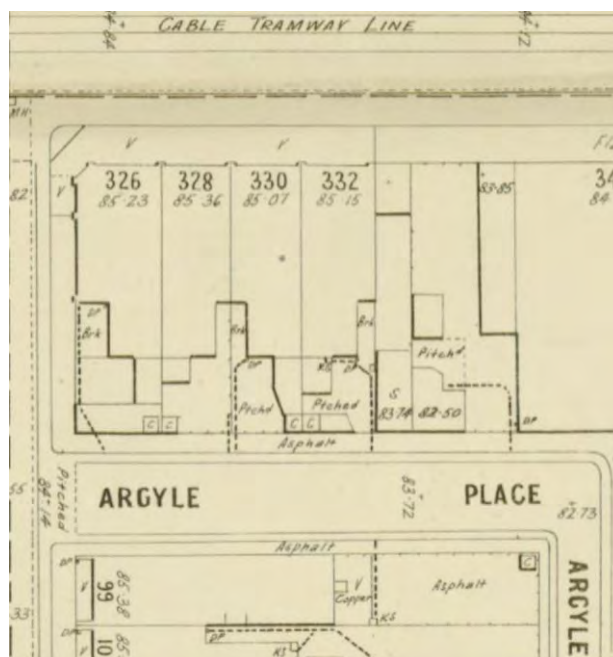
Over 1874 to 1885 James and Agnes Cooper's restaurant was at the third shop north of Argyle St. Initially 314 Brunswick St, it was renumbered as 330 Brunswick St in 1885. The shops north of Argyle St were owned by John Trehwella who had been a successful gold miner near Bendigo. The brick shop with five attached rooms is now, in 2022, the Viet Rose bakery & cafe.

In 1885, when they left this shop, the Cooper family consisted of parents Agnes and James, and Janet (16), James (14), Henrietta (11), Agnes (9), Charlotte (6) and Charles (1).

From 1885 to 1889 the Cooper family, with their six children, lived in the eight room Ventnor House at what is now 99 Argyle St. James Cooper died here in 1888, aged 55.

² Rate Books are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

Fitzroy People



Ventnor House, 99 Argyle St, at the corner of Argyle Place, and extract from MMBW plan 1241, dated 1900 showing 99 Argyle St, corner of Argyle Place; and its proximity to 330 Brunswick St

James Cooper's funeral notice on 11 Dec 1888 describes him as "waiter, for many years an old and respected resident of Fitzroy". On the same day a notice was placed by the Ancient Order of Foresters inviting members to attend Brother James Cooper's funeral leaving from Ventnor House.

Agnes is recorded as the restaurant keeper in the 1890 Rate Book and the 1912 Electoral Roll, and this was presumably her role during her 45 years of restaurants along Brunswick Street. The Sands & McDougall Directories over this period usually identify the restaurant business, and the primary occupant was usually her husband, initially James Cooper and later Thomson Baishont.

After the death of James, Agnes and her children moved to 300 Brunswick Street. Widow Agnes then married Thomson Baishont in 1891 when she was aged 47. Thomson Baishont, born at Farnham in Surrey, had been engaged by the Royal Navy in 1877 as a baker. With his unique Baishont name, he advertised in newspapers as a plasterer at Warragul (1886) and Malvern (1889). In 1912, the electoral roll records him as a driver living at 242 Brunswick Street (Beswicke Building). From 1895 to 1927 there are newspaper references to his 33 acres of land, and fruit growing near Warrandyte.

THE Friends of the late Mr. JAMES COOPER, waiter, for many years an old and respected resident of Fitzroy, are most respectfully invited to follow his remains to the place of interment, the Melbourne General Cemetery. The funeral is appointed to move from his late residence, 99 Argyle-street, Fitzroy, TO-MORROW (Wednesday), 12th December, at 11 o'clock punctually.
WILLIAM GEORGE APPS, Undertaker, Fitzroy and Moor streets, Fitzroy; High and Robe streets, St. Kilda; and 180 St. George's-road, North Fitzroy. Telephone No. 1048.

A. O.F. COURT FRIAR TUCK, No. 3184.—The Members of this Court and the order in general are respectfully invited to follow the remains of their late Brother, JAMES COOPER, to the place of interment, the Melbourne General Cemetery. The funeral is appointed to leave his late residence, Ventnor House, Argyle-street, Fitzroy, THIS DAY (Tuesday), at 11 o'clock.
W. YOUNG, Secretary.

³ James Cooper "waiter, for many years an old and respected resident of Fitzroy" died at Ventnor House, 99 Argyle Street

³ Age, 11 Dec 1888, page 8, from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>

Fitzroy People

Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for Agnes Cooper									
City of Fitzroy > 1888-1889									
2	Clark	Robert	grainman			94	n. 3.		20
3	King	George	woolclane	"Columb"		off	n. 4.		22
4	Cooper	Agnes	widow			99	n. 8.		40
5	Patterson	Marion	widow	Gibson George		101	n. 5.		32

⁴ Agnes Cooper, widow, was the occupant at 99 Argyle St, a stone and brick house with 8 rooms

After her marriage, she and her second husband ran two Brunswick Street restaurants: from 1890 to 1897, on the east side, second north of Johnston Street, and from 1898 to 1913, on the east side, fifth south of Greeves Street. Agnes Baishont's restaurant was at No 300, comprising of a shop and nine rooms owned by the Union Bank. The Union Bank was adjacent at 298 Brunswick Street, at the corner of Johnston Street.



⁵ Agnes' restaurant & the Union Bank at the right: Brunswick St, c 1890, SLV, H11763, and Agnes' restaurant at 300 Brunswick St, second north of Johnston St, 1890 to 1898

Agnes is recorded as a widow in the 1891 rate books as occupant at 300 Brunswick Street and in 1892 she appears as Agnes Baishont. Agnes's daughter Janet is the occupant at 300 Brunswick Street in the 1892 directory running a coffee house. By 1893 Thompson Baishont, Agnes's new husband is the occupant.

In 1898, Agnes and Thomson moved to an 11 room residence and restaurant in the new Beswicke Building at 242 Brunswick Street, sixth south of Greeves Street. She operated the restaurant until her death there on 21 June 1913. Her estate then consisted only of two blocks of land at Birmingham township, in the Spotswood-Newport area, willed to her 29 year old son Charles, with elder daughters Janet and Henrietta as executors.

³ Age, 11 Dec 1888, page 8, from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>

⁴ Rate Books are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

⁵ City of Yarra, Heritage Database

Fitzroy People

Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for Agnes Cooper

City of Fitzroy > 1890-1891

7	Ironsides	William	bank manager	Union Bank	do	298 St. Luke St	120
8	Cooper	Agnes	restaurant	do	do	300 + shop 9	80
9	Bushman	Isadora	dealer	Robertson	do	302 + 5	55

Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for Agnes Biaschont

City of Fitzroy > 1892-1893

Surname in full of Person Rated.	Christian Name in full of Person Rated.	Calling or Occupation.	Owner, Lessee, Assignee, or Occupier of Property.	Name of Owner of Rateable Property.	Residence and Post Town or Post Office.	No. of Street.	Rate
Biaschont	Agnes	Restaurant	do	Union Bank	do	300 9	

Rate book entries for 1891 and 1892

Johnston st
298 Union Bank of Australia
—Ironside, Wm., mgr
300 Cooper, Miss J., coff hse
302 Butler, Isadore, dealer

Johnston st
298 Union Bank of Australia
—Ironside, Wm., mgr
300 Baishont, Thomas
302 Dilworth, Mrs Mary A.
304 Hocking, H. S., woodmr



Directory entries 1892 and 1893 (left) and 242 Brunswick Street, now Kumo clothing (right)

Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963 for Agnes Baishant

City of Fitzroy > 1898-1899

8	Baishant	Agnes	Restaurant keeper	do	242 Bishop	11	40
9	Barnwell	Robert	Regardmaker	do	240	11	40
10	Simpson	David	Clothing	do	238	11	40
20	Booth	Benjamin	Factors	do			

Rate book dated 5 Dec 1898, 242 Brunswick St, Agnes Baishont, restaurant keeper, brick shop, 11 rooms

⁶ Rate Books are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

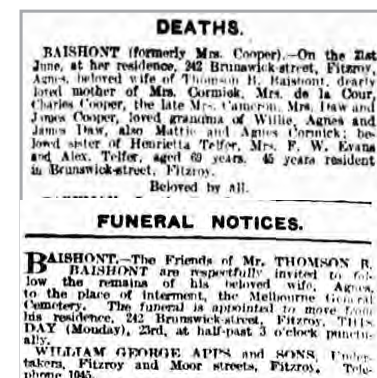
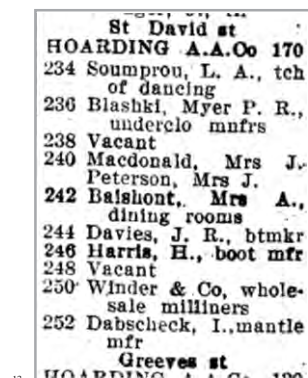
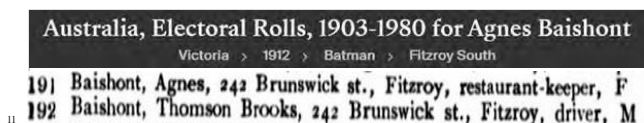
⁷ Rate Books are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

⁸ Sands & McDougall Directory, 1892

⁹ Sands & McDougall Directory, 1893

¹⁰ Rate Books are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60706/>

Fitzroy People



1910 Sands & McDougall directory (left and middle) and Death and Funeral notice for Agnes Baishont (right)

Agnes's family and children

Henrietta Telfer, her unmarried sister, had arrived in Melbourne in 1882, aged 26. The electoral rolls of 1903 and 1909 record that she lived with Agnes, with 'home duties' as her occupation.

Janet Ellen (Tot), her eldest daughter had married John Cameron in 1891, and the electoral rolls record them living at 242 Brunswick Street in 1903, 1906, 1909 and 1912. Her occupation was 'cook' and his was 'driver'. Janet died suddenly at 242 Brunswick Street in June 1912, six months before her mother Agnes.

Henrietta Alice, her second daughter, born 1874, had married Matthew Barnewall Cormick. In 1905 they lived nearby at 20 St David Street.

Agnes Mary (1876-1910), the third daughter, married William Lewis Daw and they lived nearby at 20 St David Street in 1903. She died at her mother's residence, 242 Brunswick Street in July 1910.

"A patient sufferer gone to rest."

Charlotte Louisa (1879-1956), Agnes's next daughter, was a waitress living at 242 Brunswick St in 1903.

Charles Archibald (1884-1950), Agnes's youngest child. He lived at his mother's residence at 242 Brunswick Street in 1909, 1912, 1913, and he was enlisted at the First World War over 1915-1919. He later lived at Brunswick (1924) and Coburg (1925), before returning to Fitzroy at 22 Moor Street (1931), 65 King William Street (1937) and 8 Cowell Street (1943).

Thomson Baishont (1859-1942), Agnes's surviving husband married again in 1924 and died in 1942.

¹¹ Electoral Rolls are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1207/>

¹² Electoral Rolls are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1207/>

¹³ Directories are available on-line at <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60845/>

¹⁴ Age, 23 June 1913, pages 1 and 8

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Annex A - Early Restaurants and Eating Houses at Fitzroy

Melbourne directories indicate the early presence of restaurants, etc. in Fitzroy:

Restaurants, Coffee Houses, Refreshment and Colonial Wine Rooms.					
	all of Melbourne	Fitzroy area	description	street	occupant
1859	27	1	oyster room	Gertrude	Mrs Bowern
1866	35	0			
1868	50	1	wine room	86 Gertrude	Felix Bronard
1869	60	2	(residence only) wine room wine room	145 Brunswick 129 Gertrude 181 Gertrude	James Cooper Smith Thomas Skinner
1870	62	6	eating house eating house wine room wine room wine room wine room	145 Brunswick 167 Gertrude Brunswick Gertrude Gertrude Gertrude	James Cooper J Williams Emile Lance Thomas Skinner Mrs Slaifstein H S Ward
1874	99	7	restaurant wine room restaurant wine room wine room restaurant restaurant	314 Brunswick 97 Smith 181 Smith 119 Smith 4 Condell 6 Condell 14 Condell	James Cooper Clement Deschamp G Durbridge Sarah Forest W Hyland John Neil Samuel Wickham
1880	84	4	restaurant restaurant restaurant restaurant	314 Brunswick 111 Gertrude 111 Gertrude 14 Condell	James Cooper John De Pass J Parker Samuel Wickham
1884	70	4	restaurant restaurant restaurant restaurant	314 Brunswick 111 Gertrude 2 Condell 14 Condell	James Cooper John Davies Johann Feige Samuel Wickham
1892	166	8	coffee house	300 Brunswick 97 Gertrude 2 Condell	Miss J Cooper James Brennan Johann Feige and others
1910	180	10	dining rooms	242 Brunswick	Mrs A Baishont

In the directories, the classification of ‘restaurants’ also included coffee houses, refreshment rooms, colonial wine rooms, eating houses and dining rooms. The earliest known in Fitzroy was Mrs Bowern’s oyster room in Tanner’s 1859 directory.

Agnes Telfer had married James Cooper in 1866 and the Cooper family resided at 145 Brunswick Street in 1869. By 1870 they were advertising their ‘eating house’ there. J. Williams also then advertised his ‘eating house’ in Gertrude Street. Williams had gone by the following year but Agnes continued as a restaurateur along Brunswick Street for 45 years until her death in 1913.

William Blanchfield

1835 - 1907

Author

Robyn Stephens

Robyn Stephens recently joined the Fitzroy History Society. She is interested in the life and times of the early settlers of our city. Robyn Stephens is William Blanchfield's great-great-granddaughter.

A young Irish immigrant named William Blanchfield arrived in Melbourne on 25 September 1854. For almost forty years he resided, worked and raised a family in Fitzroy. In 1856 William married Catherine Slaven and together they had eleven children. After Catherine's death, he married Mary Elizabeth Burns Stanton, a widow, and fathered another four children. His principal occupation was that of a grocer, but for many years he also held the contract to light the streetlamps of South Fitzroy. In 1869 he began investing in properties in Napier and Little Napier streets, between Gertrude and Webb streets. In 1882 he was the owner, and landlord, of thirteen properties in Fitzroy.¹ He was the licensee of the Council Club Hotel, on the corner of Napier and Webb streets, from 1885 to 1892. After transferring the licence of the Council Club Hotel in 1892 to his daughter, Annie Carroll, he moved to Yarraville and once again took on a grocery business. He spent the remaining years of his life in Yarraville, and died in 1907.²

To gain an insight into the life and times of William Blanchfield in the forty years he spent in Fitzroy, it is appropriate to highlight his achievements and explore the challenges he experienced in his family and business lives.

William Blanchfield – Family

William arrived in Melbourne on the 25 of September 1854 as an unassisted immigrant on the ship *John and Lucy*. He departed from Liverpool on 9 of July 1854 but it not known when he left his home in Kilkenny, Ireland. The shipping record lists his age as 20, and his occupation as a grocer.³

Just over two years after arriving in Australia, William married Catherine Slaven. Their marriage took place on the 13 of October 1856 at St Francis' Catholic Church in Melbourne, which is still located on the corner of Lonsdale Street and Elizabeth Street. St Francis' is the oldest Catholic Church in Victoria.⁴

¹ VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book

² The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Death Records*

³ VPRS 947/P0000, Jul - Sep 1854

⁴ <https://ehive.com/collections/6420/objects/1103455/st-francis-church-melbourne-c-1890>

Fitzroy People

Catherine was daughter of John Slaven and Ann Cusack, Irish immigrants who had arrived in Melbourne about three years earlier. At the time of William and Catherine's marriage the Slaven family were living in Collingwood. Details from William and Catherine's marriage certificate indicate that William's birthplace was Kilkenny, Ireland, and Catherine's birthplace was King's County, Ireland. Their ages were recorded as 20 and 21 respectively. William's occupation was grocer and Catherine's occupation was listed as a farmer's daughter. William signed his name on the marriage registration but Catherine only made her mark, which suggests Catherine was unable to write.⁵

The first of William and Catherine's eleven children was born the following year. Catherine continued to bear a child nearly every two years over the next twenty years.⁶ Four of their children died in infancy, one at just five weeks old - the cause of its death was convulsions, the other three died at less than six months of age from "Marasmus".⁷ Marasmus is a form of severe malnutrition. It occurs in children that don't ingest enough protein, calories, carbohydrates, and other important nutrients. This is usually due to poverty and a scarcity of food. Areas which have famines or high rates of poverty have higher percentages of children with marasmus. Nursing mothers may be unable to produce enough breast milk due to their own malnutrition. This then affects their babies.⁸ In those days, it was not uncommon for families to employ a "Wet Nurse" who would breastfeed and care for an infant. In 1876, William and Catherine advertised for a 'wet nurse' to assist with their youngest son and to carry out general duties but unfortunately their son did not survive.⁹

Not a lot of information is known about their seven surviving children except for William, Annie and Catherine. William (jr) went to New Zealand and settled there but died suddenly, predeceasing his father.¹⁰ Annie married and first settled in Fitzroy before moving to Ballarat for a few years and then returned to the city. Catherine (jr) married but died from "Phthisis" (pulmonary tuberculosis) at the young age of 20.¹¹ Further research is required on the other four surviving children to learn more of their stories.

Their children's birth and death certificates provide evidence of where William and Catherine lived at the time. These records show they moved around the Fitzroy area, living at addresses in Cambridge, Leicester, Little Napier, Wellington and Napier Streets. On their first child's birth certificate, William's occupation is listed as a grocer. On the following three, his occupation is listed as labourer, and then on the certificates for the remaining children his occupation is again recorded as grocer.

William and Catherine were married for 31 years and spent all that time living and working in Fitzroy. Catherine passed away at their home (then the Council Club Hotel), in Napier Street, on 20 of June 1887, aged 50.¹² At the time of her passing William was the Licensee of the Council Club Hotel and they had seven surviving children, some of whom were adults, with the youngest being 14 years of age.

In 1888, the year following Catherine's death, William married his second wife, Mary Elizabeth Burns Stanton, a widow with three young boys. They were married at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in West Melbourne. William, now 50, was considerably older than Mary, who was just 25; a similar age to some of William's children. William signed the marriage register but Mary only made her mark. The witnesses to their wedding were Mary's sister, Agnes Teresa Cayzar and Mary's brother in-law, Stribly Thomas Cayzer.¹³ William now had three stepsons and his two youngest daughters to provide for. A couple of months after their marriage, Mary's youngest son died. William and Mary then had four children together, a son, twin girls and another son, who died as a baby.¹⁴

After their marriage, William and Mary remained in Fitzroy for about four years before moving to Yarraville.

⁵ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Marriage Records*
The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Birth Records*

⁷ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Death Records*

⁸ <https://www.healthline.com/health/marasmus#risk-factors>

⁹ *Argus*, 29 May 1876, p 1.

¹⁰ *vening Post*, (Wellington, New Zealand), 8 February 1899, p 6.

¹¹ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Death Records*

¹² The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Death Records*

¹³ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Marriage Records*

¹⁴ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Birth and Death Records*

Fitzroy People

William Blanchfield – Lamplighter

Even though William's occupation was listed as grocer on the shipping records and on his marriage certificate, it appears that around the time of his first marriage he was also employed as a lamplighter. William Blanchfield (referring to himself as a "Lamplighter in Collingwood") placed an advertisement in the *Argus* in November 1856 attempting to make contact with Henry Thomas Ridley.¹⁵ At that time, Alexander Knowles (who had been the witness at William's marriage to Catherine) held the tender for lighting the lamps of the city. The tendered amount was 6s 3d per week for lighting the lamps and 2s 6p per lamp for painting the lamp pillars when required.¹⁶ William Blanchfield, again referred to as a "Lamplighter in Collingwood", was recorded as being insolvent in 1867.¹⁷ From 1869 onwards, numerous advertisements appeared in the newspapers seeking a "young man or strong boy to light lamps, contact Wm Blanchfield 63 Napier St".¹⁸ In 1874 William was offering to pay such a worker 10s a week and supply the necessary equipment.¹⁹ In 1875 the Fitzroy Council's minutes confirm the acceptance of William Blanchfield's tender for the sum of 2s 9d per lamp for lighting and extinguishing the lamps, "north of Reilly-street", for the unexpired portion of the Gas Company's Contract.²⁰ In 1892 the Council voted that "the following tenders be ... accepted for lighting, extinguishing, cleaning, and repairing the public street lamps for the period ending 30th September, 1893, viz. :- W. Blanchfield, for the South Division, at the schedule rate of 22s 9d per lamp per annum..."²¹ (Interestingly, James Holden, was paid 26s per lamp for doing the same work in Fitzroy's North Division). The Council minutes during 1893 record the payment by the Finance Committee of either £9 or £10 pound a fortnight to William Blanchfield for lighting the lamps in the South Division.



Streetlamp Little Napier Street, Fitzroy, c1900 (State Library of Victoria)

¹⁵ *Argus*, 29 November 1856, p 1.

¹⁶ *Argus*, 26 March 1856, p 4.

¹⁷ *Argus*, 12 April 1867, p 5.

¹⁸ *Argus*, 1 November 1870, p 1.

¹⁹ *Argus*, 20 January 1874 p 8.

²⁰ *Mercury and Weekly Courier*, 14 September 1878, p 2.

²¹ *Fitzroy City Press*, 8 April 1892, p 3.

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The job of a lamplighter required the lamps to be lit within the half-hour before sunset and extinguished within the half-hour after sunrise. To reduce costs in the early years, the lamps were not lit on nights where there was a full moon. Lamplighters were responsible for keeping the lamp functional and maintained. There was an inspector of lamps who would also regularly check the lamps - if it was found that a light was not operating, a fine would be imposed. So, it would not have been unusual for William to be out and about in the night or early hours of the morning. At about 3:30 one morning in February 1875, William was out and discovered a fire at the rear of the Australian Baths, in Napier Street, Fitzroy. He raised the alarm at the local fire station, and the brigade soon attended, extinguishing the fire before much damage was done.²²

William was involved with the lighting of the street lamps of the city until his final tender with the Fitzroy Council expired late in 1893, and his contractor's security bond of £30 was then refunded.²³

William Blanchfield – Grocer

As well as being a lamplighter, William was also a grocer. That trade was listed in his immigration record, marriage registration and the birth record of his first child. However, the first evidence of him operating a grocer's business is found in the rate books of February 1865. He is then the occupier of a wooden shop in Wellington St. Collingwood, owned by Mary Watson.²⁴ At the end of that year he had taken up residence at 53 Napier St. owned by the Estate of Bedgood.²⁵ This is where he traded as a grocer up until 1885. In the ratebooks of 1876 he is listed as the owner of the premises.²⁶ He continued to own the property until 1887 when it was sold to a Bernard Marks.

Advertisements appeared in the newspaper advertising items available for purchase from W. Blanchfield, family grocer. He was listed as an agent for the *Advocate* newspaper, in lists of Victorian agents that were regularly advertised in the paper.²⁷ Quality tea from the Calcutta Tea Association was available for purchase from William's shop.²⁸ He would also deliver wood and coal at the "lowest rates"²⁹, and when necessary he employed a man to cut fire-wood by the ton.³⁰



At times, tickets for concerts such as the "Concert of Moore's Melodies", in the Fitzroy Town Hall, on Tuesday, 13th June 1876, could be purchased from Mr Blanchfield's at 63 Napier St. (Proceeds from that concert went towards the payment of the New Organ Gallery in St John's Church in East Melbourne).³¹

Grocers were subjected to visits by the Inspector of Weights and Measures to check the business was operating correctly and that customers were being charged the correct amount for the goods they purchased. Even bread needed to be weighed and the correct charge calculated, but it was also a requirement that the goods be weighed in front of the customer. If proprietors were found to breach these regulations, they could be prosecuted and fined. This happened to William in March 1882 and he was fined 20s with 21s costs. The weight of the bread was underweight by 2oz $\frac{3}{4}$ dr. Five other sellers were also fined on the same day.³²

William continued the grocery business in Napier St Fitzroy until he became the licensee of the Court House Hotel in 1885.

²² *Argus*, 2 February 1875, p 4.

²³ *Fitzroy City Press*, 6 October 1893, p 3.

²⁴ VPRS 2340/P0000, Collingwood Rate Book

²⁵ VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book; 53 Napier Street was renumbered to 63 about 1866 and renumbered again to 83 about 1887.

²⁶ VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book

²⁷ *Advocate*, 1 May 1869, p 16.

²⁸ *Argus*, 3 December 1881, p 8.

²⁹ *Fitzroy City Press*, 11 March 1882, p 2.

³⁰ *Age*, 6 Dec 1883, p 7.

³¹ *Advocate*, 10 June 1876, p 11.

³² *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 March 1882 p 9.

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William Blanchfield – Licensee of the Council Club Hotel (Formally the Court House Hotel)

In 1885 William took over as the licensee of the Court House Hotel from Mary Cox, and the name of the hotel was changed to the Council Club Hotel shortly after that.³³

At the time, changes were imminent for the industry with The Licensing Act 1885 coming into effect on 1 February 1886, and the temperance movement gaining strength. Key changes of The Act were a reduction in operating hours - hotels could then only operate from 6am till 11:30pm, licensing fees were charged on a graduated scale, from £15 to £50, depending on the value of each licensed premise. The Act allowed for one hotel for each 250 of the first 10,000 adult inhabitants (i.e. 40 hotels for 10,000 adults), and then one more hotel for each additional 500 adult inhabitants. Existing licenses were not affected by this new statutory number, but no new licenses were to be granted until the number had been reduced to under the statutory number.³⁴

When taking over the license of the hotel, William was lent £80 from The Melbourne Brewing and Malting Company Limited. In addition to the initial loan, the contract allowed further money to be borrowed and advanced on goods supplied by them. The interest rate was £8 per hundred per year. Attached to the contract was an inventory detailing the furniture and equipment within each room. The hotel was a 2-storey building, with five rooms downstairs: the bar, bar parlour, piano room, dining room and kitchen, and five bedrooms upstairs. At the time of taking over the hotel the chattels were basic and some items were damaged or in poor condition. The barroom contained the bar and a table and a couple of chairs and only eighteen glasses. The parlour was furnished with a table, two horsehair couches and a cedar sideboard. The piano room had three chairs, carpet on the floor and was decorated with some pictures and ornaments. The dining room had two tables and only four chairs, a colonial sofa, and was decorated with pictures. The kitchen had two tables, a meat safe, two tubs, three saucepans, two irons and odd crockery. The stairway leading up to the second storey was carpeted. All the bedrooms had a dressing table, washstands and iron beds, four had double beds and one had two single beds. Bedroom number five was more elaborate than the other bedrooms and was furnished with additional items including a piece of carpet. Most of the rooms had venetian blinds on the windows although some rooms had additional curtains.³⁵

There were plans for additions to the hotel, and tenders were called by architects Powell & Whitaker in December 1886³⁶ and again in September 1887³⁷. It is not exactly clear if, or when, these additions happened.

In January 1890 there was a fire at the hotel which caused some damage to the upper floor. There are conflicting reports as to the cause of the fire. One report claims it was the result of a careless use of a match which set fire to the bed clothes.³⁸ The other claims it occurred as the result of a resident of the hotel falling asleep leaving a candle burning.³⁹



Council Club Hotel, Napier St Fitzroy c1960 (VPRS 7712/P0001, 190390)

³³ Argus (Melbourne), 18 August 1885, p 7.

³⁴ Kilmore Free Press, (Kilmore), 7 January 1886, p 3.

³⁵ VPRS 8350/P0002, 73521

³⁶ Age (Melbourne), 4 December 1886, p 7.

³⁷ Age (Melbourne), 16 September 1887, p 8.

³⁸ Age, 6 January 1890, p 6.

³⁹ Mercury and Weekly Courier, 9 January 1890, p 3.

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In 1892 the license of the hotel was transferred to William's daughter, Annie Carroll, a 27 year old mother of two young children. Annie purchased the lease and goodwill of the hotel and was lent £500 from Carlton and West End Breweries.⁴⁰ Annie then operated the hotel for three years.

William Blanchfield – Property Owner

In 1869 William Blanchfield began investing in properties in Napier and Little Napier Streets between Gertrude and Webb Streets. In 1882 he was the owner and landlord of thirteen properties in Fitzroy.⁴¹ Being an owner of thirteen properties may lead one to think that William was a man of means but this was not so. Examination of the property titles indicates that William had to borrow money to purchase the properties. When a loan was due he would refinance the properties by borrowing again. At times he had second mortgages against the properties. When he sold the properties he still had outstanding mortgages on them.

The first property William purchased was from Edwin Smith in 1869.⁴² It was a parcel of land located on the corner of Little Napier and Webb Streets; with a 66' frontage to Little Napier Street and 59' frontage to Webb Street. William purchased the property with funds borrowed from The First Bowkett Building and Investment Society. Almost immediately after purchasing the land he began construction of three 3-roomed cottages.⁴³ Soon after, he also began building a hotel on the Webb Street corner of the allotment. He borrowed additional funds from The First Bowkett Building and Investment Society and a solicitor named Samuel Gillott, to finance the construction of these buildings. The cottages and hotel were completed and ready to lease by March 1870. The hotel was named the Victoria Hotel. It was leased to Richard Sylvester O'Brien who was the licensee for the next thirteen years. In 1883 William Blanchfield sold all four of these properties to Thomas Feeney.⁴⁴

Throughout the 1870s William Blanchfield acquired more houses and cottages in the Napier and Little Napier Street area. One of the last properties William purchased was 63 Napier Street in 1878. He had leased this property for many years and operated his grocery business from the premises.

William rented his properties to tradesmen; bootmakers, labourers, carpenters and painters, and a significant number of properties were rented to females. Some of the long-time tenants of properties were Richard Sylvester O'Brien (Licensee of the Victoria Hotel), John Love (the proprietor of the Australian Baths), and William Burge (a Disinfecter) and his wife Madam Burge (a Dressmaker). In 1887 William Blanchfield had sold all his Fitzroy properties.⁴⁵

Table 1: Summary of Properties owned by William Blanchfield⁴⁶

Address	Purchased	Purchased from	Sold	Sold to
59 Little Napier St	1869	Edwin Smith	1883	Thomas Feeney
61 Little Napier St	1869	Edwin Smith	1883	Thomas Feeney
63 Little Napier St	1869	Edwin Smith	1883	Thomas Feeney
65 Little Napier St	1869	Edwin Smith	1883	Thomas Feeney
73 Napier St	1871	Daniel Hughes	1887	Bernard Marks
75 Napier St	1871	Daniel Hughes	1887	Bernard Marks
44 Little Napier St	1871	Daniel Hughes	1887	Samuel Marks
119 Napier St	1872	Estate of Henry Nalty	1887	James Stenhouse
80 Little Napier St	1872	Estate of Henry Nalty	1887	James Stenhouse
82 Little Napier St	1872	Estate of Henry Nalty	1887	James Stenhouse
63 Napier St	1878	Estate of Bedgood	1887	Bernard Marks
65 Napier St	1878	Estate of Bedgood	1887	Bernard Marks
38 Little Napier St	1878	Estate of Bedgood	1887	Bernard Marks

⁴⁰ VPRS 8350/P0002, 95541

⁴¹ VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book

⁴² Burchett Index of Melbourne City Council's Notices of Intention to Build (FHS)

⁴³ VPRS 16705, Index to Applications for Certificate of Title

⁴⁴ VPRS 405 Register of Applications for Certificate of Title

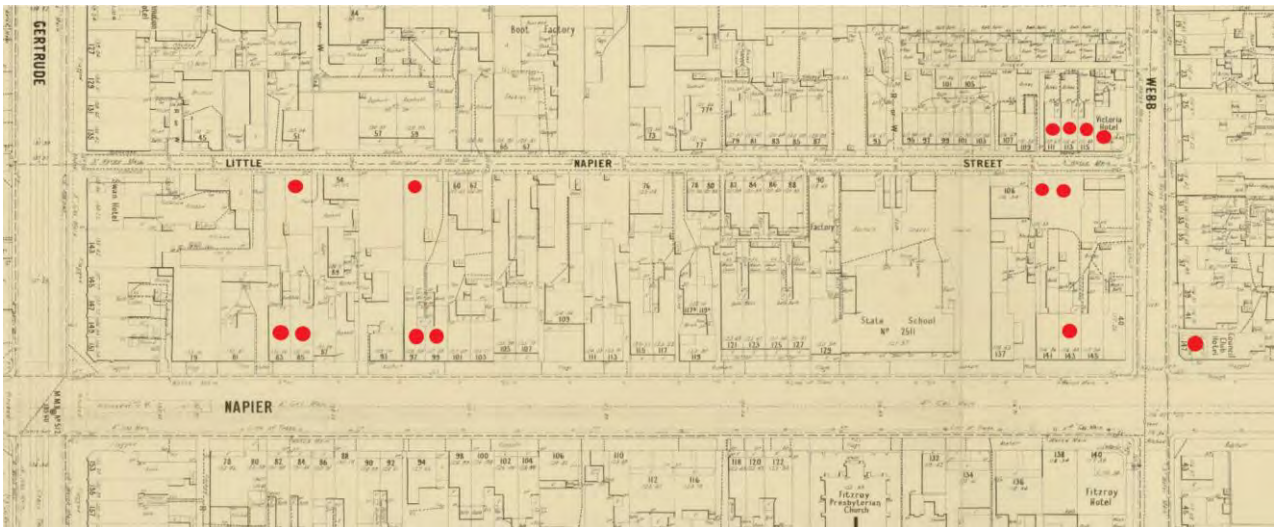
⁴⁵ VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book

⁴⁶ VPRS 405 Register of Applications for Certificate of Title;

VPRS 4301/P0000, Fitzroy Rate Book. In 1872, 65 Little Napier St was renumbered and given the address – 20 Webb St. In 1887 the houses in both Napier and Little Napier St were renumbered. Napier Street: 63 became 83, 65 became 85, 73 became 97, 75 became 99, and 119 became 143. Little Napier Street: 38 became 52, 44 became 56, 80 became 112, 82 became 114, 59 became 111, 61 became 113, and 63 became 115.

Fitzroy People

Diagram 1: Map showing the location of the Council Club Hotel and the properties owned by W. Blanchfield



Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works detail plan, 1203, City of Fitzroy (State Library of Victoria)

After Leaving Fitzroy

In 1892 William transferred the license of the Council Club Hotel to his daughter, Annie. Around that time William, his wife Mary, and their younger children moved to Yarraville, and once again William established a grocery business. William remained in Yarraville for the rest of his life. He died on 5 of August 1907, at his home in Yarraville, aged 72.⁴⁷ He was buried the following day in the family grave at the Melbourne General Cemetery, in Carlton. He was survived by his wife, Mary and three children from his second marriage and four children from his first marriage.

⁴⁷ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; *Death Records*

Jane Briggs

1801 - 1871

Author

Peter Woods

Peter Woods has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for several years. A retired civil engineer he has had a strong interest in the physical development of Melbourne's oldest suburb and more recently in the inhabitants that made Fitzroy such an interesting place.

Jane Briggs was an early settler in Melbourne, arriving in 1849 with her husband and children and only fourteen years after the arrival of John Pascoe Fawkner and John Batman. Her husband died soon after their arrival, but Jane somehow purchased land and a modest house in Fitzroy and lived there until her death at age seventy years.

Jane Mitchell was born in Yorkshire in 1801. Jane's occupation or skills are not known, although she had a good education - her signature on documents related to the purchase of land and will shows a well-developed and strong signature exhibiting excellent handwriting. Her husband, Joseph Briggs (also born in 1801), was from Drumnagoon, County Armagh, Ireland. They were married in Yorkshire on 8 August 1822 in Saint Peter, Leeds.

There were three families with the names Joseph and Jane Briggs who emigrated to Australia in the mid 1800s, all had six to eight children. It has been difficult to know which of the families are those of interest to us, but detailed examination of dates, marriages and deaths enabled the story of the Briggs of Fitzroy to be told.

Joseph's occupation is listed on the birth certificates of their children as "joiner" (cabinet maker or skilled carpenter). The children are registered as being born in Ferrybridge, a town about 30 kilometres south-east of Leeds. In the early 1800s would have been a small town lying on the banks of the River Aire, a tributary of the Humber River. Now, it lies in the shadow of a large nuclear power station.

It is not known why Joseph and Jane, and their relatively large family of eight children, left England in 1849 to travel to Australia. At the time, the oldest of their children was about twenty-six years old and the youngest only a few years old. The family travelled to Australia on the *Thomas Fielden*, a baque-rigged ship of 903 tons that had been built in 1847 in Quebec. They boarded the ship in either Newcastle or Liverpool on 17 August 1849 and arrived in Melbourne on 4 December 1849.¹

The beginnings of their life in Australia could not have been as they had expected. Less than a month after their arrival Joseph died on 9 January 1850 of an unnamed cause in Collingwood.² Joseph has no known grave. Until the Melbourne General Cemetery was opened in 1853, burials were held at cemeteries in either what became Flagstaff Gardens or what became the carpark at the Victoria Market.

¹ *Argus*, Tuesday 4 December 1849

² Collingwood was an early name for the suburb of Fitzroy and it was probably present-day Fitzroy where he died.

Fitzroy People

Sand Allen	2692	Highton	1949	March	"	"	C. Stour.
Joseph Briggs	2693	Collingwood	January 9th 1949	East	"	"	Marconot.

Register of Deaths, Burials etc from the Wesley Church Register 1850

[illegible]

*Conveyance of land from Robert Saunders Webb to Jane Briggs*³

A widow with four adult and four young children would have found managing financially in early Melbourne somewhat difficult. However, the family must have had a reasonable income. Jane bought a property in King William Street, Fitzroy from Robert Saunders Webb on 2 May 1850⁴ and three properties in Little Brunswick Street (later renamed Fitzroy Street) on 28 August 1851. These properties were at the northern end of the development of Melbourne. At that time, the nearest water ‘stand-pipe’ was at the corner of Victoria Street and Brunswick Street half a kilometre away. However, residents were able to purchase water and have it delivered by horse-drawn watercart. The construction of a sealed roadway and water-supply pipes did not happen for another eight years; piped sewerage was many years later; and there were still no houses on Fitzroy Street, Nicholson Street or Brunswick Street north of Moor Street until 1862.

When Jane commenced building a ‘house’ in 1852 she was registered as ‘builder’ and ‘owner’ in the Burchett Index.⁵ The 1854 *List of Improved and Unimproved Property* described a ‘Wood house etc (Sec75 Fitzroy St)’ at 164 Fitzroy Street.⁶ It is assumed that this is the house that Jane built in 1852, although it could have been a second building on the site. In 1868, the house is recorded as having three rooms.⁷

³ Lands Titles Office Melbourne

⁴ VPRS 3182 Roll 3

⁵ Melbourne City Council Notices of Intent to Build from 1850, microfiche records State Library of Victoria.

⁶ Melbourne City Council Fitzroy Ward, *Improved and Unimproved Property Rate books, Volume 3 1854*

⁷ According to the 1868 rates notice.

Fitzroy People

Additionally, Jane advertised for house staff. A newspaper advertisement states:

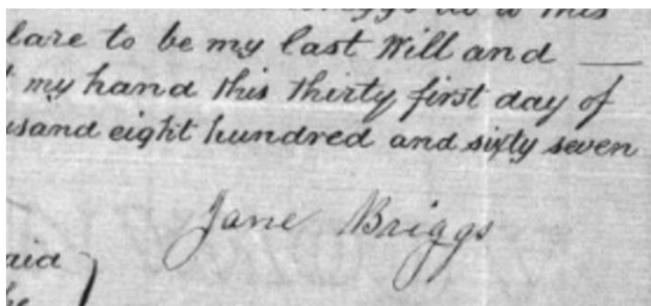
WANTED, a Female Servant to make herself generally useful. Also a Nursemaid; apply to Mrs Briggs, bottom of Fitzroy Street Collingwood.⁸

Information on Jane's working life while she lived in Fitzroy or those of her adult children's employment and younger children's education has not been found. At least four of the elder children (William, Harriet, Maria, and Sarah Jane) married and presumably lived elsewhere.

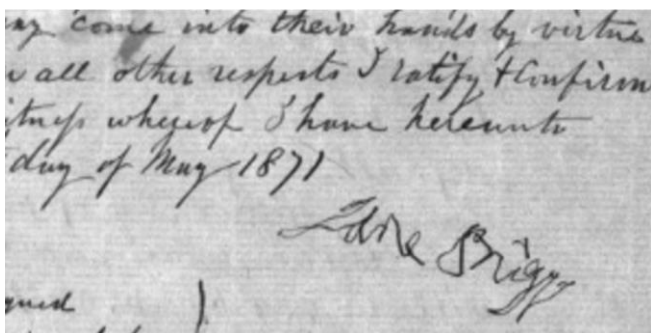
On 31 August 1867, then aged 66, Jane made a will that described how her estate was to be handled on her death. A Codicil making small changes was added a few days prior to her death in May 1871. Her signature shows a remarkable deterioration in the period between the two documents and is barely legible on the second.⁹

Jane died on 10 May 1871 of an 'internal tumour'. At the time, it is recorded she was living in Fitzroy Street¹⁰. Her funeral was conducted by George Apps, whose funeral parlour lay directly across the street from her house. She is buried in Melbourne General Cemetery in the Baptist section (Plot BAP C 152) where she is incorrectly named in some cemetery records as 'Bagge'. Cemetery records also show that her daughter, Harriet, was buried in the same grave at some later date. There is no gravestone on the burial plot.

Probate on the will was granted only one month later, on 10 June 1871. The Executors were Marsden and Stillwell of Carlton. After the solicitors' fee and council rates were deducted, Jane's total worth was just over £600, which was probably derived from the sale of the properties. Jane's daughter Maria Lancaster was left all her personal possessions plus £150, daughter Mary Ann of Leeds her Bible in three volumes plus £100, and the freehold property in Fitzroy Street and King William Streets to be sold and the proceeds to be shared equally to all her children.

A close-up photograph of a handwritten document, likely a will, showing the text 'I do hereby declare to be my last Will and in my hand this thirty first day of August and eight hundred and sixty seven' followed by the signature 'Jane Briggs'.

Section of signed Will of 1867

A close-up photograph of a handwritten document, likely a codicil, showing the text 'I do hereby come into their hands by virtue of all other respects I ratify & confirm the wills wherof I have heretofore made this day of May 1871' followed by the signature 'Jane Briggs'.

Section of signed Codicil of 1871



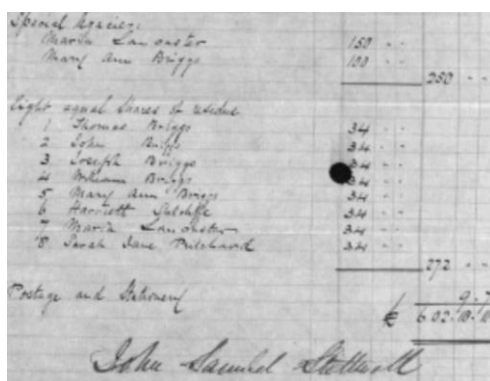
Jane Briggs burial plot at Melbourne General Cemetery
(Photo by author)

⁸ *Argus*, 31 January 1853

⁹ Jane Briggs Will and Codicil, PROV

¹⁰ There is conflicting information. The probate lists Jane as living in Fitzroy Street at the time of her death, while the advertisement to sell the properties following her death indicates that the cottages were all let at this time.

Fitzroy People



Portion of will allocating her estate to her children

The following advertisement to sell Jane's property in Fitzroy Street appeared in the Melbourne Herald in July 1871. By this time, there was a stone cottage and two weatherboard cottages on the site, with the latter described as suitable 'tradesmen's residences'.

SATURDAY JULY 15

FITZROY

On the Ground

Corner Fitzroy and King William Streets

To Capitalists, Members of Building Societies, and Others

C.J. and T. Ham have received instructions from the executor of the late Mrs. Jane Briggs to **SELL** by **PUBLIC AUCTION**, on the ground, corner of King William and Fitzroy streets, Fitzroy, on Saturday July 15, at four o'clock.

All that piece of land, having a frontage of 101 ft. to King William Street by a depth of 72ft. 8in. along Fitzroy Street, on which are erected a

STONE COTTAGE

Containing four rooms, let at 12s per week, and

2 WEATHERBOARD COTTAGES,

Let at 14s per week.

The auctioneers would draw special attention to this sale. It is well known that cottages and tradesmen's residences are in great demand in this neighbourhood, and any person desirous of a good and safe investment would do well to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Title Perfect¹¹

A little more is known about Jane's children. This is listed below:

- Thomas (b.1826): lived in Axe Creek, near Bendigo. His occupation was a brewer and he died in 1908.
- Maria (b.1829): died 1830 in Yorkshire
- John (b.1831): born in Ferrybridge, Yorkshire. He later moved to New Zealand. He died in 1914.
- Joseph (b.1836): was a grocer and lived at 98 Canning Street, Carlton with his wife Sarah Ann. Joseph died in 1893.
- William (b.1838): shared a house with Joseph in Carlton. He was married in 1852 only two years after arriving in Australia and is listed in the 1919 electoral roll as having 'independent means'. William and his wife celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in 1877 at Dunedin, New Zealand. William died in 1903.
- Mary Ann (b.1840): later returned to Leeds, Yorkshire.
- Harriet (b.1841): married to William Sutcliffe of Leeds, a warehouseman. At some stage, she returned to Australia as she is listed in cemetery records as being buried in the same grave as her mother.
- Maria (b.1843): married to Lewis Morgan, Lancaster.
- Sarah Jane (b.1844): married to Chas Pritchard on 11 November 1863 and died 1874.

¹¹ *Herald*, 8 July 1871

Francis Clark

1820 - 1896

Author

Alison M Hart

Alison Hart (nee Clark) has a Master of Arts from Monash University and has worked as an academic researcher since the 1990s, currently at The University of Sydney. After returning to North Fitzroy in 2010, Alison began researching her father's family connection to colonial-era Fitzroy and fostering her long-held interest in the local social, political and built environment through involvement with the Fitzroy History Society



*Portrait of Francis Clark
(State Library of Victoria)*

Francis Clark, the son of an illiterate farm labourer, arrived in Melbourne from Essex in 1840 at the age of nineteen. Initially a squatter in up-country Victoria, then butcher, publican, builder, land speculator, property owner, and gentleman farmer, Francis's story parallels the boom and bust of colonial-era Melbourne. He was elected a Melbourne City Councillor in the 1850s, campaigning for Fitzroy's independence, and through extensive residential and commercial landholdings in Fitzroy, he maintained close ties with the suburb until his death in 1896. Though apparently 'a very wealthy man' at his death, the economic bust of the 1890s had significant impact on Francis's fortunes.

Fitzroy People

Background

Francis's story to some extent parallels the story of early Melbourne. Born the son of an illiterate farm labourer, Francis arrived with little from Essex to the Port Philip colony, less than five years after its establishment. It was a land of opportunity about to experience a massive economic boom and rise in wealth. Reflecting this boom Francis's son Thomas would obtain a Master of Arts degree from St John's College, Cambridge University¹. But following the boom came the bust of the 1890s, which had a significant impact on Francis's fortunes. This recession was deeper and longer lasting in Australia — and particularly Melbourne — than in most of rest of the world.²

In 1840 when the nineteen-year-old Francis arrived as an unassisted migrant in Port Philip (Melbourne) it was very much a pioneer town with a population of just 4,500. At this time, land for squatting in country Victoria was readily available for those who could show they had occupied it and made improvements. Francis went to the Hurdle Creek (a tributary of the King River) area, about 20 km south west of Wangaratta “and took the management of a sheep run for about two years”.³

Francis in Fitzroy

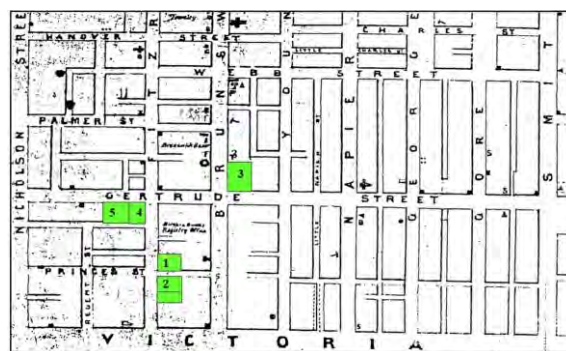
In 1839, the first blocks of land north of what we now know as the Melbourne CBD were sold in Fitzroy (initially called Newtown, then Collingwood). These were purchased in the main by Sydney-based speculators and quickly subdivided and on-sold. Development in Fitzroy was rapid.⁴ In 1841 the population was around 600, by 1850 it had grown to 3,000 and by 1861 it was 11,807. In 1881 the population of Fitzroy had reached 23,118 people.⁵ This was not surprising, considering in the post gold-rush boom years Melbourne had become the richest city in the world, and after London, the second largest city in the British Empire.⁶

The first available record of Francis in Fitzroy is dated two years after this 1841 sketch of Brunswick Street (looking north along the southern end towards Gertrude Street).⁷ *The Colonial Directory* of 1843 lists Francis as a butcher in Little Brunswick Street, Collingwood (renamed Fitzroy Street around 1853). He owned this property until at least the early 1850s.⁸ It appears Francis continued to maintain a grazing property near the Murray River till the 1850s, likely supplying meat for his city business.

On 28 July 1842, Francis married Martha Davies at the newly opened (though still unfinished) St James Old Cathedral on the corner of William and Little Collins Streets (since moved to King Street). On 27 May 1843 their first child, William Thomas (known as Thomas) was born⁹.



'Brunswick Street – Newtown from the front of our house'
June 1841 Sarah Bunbury, (State Library of Victoria)



Nineteenth Century map of South Fitzroy showing Francis Clark's properties. (State Library of Victoria)

¹ Francis Clark was born in the Essex village of White Roding (or Roothing as it was known in his time) on the 10 of September 1820. He was the fourth of nine children and the second-eldest son. White Roothing, one of a group of eight Saxon villages established in the 6 Century, was a largely agricultural community. Francis's father was variously listed in the St Martin's parish register as a butcher or farm labourer.

² Jill Robertson, Gertrude Street, Fitzroy.

³ Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present.* (McCarron Bird Melbourne 1888) p 514; Jack McRae, Series 19 - Superintendent's Correspondence Files 1839–1851, List of Squatters sorted alphabetically (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://collections.historyvictoria.com.au/rhsvdatabases/squatters.pdf>

⁴ Robertson Gertrude Street, Fitzroy.

⁵ Cutten History Committee of the Fitzroy History Society, *Fitzroy, Melbourne's first suburb*, (Melbourne University Press Melbourne 1991). Retrieved from <http://www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/publications/index.php?pub=first&page=7>

⁶ Melbourne, Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved August 30, 2015, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Melbourne&oldid=678386123>

⁷ M. Moore, 'Early Brunswick Street in 1839 and 1841' in Miles Lewis (ed.). *Brunswick Street – lost and found*, (Fitzroy History Society Inc., Faculty of Architecture, University of Melbourne, National Trust of Australia, Victoria 2012).

⁸ *Colonial Directory*, Fitzroy Library History Collection (1843-1844, 1847).

⁹ Over the next ten years the Clarks had six more children. Of these, four daughters survived to adulthood and a son and a daughter died in infancy.

Fitzroy People

In July 1849, *The Argus* reported that Francis Clark, butcher, appeared in court to answer an information filed against him by the Town Inspector for throwing blood onto Brunswick Street (indicating that his butchery and stables extended right through the block to Brunswick Street). The case was dismissed on an objection that the information did not set forth that the blood was on “a carriage or footway” in terms of the Act.¹⁰

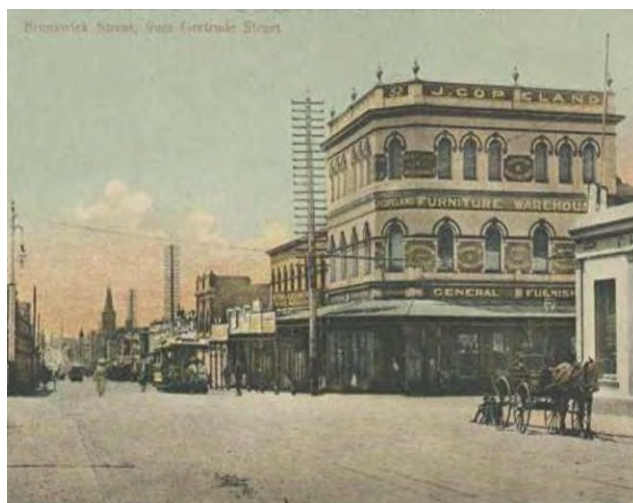
While Francis was seen as a land speculator, he held onto many properties for over 40 years that he bought or built in the 1840s and 1850s in Fitzroy. Marked on this nineteenth century map of south Fitzroy the shaded areas represent the location of some of the properties he owned (at times numbering fifteen or sixteen), many of which he built. The Devonshire Arms was built on the corner of Fitzroy and Princes Streets (no.1), his butcher shop and dwelling of “four rooms, kitchen, slaughter house, curing house and stable” next door (no.2) — most probably on the south side.¹¹ Both date from the early 1840s. On the north-east corner of Gertrude and Brunswick Streets, Francis owned a large block of properties (no.3), and on the south-west corner of Gertrude and Fitzroy Streets he built a bakery (no.4) and three cottages alongside, with frontage on Gertrude Street (no.5).

Francis built the Devonshire Arms, considered to be Melbourne’s oldest extant licensed public house (and currently Fitzroy’s oldest surviving building) in 1842-1843. He was its first licensee until 1845. He applied for a building permit for the bakery on the corner of Gertrude Street and Fitzroy Streets in 1853 and ordered the casting of iron baking ovens in Port Melbourne (then known as Sandridge).¹² In the 1980s these ovens were still in use by Melbourne’s largest commercial bakery still using wood-fired ovens.¹³ The building is still in use today.

The largest and most valuable group of Francis’s properties was on the north-east corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets, opposite the Rob Roy hotel. In 1858 Francis owned four properties in Gertrude Street and four in Brunswick Street at this location, and applied to build a further two double storey shops in Gertrude Street “Next to the Colonial Bank” in 1859. These buildings were demolished in 1969 to make way for the Atherton Gardens public housing estate.¹⁴



*Bakers' oven installed by Francis Clark in the 1850s
(Collection of the author, 2014)*



*North-east corner of Gertrude and Brunswick Streets, looking
north along Brunswick Street (State Library of Victoria)*

¹⁰ ‘Informations’. *The Argus*, Melbourne, July 09, 1849, p 2.

¹¹ Melbourne Rate Books, Fitzroy Library History Collection (1845-1858).

¹² W.H. Burchett, *The Burchett Index*, Chronological index of “notices of intent to build” lodged with the Melbourne City Council from 1850 to 1916, Melbourne Historic Buildings Council, (1983?). Retrieved from <http://www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/research.php>

¹³ Robertson Gertrude Street, Fitzroy.

¹⁴ Further details of these buildings can be found on the Fitzroy History society website;
<https://fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/francis-clark-amhart-2015-2022-1.pdf>

Fitzroy People

Francis the entrepreneur

After little more than ten years in Victoria, Francis had not only bought land and built residential and commercial properties, but also likely had commercial control of the entire supply chain of his meat production, from running his own stock in northern Victoria, to butchering, preserving and selling the product. In 1851 Francis Clark was awarded the first gold medal for cured beef at the Melbourne Exhibition. Prior to refrigeration this was considered a valuable skill, and a commercially important one in view of the demands to supply meat to the goldfields.¹⁵

Francis also maintained a butcher shop at 121 Elizabeth Street, on the corner of Bourke Street in the city, from about 1845 to 1854. It may have been that he needed a city address to gain a seat on Melbourne City Council. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1848, he was elected to the Melbourne City Council for Bourke Ward in 1852. This enabled Francis to successfully agitate for the establishment of Fitzroy as a separate government entity to Melbourne. This occurred in 1858.¹⁶

However not all Francis's endeavours met with success. Around 1851 Francis and several other men went to New Zealand with the notion of taking up grazing land. However, by then the Victorian gold rush had begun in earnest — between 1851 and 1861 Victoria produced one third of the world's gold — and on their return to Victoria they had to abandon the project, because they could not get sufficient men to go with them to provide labour for the project.¹⁷

Fairy Hills Alphington

Francis bought land in October 1852 in Keelbundoora (Alphington) from speculator Thomas Walker, paying £2,600 for 52 acres. He immediately sold nine acres on which the (new) Darebin Bridge Hotel was built (which is still there today).¹⁸ On the remaining acres on the hill over-looking the confluence of the Darebin Creek and the Yarra River he built Fairy Hills, a “large and comfortable house” from local mudstone in 1853. “It was a typical homestead of the day situated amongst huge redgum trees, with ...a driveway ... [which joined] the main road where the present Boulevard now joins the highway”.¹⁹ In 1856 Francis then sold most of the land on the west side of Heidelberg Road for close to 100% per acre profit.²⁰

Around 1854 Francis retired from his butcher business and Edward Langton (a fellow agitator for Fitzroy Ward's independence, and later a well-known Free Trade League politician) took up the proprietorship of the Elizabeth Street butcher shop.²¹ Francis apparently retired to the Fairy Hills property around this time, but it seems he did not settle here permanently until after the mid-1870s. His son William Thomas resided at Fairy Hills in the late 1860s and the house and land was also leased out at various times during this period.²²

Trips back to England 1850s-1870s

At this time, it was common for wealthy colonialists to travel back to the ‘old country’. Francis made at least three trips back to England between about 1855 and 1875 along with various family members, at times staying for extended periods.²³

¹⁵ ‘Victorian Industrial Society, Animal Productions The Argus, Melbourne, February 1 1851, p 2.

¹⁶ Bourke Ward, The Argus, Melbourne August 20, 1852, p 2.

¹⁷ Ian Harper, *Economics for life: An economist reflects on the meaning of life, money and what really matters.* (Acorn Press Brunswick East 2011); Sutherland *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present.*

¹⁸ Commercial Intelligence, The Argus, Melbourne October 11, 1852, p 4.

¹⁹ Fairy Hills and Alphington, Heidelberg Historian, No.78, June 1980, p 6.

²⁰ D.S. Garden, *Heidelberg: The land and its people, 1838-1900.* (Melbourne University Press Melbourne 1972)

²¹ Jean Cooksley, ‘Langton, Edward (1828-1905)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography.* Retrieved from <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/langton-edward-3990>

²² The Boulevard, Heritage Collection, 141. Heidelberg Historical Society picture database, P4747, (1982).

²³ Sutherland *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present.*

Fitzroy People

In 1856, Francis found himself in front of The Bench at Dunmow Petty Sessions due to a case related to an altercation with his sister's husband, Mr James Westwood of White Roothing. Westwood contended Francis had "made me a promise to give something towards apprenticing my son". Francis denied this and on being called a liar by Westwood (who was heard by a witness to say "You came from Australia to be a gentleman instead of which you are a blackguard") struck Mr. Westwood twice. Francis did not deny the assault, but it was contended "there was such an amount of provocation, that the smallest possible fine would meet the case. ...The bench ... agreed that in consequence of the provocation, they should reduce the fine to 5s.; expenses 9s. 6d, — Paid".²⁴

From 1861 to 1866, Francis, Martha, all five of their children and household staff, lived at the rather grand mid-16th century (and now Grade I listed building) Goston Lodge, also known as Clock House, in Great Dunmow, Essex.²⁵ While in England Martha died in 1862, and their daughter Catherine, died in 1869, at the age of nineteen²⁶. In August 1869 Francis's eldest son (William) Thomas, having gained his Master of Arts at St John's College Cambridge University, returned to Australia with his elder sister, Mary Anne. By 1871 Francis had moved to Marylebone with daughters Mary Anne, now 25, and Armenia 20.²⁷

Return to Australia 1877

After Francis's final return from England in 1877 and marriage to his second wife, Henrietta who was 30 years younger than his 57 years, he settled at Fairy Hills, Alphington. Though retired from day-to-day business, he continued to maintain his Fitzroy properties and take an active part in various business and philanthropic activities.

In November 1887, Francis and a group of well-known colonialists, Governor Sir Henry B Loch, AG Young and Reverend CT Perks, John Halfey, Francis Henty and Mr George Selth Coppin, donated around £50 each to the Old Colonists Association to build the Jubilee Cottages at Rushall Crescent.²⁸

The Jubilee Cottages were designed by Joseph Crook, the architect responsible for a large number of buildings in Prahran, Windsor, St Kilda and Malvern, and built in 1888. In 1970 due to maintenance problems six of these were demolished and replaced, though the memorial stone laid by Sir Henry Loch, is still there.²⁹

In 1889 Francis was re-elected a Director of the Kyneton Brewing and Malting Company Limited and from 1892 to 1894 was chairman of shareholders for Cohn Bros' Victoria Brewery Company.³⁰ It was reported in *The Argus* that at the 1894 half-yearly shareholder's meeting, Francis Clark noted the business of the Cohn Bros' Company "continued to be of satisfactory character due to very careful management exercised at the brewery".³¹ Over this period of time, he was also the director of a number of other brewing and milling companies.



Goston Lodge (Clock House) Dunmow Essex. Property of Sir G. Beaumont Bar, by J. Greig (Higham, & Greig, Excursions through Essex, 1818, collection of author)



Jubilee Cottages, Rushall Park (built 1888-89, demolished 1969-70) (O'Neill, A place of their own, 2005)

²⁴ 'Dunmow Petty Sessions February 4', Chelmsford Chronicle, 08 February 1856.

²⁵ United Kingdom Census 1861 recorded residents as Francis Clark "gentleman, and his five children; William Thomas 17, Mary Ann 15, Elizabeth Susan 13, Catherine Hanna 11, and Armenia Martha 9, a housekeeper, a cook and a young housemaid". Anne Line, the housekeeper at Goston Lodge in the late 1500s, was hung by the Elizabethan Government in 1601 for harbouring a Catholic priest and later made a saint. 'The Clock House in Dunmow, Domesday Reloaded', (BBC 1986).

Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-560000-222000/page/6>

²⁶ Deaths, Essex Standard, Essex, England April 11, 1862; Deaths, Essex Standard, February 26, Essex, England 1869, p 3.

²⁷ The 1871 United Kingdom census shows Francis living in Marylebone.

²⁸ Frances O'Neill, A place of their own: The Old Colonists' homes in Victoria. (Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne 2005)

²⁹ O'Neill A place of their own.

³⁰ 'Kyneton Brewing and Malting Company', The Argus Thursday 31 October 1889, p. 5. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8566619>

³¹ 'Cohn Bros'. Victoria Brewery Co., The Argus, June 13, (Melbourne, 1894), p 6.

Fitzroy People

The 1890s ‘bust’

It is clear from the grandeur of Francis’ sons’ grave at Melbourne General Cemetery that Francis was wealthy in 1886 when William Thomas died. The inscription reads:

In memory of William Thomas Clark who died June 8th 1886, aged 43, the beloved and only son of Francis Clark, Fairy Hills, Alphington, and dear husband of Louisa Clark...

By 1891, Melbourne’s Great Boom gave way to a decade-long depression that created high unemployment and ruined many businesses. Banks and building societies crashed and wages fell. There were a series of shearer and miner strikes in 1891 and 1892, and by 1893 the Federal Bank collapsed and many financial institutions (including several major ones) suspended trading.³² By 1894, the worst of the crisis was over, but property prices were hit hard, rents were reduced and many properties remained vacant³³. Francis was not immune to the impact of the crash.

The following table shows the rate valuation and occupancies of the properties Francis owned in Fitzroy in 1895 compared to 1889. By 1895, Francis was receiving about 30% less rent than six years earlier. Additionally, several other properties, including some of the highest rated on the corner of Gertrude and Brunswick Streets, were vacant.



*Grave of William Thomas Clark, Melbourne General Cemetery, Parkville.
Francis Clark’s more modest headstone is visible to the right (Collection of the author, 2012)*

³² ‘Economic history of Australia’, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* (2015). Retrieved August 30, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Economic_history_of_Australia&oldid=674863471

³³ It was not until the 1920s that property prices in Fitzroy recovered from the bust. Jill Robertson, *Gertrude Street, Fitzroy*.

Fitzroy People

Table 2: Rate valuations for Fitzroy properties 1889 – 1895³⁴

Property	Occupier	1889	Occupier	1895
Gertrude St (south side, cnr Fitzroy St)	Bakery	£110	Bakery	£90
	Cottage	£22	Cottage	£12
	Cottage	£28	Cottage	£18
	Wood dealer	£36	Wood dealer	£18
Gertrude St (north side, cnr Brunswick St)	Pawnbroker	£80	Pawnbroker	£60
	Tailor	£100	Eating house	£55
	Eating house	£100	Eating house	£55
	Confectioner	£75	Confectioner	£55
Brunswick St	Furniture mart	£468	Vacant	£350
	Tailor	£100	Tobacconist	£50
	Oyster shop	£100	Vacant	£50
	Confectioner	£100	Vacant	£50
	Hairdresser	£100	Boot maker	£50
	Butcher	£110	Butcher	£100
Fitzroy St	Devonshire Arms	£220	Devonshire Arms	£180

Francis Clark's death 1896

Following Francis' death in February 1896 various death notices alluded to his supposed wealth:

Clarke (sic) appears to have made most of his wealth speculating in land and buildings in the Fitzroy and Alphington (now Ivanhoe) areas with the result that he died a wealthy man.³⁵

We regret to chronicle the death on Tuesday morning at the advanced age of 75, of Mr. Francis Clark of Fairy Hills. Mr. Clark was an old pioneer, and, at one time, was partner in a large business carried on in Brunswick St. Fitzroy ...He was supposed to have died a very wealthy man, as he was a large shareholder in several breweries and flour mills, and was owner of valuable blocks of property in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, and elsewhere.³⁶

Francis left a long and complex will written in 1892 that attempted to provide various protections and trustees for his land and other assets. His total assets were £42,149, which included shares that had a face value of over £65,000, of which £59,000 were valueless.³⁷ But he also had liabilities totalling £77,128 comprising extensive property mortgages, interest and overdrafts owing, overdue calls on shares, and unpaid Hawthorn Grammar tuition fees for his grandsons. Consequently, regardless of his property portfolio, he was £34,978.11 in debt when he died.

³⁴ Information compiled from Fitzroy rate books (Fitzroy Library History Collection)

³⁵ Heritage Victoria 'Former Devonshire Arms'.

³⁶ 'Heidelbergshire', *Mercury and Weekly Courier*, February 6 1896, p 3.

³⁷ Heritage Victoria 'Former Devonshire Arms'.

Properties mentioned in Francis' will

In Francis's will there were ten pieces of property individually described the most valuable being:

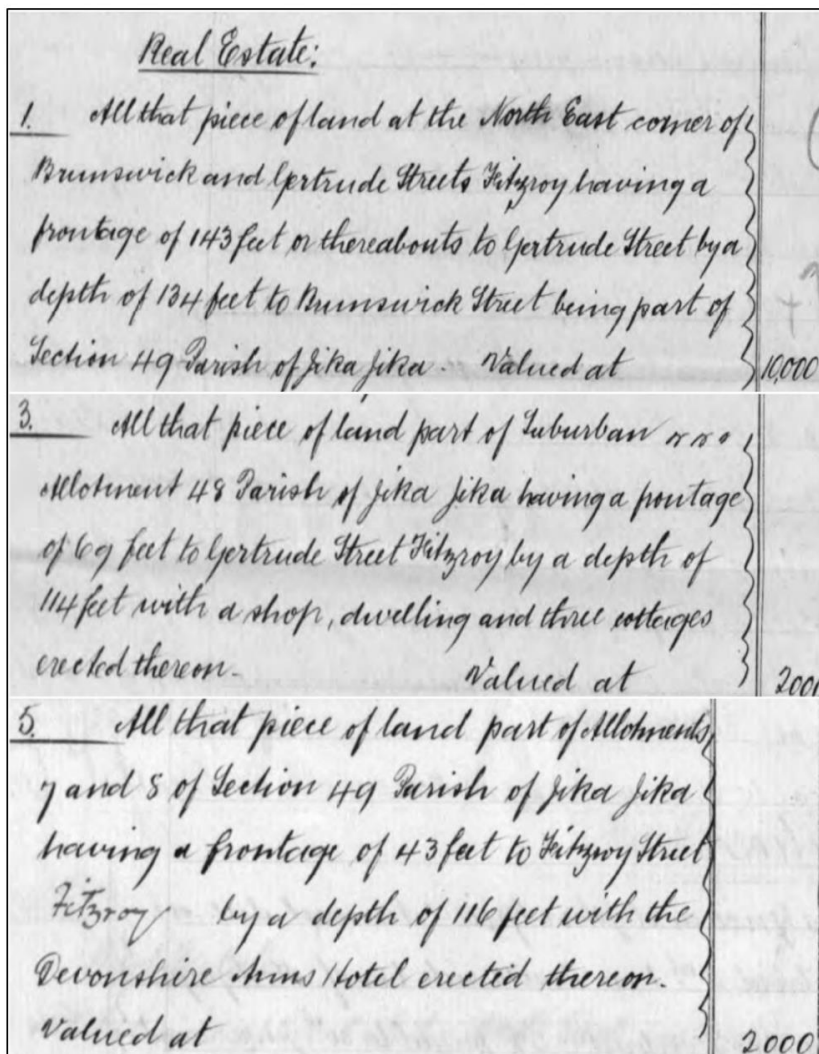
- "At the North East corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets" (see Fig. 3) which comprised numbers 52-62 Brunswick St and 97-101 Gertrude Street—this was "valued at £10,000".

Also described were:

- "a shop dwelling and three cottages" on the south side of Gertrude St and including the bakery at no 62 "valued at £2,000"
- The Devonshire Arms Hotel (in Fitzroy Street, measuring 43x116 ft) also "valued at £2,000"

In addition, there was another £9,515 worth of real estate comprising:

- two cottages in High St Northcote
- the Royal Hotel in Flemington Road (more recently called The Redback Hotel and now apartments) and two adjacent shops
- a block with a 123-foot frontage in Railway Street Alphington
- a 68 x 162-foot block in Heidelberg.
- 308 acres in Nilimbik
- Seven acres and the house at Fairy Hills
- 40 acres on Heidelberg Road Alphington, part of the Fairy Hills property.³⁸



Excerpt from Francis Clark's will, State Library of Victoria, 1892.

³⁸ Francis Clark, Will, State Library of Victoria, 1892.

Fitzroy People

The changing circumstances of Francis' wealth can also be seen in his headstone. Compared to William Thomas' headstone, Francis' is very modest.

Francis's headstone reads:

In Loving memory of Francis Clark late of Fairy Hills Alphington who died 4th February 1896, aged 75 years. Also Harry Vivian, youngest son of the above and dearly loved only child of Henrietta Clark who died 3rd July 1905, aged 18 years. "There is no death there is but life, which gathers as it rolls from stage to stage".

Despite the circumstances, Francis managed to provide enough protection for his widow Henrietta to remain in the Fairy Hills homestead until 1930, even if the surrounding land had by then been reduced to little more than two acres. By the First World War the area had become "very popular with home buyers" and Fairy Hills was "considered *the* desirable residential area" in Melbourne.³⁹

In 1956 the old mudstone house was demolished to make way for further subdivision. Clark Road however still remains, and together with the western section of The Boulevard, it follows what was once the driveway from Heidelberg Road to Francis Clark's Fairy Hills homestead, which was located on the west side of Clark Road, where Sylvan Court is today.⁴⁰



Grave of Francis Clark, Melbourne General Cemetery, Parkville. (Collection of the author, 2012)

³⁹ Susan Reidy, 'Finding Fairy Hills in the records of the Heidelberg Historical Society'. *Heidelberg Historian*. No.259, August, 2010, pp 2-3.

⁴⁰ Grace Holden, 'Fairy Hills', Notes of the photos P1475 & P1476, Heidelberg Historical Society (n.d.).

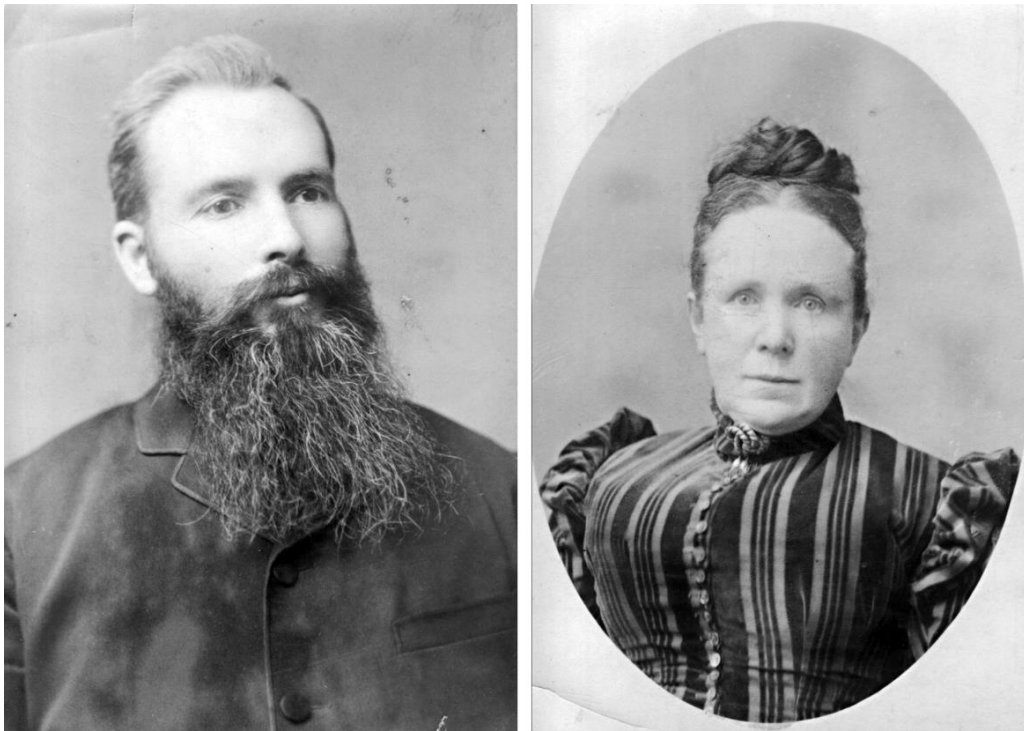
Patrick John Conway

1841 - 1923

Author

Suzanne White

Suzanne White is the great granddaughter of Patrick John Conway and granddaughter of Margaret May Leo Conway. Suzanne was born in Melbourne in 1963 and has a Bachelor of Business from RMIT. She is a keen amateur family history researcher who endeavours to bring to life the stories of her ancestors who migrated to Victoria in the nineteenth century. Suzanne holds the Conway family collection of photos and documents included herein.



Patrick and his first wife Bridget Conway (nee Hennessy), photographer unknown (Conway family collection)

Patrick John Conway was a businessman and master baker who lived in North Fitzroy for some forty years. Patrick built two bakeries in Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy; the Ennistymon Bakery, that when built, was described as 'one of the best bakeries in Victoria' and Conway's Bakery. Patrick survived many ups and downs in business including, insolvency, union disputes, embezzlement, the 1890s depression, an explosion at his Ennistymon Bakery in 1911 and a planned ambush of the bakery's takings in 1917. By the time of his death in 1923, Patrick had lost two wives and five of his eight children.

Fitzroy People

Patrick was born in about 1841 to Patrick Conway and Ann Conway (nee Devitt), in County Clare, Ireland. By 1872 Patrick had migrated to Victoria and married his first wife, Bridget Hennessy, at St Francis' Church in Melbourne. Bridget was born in 1844 to John Hennessy and Catherine Hennessy (nee Quinn) in Ennistymon, County Clare, Ireland. Ennistymon is a small country market town near the west coast of Ireland.

Patrick's first known venture in Melbourne was a bakery in Little Bourke Street West (on the corner of Goldie Alley)¹ that failed when Patrick became insolvent with a debt of three hundred and three pounds. The fittings in the bakery, his horse and cart, household furniture and all of the effects of the estate were sold at public auction on 6 October 1873.² This was just a year after he had married Bridget and the year of the birth of their first child, Patrick John Conway. It is imagined life would have been very difficult for a time for the family. More children were to follow, Francis James Conway was born in West Melbourne in 1874 and Mary Agnes Conway was born in Cheltenham in 1876. Sadly, Mary Agnes died the following year in 1877. Another son, John Thomas Conway was born to Patrick and Bridget in Carlton in 1878. In the years to follow Patrick's sons, Francis and John, followed their father into the baking trade.

By 1879 the family lived in Fitzroy and by 1881 the family lived in a brick house in Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy named 'Ennistymon Cottage', a property Patrick owned by 1882.³ The property was surely named in honour of Bridget's birthplace in Ireland. Another daughter, Katherine Teresa Conway was born to Patrick and Bridget in 1880 in Fitzroy. Michael Conway was born to Patrick and Bridget in Fitzroy in 1881. Sadly Michael survived only a few days after his birth.

By 1884 Patrick was in a partnership with Joseph Pennington (Pennington and Co.) and they operated a bakery that traded at 53 Faraday Street in Carlton⁴. In 1884 Pennington and Co. won the first Gold Medal for the "Best Fancy Bread made in the Colony"⁵ This award would take pride of place in the bakery's advertising for many years together with the First Class Certificate in the West Bourke Show, which Pennington and Co. included in their advertisements. In 1885, another daughter, Mary Ann Theresa Conway, was born to Patrick and Bridget in Fitzroy. In the years to follow Mary would enter the Order of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

By April 1884, Pennington and Co. had freely committed to the eight-hour day for workers.⁶ However by February 1886 a dispute erupted with the Operative Baker's Society after four men gave their notice to Pennington and Co. and were replaced by workers who were non-members of the Operative Baker's Society. A further issue in dispute was the dismissal of an employee who had brought an alleged breach of the Society's rules at the bakery to the attention of the Society. The dispute was ultimately resolved by arbitration in April 1886.⁷ By 1888, Patrick's partnership with Pennington had dissolved, when Joseph Pennington retired, and Patrick operated the bakery in his own right, trading as Patrick Conway.⁸

Patrick and Bridget's last child, Margaret May Leo Conway, was born in 1888 in Carlton. At some time in the first half of 1889 Patrick commenced trading at 186-188 Faraday Street in Carlton⁹; a business Patrick called the Melbourne Bread and Flour Store. The bakery was also known as the Carlton Bakery.

¹ 'Sales by Auction', *Argus*, 9 August 1873, p 2.

² 'Sales by Auction', *Age*, 26 September 1873, p 4.

³ 'Births, Deaths and Marriages', *Leader*, 12 November 1881, p 26; Victoria, Rate Books, City of Fitzroy, 7 November 1881 and 2 November 1882.

⁴ 'Advertising: Carlton Bakery', *Jewish Herald*, 11 January 1884, p 15; 'Public Notices: Dissolution of Partnership', *Age*, 9 May 1888, p.x.

⁵ 'The Bread Competition', *Traralgon Record and Morwell, Mirboo, Toongabbie, Heyfield, Tyers and Calligree Advertiser*, 4 April 1884, p 4.

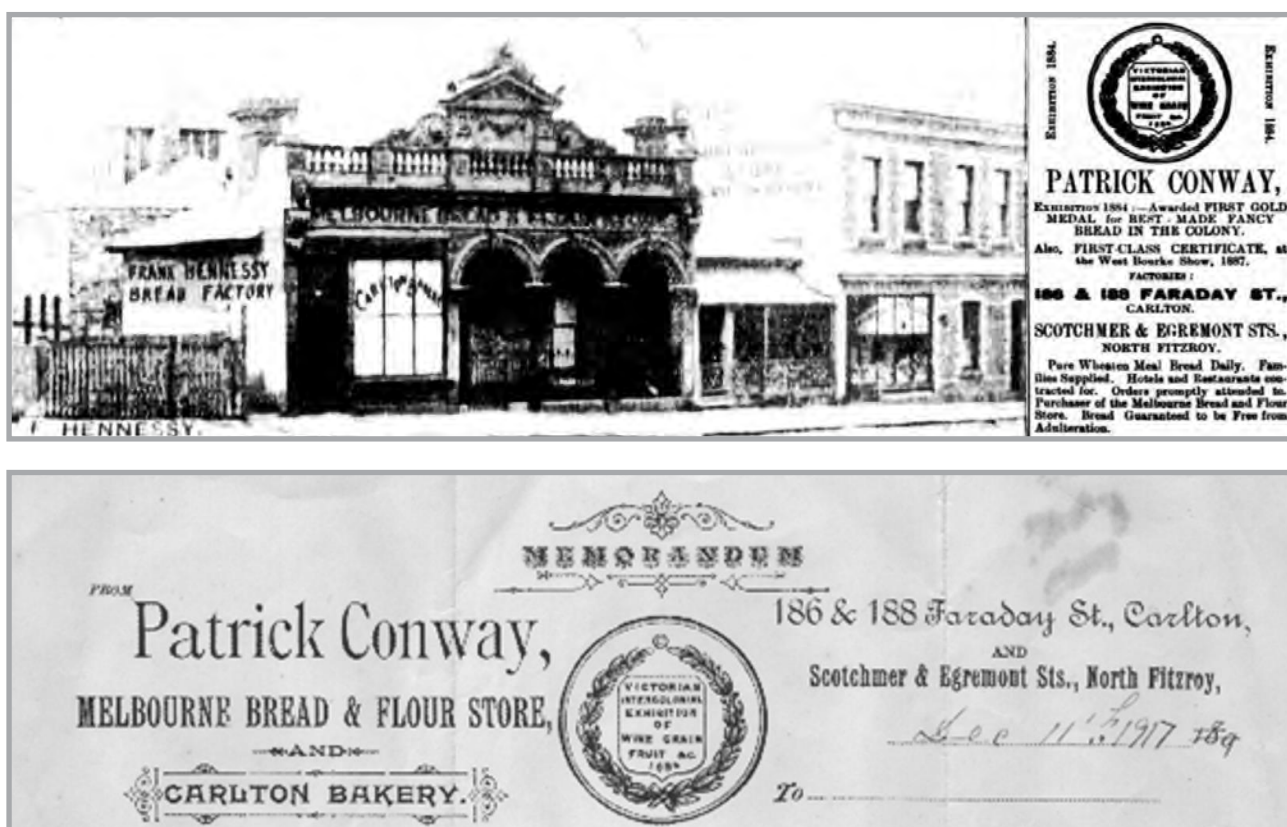
⁶ 'Public Notices: Eight Hours Men', *Argus*, 7 April 1884, p 3.

⁷ 'Trades Meetings', *Age*, 25 February 1886, p 5; 'Trades Meetings', *Age*, 8 March 1886, p 7; *Argus*, 'A Dismissed Baker', 13 March 1886, p 13; 'The Bakers Dispute', *Age*, 20 March 1886, p 10; 'The Bakers Dispute', *Age*, 8 April 1886, p 5.

⁸ *Age*, 9 May 1888, p.8, 'Public Notices'.

⁹ *Advocate*, 8 June 1889, p.13, 'Advertising'.

Fitzroy People



1. Illustration the Melbourne Bread and Four Company, also known as the Carlton Bakery in 1890, published in the Weekly Times on 29 August 1890, which by that time was managed by Frank Hennessy (Patrick's brother in law) 2. Advertisement published in Fitzroy City Press, on 28 March 1890 3. Letterhead Patrick Conway's Melbourne Bread Flour Store (Conway family collection)

By 1888 the Fitzroy rate books reveal that Patrick owned the land in Scotchmer Street (or at least some of it), upon which Patrick would build his new bakery. The Ennistymon Bakery was at located at 98-100 Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy and it was opened with some fanfare in the Fitzroy press in February 1890, when it was described as 'one of the best and most compact bakeries in Victoria'.¹⁰ The bakery was reportedly built at a cost of between four and five thousand pounds.¹¹ It was reported by the Jewish Herald that on Wednesday 26 February 1890 a large and influential gathering took place at the Ennistymon Bakery to celebrate the opening of the Melbourne Bread and Flour Store's North Fitzroy branch. Luncheon was held on the large balcony upstairs, to which the many present 'did ample justice'. A Mr Hurst was reportedly 'in the chair' at the function and after the usual toast was proposed to Patrick, 'whose energy and perseverance had brought him a substantial trade', Patrick showed his guests over the bakehouse.¹²

¹⁰ 'North Fitzroy and Its Progress', *Fitzroy City Press*, 28 March 1890 p 3.

¹¹ 'North Fitzroy and Its Progress', *Fitzroy City Press*, 28 March 1890, p 3; 'Topics of the Day', *Herald*, 27 February 1890, p 2.

¹² 'New Premises for The Melbourne Bread and Flour Store (North Fitzroy)', *Jewish Herald*, 28 February 1890, p 6.

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1. The Ennistymon Bakery at 98-100 Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy as it is today; 2. MMBW Plan Scotchmer and Egremont Streets, North Fitzroy 1904 (State Library of Victoria); 3. The Ennistymon Bakery name, still intact on the building today

The bakery had a frontage to Scotchmer Street of fifty to sixty feet and a depth of one hundred and twenty feet to Egremont Street. It comprised ten rooms, a shop and factory and a flour store capable of holding two and half thousand bags of flour. The bakery had a telephone installed and there was a machinery room and a room for sweating the scone flour. Four ventilators conveyed fresh air into the bakehouse. The troughs ran the whole length of the bakehouse, with divisions between each trough, where trolleys were stored. The trolleys were used by the bakers to place bread in the top of the double-decker oven. The trolley ran on wheels and could be pushed aside when no longer required.¹³

Patrick had installed the newest invention at the bakery, a patented Bailey and Baker Continuous Baking Oven. These ovens were made by the firm Joseph Baker and Sons, London, a firm that had exhibited in Melbourne in 1889 to great success. The firm subsequently opened a Melbourne office.¹⁴ The new double decker oven at the Ennistymon Bakery was set in brickwork and encased in glazed tiles¹⁵. The oven circulated direct and continuous heat through medium hot air chambers (without any loss of temperature in the oven). The oven included a lamp that would light the oven, without the need to open the door to view the baking goods. The oven also had a pyrometer that measured the oven's temperature. The oven also had a syphon flue to carry off the sulphur fumes generated by traditional fire ovens.¹⁶ Advertising for the Bailey and Baker Continuous Baking oven in 1889 boasted the numerous benefits associated with the oven; cleaner and more regular heat, no exposure of the baking goods to sulphur and no burnt loaves.¹⁷ The oven needed to be fired only once in twenty-four hours and hence saved time and money and the temperature could be controlled by the baker by the use of dampers on the outside of the oven.¹⁸

Despite this success in business tragedy struck Patrick and his family some two years after the Ennistymon Bakery was opened when on 9 June 1892 Bridget died of cardiac debility at the Ennistymon Bakery after a two-month illness. Bridget was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery. Following Bridget's death, Patrick married Bridget Theresa Russell (his second wife) on 30 March 1894 at St Xavier's Church in Adelaide. Bridget Russell arrived in South Australia on 29 March 1894 at Largs Bay on the steamship, Ballaarat. Bridget Russell was the daughter of Thomas Russell and Ann Russell (nee Ledin) and she was born in County Clare in about 1854. Patrick and his second wife had no known children.

¹³ 'North Fitzroy and Its Progress', Fitzroy City Press, 28 February 1890, p 3; 'Topics of the Day', Herald, 27 February 1890, p 2; The Fitzroy rate books reveal that 100 Scotchmer Street was comprised of fifteen rooms and 98 Scotchmer Street was comprised of nine rooms in 1891.

¹⁴ Baker Perkins Historical Society, 'History of Baker Perkins in Australia', <http://bphs.net/ServingTheWorld/BPAustralia/index.htm#1>

¹⁵ Advocate [Melbourne], 1 March 1890, p.15, 'Home Rule for Scotland'.

¹⁶ 'A Thriving Industry', Tasmanian, 14 December 1889, p 14; 'Special Advertisements', Williamstown Chronicle, 16 March 1889, p 4.

¹⁷ 'Special Advertisements', Williamstown Chronicle, 16 March 1889, p 4.

¹⁸ 'A Thriving Industry', Launceston Examiner, 11 December 1889, p 3.

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The Fitzroy rate books in 1890 (to at least 1894) reveal that Patrick owned the property at 98 - 100 Scotchmer Street. By December 1895, the Australian Deposit and Mortgage Bank (A. D. & M. Bank), owned the property, albeit Patrick continued to operate the bakery and his family lived at the premises. At some point during the worst of the 1890s depression, Patrick must have mortgaged the property. By at least 1896, Patrick's brother-in-law, Francis (Frank) Hennessy managed the Carlton Bakery, with the bakery's bread carts delivering to Carlton (and North Carlton), Fitzroy (and North Fitzroy), Collingwood, North Melbourne, East Melbourne and Jolimont, whilst Patrick ran the Ennistymon Bakery. The Carlton Bakery also had a suite of rooms that provided luncheon and light refreshments by 1896.¹⁹

In 1899 an employee of the Ennistymon Bakery, named Flegg, who had been employed by Patrick for two years to deliver bread and collect accounts was charged with the embezzlement of some sixty-four pounds from forty-three different accounts. Flegg collected the correct payment from the customers then altered the books and recorded that less had been paid by the customers than was in fact paid; Flegg pocketed the falsely deducted amounts and then made excuses as to why the customers were indebted to Patrick.²⁰ After enquiries were made by Patrick with the falsely indebted customers, Flegg was arrested by the police at Patrick's stables on 5 June 1899 and he was committed to trial for the embezzlement.²¹

It seems Patrick did not always adhere to the letter of the law either; in 1900, 1909 and 1915 Patrick was fined for failure to pay the rates set by the Bread Board to some of his employees.²² In 1905 more than twenty loaves baked at Patrick's bakery being distributed on a bread cart in Johnson Street were found by an Inspector to be twelve ounces under the advertised two pound weight.²³ In 1909 Patrick was one of several bakers fined for wrapping loaves of bread in newspaper, a practice that had once been common, that had since become unlawful.²⁴

On 16 March 1900, Patrick admitted his daughter, Margaret, to the Good Shepherd Convent in Middle Park, although the author understands Margaret spent time at the Good Shepherd Abbotsford Convent. Margaret was discharged from the Convent on 23 November 1908.²⁵ It is not known why a twelve-year-old Margaret was admitted to the Convent. The convent ran a laundry in which the inmates worked. In the years after her discharge, and before her marriage, Margaret went on to work live in Carlton for several years and worked as a presser²⁶.

In the early hours of 22 June 1911, a large explosion was felt in North Fitzroy, shaking the foundations of buildings, sending residents running out into Scotchmer Street, who thought that an earthquake had occurred. The explosion happened at the Ennistymon Bakery in Patrick's office and Patrick and his second wife remarkably escaped serious injury or worse, as the explosion had blown a hole in the floor under their bed, bringing down heavy pictures inches from their heads.

The explosion had blown out the wall between Patrick's office and the front of the shop and glass was blown across Scotchmer Street. Patrick and Bridget were found in an unconscious condition (some newspapers reported that they were asleep) and were rescued from the building by the police. There was some suggestion that sabotage of the chandelier might have been caused by a person bent on a malicious intent against Patrick, so an investigation proceeded. It was reported that Patrick had trouble accepting the suggestion.²⁷ The official verdict was that there had been a gas explosion as a result of a gas leak in a chandelier.²⁸ The explosion was reported widely all over Australia. It is unclear for how long the bakery was closed to trade following the explosion, although Patrick and his wife lived at the premises in 1912 and 1913²⁹.

The following year Patrick's daughter, Katherine Teresa, sadly died on 13 December 1912 in Yarram Yarram of mitral heart disease when she was thirty-two years old. By 1914/1915 Patrick had moved the bakery and family home to the opposite corner of Scotchmer and Egremont Streets (102 Scotchmer Street). By February 1915, W. Tilley, a pawn broker, traded at the former Ennistymon Bakery location.³⁰ Tragedy struck again when Patrick's first child, Patrick, died on 16 December 1916 of tuberculosis.

¹⁹ 'Carlton Bakery', Weekly Times, 29 August 1896, p 37.

²⁰ 'Alleged Embezzlement', Argus, 14 June 1899, p 3; 'Charge of Embezzlement', Age, 14 June 1899, p 3.

²¹ 'Sent for Trial: The Baker's Collector', Herald [Melbourne], 13 June 1899, p 4.

²² 'Factories and Shops Prosecutions', Fitzroy City Press, 3 August 1900, p 3; 'Underpaid Driver', Argus, 21 October 1909, p 9;

'Employer Fined', Argus, 25 November 1915, p 10.

²³ 'Shortweight Bread', Herald, 17 May 1905, p 1.

²⁴ 'Newspapers as Wrappers', Argus, 26 January 1919, p 8.

²⁵ Information supplied by the Archives, Good Shepherd Sisters.

²⁶ Electoral Rolls: Batman, Subdivision of Carlton North, 1914; Melbourne, Subdivision of Carlton South, 1916 and 1919.

²⁷ 'At North Fitzroy, Baker's Shop Wrecked', Herald, 22 June 1911, p 8; 'Gas Explosion at Fitzroy', Age, 23 June 1911, p 7.

²⁸ 'Fitzroy Explosion', Herald, 23 June 1911, p 8.

²⁹ 'Funeral Notices', Electoral Roll, Batman, Subdivision of Delbridge, 1913; Argus, 14 December 1912, p 13.

³⁰ 'Public Notices', Herald, 11 February 1915, p 7.

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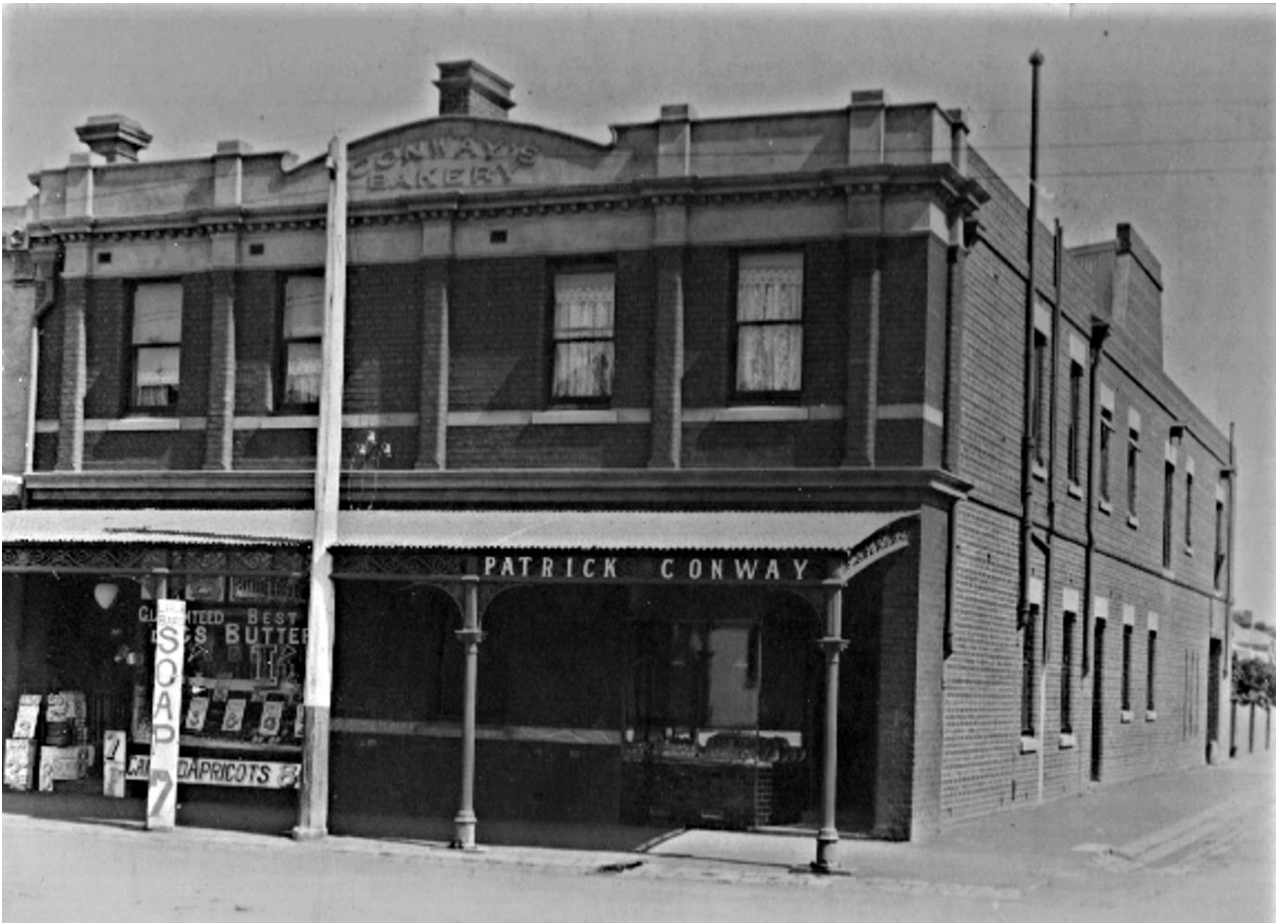


Photo: Conway's Bakery at 102 Scotchmer Street North Fitzroy, described on the back of the photo as the 'new home'. The photo was taken by P. F. Nash Photos, 850 Brunswick Road, North Fitzroy, circa 1914/1915 (Conway family collection)

In November 1917, a planned ambush of Conway's Bakery occurred when Bridget (Patrick's second wife) carried the bakery's takings from the bakery to the bank in Brunswick Street. Bridget was assaulted by two men who stole her purse, which contained eighty-five pounds. The elderly Bridget reportedly fell to the ground in a semi-conscious condition and cut her head as she tried to hang on to the bag. The assailants took the stolen money to a house in Birkenhead Street, Fitzroy, where the sister of one of the assailants resided and divided the money between them and burnt the bag. One of the men was sentenced to six months for his part in the robbery.³¹

³¹ 'Woman Assaulted and Robbed', *Argus*, 1 December 1917, p 19, 'Fitzroy Street Robbery', *Argus*, 20 December 1917, p 8; 'Elderly Woman's Pluck Recalled by Court Case', *Herald*, 10 December 1917, p.5.

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In a bizarre twist some days later Bridget placed an advertisement in the *Age* on 16 December 1917 stating that an advertisement after the robbery placed by an unknown person, posing to be Bridget, that thanked a person for the return of her purse by post was fraudulent and that the police had found her purse empty, burned and discarded in a house.³² In November 1918 Patrick wrote a letter of complaint to the Fitzroy City Council that policing in the neighbourhood was inadequate as his shop window had been broken four times in the previous four months.³³ Bridget died the year following the assault and robbery on 23 September 1918 at Conway's Bakery and she was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery. The Fitzroy Council sent Patrick a letter of condolence following the death of his second wife.³⁴ Just three weeks later, Patrick's youngest child, Margaret married Henry James Browne M.M. at St Brigid's Church in North Fitzroy.³⁵ Henry had served at Gallipoli and the Western Front in the 15³⁶ Battalion of the AIF.³⁷ Margaret and Henry lived for a time with Patrick at Conway's Bakery following their marriage.

On 19 August 1920 Patrick put up 102-104 Scotchmer Street for public auction. 102 Scotchmer Street, was described in the advertisement for the auction as comprising of (on the ground floor) two living rooms, a bread house with fittings, large bakehouse with two ovens, four small and two large mixing troughs, two copper troughs and a large mixing shed. The first floor was described as comprising of five living rooms, a bathroom, two store rooms, a mixing room with electricity and installed mixing plant. 104 Scotchmer Street was described as a large lock-up shop, let at one pound per week.³⁷ After the sale of Conway's Bakery, Patrick lost another son on 6 October 1922 when Francis died of acute nephritis and pericarditis.

By the time of Patrick's death on 14 September 1923, he lived at the St Joseph's Home for the Aged³⁸ in Northcote; a home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Patrick died when he was aged eighty-two years old and was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery with his second wife, Bridget Conway (nee Russell). By the time of Patrick's death he had lost both his wives and only three of his eight children had survived him, John, Mary (Sister Anna) and Margaret. His total estate was valued at some nineteen hundred and thirteen pounds. Patrick's son, John, subsequently died on 23 April 1941, Patrick's daughter, Margaret, died on 19 July 1965 and his other daughter, Mary (Sister Anna), died at the Dunedin Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor on 12 October 1966.



Portraits of Patrick's children: John Conway; Katherine Teresa Conway; Mary Ann Theresa Conway (Sister Anna); Maggie May Leo Browne (nee Conway) with Henry James Browne M. M. on their wedding day (Conway family collection)

³² 'A Fitzroy Robbery', *Age*, 26 December 1917, p 5.

³³ 'Fitzroy City Council', *Fitzroy City Press*, 16 November 1918, p 2.

³⁴ 'Fitzroy City Council', *Fitzroy City Press*, 5 October 1918, p 2.

³⁵ Henry was awarded the Military Medal (M.M.) on 4 October 1916 for his bravery and enterprise in maintaining the communication lines between the 4th Brigade Headquarters and the 15th Battalion Signals located at 'Concrete House' at Pozieres from 5-11 August 1916 which included laying four wires of which eight hundred yards were laid in open territory under heavy barrage, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1585011>.

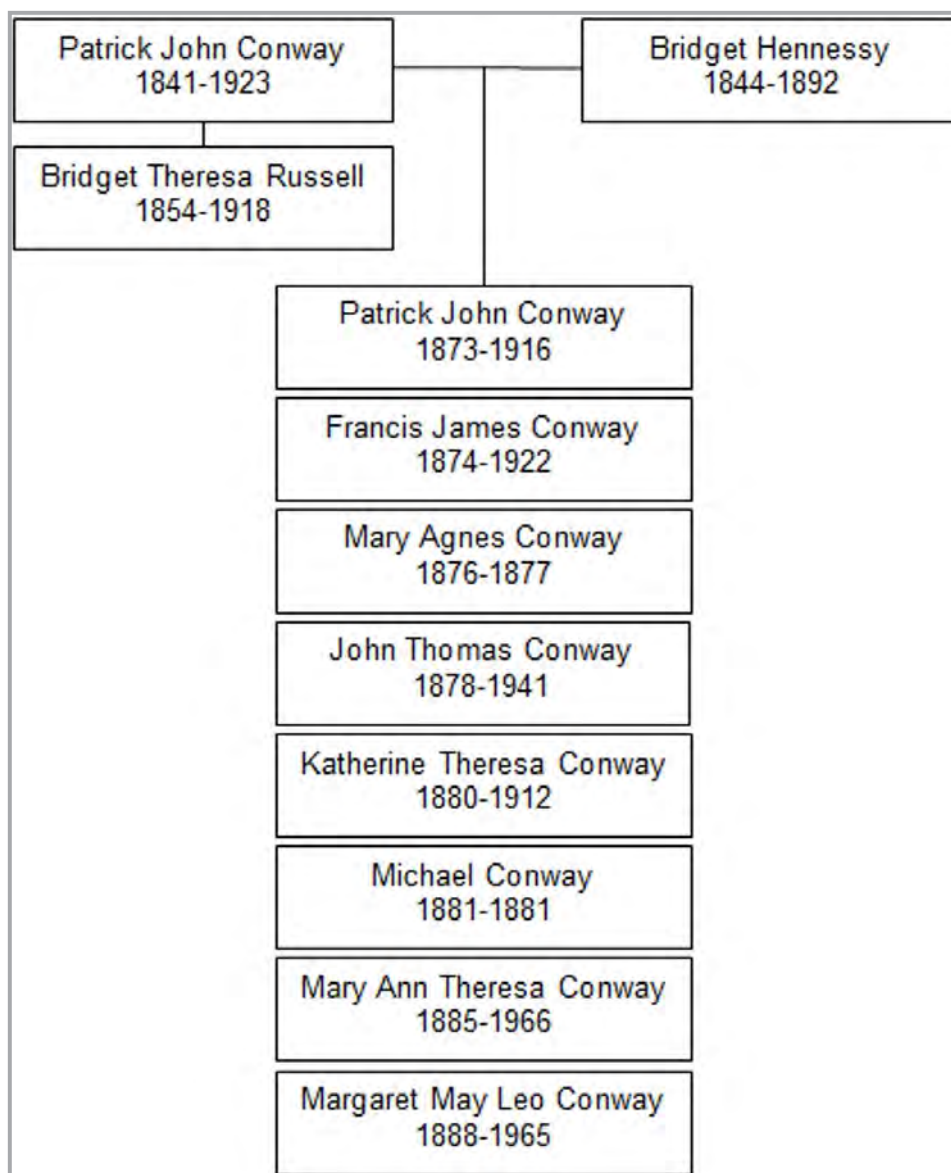
³⁶ National Archives of Australia, Series B2455, item number 3130651.

³⁷ 'Sales by Auction', *Argus*, 31 July 1920, p.2; *Argus*, 14 August 1920, p 2..

³⁸ Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS, 28/P0003, 192/739, sworn statement of Joel Fox and Frank Hennessy, 14 and 15 November 1923.

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Figure 1: The children of Patrick John Conway and Bridget Hennessy



Sue Kee

Date of Birth and Death Unknown

Author

Jo Buckle

Jo Buckle has lived in Fitzroy since she arrived in Australia over 20 years ago. She has long been interested in history but this is her first attempt at research. She works in public health.

Sue Kee was a Chinese doctor, herbalist or healer who practiced Chinese medicine for over 40 years in the late 19th and early 20th century, including in Fitzroy. Several newspaper reports highlight racism against the Chinese community, including Sue Kee, at the time. Despite this environment, there is also evidence that he was a well-known and respected community member who had many patients and also accompanied Chinese diplomats on a visit to Ballarat in 1897 to assess the welfare of Chinese living in Victoria

Background

Being of Chinese heritage in Victoria in the late 1800s would not have been easy. After the discovery of gold in the 1850s, more than 200 000 people came to Victoria, mainly from Europe, North America and China. Racism was particularly directed towards the Chinese, and was first enshrined in Victorian law on 12 June 1855, when ‘An Act to Make Provision for Certain Immigrants’ was passed.¹ This Act defined immigrants as ‘any male adult native of China... or any person born of Chinese parents’ and limited the number of Chinese passengers allowed on a ship to one for every ten tons and levied a poll tax of £10 for every Chinese arrival. Consequently, many Chinese people heading for Victoria disembarked elsewhere, usually in South Australia, and had to travel overland – often by foot which would take around three weeks – to reach Melbourne or the gold fields inland.

Sue Kee arrived from New Zealand in 1886 to practice Chinese medicine. It is not clear how he travelled as ship passenger records have not been found but he may have originally reached Victoria from another state due to the obstacles and extra expense stemming from the Chinese Immigration Act. He set up practice in Little Bourke Street² and advertised his services in *The Age*, *The Argus* and *The Herald*. Sue Kee proclaimed his ability to treat a long list of ‘nternal and external diseases’ that illustrate common, and fascinating, medical issues in the colony at that time. This included ‘consumption, fevers, asthma, heart disease, rupture, ague, diphtheria and throat diseases’³, dyspepsia, jaundice, worms, rheumatism, neuralgia, abscess, dropsy, gonorrhoea, eruption, measles, piles, poisoned wounds and ringworm.⁴

After this Sue Kee moved his practice to Fitzroy, but regularly relocated over the next two decades (see end of article for more details), and regularly appeared in newspaper reports of local events. He also maintained close links with China. He travelled back to China periodically, joined a mission by Chinese diplomats to Ballarat in 1887 and in 1889 donated the generous sum (at the time) of £10 10s to the China Famine Fund.⁵

¹ ‘An Act to make provision for certain Immigrants’, *Supplement to the Victoria Government Gazette of Friday June 15 1855* No 57.

² Advertising, *Argus*, 5 March 1886, p 3.

³ Advertising, *Herald*, 12 January 1891, p 4.

⁴ Advertising, *Herald*, 15 June 1891, p 3.

⁵ ‘China Famine Fund’, *Age*, April 1889.

A “Mysterious Death” and inquest

Shortly after setting up his practice in Melbourne in 1886, Sue Kee tended to a patient in Collingwood who subsequently died. Mrs Angeline Lester, a 59-year-old ‘elderly’ widow, was seen on her veranda by her neighbour ‘in a fit or a swoon’ and her daughter, Mrs Smith, summoned Sue Kee, who had a ‘large practice in lower Collingwood’.⁶ Sue Kee administered some powders and ‘a brownish liquid’ with instructions for administering two doses of it.⁷

The event was covered in several newspapers highlighting widespread discrimination towards Chinese migrants at the time. *The Herald’s* article was titled ‘The Mysterious Death at Collingwood’ even though it also noted that the widow ‘was found lying in a dying condition’ even before Sue Kee arrived.⁸ *The Bendigo Advertiser* wrote that ‘the first dose [of medicine] was ... sufficient for Mrs Lester as about a couple of hours afterwards she was found dead’ and suggested that the upcoming inquest ‘may go hard with John’, a discriminatory term used to refer to any Chinese man.⁹ *The Bendigo Advertiser* also proposed the coroner might be critical of Sue Kee because ‘medical men are as much averse as carpenters and cabinetmakers to being ruined by Chinese cheap labor’.¹⁰

At the inquest on 31 December 1886, held at the Bristol and Bath Hotel in Collingwood,¹¹ Sue Kee, said he thought ‘death was caused by disease of the heart, which he considered always fatal’. He produced a prescription in Chinese which he explained was herbs given for the purpose of alleviating the pain. Dr Colin McFarlane of Victoria Parade in Fitzroy agreed with Sue Kee, stating that Mrs Lester had died of natural causes since the ‘heart disease was so far advanced that no medicines administered would cause death or restore deceased’.¹² Sue Kee was eventually exonerated.

Accompanying the Chinese Commissioners to Ballarat

Between May and September 1887, two Imperial Chinese Commissioners, General Wong Yung Ho and Consul-General U Tsing, visited the Australian colonies ‘to inquire into the condition of the Chinese trade with these colonies, and also to inquire into the condition of the Chinese who have settled here’.¹³ The Commissioners were greeted by government representatives and were generally welcomed with much pomp and ceremony. A group of 47 Chinese representatives in Victoria presented the Commissioners with a list of grievances, which they then passed onto the Victorian premier, Mr Gillies, when they met with him in May 1887.¹⁴ The three major areas of grievance were the £10 tax for entry into Victoria, the inter-colony (interstate) border tax, and the unprovoked and often unpunished violence that “larrikins” meted out on the Chinese community.¹⁵ The Commissioners visited Ballarat in June accompanied by Sue Kee, and nine other Chinese dignitaries from Melbourne and Sydney.¹⁶ In his classified advertisement in *The Age* around that time he described himself as ‘the only recognised Chinese doctor’.¹⁷ The party travelled ‘in a State carriage’ to Ballarat and met with the mayors of Ballarat and Ballarat East and other councillors. On arrival at the train station, they found it ‘fairly thronged with people anxious to catch a glimpse of the distinguished visitors.’ Mindful of possible trouble, however, “a posse of police kept down any tendency that there might have been on the part of some to larrikinism”.

⁶ ‘The Mysterious Death at Collingwood’, *Herald*, 31 December 1886, p 3.

⁷ ‘Sudden Death’, *Mercury and Weekly Courier*, 31 December 1886, p 2.

⁸ ‘The mysterious death at Collingwood’, *Herald*, 31 December 1886, p 3.

⁹ ‘Melbourne’, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 31 December 1886, p 3.; ‘John’ or ‘John Chinaman’ were generic name coined by sailors when they did not bother to learn the names for Chinese stewards. John (noun), OED Online Oxford University Press.

¹⁰ Chinese furniture workers were accused by European tradesmen of undercutting them by using “sweated labour”, that is low pay, long hours and unsafe conditions. State Library of Victoria Blog: <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/european-labour-stamps-on-australian-furniture/>, retrieved 3/5/22.

¹¹ ‘Sudden Death’, *Mercury & Weekly Courier*, 31 December 1886, p 2.

¹² ‘The mysterious death at Collingwood’, *Herald*, 31 December 1886, p 3.

¹³ The Chinese Commissioners, *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 21 May 1887, p1070. The Commissioners also visited Dutch and Spanish colonies in Southeast Asia around the same time.

¹⁴ Chinese-Australian historical images in Australia www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/blogs/CH00044b.htm retrieved 10/5/22.

¹⁵ Marilyn Lake, ‘The Chinese Empire Encounters the British Empire and Its ‘Colonial Dependencies’: Melbourne, 1887’ in *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 2013 pp 183–184.

¹⁶ ‘The Chinese Commissioners in Ballarat’, *Ballarat Star*, 15 June 1887, p 2.

¹⁷ *Advertising, Age*, Sat 9 Apr 1887, p 16.



Chinese Commissioners, General Ho and Consul-General Tsing on an official visit to Sydney, with unidentified young Chinese male in western suit (centre). State Library of New South Wales.

In contrast to the meetings and public interest in Victoria, a Brisbane newspaper lamented “It is strange to see the heartiness of the reception accorded to the Chinese commissioners in countries where constant if feeble efforts are being made to get rid of John Chinaman.” The article recommended that the Commissioners “should have been told to clear out taking all their countrymen with them.”¹⁸

On their return to China, the Commissioners recommended that a consul be established in Sydney to protect the interests of their countrymen, but this did not happen due to concerns about costs. While the Commissioners’ visit appears well received, it did not lead to less discrimination of the Chinese community in Victoria and other colonies in subsequent years. Newspaper articles from 1890 continue to demonstrate attitudes:

- In January 1890, *The Argus* ran an article titled “Barbarous Melbourne” highlighting “Chinese heathenism, Chinese dens, Chinese filth” amongst other criticisms of the city.¹⁹
- In January 1890, the *Newcastle Morning Herald* lamented “the brutality and vice of some of the Chinese residents of large Australian cities,” recommending to ‘our own people to avoid ‘the yellow plague’, and to demand that ‘if the lemon-hued sons of the Celestial Land are allowed to remain here they must conform.’²⁰
- In April 1890, *The Age* stated unequivocally that “the firm determination of the Australian colonists is to reserve this continent for the Anglo-Saxon race.”²¹

¹⁸ The Chinese Commissioners, *Week*, 21 May 1887, p 17.

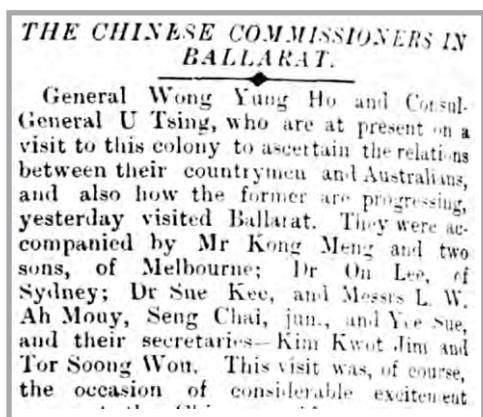
¹⁹ The Barbarisms of Barbarous Melbourne, *Argus*, 18 January 1890, p 13.

²⁰ In Recess, *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners’ Advocate*, 27 January 1890, p 5.

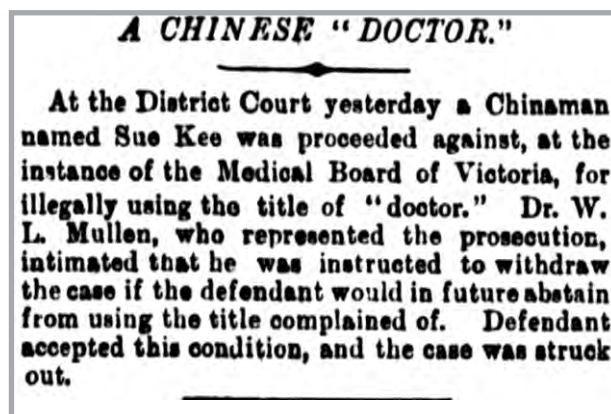
²¹ *Age*, 29 April 1890, p 4.

Granted exemption from the Chinese Act 1890

In July 1890, the Chinese Act²² was enacted in Victoria and required Chinese residents to apply for formal exemptions if they wanted to retain their right to entry and residence in Victoria. The exemptions which were granted were published in Victorian Government Gazettes.²³ Sue Kee, along with his wife, Lou Se, and seven other Chinese men were granted exemptions: gardeners, storekeepers, a French polisher and a fish hawker, were “given an exemption from the provisions of The Chinese Act 1890... for a period of 3 years” in June 1899.²⁴



Ballarat Star, 15 Jun 1887, p. 2



The Age, 1 June 1894, p. 6

Prosecutions by the Medical Board

The Medical Board of Victoria was created in 1844, modelled on an existing British institution, to register ‘legally qualified medical practitioners’ in Victoria.²⁵ In 1874, a Ballarat doctor, Lo Kwoi Sang, claimed to be able to effectively treat diphtheria before a vaccine was developed in the 1920s. Lo Kwoi Sang wrote in the *The Argus* in October 1874²⁶ that he knew the cause of diphtheria and ‘I possess the cure as well, and am prepared at any moment to... prove it to be correct in the presence of all the medical men in the colony’. This enraged the Medical Society of Victoria, who referred to him in *The Australian Medical Journal* as ‘a sallow semi-barbarian who maltreats our language, blows his powder down into the fauces and the diphtheria is “cured”’.²⁷ The Medical Board warned against ‘the evils of permitting such persons the unchecked exercise of their charlatanry’²⁸ and in 1875 charged Lo Kwoi Sang with contravening The Medical Practitioners Act. This was the first charge of its type and Lo Kwoi Sang was then obliged to call himself a healer or herbalist. Many other Chinese doctors were then also similarly charged.

Twenty years later in May 1894, Dr Kee was similarly sued by the Medical Board of Victoria for ‘illegally using the title of doctor’. He agreed to abstain from using the title, and legal proceedings were dropped. Like Lo Kwoi Sang, Sue Kee was able to call himself a healer or herbalist and advise on and sell medicinal herbs but could not legally give a diagnosis. Chemists had similar limitations put on their practices.²⁹ After the court case, Sue Kee’s listing in the 1899 Sands Melbourne Directory categorised him as a Chinese Healer and from 1903 onwards Sands listed him as a herbalist.³⁰ However, by 1903 his advertisements again listed him as a ‘Chinese Doctor’.³¹

²² This Act remained in force until federation and was a forerunner to the Australia-wide Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

²³ Australasian Legal Information Institute, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/ca189077.pdf, retrieved 3/5/22

²⁴ Police Gazettes, Victoria, Australia 1864-1924, 1899 p 194.

²⁵ G. Wolf, A delayed inheritance: the Medical Board of Victoria's 75-year wait to find doctors guilty of "infamous conduct in a professional respect". *J Law Med*, 2015 Mar;22(3):568-87. The Board was the forerunner to today's Medical Practitioner's Board of Victoria that has a similar role.

²⁶ Local Topics, *Australian Medical Journal*, October 1874, p 319.

²⁷ ‘The Craze for Specifics’, *Australian Medical Journal*, October 1874, p 306.

²⁸ ‘The Craze for Specifics’, *Australian Medical Journal*, October 1874, p 307.

²⁹ ‘A Chinese “Doctor”’, *Age*, 1 June 1894, p 6.

³⁰ Prior to the case, he had listed him under “Physicians, Surgeons & Medical Practitioners”. *Melbourne Directory (Sands) 1892*, p 1345.

³¹ Advertising, *Argus*, 30 January 1903, p 9.

Fraudulent voting or mistaken identity?

While based in Nicholson Street, Sue Kee was mistaken for George Tye Kee whose practice he took over when Tye Kee travelled to China for three years. In September 1896, an election for councillors at the West Ward of Fitzroy City Council resulted in Mr Oldfield beating his rival, Mr Apps, by one vote. Newspaper reports stated there were 'several cases of wrongful voting and impersonation', 'sufficient to render the election invalid'³². One case involved 'Tye Kee, who has been a voter in the West Ward for several years, left for China in April last, and the person who voted is Sue Kee, who is carrying on the business during Tye Kee's absence'. The Fitzroy City Press noted that 'Sue Kee states that he repeatedly refused to vote, although called on several times during the day... by a person dressed in a frock coat and belltopper, who... assured him that he was entitled to vote as Tye Kee'. So, Sue Kee voted and no charges were laid against him. The press reserved their ire on this occasion for Mr Oldfield and his team, since 'the fact of Tye Kee having left the colony was well-known, and whoever procured Sue Kee to impersonate him should not be permitted to go scot free'.³³

Victim of Fitzroy street crime

In September 1905, Edward Albert "Boxer" Wilson attempted to steal Dr Kee's gold watch and chain (valued at £21³⁴) when Sue Kee and his wife were outside their house at 2 Marion Street. Sue Kee evaded his attempt, but recognised Wilson and notified the police who issued a warrant for his arrest.³⁵

A few weeks later, Wilson was spotted by a policeman in Benalla, wearing 'dark clothes, and a white handkerchief round neck',³⁶ and was arrested on 7 October 1905. During his trial on 12 October, Wilson claimed he had been at the Wangaratta Show on the date of the attempted theft, that he had an alibi and was not guilty. Sue Kee and his wife testified that he was the man who had attempted theft. Wilson's alibi was disproved in court and Wilson changed his plea to guilty and was given a sentence of three months' imprisonment.³⁷



The Age, 7 Oct 1905



"White Australia and a Yellow Doctor"

In March 1907, Sue Kee again appeared in the press following the death of another one of his patients.

The Daily News published an article, 'White Australia and a Yellow Doctor. White Man No More' about the incident.³⁸ Sue Kee now had wealthier patients in Melbourne and further afield and no longer served only the poor of lower Collingwood. Many of the newspaper articles stressed that his patient, William Campbell 'had paid £75 to Sue Kee' over the course of his treatment,³⁹ a contrast to the national minimum 'fair and reasonable wage' for working men of £2 per week set in that year.⁴⁰

³² Fitzroy City Council, Fitzroy City Press, 24 September 1896, p 2.

³³ Fitzroy City Council, Fitzroy City Press, 24 September 1896, p 2.

³⁴ 'Another Watch Snatching Case', *The Age*, 7 October 1905, p 12.

³⁵ Highway Robbery and Stealing from the Person, Victoria Police Gazettes No. 38 – 9240, 20 September 1905.

³⁶ 'Highway Robbery and Stealing from the Person', Victoria Police Gazettes No. 38 – 9240, 20 September 1905.

³⁷ 'Watch Snatching Case', *Age*, 13 October 1905, p 6.

³⁸ 'White Australia', *Daily News*, Perth, 14 March 1907, p 11.

³⁹ 'Chinese Doctor's Patient', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 16 March 1907, p 8.

⁴⁰ 'Harvester case', Fair Work Commission Australia

<https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/history/waltzing-matilda-and-sunshine-harvester-factory/harvester-case>

Fitzroy People

Campbell, who had suffered from lung disease (tuberculosis) for three years, died after eight months in Sue Kee's care. His treatment 'consisted in the withdrawal of water, milk, cream, and fats, and the drinking of large infusions of herbs, which caused a good deal of nausea'. This had, according to the inquest, led to death of tuberculosis being 'hastened by the withdrawal of foods' and 'unduly accelerated by unskilful treatment'. Apparently, 'Sue Kee had promised to cure Campbell but instead had so reduced his weight and strength that the ravages of the disease were very rapid'.⁴¹

The press thought that 'proceedings will probably be taken against the Chinaman'⁴² but it does not appear that they were.

After 1909, further newspaper articles or advertisements mentioning Dr Sue Kee have not been found. However, by then Sue Kee had had a long career in Melbourne - an advertisement in 1908 told readers that he had '35 years' Australian practice'.⁴³ Despite critical press and some medical practices that today's readers may find surprising, Dr Kee was a man with a respected profession, a good income and had many supporters in the community. In 1896, Sue Kee published testimonials from grateful patients including one of which noted, 'my son, suffering from typhoid fever ... given up as incurable by several European doctors, was completely restored to his former health, having only been three days under Mr Sue Kee's wonderful treatment'.⁴⁴ Another patient, James Merry of Flinders Lane, wrote to Sue Kee in 1891: 'After daily visits for a fortnight I felt great improvement, and am now perfectly well. Wishing you every success in your practice, which you truly deserve'.⁴⁵

Background: Regular re-location of Sue Kee's practices

Sue Kee regularly relocated his practice over the years. By January 1888 Sue Kee was living and working at 28 Gertrude Street in Fitzroy, 'near the tram engine house'.⁴⁶ In 1890, he travelled to China for a period and on returning in the same year moved to 23 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, alerting 'his old friends and patients' of his new address, 'near Cyclorama'.⁴⁷ Only a year later, in 1891 he moved again to 12 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy⁴⁸, then in 1894 to 5 Victoria Parade, near Nicholson Street, Fitzroy,⁴⁹ and in 1896 to 24 Nicholson Street, ('corner Princes-St, Fitzroy; trams pass door'⁵⁰); sharing the business address with another Chinese doctor, Dr George Tye Kee. Two years later, Sue Kee again moved to 539 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, on the corner of (what was then) Evelyn Street.⁵¹ In 1903, Sue Kee briefly worked in St Kilda Road⁵² but by June he was back in Fitzroy returning to 24 Nicholson Street⁵³ where also took over George Tye Kee's patients during the latter's three-year trip to China. At this time, Sue Kee and his wife lived at 2 Marion Street, Fitzroy⁵⁴. After George Tye Kee's return to Melbourne in 1907, Sue Kee moved to Alfred House, East Melbourne 'two doors from Parliament House, near Albert-St'⁵⁵, 'opposite the Continuation School' (which is now the Royal College of Surgeon's building) where he shared this business address with the similarly named Dr JF Sue Kee. Sue Kee stayed at this location until at least 1909.⁵⁶



Advertisement in The Age, 1905⁵⁷

⁴¹ 'Chinese Doctor's Patient', Ovens and Murray Advertiser, 16 March 1907, p 8.

⁴² 'Chinese Doctors', Coolgardie Miner, 15 March 1907, p 3.

⁴³ Advertising, Age, 13 January 1908, p 9.

⁴⁴ Advertising, Age, 31 October 1896, p 3.

⁴⁵ Advertising, Argus, 19 February 1891 p 3.

⁴⁶ Advertising, Age, 3 January 1888, p 2; Rate Books, City of Fitzroy [1858-1901] 14 Dec 1888.

⁴⁷ Advertising, Age, 15 November 1890, p 3.

⁴⁸ Melbourne Directory (Sands), 1892.

⁴⁹ Advertising, Age, 15 Oct 1894, p 3.

⁵⁰ Advertising, Age, 16 Sep 1903, p 8.

⁵¹ Melbourne directory (Sands), 1899.

⁵² Melbourne Directory (Sands), 1903.

⁵³ Melbourne Directory (Sands), 1906.

⁵⁴ Another Watch Snatching Case, Age, 7 October 1905, p 12.

⁵⁵ Advertisement, Argus, 11 May 1908, p 5.

⁵⁶ Advertisement, Argus, 4 January 1909, p 3.

⁵⁷ Advertising, Age, 7 January 1905, p 1.

Thomas Kidney

1814 - 1890

Author
Simon Armstrong

Simon Armstrong joined the Fitzroy History Society in 2019 after being interested in walking tours. He helped establish walking tours around Fitzroy for people who are interested in the history of the suburb. Simon has since become involved in several podcasts that further help people to learn about the interesting history of Fitzroy.

Thomas Kidney emigrated in 1853 inspired by the opportunity that the gold rush presented. He soon realised that more money could be made from supplying clothing to the growing population. He and his brother set up clothing stores in Gertrude Street, then Smith Street. Thomas was also active in local politics, including as president of a local political organisation in Fitzroy and Collingwood known as the “Kidney Parliament” that championed for improvements to local roads. A reserve in North Fitzroy is named after him – the ‘Thomas Kidney Reserve’ on Rushall Crescent, Fitzroy North.

Establishing Kidney Brothers in Fitzroy

After hearing about the goldfields of Victoria, or Port Philip as it was then known at the time, Thomas arrived in Melbourne on 18 July 1853 at the age of 38 on the ship “North Atlantic” with his wife, Emma, and two children, William (13) and Mary (11). They purchased their first house in Napier Street on 10 October 1853¹.

Having left a successful clothing business in Manchester, England², Thomas wanted to establish a new business in Melbourne, and he imported iron from Scotland to erect a store in 1854. The 28 by 62 foot store was built on Gertrude Street adjoining the Rob Roy Hotel (now the Workers Club) located on the corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets, Fitzroy. In 1861, his brother William emigrated to Melbourne on the ship *Great Britain*. By 1881, Thomas, William and a third brother, James, purchased land in Smith Street and built a large clothing store at 168 Smith Street, Collingwood (now part of the new Coles supermarket complex) where ‘Kidney Brothers’ became a very successful business.³

The ‘Kidney Parliament’ and Fitzroy’s Independence

In the 1840s, before Fitzroy was established as a municipality, residents were concerned with controlling liquor licences and gaining police services⁴. In the 1850s, residents became concerned about creating a built environment, which underpinned the demands for the creation of local self-government. By the time Fitzroy became a municipality in September 1858, residents were experienced in local politics⁵. This included Thomas Kidney. In addition to running the business, Thomas was actively involved in local politics, was a member of the Old Colonists Association, and worked as a Justice of the Peace adjudicating on many matters such as thefts, larceny, and drunkenness. He was also president of a local political organisation in Fitzroy and Collingwood known as the “Kidney Parliament”.

¹ ‘Prominent Citizens – William and Thomas Kidney’, Fitzroy City Press, 24 October 1885, p 3.

² Thomas’ father was a successful farmer and after realising his sons were not interested in agriculture, he helped them get into the clothing industry in the City of Glasgow. The brothers then moved the business to Liverpool, London, York, and then to the heart of the clothing industry in Manchester.

³ ‘Prominent Citizens – William and Thomas Kidney’, Fitzroy City Press, 24 October 1885, p 3.

⁴ Rosemary Kiss, ‘The business of politics’ in Fitzroy, Melbourne’s First Suburb, 1989, p. 34 -54 Hyland House Publishing.

⁵ John Senyard, Fitzroy History Society Newsletter, January 2008, p 3.

Fitzroy People



Kidney Brothers shop at 168 Smith Street, Collingwood. William Kidney may be the person in the top hat in the middle of the picture.

John Senyard⁶ has written of the Kidney Parliament:

In 1854, the colonial government passed The Fitzroy Ward Improvement Act granting fifty thousand pounds to be spent mainly on the creation of proper streets and roads in the suburb. In part, the money was needed to pay the cost of road works – turning the notorious dirt tracks of Fitzroy into passable streets. The money was also needed to pay property owners' compensation for street "alignment". Because Fitzroy had privately subdivided in the 1840s, sometimes property with improvements such as fences and even buildings stood in the path of the new streets.

The Fitzroy Ward Improvement Act became immediately controversial. Swamped by a severe financial crisis caused by the demands of the gold rush the colonial government attempted to back out of paying the money promised to Fitzroy. After a series of local deputations to Lt. Governor Hotham a mere ten thousand pounds was released in April 1854. Two months later the government refused to release any further funds.

Over the following twelve months local agitation kept pressure on the government to fulfil its obligations to the improvement of Fitzroy. Public meetings were held, delegations were formed, and an organising committee met regularly to keep pushing the issue. Known locally as 'The Kidney Parliament' after its leading member Thomas Kidney, the committee included many men subsequently prominent in Fitzroy local politics such as Benjamin Bell, Henry Templeton and Alexander Reilly (Reilly's 'Fitzroy Hotel', which stood on the corner of Webb Street and Napier Street, was a favoured meeting place for the 'Kidney Parliament'.)

By 1855 the financial problems of the colonial government had begun to ease and in the wake of the Eureka rebellion Governor Hotham's autocratic style was under scrutiny. Self-government was granted to Victoria in July. Three months later, in October, ten thousand pounds was released for Fitzroy Improvement followed in December by a further twelve thousand five hundred pounds.

With the release of these funds the work of the 'Kidney Parliament' was virtually finished, and its last meeting was in March 1856.

⁶John Senyard, *Fitzroy History Society Newsletter*, January 2008, p 3.

Fitzroy People

The significance of the 'Kidney Parliament', however, was wider than questions of road making and the self-interest of property holders seeking compensation. Towards the end of its life, Kidney's committee had begun to look at other important issues of urban development in Fitzroy. Resolutions were passed calling on the City Council to undertake specific works such as the widening of Moor Street, a memorial was sent to the Postmaster General asking for a branch post office, a request was made for direct representation in the Legislative Council and the questions of improved water supply and the erection of a fire alarm bell were raised.

These resolutions reflected an increasing level of political maturity in Fitzroy and they foreshadowed deeper changes in Fitzroy's political status.

Nine months after the end of 'Kidney's Parliament' a public meeting of ratepayers and residents held at the 'Fitzroy Hotel' considered the separation of Fitzroy Ward from the Melbourne Corporation. A petition was drawn up and the subsequent document, calling for independence for Fitzroy, was presented to the Governor Sir Henry Barkly (Hotham had died on December 31 1856).

On September 9 1858, Fitzroy was proclaimed a municipality with its own council, a triumph for those ratepayers wanting separation.

After the Kidney Parliament

Thomas' wife, Emma, died in 1859 and he married Annie James on 23 Sept 1862 when he was 47 years old. Thomas and Annie had eight children. Following Annie's death in 1878, his daughter Mary from his marriage to Emma looked after Thomas and Annie's children.

Thomas died some 30 years after the Kidney Parliament in February 1890, aged 75, at his residence in 85 Rowe St, North Fitzroy. Probate shows Thomas was a reasonably wealthy man and that he had assets of £9220. He owned three houses in: Cobden Terrace, Fitzroy North; Gore Street, Fitzroy; as well as property in Smith Street, Collingwood.

Mary lived with Thomas until his death. Thomas is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery in the same plot as with both his wives and children and his brother William.

THOMAS Kidney, formerly of Gold-street, Collingwood, but lately of Rowe-street, North Fitzroy (a very old colonist and Justice of the Peace), by his will, dated October 15, 1889, and presented for probate by Messrs. McFarlane and Tolhurst, solicitors, appointed The Trustees, Executors and Agency Company, Limited of 37 Queen-street, Melbourne, executors. He bequeathed to his son Thomas his two gold watches, gold pencil case and gift and memorial plate, and to his daughter, Ethel May, his piano, books, book cases, coffee sets and china. He empowered his trustees to apply the proceeds arising from his real estate, known as Cobden-terrace, in Smith-street, Collingwood, and in Gore-street, Fitzroy, and his personal estate for the maintenance and education of his children, Florence, Elfreda, Adelaide Maude, Thomas Isaac and Ethel May, until the youngest child attains the age of twenty-one years. The Smith-street property is then to be sold and the proceeds divided equally amongst his children, except his daughter Jessie, who is bequeathed the residue of his estate. The testator died on February 8, 1890, and his will was sworn at £9,220 real and £187 personal. Total, £9,687.

Excerpt of Thomas Kidney's will (Table Talk, 7 Nov, 1890, p.6)

Fitzroy People

Background

Thomas was born in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland in 1814⁷. A reserve in North Fitzroy on Rushall crescent has been named after Thomas Kidney. The North Fitzroy Community Garden group is located there.

Thomas' brother, William, was born nine years after Thomas in Ayrshire, Scotland in 1824. William worked with Thomas to set up the clothing shops in both Brunswick Street and Smith Street. He was elected mayor of Collingwood in 1874 and had many public and charitable interests, including being a member of the Melbourne Hospital committee, a returning officer for the electoral district of Collingwood, a Justice of the Peace and was also involved in the Old Colonists Association in North Fitzroy as was Thomas. William never married and died in 1886 at 62. His estate was administered by Thomas's daughter, Mary, and left to various sisters in Scotland and Thomas' and James' sons and daughters.

140 COLLINGWOOD	
Crook, William, surgeon Rob Roy hotel. McGregor, Henry Kidney Bros., importers and warehouse- men. 61 Courlay, R., carpenter and joiner. 61½ Rich, Edward, grocer and fruiterer. 63 Girvin, J., timber merchant, &c. Wolstenholme, John, ironmonger Lowe, Joseph, glass and china importer &c., Staffordshire house Mills, W., saddle and harness maker. 79 Chidley and Lancelott, bazaar	Labor Myers, Simmo Wright Pitcher Hall, I Liverp Crothe Hacker Edmen Cham Caltha Grev

Source: *Tanner's Directory, 1859* showing Kidney Bros. at 61 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.



A recent photo of 85 Rowe Street, Fitzroy North where Thomas Kidney died (North Fitzroy Community Gardens Group, <https://rushallgarden.wordpress.com/thomas-kidney/>).

⁷ 'Prominent Citizens – William and Thomas Kidney', *Fitzroy City Press*, 24 October 1885, p 3.

Elizabeth Lusher

c.1825 - 1893

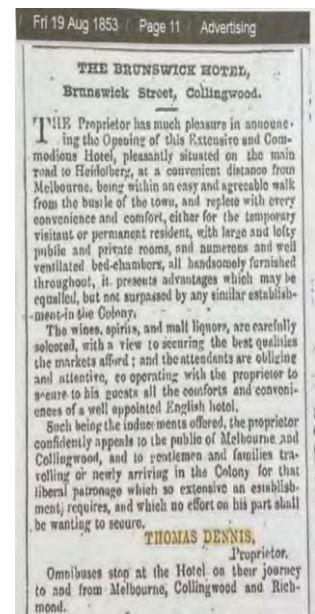
Author
Vicki Hutchins

Vicki Hutchins and her partner bought their first house in North Fitzroy in 1975 in McKean Street and then another in Delbridge Street in 1979. She was keen to research the history of their homes and spent many hours at the Fitzroy Town Hall scrolling through the rate books, which piqued her interest in the suburb's history that endures today. Vicki initially worked in special teaching before spending the last thirty years as a picture framer with a workshop in Richmond.

Elizabeth arrived in Australia from England with her husband, Thomas Dennis, in 1851. Thomas was a builder and only a year later they opened the grand Brunswick Hotel in Fitzroy, holding a gala ball to celebrate its opening. Over the following years, the hotel was the scene for a series of colourful events relating to ambitious developers, court cases and bigamy. Elizabeth Lusher is at the centre of this story and it provides a snapshot of early Melbourne and its first suburb between 1850 - 1890.

Elizabeth Lusher married Thomas Dennis, a builder, at a registry office in London in 1845. Thomas was keen to travel to the colonies and asked Elizabeth's father to finance their travels. He agreed only on the condition that Thomas and Elizabeth were wed again in a church before departing. Following their marriage in London, they departed for Melbourne on the barque 'British Sovereign' in September 1851.

Thomas bought land shortly after arriving in Melbourne and built three cottages on the corner of Napier and Gertrude Streets, Fitzroy. He quickly sold these and in 1852 used the proceeds and loans of £7000 to build the Brunswick Hotel and public stables on Great Brunswick Street, Collingwood as Fitzroy was then known.¹ Between November 1853 and January 1854, he also built six or seven cottages at the rear of the hotel that faced Little Brunswick Street. In April 1853, Thomas also joined the board of the recently opened Second Mutual Building Association along with other notable members including John Hodgson, Mayor of Melbourne and Member of the Legislative Council (Upper House in Victorian Parliament), and solicitors.



The Argus, 19 August 1853, p. 11

¹ The Hotel was mortgaged to Henry Miller MLC, and others for £6,000 and the furnishings were financed by a Mr. Beaumont for £1,000.

² 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

Fitzroy People

Thomas was granted a licence in May 1853 and in November Thomas and Elizabeth held a gala dinner ball and concert to mark the official opening of the hotel. Ticket advertisements describe the opening in lavish terms with the gala to be held in a large assembly room 'capable of holding two hundred persons', with a quadrille band and 'catering provisions for all patrons'.² The advertisement promoted its location as an 'easy and agreeable walk from the bustle of town and placed on the main road to Heidelberg'. Accommodation was also offered in 'large and lofty private rooms and numerous and well-ventilated bed chambers, handsomely furnished throughout'.³ Following its opening, Thomas and Elizabeth continued to hold more impressive occasions in the Hotel, including a 'Grand Concert' in 1854, but soon after a surprise visitor disrupted the tale.

In 1855, Thomas's son from his first marriage to Mary Ann Felton (on the Isle of Wight in 1831) appeared at the Brunswick Hotel declaring his heritage to Elizabeth. He asked for money for his mother who was in desperate circumstances after Thomas had left her and their two sons in 1834 without financial support. Elizabeth had not known that Thomas was already married when she married him in London. Thomas claimed that he had heard from a third party that Mary had died in 1851 when his children were nine and ten years old, stating the children were old enough 'earn their own living'.⁴ Elizabeth Lusher refused to remain with Thomas Dennis and told him to return to England, which he did in 1855.⁵ Despite Thomas' behaviour, Elizabeth agreed to send him money when he was London so he would not 'want for bread' on condition that 'he not bring any more disgrace to me and my family'.⁶ The hotel remained closed until 1856 when Elizabeth Lusher took over the licence⁷ and mortgage. Elizabeth then reopened it and ran it profitably and was able to reduce the loan significantly.⁸

But Elizabeth's problems with Thomas did not end there.

Thomas remained in London until May 1860 when he returned to Australia to claim ownership of the Brunswick Hotel. Thomas arrived at the hotel accompanied by several prizefighters armed with life preservers. One of the men accompanying Thomas demanded that the barman leave, taking over the bar asking patrons for their orders. He also grabbed the till and knocked Elizabeth to the ground, but she regained her composure and the till and ordered them out. The siege lasted three hours, ending when Elizabeth's supporters arrived and removed Thomas and his associates from the premises.⁹

In court, Thomas defended his actions stating that he was returning to what was rightfully his and arguing that he had returned to London in 1855 only to settle legal matters in his father and uncles' estates. He told the court that family property in Dorchester bequeathed to him was being managed and let by his brother. Elizabeth made several counterarguments. She noted while Thomas was in London, she had bought the hotel with her own earnings, the licence was in her name and therefore she was the only person authorised to serve drinks on the premises, and she had paid most of the mortgage.¹⁰ She maintained that Thomas had no excuse for his conduct and asked that he be given a suitable penalty. Thomas was unsuccessful in his claim and the Fitzroy Police Court found him guilty of trespass in the Brunswick Hotel and fined him five pounds or, in default, one month's imprisonment.¹¹ Thomas was also later declared insolvent.¹²

Elizabeth remained publican and licensee until 1871 and made further improvements to the business. In 1863, when business was booming, she added twenty-three rooms and a skittle alley to the rear of the hotel, claiming it to be the 'Best and most commodious in the Colony'. In 1871, she married Charles John Wileman at St Kilda and then travelled to England. She never returned to Australia. Elizabeth died in 1893 at Eastbourne, England. Henry Heath, who ran a business opposite the Brunswick Hotel and was a member of the Wesleyan congregation, was her executor and oversaw her estate. She left each of her children £150 and interest on all her shares. Elizabeth's son, George Dennis, had married Henry Heath's daughter, Emma, at St Mark's Church in Fitzroy just prior to his mothers' departure for England.¹³

² "The Brunswick Hotel", Argus, 19 August 1853, p 11.

³ "The Brunswick Hotel", Argus, 19 August 1853, p 11.

⁴ 'Insolvent Court', The Victorian Farmers' Journal and Gardeners' Chronicle, 14 July 1860, p 11.

⁵ Thomas Dennis changed his name to 'Davis' while in the UK. 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

⁶ 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

⁷ 'Licencing Meeting', Argus, 7 June 1858, p 7.

⁸ 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

⁹ 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

¹⁰ By the time that Thomas Dennis invaded the hotel, Elizabeth only owed £2,500 to Mr. Miller. 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

¹¹ 'A curious case', Age, 29 May 1860, p 5.

¹² Thomas and Elizabeth divorced in 1864. England and Wales Civil Divorce Records 1858 - 1916

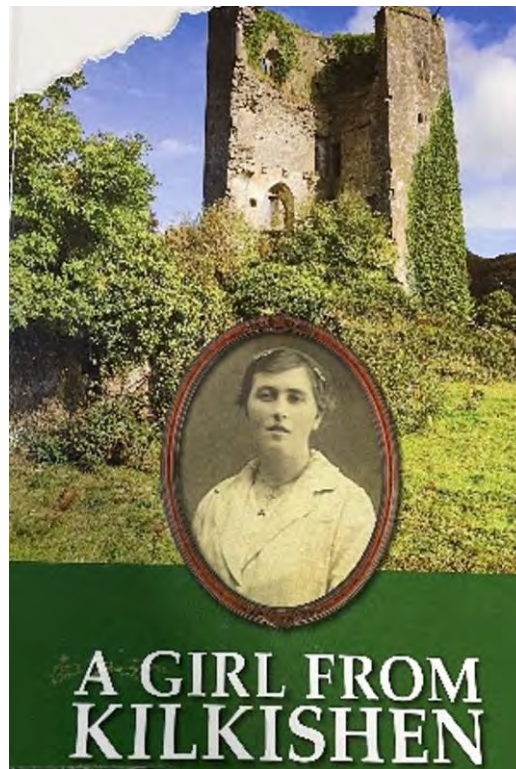
¹³ www.ancestry.com

Mary Ellen Mooney

1890 - 1963

Author
Vicki Hutchins

Vicki Hutchins and her partner bought their first house in North Fitzroy in 1975 in McKean Street and then another in Delbridge Street in 1979. She was keen to research the history of their homes and spent many hours at the Fitzroy Town Hall scrolling through the rate books, which piqued her interest in the suburb's history that endures today. Vicki initially worked in special teaching before spending the last thirty years as a picture framer with a workshop in Richmond.



'A Girl from Kilkishen' by Michael Burleigh

Mary Ellen Mooney arrived in Australia, aged 23, from Ireland. She managed, initially with her husband and brother-in-law and latterly with her sons, the Rob Roy Hotel on the corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets between 1922 and 1950. At this time, Fitzroy was overcrowded with a diverse group of residents including criminal gangs, including Squizzy Taylor, and factory workers along with wealthier residents. Mary Ellen was a strong and independent woman managing people and businesses in a challenging era and suburb in Melbourne.

Fitzroy People

Mary Ellen McNamara¹ and Tom (Thomas) O'Brien Mooney married in 1919 when Mary Ellen was 23 years. They bought two hotels in Victoria, the Montague Hotel in South Melbourne and the Moyhu Hotel in the King Valley in northeast Victoria. In 1922, they sold to Moyhu Hotel to lease the Rob Roy Hotel at the intersection of Brunswick and Gertrude streets in Fitzroy.² Thomas' brother, Patrick, had the licence.

At the time, Fitzroy was a crowded suburb with 35,000 residents. In her memoirs, Mary Ellen described Fitzroy in the early 1920s as a noisy, fast and antisocial suburb that was foul smelling, with a lot of criminals and crime, poverty, low budget brothels, ill health, and sly grog³. Maintaining order, considering the patrons' drunkenness and prostitutes 'exhibiting their wares', was a key job.⁴

The Rob Roy had some dangerous and locally powerful patrons and Mary Ellen and Tom managed the hotel in a difficult environment. Regular patrons included Joseph Theodore Leslie Taylor, or 'Squizzy' Taylor as he is better known, who brazenly continued to frequent the hotel after absconding bail. Only a few years before Thomas and Mary Ellen's arrival, Squizzy had led a gang war in Fitzroy. He financed his activities through selling sly grog, prostitution, illegal bookmaking, Two Up and extortion⁵ and having observed Squizzy and his various criminal pursuits, Mary Ellen described him as 'a thug with a string of misdemeanors and crimes to his name' that included pick pocket, assault, shop break ins, armed robbery, and murder. Yet, in 1927 Mary Ellen lamented 'I've lost another customer' after Squizzy died of gunshot wounds in a feud with a rival, John 'Snowy' Cutmore. Other customers included the Molnar twins, perhaps not as notorious as Squizzy, who lived behind the Rob Roy Hotel. While the twins' criminal father had instilled in them his hard and violent ways, Mary Ellen described them as not very bright and continually in trouble with the police and accumulating convictions.

Society in Fitzroy was quite diverse at the time and not all the Rob Roy customers were criminals. Customers also included business and professional people, who lived locally in comfortable and large town houses and terraces, as well as factory workers who lived in cramped two room houses with few amenities. The factory workers worked six days a week in the many local industries, including the shoe trade, clothing and metal work, and when they knocked off work at 4 o'clock they went to the Rob Roy until 6 o'clock closing. Frequent brawls erupted at closing time, often with patrons of the rival hotel, The Champion, that was diagonally opposite the Rob Roy. Tom and Mary Ellen's publican duties extended to managing these situations as the police had little control and were outnumbered. However, they also often trod a fine line of regular, highly lucrative after-hours trade where they were able to substantially increase the day's takings.

Tom and Mary Ellen moved from living at the Rob Roy to a home in Garton St, Princes Hill after they had had two children, which were followed by two more. In 1925, Tom died suddenly, and Mary Ellen considered returning

to Ireland with her four young children, the youngest being only twelve months old, where she would have the support of her family. But with an ongoing income from the Montague Hotel, she decided to remain in Australia and to continue the businesses that she and Tom had begun. To continue managing the Rob Roy without Tom's support, she sent her two oldest sons to boarding school in Ballarat.

Her brother-in-law, Patrick, remained the licensee and Mary Ellen cleaned, worked in the bar and kitchen and managed the patrons. The hotel remained profitable even during the Depression when half of Fitzroy's population were unemployed. Mary Ellen ran a 'slate' for her patrons, that is a record of patron's drinks that they always honoured later. Mary Ellen's firsthand account of this period in Fitzroy describes a community who received enormous pleasure from things like the Phar Lap's racing success and cricketer Don Bradman's brilliance. Football was like a religion, essentially tribal and Fitzroy and Collingwood were passionate opponents. Fitzroy's football star, Haydn Bunton, sustained the locals.

¹ Much of the information in this profile is drawn from 'A Girl from Kilkishen' by Michael Burleigh (2019).

² The Rob Roy Hotel was built in 1857 by Henry McGregor, a former policeman. It is now called the Workers Club.

³ Michael Burleigh, 'A Girl from Kilkishen' (Sydney, 2019), p 10.

⁴ Michael Burleigh, 'A Girl from Kilkishen' (Sydney, 2019), p 10.

⁵ Chris McConville, 'Taylor, Joseph Leslie (Squizzy) (1888–1927)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/taylor-joseph-leslie-squizzy-8762> (accessed 13 September 2022)

Fitzroy People

In 1926, Mary Ellen was able to buy the hotel freehold and in 1929 she renovated the dining room, bar and interior. A parapet with the date 1929 added, which can still be seen today. Mary Ellen's oldest child, Jack, became the youngest licensee in Victoria at 21 years old when he took over the licence in 1941. In 1947, Tommy, the youngest child, took over the licence. Mary Ellen then purchased the Sarah Sands Hotel in Sydney Road, Brunswick in 1950, while retaining ownership of the Rob Roy.

Reflecting on her experiences, Mary Ellen said:

Making the hotels work so that my children would not go without, and so that they would have a great education became very important to me. ... Along the way, I found I acquired a lot of skills. Or, perhaps, they were already there waiting to be used. I became a strong, independent, intelligent business woman in an era where this was not common. I managed finances, people and property. I had to be strong in how I ran the hotels. The police, the licencing court, some unscrupulous or unruly customers all needed to be dealt with firmly.⁶

Mary Ellen continued working at the Sarah Sands until her sudden death in 1963 at 72 years old. Having earned the respect of her customers and the community, many people attended her funeral. She is buried beside her beloved Thomas at the Fawkner Cemetery.



Source: 'A Girl from Kilkishen', Sydney, 2019

1890	Mary Ellen McNamara was born in Kilkishen, Ireland
1914	Arrives Melbourne aged 23
1919	Marries Thomas Mooney at St Patrick's Cathedral
1919	Buys Montague Hotel, South Melbourne and Moyhu Hotel, Moyhu
1922	Sells Moyhu Hotel and leases the Rob Roy Hotel Fitzroy
1922	Patrick O'Brien (brother of Thomas) takes up Licence
	Thomas and Mary Ellen take up residence at Rob Roy Hotel (maintaining ownership of Montague Hotel)
1925	Tom and Mary Ellen move to live in Garton Street, Princes Hill Thomas dies suddenly and Mary Ellen remains manager at the Rob Roy Hotel.
1940	Mary Ellen's oldest son, Jack O'Brien, begins working at the Rob Roy Hotel
1941	Jack becomes licensee of Rob Roy Hotel and is the youngest licensee in Victoria at 21 years old
1947	Thomas O'Brien, the youngest child of Mary Ellen, takes over the Licence
1950	Mary Ellen buys Sarah Sands Hotel on Sydney Road, Brunswick
1963	Mary Ellen dies aged 72 and is buried at Fawkner Cemetery beside Thomas.

⁶Michael Burleigh, 'A Girl from Kilkishen' (Sydney, 2019), p 171.

Alice Ann Riley

1874 - 1940

Author

Alison M. Hart

Alison Hart (nee Clark) has a Master of Arts from Monash University and has worked as an academic researcher since the 1990s, currently at The University of Sydney. After returning to North Fitzroy in 2010, Alison began researching her father's family connection to colonial-era Fitzroy and fostering her long-held interest in the local social, political and built environment through involvement with the Fitzroy History Society.

Alice Ann Riley (previously Warburton, née Large) was a tireless campaigner for labour causes, particularly focussed on womens' and children's rights. She was prominent in the early days of the Victorian Socialist Party and the Australian Labor Party, fundraising and working on many socially active women's committees, and a stalwart campaigner for the anti-conscription movement during WWI. Living in Rose Street for many years, Alice played a powerful role in both Labor circles and her inner suburban community of Fitzroy, always standing up for those in need.

Alice Ann Riley was 'A staunch Laborite ...remembered for the helping hand she always gave those in need, for her resolute manner when she considered herself right, and her determined opposition to what she considered wrong'.¹

The above quote is an apt description of Alice Riley who was a tireless writer of letters to newspaper editors and parliamentarians campaigning on issues she considered important, such as conscription, labour rights – particularly for women and girls, poverty, education and community services.

Background

Alice Ann Large was born in Hobart on 6 December 1874 to parents Robert Large (1827-1877) and Alice Kate (nee Dwyer 1851-1930). Robert Large was from Eton, Buckinghamshire, England and had been sent to Australia as a convict aboard the *Patenira* in 1846 when he was 19 years old. Alice Kate was from Tipperary, Ireland.²

When Robert, widowed with two young sons, married Alice Kate in Hobart in 1870, he was 43 and she was 19. They had five children together in Hobart, three of whom survived to adulthood. Alice Ann was their second oldest surviving child and the only girl. Robert Large died in 1877 when Alice was only three and before her brother Walter was born. It is not known when the family moved to Melbourne, but by the time Alice was 17 all the family except her eldest stepbrother, Thomas Large, were living in Melbourne.³

When she was 17 years old Alice married William Ward Warburton (1870-1953) on 9 April, 1892 in Fitzroy, and during 28 years of marriage they raised four children together.⁴

¹ 'Fitzroy A.L.P. pays respect to the Memory of Mrs Fred Riley', *Labor Call*, 11 July 1940, p 9. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article249486879>

² Dr. Jan Penney, unpublished research for Friends of Coburg Cemetery, n.d.

³ Dr. Jan Penney, unpublished research for Friends of Coburg Cemetery, n.d; Records show that in 1909, Alice's mother was living at 142 Amess Street Carlton with sons Robert George, a baker, and Walter, a hairdresser, and their families. By 1917, her mother had moved to 7 Moor Street Fitzroy, and was keeping house for her stepson, John Thomas Large, a bootmaker.

⁴ Their children were William Joseph Warburton (1893–1963); Alice Ann Warburton (1896–1979), Robert Ward Hall Warburton (1903–1968) and Ivy Gladys Warburton (1907–?); Penney, unpublished research for Friends of Coburg Cemetery.

Early political activism

Alice came from a family of union stalwarts, with two brothers, Robert and Walter, heavily involved in trade unions, and from her early 30s became politically active. Known at this time as Alice Warburton, she became involved in the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP) in the early 1900s, as did many politically active women of the time.⁵ The VSP was established in Melbourne in 1906 by Thomas Mann, an English trade unionist, communist and public speaker who had immigrated to Australia in 1902. Mann played a significant role in the development of the communistic ideals of the early Victorian Labor Party, many members of which were also involved in the VSP.⁶ Alice and Mann became lifelong friends, and when Mann returned to England in 1910 they remained correspondents.⁷ The VSP was the first explicitly Marxist party in Australia and saw its role ‘mainly as a force for socialist education in the wider Labor movement’ rather than contesting elections.⁸

Alice was a member of the VSP Women’s Socialist League’s (WSocL) executive committee and she played an active role in decision making processes and Party activities, including contributing to the VSP weekly newspaper, the *Socialist*. Alice strongly believed it was “women’s obligation to agitate for a ‘decent home, proper education for her children ...warm clothing [and] plenty of food’”.⁹ She was heavily involved in fundraising drives including balls, dinners and socials, the Christmas fair, and various Bazaars, to provide funds for the party to continue their political and social campaigns. VSP Party Secretary Robert Samuel Ross wrote to Alice in 1915, expressing gratitude for the “splendid effort, and [noted that] it was decided to record in the [VSP] minutes a special tribute and vote of thanks to the Women’s League on their magnificent effort”.¹⁰

The WSocL had regular meetings and gave talks and lectures, recruiting new members. As Alice explained ‘... besides being social, [these gatherings] shall be educational insofar as endeavour is to be made to instil into the minds of women workers the positive necessity for industrial and political organisation’.¹¹ Women presented papers at the meetings on a variety of topics. Some were women oriented – such as ‘Organisation of Women’, ‘Marriage and Motherhood’. Others were on wider topics of social importance – such as ‘The Class Struggle in History’ and ‘International Capitalism’. At one of these meetings Alice presented a paper on ‘Womanhood and Conscription’.¹²

During the First World War, the cost of war was seen to unfairly fall on the working classes and their families, and emotive propaganda posters like ‘The Burden Bearer’ poster and leaflets, were frequently distributed at meetings and in street rallies.¹³ From the start of the war to June 1917, the retail price of food and groceries had risen over 28% against wage rises of 15%. Workers and their families were being asked to make voluntary sacrifices (such as substituting “macaroni for meat”).¹⁴ In August and September 1917 Melbourne was the scene of a series of sometimes violent demonstrations, mainly organised and attended by women such as Alice, which demanded immediate government intervention on the issue of the rising cost of living.¹⁵

Fundraising and public education about Party campaigns was especially important during the war years to further drives against the cost-of-living rises and conscription, and Alice proved a tireless worker for the cause. As Secretary of the WSocL throughout the cost-of-living demonstrations and the anti-conscription campaigns she worked with determination, constantly writing letters to newspapers and politicians, organising and presenting at meetings, raising funds through markets and fairs and rallying women to the cause.¹⁶

⁵ Joy Demousi, *Women Come Rally: Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia 1890-1955*, (Melbourne, 1994), p.51.

⁶ Graeme Osborne, ‘Mann, Thomas (Tom) 1856-1941’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Retrieved from <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mann-thomas-tom-7475>

⁷ ‘Mrs. Fred Riley Dies After Short Illness’, *Labor Call*, 4 July 1940, p 10. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article249486799>

⁸ ‘Victorian Socialist Party’, *Wikiwand*. Retrieved from https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Victorian_Socialist_Party

⁹ Damousi *Women Come Rally*, p.52; *Socialist*, 8 December 1916, p 1.

¹⁰ Damousi *Women Come Rally*, p.52.

¹¹ *Socialist*, 28 July 1916, p 3.

¹² Damousi *Women Come Rally*, p 54.

¹³ ‘The Burden Bearer’, *Labor Call*, 5 November 1914, p 3. Probably drawn by Rob Shaw.

¹⁴ Judith Smart, ‘A divided national capital: Melbourne in the Great War.’ *The La Trobe Journal* 96 (2015), p 42.

¹⁵ Judith Smart, ‘Feminists, Food And The Fair Price: The Cost Of Living Demonstrations In Melbourne, August-September 1917’, *Labour History* 50 (1986), p 113.

¹⁶ Damousi *Women Come Rally*, p 55.



Anti-conscription campaign

The Women's Socialist League also played an important role in the anti-conscription campaign in the lead-up to the conscription referendums in October 1916 and December 1917. Large 'women only' public meetings and rallies were organised throughout 1916, several of these in early October described by the *Socialist* as 'rammed, jammed, crammed ...packed to the doors'. On 21 October 1916, over 10,000 women marched from the Guild Hall in Swanston Street to Yarra Bank – by which time the crowd numbered 50,000.¹⁷ Alice's future husband, Fred Riley, also heavily involved in the Labour movement and the VSP, wrote:

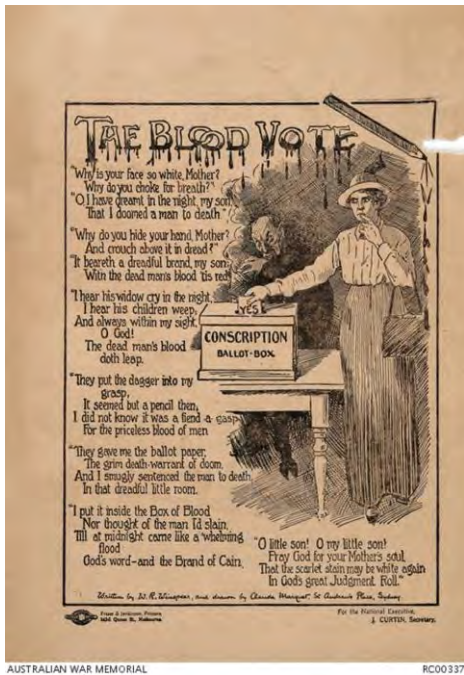
*The women's demonstration ... was a gigantic success; in fact ... we expected a procession, but we never expected to see the crowd of women who marched. The procession was over a mile long, extending from the Guild Hall right to the road that led to the Yarra Bank ... During the afternoon, from about six platforms speeches were delivered, all of which were listened to attentively...*¹⁸

Raising funds to support political and social campaigns was an ongoing activity. In November 1917, seeking funds to campaign in regional areas during the lead-up to the second conscription referendum, Alice described the activities of the League in a letter to a potential donor:

*every night we have about 50 meetings going and have some 120 speakers out speaking; besides a great army of canvassers, we have men and the women, we have the enthusiasm, all we require is the cash to carry on ...*¹⁹

Posters appealing to women in their role as mothers were widely distributed. The 'Blood Vote' poster²⁰ has been described as 'probably the single most influential piece of campaign material produced by the anti-conscription campaign'²¹ with over a million copies printed and distributed in 1916-1917.

Ultimately conscription was voted down in both referendums. Lauding the women's campaign work, Alice commented in the *Socialist* in March 1918 that while not wanting to at all 'belittle the grand work done by our men-folk ...had it not been for the enthusiastic organising and self-sacrifice of the women of the movement the vote would not have gone as it did'.²²



¹⁷ Damousi Women Come Rally, p 102.

¹⁸ Judith Smart, Labour History Melbourne, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. Retrieved from <https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/2016/12/06/opposing-war-womens-protest-in-world-war-i/>

¹⁹ Damousi Women Come Rally, p 55-56.

²⁰ Claude Marquet and EJ Dempsey, 'The Blood Vote', Australian War Memorial Leaflet Collection, Retrieved from <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C964519>

²¹ Culture Victoria. Retrieved from <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/against-the-odds-the-victory-over-conscription-in-world-war-one-the-trade-unions-anti-conscription-campaign/handbill-the-blood-vote/>

²² 'The Fair and the Movement', *Socialist*, 1 March 1918, p 3. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article240686588>

The 1919 wharf labourers' dispute

In 1919 the wharf labourers dispute paralysed the Melbourne docks and coastal shipping for three months, with 4,000 dock workers stood down in late May, and by June another 30,000 other workers stood down by employers hoping to pressure the seamen to return to work.²³ During the strike, as Secretary of the Women's and Children's Wharf Laborers' Relief Committee, Alice became chief organiser. She wrote many letters to newspapers and parliamentarians petitioning for funds and support, such as food, bedding, and the flesh of rabbits that had been killed for their fur. She included stories from desperate women afraid their children would die from lack of proper food, and stories of how donations had helped people. Her efforts were instrumental in raising money to assist the wives and children of the men who were no longer able to earn a wage.²⁴ Fred Riley, was also heavily involved in the campaign as Organising Secretary of the Wharf Laborers' Relief Finance Committee. Ultimately, Alice helped raise over £10,000 throughout Australia, as well as donations in kind, to support the striking workers' families, making a real difference to many.²⁵

In early 1920 Alice divorced William Warburton (listed in proceedings as a labourer residing in Madeline Street Carlton – now Swanston St). She claimed £30 from Warburton towards the cost of divorce proceedings, but he claimed insolvency.²⁶ The same year she married Frederick John Riley (1886-1970), the Organising Secretary of the Manufacturing Grocer's Union. Clearly, they had become close through shared political and union interests – involvement in the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP) and the labour movement – and particularly in their work together during the wharf labourer's dispute.

Public political clashes

Alice, who was noted '...for her resolute manner when she considered herself right, and ...determined opposition to what she considered wrong', at times fell out with other public figures, including people in the women's movement and frequently engaged in public letter writing to get her views across.²⁷

In 1919, at the height of the wharf labourer's dispute, her 'Women and Children in Distress' open letter raised the ire of Senator John Earle, ex-Labor Premier of Tasmania. Senator Earle responded to her letter of appeal publicly, sending an insulting cheque for £1, and deriding the 'wicked and stupid strike ... [with workers] driven like oxen to their own suffering and destruction by a band of mugwumps'. He accused the vast majority of workers of 'lacking the moral courage to stand up to ...the irresponsible minority led by the notoriety seeking mugwumps' and went on to say:

The fact is, sister, that the women and children are being bitten by the snake of revolution and direct action and you and your good committee are running about with a bottle of antidote in the shape of a subscription list trying to alleviate their suffering ...why don't you get to work and kill the snake ...²⁸

Alice returned Earle's cheque and responded publicly on behalf of the committee, with vitriol: 'we strongly resent your gratuitous insult hurled at our leaders who are working honestly' and accused him of being 'moved rather by a desire to obtain a cheap advertisement and political capital than by any honest desire to help the needy'. She continued, accusing him of being a traitor to the Labor cause over a previous incident which 'still stinks in the nostrils of honest folk', and pointed out his ignorance of the situation, accusing him of supporting scab labour as the men were not actually on strike, but had been locked out. Alice ends her response with 'no thank you Senator Earle, our women would rather starve than accept your dole in the circumstances you offer it'.²⁹

²³ 'Strike in a time of pandemic: the 1919 seafarers strike', Solidarity.net.au,

<https://www.solidarity.net.au/highlights/strikes-in-a-time-of-pandemic-the-1919-seafarers-strike/>

²⁴ 'Reason in Revolt', source documents of Australian radicalism, (National Library of Australia Manuscript Collection. NL 3222/6) (1919). Retrieved from <https://www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/objects/pdf/a000095.pdf>; "'World's" Fund', The World, Hobart, 3 September 1919, p 6.

²⁵ 'Insolvencies', Age, 8 April 1920, p 8. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article203706782>

²⁶ 'Fitzroy A.L.P. pays respect to the Memory of Mrs Fred Riley' Labor Call.

²⁷ 'Senator John Earle Offers Advice', Labor Call, 17 July 1919, p 7. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250037097>

²⁸ 'Senator John Earle Offers Advice' Labor Call.

Fitzroy People

In December 1924, Alice, now Mrs Riley (having divorced William Warburton and married Fred Riley in 1920) was again involved in a scrap in the newspapers. She wrote to local Councillors and the Minister of Lands, Mr Downard,³⁰ objecting to an impending Council decision to alienate 'a portion of the Edinburgh Gardens in the interests of professional sports', thus robbing residents by annexing 'a couple of acres of the Fitzroy Cricket and Football Ground'. The paper announced 'Mrs. Fred Riley, Secretary of the North Fitzroy branch of the Australian Labor Party, got a clean "bull's-eye" on Mr. Downard, Minister of Lands'. While Mr Downard argued the decision was based on a vote of the Council and should therefore represent local residents, Alice pointed out that the councillors hardly reflected a democratic franchise of local residents, but were elected 'on a franchise that gave to some electors as many as three votes each; also that many of the electors did not live in Fitzroy', as could also be said of some of the Councillors. She suggested a fair poll would include all ratepayers residing in the Council area, and that 'All boarders and lodgers residing in Fitzroy should have some say in a question such as this. ... Landladies don't care to have their boarders, male or female, stuck on the premises all the time. —"Bravo, Mrs. Riley"'.³¹

Alice did not hesitate to castigate her own side of politics if she disagreed with their views or felt they had failed to support women's rights.³² For instance, in 1917 she fell out with Vida Goldstein, an uncompromising feminist and pacifist involved in the Australian Women's Movement, when Goldstein announced herself as an independent feminist candidate supporting anti-conscription for the upcoming Senate election. Alice Warburton and Elizabeth Wallace (Secretary of the Labor Women's Anti-Conscription Committee) engaged in a public campaign, writing an open letter to Vida Goldstein imploring her to withdraw her candidature as they considered it would divide the anti-conscription vote and risk a pro-conscription candidate winning the seat. Vida replied, somewhat scathingly, that she had been at the forefront of the Peace Movement and the Labor and Socialist Parties had been slow to rally to the cause, and in fact were not truly committed to pacifism.³³ In the end Goldstein was defeated in the vote, as was conscription.

In another instance, in 1928 Alice, as secretary of the Fitzroy branch of the ALP, caused considerable consternation within the Party. It was reported in the *Argus* that 'controversy had arisen in Labor circles' about the failure of the central party to support the motion of the Fitzroy branch to send a woman delegate to the Pan Pacific Conference of Women in Hawaii, and to share the costs involved.³⁴ Despite the Trades Hall having already contributed half the costs, the ALP Central Executive would not provide the other £50 required, claiming that the conference was 'purely an academic gathering' and not part of the formal Labor Party movement.³⁵ Local women eventually raised the remaining costs through personal subscription, but Alice was determined to castigate the Central Executive who appeared to think that women party members should remain 'drawers of water or poodles of the Movement, ready at the beck and call of those self-satisfied individuals'.³⁶

It seemed that every effort of the women to get a better understanding of the conditions of the workers of other lands was thwarted by a small section who appeared to think that women have no right in the Labor Movement but to be either the drawers of water or the poodles of the Movement, ready at the beck and call of these self-satisfied individuals. Women had a right to develop their intellectual outlook, and it was time that this right was asserted.

The report was received and it was resolved that, whilst the Fitzroy branch of the A.L.P. commended most highly the generous spirit of the T.H.C. in making a grant of £50 to permit Miss Heagney to attend the Pan-Pacific Conference, it also placed on record its disapproval of the Central Executive in not assisting in the financing of the delegate, especially as the Executive had had more than twelve months to determine on the matter. Also that the members of the party that subscribed to the fund be heartily congratulated on their fine effort.

—ALICE ANN RILEY, hon. secretary
Fitzroy branch A.L.P.

'Pan-Pacific Conference' (extract), Labor Call, 23 August 1928.

³⁰ 'Topical', *Labor Call*, 18 December 1924, p. 7. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250083875>

³¹ 'Topical', *Labor Call*, 18 December 1924.

³² Penney, unpublished research for Friends of Coburg Cemetery.

³³ Geraldine Robertson, *Changing the world told by Vida Goldstein (1869-1949 and the Women's Political Association (1903-1919), (2022).* Retrieved from <https://commonslibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/CHANGING-the-WORLD.pdf>

³⁴ 'Pan-Pacific Congress', *Argus*, 26 July 1928. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3948732>

³⁵ 'Pan-Pacific Conference Women's Delegate', *Labor Call*, 23 August 1928, p. 9. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article249958264>

³⁶ 'Pan-Pacific Conference Women's Delegate' *Labor Call*.

Advocacy for girls' education and employment rights

Alice considered universal education very important and was involved in many campaigns around increasing education for children, particularly girls. In 1925 she was successful in campaigning with John Cain Snr (then a Northcote City Councillor) and others for a new co-educational high school – Northcote High School – to be established in St Georges Road.³⁷

During the Depression she also worked for the Unemployed Girls' Relief Fund raising funds and appealing for support and continued to work diligently over the next ten years with the Fitzroy local branch of the ALP, constantly campaigning for women's and girl's rights.³⁸ As the President of the Labor Women's Organising Committee, at the Quarterly Conference of Labor Women, she led the discussions about the working conditions and pay of women and girls, and the conditions of the unemployed. The cost of utilities was also prominent in discussions.³⁹

Branch work with the ALP

As long-time secretary of both the Fitzroy and North Fitzroy branches of the ALP, Alice was always concerned about real democratic representation. In 1928 she took up the cause to keep the municipal rolls up to date, as her committee had researched and found them to be in 'a very bad state of organisation', with 'more than one-third of those entitled to vote at the last election ...disenfranchised'.⁴⁰ She also suggested ways that the government could ensure that disenfranchised tenants could vote, even if their landlord, though no fault of the tenant, had failed to pay their rates.

UNEMPLOYED GIRLS.

The president of the Labor women's organising committee (Mrs. F. J. Riley) and Miss Muriel Heagney have been seeking a workroom in Fitzroy on behalf of the local unemployed Girls' Self-Help Club. Although several premises have been inspected, none have so far been deemed suitable for the purpose. An appeal is made to factory owners in the district to place a building at the disposal of the committee. A dance is being organised by the committee to be held in the Fitzroy town hall on 23rd inst. The whole of the proceeds will be devoted to the assistance of unemployed girls.

'Unemployed Girls', The Age, Tuesday 21 July 1931 p 5.

FITZROY A.L.P. PAYS RESPECT TO MEMORY OF LATE MRS. F. RILEY

MEMBERS of the Fitzroy branch of the A.L.P. assembled at the usual fortnightly meeting on July 3, under the shadow of bereavement. A much respected member, the late Mrs. Alice Riley, wife of Mr. F. J. Riley, secretary of the Manufacturing Grocers' Union, had passed away on the previous day.

After reading the minutes, the president (Mr. W. J. Donovan) announced that the meeting would adjourn as a token of respect to the memory of Mrs. Riley.

The secretary (Mr. C. W. Bird) reported that the funeral was largely attended by many representatives of both wings of the Labor movement, members of the branches in Fitzroy, past members and many relatives and friends of the deceased.

Mr. E. C. Harridence said he had been associated with Mrs. Riley in the branch for many years. She had been a staunch Laborite and would be remembered for the helping hand she always gave to those in need, for her resolute manner when she considered herself right, and her determined opposition to what she considered to be wrong. Labor had lost a good helper.

Members stood in silence while a motion instructing the secretary to convey sympathy to the relatives of the deceased was carried. The meeting then adjourned until July 17.

Labor Call, 11 July 1940, p 9.

³⁷ 'Secondary Education', Age, 6 July 1925, p 12. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article155806921>

³⁸ 'Unemployed Girls', Age, 21 July 1931, p 5. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article203023929>

³⁹ 'Woman's Interests', Age, 7 September 1931, p 9. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article204331770>

⁴⁰ 'Municipal Rolls', Labor Call, 13 September 1928. Retrieved <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article249958485>

Fitzroy People

Alice's death

Alice died at the age of 65, on 2 July 1940 after a short illness. Fred Riley had forgone attendance at a recent ALP conference to be at her side during her illness.⁴¹ She was remembered with respect in the Labor press and also the wider media. Her funeral was 'largely attended by many representatives of both wings of the Labor movement, members of the branches in Fitzroy, past members and many relatives and friends'⁴².

Reflecting her interest in women and children's welfare and education, obituaries noted her roles as a special magistrate of the Children's Court and a Board member of the Emily McPherson College of Domestic Economy. She was also a highly respected Justice of the Peace.⁴³

She was buried at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery on 3 July in the grave she shared with her mother, Alice Kate Large who had died in 1930 and her half-brother John Thomas Large, who died in 1924.



Alice Riley's headstone. Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery. Collection of the author.

⁴¹ 'Mrs. Fred Riley Dies After Short Illness' *Labor Call*.

⁴² 'Fitzroy A.L.P. pays respect to the Memory of Mrs Fred Riley' *Labor Call*.

⁴³ 'Mrs. Fred Riley Dies After Short Illness' *Labor Call*.

John David Shawcross

1863 - 1945

Author

Meg Lee

Margaret (Meg) Lee is a long-time member of the Fitzroy History Society. An interest in history with curiosity of the local environment motivates this research. Meg has a background working life in education.

The dawn of the bicycle age began in the 1860s. As bicycle availability exploded in Melbourne during the following decades the sport of cycling led to the creation of cycle clubs across Melbourne. John David Shawcross became a cyclist, and this interest led him to create a cycling business to repair, manufacture, and import bicycles to Melbourne. His legacy is exemplified in the 'Shawcross' building at 320 Brunswick Street, his bicycle business. He created and became Captain of the Fitzroy Cycle Club, he also assisted to establish Fitzroy's first gymnasium. And all of this prior to Malvern Star bicycles and the First World War.

John David Shawcross was born in Melbourne on 19 May 1865 at 142 Lonsdale Street East. His father John Shawcross was originally from Manchester and married Susan Carter, a Londoner, in Bendigo in 1864. He built 320 Brunswick Street to operate his cycling business. It is easier to understand John David Shawcross if we place him within the developments of the times as he grew up in the new age of the bicycle.

The technological innovation of a bicycle, known as the 'penny farthing', first appeared at the Paris International Exhibition in 1867. Pedals being applied to the front wheel of a two-wheel machine. Paris and France took the idea up with great abandon. The mobility of humans was no longer reliant on the horse or other humans for transportation.

In Melbourne by 1869, *the Argus* tells us how bicycles became present within Hoddle's grid. 'velocipedestrians', as they were called, may not be aware that they are liable for a fine for propelling their vehicles upon the paths set aside for foot passengers'.¹ With a wooden bike frame and metal wheels going around the cobblestoned streets of Fitzroy it's no wonder they were called 'boneshakers'. In the 1870s the first, all metal and rubber wheels delivered instantly smoother rides.

By 1885 'cycling' is a new word. Risky rides on high bikes lead to development of the 'safety bicycle' with two similar sized wheels with the addition of a chain to run the power from the back wheel. J Boyd Dunlop was a Scottish veterinarian and inventor who in 1887 enabled cycles to roll on a foundation of air and rubber. They became quick and capable of moving fast enabling long distances to be travelled and the creation of cycling sports began. On one hot summer day on a ride of 10 miles to Heidelberg from Fitzroy, Shawcross completed the ride in 40 minutes. He was on a bike with pneumatic tyres and was one of the first cyclists to win on pneumatic tyres. He finished 7 and a half minutes faster than the next rider on an ordinary (that is without pneumatic tyres) safety bicycle.²

¹ *Argus*, 16 September 1869

² *Australasian*, Saturday 14 March 1891, p 18.

Fitzroy People



The name 'Shawcross' can be seen on the Argyle Street side of the building and is listed in the Yarra Heritage Overlay HO 155. Photo: M. Lee



*Pneumatic tyres being blown up with fire bellows. Henry Short
photo 1897H96.160/523 SLV*



The High Wheel or 'Penny Farthing' and a 'Boneshaker'

Fitzroy People

Initially, Shawcross traded as a 'dealer' based at 83 Elgin Street, Carlton. There is a report of theft of jewelry from this location in 1890.³ In 1893 Shawcross successfully began to ride bicycles competitively. He was 23 and through this skill and no doubt his love of the sport, established a business importing and manufacturing cycles, in rented premises at 224 Brunswick Street, on the corner of St David Street according to Fitzroy Rate books.



'Advertising', Age Saturday 23 May 1896, p 5

Cycling as a Sport

Sporting clubs and cycling exploded during 1890s with the creation of at least 14 bicycle clubs in Melbourne.⁴ These clubs organised races at various venues around Melbourne. There were interclub competitions and many country fairs and festivals entertained with bicycle races plus athletic events. The races could be up to 10 miles but generally were either one or two miles and riders were given handicaps.

Significantly, in Melbourne in 1887 a 3-mile (4.8km) race, the Austral Wheel race, was held on 'penny farthings' at the MCG. In 1893 John David Shawcross won the Austral Race.⁵

Note: the Austral Wheel race remains the oldest official track bicycle race in the world. Once the first prize was a grand piano! Tim Finnigan won the race in 1898 and went on to establish Malvern Star bicycles. Corruption tinged the event in 1901 when the American, "Plugger" Bill Martin, won from scratch, due to allegations of fixing by infamous John Wren.

The Fitzroy Bicycle Club was established in 1890 by J. D Shawcross. He became Captain and offered a medal for the race winner.⁶ The Club had initially 36 members and as an effort to encourage club membership Shawcross donated 3 Guineas towards the cyclist for best attendance at meetings and races.⁷ The Fitzroy Bicycle Club had rooms in Gertrude Street. They agreed to meet monthly and initially did not compete in inter-club races being a new club. A unique badge was designed with the criteria that the full name 'Fitzroy' be included on the badge. Coincidentally Melbourne Harriers and Melbourne University Athletic Clubs were the first Victorian Athletics Clubs to be formed also in 1890. There is evidence that J. D Shawcross gained amateur status as a harrier.⁸

The Fitzroy Bicycle Club organised races to Heidelberg and or Brighton on Sunday mornings leaving at 9.30am and 'being back in time for dinner'. They proudly presented 27 riders for a meet at Exhibition racetrack within the Carlton Gardens site. His brother Thomas was also a cyclist and rode in the same race meetings with Shawcross.

³ *Argus*, Friday 3 January 1890, p 6.

⁴ *Australasian*, Saturday 14 March 1891, p 18.

⁵ *Coburg Leader*, 25 Nov 1893.

⁶ *Australasian*, Saturday 26 July 1890, p 19.

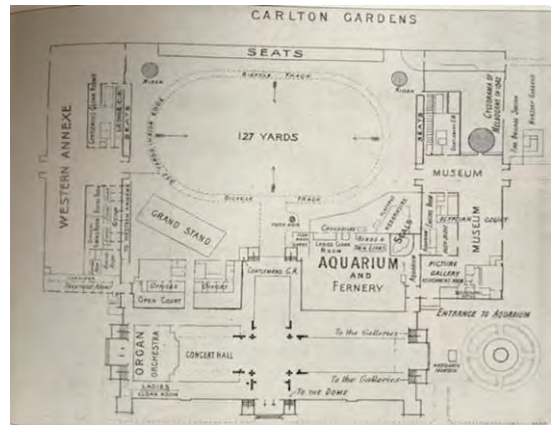
⁷ *Leader*, Saturday 26 July 1890, p 19.

⁸ *Argus*, Thursday 1 November 1888, p 7.

Fitzroy People



1896 Austral Wheel race line up on MCG grass track in *Wheeling Matilda: The story of Australian Cycling*, Jim Fitzpatrick



Map of the cycling track 1890 in *Victorian Icon: the Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne*. David Dunstan.

Shawcross was a racing cyclist from the years 1888 – 1894. The following is a list of races he entered:

1888 One Mile Open Bicycle Race⁹

1891 Notably he won on Pneumatic tyres¹⁰

1892 Temperance Jubilee¹¹

1892 Spring Racing¹²

1892 MCG¹³ Melbourne Bicycle Club Autumn Race meeting cycling with athletics

1892 Bendigo Easter Fair, Cycling and Foot Races¹⁴

1893 Wine, Fruit and Grain Fair at Exhibition¹⁵

1883 Amateur athletics status

1893 Report of races from Brunswick Town Hall to Haymarket plus Austral Wheel including a race and cycling down Queens Parade¹⁶

1893 Victory Bicycle Club¹⁷

1893 Interclub Races to Haymarket to Beveridge¹⁸

1894 Report of Melbourne Bicycle Club Spring Meeting¹⁹

1894 Gymnasium Athletics

1895 Athletics²⁰

Shawcross also assisted in forming the first gymnasium in Fitzroy.²¹ In 1892 following a race meeting at the Exhibition track he reported theft of personal items from the dressing room. These items included a 'Waltham' watch a double gold albert, silver horseshoe locket, gold locket with diamond in centre. gold scarf pin with four diamonds, two gold solitaires and cash totaling 37 pounds in total'.

⁹ *Melbourne Bicycle Club Sports*, Nov 30, 1888

¹⁰ *Leader*, Saturday 14 November 1891, p 21.

¹¹ *Argus*, Thursday 18 February 1892, p 10.

¹² *Argus*, Wednesday 12 October 1892, p 10.

¹³ *Argus*, Wednesday 23 March 1892, p 9.

¹⁴ *Bendigo Advertiser*, Thursday 21 April 1892, p 3.

¹⁵ *Argus*, Tuesday 18 April 1893, p 6.

¹⁶ *Coburg Leader*, Saturday 25 November 1893, p 3.

¹⁷ *Coburg Leader*, Saturday 25 November 1893, p 3.

¹⁸ *Argus*, Tuesday 13 June 1893, p 3.

¹⁹ *Argus*, Monday 10 December 1894, p 5.

²⁰ *Australasian*, Saturday 23 November 1895, p 19.

²¹ *Sportsman*, Tuesday 12 June 1894, p 2.



The Melbourne Exhibition Ground Track 1890s. Five laps to a mile. Wheeling Matilda: The story of Australian Cycling, Jim Fitzpatrick

Shawcross Business Operations

In tandem, pardon the pun, with racing he continued to develop and expand his business operations. Shawcross began his bicycle business in rented premises in 1893, the land and building being owned by Jackson Millar. By 1897 he was the sole agent for Clark Bros and Rothwell bicycles.

In 1897 Shawcross applied for a Trademark to manufacture a bicycle to be called “The Greyhound”. For anyone interested in exploring the modifications to bicycles it can be viewed at National Archives of Australia.²² He advertised this as per below. He was also trading bicycles from 97 Elgin Street, Carlton at the time, see below.

GREYHOUND CYCLES, the best colonial machines, equal to the highest grade imported, built from the best British materials. Rothwell, highest grade British Cycles. Cash or very easy terms. J. D. SHAWCROSS, Greyhound Cycle Factory, 224 Brunswick-st., Fitzroy.

Age Monday 14 Mar 1898, p 2.

²² N.A.A. -Series A 11731 Item no 4996724.

AUSTRALIA'S HIGHEST GRADE CYCLES.—
THE GREYHOUND (registered), lowest terms,
40s. deposit, 5/ week, no increase in price; New
Covers, from 7s. 6d.; New Tubes, with valves, from
3s. 6d. **J. D. SHAWCROSS**, 97 Elgin-street, Carl-
ton; and 224 Brunswick-street, Fitzroy.

'Advertising', Age Sat 23 Nov 1901, p 15.

THE GREYHOUND, Australia's highest grade
Cycles, 40s. deposit, 5s. week, guaranteed 12
months; **THE UNION JACK**, £10 10s., £12 10s.,
B.S.A. parts, 40s. deposit, 5s. week, guaranteed 12
months. **J. D. SHAWCROSS**, 320, 322, 324 Bruns-
wick-street. Fitzroy.

'Advertising', Age Sat 21 Feb 1903, p 15.

Personal history

John David Shawcross married May Eleanor in Wesley Church in 1900. He was 37. She was the daughter of Alfred Pavitt, publisher of Printing House, The Grove, Bayswater, England. Following his marriage, Shawcross shared a house with his brother Thomas at 611 Rathdowne Street. By 1909 Thomas had purchased 395 Nicholson Street where they continued to cohabit together also with their sister Elizabeth. Thomas remained the owner of this property all his life.

In 1901 Shawcross's first child was born but died in 1902. They eventually had three children. May Dorothy (married name Lyle) (b.1903), who has a Citizen Service Record 1940-47, Gordon Douglas 1906-1985, and Phyllis Grace (married name Westfield) 1908-1943.

Consolidation and New Ventures

Shawcross built an impressive red brick 'warehouse' in Brunswick Street in 1902 The building has been described as 'imposing and unique in design and a notable addition to the architecture of the street'.²³

By 1902 the business was operating from 320 Brunswick street. He was also advertising for a mechanic.

CYCLE Mechanic, first class builder. After 1 p.m., **J.**
D. Shawcross, Greyhound Cycle Factory, 320-324
Brunswick-st., Fitzroy.

'Advertising', Age Wed 3 Sep 1902, p 5.

²³ *Fitzroy City Press*, Friday 9 May 1902, p 2.

Fitzroy People



Detail of building pictured previously. Photograph M. Lee



Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works detail plan, 1241, City of Fitzroy, 1900 showing a previous building footprint. Number 320 includes 322 and 324 as opposite Argyle Street the numbering begins 226.

Fitzroy People

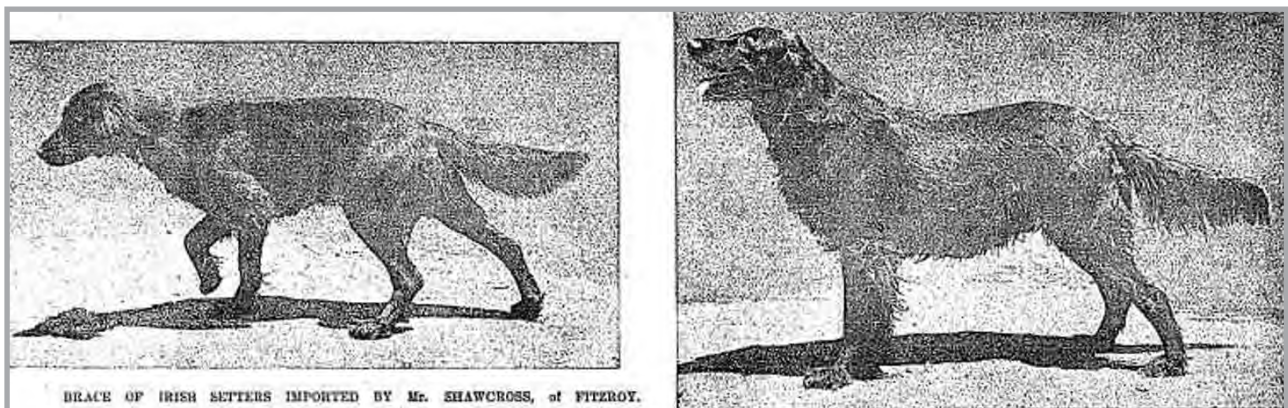
But already Shawcross was considering other ventures. In 1904 he began importing champion breeds of Red Setter dogs.²⁴

He showed the dogs at Agricultural Shows while simultaneously running his business in Brunswick Street. He had much success with showing Red Setters at various Agricultural Shows and local dog shows. He bred and sold red setters.

By 1915 Shawcross had begun new ventures in Black Rock where he erected a six room weatherboard home at 51 Second Street, Black Rock. The same year Moorabbin City Council gave permission to remove a building from Auburn to Second Street Black Rock. By 1919 he was showing dogs with his son, Gordon Douglas Shawcross.²⁵

At the age of 73, in 1938, he is recorded as an agent for Harley Davidson motorcycles operating from 17 Balcombe Road Black Rock.²⁶

He died in 1945, aged 80, at 51 Second Street, Black Rock and is buried in the Cheltenham Cemetery. His Probate describes him merely as a 'Retired Storekeeper'.



²⁴ *Leader*, Saturday 6 Feb 1904, p 36.

²⁵ *Weekly Times*, Saturday 16 August 1919, p 14.

²⁶ *Age*, November 3, 1938

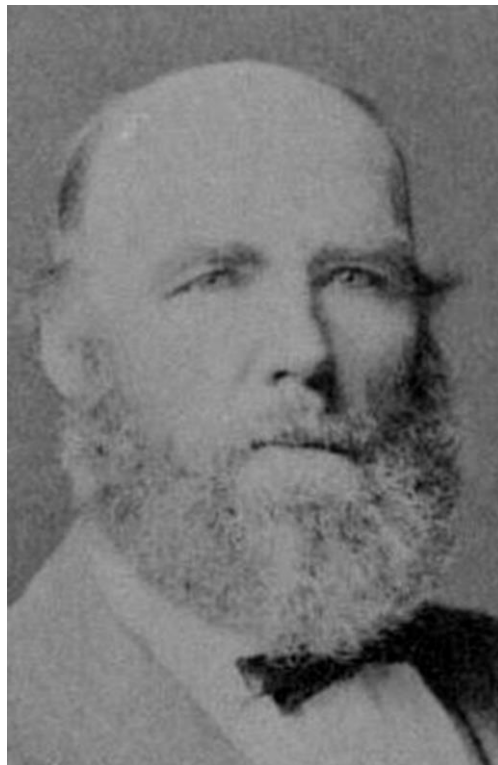
Charles Toms

1821 - 1906

Author

Peter Woods

Peter Woods has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for several years. A retired civil engineer he has had a strong interest in the physical development of Melbourne's oldest suburb and more recently in the inhabitants that made Fitzroy such an interesting place.



Charles Toms

*Secretary to National Trades Hall and Literary
Institute Committee 1869 – 1877. Source: Woods
Family Records*

Charles Toms was an influential figure in the early Melbourne trade union movement. He originally trained as a bricklayer in Dorset, England and came to Australia with his family in 1857. He lived in Fitzroy for about 25 years.

Disclosure. Charles Toms was the author's great great grandfather and Georgina his daughter by his first marriage, his great grandmother. The fact that Charles and Emily lived in the same street as the author, King William Street in Fitzroy, is a coincidence.

Fitzroy People

Background

Charles Toms was born on 1 July 1821 at Winfrith, Dorset, England to parents Henry Toms, a mason, and Elizabeth (nee Mandal) and was baptized on 29 July 1821. Charles had five siblings, two younger brothers, Richard (born in Winfrith, 1823) and John Henry (born in Portland England, 1828), and twin sisters Hannah and Elizabeth (born in 1834)¹. Charles trained as a bricklayer in Dorset and continued to work in the trade until around 1890².

In September 1843, Charles (22 years) married Mary Cheeseman Myles, a farmer's daughter, in South Stoneham, Southampton. Their daughter Georgina was born in February 1845. Charles, Mary and Georgina moved to London sometime after Georgina's birth. Mary died in London in 1854 when Georgina was ten years old. The following year Charles married Emily Charlotte Chidgey in Islington, London.

Page 176.

1855: Marriage solemnized at Saint Peter's Church, in the Parish of Islington, in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Time of Marriage	Others Present and Sponsors	Read or Declaration of Intent
24 th Dec.	Charles Toms	36	Widower	Bricklayer	16 Portland St	Henry, Toms	Minister	
1855	Emily Charlotte Chidgey	21	Spinster	—	14 Peter's Church Lane	Matthew Chidgey, (Father)	Minister	

Married in the Parish Church of St Peter according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, after Service.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Charles Toms and Emily Charlotte Chidgey, in the Presence of us, Joseph Gaskell, Minister, and Robert Dawson, Clerk.

Charles' and Emily's marriage certificate³

Migration to Australia

In 1857, Charles, Emily and Georgina arrived in Australia from Southampton on the ship, 'Talbot' as unassisted migrants, that is at their own expense. They had departed England on 21 May 1857 and arrived in Geelong three months later (25 August 1857). Their arrival was sponsored by Charles' brother, Richard, who lived in Colac, Victoria.⁴

A year after arriving in Australia, Charles and his family moved to Little George Street, Fitzroy where they rented accommodation. Charles and Emily's sons, Arthur (1858) and George (1862), were born while they resided here while their sons, Walter (1867) and Sydney (1869) were born when they lived above a shop in Smith Street.⁵

A few years later, in 1876, Charles and Emily purchased and moved to a five-room weatherboard house in King William Street, Fitzroy.

¹ 1841 England Census

² According to official records including birth records, rates notices, and property ownership.

³ Woods Family records

⁴ Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists 1839 to 1858

⁵ City of Fitzroy Rate Books 1855 to 1963

Fitzroy People



Charles Toms outside his house at 22 King William Street, Fitzroy c1860. Source: Woods Family Records

Charles' role in the trade union movement in Melbourne

Trade unionism began in Victoria in the 1850s with the push for the 8-hour working day. The National Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committee was created to coordinate the various trades and to advance the working conditions of Victoria's trades people but also to construct a permanent building in Carlton to replace a temporary 1859 timber and galvanised iron-clad building. It was believed that if tradesmen were to be granted more leisure time they should engage in additional learning and facilities should be provided for such. In 1869, Charles Toms was appointed Secretary to the extravagantly titled *National Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committee* and was involved in the initial construction period.

Between April 1868 to May 1869, Charles Toms placed several newspaper advertisements inviting members, bricklayers and land trustees to attend meetings. For example:

*'SPECIAL MEETING TRADES HALL COMMITTEE, Friday 11th inst, at half past 7 p.m. To consider the advisability of immediately erecting the permanent hall. Charles Toms, Secretary. Trades Hall'*⁶

*'TRADES-HALL COMMITTEE – SPECIAL MEETING THIS EVENING, 28 inst, at half-past 7pm. All members and land trustees are requested to attend, Business: - Relative to calling a meeting to lay their scheme and address before the public. Charles Toms, Secretary.'*⁷

Other newspaper advertisements highlight the committee's work to improve the working conditions for tradesmen:

*'Bricklayers of Melbourne and Suburbs have resolved to establish the SATURDAY HALF-HOLIDAY as carried by summoned meeting, from this day. Charles Toms Secretary.'*⁸

⁶ *Argus*, Friday 14 May 1869

⁷ *Argus*, Friday 28 May 1869

⁸ *Argus*, 27 July 1868

Fitzroy People

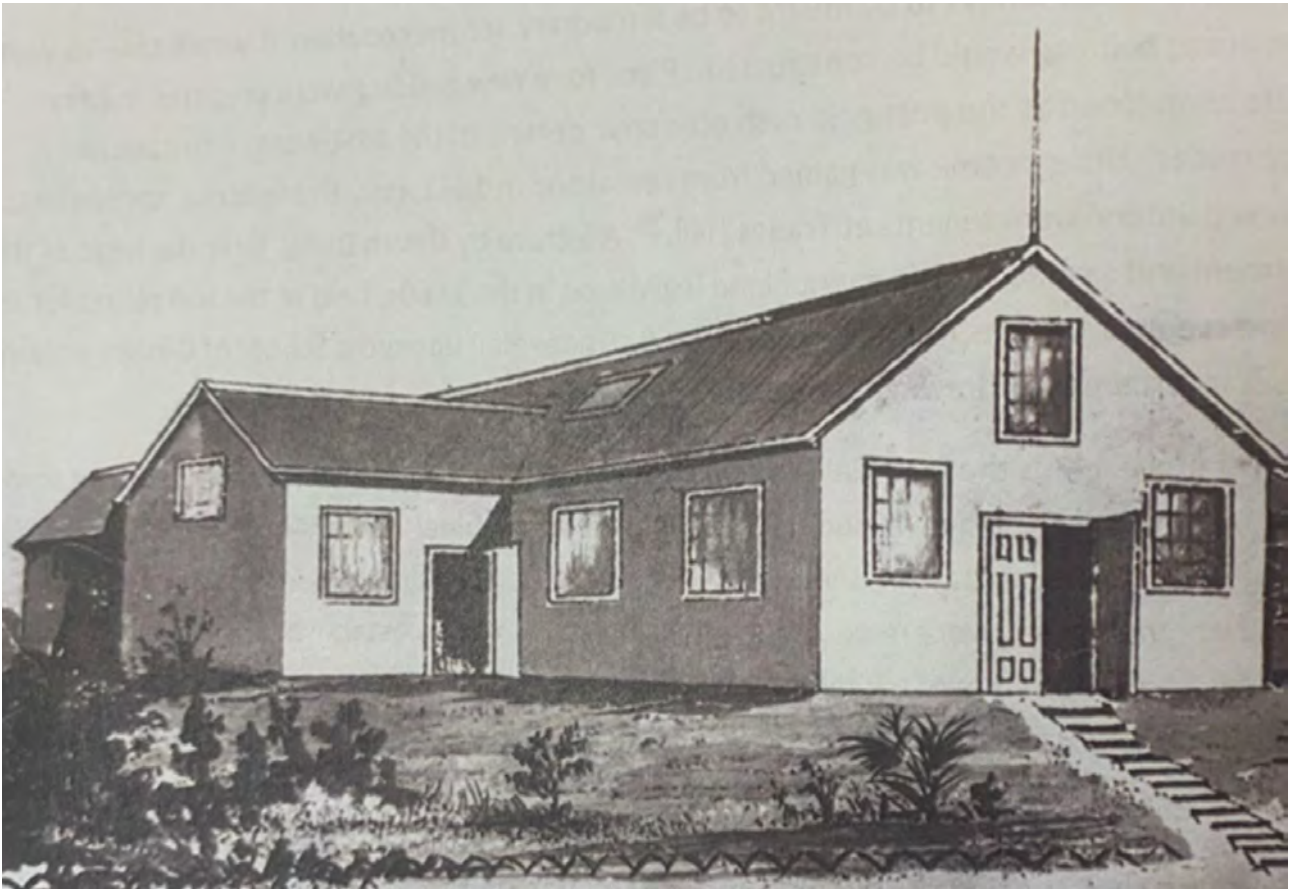


Illustration of the original Trades Hall, Carlton c 1860

C. J. Jones
Sec. T. H. Committee

To the Members of the Carpenters & Joiners
Society

Gentlemen

Being desirous to raise money for the
Permanent Hall fund we wish to hold a Select Ball
in the Trades Hall on the 26th of May next (Queen's Birthday)
we shall therefore be Pleased if you would hold your
weekly Meeting on that Night in one of the Side Rooms
An Answer with in the Affirmative will oblige
The Trades Hall Committee

Yours Truly
Charles Jones
Sec. T. H. Committee

29/4/70

Sample page from a Trades Hall Minute Book

Fitzroy People

Funds for the new building grew slowly due to the decline in the local economy after the gold rush and it was not until 1874 that construction of the permanent building, designed by the architect Joseph Reed, commenced. Construction continued in stages for some 50 years until 1925.

In September 1877, the Committee's treasurer suddenly left Melbourne for England without notifying his fellow committee members. The police became involved when the committee found issues with their bank account and missing cheques. Committee minutes do not mention the treasurer or Charles Toms again and no references have been found as to any action taken against the two men. However, a new treasurer and secretary were named at the next meeting. William Emmett Murphy became the first secretary to the renamed Trades Hall Council, a term which survives to this day.

Charles' life after his trade union role

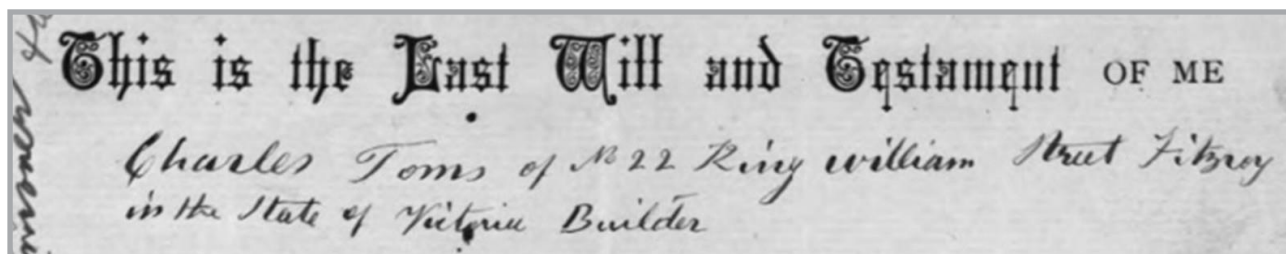
Charles disappeared from public life in 1877 following the sudden departure of the Committee's treasurer. He continued to live in King William Street and from 1890 his occupation on electoral rolls was stated as Clerk of Works⁹ (a supervisor of construction works). By 1903 the electoral roll describes Charles as having 'independent means' but by then he had retired from work. Emily's occupation is quoted on all electoral rolls throughout this period as 'home duties'.

Charles died on 23 September 1906 of 'lobar pneumonia and heart failure' and is buried in plot Z1051 at Melbourne General Cemetery along with Emily and one of his sons, Walter¹⁰. After Charles' death, Emily remained at King William Street for several years before moving to Camberwell to live with her son, George, and his wife. In 1965, the King William Street house was demolished along with all houses along the south side of the street during a redevelopment of the area.

The family's connection to Charles' brother, Richard, remained. In 1863, Charles' daughter, Georgina, married Edward Chapman in Colac. Richard died in 1902 in Yarrowonga. Charles' sons, Arthur and George, both married in the late 1870s while Sydney did not marry. Walter died before Charles.



Gravestone of Charles, Emily and son Walter
Source: Author's photo



Charles's will; Source: Woods Family records

⁹ Fitzroy Rate Book, 1900

¹⁰ 'Notices', Age, 25 September 1906

Sarah Ann "Annie" Turner

1862 - 1921

Author

Jo Buckle

Jo Buckle has lived in Fitzroy since she arrived in Australia over 20 years ago. She has long been interested in history but this is her first attempt at research. She works in public health.



Annie Turner was 'Australia's Greatest Clairvoyante'. Aided by her spirit guide, Betsy, Annie was considered 'fashionable drawing-room entertainment' by some and a charlatan by others. She lived in Fitzroy from 1901 and travelled to regional Victoria, Tasmania and Sydney to hold seances. Her skills were called upon to find missing people, including in some high-profile cases. After a divorce, she had a long-term relationship with the former pastor of a faith-healing church.

Fitzroy People

Background

Sarah Ann Foster was born in 1862 in Geelong. Ann or Annie, as she was generally known, was the fourth of six children born to English immigrants William Foster (1820-1888) and Ann Foster, née Brame (1836-1901).¹

Annie married George Turner in 1881, when she was 19 and he was 25. They had four children, Eula Mabel Turner (1882-1954), Clarice Leila Turner (1886-1965), Alice Irene Turner (1890-1961) and George Colin Turner (1898-1982)². George and Annie divorced in 1909. Annie was also in a relationship with Albert James Abbott from at least 1909.

Annie worked as a nurse, clairvoyant and ran a boarding house. She moved to Fitzroy in 1901³, living and working there for much of her adult life.

She died on 17 Aug 1921 age 58⁴ and is buried in Drysdale cemetery in Greater Geelong.⁵ She was survived by her four children.

The profession of clairvoyant

In the early days of the Australian colonies, clairvoyance, mysticism, and spiritualism were sources of entertainment. Many settlers believed in prophecies and thought that mediums were able to speak with the dead. As early as 1856, the Governor of Tasmania and his wife hosted a “Seances Fantastique” in Hobart, billed as ‘fashionable drawing-room entertainment’ in *The Courier*.⁶ By 1870, the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists had formed in Melbourne. Alfred Deakin, who became Australia’s Prime Minister in 1903, was one of its early presidents (in 1878) and he attended numerous séances.⁷ Deakin had ‘an eclectic blend of beliefs in mediumship, reincarnation, theosophy, clairvoyance, the occult, mysticism and extrasensory perception’.⁸ But others did not necessarily share the same beliefs. A citizen writing to the *Arena Sun* in 1903 suggested the police should be more interested in ‘the harpies, who use spiritualism as a pretext for extracting large sums of money from credulous fools’.⁹

From 1902 onwards, Mrs Annie Turner, with the help of her spirit guide, ‘Betsy’, earned a good income from such ‘credulous fools’. In 1903, Annie held séances daily at 16 Brunswick St in Fitzroy for six pence. By 1904, she had doubled her fees, charging one shilling. Between 1905 to 1912 she owned and worked from a house named ‘Mon Sejour’, at 24 Brunswick Street (now part of the Australian Catholic University).¹⁰ From here she also offered services as a “Medical Clairvoyante” providing diagnoses in person or from a lock of hair posted to her for five shillings; or from a photo, for which she only charged two shillings and six pence.¹¹

¹ Australia, Births and Baptisms, 1792-1981; source ancestry.com.

² George Colin was known as Colin, perhaps to distinguish himself from his father.

³ ‘Pastor and Clairvoyant’, *The Argus*, 9 November 1909, p9

⁴ Australia, Death index 1787-1985; source ancestry.com

⁵ www.ancestry.com

⁶ Classified Advertising, *The Courier*, 29 August 1856 p. 4.

⁷ Victorian Spiritualists’ Union website, source www.vsu.org.au/about-vsu

⁸ Graham Fricke, ‘The Percipient Mr Deakin’ in the *Deakin Law Review*, Vol 4, No.1 p 32, 1997

⁹ ‘Spiritualism’, *The Arena-Sun*, 5 March 1903, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Mon Sejour A brief history of 24 Brunswick Street*, Fitzroy Victoria; Ruth Webber, ACU, source <https://docplayer.net/53423604-Mon-sejour-a-history.html>.

¹¹ Classified Advertising, *The Age*, 24 March 1905, p 14.

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Annie also started travelling further afield to offer her services. In December 1906, she visited Hobart for a very successful fortnight of interviews and professional visits. Dressed in black silk, with 'pink poppies in her light auburn hair'¹² she provided a public 'demonstration of her remarkable powers' where she was in a trance for half an hour, recounting visions related to departed friends and relatives of audience members. The *Tasmanian News* reporter noted her 'lady like appearance' and remarked on her 'genuinely honest Christian character, as well as her phenomenal psychic power, which wins the hearts of the people'.¹³ Her reputation grew and a 1908 advertisement of one of her demonstrations of "Spirit Life" in The Guild Hall, Swanston Street described her as 'Australia's Greatest Clairvoyante'.¹⁴ By 1909, she was reportedly able to earn up to '£20, £30, £40 a week' during visits to Sydney which she described as a 'great success financially'.¹⁵ By comparison, factory workers only earned around £150 per year.¹⁶

Locating the dead

Annie was called on several times to find missing persons. In 1906 Alfred Cutler of Richmond had vanished without a trace. Five months later in 1907 his wife took a photograph of him, along with his boot, to Annie, who claimed 'the owner of this boot is dead and that he had drowned in the Yarra having fallen off the Punt-road footbridge'.¹⁷ Mrs Cutler informed the police who declared they could 'hardly prepare briefs upon the visions of clairvoyants, and dismissed the subject'.¹⁸ However, the remains of Mr Cutler were recovered in the very spot indicated.¹⁹

In October 1907, Annie was asked by his family to 'find' Samuel Thompson, using objects belonging to him, including a necktie and his Bible.²⁰ Thompson's body was subsequently found in the Yarra, and Annie recounted to *Herald* reporters that she had predicted it. 'I put it [the Bible] to my forehead, and I at once saw this young man walking beside the river... Then he fell... The young man had been drowned'.²¹ The reporters mockingly asked her about the objects brought to her: 'Is a necktie better than a boot? Is a collar-stud too small, or an overcoat too large?' and she berated them for their cynicism.

Reporters continued to be sceptical despite Annie's success and fame. Via a letter to *The Herald*, in December 1907, Charles H Matters challenged 'Mrs Annie Turner ... why don't you come out of Fitzroy or Carlton, where nearly all the clairvoyants seem to live and flourish, and have a test'. He gave newspaper reporters five sovereigns and challenged her to name the year stamped on each.²² Annie apparently refused to stoop to party tricks, and wrote in reply that 'it is not my province to defend spiritualism', and complained that 'there are... carping critics in abundance, who, dog-in-the-manger-like, cannot do the work themselves, and are anxious to impede those who can'.²³

Just a few months later in March 1908, Annie was asked to help solve the murder of Mrs Mary "Madge" Graham at Vale Park and give a public demonstration of her gifts at the Alfred Hall in Ballarat. Annie went into a trance and described in detail the alleged events leading to Mrs Graham's death.²⁴ On another occasion in 1910, Annie tried to claim a £100 reward that had been offered for information leading to the recovery of a Miss Gibson in Sydney. Annie stressed 'she told where the body of Miss Gibson was' but unfortunately for her the reward had been withdrawn a week before the body was found.²⁵

¹² 'Mrs Annie Turner, The Clairvoyante', *Tasmanian News*, 1 December 1906, p 3.

¹³ 'Mrs Annie Turner, The Clairvoyante', *Tasmanian News*, 1 December 1906, p 3.

¹⁴ 'Advertising, Meetings, Lectures &c', *The Age*, 17 March 1908.

¹⁵ 'A Clairvoyant's Divorce', *The Age*, 9 November 1909, p 9.

¹⁶ State Library of Victoria, source <https://guides.slv.vic.gov.au/whatitcost/earnings>

¹⁷ 'A Mystery Solved, The Disappearance of Mr. Cutler', *The Age*, 20 January 1907, p 5.

¹⁸ 'A Mystery Solved', *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 19 January 1907, p 6.

¹⁹ 'A Mystery Solved, The Disappearance of Mr. Cutler', *The Age*, 20 January 1907, p 5.

²⁰ 'More Clairvoyance', *The Herald*, 1 October 1907, p 1.

²¹ 'More Clairvoyance', *The Herald*, 1 October 1907, p 1.

²² 'Clairvoyance, A Sovereign Challenge', *The Herald*, 4 December 1907, p 3.

²³ 'Mrs Turner Defines her Beliefs', *The Herald*, 27 December 1907, p 5.

²⁴ 'A Clairvoyant's Demonstration', *The Age*, 2 March 1908

²⁵ 'A Clairvoyant's Claim', *Casino & Kyogle Courier and North Coast Advertiser*, 7 Dec 1910, p 3.

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In January 1909, *The Herald* chortled 'the charlatans and humbugs who live on the credulity of the foolish by extracting money by the pretence of fortune-telling, crystal-gazing, astrology and clairvoyance have been stirred up'.²⁶ Fourteen people, including Annie, were charged with 'having unlawfully used certain subtle craft', that is, deceiving or imposing on a person for money. Plain-clothes policemen had been sent out to "gain entry to the houses of dealers in magic... to obtain the best evidence of illegal action", even by 'going into disguise like the detective of fiction'.²⁷ In Annie's case, Constable Clement Bell, an unmarried man, had been instructed to pay her to 'find' his fictitious wife. Annie's response, that the wife was alive and in Richmond or Collingwood, was used against her in court by Bell, a witness for the prosecution.

Annie appeared at the Courthouse in Condell Street a week later on 27 January. Her trial was extremely well attended by a 'great audience of women'²⁸ and was 'inconveniently crowded'.²⁹ While admitting she was a clairvoyant and had 'proved thousands of times [she had a] gift of vision' and worked 'for reward and the good of humanity', she pleaded not guilty. Her lawyer, Mr Purves KC, objected that Constable Clement Bell had visited Mon Sejour on two occasions. He 'went to the woman with the money in his hand, and went there to tell lies. How could he be imposed upon?'³⁰ Annie was found guilty and fined £10, along with costs of £5, 5s.

She appealed in March 1909 because she 'really and truly believed in her power... there was no subtle craft' to defraud or impose. 'I mean by clairvoyant 'second sight, a gift of discernment and prophecy'', she said. 'I believe I have that gift from God.'³¹ The judge allowed the case to be heard again by the Full Court of Melbourne, which took place on 9 June, but her appeal was unsuccessful. According to *The Herald*, 'the Full Court... ridiculed her'.³² She was fined a further £2 plus costs³³ and was required to not to offend again, but she did not follow this request and travelled to Sydney to sell her services.³⁴

In Court again: petition for divorce

Annie, now aged 47, sought a divorce from George Turner in 1909. George and Annie had different views on their circumstances. Annie stated George had 'deserted her for the statutory period of three years and upwards.'³⁵

She also claimed that 'up to December 1905, in Melbourne, my husband did no work. I was nursing, keeping boarders and practising as a medical herbalist.' She noted that in December 1904 they had had a dispute about one of the boarders and George had left for Drysdale, near Geelong, then Trafalgar in Gippsland where he began farming. Annie claimed, 'during the first year I lent him over £80... He said, 'We were never made for each other; there are plenty better girls than you in Trafalgar; your place is hell. ' Since 1903 he has never given me a shilling'.³⁶ She also noted, 'My husband has been cruel to me all my life'³⁷ and that 'her life had been unbearable for years'.³⁸

²⁶ 'Subtle Craft', *The Herald*, 21 January 1909, p 6.

²⁷ 'Raid on Fortune Tellers', *The Argus*, 22 January 1909, p 4.

²⁸ 'News and Notes in a Nutshell', *The Herald*, 27 January 1909, p 1.

²⁹ A 'Raid on Fortune Tellers', *The Bendigo Independent*, 28 January 1909, p 4.

³⁰ 'Clairvoyants in Court', *The Argus*, 28 January 1909, p 6.

³¹ 'A Spiritualist Clairvoyant', *The Bendigo Independent*, 22 March 1909, p 5.

³² 'Subtle Craft', *The Herald*, 10 June 1909, p 4.

³³ 'Subtle Craft', *Hamilton Spectator*, 17 June 1909, p 4

³⁴ 'Subtle Craft', *Gippsland Times*, 17 June 1909, p 3.

³⁵ 'Relationship Reviewed. Jealous Husband Seeks Justice'. *Truth* (Perth, WA) 2

³⁶ 'Pastor and Clairvoyant', *The Argus*, 9 November 1909

³⁷ 'A Clairvoyant's Divorce', *The Age*, 9 November 1909, p 9.

³⁸ 'In a New Role', *The Ballarat Star*, 9 November 1909, p 4

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George did not deny that he had not contributed financially to the raising of his children, but “defended the suit on the ground that he had not been guilty of desertion but that his wife’s relations with Pastor Abbott had led to his leaving the house”.³⁹

According to George, ‘All the trouble has been caused by Pastor Abbott ... I found she used to go out nightly to Pastor Abbott’s. I waited every night until nearly 12 o’clock, and that is more than an Englishman could stand’.

Pastor Albert James Abbott was known to the press, previously involved in numerous scandals (see next section) and his name had already been linked with Annie’s at Annie’s earlier trial. Constable Bell informed the court that Pastor Abbott had admitted him to Mrs Turner’s house, which received a laugh from the public watching the case.

Annie claimed that her ‘relations with Abbott have been of a purely business character’, as he was her business agent,⁴⁰ even though he had lived at her house since 1906, often sat at the head of the table because he was ‘good at carving’, and her children often called him ‘Pa’.⁴¹

Happily for Annie, the divorce was duly granted on the grounds that George Turner had moved out (to Trafalgar) many years previously and had not given her money for the household or children. Annie was also awarded custody of the youngest and still dependent child, Colin.



Pastor Albert James Abbott

An account of the life of Annie Turner would not be complete without a little background into her fascinating companion in later life, Albert James Abbott.

In the 1880s, Abbott had been a ‘professor of anatomy, theology and psychology’ and ‘demonstrator in botany at the University of Dunedin’ in New Zealand.⁴²

By 1888, he was Pastor Abbott of the faith-healing Free Christian Church based in Fitzroy. The church’s previous leader, Pastor Johnson was removed due to charges of immoral conduct, that is, “living with and passing off as his own wife the duly wedded spouse of another”.⁴³ Just four years later, Pastor Abbott was also under suspicion of immoral behaviour. At that time, he and his wife ran a “faith healing establishment known as ‘Bethshan’ at 156 Nicholson-street, Fitzroy”. Pastor Abbott’s wife claimed she had seen him leaving a lady’s room at midnight; the Pastor suggested that the lady in question had merely been mending his trousers for him.⁴⁴

In 1893, church stewards convened a public meeting at Foresters’ Hall in Smith Street to make several allegations. The first was that Pastor Abbott had been seen kissing young girls of the congregation. The Pastor did not deny having kissed two girls who were not related to him but suggested this was common. He claimed they were ‘holy kisses’.⁴⁵ Other allegations included: being ‘seen at the house of a sister [a member of the faith-healing congregation] late at night under suspicious circumstances’; purchasing wine on Sunday; and forging signatures. Abbott was asked to leave the church but declined. This caused a rift amongst the congregation and several left to form the “Followers of Jesus”⁴⁶. It appears that the Free Christian Church faded into obscurity.

³⁹ ‘Pastor and Clairvoyant’, *The Argus*, 9 November 1909, p 9.

⁴⁰ ‘A Clairvoyant’s Divorce’, *The Age*, 9 November 1909, p 9.

⁴¹ ‘A Clairvoyant’s Divorce’, *The Age*, 9 November 1909, p 9.

⁴² ‘Subtle Craft cases’, *Age*, 20 March 1909, p 13.

⁴³ ‘Pastor Johnson’s Love Story’, *Herald*, 19 March 1891, p 2.

⁴⁴ ‘A Religious Scandal’, *Age*, 28 November 1892.

⁴⁵ ‘A Pastor and His Flock’, *South Australian Chronicle*, 30 December 1893, p 21.

⁴⁶ ‘Melbourne’, *Bendigo Independent*, 26 May 1894, p 2.

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Albert Abbott continued to call himself Pastor and conduct marriages in the Fitzroy area for 7s 6d in the Coffee Palace on Smith Street, and at Mon Sejour when he lived with Annie⁴⁷. However, he married several couples where one person, most often the groom, was later found to already be married and consequently he was often called as a witness in the subsequent court case. At one trial in 1902, he stated that he had celebrated about 800 marriages in the last year. At a 1908 trial, he admitted that he needed no notice before conducting a marriage celebration and asked for no proof or papers.⁴⁸

Commercial Success

Annie and Pastor Abbott continued to attract the press' attention. In January 1911, a reporter claimed that Annie and Abbott (referred to as 'the alleged clairvoyant... has been starring in Sydney as a psycho-seer under the managerial auspices of Pastor Abbott, notorious as an oily-tongued, superstitious bounder')⁴⁹ had earned '1,000 sovs. net, equal to £4,000 per annum' for less than three months work in Sydney.⁵⁰ In April, Annie paid for nine family members, including Abbott, to visit Great Britain for the Coronation of King George V, on to Jerusalem, and finally 'to the Yewnited States, and try to yank the almighty dollar out of the Yankee'.⁵¹

Even though Annie was doing well financially, she took two former friends to court to recover over £17 that she had lent one of them when he was 'in bad health and not expected to live'. Annie was described as 'garbed in the height of fashion, being attired in an Empire costume of black silk, heavily braided. She had a large picture hat decorated with osprey feathers, besides a pair of black kid gloves'. In court she claimed, "I've lent hundreds of pounds to many people in Fitzroy, but never received any in return."⁵²

After returning to Melbourne from her trip, Annie sold Mon Sejour in 1914 and built a house, Foster Court, in St Kilda Road.

Arthur Conan-Doyle visits

In 1914, Annie and Abbott returned to Sydney and while there were visited by Arthur Conan-Doyle, the author of *Sherlock Holmes* that he created in 1887. In his 1921 '*The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*'⁵³, Conan-Doyle wrote admiringly:

I called upon Mrs. Foster Turner⁵⁴, who is perhaps the greatest all-round medium with the highest general level of any sensitive in Australia. I found a middle-aged lady of commanding and pleasing appearance with a dignified manner and a beautifully modulated voice, which must be invaluable to her in platform work. Her gifts are so many that it must have been difficult for her to know which to cultivate, but she finally settled upon medical diagnosis, in which she has, I understand, done good work.

and

Mrs. Foster Turner's gift of psychometry is one which will be freely used by the community when we become more civilised and less ignorant.

Conan Doyle also refers to "Doctor Abbott;" presumably this is Albert Abbott's new title.

⁴⁷ 'Family Notices', *Age*, 25 January 1896, p 3;
In 1903, he is listed as Clergyman, residing at 14 Gore St, Fitzroy.
Australia, Electoral Rolls 1903-1980; source ancestry.com

⁴⁸ 'Curious Bigamy Case', *Age*, 30 May 1902, p 3;
'Another Bigamy Case', *The Age*, 14 May 1908, p 3;
'Charge of Bigamy', *Age*, 1 March 1898, p 7.

⁴⁹ 'Artful Annie Turner', *Bullfinch Budget* 28 January 1911, p 2.

⁵⁰ 'Artful Annie Turner', *Bullfinch Budget* 28 January 1911, p 2.

⁵¹ 'Artful Annie', *Truth*, 8 April 1911, p 10.

⁵² 'Artful Annie', *Truth*, 8 April 1911, p 10.

⁵³ '<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39718/39718-h/39718-h.htm> Chapter XI.

⁵⁴ Annie added her maiden name, Foster, to her married name, Turner, later in her life.

Henry Edward (Ted) Whiting

1882 - 1941

Author

Blair Gardiner

Blair Gardiner's interest in local history arises from his architectural background working in the inner suburbs of Collingwood, Fitzroy, and North Melbourne. He is compiling a record of North and West Melbourne hotels with ongoing research on the manufacturer and philanthropist Macpherson Robertson and the larrikin youth 'Pushes' of the inner suburbs. His most recent public presentation was a talk on the larrikin group the Crutchy Push and its main protagonist Valentine Keating.

Henry Edward (Ted) Whiting was known as a "champion of Fitzroy" and later the "King of Fitzroy". These two titles describe two significant periods of Whiting's life, one as an Australian boxing middle-weight title holder and the other as a figure controlling Fitzroy's sly grog trade.

Introduction

"They registered dozens of hits on his skull,
But the missiles failed to pass
As a "pipsqueak" fails on the steel-clad hull
Of one of the Dreadnought class.
The firing was practised for years and years
By squads of from two to six;
All parties began to get bored to tears;
For the net results were nix.
Then someone thought of a workable scheme
And crossed Ted hard on the jaw:
A pug with a head like a granite rock
Will frequently take, alas!
The deadest and suddenest sort of knock
Through having a jaw of glass".

¹ 'His Downfall', *The Bulletin*, p 40.

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The Bulletin magazine in February 1919 included these verses in its "Sporting Notions" section as an adjunct to some paragraphs on Edward Whiting. One may find reference to Henry Edward (Ted) Whiting as a "champion of Fitzroy" and later the "King of Fitzroy". The Bulletin verses allude to the two eventful periods of Ted Whiting's life. The first, in which Fitzroy regarded him as its champion, as an Australian boxing middle-weight title holder. The second, where others bestowed on him the title of "King" in controlling the sly grog trade of Fitzroy. The Bulletin poem relates to an attempt on Whiting's life, reporting that 'no fewer than six revolver shots were found embedded in his head..., and only the possession of an abnormally thick skull saved him".

This episode was one of a series of violent confrontations between criminals of Fitzroy and Richmond. The confrontations came to be known as the "Fitzroy Vendetta" and eventually led to the death of the criminal figurehead Joseph Theodore Leslie "Squizzzy" Taylor who was living in Richmond at the time.

Background

It is not known precisely when or where Henry Edward (Ted) Whiting was born. His first wife, Margaret (nee) Mooney, who he married in 1908 and divorced in 1915, reported that he had informed her that he was born in Victoria in 1884. His gravestone in the Melbourne General Cemetery suggests that he was born in 1882. Ted's father, also named Henry Edward Whiting, appears to have moved to the Victoria from Tasmania, living in Collingwood and Fitzroy and it is thought Ted Whiting was born here. Ted and Henry Edward may be descendants of John James Whiting, who, at the age of 28 in 1843, was found guilty of fraud in Ipswich, Suffolk, England and transported to serve his sentence of seven years in Launceston, Tasmania.

² 'His Downfall', *The Bulletin*, p 40.

³ Hugh Anderson, *The Rise and Fall of Squizzzy Taylor*, 2013, p 40.

Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson

1877 - 1915

Author
Jennifer McKeagney

Jennifer McKeagney lives in North Fitzroy and is an active member of the Fitzroy History Society. She has a keen interest in Classical architecture and the expression of its decorative elements in the nineteenth century buildings both north and south of Alexandra Parade.



*Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson*¹

Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson was born in Fitzroy into a prosperous family of drapers that had established their business in Brunswick Street ten years before her birth. She spent the early part of her childhood in the suburb. The three-storey building that originally housed Wilson Bros drapers at the southern end of Brunswick Street remains a landmark in Fitzroy. Before the turn of the century, the family had relocated to Brisbane. It was there that Myrtle trained as a nurse. When the First World War broke out, she made her way to England and joined the British Army's Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Myrtle never made it back to Australia. She died in France and was buried at Wimereux Communal Cemetery in the country's north-west, between Boulogne and Calais.

¹. 'We Remember Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson' *Imperial War Museums* [website], <https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/story/73935>

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Early Years and Family

Myrtle's mother, Catherine McNaughton Wilson (nee Craig), was born into a merchant family in Glasgow in 1840 and died in Brisbane in 1923 at the age of 83.² Her father, Andrew Stevens Wilson, was born in 1841 in Baldock, Hertfordshire and died in middle age in Queensland in 1898³. The couple married at the Catholic Apostolic Church, in Queensberry Street, Melbourne on February 24, 1866 in a ceremony conducted by the groom's father, the Reverend William Wilson⁴.

Myrtle was the second youngest of Catherine and Andrew's six children.

The couple's first child, James John, was born in Collingwood in 1867. Andrew Ernest followed him in 1868. After a gap of approximately four years, the couple's first daughter, Catherine Sarah, was born in 1872. A third son, Godfrey Craig was born in 1874. Myrtle was born in 1877 and was the first of the Wilson children to be born in Fitzroy. In 1878, Lillian May, the last of Catherine and Andrew's children, was also born in Fitzroy. That same year, six-year-old Catherine Sarah died and was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery.

Andrew with his brother, John C. Wilson, established the family's drapery business. 'Wilson Brothers' first opened in Bridge Road, Richmond in 1865, then moved to Brunswick Street, Fitzroy in 1866 and continued to operate in Fitzroy and surrounds until 1884-85. Despite having a presence in Brunswick Street from the mid-1860s, it was not until 1883 that the brothers called for tenders to build their substantial three-storey warehouse and shop at 127-131 (now 143-145) Brunswick Street, south of Hanover Street.⁵ At around this time they also opened other branches in Errol Street, North Melbourne and at 146 Smith Street, Collingwood. By 1885, however, the business had disappeared from the Victorian directories and rate books.

The landmark warehouse and shop transferred to the ownership of Charles A. Pearce in the mid-1880s. In 1892, under his ownership, the bluestone building's façade was re-modelled to increase window sizes to improve the display of drapery.⁶ In recent years, the building's 1880s façade (as depicted in F.W. Niven's lithograph below) has been reinstated.



143-145 Brunswick Street detail from 1889 lithograph, 'Panoramic View of Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria 1889'⁷.

² 'Cemeteries', *Bundaberg Regional Council* [website], <https://www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/residents/cemeteries-1/2>

³ 'Cemeteries', *Bundaberg Regional Council*

⁴ 'Marriages', *Argus*, Monday 26 February 1866, p 4, *Trove* <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/5763216?searchTerm=%22andrew%20s%20wilson%22%20brunswick%20street%20fitzroy>. The Catholic Apostolic Church or Irvingian Church was established in the 1830s in Scotland by Edward Irving, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland.

⁵ 'Tenders invited for Erecting three-storey warehouse', *Argus*, Thursday 15 March, 1883, p 3. *Trove* <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/265325>

⁶ 'Renovation of the Premises of Mr C A Pearce', *Argus*, Wednesday 6 March, 1892 p 7. *Trove* <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/8405408?searchTerm=charles%20a%20pearce%20draper%20brunswick%20street%20fitzroy>

⁷ Niven, F.W & Co, Printers and Lithographers, 'Panoramic View of Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, 1889' [picture], <https://viewer.slv.vic.gov.au/?entity=IE1338704&mode=browse>

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25 Moor Street Fitzroy⁸



58 Bell Street Fitzroy⁹



Queens Parade South of Rushall Crescent¹⁰

The brothers lived at various addresses nearby. Myrtle's girlhood homes were at 25 Moor Street, Fitzroy (1878-79), 58 Bell Street, Fitzroy (1880-82), Northcote Road (now Queens Parade – five houses south of Rushall Crescent on the western side of the road) North Fitzroy (1883), and possibly South Yarra in 1884.

There is no information available on where Myrtle attended school. It is possible that at least some of her older siblings attended the nearby school in Bell Street. Robert Bell originally established the school in 1855 as the *National School, Fitzroy*. After the *Education Act 1872* established free, secular and compulsory education, the school was sold to the government and by 1873 was operating as State School No.111.¹¹

It appears that Myrtle's family moved from Victoria to Queensland at some time between 1885, when she would have been approximately seven or eight years of age, and 1892 when she would have been around 15 years of age. Their Queensland home, 'The Roses' was in Victoria Avenue, Chelmer.¹² From 1892, records indicate that Andrew Wilson was operating a drapery business at Bundaberg, Queensland. By 1895, he was also a Justice of the Peace. In 1897, his drapery business was one of 11 in Bundaberg, and he had another at Gin Gin, north of Bundaberg.¹³ In 1898, when Myrtle was 21, her father passed away. He was 57 years of age.

Nursing and World War I

Myrtle Wilson undertook her nursing training at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. By 1915, she and her younger sister, Lillian, were both nursing at the Bundaberg hospital. Records suggest that Lillian eventually became the Matron at Bundaberg General Hospital.¹⁴

Nursing was the primary means through which women could participate directly in the First World War and over three thousand Australian civilian nurses volunteered for active service during the War. Of that number, more than two thousand joined the Australian Army Nursing Services (AANS) and served overseas alongside Australian nurses working with the British Army's Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), the Red Cross and other privately sponsored facilities.¹⁵

⁸ J. McKeagney, photograph, 10 May 2022

⁹ J. McKeagney, photograph, 10 May 2022

¹⁰ J. McKeagney, photograph, 15 June 2022

¹¹ Victorian Heritage Council, 'Victorian Heritage Database Report Former National School H1031', *Victorian Heritage Database*, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/446/download-report>

¹² I. Lang, 'Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson: Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service' *State Library of Queensland John Oxley Library Blog*, [web blog] 4 January, 2016 <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/myrtle-elizabeth-wilson-queen-alexandras-imperial-military-nursing-service>

¹³ *The Queensland Official Directory 1896-1897*, H. Wise and Co, Brisbane, 1896, p 212.

¹⁴ As cited in Lang, 'Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson: Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service'

¹⁵ 'Great War Nurses', *Australian War Memorial* [website], <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/nurses/ww1>

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All Australian nurses working with the AANS and other organisations during the war were considered to be 'on active service', but after the war, for official recognition and eligibility for a range of repatriation benefits, only those women enlisted with the AANS (and an additional 129 nurses sent to India as QAIMNS nurses by the Australian Government) were officially recognised. Australian nurses who were already in Britain or who made their own way to London and then to get across to France or other theatres of war have not been fully accounted for or recognised. The Australian Service Nurses National Memorial in Canberra, for instance, acknowledges only those women who served in the AANS, as does the Australian War Memorial's Roll of Honour.¹⁶

In April 1915, less than a year after the outbreak of the First World War, Myrtle departed for England. That same month Australia sustained massive casualties at the battle of Gallipoli. Myrtle sailed on the *Orontes* and is likely to have paid her own passage.¹⁷ On 31 May 1915, she applied to join the QAIMNS (Reserves) and was appointed to the Service on 9 June 1915.

QAIMNS originally had very strict entry criteria. Nurses had to be single women of good social standing between 25 and 35 years of age. They were required to have trained for three years at one of only 34 United Kingdom hospitals approved by the Nursing Board. At the start of the First World War, there were less than 300 nurses in the QAIMNS. However, due to high casualty rates and the huge wartime expansion of the British Army, the rigid recruitment criteria were relaxed. This enabled married women, those from working class backgrounds and nurses, like Myrtle Wilson, who had trained outside the United Kingdom, to join. The increasing mechanisation of war that produced land mines, mortars, grenades, tanks, flame throwers and gas attacks, also led to a horrific array of injuries among soldiers and, in turn, highlighted the importance of the role of well-trained nurses in front line care. By the end of the War, QAIMNS numbers had increased to 10,000 (including reservists).¹⁸



Australian nurses (names not identified) of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service outside No 7 General Hospital, France in July 1915.¹⁹ Myrtle Wilson was nursing with the QAIMNS at the No 7 hospital at this time and may be present in this image (back row fourth from the left).

¹⁶ 'Australian Women and War', *Anzac Portal*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Australia, July 2008, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/australian-women-and-war#2>

¹⁷ Lang, 'Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson: Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service'

¹⁸ 'Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps', *National Army Museum* [website], <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/queen-alexandras-royal-army-nursing-corps>

¹⁹ Australian War Memorial, photograph ID Number PO9900.002 [picture] as cited in Lang, 'Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson: Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service'

Myrtle was posted to the No.7 British General Hospital near Boulogne on the Channel coast. The hospital was located in a building that, prior to the War had been a hotel. By September 1915, the hospital had capacity for 1100 patients.²⁰ These types of base hospitals were located further back from the front line than casualty clearing stations. In France and Flanders, British General hospitals were often located near the ports and close to railway lines so that casualties could be transported to them and evacuated to England for longer-term treatment as required.²¹

American born British nurse, Adelaide Walker worked at the No 14 Stationary Hospital (another type of base hospital, usually smaller than a General hospital) also at Boulogne, less than a year before Myrtle Wilson arrived in France. Her account of her experience there highlights the difficulties encountered by nurses on an almost daily basis at these facilities:

We arrived at Boulogne on October 30, 1914. The place gave us the impression of being a seething mass of ambulances, wounded men, doctors and nurses: there seemed to be an unending stream of each of them. All the hotels were hospitals, which gave one a horrid feeling of disaster.

Number 14 Stationary hospital was found to be in a large hotel on the sea-front at Wimereux. The Officer Commanding was in the hall receiving patients: he directed us to the top floor, where the nurses had their quarters. Every place was packed with sick and wounded lying on the floor; you stepped between them, and over them, to get along. As soon as we could get into our indoor uniform we went straight into the wards. I relieved the matron in the theatre, where she was busily working. Operations went on unceasingly. As fast as one patient could be taken off the operating table, another was placed on – and so on all through the night: the surgeons had been at it the whole day. As I went to bed in the morning I met the orderlies carrying patients down the stairs for evacuation by boat to England, while the doctors were helping to carry in another convoy which had just arrived. We rested until midday, then went to relieve other nurses who had not yet had a rest. Reveille was being sounded the following morning as I got into bed. At 7 a.m. I was awakened by the secretary of the matron-in-chief, who had to shake me pretty hard. She calmly informed me that the matron-in-chief's car was at the door, and that I was to proceed at once to a hospital in the town. She made a cup of tea while I dressed, then I drove down to the docks.

The sugar sheds on the Gare Maritime were to be converted into a hospital, No.13 Stationary hospital. What an indescribable scene! In the first huge shed there were hundreds of wounded walking cases (as long as a man could crawl he had to be a walking case). All were caked with mud, in torn clothes, hardly any caps, and with blood-stained bandages arms, hands, and legs; many were lying asleep on the straw that had been left in the hastily cleaned sheds, looking weary to death; others sitting on empty boxes or barrels, eating the contents of a tin of "Maconochie" with the help of a clasp knife. Dressings were being carried out on improvised tables; blood-stained clothes, caked in mud, which had been cut off, were stacked in heaps with rifles and ammunition. Further on, the sheds were being converted into wards; wooden partitions were being run up, bedsteads carried in, the wounded meanwhile lying about on straw or stretchers. The beds were for stretcher cases, and were soon filled with terribly wounded men, who had just to be put into the beds as they were, clothes and all. As fast as one could get to them the clothes were cut off, the patient washed and his wounds dressed. Some had both legs off, some their side blown away – all were wounded in several places. Doctors and nurses were hopelessly outnumbered, distractedly endeavouring to meet the demands made upon them. Here too we found the Matron-in-Chief with the Expeditionary Force in France (Dame Maud McCarthy) helping and directing. Under her supervision a miraculous change soon took place; reinforcements of nurses began to arrive, and the sheds took on the appearance of a well ordered hospital.²²

²⁰ E. M McCarthy, 'War Diary Matron in Chief, British Expeditionary Force, France and Flanders' 2013, *Scarletfinders* <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/38.html>

²¹ 'British Base Hospitals in France', *The Long, Long Trail, Researching Soldiers of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918* [website], <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/british-base-hospitals-in-france/>

²² A. L Walker, 'Experiences at a Base Hospital in France 1914-1915, *Scarletfinders*, 2013, <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/156.html>

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The crises did subside from time to time and Christmas Day 1914 was one such occasion, as Adelaide Walker goes on to describe –

On Christmas Day, 1914, a service was held at 6 a.m. in one of the wards. A beautiful crucifix which had been presented by Queen Alexandra was used at this service. Later in the morning a present was given to each man by Lady Gordon-Lennox, she and her daughter – now Lady Titchfield – taking them round. It had been intended to give them out from a Christmas tree in the evening, but word came that there was to be an evacuation. During the afternoon a convoy of patients was received who came in time for evening and Christmas dinner. It was wonderful how happy they were – wounds and hardships all forgotten in the joy and thought of getting to “Blighty”.²³

Myrtle worked at the No.7 until becoming ill with pneumonia in December 1915. She was then transferred to No. 14 General Hospital at Wimereux. At the time she fell ill, Myrtle would have been working long hours in a stressful and often unrelenting environment, perhaps not unlike that described by Adelaide Walker above. To compound matters, in December, the weather would have been bitterly cold and antibiotics to treat her pneumonia were not yet available.

Australian born Maud McCarthy, Matron-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, noted the deterioration in Myrtle’s health in her diary:

9th Dec – Miss Wilson... very ill

19th Dec – Miss Wilson, Australian, pneumonia, DI list – people in Australia, WO informed, and cousin in England.

23rd Dec- Telephone message from 14 General Hospital saying Miss Wilson, Australian on Q Reserve, condition critical. Informed WO. Later to say she had died 7.30am.

A further entry in her diary on Christmas Eve 1915 is more expansive and underscores the tragedy of Myrtle’s final days:

Rang up early to find out when Miss Wilson’s funeral was to take place. 2pm today, so arranged to go, and asked 14 General to procure flowers for me if they had not already done so. Left at 11am. Raining incessantly. Arrived 1.30, had lunch, drove straight to 14 General, where I found the Matron Miss Fox neglected to tell anyone in either Boulogne or Wimereux area of the early date of the funeral, or the Australian Hospital, not even the Assistant Principal Matron, so that she could have informed all Hospitals so that everyone might have had an opportunity of paying a last respect to one who had come so far and who was among strangers. I was extremely annoyed. The rain was continuous. There were a great many officers, and not a dozen Nursing Sisters from the whole area. On return to 14 General the Assistant Principal Matron had arrived with flowers from some of the Hospitals but did not know anything about the funeral.²⁴

Myrtle Wilson was 38 years of age when she died and was one of six QAIMNS nurses to die from illness during the course of the war. She was buried at the Wimereux Communal cemetery (III M1) about five kilometres outside Boulogne.²⁵ In addition to civilian burials, the cemetery contains Commonwealth burials, primarily of the First World War as well as French and Germans war graves.²⁶

²³ A.L. Walker, ‘Experiences at a Base Hospital in France 1914-1915’

²⁴ Maud McCarthy, ‘War Diary: Matron in Chief, British Expeditionary Force, France and Flanders’

²⁵ ‘Wilson, Myrtle Elizabeth’, *Virtual War Memorial Australia*, [website] <https://www.vwma.org.au/explore/people/802331>

²⁶ ‘Wimereux Communal Cemetery’, *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* [website], <https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/8200/wimereux-communal-cemetery/>

Myrtle's older brother, Godfrey, published her death notice in the Brisbane Courier on 28 December 1915:

While Myrtle's QAIMNS records describe her as a 'staff nurse', she was referred to as a nursing 'Sister' in other sources. Correspondence from Lillian gives her the title 'Sister' as does her gravestone. Lillian chose the inscription on her sister's gravestone '*Behold, I come quickly*' from the Book of Revelations. Myrtle did not die intestate. In August 1913, she made a will through which she bequeathed her estate, including property, to her sister.

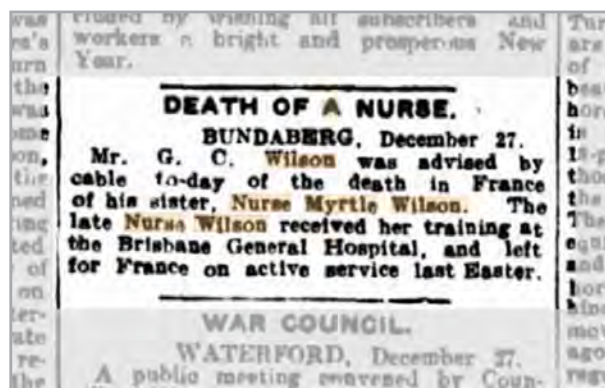
Myrtle's file in the British National Archives First World War Nursing Service Records provides little information on her, apart from records of correspondence after her death between Lillian and the British War Office regarding her estate and personal effects.²⁸ On 22 January 1916, Myrtle's personal effects of two packages were forwarded to the Defence Department, Australia via the transport *Benalla*.

Memorials

Myrtle Wilson's name appears on an honour roll of World War I and II nurses at the Bundaberg Hospital. This memorial also includes a 'Sister Lilian Wilson' who may have been Myrtle's younger sister who also nursed at the Bundaberg Hospital.

She is also acknowledged on the commemorative roll (as distinct from the Roll of Honour, which is reserved for those who served in Australian Armed Forces including the AANS) in the commemorative area of the Australian War Memorial at Canberra.³⁰ In addition, Myrtle's name appears on war memorials and rolls of honour including the Corinda Sherwood Shire Roll of Honour, Graceville War Memorial and the Queensland Australian Army Nursing Service Roll of Honour.³¹

In 2019, Myrtle Wilson and eight other Queensland nurses who died during the war or shortly afterward were commemorated a First World War Nurses Memorial Grove in Anzac Park in Toowong, Queensland³² The grove of lemon-scented myrtle trees have white flowers that symbolise the white pinafores worn by the nurses. The grove was established to honour their dedication and sacrifice and personal connection to Brisbane.



Brisbane Courier, 28 December 1915²⁷



Bundaberg Hospital Honour Roll²⁹



First World War Nurses Memorial Grove in Anzac Park, Toowong, Queensland³³

²⁷ 'Death of a Nurse', Brisbane Courier, '28 December 1915, p. 7, TROVE <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/20061961?searchTerm=%22sister%20myrtle%20wilson%22>

²⁸ 'Myrtle Wilson WO 399/9132' The National Archives [website], https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_aq=%22Myrtle%20Wilson%22&_dss=range&_sd=1914&_ed=1915&_ro=any&_st=adv

²⁹ M. Moore, photograph, 10 July 2009

³⁰ 'Commemorative Roll, Myrtle Elizabeth Wilson', Australian War Memorial [website], <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1431034>

³¹ 'Virtual War Memorial Australia 'Wilson, Myrtle Elizabeth'

³² 'First World War Nurses Memorial Grove', Monument Australia [website], https://monumentaustralia.org.au/australian_monument/display/115712

³³ Monument Australia, 'First World War Nurses Memorial Grove'



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