



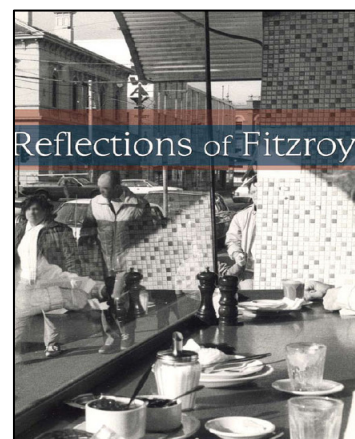
April 2009

fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com

P.O Box 180, Fitzroy 3065

“Reflections of Fitzroy”
Thursday 30 April 2009, 7.00 pm
Edinburgh Gardens Community Room

In 2008, 10 fourth year Honours and Masters students in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne published a book entitled “Reflections of Fitzroy”. Each student conducted original research exploring an aspect of the social and cultural history of Fitzroy, and the publication was part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the creation of Fitzroy as a separate municipality. Join some of the authors as they give us insight into their research into areas as diverse as prostitution in 19th century Fitzroy, the early history of the Edinburgh Gardens, and the Fitzroy larrikin “Melbourne Mick”.



Monday, 11 May 2009 at 6 30pm John O’Brien’s Fitzroy



John O’Brien, lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Melbourne, photographed Melbourne and country Victoria in the 1950s and 1960s.

Following the recent release of some photographs in digital form by the University Archives, the Fitzroy History Society and the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne are delighted to offer an evening enjoying a selection of John O’Brien’s photographs of Fitzroy.

Venue: the Fifth Floor Common Room of the John Medley Building, University of Melbourne, Grattan Street.

Meet under the arch of the John Medley Building at 6.20 for 6.30 pm start

Tuesday, 2 June 2009, at 6pm - visit to the Australian Catholic University

FHS member, Professor Gabrielle McMullen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), invites us to visit Australian Catholic University to hear the history of this university in our midst, and to share the earlier history of the site.

The site was originally the home of Richard Grice from the 1850s, the German Turn Verein clubrooms from 1906 to 1915, and the Commonwealth Note Printing centre from the 1920s.

Meet in the front foyer of 115 Victoria Parade at 6pm sharp.



A devastating history repeats itself...1851 and 2008 - Bushfire Inquest held in Fitzroy

February 6, 1851 was a 'Black Thursday' in Port Phillip. The country was overwhelmed with fire and smoke, 'as if a destroying angel had winged its way, scattering firebrands far and wide across the province'.

The *Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, 1835 to 1852, reported that Melbourne's dusty, hot, and windy atmosphere was so dense that 'for every mouthful of air was like flame puffing out a furnace'. At midday it was 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade and 129 degrees at Brentani's, a jeweller shop in Collins Street. The Supreme Court adjourned for the day and the electric telegraph communication ceased with some citizens gathering at either Flagstaff Hill or Batman's Hill to observe the damage. The following day the *Daily News* reported that Melbourne's 'atmosphere of dust, ashes, steam, heat and suffocation that one might experience in looking into Mt Etna immediately after it has been extinguished by a water spout'.

The fire had begun in the Plenty Ranges where 2 careless bullock drivers left their campfire logs of the previous night burning and fanned by strong winds fired the bush in all directions. The fire kept enlarging its orbit 'rolling around like some high monster destroying everything it touched, its track marked by charred timber, embers and ashes, cries and lamentations'. Some people, 'ruined by its operation, never even saw it until it crashed in about them with a crackling and roaring clamor positively astounding'. The damage done in the Plenty district was considerable. More than 100 families were left 'homeless and penniless' with many livelihoods lost with loss of whole herds of cattle (up to 1100) and sheep. The country between Ballarat and Geelong also suffered extensively with extensive loss of property, 3000 tons of hay and 50,000 bushels of wheat. Buninyong Forest burned for several days. Werribee and Mt Macedon were under fire 'in a style that would gladden the druids'. The fires reached as far north as Goulburn yet the townships of Kilmore, Seymour and Honeysuckle remained untouched, 'they were like islets in an ocean of flame for some days'. The creeks were crammed with festering carcasses and live and injured animals rushed to the creeks to drink found no water. 'No quarter if the district escaped, from Gippsland to the Murray and from Plenty to Glenelg'. 'Vessels fifty miles out to sea had their decks covered with ash and leaves'.

Bringing the aftermath to Fitzroy with the sad end for the McLelland family from the Plenty ranges. To quote, 'Where the King's College now stands in Nicholson Street, facing Faraday Street, there was a rakishly rigged -up hostelry known as the *Traveler's Rest*, and here the bullock team with its load of roasted corpses pulled up and the dead were moved inside.' Dr Wilmot, the Coroner, decided upon holding the inquest there the same night and his having become generally known, there was a large exodus of people from Melbourne to the place. It was moonlight and the moon was hardly looked upon a more ghastly spectacle from that day to this. A jury was empanelled and after a sickening though necessary ceremonial of 'viewing' (the bodies) was gone through. Alexander Miller, a shepherd in the dead family's employ, was examined and his testimony disclosed as additional facts; that though there were fires in the ranges for some days before, they did not approach nearer than ten miles to the family's place until Thursday evening. He was out driving his sheep to water when he saw flame coming rapidly towards him through the bush with a loud hissing and crackling noise; and getting alarmed he hurried his sheep towards the homestead to have them as much out of danger. On arriving there about noon the place was on fire, and he shouted loudly but received no answer. The fire now began to press him so closely as to compel him to abandon his sheep and run for his life, the flames almost up to his heels. With his utmost speed and much difficulty he kept ahead until he arrived at the creek, into which he plunged head foremost and remained there with only his chin upwards above the water, scarcely daring to move and not emerging from his unpleasant bath until dark. Where he crept forth and approached to where he had left the hut; but there was not a trace of it remaining. Going back to a portion of the creek from which the family used to fetch water he there found McLelland up to his neck and helped him out. Inquiring after the women and children he was told they were all dead, and both he and his master lay down on the bank of the creek remaining there until morning, when his master proposed that they should go in search of the bodies, but the witness strongly advised that before doing so they should proceed to a Dr Ronald about three miles distance for assistance and they did. Here McLelland remained unable to travel further and others returned to the hut where the bodies of the family were found lying face down some twenty yards from the hut. Not a scrap of clothing remained on any of them. They were stark naked and black and burnt. A verdict of accidental death was returned. Next day, Sunday, all burnt remnants were coffined and interred in the Melbourne Cemetery and McLelland was transferred to Hospital where he slowly recovered and lived for a few years'.

The above extract is based on pages 441-448 of *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne, 1835 to 1852*, authored by Edmund Finn (Garryowen) who lived at Leicester Street, Fitzroy from the 1840s. You can read the full Chapter XXXIII in this 1000 page book, a copy of which is available at the Fitzroy Library."

Fitzroy History Society receives a City of Yarra Grant to establish a Website

The Society has a subcommittee working on this development and would be interested to hear from any members who have website expertise and would be interested in working with the committee. Please email or contact us by writing to Fitzroy History Society, PO Box 180, Fitzroy 3065 or fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au

Acknowledgement

Trudie Frazer was the author of a piece in the last Newsletter titled "The Captain's House". We apologise for the oversight.

THE MATCH INDUSTRY OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

A new book, 'Lighting up Australia', tells the story of the factories that made matches, the people who worked in them, the entrepreneurs who invested in them and more. Fitzroy had one small factory at 141 St Georges Road, North Fitzroy where apart from the reworked façade and the rear of the building the essential fabric of the building remains in tact.

The book is a large format paperback, 190 pages with over 100 illustrations compiled after four years archival research. Interestingly the book includes not only the collectibles of the industry but also a snapshot of the industry sustained for so long (1843-2003) yet disappeared over a relatively short fifteen year period and largely due to social change. The author has written to the Society informing us about the book with details on its availability.

If you are interested the book is available from the author direct; Jerry Bell, MA (Oxon) 555 Dandenong Road, Armadale, 3143 or email; jjbell@netspace.net.au. It is \$30 a copy.

Following Fitzroy's Founding Footsteps

On the windiest Tuesday evening of March 3 a group of us set out on a fascinating twilight walk in the eastern blocks from the Town Hall.

The walk was ably led by Trudie Fraser who has collected a wealth of information about the immediate locality and its early architecture and past residents. At the corner of Gore and Greeves Street we saw the Collingwood & Fitzroy UFS dispensary, there from 1886 to 1968, and since then occupied by the Russian House Cultural Advancement Centre. We heard of the dispensary's first chemist who brought up his family of six children in a small terrace house just down the street in Greeves Street. This family in 1915 received the sad news that one of their sons had died at Gallipoli.

This area is fascinating for the small and larger buildings a happy mix of residential and public establishments. For example, St Marks Church, the Captain's House with one of the first Fire Insurance plaques, and Pastor Doug Nicholls church.

You can all enjoy the walk as it was one of the four points of the compass walks that the Society developed in celebration of the 150 year as a municipality and supported by the City of Yarra. A suggested route for the walk can be found on the City of Yarra website

<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/home.asp> and search for Founding Footsteps, or drill down to >Planning & Building > Heritage > History of the City of Yarra.

Changes to membership renewal dates

We have decided to streamline membership renewal dates, to make it easier for members to remember when to renew their membership. As from this year, there will be a common renewal date for all members of 1 August. If you last renewed before 1 August 2008, your new renewal date will be 1 August 2009. If you have not renewed since 1 August 2008, your new renewal date will be 1 August 2009. The cost of annual membership will remain at \$10 per person per year. If you have any queries about this proposal, please email us at fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au or write to us at PO Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065.

Catherine Pugsley

Please note some events and dates have been altered since our last Newsletter publication. Those advertised here are the current planned events with accurate times and dates and locations.

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Name (s)

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Telephone

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Address

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E-mail

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Subscription Cash Cheque
\$10 per person, per year

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Please forward your Comments, Feedback, Suggestions for future activities

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If undeliverable, return to

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