

## Fitzroy History Society Newsletter

[www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au)

August 2012

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Thursday, 23 August 7.00 PM**

Council Chambers,  
Level 1 Fitzroy Town Hall  
201 Napier St, Fitzroy

#### **Guest speaker: Major General Mike O'Brien**

On "*Fitzroy and the First World War*".

With an opportunity to view the  
Honour Roll in the Town Hall.

### **Artist Danilla Vassilieff in Fitzroy at Heide Art Gallery**

**Sunday, September 23 11.00am**

5 – 7 Templestowe Rd Bulleen

Felicity Moore, author of ***Vassilieff and his Art*** will give members of the Fitzroy History Society and friends a personal guided tour of the current exhibition showing of Danilla Vassilieff's 1930s especially works in Fitzroy at Heide Art Gallery. Felicity is very knowledgeable about this 1930's and 1940's Melbourne significant artist.

Enthusiastic reviews of his paintings—often of children playing in the streets of Collingwood, Fitzroy and East Melbourne—established his reputation. He met up with John and Sunday Reed and joined the Contemporary Art Society,

*"His confident attack on 'fine art', and his insistence that 'gut' response and 'message' mattered more than intellect and aesthetics, influenced younger artists, among them Albert Tucker, Lina Bryans, Joy Hester and (Sir) Sidney Nolan."* ADB



### **The Marsdens of Melbourne**

On 25 July 2012, Anne Marsden, author or the book

***'The Marsdens of Melbourne -the rise and fall of a family's fortunes 1841- 1941'*** presented her findings regarding the family lives in early Fitzroy.

The early Fitzroy residents were Joseph Ankers Marsden, born 1811, of Moor Street and John Marsden, Chief Government Architect with Public Works Department, born 1844 and Fitzroy.

Anne has donated a copy of her book to the Local History Collection housed in the Fitzroy Library. She has also donated a copy of a diary written by John Whiting, containing an account of his voyage to Australia, 26 Jan to April 1853, plus his later years at the goldfields and more generally around town. In 1860 he married Sarah, daughter of Joseph Ankers Marsden. Whiting had a shop in Gertrude St.

Anne Marsden presented the diary to FHS and the Library from the Maloney family, descended from Whiting.

Anne is currently researching the initial committee members of the first Mechanics Institute of Melbourne, Collins Street, through the auspices of the Athenaeum Library.

### **FHS ANNUAL DINNER**

**Friday, 16 November 2012 7.00pm**

The Gertrude Hotel  
Cnr Napier and Gertrude Streets  
\$45 for 2 courses + glass of wine.

RSVP by Monday 12 November to  
[fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au)

## Brunswick Street: Lost & Found National Trust Heritage Festival event

As part of the National Trust of Victoria's Heritage Festival 2012, FHS, in partnership with architectural historian Professor Miles Lewis, presented "Brunswick Street: Lost and Found", an insight into the early history of South Fitzroy, on 20 May.

Professor Lewis led a walk around the southern part of Brunswick Street and surrounds, which included access to some significant sites that are not usually open to the public. In the front garden of Dodgshun House we were able to view the marker indicating the site of the birthplace of Mary MacKillop, Australia's first saint. The opportunity to see the inside of the former Joseph Lyddy OBB Polish Factory in Fitzroy Street added to the understanding of this important example of Art Deco architecture gained on our recent walk led by Willys Keeble. Inside Central Hall, we had access to the whole building – including climbing the ladder to the ceiling for those who chose to take the challenge – and viewed the display of historic photographs in the building's foyer. Other "secrets" of Fitzroy's architectural history shown to us included firewalls and former nightcart hatches visible from the bluestone laneways behind early buildings such as Glass Terrace.



The walk was followed by a seminar held in the former Kendall's veterinary college, itself an example of "Brunswick Street: Lost and Found". From its construction in 1888 until 1920 it was a veterinary hospital, built privately, and part of the University of Melbourne vet school from 1908. Its subsequent history for many decades is difficult to trace, although it is known to have been used for businesses as diverse as a car salesroom and a packing manufacturer. Now part of the Metropole Hotel, it has been restored and has several spaces available for public hire, with many original features of the veterinary college, such as the site of the dispensary, still visible in the building's interior.

The seminar papers focussed on new research recently undertaken by members of the FHS committee, which adds to the historical studies of the area already in existence. Meg Lee, using sources including newspapers of the time, researched the life of the man after whom Brunswick Street is named – Captain George Brunswick Smyth – and Smyth's own will.

Smyth, who emigrated to Port Phillip in 1838, was appointed officer-in-charge of the Port Phillip Mounted Police in 1839 while only in his twenties, and during his time in Melbourne was instrumental in the establishment of a number of clubs and associations, including the Port Phillip Turf Club, the Melbourne Club, the first Masonic lodge, and the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute. Following the earliest Crown land sales in 1839 in Newtown (South Fitzroy), Smyth bought, subdivided and sold, allotments within Lot 49, with the name "Gertrude Street" first appearing in memorials of sale on 30 December 1839. Meg's research debunks the theory that Smyth named Gertrude after his daughter: Smyth died aged 30 in England, childless. Contemporary newspaper records show Captain Smyth and his wife attending the high-society wedding of a Gertrude Smyth at Kensington Palace in 1840 – this Gertrude may have been the niece of Captain Brunswick Smyth and had Gertrude Street named in her honour.

Tim Gatehouse researched the lives of some of Melbourne's most prominent early residents - Charles Ebdon, Anthony Beale, Arthur Kemmis, Robert Webb, Thomas Strode and James Montgomery - who lived in some of Fitzroy's earliest houses, described in newspapers of the day as "magnificent", "elegant" and "beautiful". The backgrounds and careers of these men varied, as did their fortunes after settling in Fitzroy. A fascinating element of Tim's research is the content of the diary for the years 1839-40 of Anthony Beale, a former official of the East India Company, who erected his prefabricated cottage brought from England on the east side of Brunswick Street, near the later site of the Fitzroy Town Hall. The cottage does not seem to have been the "magnificent residence" described in the press, and Beale provides a most entertaining description - with illustration - of the family's first night in the house in which the roof leaked so badly that Beale and his wife went to bed under umbrellas. Another illustration depicts "A visit by two naked natives, the only visitors as yet", with the Beales' dog barking, "bow bow bow" at the visitors, and the family children hiding behind a barrel.

Letters written by a young married couple, Hanmer and Sarah Bunbury, who chose to migrate to Port Phillip in 1840 and on arrival lived in Brunswick Street, were the focus of Trudie Fraser's research. The letters reveal the reasons for migration, the life and family left behind, the voyage, expectations of Port Phillip, and first impressions of the climate, scenery, vegetation, native inhabitants, and the suburb of "New Town". They show a hard-working and resourceful couple dedicated to building a new life under difficult conditions.



Sarah Bunbury was a talented artist: three of the watercolour paintings which she sent to her relatives in England to show her new house and neighbourhood are now housed in the State Libraries of Victoria and New South Wales. The challenge of identifying the precise location and direction of the scenes depicted in Sarah Bunbury's paintings led Mike Moore to undertake further research about the early subdivision and creation of streets in the area. Using other visual images produced in 1839, as well as the Bunbury letters and records of the early land sales, Mike has identified that the birthplace of Saint Mary MacKillop is depicted in the centre of one of the Bunbury paintings.

The seminar proceedings, edited by Professor Lewis, have been published as a lasting record of the research undertaken, and can be purchased from the Fitzroy Library.

We extend our thanks to Professor Miles Lewis for his generous contribution to the project, and also acknowledge the assistance of Mary Lewis, Nigel Lewis and Richard Gorr.

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About Our Organisation...

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