



June 2017

www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au

President: Peter Woods

NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held on Tuesday 11 July at 7.30 pm in the Reading Room of the Fitzroy Library.

After the brief formal meeting, the guest speaker will be Jim Davidson. His topic is

The Accessible Past: History through post cards

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: A reminder that subscriptions are due for renewal as from the AGM

UPCOMING EVENT

OPEN HOUSE—FITZROY

On Sunday 30 July, as its contribution to the Open House program, Yarra Council is opening the Fitzroy Town Hall to the public. FHS has been asked to provide guides to cover historical aspects of the building.

There will be 30 minute tours, starting at 10.00 am, with the last tour at 3.30 pm. The tours will be conducted through the Reading Room, Ballroom, and the upstairs Council Chamber and Mayor's Room. The volunteer experts for the Open Day include:

Robyn Riddett, who wrote the Fitzroy Town Hall conservation plan back in the 1990s, and led tours in 2007 (as seen in the photo opposite);

Carole Woods who wrote the history of the Fitzroy Library 1877-1997 (green book);

Ted Rush, Mayor in 1973;

Mike O'Brien, our expert on the WW1 Honour Boards, who compiled the Fitzroy Town Hall: Heart & Soul of Fitzroy (red book), published in 2007.

Other FHS members will assist with the tours.

To control numbers, pre-booked tickets will be required for the tours. Check the Yarra Council website nearer the date for details and/or www.openhousemelbourne.org

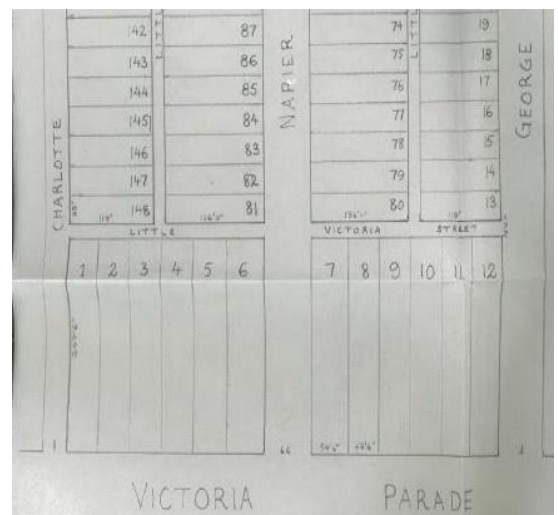


Robyn Riddett speaking in the Mayor's Room in 2007.
(Photo: M. Moore)

Plan of Subdivision of Melbourne Suburban Section No. 50. Property of G.W. Cole

Ken Smith, of the Port Phillip Pioneers Group, who gave a talk to FHS last October, has researched the detail of early land sales and Subdivisions across Fitzroy and neighbouring areas. He has gifted our Society with his detailed study of the original land sales of the 25 acre area bounded by Victoria Parade and Young, Webb, and George Streets (Section 50).

The booklet records the old law details of sales by G.W. Cole of the 148 lots in 100-plus memorials in the period January to November 1850. A map of the subdivision is included. The booklet has been placed in the Fitzroy Library collection and will be placed on the FHS website.



Part of map showing southern subdivision of Section 50

RECENT EVENT: REMEMBERING FITZROY—A walk along the lost streets of the Atherton Precinct

On Saturday 22 April, as part of the Australian Heritage Festival, *Remembering Fitzroy* examined changes made to areas of Melbourne's first suburb, Fitzroy. The area was originally called Forest Hill, then Newtown, then Fitzroy from 1851. The suburb was named after Sir Charles Fitzroy, Governor of NSW.



Title: View south from the Fitzroy Town Hall tower, c1880, [Fitzroy Local History Photograph Collection, FL 1561]

The walk was inspired by an 1880 photo looking south from the Fitzroy Town Hall tower, and another photo taken in 1920 from the same vantage point, with a view to the north.

Led by Mike Moore, approximately 40 people attended the walk on a pleasant cloudy/sunny Saturday afternoon.

The main walk was to the south, with significant demolition having taken place in the 1970s on land bound by Brunswick, Gertrude, Napier and King William Streets, in what was regarded as a slum area. The Housing Commission demolished an entire block of one and two storey houses and shops along with eliminating several streets to make way for four twenty-storey towers to form the Atherton Gardens high-rise estate. Thus 3000

people were accommodated where 600 had lived before.

Heading south from the Town Hall along Napier Street, the first area examined was the former site of John Stone's Timber Yard, Saw Mill and Joinery Works, which occupied several sites along Napier, Condell and Charles Streets. We were told that the joinery was the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere when John Stone died in 1908. The Fitzroy Creche and Day Nursery now occupies some of this area. In 1912 there was a large fire at the Condell Street premises which threatened the Fitzroy Town Hall.

FHS member Peter Williams reported that Wallace Stone, timber merchant and son of John, had a house constructed in Ivanhoe by builder John W. Brown in 1913 with the woodwork coming from the joinery works. Named *Clarivue*, it was described as one of the grandest houses in Heidelberg. It later became the Ivanhoe RSL but unbelievably, the RSL burnt down on Friday 21 April, the day before our walk. There is also a link between John Stone's works and Provan's Timber & Hardware. David Provan commenced work at Stone's premises, becoming their joinery foreman before setting up the business of Mulready, Provan and Clark in 1903 with two other work mates. The business still operates today nearby in Clifton Hill.

Also adjacent to Stone's timber yard and joinery in Charles Street along to Young Street was the stone yard operated by Delbridge & Thomas. Some of the stone for the Victorian Parliament House came from the Delbridge Stone Works. Delbridge died in 1887 and the site was taken over by John Stone's timber yard from 1900. The foundation stone of the Fitzroy Town Hall was laid by Mayor Edward Delbridge in 1873 and the building opened in 1874.

Southwards along Young Street on the eastern side between Little Charles and Webb Street was the shop and dwelling built by Hugh Kneen for himself in 1864 and a house he built in 1870. Kneen, a carpenter, had arrived in Australia in 1853, was a Fitzroy councillor for 4 years from 1872, and was mayor in 1874. He retired to Portarlington in the 1880s and died there in 1912. There is a street named after him in North Fitzroy.

As we turned from Young Street into Webb Streets, Peter Woods reported that Robert Saunders Webb, became the first Collector of Customs. Webb had "unusual" accounting methods and was relieved of his duties 6 years later. He returned to England and died there. His wife died on the return journey to Australia and was buried at sea.

Larcher operated a wholesale and retail dairy from Webb Street, before moving to his larger site in Moor Street.

The 5 acre site bounded by Webb, Brunswick, Gertrude and Young Streets was owned from Oct 1839 by Peter Ferrie, a solicitor, and the site was soon bisected by Ferrie Street (east-west) and Atherton Street (north-south). Who was Atherton? No Atherton had owned land or lived in the area. Ken Smith had reported that Peter Ferrie and Henrietta Atherton had arrived here in September 1839, and that Ferrie was a witness a week later for Henrietta's marriage to Thomas Brown.

We walked the length of Atherton Street before crossing to Napier Street and heading northwards. The former Presbyterian Church and its associated brick building, all still standing, were the 1970s home of Brian Howe, a Methodist minister and

later deputy Prime Minister. Opposite, but now gone, was the Napier Street State School, opened 1883 and converted to a Correspondence School in the 1930s. It was demolished for the high rise estate.

There were four hotels along Webb Street in 1900, the London Hotel, the Victoria Hotel, the Fitzroy Hotel and the Council Club Hotel. The latter is still in operation at the Gore St corner. The Fitzroy Hotel on the south-east corner of Webb and Napier Streets was demolished in about 1970.

The walk then finished back at the Town Hall and a smaller group then walked north along Napier St, using a 1920 photo taken from the Town Hall tower as reference material. Turning east along Greeves Street, several finished with drinks and jaffles at the Bad Frankie bar, to conclude a very pleasant and informative afternoon.



Walk participants on the Atherton Reserve near the corner of Charles and Napier Streets. (Photo: P. Heading)

A 12 page booklet on the walk is available from Committee members.

Oral History Project

In June 2015 the History Society, under the direction of committee member Meg Lee, decided to approach a number of long-term Fitzroy residents and obtain 'their story' of life in the suburb during the years of their residence, so that these experiences are not lost over time. A total of 23 residents have now been interviewed by a number of volunteers, and their recollections stored in the Fitzroy library in the original spoken form, along with a transcript of the interview, a short biographical paragraph, and a photograph of each interviewed person.

The City of Yarra have decided to produce a video recording of some of the stories, and launch the results of all interviews at a function in the Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room on 17 August, 2017 when all those interviewed and the facilitators, will be celebrated for the work involved in the sharing of these personal stories.

Research focused on North Fitzroy

Over the years, much of the research of the History Society has concentrated on the oldest part of Fitzroy, that south of Alexandra Parade. Less effort has been spent on North Fitzroy, so in an attempt to rectify this the committee decided to concentrate on North Fitzroy in 2017. The work is not intended to be a definitive study of North Fitzroy; rather an attempt to introduce some of the factors which have shaped the municipality. Aspects being looked at by a number of members include aboriginal history, inputs into the planning of street layouts, historical land owners and residents, the naming of parks, and the area's dairies. Research and writing will continue over the coming months with the aim of producing a booklet and giving a public presentation.

Opening of new North Fitzroy Library

On Saturday 8 April the new North Fitzroy Library (Bargoonga Nganjin) at the corner of St Georges Road and Best Street was officially opened.

Lina Favrin, FHS member and Digital and Community Learning Librarian at the Fitzroy Library, produced a display of historical material for the opening.



Photos: M. Lee

FACEBOOK

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Become a Member

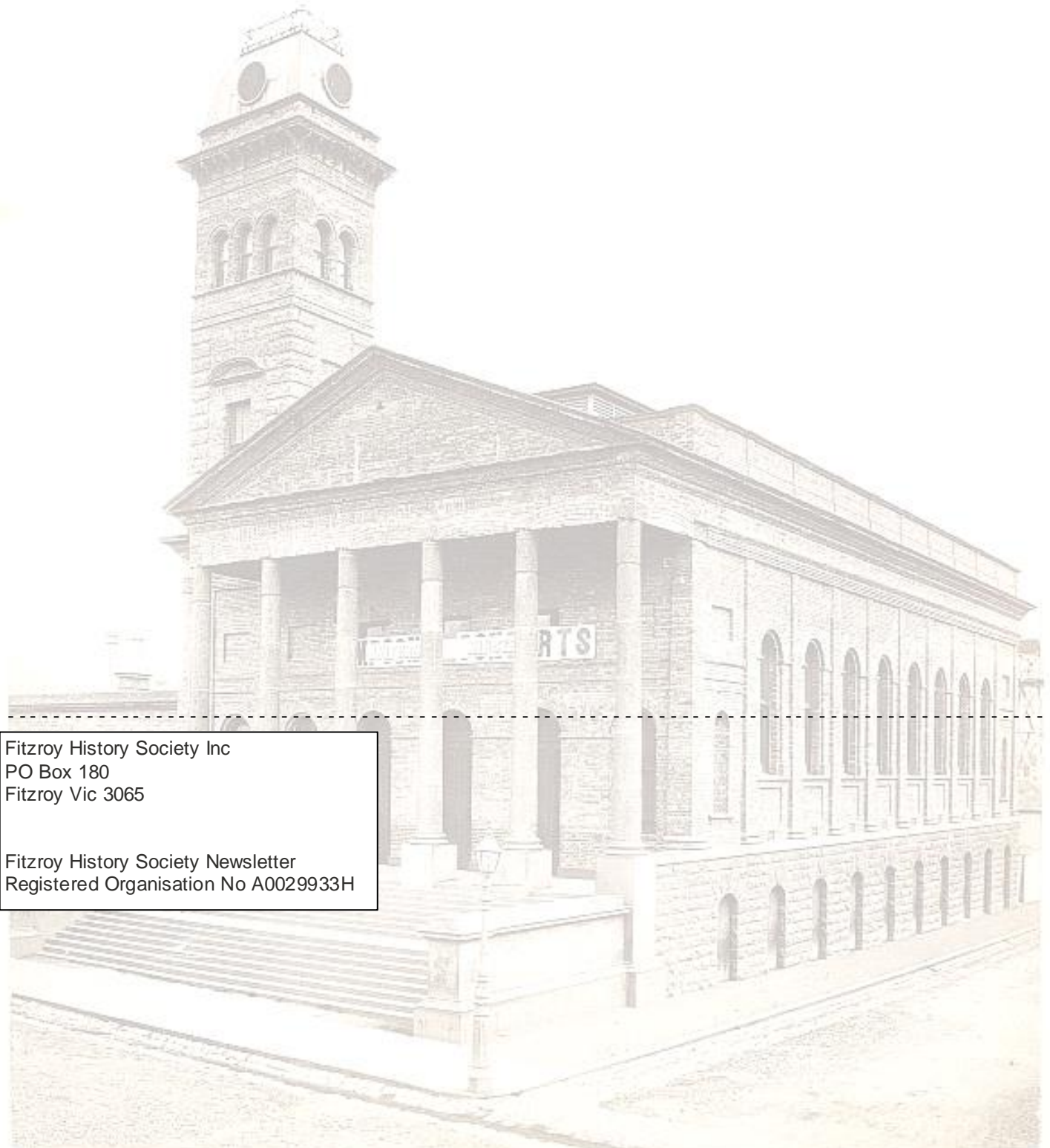
Membership costs just \$10 per person per year.

To make renewal easy, all memberships fall for renewal on 1 August each year (around the date of our AGM). If you would like to join or renew your membership, please complete the form found in this newsletter or on our website www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au and send it with the membership fee to PO Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065.

If you have any queries email us at fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au or write to us at PO Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065.

We look forward to having you as a member.

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