



March 2020

www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au

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NEWSLETTER

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UPCOMING EVENTS

One of the principle items in our newsletters is information for members on events we have planned for the near future. Obviously, with the COVID 19 virus and the need for separation/isolation of ourselves to limit cross-infections, these events have had to be postponed until such time as the Government tells us that conditions have improved sufficiently that normal life can resume. Even our regular committee meetings have been abandoned, replaced by an email substitute keeping the committee aware of memberships, the financial standing of the organisation, and general awareness of people and events.

We had organised two events; a visit to the St Vincent's Hospital archives originally for March, and a walk along Brunswick Street for April. Yes, we have conducted walks along Brunswick Street before, but recent research principally by Mike Moore have unearthed many more interesting facts on a number of sites. Another event we were considering was a viewing of artefacts from the Heritage Victoria, Artefact and Research Centre in Abbotsford. This was to have been held on Heritage Week in May, and was believed to include many items which have a direct link to Fitzroy. We plan on holding these events at a date which is likely to be several months away. We will advise in newsletters with plenty of notice.

SPANISH INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

The pneumonic influenza epidemic of 1918-19 killed an estimated 50 million people world-wide. In Australia, the flu arrived at the beginning of 1919 and infected about 40 percent of the population, with officially about 12,000 deaths, although later estimates are for at least 15,000.

The report of the Fitzroy Health Officer for 1919 to Fitzroy Council was covered in the Fitzroy City Press of 4 June 1920 and is reproduced below. The report gives the number of deaths of Fitzroy citizens due to influenza in 1919 as 101 with a death rate of 2.99 per 1000 (0.3 percent). Australia-wide the death rate was just under 0.3 percent.

6.

HEALTH OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 1919.

I have the honor to present the following report on the sanitary condition of the city for the year 1919.

Population.—33,658.

Birth Rate.—21.89. The number of births registered during the year was 736, giving a birth rate of 21.89 as compared with 23.993 last year.

Death Rate.—9.71. The number of deaths during the year was 557. 25 of these cases occurred in hospitals outside the City, viz ;—Infectious Diseases Hospital 22, (being Influenza 16, Diphtheria 5, Meningitis 1. Melbourne Hospital 3 (all Phthisis-Pulmonalis). Of deaths that occurred in the City 70 were in children under 5 years, 68 being in children one year and under, and 462 in persons over 5 years.

There was 1 death from accident or violence in children under 5 years and 2 in persons over 5 years.

Out of the 557 deaths, 230 were cases admitted to the different hospitals in the City from other districts. When this number is deducted, it leaves the total number of deaths 327.

Taking the estimated population at 33,658, this gives a death rate of 9.71 as compared with 7.53 for the previous year.

The mortality due to the different Zymotic Diseases was as follows :—

Typhoid Fever.—1 case reported and 1 death, giving a death rate of .029.

Diphtheria.—121 cases reported with 5 deaths (all in the Infectious Diseases Hospitals) giving a death rate of .145.

Scarlet Fever.—48 cases reported with no deaths.

Whooping Cough.—1 death, giving a death rate of .029.

Measles.—3 deaths, giving a death rate of .089.

Diarrhoeal Diseases.—15 deaths, giving a death rate of .445.

Tubercular Disease.—75 cases reported with 25 deaths, giving a death rate of .74.

Pneumonia.—Principally Influenzal. 101 deaths, giving a death rate of 2.99.

There was a very extensive epidemic of Influenza during the first six months of the year. 2,559 cases were reported, but numbers of mild cases were not reported. The number of deaths from Pneumonia was 101, which has increased the death rate for the year by 2.18.

I feel that the deaths would have been much more numerous only for the very generous inoculation that was done at the Town Hall, as well as in private. The majority of those who were inoculated early did not develop the disease, and those who did contract it after inoculations, got it in much milder form.

I heartily congratulate the Health Committee on the very efficient manner in which all the arrangements for the inoculations were carried out, as I feel certain it could not have been done more thoroughly.

I also tender the Committee my heartiest congratulations on the excellent way in which they converted the Bell Street School into a perfect little hospital, deserving the thanks of the citizens for the very energetic manner in which they carried out the work.

Fortunately for the community the worst of the epidemic was over by the time the hospital was completed, but of course no one could anticipate that. Had it been opened at an earlier date, several lives would have been saved. In the earlier stages of the epidemic it took days to get the worst cases into hospital owing to want of beds, and very often it was then too late, as the patients were in a dying condition when accommodation was at last found for them.

(Sgd.) F. W. W. MORTON,
Health Officer.

Australia Day Honour

FHS member Carole Woods was a recipient on an OAM in the recent Australia Day awards for "Services to community history." Carole was the guest speaker at our 2010 AGM.

An article of hers appeared in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria *History News* (Issue 345 of December 2019) recounting a walk that looked at Alfred Deakin's connection to Fitzroy. The article is reprinted below:

Remembering Alfred Deakin in Fitzroy

Alfred Deakin died aged 63 at Llanarth, his home in South Yarra, on 7 October 1919. One hundred years later on 7 October 2019 Mike Moore, former president of the Fitzroy History Society, organized a walk in remembrance of Deakin's early association with Fitzroy.



Peter Woods, Carole Woods (no relation) and Mike Moore at the site of the former Deakin home in Gore Street, Fitzroy, 7 October 2019. Photo courtesy of Meg Lee .

I joined the small group of Fitzroy residents as the representative of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Alfred Deakin was one of the three inaugural vice presidents of the Historical Society of Victoria (HSV), as it was originally known, and the society has a hand-written note in which he apologized for probable non-attendance at a preliminary meeting on 21 May 1909; a fortnight later he entered his third term as prime minister of Australia.

On 7 October 2019 we walked to the site of 90 George Street. Here Alfred was born in 1856 and lived with his parents Sarah and William Deakin and older sister Catherine until he was three. In 1926 the HSV arranged for a memorial tablet to be fixed to the cottage, and society members joined Deakin descendants outside the cottage in 1956 to mark the centenary of Deakin's birth. The cottage was demolished in 1978.

After leaving George Street we walked to the site of the Deakins' second Fitzroy home at 72 Gore Street near the corner of Gertrude Street, where they lived from 1859-62. Here Alfred's love of books and theatrics flourished;

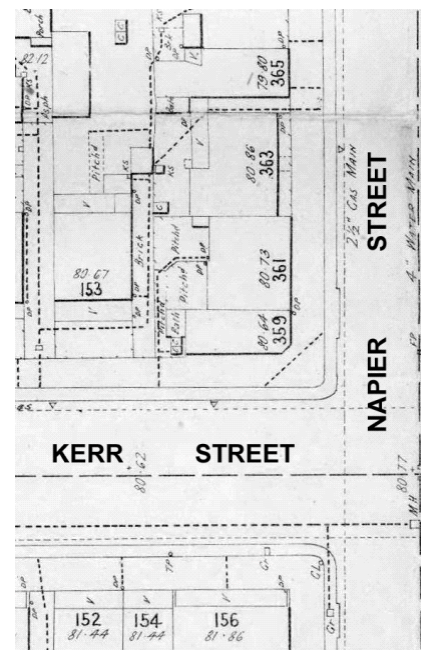
he transformed a wagon belonging to stables on the street corner into a ship or fortress for his plays. Fittingly, the corner site is now occupied by Rose Chong's costume hire shop, which weaves its own transforming magic.

The Deakins moved their Gore Street house to Adams Street, South Yarra, where it was named The Elms after an ancestral home near Grosmont, Wales. Much later, Alfred's musically gifted youngest daughter, Vera, visited the scene of his early boyhood when performing in the concerts of her cello teacher, Herr Louis Hattenbach, at his home, 13 Gore Street.

The young boy from Fitzroy rose to a leadership role in the Victorian government. As chief secretary in December 1888 he laid the foundation stone of the Fitzroy courthouse, which was an extension to the grand town hall. In a speech on this occasion, Alfred referred to Fitzroy as 'my native place'.

Carole Woods

359 and 361 NAPIER STREET – a brief history



From MMBW plan 1240, dated 1900.

From 1859, James Inkster owned the vacant land at the corner of Napier and Kerr Streets. By October 1859 he had built a two room stone cottage, now identified as 361 Napier Street.

On 3 November 1863 he married Catherine Murphy at St Francis's Church, Melbourne. Their four children were born at the bluestone cottage from 1864 to 1873.

By December 1869 he had sold the northern land portion, 30 ft. x 40 ft. (now 363 Napier Street) to Frederick Rouse. Then by 1877 the three room brick shop, known as Willow Tree Store, was built on the corner along the Kerr Street frontage.

Inkster was a contractor, and there are newspaper references to the Fitzroy council awarding him contracts for:

- kerbing on portions of Hodgson, Kent, Spring and Henry Streets in February 1863;
- Kerbing and channelling on portion of Johnson Streets in August 1863;
- 300 yards of metal (crushed stone) for Smith Street in June 1865

He was also awarded contracts at other locations across Melbourne

James Inkster died, aged 58 (or 53?), at Willow Tree Store on 1 January 1889 "after a long and painful illness".

INKSTER —On the 1st January, at his late residence, Willow Tree Store, 359 Napier-street, Fitzroy, after a long and painful illness, Mr. James Inkster, contractor, aged 53 years

The Leader, Sat. 5 Jan. 1889, p.40.

His wife Catherine continued in the store as a grocer from 1885 for over a decade.

PAPERHANGER, to do small job, wanted. Willow Tree Store, Napier and Kerr sts., Fitzroy.

The Age, Tues 28 April, 1891, p. 8.

She died in 1923 at her son's residence, 417 Napier Street.

HALF-DROWNED HALF-BAKED: Essays on the History of North Fitzroy

This 146-page A4 sized publication of the proceedings of a seminar held in 2017 has been reprinted. It is available from the Society for \$20.

Oral History Project

Jenny Wills' story is being added to the FHS oral history collection. The transcript of Jenny Wills' recollections will be available soon on the FHS website.

Jenny is committed to local democracy and equal rights for all. She was Fitzroy Council's first social planner from 1974 to 1981 and helped establish Council's unique Social Planning Office. This was a "one-stop shop" for Council's staff in children's services and aged care, as well as community agencies such as the Fitzroy Advisory Service, Shelter Vic, and State and Commonwealth agencies. It provided a base for community groups, for example, the Fitzroy Housing Repair and Advisory Service and advocacy groups such as the Medibank Action Coalition and it was also a free meeting place for local interest groups, both in and out of office hours.

After travelling overseas and some short term appointments, Jenny continued her career in local government as Director of Social and Cultural Policy at the Municipal Association of Victoria, a position she retired from in 2000.

She is co author of the 1985 book, *Local Government and Community Services Fitzroy – A Study in Social Planning*; the commissioned 2001 pocket guide, *Just Vibrant & Sustainable Communities – A Framework for Progressing and Measuring Community Wellbeing* and the 2012 free on-line book, *Redesigning Local Democracy*.

Jenny was a foundation member of the Victorian Local Government Women's Coalition and helped develop the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter, now endorsed by the majority of Victorian Councils and was the Australian representative from 1997 to 2000 on the gender equity task force of the International Union of Local Authorities.

In 2008 she was inducted to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in recognition of her pioneering community development, social planning work and her contribution to women's rights.

Jenny now lives in Geelong where she is convenor of WILD, Women in Local Democracy.



Jenny Wills

Become a Member

Membership costs just \$20 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 available on our website www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au and send it to PO Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065 .or via email to andy.lanskis@gmail.com The membership fee can be posted with this form, or preferably, paid into our Bendigo Bank account: BSB 633 108, Account Number 1516 20127, Account Name THE FITZROY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.

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.

In order to save costs we are now sending all newsletters by email. If this is unsatisfactory for you, please advise so we can send a copy by post