

Fitzroy History Society Newsletter

www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au

July 2013

Before Woolworths: an epic 1980s battle for a liveable Fitzroy

**A Talk by Val Noone
Guest Speaker at
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 21 August, 2013
7pm for AGM, Talk at 7.30pm
Fitzroy Reading Room at Fitzroy Town Hall**

Before Safeway opened on the current Woolworths site in Smith Street in May 1987, residents in the Gore Street Area Action Group (GAAG – some pronounced it “gag”, others “garg”) fought a four-year battle to save the Ackman's building. GAAG aimed to promote development in Smith Street while saving the heritage building and preserving the amenity of our residential area – the developers wanted the trucks to enter from Gore Street. This talk is an insider's account of the organising, letter boxing, protesting, lobbying, legal wrangles, internal disagreements, street closures, ALP intrigues, independent councillors and the tragic-humorous result of supermarket-carpark-façade. With developments scheduled for this site in the coming year, this presentation will be both historical and topical.

Demolishing ACKMAN'S Smith Street c. 1984



With increasing costs of printing and postage for the Newsletter we prefer to send you a copy by email. By receiving it by email you help to keep the membership subscription to a minimum – and help the environment.

Please email fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com.au with your email address to receive the newsletter electronically

Forthcoming Events

Members' Family History Research Presentation

8th October
Fitzroy Library
7pm

Alison Hart

Alison's great, great, grandfather, Francis Clark born Essex 1820, arrived in Melbourne in 1840. He was the builder of Devonshire Arms Hotel 1843, manager of Palmers soda factory, butcher in Brunswick St 1847-49. In 1852, he was elected to MCC. He became a donor of Jubilee Cottage at the Old Colonists and was associated with Kings College, Clifton Hill. He died in 1896 at his residence at Fairy Hills, Alphington.

Janet Gaff

Janet's forebear was Lucy McKinney nee Burke, who from about 1865 lived in Fitzroy St. The original farmhouse was demolished in 1860.

Tour of State Library Exhibition

5.30pm 19 November

Meet in the Swanston St Foyer

Free, secular and democratic
With Curator, Harriet Edquist

The Library founded in 1853 and the cultural institutions that shared its site – the museum, gallery and art schools – were established by a group of colonial liberals including judge Sir Redmond Barry and architect Joseph Reed. Redmond Barry had been a resident of Fitzroy. Celebrating the Dome centenary, opened in 1913, we are hopeful that our guide will be the curator Harriet Edquist, Professor of Architectural History at RMIT and Director of RMIT Design Archives

Annual Dinner and Get Together

December 6th 2013

7pm

Haskins Restaurant

North Fitzroy Arms Hotel

CARPETED PRIVATE DINING ROOM

Self choice from either Bar or Dining Room menu

Reasonable prices

ALL WELCOME

Please RSVP to fitzroyhistorysociety@yahoo.com



**Coming Soon -An Exhibition
at
City of Yarra Fitzroy Branch Library**

Little Elvie, pictured above, was born Elvie Watson in 1924. She started her stage career at the age of 4 and became a popular child performer of the Vaudeville era of Melbourne. Elvie's family moved to Glass Terrace, 64 Gertrude Street in 1916. Whilst attending The Academy of Mary Immaculate in Nicholson Street, she appeared in Pantomines, variety shows and. At the age of 10 she performed in J.C. Williamson's Grand Opera season with Dame Nellie Melba in productions of La Boheme and Aida at His Majesty's Theatre.

The Exhibition will be curated by Eliza Greenhatch and feature original photographs, programs and newspaper clippings an exhibition of Elvie's career between 1918 and 1929 against a backdrop of Fitzroy and the flourishing Melbourne Theatre scene from the end of the Great War and the start of the Depression.

Fitzroy History Society gains PROV Grant

to publish a history and walk along the

Inner Circle Railway Walk

An e-publication of a Self-Guided Walk

Fitzroy History Society recently was granted a Public Record Office History Grant of \$3000. The specific project is to produce and e-publish a self guided walk for inclusion onto FHS website. The walk will finalise the great body of research that **Terence Nott** has compiled and previously used as he lead walks.

2013 HERITAGE FESTIVAL AND GERTRUDE STREET WALKS

The hottest tickets in Fitzroy were to the series of four Gertrude Street walks run by our society recently. Both "The life of Gertrude Street", run by Maria Frendo and Michael Doogan, and "The Buildings of Gertrude Street", run by Professor Miles Lewis, were completely sold out early in the piece. With so many devastated would-be audiences, a fifth walk was arranged to avoid potential crowd rage. The tickets were a modest \$5 and we have resolved to double that next time, now we are flushed with success.

Maria and Michael's walk focused on the stories and scandals of Gertrude Street from 1890's to 1990's, and featured surprise pop-up re-enactments. The dentist from 1890's offered to perform free extractions for the audience, and at the Napier hotel there was a hasty escape from the cops by Squizzy Taylor and his floozies. From the Maysar Gym, screaming people fled the supposedly burning building, re-enacting the fire in the 1960's, which destroyed the third floor of the then furniture shop. 50's prostitutes, Q and A's (Queer and Alternatives), spivs with Elvis hairstyles, rounded out the walk, all anchored by lively, informative, and sometimes spicy, commentary by Maria and Michael.



Miles Lewis's walk was a perfect complement, as it focused on the buildings and architecture of the street. We learned about the early events, which determined the street layout and subdivision of the district. Water supply to the area and to the city of Melbourne was explained and a historical stopcock cover, which many of us would have trodden on unawares, was revealed. Photos of early buildings were distributed and we were able to compare the present day buildings with their original designs.

Many audience members were locals or those with local family history, and the society was delighted to meet new people who can add to our growing knowledge and affection for our Fitzroy.
Rose Chong

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Subscription, by cash or cheque, is \$10 per person, per year,
renewable annually on 1 July.

Please pay in person at the AGM or our other events,
or by post to PO Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065

A receipt is required
is not required
or by email is sufficient

As well as the information regularly available at

<http://www.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/>

I would prefer to receive the newsletter

by email ,
or postage of a printed copy .

Optional

We welcome your general feedback, and/or your suggestions for events or activities.

My interest in Fitzroy history is:

local history family history

local heritage social activities

or other - details are

I can contribute the following information / knowledge on Fitzroy history.

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 on our website www.fitzroyhistorysociety.com.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.

Fitzroy History Society Inc
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