

Carlton Community History Group

# Carlton Chronicles

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## Women's football in the 1930s

Women and girls playing football is these days regarded as normal and strongly supported, as evidenced by the popularity of the Australian Football League Women's (AFLW). But it was not always so. In previous generations football was regarded as a males-only sport and women and girls were excluded. However, there was at least one occasion during this era of male dominance on which women's teams did play on a major football ground in Melbourne. This was in August 1933 when two women's teams wearing the colours of Carlton and Richmond took to the field at the Carlton grounds in Princes Park.

But the match was regarded as a novelty and not really taken seriously. It was part of a fund-raising event that featured other novelty matches and events - a match between past players of Carlton and between members of the Young Chinese Football Club, a long kicking contest and an amateur athletic race. However the women involved took the opportunity to play football very seriously. One of those was 16 year old Myra MacKenzie who at that time lived in Garton Street, Princes Hill, right next to the Carlton grounds. When interviewed in 2009 by Tony de Bolfo, historian for the Carlton Football Club, she



Merle Lane, captain, leads the 1933 Carlton women's football team into the ground. (Photo: Carlton Football Club, Bluseum).

remembered that an advertisement had been placed in a newspaper seeking expressions of interest from budding female footballers. 'My father saw the ad and said "You better get over and show them what you can do", so I went to training, and about seventy or eighty women turned up'.

Aspiring women footballers 'came from everywhere', said Myra. Most were already playing some sort of sport, but not football. 'The captain, Merle, was head of a cycling club, and the rest were basket-ballers and the like. The whole point was to raise money for the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Someone thought "What if we get two girls' teams to play", so one team wore Carlton colours, the other Richmond'.

The women and girls trained several days a week, coached by two former Carlton players. Eventually two teams were picked from the better players. 'We played two 20-minute halves', Myra said. 'It was very low-scoring and we won the game'. The Carlton team kicked one goal six, twelve points, while the Richmond team were held scoreless.

After the success of this fundraising event, there was talk of trying to organise more women's football matches. But according to Myra, 'the man in charge at Carlton said we weren't allowed to train at the ground, and that was that'.

Myra did not live long enough to see the success of the AFLW. She died in December 2015 at the age of 98. But according to Tony de Bolfo she always took pride in the role she had played in blazing a trail for women footballers.



The Carlton women's football team, August 1933. Sixteen year old Myra MacKenzie is in the front row on the left. (Photo: Carlton Football Club, Blueseum).

## Historical Walks in Carlton

### **Sunday 2 October, 2.00 pm – South Carlton**

Discover remnants of early Carlton before the era of the cast-iron terraces, and learn of its more notorious crimes, notable migrants and more recent controversies.

### **Sunday 9 October, 2.00 pm – North Carlton**

Explore North Carlton's nineteenth century streetscapes and learn about its history, its forgotten prison, and stories of the Jewish and Italian migrants who settled there.

### **Sunday 16 October, 2.00 pm – South Parkville**

Explore the atmospheric streets of South Parkville and nearby Royal Park. See a nineteenth century pre-fabricated building, the site of a notorious crime, and fine examples of Victorian architecture.

**These walks are run by the Princes Hill Community Centre in conjunction with the Carlton Community History Group. To register, contact Princes Hill Community Centre. Phone: 9387 7740. Email: [enquiries@princeshill.org.au](mailto:enquiries@princeshill.org.au)**

## Did you know - Statue of Carlton woman activist

In Victoria there are more statues of animals than there are of women. Appallingly, women make up only one percent of statues in Victoria. Trades Hall Council do not think this is good enough, so they are planning to erect a statue of renowned equal pay campaigner and trade union legend, Zelda D'Aprano outside Trades Hall in Lygon Street, Carlton. The Victorian government has already committed some funding for this project. Zelda grew up in Carlton and in her final years before she died in 2018, she lived in North Carlton.

## New mural a reminder of times past

This new mural has appeared on the north-facing wall of Clay Health & Organics, a health food and organic produce store in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton. The bold and colourful image was painted by artist Melanie Caple, who has done other work in Carlton. The mural image of fruit and vegetables is quite apt, as the fresh produce section of the shop is housed in number 719, which was originally the site of a greengrocer's business.

Clay Health & Organics now occupies two shop buildings at 719 and 721 Rathdowne Street. The two shops have had a variety of business uses over their lifetime. Fruit and vegetables were the order of the day when a greengrocer opened at number 719 in 1915, while its neighbour at number 721 traded in hardware. Other business occupants have included a confectioner / pastrycook, grocer, furniture manufacturer, importer, dressmaker, the bookshop Rathdowne Books and the clothing store Frisck. Clay Fine Food initially occupied one shop at number 719, then expanded its floorspace and business as Clay Health & Organics into number 721 in 2016.



## From schooners to school books

On St Patrick's Day in March 2020, Carlton's Dan O'Connell Hotel served its last beer and closed its doors forever. The hotel, famous for its St Patrick's Day celebrations, suffered substantial financial losses as a result of COVID business restrictions, thus forcing its closure. Within a few months the iconic Edwardian building on the corner of Canning and Princes streets was listed for sale and sold to an undisclosed buyer in July 2020. After months of speculation, the new owner was announced as the Fitzroy Community School. The school has planning approval to convert the former hotel premises to the new Carlton campus. The building is subject to heritage controls and the façade and external appearance – including the hotel signage – will be retained in the school building

The sale and refurbishment of the Dan O'Connell Hotel attracted considerable media attention, but not all the reports stand up to fact-checking. 'The Dan', as it is popularly known, has been described as 'one of Melbourne's oldest hotels' in a '136 year old building'. Melbourne has hotels dating back to the 1850s, three decades before the Dan O'Connell Hotel was first licensed. Named after an Irish political leader, the Daniel O'Connell Hotel first appeared in the Licensing Register in December 1883, with Mary Buggy as licensee. The hotel had an earlier history as the Munster Arms, dating back to 1875. The building at the time – described as a small brick hotel in the rate books – would have borne little resemblance to the ornate Edwardian structure that now stands on the corner site. The new hotel was designed by Smith & Ogg and built by C.F. Pittard in 1912, which makes it 110 years old in 2022.

## A notable Carlton personality – George Coulthard

One of the towering figures of the Carlton Football Club and indeed of Australian Rules football more generally in the nineteenth century was George Coulthard. As well as being one of football's finest players, he was also a Test cricketer and Test match umpire.

Coulthard first started playing club-level football in 1874 when at the age of 18 he started playing for a junior side called the Carlton Imperials. He was at that stage living with his parents in Carlton Place, Carlton. He proved to be a match-winner for the Imperials, and in 1876 was recruited by Carlton, then a powerhouse of Victorian football. In 1877 Coulthard helped Carlton to a premiership win in the newly formed Victorian Football Association (VFA). He was also a key member of the Victorian side that dominated the first intercolonial matches.

A fast, versatile and highly skilled footballer he was, in the opinion of many of his contemporaries, the greatest player yet seen in the Australian game. Capable of playing in most positions, he was a superb kick, particularly over distance, and was the VFA's leading goal kicker on three occasions (once jointly). His elusive dashes with the ball up the field for 100 metres or more became a celebrated aspect of his game. In July 1880 a profile of Coulthard in the *Australian Pictorial Weekly* said:

For the last five years his name has been very prominent among footballers, and for playing the game in its most perfect style we would have much difficulty in finding his equal; he marks with certainty and kicks 'punt' or 'drop' with admirable judgement and accuracy. . . . His fellow players show their confidence by always playing to him when possible.

George was also a prominent cricketer. He began his career with the Carlton Cricket Club, but for the 1877–78 season transferred to the Melbourne Cricket Club. In the early 1880s he played for a Victorian XV, and on one occasion in February 1882 batted for the Australian test side against England. He was also a cricket umpire. In 1878 he was appointed umpire for the touring English side, and in February 1879 gave a controversial 'out' during a match in Sydney that caused an uproar. He is one of the few people who have both umpired a test match and played in one. Coulthard's sporting exploits in both football and cricket made him a household name throughout Australia.

Off the field, he ran a tobacco and sporting goods store at 233 Lygon Street, Carlton, that doubled as a clubroom and smoking room. In July 1880 he married Letitia Ann Jackson with whom he had two daughters, one of whom died in infancy. However, in the early 1880s he began suffering from the effects of tuberculosis and by 1883 he was no longer able to play cricket or football or indeed to work at all. To assist him, the proceeds from a June 1883 match between Carlton and Melbourne at the MCG was donated to Coulthard. On the 22 October 1883 at his home at 233 Lygon Street, George Coulthard died, aged only 27. However, his talent was remembered long after his sporting career ended. In 1996 he became one of the inaugural inductees to the AFL Hall of Fame.



George Coulthard in 1881  
(Photo: Bluseum)

## The Old Lolly Shop

(Based on an article by Rose Raymen)

Many of the immigrant families that settled in Carlton in the early years of the twentieth century embraced the opportunity to run a small business - greengrocers, delicatessens, restaurants and milk bars. These small businesses became the linchpin of countless immigrant families and the heart of many suburban communities.

Elizabeth and Henry Cohen, who were descendants of European Jewish immigrants, opened a milk bar at 314 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton in 1939. It became popular with children from the nearby Lee Street State School, now the Carlton North Primary School, located around the corner at 60 Lee Street. It was always crowded at lunch time with school kids and was their tuckshop. Every Friday 'good' children were rewarded with a free handful of boiled sweets from the big lolly drum that Elizabeth kept behind the counter. The milk bar gradually became known as the 'Old Lolly Shop'. For adults the milk bar was a place to sit and talk or to meet in the evening.



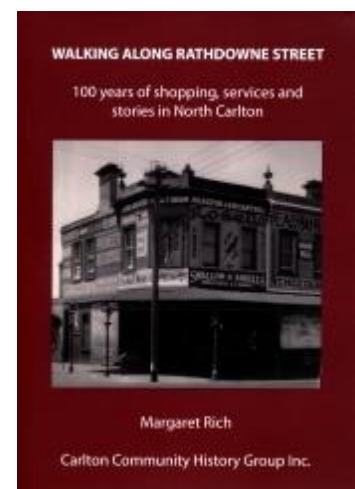
The Cohens saw the neighbourhood change over time. Carlton's Jewish community moved out to the middle suburbs, to be replaced by immigrants from Italy and Greece in the 1950s and 1960s. Supermarkets multiplied and schools ran their own tuckshops. Henry Cohen passed away at the Rathdowne Street address in 1962 aged 63. Elizabeth Cohen closed the Old Lolly Shop in 1975. By that time, she had served generations of Carlton children and their parents. Elizabeth Cohen died in 1990 aged 85 years.

### Walking Along Rathdowne Street: 100 years of shopping, services and stories in North Carlton

This book, by Margaret Rich, examines the changing use of the shops and some other buildings in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, between Princes Street and Park Street, from the early 1870s. This study traces the gradual change from a vibrant shopping strip supplying the everyday needs of people who lived nearby, through the commercial doldrums of the mid 20th century and into the gentrification phase which has resulted in the Rathdowne Street of today. Stories of the lives of some of the shopkeepers are included. The study is organised by street number and a profile of some 150 buildings is provided.

**Copies are available from the Carlton Community History Group.  
Cost \$15 plus postage and handling.**

<http://www.cchq.asn.au/publications.html>



## From Jewish to Islamic cultural centre

A quick glance at the façade of 588 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, is enough to suggest that it has an interesting history, and the impression is confirmed by walking down the neighbouring lane where the side wall shows a range of altered window spaces in a building occupying almost the entire site.

Until the 1930s it was just a local shop that sold everyday necessities to a clientele used to doing all their shopping on foot. Number 588 housed a greengrocer for many years. By the 1930s, however, local shops were in trouble and at the same time a rapidly growing Jewish population needed accommodation for its clubs and organisations. From 1939 this building was the home of a Jewish group called *House of Culture*. In 1952 *House of Culture* was succeeded by *Mizrachi House*, home of an international Zionist movement whose Melbourne branch had been founded as recently as 1943.



588 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.  
(Photo: realestate.com.au)

However, there was soon another change of hands when in 1956 the building was bought by the just-established Cyprus Turkish Association. There were only a small number of Turkish Cypriots in Melbourne at the time and they often met informally outdoors, on the banks of the Yarra, for example. By the early 1950s the need for a cultural venue in a central position was urgent. A building opposite the City Baths was considered, but the North Carlton site, described as 'an old theatre', was cheaper and offered better parking. Renovations were completed just in time to welcome a group of Turkish wrestlers coming to Melbourne to compete in the 1956 Olympic Games.

The Drummond Street mosque was not built until 1969 and in the meantime the building at 588 was important in providing Islamic prayer facilities. On Saturdays the Association ran language classes for children in the front rooms of the building while their parents socialised at the back. A major change occurred when in 1967 the Turkish and Australian governments agreed on a program of assisted migration, and the Rathdowne Street building became too small for the growing population and was sold. Since then it has been a private residence.

**This publication, Carlton Chronicles, is produced and distributed four times a year. If you would like to be put on the mailing list, email the Carlton Community History Group at [cchg@y7mail.com](mailto:cchg@y7mail.com) or visit our website [www.cchg.asn.au](http://www.cchg.asn.au)**