

Carlton Community History Group

Carlton Chronicles

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The Eight Hour Day parade

Over a long weekend in early March, Melbourne celebrates the Moomba Festival, which centres around a grand parade through the city. But before there was Moomba and the Moomba parade, that long weekend was used for another grand parade that celebrated something entirely different, the winning of an eight hour working day. This was one of the most important improvements in the conditions of workers, and in Victoria the campaign for an eight hour day began in, and was centred in, Carlton

In the mid nineteenth century there was a movement in the UK and in the Australian colonies for the working day to be reduced from ten to eight hours with no decrease in pay. It was called the Eight Hour Day Movement and it had as its basic principle the right of every working man to eight hours labour, eight hours recreation and eight hours rest. In the UK this campaign got nowhere. But here in the colony of Victoria things were different. The gold rush of the 1850s had created a shortage of skilled labour at a time when many important buildings, such as the University and the State



The Federated Rubber Workers' float in a Carlton street, ready for the Eight Hour Day parade. Note the 8-8-8 on the horses' rugs. (Photo: State Library of Victoria)

Library, were being constructed. There was a demand for skilled workers such as stonemasons, carpenters and bricklayers, but many of these had left to seek their fortune on the goldfields. This meant that those who remained in Melbourne were in a strong position to negotiate for better wages and conditions.

On 21 April 1856, the stonemasons working at the University in Carlton downed tools and marched on Parliament House, which was also being built at this time, demanding that the normal ten hour working day be reduced to eight hours. Because they were in such a good bargaining position, they were successful in their demands. This was a world first – a recognition of the principle of eight hours work, eight hours recreation and eight hours rest. The right to an eight hour working day was at first confined to stonemasons, but their victory provided the impetus for other building trades to agitate for similar conditions, and it was eventually applied to a range of other trades and

occupations. This campaign to extend the right to an eight hour working day was centred on the Trades Hall in Lygon Street, Carlton.

The date of that first action by stonemasons, 21 April, became a day of celebration for workers and tradesmen in Melbourne for the next 100 years. It was celebrated each year with a grand parade through the city that attracted a crowd of tens of thousands. A feature of these Eight Hour Day parades was floats with large banners that proudly proclaimed the name of an individual union and its aspirations. In 1879 the day became a public holiday. After the First World War, the date was changed to March so as not to compete with the Anzac Day parade, and in 1934 the Eight Hour Day was renamed Labour Day. However over the decades that followed attendance at the procession dropped away, and in 1951 it was abandoned altogether. In 1955, the Labour Day holiday was taken over by Moomba, and the Labour Day parade replaced by the Moomba parade.

Kurop's Corner Store

By Rose Raymen

From the 1950s until the early 1970s, almost every suburban neighbourhood in Melbourne had a corner store. People knew their local shopkeepers and shopkeepers knew their customers. It was a one-stop shop for basic groceries, newspapers, tobacco, ice cream and mixed lollies. With the introduction of supermarket chains and service stations, many corner stores, milk bars and delicatessens, were forced to close.

Kurop's corner store was established in 1950 by Jewish immigrants Chaskel and Mania Kurop (formerly Kuropatwa) and located on the corner of Pigdon and Amess Streets, North Carlton. The Victorian building at 91 Pigdon Street, was also the family's home. Chaskel Kuropatwa was born in the town of Lodz, Poland / Russia, in 1903 and tragically lost his first wife and two young children during the war in Europe. Mania was born in Ukraine in 1915 and lost her first husband in the Battle of Stalingrad. Chaskel and Mania Kuropatwa, emigrated to Australia in 1948, with daughter Vera from Mania's first marriage and son Leon, settling in the inner suburb of North Carlton.



(Photo: Rose Raymen)

Kurop's corner store was not only popular with the Carlton locals but was also frequented by customers from Brunswick, Coburg, Preston, Northcote, Elwood, St Kilda, Kew and Balwyn. The store was open seven days a week, closing around nine in the evenings. However, in the days leading up to the Jewish festival of Passover, the deli traded till midnight, selling boxes of matzos (unleavened flatbread), horse-radish and Kosher wine. After moving to Pigdon Street in 1957, my parents, Joseph and Zelda, were regulars at the store and would often chat informally with the couple in Yiddish.

After the closure of their beloved corner store, the Kurops moved to the suburb of North Caulfield. Chaskel Kurop passed away in 1980, followed by Mania Kurop in 2007. Both are buried at the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha cemetery in Springvale.

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Orlando's Mark

The ornamental cast iron and wrought iron features that are so characteristic of Victorian terrace houses in Carlton were often manufactured locally in Carlton. North Carlton in particular had a number of foundries, forges and blacksmithing businesses that produced these items for houses in the late 19th and early 20th century. Evidence of this is found on some houses in Pigdon Street, Princes Hill, whose ornamental gates bear the name of their maker 'O. Goodall Maker North Carlton' (see photos). The houses are three single storey homes named Ormuz, Orotava and Oruba at numbers 299, 301 and 303 Pigdon Street. When they were built, Mr. Goodall's blacksmithing business was located not far away in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.

Orlando Goodall was an Englishman who hailed from Cheshire. He was born in 1862 and arrived in Australia via New Zealand, where he married a local woman, Emily Merson, in 1884. They had three sons, born in Australia between 1885 and 1895, and the family lived initially in Mcllwraith Street, Princes Hill, and Drummond Street, North Carlton. Orlando established an oven making business, Goodall & Merson, in partnership with William Merson (possibly Emily's brother). The business was near the corner of Macpherson and Arnold Streets,

across the road from the Melbourne General Cemetery. The partnership was dissolved in January 1899 and Orlando moved his blacksmithing business to Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.

In 1903, Orlando built the family home at 823 Rathdowne Street, on land owned by his wife Emily. The family lived there for a few years only, and the house and blacksmithing plant and equipment was advertised for sale in 1906. Orlando died in Sydney in 1928, survived by his widow Emily and two of their sons.

The cast iron ovens manufactured by Goodall & Merson have long since rusted away, and the Goodall family home in Rathdowne Street was demolished in the early 1970s and replaced by a block of flats. However, the legacy of Orlando's cast iron and wrought iron work remains at the gates of Ormuz, Orotava and Oruba in Pigdon Street.



(Photo: CCHG)



(Photo: CCHG)

A delayed opening

On Friday 17 April 1964, the new South Carlton Post Office was officially opened at 113-119 Lygon Street. As the opening time approached, the invited guests and a crowd of onlookers gathered, but where was the guest of honour? Arthur Calwell, Federal Leader of the Opposition, was on his way by bus from an unscheduled stop in country Victoria. His flight, and several others, had been diverted from fog-bound Melbourne to Mangalore airport near Seymour. Over 400 passengers were stranded at the rural airport, and there was only one telephone available to relay information back to Melbourne. Eventually however he arrived and opened the new post office. After the completion of formalities, Mr Calwell took his place behind the counter and served the first customer of the day. *The Sun* newspaper of 18 April 1964 published a photo of Arthur Calwell, V.I.P. 'postal clerk' serving four year old Andrew McClean.

Carlton Personality – Lena Santospirito

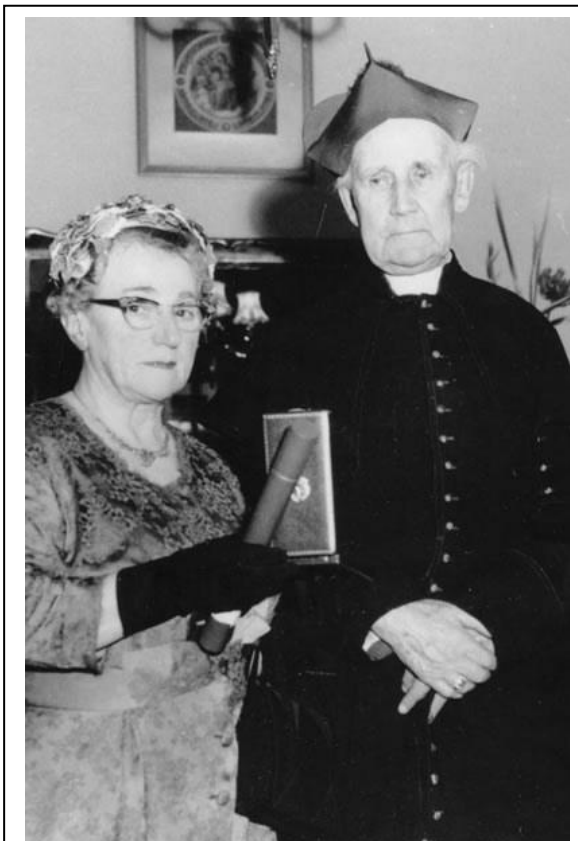
Lena Santospirito was one of the first Italo-Australian women to assume a leadership role in the provision of welfare and community services to Melbourne's Italian community. The Australian-born daughter of Italian parents, she was the first woman to be appointed President of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief, a position she held from 1946 to 1955. These were the years in which mass migration from Italy to Australia was beginning. Her efforts in this role were recognised by the Italian government in 1958 when she was awarded the Italian Star of Solidarity.

Lena was born in Ballarat on 4 April 1895. Her parents had migrated to Australia from the Aeolian Islands, off the north-east coast of Sicily. She did her schooling in Melbourne and in 1925, she married Antonio Santospirito. Antonio was also born in the Aeolian Islands and came to Australia as a child. He ran a flower-stall off Flinders Lane in Melbourne. After their marriage the Santospiritos moved into a home at 79 Bouverie Street, Carlton, which soon became the headquarters for Italian welfare in Melbourne.

During the Second World War, many Italians in Australia suffered great hardship when Italy entered the war as an ally of Germany, and they were interned as 'enemy aliens'. In June 1940, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Rev. Daniel Mannix, established the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief to provide assistance to Italian internees and Italian prisoners of war who were being held in Victoria. Lena was a founding member of the Committee and worked throughout the war organising fundraising dances, concerts and bazaars.

After the war, in 1946, she took over as President of the Committee and in that role presided over the most turbulent period of Italian-Australian history. The focus of the Committee's work had by then shifted to assisting the post-war migrants from war-torn Italy who began to arrive in Australia. For government-assisted migrants the situation was hard enough, but for the eighty percent who were unassisted it was even harder. They needed help to find accommodation, employment and to deal with government bureaucracies. This assistance was provided by the Archbishop's Committee, which largely operated out of the Santospirito's home in Bouverie Street, Carlton. Lena used her contacts in the Italian and wider communities to find work placements for many migrants. Amongst other things, she inserted ads in newspapers offering the services of strong, hard-working Italians. She also helped many people in their dealings with the Department of Immigration, with the assistance of her friend and local member of parliament, Arthur Calwell.

In 1955 she resigned from the Archbishop's Committee, but continued her community work for various religious and charitable organizations. She is remembered for her tireless work, her faith and the generosity she showed to so many people in Melbourne's Italian community. Lena Santospirito died in 1983 and is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. In 2001 her name was added to the Victorian Honour Role of Women.



Lena Santospirito with Archbishop Mannix receiving the Italian Star of Solidarity at Raheen in 1958. (Photo - Italian Historical Society)

Historical Walks in Carlton

Saturday 7 October, 10am till 12 noon – Jewish and Italian Carlton

This tour takes you through the streets of Carlton to learn something of the two communities that, in the early and mid-twentieth century, made it one of Australia's first truly multi-cultural suburbs. You will visit the sites of synagogues, churches and iconic businesses, and hear stories of crimes and disputes, of those who prospered and those who struggled.

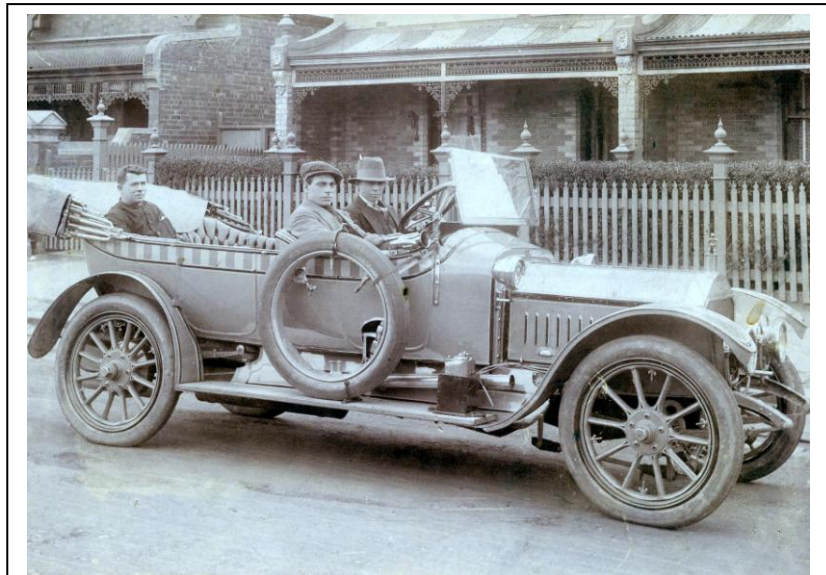
Saturday 14 October, 10am till 12 noon – Melbourne General Cemetery

Melbourne General Cemetery is the oldest and most historic of our existing cemeteries. On this tour you will learn about its history, and about some of the interesting or notorious characters who are buried there.

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

The Rathdowne Street Mechanic

Martin John Shelley, known as 'Matt', was a mechanic who spent around 40 years running a bicycle and motor vehicle business in various locations in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton. Born in 1883, he was a keen cyclist and his passion became his livelihood. By 1909 he was in his mid-twenties, married, and running a bicycle manufacturing and repair shop at 430 Rathdowne Street. Two years later, he went on an extended overseas tour to study cycle manufacturing, leaving his wife Annie in charge of the business. On his return seven months later, he found that Annie had run off to Sydney with another man, clearing out the business bank account and taking their young son with her. However, despite this setback, Matt continued his cycle business and expanded into importing and servicing motor cars. In March 1917 he had a daughter born to Ivy Rose Wells. Matt and Ivy went on to have four other children, and were eventually married in 1922.



Martin Shelley loved cars and was usually in the driver's seat, but in this photo, taken in Rathdowne Street, he is a back seat passenger. (Photo courtesy of Jenny McInerney).

With a growing family and demand for larger business premises, Matt purchased a double block of land in North Carlton in 1920. A new motor garage was purpose built at 520-522 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton. The business flourished in the larger premises, which had the advantage of rear access via a laneway off Richardson Street and wide doorways to accommodate motor vehicles.

As well as being a mechanic, Matt was a motor car enthusiast. On several occasions he had run-ins with the police for speeding and other traffic violations. In 1917 he led police on a spectacular chase from South Yarra to North Carlton, with a police constable standing on the car's running board and clinging on for dear life.

By 1940, Matt was in his late 50s and ready for retirement. In 1940-41 the garage building in Rathdowne Street was converted for use as a dry cleaning business with the addition of a shopfront. In 1951 it was sold to Pullars Dry



The cyclist on the left is Martin Shelley's son Kenneth. In the background is Martin's garage at 520-522 Rathdowne Street, which later became Pullars Dry Cleaning (Photo courtesy of Jenny McInerney).

Cleaners Pty Ltd. A dry-cleaning business operated there for the next seventy years until 2011. In late 2013 the building was demolished and redeveloped as residential apartments.

Army land in Princes Hill

From 1914 until 1994 there was a drill hall and army depot in Princes Hill, in Park Street between Wilson and McIlwraith Streets. For the 80 years during which it operated, it was the base for a number of different militia or reserve units. After the Second World War, the depot was known as the Bougainville Barracks. From 1955 until it was closed in 1994, Bougainville Barracks was the home of a regiment that operated tanks, armoured scout cars and personnel carriers. Several people who lived in North Carlton or Princes Hill in those years remember seeing 'tanks' driving around the streets of Princes Hill.

When Bougainville Barracks was closed in 1994, all the buildings on the site were demolished, and the land put up for sale by the government. Local residents and community groups agitated for the newly vacant land to be used for recreational purposes to alleviate the critical shortage of facilities in the area. The Principal of the Princes Hill Secondary College for example said in a 1994 newspaper interview that his school had only one basketball court for 700 students. 'And after school hours, hundreds more kids pour in every week. The need is quite critical for the kids and adults in this area. The current facilities are simply not adequate'. The government was however obliged to sell the land commercially, not give it away. Community groups or the local school could buy it, but none of them had the funds to do that. In the end the land was sold commercially to a private developer who in the late 1990s built a large number of two and three-storey town houses on it. The opportunity for the land to be used for community recreational purposes was lost.

**Interested in local history? Join others with similar interests in the
Carlton Community History Group.**

Our aim is to help preserve our past for the future.
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