

Carlton Community History Group

Carlton Chronicles

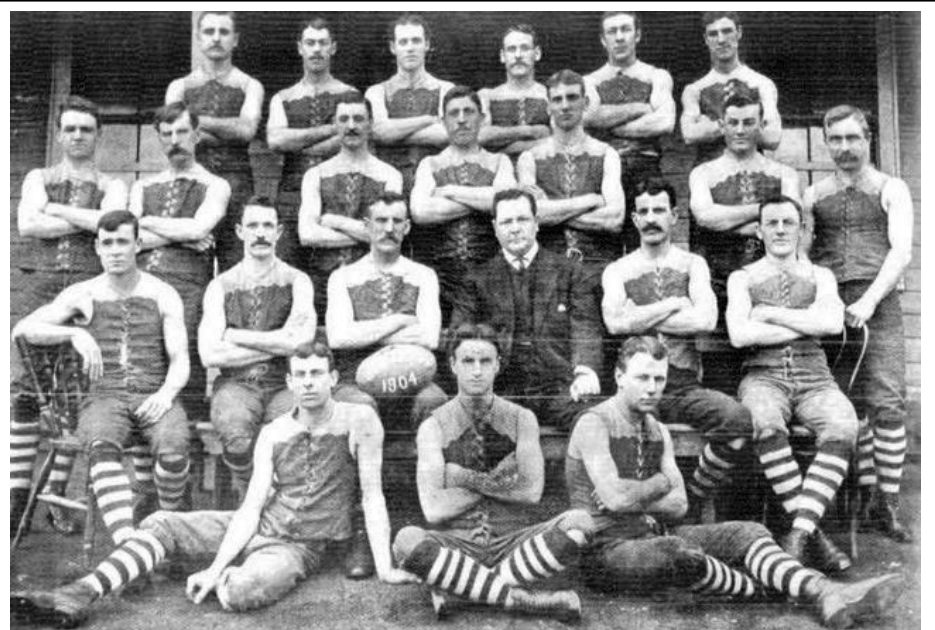
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Carlton Football Club's early uniform

The Carlton Football Club's theme song says: 'We are the Navy Blues. We are the Old Dark Navy Blues'. But it was not always so. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Carlton uniform was not dark navy blue but a mid-blue with beige shoulders. The shoulders were made of chamois leather because it was more comfortable to wear than the canvas often used for the rest of the guernsey. Chamois is a type of porous leather, traditionally the skin of a European mountain goat, but today usually made from sheepskin. The chamois leather shoulders were dyed or painted white, so the official colours were therefore mid-blue and white. But after repeated washing, the white dye or paint would wear off to reveal the beige chamois underneath, which meant that the colours of the Carlton Football Club appeared to be mid-blue and beige. Being of a stiff material, the guernseys were not pulled on over the head but were laced up in the front.

It was not until the early twentieth century that the uniform was changed to the navy blue one that we are familiar with. A sports magazine in April 1907 reported that: 'Owing to similarity in uniforms of several League teams, and the consequent difficulty of distinguishing one footballer from another



The Carlton team, runners-up in the 1904 Grand Final, wearing the old uniform of mid blue with beige shoulders. (Photo: Blueseum)

in close play, Carlton will have a large C worked on the front of their jerseys'. This was adopted by the Club in 1909, which at the same time changed from the mid-blue and beige to the dark blue guernsey with a white monogram on the front featuring a large letter C. It took some time for the change-over to be completed however, and for a number of years around 1910, Carlton took to the field wearing a mixture of the old and new uniforms. But by the time of the First World War the change was complete. The shape and design of the monogram on the front however continued to change and develop, from an original that was quite elaborate to the simple clear style of today. (Source: Blueseum, www.blueseum.org)

Childhood memories of North Carlton

In this article, Les Kausman recounts his memories of growing up in North Carlton in the 1940s.

I was born in Sydney in 1935. My family (Mum, Dad and older brother) came to live with my maternal grandparents at 303 Pigdon Street, Princes Hill, when I was three years old. Money was short, but life was extraordinarily good. Huge palm trees populated the plantation strip down the centre of the street. Princes Park was a natural playground just a few minutes away, and Princes Hill Primary school was just across the road. My grandfather was wonderful with his hands and I was his little helper as he built a De Soto car in his backyard.

When I was five, we moved around the corner to a milk bar and premises at 88 Wilson Street. What a perfect position, with Princes Hill Primary one street north, and Princes Hill Secondary one street west. With no TV or computers to keep us inside, we spent all of our non-school time out on the street. Wilson Street also had a plantation strip, and on hot summer nights it seemed the whole street would congregate on the grass to escape their unbearably hot homes. Someone knew how to turn the sprinklers on, which was the cause for much fun and cooling off. Just one street south of my home was the Melbourne General Cemetery. What better way to spend warm summer days than in that private playground, lounging around on cool marble slabs?

In 1942, when I was seven years old, the Japanese bombed Darwin. The Government, fearing that Melbourne might be targeted, devised a plan to 'save' the children. I recall running home to Mum with a letter from school seeking parents' permission, in an emergency, to transport my brother and me to the country. My mother refused permission. The emergency never materialized.

Princes Park was a boy's dream place. It was a virtual huge backyard for our footy and cricket games, and inside the stadium at Carlton footy matches there was a financial bonanza as we collected bottles and reclaimed the deposits. Further pickings were available in Royal Park, where the American troops had camped. They were a friendly and generous lot, giving us sixpence a pair for a spit-and-polish of their shoes. Royal Park was also where we roasted potatoes (although we were sometimes joined by unwelcome bull ants) and fished for yabbies.

When I was 12, we moved to Amess Street, near the corner of Pigdon Street, amongst a high percentage of Jewish families. On the opposite corner Kurop's conducted their continental smallgoods business, with European delicacies not seen at the traditional Melbourne grocer's shop.

The North Carlton Police Station was also in Amess Street. Every day Constable Hall did his rounds on his pushbike, and always greeted us with a wave and a 'Hello boys' as he sped past. Sometimes he had to answer complaints about our cricket games in the street. I recall him standing astride his bike and apologising; 'Sorry boys, I have to move you on. Pop around to Rathdowne Street; there are plenty of lampposts there you can use as wickets'. We loved that policeman, and the fact that he played football for Carlton further elevated his image. My father was an SP bookmaker, which was illegal. He also conducted an illegal two-up school in the back lane. My job as a 12-year-old was to stand guard on the corner of the lane in Pigdon Street, and warn Dad if the police appeared. I was in fear that Constable Hall would freewheel from around the corner into Pigdon Street, begin to raise his arm in a 'Hello', and realise what I was up to. I had such affection, such respect for that policeman, and here I was, betraying that relationship.

Ernest the baker lived in McIlwraith Street, just one street west of his Lygon Street bakery. He had a daughter, Leah. Leah and I had similar sporting and cultural interests, but at my age of 15, girls who were 12 years old were not on my radar. This all changed with the passage of time, and we now have been married for 66 years, with three sons and seven grandchildren. North Carlton is a very nostalgic place for us both.

The Taggart Brothers of Nicholson Street

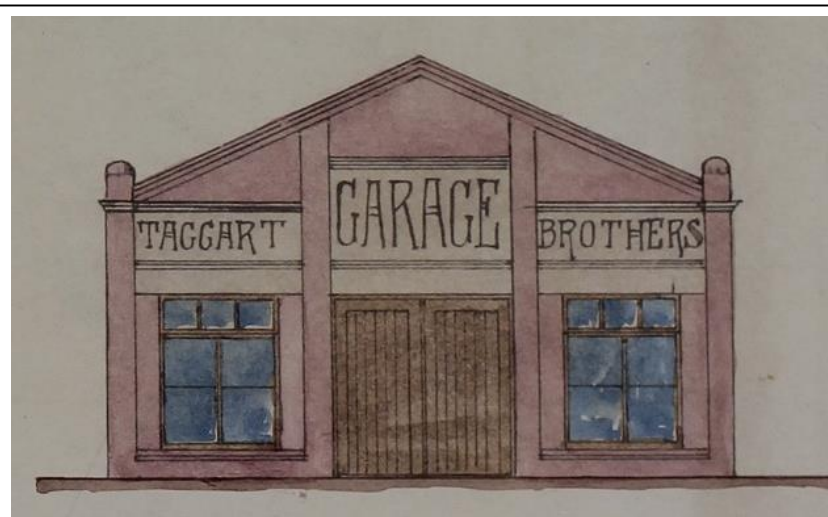
The Taggart Brothers - Alfred James and Thomas Norman – were born in North Fitzroy and made their living on the North Carlton side of Nicholson Street. As young men aged in their twenties, the brothers took over Fontaine's existing cycle business in a two-storey shop and residence at 699 Nicholson Street. The building was one of three terraces, originally built in 1889-90. Taggart Brothers began advertising as Ensign Cycle Works in 1907. Ensign was a popular brand and the brothers offered hire, repair and sales, with cycles built to order from £8 8s.

The cycle business continued at 699 Nicholson Street for the next decade, but the Taggart Brothers recognized the transition to motor vehicles as a viable business development. More space was needed and, fortuitously, the adjacent property at 695 and 697 Nicholson Street became available. This double block originally housed a timber boat factory, dating back to the 1880s. It served a variety of business purposes, including a plumber, furrier, estate agent, and furniture dealer. Plans for a new purpose-built garage were lodged with the council in September 1918 and the works were completed three months later. The wide front door, with windows either side, enabled ample access for motor vehicles.



Renovations for a medical clinic in Nicholson Street in 2019 uncovered this signage that dates back to the days of Taggart Brothers' motor garage. (Image: CCHG)

Alfred Taggart died in March 1927, just short of his 46th birthday, and the garage business was continued by his younger brother Thomas. In the mid-1930s, Thomas moved south to premises shared with a tyre company at 677-679 Nicholson Street. Thomas Taggart died in November 1956, aged 72 years. The Taggart Brothers, together in life and business, were buried with other family members in Melbourne General Cemetery. The former garage building became an ironmongery and later a hardware store. In

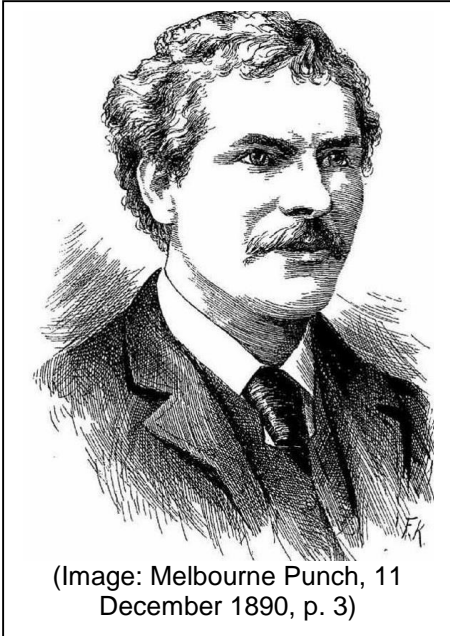


Architectural drawing of Taggart Brothers' Garage in 1918. (Image: Building Application Plan VPRS 11201/P1/1568).

more recent times, the building was home to the video store 'Video Zone', and the beauty clinic 'Duquessa'. Renovations for the medical clinic 'Doctors on Nicholson' in 2019 uncovered signage dating back to the days of Taggart Brothers' motor garage.

Carlton Personality - William ('Billy') Midwinter

The Clyde Hotel has always been a popular place for sports-minded people and in the 1880s it had its own resident cricketer hero. William 'Billy' Midwinter was born in Gloucestershire, England in 1851, and migrated to Australia as a child in the 1860s. As an international cricketer, he had the distinction of playing for, and against, the teams of his birth and adopted countries – Australia versus England (eight tests) and England versus Australia (four tests).



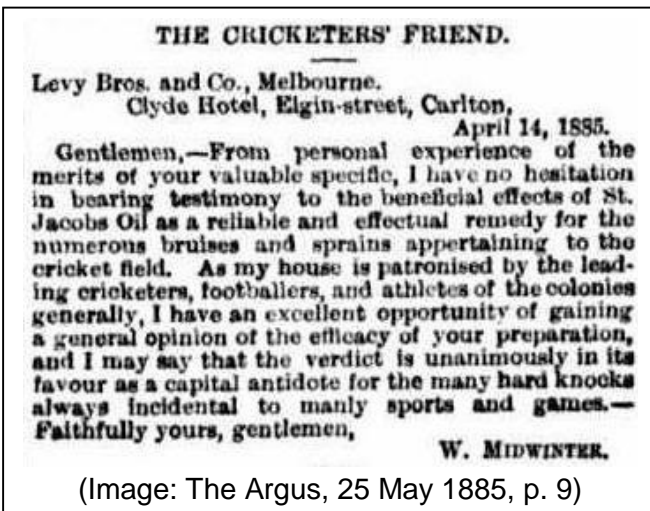
(Image: Melbourne Punch, 11 December 1890, p. 3)

As a teenager Billy lived with his parents in Bendigo, and began his cricket career there with the Bendigo United Cricket Club. By 1877 he had made a name for himself and was selected to play for Australia in what has become recognised as the first ever Test Match against England. Later that year he travelled to England and was selected to play for the county of his birth, Gloucestershire. In 1881-82 he was selected to tour with the English team visiting Australia, and with them played four Tests. In 1882-83 he returned to live permanently in Australia and during the years that followed was selected for several more Test Matches against England. This makes him the only man to play Test cricket for one international side, then another, and then return to his original international team.

In 1885, Billy Midwinter purchased the licence of the Clyde Hotel on the corner of Elgin and Cardigan Streets in Carlton. He paid £200 to the incumbent licensee, George Andrew, who then absconded with the money and transfer documents. Through his representative Mr. Demaine, Midwinter made an

application to enable him to sell liquor on the premises. The licence transfer was granted on 7 May 1885. In January 1886, he obtained mortgage of £600, (via a bill of sale) from the Melbourne Brewing and Malting Company Limited. The terms of the bill of sale required the Clyde Hotel to sell the company's liquor products. In January and February 1887, while he was licensee of the Clyde Hotel, Midwinter played a further two Test Matches against the English tourists. A match against England for Victoria in March of that year was the last of his cricket career. In June 1887, the Clyde Hotel

licence was transferred to Andrew Young, and Midwinter was granted the licence of the Druids Hotel, South Melbourne, in September 1887.



(Image: The Argus, 25 May 1885, p. 9)

In June 1883, William Midwinter had married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Frances McLachlan at St Peter's Church, Melbourne. They had three children – William (1884), Albert (born at the Clyde Hotel in 1886) and Elsie (1888). Elsie lived for ten months only, and her brother Albert and mother Lizzie followed her to the grave in 1889. After this tragic loss of his wife and children, Billy's mental health deteriorated. He left Melbourne and stayed with his married sister in Bendigo. When his behaviour escalated to violence and self-

harm, he was admitted to the lunacy ward of the Bendigo hospital in June 1890. He was transferred to Kew Asylum, Melbourne, in August 1890 and his condition was considered incurable. He died at the Asylum on 3 December 1890 aged only 39 and was buried with his family in Melbourne General Cemetery. In February 1982 the Australian Cricket Society, in association with the Victorian Cricket Association, laid a commemorative plaque at his unmarked grave site.

Did you know

Street names in Princes Hill

Up until the mid-1870s the area of North Carlton that we now call Princes Hill was open ground and yet to be built on. It was referred to in land ads as simply 'the land beyond the cemetery'. By 1878 however, the area had been surveyed and all the streets laid out. On the Melbourne City Council at this time were councillors named Bowen, Arnold, Wilson, McIlwraith, Richardson, Patterson, Pigdon and Holtom. Each one of them, when he retired from the Council, had a street in Princes Hill named after him. The Mayor of Melbourne at the time was John Pigdon and he had his name applied to the largest and most important of the streets.

Cows in Princes Park

In the nineteenth century, Princes Park was little more than a cow paddock. According to the park ranger's report, in 1870 there were some 90 head of cattle grazing in the park, which in those days had a fence around it to keep the cattle in. In 1881 a letter to the editor of *The Argus* newspaper complained about the state of Princes Park saying that: 'It is perfectly impassable from the constant travelling of the milch cows into and from the park'. In 1895 an article in *The Argus* described Princes Park as 'a barren waste occupied only by a few cows' and as 'merely a cow feeding establishment'.

A park for recreation

In 1879 a carriage way and footpath were built around the perimeter of Princes Park, and planted with 4,500 ornamental trees and shrubs. This was intended for quiet recreational use, but in later years it was also used for sulky racing and training racehorses. In 1918 the park was closed to all vehicles. In 1928 there was a proposal to extend Macpherson Street, Princes Hill, through the park to Royal Parade, so that there would have been a road running along the southern side of the football ground. Fortunately, this never happened and all there is there today is a footpath.

Grand Finals played in Princes Park

During the Second World War, the Melbourne Cricket Ground was taken over by the army, which meant that an alternative venue had to be found for the Grand Final. In 1942, 1943 and 1945 the Grand Final was played at the Carlton Football Ground in Princes Park. The 1945 game, between South Melbourne and Carlton, was noted for its rough play and a number of violent incidents, which resulted in seven players being suspended. It is remembered as one of the roughest games in the League's history, giving rise to its nickname 'The Bloodbath'.

Gaslight base returned

You may have seen cast iron objects like the one shown in this photo around Carlton and neighbouring suburbs. They are what is left of the old street gaslights that were installed in the 19th century. When gaslights were replaced by electric lights in the early 20th century, the light poles were all removed but the bases left in place, set into footpaths. This particular one was on the south-west corner of Nicholson and Pigdon Streets. In 2019 it was removed during the upgrading of the nearby tram stop and put into storage. For years, CCHG kept asking City of Yarra where it was, and when it was going to be put back. We are pleased to say that now, four years later, it has finally been put back, but on the south-east corner of the intersection – which is fine. It has been painted white and looks to be in good condition.

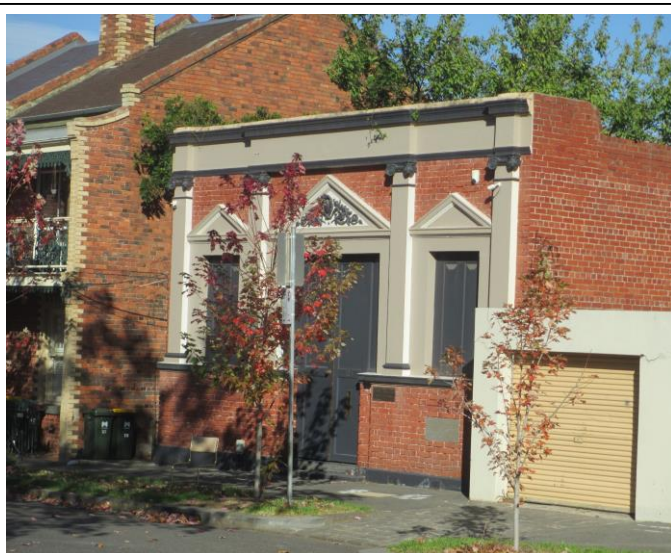


Building with a varied history

The single storey building at 119 to 121 Palmerston Street, Carlton, stands out from its Victorian-era neighbours. It is now a private residence, but its origins date back to the Political Labour Council (P.L.C.) and the fledgling Australian Labor Party.

The P.L.C. Hall, as it was then known, was built in 1914-15 by John Howell on land owned by Robert Solly. Both men were Carlton residents and Mr Solly was a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Victorian Parliament. In keeping with Political Labour Council principles, only union labour was used in its construction. Mr Solly performed the opening ceremony in June 1915. By the 1920s the building had become known as ALP Hall and was the advertised venue for Australian Labor Party branch meetings and other political activities.

The late 1930s saw major changes. The hall was leased to an organization known as the Italian Group Against War, a local group opposed to the rise of Fascism in Italy and the Spanish and Abyssinian wars. The building became known as the Casa d'Italia, and was officially opened on 12 June 1938 as a social club and meeting place for members and sympathisers of the group. However two years on, world events intervened. Italy declared war against France and Great Britain in June 1940 and this had ramifications for people of Italian origin living in Melbourne. They were declared enemy aliens and became targets of violence and abuse. In September 1940 Casa d'Italia was closed by the authorities. After its closure, the building reverted to use as a hall for hire.



This interesting looking building at 119 to 121 Palmerston Street, Carlton, was once called P.L.C. Hall. In the late 1930s it became Casa d'Italia, and in the 1970s the Foibles Theatre Restaurant (Image: CCHG)

After the Second World War there was a succession of occupants in the former hall – boot repairer, watchmaker, annex of the Collingwood Technical School, Federated Storemen & Packers' Union, and an Italian import business. There was a complete change of direction in 1975 when a planning application was lodged by Foibles Pty Ltd to convert the building to a theatre restaurant. Opened in 1976, Foibles Theatre Restaurant was a popular entertainment venue. But there were ongoing problems with maintenance and compliance with public building regulations, and in July 1979 the registration was cancelled. A few months later, in the early hours of 31 October, the vacant building was gutted by fire. According to police, there were no suspicious circumstances.

Since the devastating fire, 119 to 121 Palmerston Street has undergone two major residential transformations within the shell of its external walls, but the façade remains much the same as it was back in 1915, when the P.L.C. Hall first opened.

**This publication, Carlton Chronicles, is produced and distributed four times a year.
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