

Carlton Community History Group

Carlton Chronicles

Issue No. 34

September 2024

Big Yellow Taxi

In 1924 a passenger transport revolution took place on the streets of Melbourne, and Carlton played an integral role. At the time, Melbourne was serviced by taxi and car hire companies, some of them small operators with only a few vehicles. The newly-formed Yellow Cabs of Australia Ltd challenged the status quo, utilizing a fleet of taxis and the latest technology from Yellow Cabs of America. The company promised a better service at a cheaper cost.

Yellow Cabs of Australia Ltd. initially occupied premises in Exhibition Street, but larger purpose-built premises were required to accommodate the anticipated fleet of taxis. The site chosen for the new headquarters was 100 to 116 Elgin Street, Carlton, where a two-storey combination garage and office was built. In the leadup to launch day, Yellow Cabs recruited drivers, who had to pass physical and health checks to ensure their suitability for the job, and the safety of their passengers. The drivers were to wear brown chauffeur-style uniforms, made from specially woven material.

The taxis were built in Chicago – the home city of Yellow Cabs in America – and shipped to Australia via Canada. On arrival in Melbourne in late September 1924, 101 taxis were assembled on the wharf and driven in a convoy to the company's headquarters in Carlton. Three weeks later, on 15 October 1924, Yellow Cabs took their first paying passengers. The initial fleet was augmented with the delivery of another 51 taxis in March 1925, with the added passenger comfort of heating during the colder weather. Melbourne was the trailblazer for Yellow Cabs in Australia and services were later extended to Sydney and other capital cities.

On the Roads -- Today


Yellow Cabs

Ready to Carry Cheaply Melbourne's Moving Public

A new Cab Service springs to attention. ¶ A hundred spick and span Yellow Cabs at Thirty-five vantage points. ¶ Distinctively painted to attract attention for your convenience and safety. ¶ Ready to carry you to your destination at a moment's notice. ¶ At their wheels -- a hundred picked drivers, pledged to caution and courtesy. ¶ Better, quicker, more comfortable travel at CONSIDERABLY LOWER RATES.

YELLOW CABS—the Motors of the Millions.

Yellow Cabs of Australia Ltd.



Newspaper advertisement for Yellow Cabs. (Image: *The Argus*, 15 October 1924).



Yellow Cabs begin operating in Melbourne (Photo: *The Sun*, 16 October 1924).

During the Second World War, the Yellow Cabs headquarters in Carlton were taken over by U.S. military authorities and the company was obliged to seek alternative accommodation in South Melbourne. This move proved to be permanent and, once again, the company had a new garage built from scratch. Following the departure of Yellow Cabs, the former garage in Elgin Street became an equipment factory for Commonwealth Industrial Gases. The building reverted to its original function as a garage and service centre in 1963, when it was acquired by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (R.A.C.V.). The garage was redeveloped as residential apartments in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Carlton – The Place to Be

By Andrew Athanasopoulos

Carlton has been my home all my life. It is unique in that it offers great facilities for all stages in one's life, with the added convenience of not having to leave the area. Just two kilometres north of Melbourne's CBD, it is one of the city's oldest suburbs and a multicultural cauldron of nationalities, with different social, religious and educational backgrounds all amalgamating into one vibrant community. Steeped in history it is adorned with the architectural beauty and ornate classical features of the numerous Victorian terrace houses which characterize the area and lend an old-world charm rarely found elsewhere. The treasured Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens, home to numerous exhibitions, were the setting for the inaugural assembly of Australia's Parliament in 1901. In contrast, next to the grandeur of the Royal Exhibition Buildings is Melbourne's state of the art, ultra-modern, interactive Museum and IMAX 3D cinemas.

Got the tummy grumbles? Then head towards leafy Lygon and Rathdowne Streets where you will find a cosmopolitan array of establishments providing gastronomical delights with a European outdoor dining flavour. Nothing compares to walking down the street on a balmy night with my family, gelato in hand, watching a kaleidoscope of fashion and people walking by.

Around the corner from Lygon Street, many newborns have had their behinds slapped to welcome them into the world at the old Royal Women's Hospital. I have even left my appendix at the nearby Royal Children's Hospital. Raising a family is ideal in this environment since you know help is near if required. Couple this with trail blazing teaching childcare centres and first-rate public schools and your educational needs are taken care of. Perform well and a multitude of qualifications from the prestigious Melbourne University and RMIT University are at your doorstep, hopefully leading to a successful career.

Thanks to our forward-thinking planning forefathers, Carlton is fortunate to have an abundance of parklands. There is no shortage of places for children to run around, participate in ball games, engage in fitness regimes, join a bocce club, or walk the dog. Many of the wide tree-lined streets are now sprinkled with cafes, gourmet pubs and bars catering for the café / brunch societies, thus creating a fresh open air 'village' atmosphere conducive to living the *dolce vita*.

Carlton for me also encompasses my beloved Carlton Football Club, which has its headquarters at Princes Park. Many blissful afternoons have been spent, with my son, watching the roller coaster fortunes of our team. Sports heaven is hearing the roar of the crowd, singing the club song when we have won, and going for a kick afterwards whilst only being a few hundred metres from home.

I love it, and for me it is home. If I left, it would feel like I will be migrating to a foreign land. Here you can be hatched, matched and despatched with everything in between. Carlton has it all.

History Walk Around Carlton Saturday 28 September, 10.00am to 12 noon Jewish and Italian Carlton

Walk through the streets of Carlton to find remnants of its Jewish and Italian communities, the sites of synagogues, churches and iconic businesses, and hear stories of crimes and disputes, of those who struggled and those who prospered.

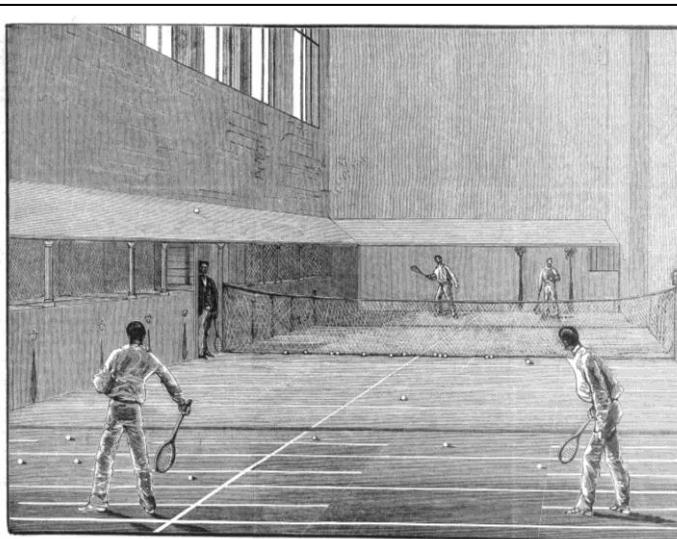
Starting point is at the Rathdowne Street end of Macarthur Square, Carlton.

This walk is run by the Carlton Residents Association in conjunction with the Carlton Community History Group. \$15 members, \$20 Non-members.

To book, go to www.trybooking.com/CTFBI

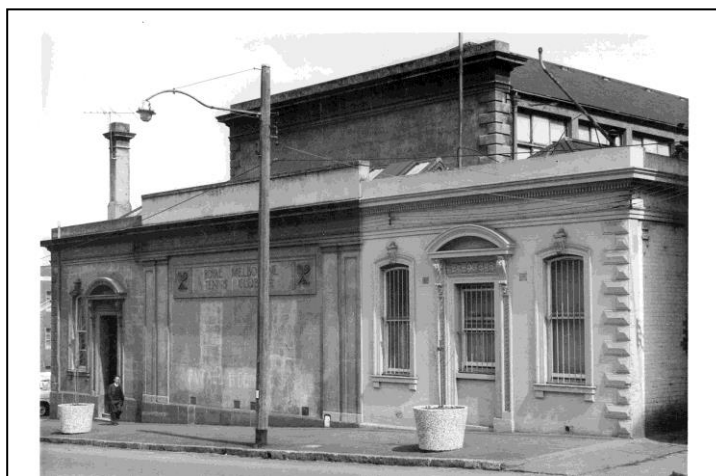
Carlton's royal tennis pioneer

Australia's first professional royal tennis player, Thomas Stone, was a resident of North Carlton for more than four decades. Royal tennis (also known as 'real tennis') was the forerunner of modern tennis, and the centuries-old sport is still practised today. Stone's journey to professional tennis player began when, as a boy, he was apprenticed to the royal tennis club at Hampton Court in England, where he once played tennis with the future King Edward VII. In 1876 Thomas Stone was invited by Samuel Smith Travers to join the new royal tennis club in Hobart, Tasmania. Travers was a pioneer in the sport of royal tennis and the Hobart club was the first of its kind in Australia and the southern hemisphere.



Interior of the royal tennis court in Melbourne, in the 1880s. (Image: State Library of Victoria).

After six years in Hobart, Thomas Stone moved to Melbourne to take up the position of manager at the Melbourne Royal Tennis Club, officially opened by Lord Normanby, Governor of Victoria, on 23 April 1882. The purpose-built indoor tennis court and club rooms were located in Stephen (later Exhibition) Street on the northern city fringe, just a block away from Carlton. Thomas Stone and his family lived at two locations in North Carlton. In 1883, Stone bought a large two-storey house on the corner of Canning and Lee streets (now numbered 271). His next residence was a large free-standing villa at 867 Rathdowne Street, purchased in 1906. Both houses were known by the name 'La Paume', the French wording meaning palm of the hand. The word is of special significance in royal tennis and other ball games.



Exterior of the court in Exhibition Street. (Photo: J T Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria).

Thomas Stone's son Woolner followed in his father's footsteps and competed in royal tennis games in Australia and overseas. He took over management of the Melbourne Royal Tennis Club, while his father maintained a lifetime interest in the sport. Thomas Stone celebrated his 85th birthday on 19 June 1924. He was recovering from a recent illness, but his health failed and he died a few weeks later on 9 July 1924. At the time, he was believed to be the oldest professional tennis player in the world. Thomas Stone's widow Elizabeth survived him by a year and died at 'La Paume' on 26 July 1925. The house was demolished in the early 1970s and replaced by a block of flats.

Also in the early 1970s, the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club sold its building in Exhibition Street and moved to new purpose-built premises in Richmond. The building in Exhibition Street was subsequently demolished.

Carlton personality – Hugh Brophy

On 17 June 1919 the following article appeared in *The Argus* newspaper under the heading 'Death of a Noted Fenian':

'In his ninetieth year, Mr Hugh Francis Brophy died on June 11 at Amess street, North Carlton. He was one of the leaders in the Fenian movement in Ireland, being the organizer for a large centre; and on 11 November 1865 he was arrested and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. After serving over two years in English gaols, he was transported to Western Australia. For the past 47 years he had resided in Melbourne, and last year he attended an Irish Australian convention, held in the Cathedral Hall, Fitzroy'.

Irishman Hugh Brophy was a staunch supporter of Irish independence and an active member of the Fenian movement. In 1865 he was arrested and convicted for his part in a plot to overthrow British rule in Ireland and sentenced to transportation. In the 1860s this meant being sent to Western Australia as that was the only Australian colony that was still accepting transported convicts. Along with 61 other Fenians he was shipped out on the *Hougoumont*, the last convict ship ever to be sent to Australia. The ship arrived in Fremantle on 9 January 1868.

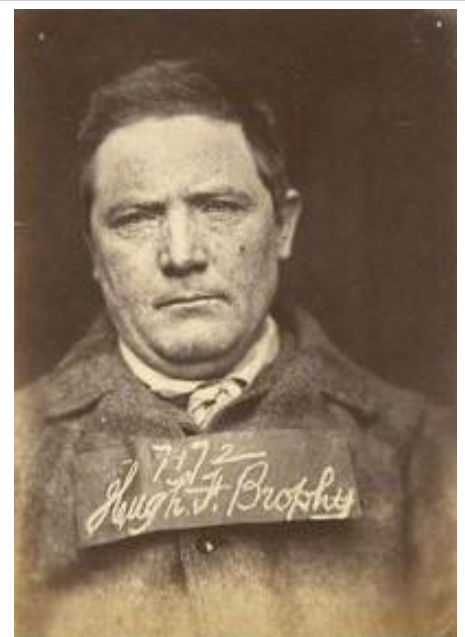
A year and a half later, in May 1869, Brophy received a Free Pardon. However he chose to remain in Perth where he established a successful construction and bridge-building company. He had been a successful builder in Dublin before his arrest.

In 1873 he decided to move to Melbourne. There he met and married Margaret Freaney, and together they established a home in North Carlton where they raised their large family. From 1895 until his death in 1919 Brophy lived with his family in Amess Street, North Carlton, a few doors south of Park Street. He continued to work as a successful builder and contractor. Among the buildings with which he was associated was the Church of St. Mary Star of the Sea, West Melbourne. He was also active in the local Irish community, a member of the Celtic Club, and one of the founding members of the Irish National League in Melbourne.

After nearly five decades in Melbourne, at the age of 90, Hugh Brophy died in June 1919 and was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. His tombstone is inscribed with the words 'Released Political Prisoner'. Beside it is the grave of fellow Fenian, Cornelius O'Mahony, which is also inscribed with those same words.

Did you know

In the nineteenth century, Princes Park was used by the City Council as a convenient dumping ground for 'night soil', human waste collected from outhouse toilets. This was deposited in trenches about 30 cm deep that were dug across the park, and covered over with dirt. It was not until 1871 that the practice was discontinued. However, this had the effect of improving the pasture in the park and its capacity to carry cattle, for the grazing of dairy cattle was an important use for the park that continued into the 20th century. Princes Park was in effect little more than a cattle yard with a rough fence around it to keep the cattle in.



A prison photo of Hugh Brophy taken shortly after his arrest in Dublin in 1865. (Photo: From the New York Public Library, Digital Collections).

Departure of Burke and Wills Expedition from Royal Park

In 1860, an ambitious expedition was organized to cross the unknown interior of the Australian continent from south to north, starting from Melbourne. This expedition, which became known as the Burke and Wills Expedition, started in Parkville and 'finished' in Carlton. It was from the Royal Society's headquarters opposite the Carlton Gardens that the expedition was organized, and from Royal Park that it departed. And it is in the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton that the remains of both Burke and Wills and the sole survivor John King now lie.

In August 1860 in preparation for departure, the expedition with its horses, camels, wagons and tons of supplies was assembled in Royal Park. On the day of departure, crowds descended on Royal Park to witness the exciting spectacle. The camels were a major source of interest and wonder, as were their exotic Indian handlers.

According to the newspaper reports, the scene was one of picturesque confusion with Burke, the expedition leader, shouting orders, men trying to load wagons and pack animals in the midst of the crowds, camels running wild, men getting drunk, and general confusion all round. Finally the Mayor of Melbourne mounted a wagon and gave a short speech. He then called for three cheers for Mr Burke who, mounted on his grey horse, acknowledged the compliment and expressed his thanks to the Government and the Exploration Committee.



A rare photograph of the expedition's camels, taken during the preparations in Royal Park. (Photo: Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales).

Finally the Mayor of Melbourne mounted a wagon and gave a short speech. He then called for three cheers for Mr Burke who, mounted on his grey horse, acknowledged the compliment and expressed his thanks to the Government and the Exploration Committee.

'These observations were greeted with loud acclamations, and then the long caravan, headed by Mr Landells on his favourite camel, filed off towards the north portion of the park, to the tune of "Cheer, boys, cheer" which a party of volunteer musicians appropriately struck up. After filing past, the expedition turned, and left the park by the south gate, proceeding past the cattle-yards and the swamp, and taking the road for Essendon, where it was expected the party would encamp for the night'. (*The Argus*, 21 August 1860, page 5).

In the long cavalcade that left Royal Park that day there were 26 camels, 23 horses, six wagons, and 16 men. On that first day the cavalcade only got as far as Moonee Ponds on the outskirts of the city. As the men started unpacking the stores that they had only a few hours ago packed, and setting up the tents, Burke headed back to Melbourne to spend the night in relative comfort there. In the weeks and months that followed the expedition slowly made its way northwest and into the central desert. In February 1861, Burke, Wills and two others managed to reach the Gulf of Carpentaria on the north coast of the continent. But on the way back Burke and Wills died of starvation in the desert. Their remains were eventually recovered and



A romanticized image of the departure of the Burke and Wills Expedition from Royal Park on 20 August 1860. (Image: State Library of Victoria).

in January 1863 buried with much ceremony in the Melbourne General Cemetery. The only survivor of the group that reached the Gulf was John King who died in 1872 and is also buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

Remnants of university fence re-instated

When it was first established in the 1850s, the University of Melbourne's campus was surrounded by a wooden palisade fence. In the 1870s this was replaced with an ornamental iron fence. At some stage, most of this fence was removed and only remnants retained – including around the main entrance in Grattan Street, and on the corner of Grattan Street and Royal Parade. These in turn were removed recently during the construction of the new Parkville underground station in Grattan Street. Fortunately this was only a temporary measure for the protection of these historic remnants during the construction period, and they have now been reinstated. The photo at right shows the newly reinstated corner post and sections of fence on the corner of Grattan Street and Royal Parade.



(Photo: CCHG).

Last tram out of the depot

Friday 23 August 2024 marked the end of an era for W class trams in Nicholson Street, North Carlton and North Fitzroy. W7 class tram number 1031 was the last of six W and SW class trams to be removed from the former North Fitzroy tram depot, where they had been in storage since 2014. The depot, now home to the bus company Kinetic, serviced the Nicholson Street tram route from 1956, when electric-powered trams replaced buses on the Bourke Street to East Brunswick run. 1956 was also the first year that tram number 1031 came into service. However, the history of trams in Nicholson Street goes back as far as 1887. The Nicholson Street cable tram service opened in 1887 and was the first to operate in Carlton. The introduction of affordable public transport was a boon to residents and businesses on both sides of Nicholson Street, and facilitated development of the shopping precinct as far as Park Street, North Carlton. The cable trams served their purpose for decades, but they were considered an inefficient mode of transport into the 20th century. The Nicholson Street cable trams were replaced by buses in October 1940. London-style double deck buses operated for a time, but they proved inefficient at peak hour and were phased out. The service was restored with electric-powered trams in April 1956 and, with major upgrades in infrastructure and rolling stock, continues to this very day. The tram tracks leading into the depot are still visible, but a short section connecting to the main line in Nicholson Street was removed in January 2020, when the tram tracks were dug up and re-instated during installation of new accessible tram stops.



W7 class tram number 1031 in preparation for its final run out of the former tram depot in Nicholson Street. (Photo: CCHG).