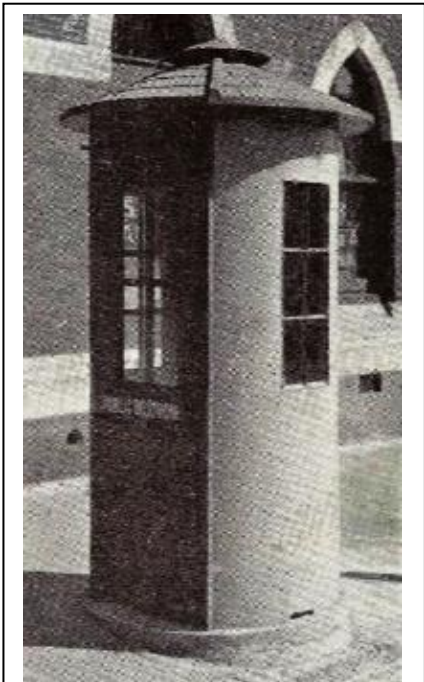


Circular telephone boxes

In the days before mobile phones, a common feature on the streets of Carlton was public phone boxes. These came in various designs and one of the more unusual designs, a circular telephone box, can be seen in the photo on the right. This was taken in Carlton in 1958, in Rathdowne Street near Grattan Street. Below is another view of one of these unusual circular telephone boxes. First introduced in 1927, they had a body made from a precast concrete pipe with two small windows, and a precast concrete roof that was conical in shape and ornamented to represent small roofing tiles. They were fitted with a precast base which, as well as providing the mounting, served as a floor. These concrete boxes required very little maintenance, although if hit by a vehicle, they were usually a total



A public telephone box made from a cylindrical precast concrete pipe. (Photo: H.J. Lewis)

loss. They had the disadvantage of requiring much more on-site work during installation, and were not readily moved to another location. Ventilation inside the box was also not good. The more familiar red wooden boxes

were first introduced in 1933, and in the 1950s these were fitted with glass louvred windows which greatly improved ventilation. However, the poorly ventilated circular concrete boxes were still in use into the 1960s.

In the bottom right-hand corner of the above photo of the circular telephone box in Rathdowne Street can be seen a square letter box. From 1901 to 1975, postal and telephone services were operated by the same government department, the Post Master General's Department. During that period telephone booths and pillar boxes were often located together on the street.



(Photo: Jack Lockyer O'Brien, reproduced with permission of University of Melbourne Archives).

Did you know

Public urinals

Another common feature in the streets of Carlton in earlier times was public urinals. These were pre-fabricated cast-iron structures manufactured between 1903 and 1918 by a foundry in South Melbourne. They used a prefabricated interlocking post-and-panel system that allowed them to be easily assembled and disassembled on site. As well as being functional, they were quite ornate by today's standards. There are still a handful of these green cast-iron toilets dotted around Carlton, for example in Princes Street near Canning Street. Nearly all of them have now been converted to unisex facilities.

Bollards

Also commonly seen in the streets of Carlton are cast-iron bollards such as that shown at right. Although this one is located in North Carlton, which is in the City of Yarra, it bears the arms of the City of Melbourne, a left-over from the time when all of Carlton was part of the City of Melbourne.

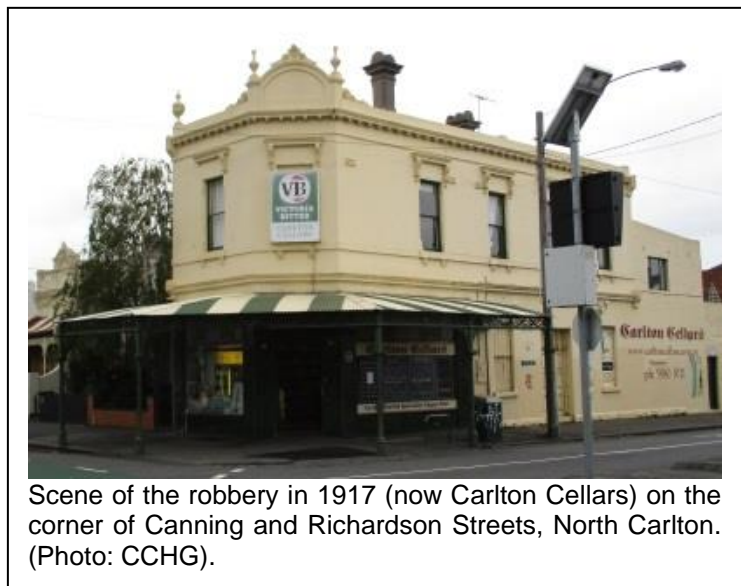
Phantom letter box painter unmasked

In the December 2023 issue of 'Carlton Chronicles' there was an article about an historic letter box in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, that had recently been restored and repainted in its original colours of red and gold on a black base. Over 50 such letter boxes around Victoria have received a similar treatment, including 34 in the inner suburbs. The restorer and painter of these letter boxes has now been revealed as Mick Slocum, a former pharmacist and accordion player in the classic Australian folk band the Bushwackers.



A Sweet-Toothed Robbery in North Carlton

In February 1917, just before Valentine's Day, two thieves managed to dodge police bullets and make off with 2,800 pounds of sugar, 112 pounds of rice and 15 shillings in cash. The well-planned robbery took place around 3.30am at William Drum's licensed grocery store, on the corner of Richardson and Canning Streets, North Carlton. The two men had loaded up their horse-drawn cart and were about to make their exit when they were challenged by Constable Simon McKenzie, on patrol from the North Carlton Police Station and armed with a revolver. The horse and cart took off and Constable McKenzie fired three shots at the horse, which would have been the 1917 equivalent of shooting out the car tyres. But the bullets missed their mark, as did the remaining five shots aimed at the cart driver. The thieves got away with their haul, valued at about £40 and most likely destined for the re-sale market. A search of Mr Drum's premises revealed that two locks on the front door had been forced open and the arc light in front of the store had been disabled. Surprisingly, two demijohns of whiskey, valued at £10 each, were left behind in the shop. Spare a thought for Constable McKenzie – instead of being hailed the hero of a thwarted robbery attempt, he probably copped a ribbing from his fellow police officers because he couldn't even shoot a horse and cart.



Drinking fountains

Apart from telephone booths and letter boxes, another type of facility to be seen in the streets of Carlton are drinking fountains. Some of these are quite humble, as is the one shown in the photo at right. This used to be at a bus stop in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, near the corner of Richardson Street, but has since been removed.



(Photo: City of Yarra)



(Photo: CCHG)

Others are more ornate commemorative fountains erected to the memory of some now long-forgotten public figure. Typical of these is the one shown in the photo at left, located in a corner of University Square. A plaque on it says that it is 'In recognition of the faithful service rendered by Thomas Ferguson, Secretary, Melbourne Total Abstinence Society, 1868 to 1904'. There are a number of other such commemorative fountains around Carlton dedicated to people whom no one now remembers.

Seventy years of weaving and spinning

The Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2024 and has a long association with Carlton and North Carlton. The Guild, originally established as a branch of the New South Wales Guild, first met at the Public Library (now State Library of Victoria) in 1954. For the next nine years, it met at several city locations, and in 1963 moved to the Loyal Orange Lodge at 524 Elizabeth Street, Carlton. There was another move in 1971 to the Horticultural Hall (popularly known as 'Horti Hall') in Victoria Street, opposite Trades Hall. In the 1980s, the Guild became part of the wider craft movement at the Meat Market Craft Centre in North Melbourne. This was not to last, as the Centre closed suddenly in 1999 and the Guild had to find new premises.

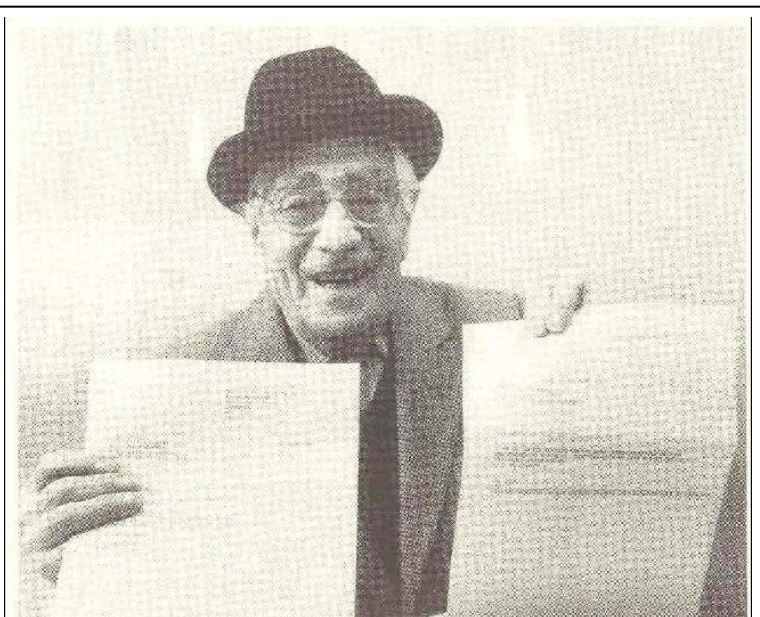
The site chosen was the scout hall at 12 to 18 Shakespeare Street, North Carlton. When the Guild moved in, the building was somewhat run down and had problems with water damage. But it provided a large open space, suitable for classes and workshops, and a single storey setting. By 2011, the building was long overdue for renovation, and also required for scouting activities. Once again, the Guild had to find another home. This was a two-storey building at 655 to 657 Nicholson Street, North Carlton, a 1970s structure with a retail shopfront on the ground floor and a gym above. While not a heritage building, the new location offered more exposure in a local business and shopping precinct, with ready access to public transport. Adding up the years, the Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria has spent nearly half of its lifetime in Carlton and North Carlton, and has woven its way into our history.

Carlton personality – Jacob Polonsky

In the 1930s and 1940s Carlton had a significant Jewish population, and there were several kosher butchers serving the needs of this community. One of these was at 797 Rathdowne Street in North Carlton, near the corner of McPherson Street. For two decades, from 1930 until the early 1950s this kosher butcher's shop was run by the Polonsky Brothers. One of the brothers, Jacob, lived an amazing life and survived to be over 100 years old.

Jacob Polonsky's amazing life story began in 1892 in the Ukraine, which was then under the rule of the Russian Czars. He was born in the town of Chudiaky, one of nine children, eight sons and a daughter. As a young man during the First World War, he was called up for military service in the Czar's Russian army. He could have evaded military service as his father worked as a clerk of Jewish records in the town and could have easily falsified his record. When interviewed by the Australian Jewish Herald in 1992, Jacob said he refused on principle to let his father do that. 'We were treated kindly in our town and I didn't want to involve my father in any deceit'. So he was drafted and ended up fighting in the Russian Imperial Army. He was however captured by the Austrians and held for three years as a prisoner-of-war in a camp in what is now Czechoslovakia. He was released when the death of the Austrian Kaiser led to a general amnesty for prisoners-of-war.

In 1923, the Polonsky family left Ukraine and migrated to Australia via Constantinople and Port Said. In the 1992 interview Jacob said that: 'The family chose Melbourne over Sydney because they had heard it was a more observant Jewish community'. They settled in Carlton, but in his early years in Australia he moved around the Victorian countryside as a drapery hawker. In 1930, eager to settle down and raise a family, Jacob and his brothers opened a kosher butcher business in North Carlton. For the next 21 years, the shop was a landmark for the North Carlton Jewish community. In the early years, running the shop was hard, as people had little money for meat during the Great Depression. 'I remember customers coming in to buy a bone for sixpence so they could make soup'. For the next two decades he worked hard to keep the business going. 'I would get up in the dark, work all day and go to bed late at night. On Sundays, I would collect the weekly accounts and do the books'.



Jacob Polonsky on his 100th birthday in 1992, with his celebratory telegrams. (Photo: Australian Jewish Herald).

The four Polonsky brothers operated the kosher butcher shop in North Carlton for twenty-one years, from 1930 to the early 1950s. After that and until he retired, Jacob worked as a book-keeper for a plumbing supplies business. A profoundly observant and deeply religious man, he volunteered his time after retiring at the Yeshiva Centre in East St Kilda. Jacob Polonsky lived to be 105 years of age, dying in 1997. At the time of his death, the Australian Jewish News proclaimed him to be 'the communities oldest practicing Orthodox Jew'. He is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton, not far from where his kosher butcher shop used to be.

The builder from Glasgow

William Lennox was a builder from Glasgow who made his home in Melbourne, and found plenty of building opportunities in the new suburb of North Carlton. Between 1873 and 1887, he lodged 47 notices of intent with the Melbourne City Council and built houses and shops in Canning, Davis, Freeman (Curtain), Macpherson, Newry, Nicholson, Rathdowne, Station, Sutton and Yorke (Lee) Streets. Lennox did quite a bit of construction work in Canning Street, where he lived, and his most stand-out work would have to be the two double storey houses that reflect his Scottish heritage – Edinburgh House and Glasgow House – now numbered 251 and 253 Canning Street.

Edinburgh House, on the corner of Davis Street, was the first to be built. Lennox bought the double block of land in 1877 and lodged a notice of intent to build a six-room house. The house was completed by 1878 when he was recorded as the occupier and ratepayer. Glasgow House had to wait a few more years, possibly because he was working on other construction projects and selling the



completed houses to fund his next land acquisition. The original corner block was subdivided in 1881 and in the same year, he lodged a notice of intent to build the second house. Edinburgh House was sold to Joseph Harvey Sharp and the newly-built Glasgow House went to Mary Hannah Kean. In 1882 both houses were rated at £42 per annum.

William Lennox built and sold many houses during his working life. He died on 30 March 1889, aged 53 years, and was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery with his wife Catherine, who pre-deceased him in July 1888. His estate was valued at £1,620 and probate was granted to his son Joseph Lennox, and William Liversage. A five-room brick cottage on the corner of Station and Canning Streets – a less opulent building than Edinburgh House or Glasgow House – was all that remained of his real estate holdings. This cottage was valued at £600. He also had two life insurance policies, valued at £200 and £300. An annotation on his probate file reads: 'A builder – Out of business for 12 months'. This could explain why he lodged no notices of intent with Melbourne City Council after 1887.

Equal-pay campaigner honoured

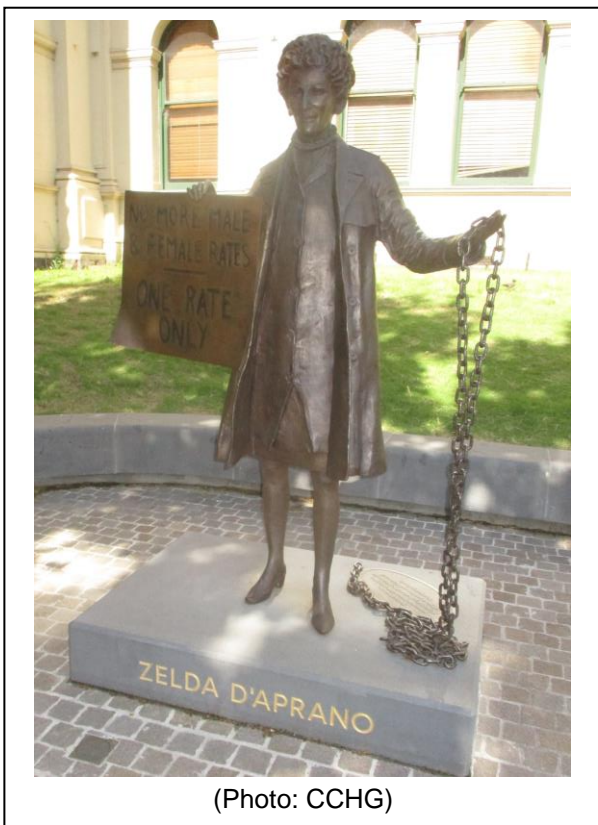
Under the trees at the front of Trades Hall in Lygon Street, Carlton, there is now a bronze statue honouring the Carlton-born equal-pay campaigner Zelda D'Aprano. She is perhaps best known for having chained herself to the doors of the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne in 1969, in protest against an unsatisfactory decision on equal-pay by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

Zelda was born in 1928 and grew up in a two-bedroom house in Carlton. The household was Orthodox Jewish, but when Zelda was still a child her mother joined the Communist Party. (In later life Zelda did likewise). She went to Lee Street Primary School and Brunswick Girls' School, but at 14 left school and began working in factories to help support her family. At 16 she married Charlie D'Aprano and they had a daughter, Leanne, the following year.

It was when working at these factory jobs that she first started to notice the inequalities that female workers faced, especially the difference in pay between men and women doing the same job. After her marriage ended in 1965, she began working as a clerk in the offices of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU). Even here, in the offices of a labour union, she found that conditions for women workers were unfair. At the time, the meat industry was being featured in an equal-pay case in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. When in October 1969 the case failed, Zelda as a protest chained herself to the doors of the Commonwealth Building in Spring Street. She was eventually cut free by the police, but the event drew enormous attention to the Equal Pay Campaign. Ten days later, she and two other women, Alva Geikie and Thelma Solomon, chained themselves to the doors of the Arbitration Court building, the body that had dismissed the equal-pay case.



(Photo: The Age / Fairfax Media)



(Photo: CCHG)

The next year, these three women founded the Women's Action Committee, which aimed to have more women involved in the struggle for equal pay. Amongst other things they travelled on public transport paying only 75 percent of the fares, because women were only paid 75 percent of the wage of men at the time. In 1972 the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission finally established the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value'.

In recognition of her work for equal-pay and equal rights for women workers, Zelda was in 2000 awarded an honorary Law Degree by Macquarie University. The following year she was inducted into the Victorian Honour Role of Women, and in 2004 was awarded the Order of Australia. In her later years Zelda returned to live in Carlton, including in an aged care facility in Rathdowne Street where she died in February 2018 aged 90. On 30 May 2023 the statue of Zelda by sculptor Jennifer Mann, representing the chaining incident

in 1969, was unveiled by former Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard.

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