



Carlton Community History Group

Carlton Chronicles

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An early Carlton Grand Final

The photo below shows what a football grand final match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground looked like in 1907. It was a clash between Carlton and South Melbourne. The Carlton players (on the right of the photo) are wearing the early club uniform of mid-blue with beige shoulders. The dark blue guernsey with the white monogram on the front was not adopted by the Carlton club until 1909. The guernseys were made of canvas and laced up at the front. The South Melbourne uniform was a white guernsey with a red diagonal sash and red and white striped socks. The Melbourne Cricket Ground was not as undeveloped as this photo would indicate. If the camera had been pointed in another direction, it would have shown several large grandstands holding many tens of thousands of people. According to newspaper reports at the time, attendance at this match was around 41,000.



(Photo: Blueseum)

The grand final was a close and hard-fought one in which neither team was able to obtain a commanding lead. The play was fast, at times desperately hard, and on a few occasions, nasty. At three-quarter time Carlton led by 15 points, and so close were the scores in the final quarter that one straight shot by South Melbourne at any time in the last ten minutes would have given them a win. But Carlton managed to hold them off to win by just five points.

The win in 1907 made it two premierships in a row for Carlton, for they had won the flag the previous year. They went on to win the premiership the following year as well, making it three flags in a row, and came close to winning a fourth in 1909. This made Carlton one of the strongest teams in the newly established Victorian Football League (VFL).

The VFL had been formed in 1896 when six clubs broke away from the established Victorian Football Association (VFA) to form a new league. They were six of the strongest clubs – Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne and South Melbourne. The following year they invited two more VFA clubs, Carlton and St Kilda, to join the VFL for its inaugural season in 1897. The VFL introduced several new innovations to the game including having an annual finals tournament and a grand final at the end of a season, instead of awarding the premiership to the team with the best record over the season. Although the VFL and VFA continued to compete for spectator interest for many years, the VFL soon established itself as the premier competition in Victoria.

A controversial Carlton footballer

William Alexander 'Bongo' Lang was a champion footballer who played 105 matches for Carlton in the years 1906 to 1910, including in the 1907 Grand Final described above. He was regarded as a skilled rover, and played in all three of Carlton's premiership winning teams in 1906, 1907 and 1908. However, he was then suspended for five years, and did not play again until 1916 and 1917.

'Bongo' Lane grew up in Parkville and started his football career playing for the Parkville Presbyterians. By the age of 18, he was playing with the senior Carlton VFL team. His first game with the club was the opening match of the 1906 season against Melbourne. In the years that followed, he established himself as Carlton's and the game's pre-eminent rover. In 1909 he was described by *The Australasian* newspaper as one of the competition's most outstanding players. Then, in September 1910, just before the team was about to play South Melbourne in the second semi-final, Lang and two other players, Doug Gillespie and Doug Fraser, were withdrawn from the team on the orders of the Carlton committee. No explanations were given publicly, but it was common knowledge that the club had acted on credible information that all three had received financial inducements to throw the match. The VFL and Carlton club launched separate investigations and Gillespie was ultimately exonerated. But Fraser and Lang were both found guilty and suspended for 99 matches, effectively for five years. Lang consistently denied his guilt. While admitting he took a bribe (reportedly £10) as one might from a sucker, he always maintained that he had no intention of underperforming because of his loyalty to the Blues.



William Alexander 'Bongo' Lang (Photo: Carlton Football Club).

After completing his five-year suspension, Lang returned to the Carlton club to play again in 1916 and 1917. But by then he was a shadow of his former self, and at the end of the 1917 season he retired from VFL football. Lang relocated to Adelaide sometime after 1928, and in 1937 he married Catherine McVicar. In July 1943 after a long illness he died, aged 55.

In 2020, members of the Lang family called on the AFL to retrospectively overturn the five-year suspension on the basis that he had been treated unfairly. To quote Lang's great nephew Ian Lang in an interview with *The Age* newspaper: '[The family] came to the conclusion that he was just a naïve boy. He was going to bet on Carlton, not against Carlton'. The family argued that he was a first-time offender and the punishment was out of proportion to the transgression. Nevertheless, the League rejected their request. The Carlton club, however, did eventually recognise his on-field achievements by elevating him in 2024 to their Hall of Fame.

AWAS parade in Princes Park in WW2

During the Second World War, Princes Park in Carlton was the site of a number of military parades. The two photos reproduced here show one such parade, of Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) personnel. This was held in December 1945 just after the war ended. The Governor-General of Australia, the Duke of Gloucester and his wife were undertaking a month-long official visit to Victoria, and towards the end of their tour, the Duchess of Gloucester attended a review of AWAS personnel in Princes Park. The photos show a march-past, and the Duchess and other dignitaries taking the salute. The Duchess wore the uniform of an AWAS colonel.



The AWAS was formed in 1941 with the objective of employing women in army-related jobs so as to release more men who could serve in forward areas. Members of the AWAS took on roles such as drivers, canteen workers, cooks, typists, signallers, and cipher clerks. There were also other unusual roles such as a Japanese translator, a veterinary surgeon, and an anthropologist who liaised with Indigenous groups. The AWAS eventually enlisted over 24,000 members. These women were the first to serve in the Australian Defence Forces outside of the usual medical and nursing field.



The AWAS Japanese translator was a young woman from Lygon Street, North Carlton, Sergeant Anita Pritchard. At about the same time as the parade in Princes Park, she was in New Guinea involved in trying to contact the General in charge of Japanese forces in Rabaul by radio telephone to inform him (in Japanese) that his country had surrendered. In an interview with *The Herald* newspaper in December 1945 she said that she broadcast to Rabaul at intervals for two days before the Japanese answered. In that same interview she said that she could write Japanese as well as speak it and could read Japanese newspapers. She had also been involved in interrogating scores of Japanese soldiers. While most AWAS members served in Australia, a few such as Sergeant Pritchard were posted to New Guinea towards the end of the war. Those who were sent there had to be volunteers, single, and aged between 21 and 35. Presumably Sergeant Pritchard fitted that description.

After the war, the AWAS was no longer required and its members were demobilised. By June 1947 the organization had been disbanded.

Carlton Personality: Giovanni Comparin

Giovanni Comparin was a prominent bus company owner before the Second World War who lived in Grattan Street, Carlton. He was born in 1899 in Thiene, Vicenza, Italy. During the First World War he enlisted in the Italian army by putting his age up by a year, and it was while in the army that he learned to drive and to fix cars. After the war he migrated to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in 1919 aged only 20. In Australia he found work as a gardener, chauffeur and mechanic. By 1923 he had saved enough money to buy his first bus and to establish a business transporting people from Spencer Street in the city to Reservoir. In 1925 he was involved in a court case that was the result of a fight between himself and a rival bus driver. An article in *The Argus* newspaper of 16 September 1925 tells how Comparin and another bus driver, both of whom operated the same Reservoir to Spencer Street route, got into a fight. The other driver was a Jewish man named Samuel Michaels. Michaels was taken to court by Comparin, for assault and at the court hearing Michaels described what happened:



This is the type of bus that Giovanni Comparin operated in the 1920s.

At Reservoir the bus drivers are supposed to run on a five-minute schedule, but Comparin, instead of keeping to it, cut in before me just as it was my turn to leave. He picked up all the passengers along the route and got into town with a full load. When he arrived, I went over to his bus and said, 'You have no right to start out of your turn'. He replied 'I am not going to be contradicted by a ---- Jew.' He then pulled a knife from his pocket, so I struck him one blow on the jaw.

Michaels was fined five pounds, plus costs and damages. Comparin's bus business grew and in 1927 he introduced a passenger service between Melbourne and Ballarat. One of his employees on the Melbourne to Ballarat service in those days was a young man named Reg Ansett who went on to bigger things in the transport industry. In 1929 Comparin returned to his village in Italy to marry Clementina Crosara. The couple returned to Melbourne, living first in North Melbourne, then in Young Street, Fitzroy, before moving to a house at 60 Grattan Street, Carlton. By the 1930s, Comparin had extended his transport service from Melbourne to Albury, and was also transporting the mail and newspapers to country towns. When Italy entered the Second World War as an ally of Germany, Comparin became an 'enemy alien' and was liable to be interned. He was forced to close his business and work in a munitions factory to show that he was contributing to the Australian war effort. After the war he resumed operating his passenger transport company, until his death in 1950. His wife Clementina lived on until 1986.

The disappearing apostrophe

On the façade of the Princes Hill Primary School (built 1924) the word Prince's displays an apostrophe. Yet on all other official signs, there is no apostrophe. When and why did the apostrophe get dropped? The answer is that in 1966, an Australian government body, the Geographical Names Board, decided that no Australian place names should contain possessive apostrophes. So for example, Paterson's Road had to be written as Patersons Road. The reason seems to be that the apostrophe indicated possession (by Paterson) when in fact the road was Crown Land. Since 1966, Prince's Hill has had to be written as Princes Hill, presumably to indicate that it is not the possession of any Prince.



Dentists in Carlton

During the 19th century, the practice of dentistry was largely unregulated with no governing body to oversee training and practitioner registration. Chemists and anyone with the basic training and equipment could advertise their services as a dentist and charge patients accordingly. This all changed with the formation of the Odontological Society of Victoria in 1884. The Society was based on the Odontological Society of Great Britain and members lobbied the Victorian government to introduce legislation for registration of dentists practising in the colony. The Dentists Act was passed in December 1887 and came into effect in early 1888. The Act set out the requirements for registration and included provision for dentists and chemists who had practised dentistry prior to the passing of the Act. Unregistered operators could be fined for using the title 'dentist' and advertising their services.

The first Dentists' Register was gazetted in January 1889 and recorded 24 registrants based in Carlton and North Carlton. Of these, 22 were already practising dentists and/or chemists, and the remaining two had external qualifications in dentistry. Several registered dentists were located in

Lygon Street, Carlton. Edmund Bignell, a chemist, advertised his services as 'Teeth Extracted, Scaled and Stopped; Children's Teeth receiving special attention'. As a chemist, Bignell would have been well versed in

E D M U N D B I G N E L L, M. P. S.,
PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMIST AND REGISTERED DENTIST,
Presents his compliments to the residents of Carlton and district, and has
pleasure in informing them that he has recommenced business at
31 MACKENZIE STREET (off Lygon-street), opposite Dr. Snowball.
Having been in business previously in Lygon-street over eighteen years,
he trusts, by conducting his business on the same principle as formerly, to
secure the confidence and support of his many friends and customers. The
Dispensing Department is conducted personally by the proprietor.
Dental Department—Teeth Extracted, Scaled and Stopped; Children's
Teeth receiving extra attention.

(Jewish Tribune Herald, 11 June 1897, page 2)

medication dispensing and dosage. However, he overdosed on chlorodyne - a formulation of laudanum, cannabis and chloroform used for pain relief and sedation - and was admitted to Melbourne Hospital in a serious condition. He must have recovered sufficiently to take a sea voyage but he died of apoplexy ten days later on 18 October 1897, on board the S. S. Barcoo, between Adelaide and Albany.

Joseph Doubleday also had a dental practice in Lygon Street. He died in October 1898 and within two months his widow advertised her intention to continue the practice, with the appointment of a 'first class' dentist, at 220 Lygon Street. Edward William Fitzgerald, Joseph Doubleday's former assistant, established his own practice in 1898, on the opposite side of Lygon Street at no. 179. He was appointed Dental Surgeon to the Port Phillip District M.U.I.O.O.F. in 1903.

By 1909, twenty years after the first Dentists' Register was gazetted, the number of dentists operating in Carlton, North Carlton and Princes Hill had dropped from 24 to 14. A handful of the original 1889 cohort of dentists and chemists were still in practice, while others had relocated, retired or died. Some new names and categories of qualifications were listed. James Watson of Wilson Street, Princes Hill, '... passed the *sine curriculo* examination before the Board, July 1907, and complied with the conditions of section 10, Act 1595', while Thomas Obbinson of Lygon Street was '... studying dentistry before the passing of the Act no. 960. Compliance with section 55, Act 1118'.

The 1890s saw major changes in dentistry training and practice. The Melbourne Dental Hospital was opened in September 1890, followed by the Australian College of Dentistry in 1897. In 1904, a Faculty of Dental Science was established at the University of Melbourne, and the College became affiliated with the university. Qualifications were upgraded to a university degree standard and the focus moved from extracting and 'stopping' teeth to preventative and restorative dentistry.

A Disorderly House

By Rose Raymen

When my family first arrived in Australia, we lived at 125 Lygon Street, Carlton, later relocating to 48 Pigdon Street, North Carlton. In 1963, my father purchased our first home at 77 Pigdon Street, North Carlton, a two-storey, four-bedroom, red-brick, Victorian architectural style property built in 1890. In the 1960s, Carlton's Jewish community was declining and moving south of the Yarra, to the leafy suburbs of St Kilda, Elwood, Brighton and Caulfield and by the mid-1970s few Jews were left in Carlton. In 1970, my parents sold the Pigdon Street property and relocated to Elwood.



Rose's parents Zelda and Joseph in the kitchen at 77 Pigdon Street. (Photo: Rose Raymen)

In the early 1970s, my mother visited a friend in North Carlton and decided to ask the current occupant of 77 Pigdon Street, if it was possible to view the house for a final time. However, the interior of the building was poorly lit and hanging curtains covered doorless entrances to a number of rooms. Chaskiel Kurop, the owner of the corner store, informed my mother afterwards, that the place she once called home, was now operating as a brothel.

In 2005, I contacted the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and was advised that according to the Sands and McDougall directories, 77 Pigdon Street, was a block of flats and that the housing must have changed in the early 1970s. However, the Carlton Community History Group clarified that the term 'flats' did not refer to a block of flats, but to a large house that has been divided (with partitions) into separate living units and that a house the size of 77 Pigdon Street could probably have accommodated two flats upstairs and two downstairs.



The house at 77 Pigdon Street, North Carlton, taken in the late 1960s. (Photo: Rose Raymen)

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

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Carlton Community History Group

at cchg@y7mail.com or visit our website www.cchg.asn.au