

# NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 11

November 2018

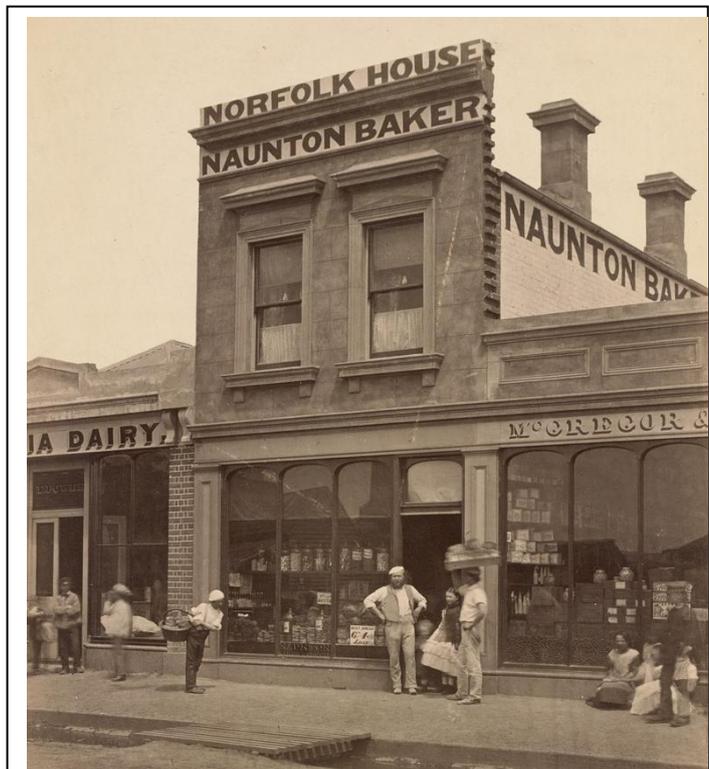
---

## Bakeries in Carlton

Bread - the simple combination of flour and water, with or without a leavening agent - has fed the world's population for millennia. Long before European settlement in Australia, aborigines used stones to grind seeds and other plant materials into meal or flour to make bread. During the early gold rush era of the 1850s, new arrivals brought their own bread making traditions to Australia - sourdough from Europe, soda bread from Ireland, cornbread from America, flat bread from India and the Middle East, and steamed buns from Asia.

One of the earliest, if not the first, bakers in Carlton was a Scottish migrant named Dugald Cameron. In August 1853, Cameron leased a portion of land in the block bounded by Victoria, Rathdowne and Drummond Streets for a period of twenty years at a yearly rent of £200. This was the start of a successful bakery business that would outlive Dugald Cameron and continue baking bread well into the 20th century, as Owens and Dixon and later Sunicrust bakeries.

The early bakers were located at the southern end of Carlton. But as the suburb developed they moved further north, satisfying the needs of residents of the new areas for fresh bread. By the 1890s, there was a bakery in the northern-most block of Lygon Street, North Carlton, and others followed. Rathdowne Street was well serviced with bakeries from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20th century, and the Natural Tucker Bakery at the top end of Nicholson Street, North Carlton, occupies the site of James Ferguson's cake and pastry shop, dating back to 1914. In the pre- and post- World War two period, migration from Europe brought continental bakers who introduced new bread products. By the 1970s, bread was more likely to be purchased from supermarkets than from a bakery. The larger scale bakeries



A baker's shop in the 1860s. Although not in Carlton, this shop in Collingwood was typical of bakeries in suburban Melbourne at the time. Note the man carrying bread on a tray on his head. (Photo courtesy State Library of Victoria).

like Owens and Dixon, Exhibition and Universal continued to operate, but their days in Carlton were numbered.

The 1980s saw a return of the smaller and specialty bakeries, with the introduction of hot bread shops and bakery cafés, where bread was baked and meals were served on the premises. The bakery franchises Brumby's and Baker's Delight have traded in Rathdowne and Lygon Streets. Black Ruby in Rathdowne Street offered a completely gluten free menu, and the long-established French Lettuce in Nicholson Street continues to delight the palate with French bread and pastries. In the 1850s, all the bakers in Carlton would have been considered 'artisan bakers'. The artisan bakers have since returned to Carlton, driven by the slow food movement and health concerns about bread ingredients and additives. The Natural Tucker Bakery in Nicholson Street, North Carlton, began baking sourdough bread in 1984, and Kylie's Slow Dough in Rathdowne Street is a more recent addition to the local bakery trade.

## Italian bakers in trouble with the law

The continental bakers who arrived in Carlton pre- and post- World War 2 had their own way of doing things and this sometimes found them in breach of the law. There was a long-standing regulation in Victoria that loaves of bread were to be sold in prescribed weights of one, two and four pounds. The Weights and Measures Act of 1950 allowed an exception for the Vienna loaf, which could be sold in weights of 12 and 24 ounces, and had to be 'marked with three slashes across the upper surface'. In October 1953, North Carlton baker Pasquale Carrazzo ran into trouble when he baked loaves of bread, known in the trade as 'pistolini', which did not conform to the prescribed definition of a Vienna loaf with three slashes. Carrazzo's loaves had a single slash down the middle of the loaf, Italian style, and his bread was therefore not exempt from the prescribed weight requirement. He was fined £2 in Carlton Court for baking for sale underweight loaves of bread.

Six months later, in May 1954, another Italian baker, Gino Catelli of Queensberry Street, was similarly charged, but he escaped a fine. The charge was dismissed on the double-negative ground that it had *not* been proved that the loaves in question were *not* Vienna loaves.

Two months later, in July 1954, Mr Catelli, together with three of his workers, appeared in the Metropolitan Industrial Court to face charges of baking bread during the prohibited hours of 5pm to midnight, and failing to make entries in the time book. In this case, both Catelli and his workers were found guilty and fined. The action was brought by the Operative Bakers' Union of Victoria, whose assistant secretary, Norman Gordon, denied claims that migrant bakers were being persecuted. He said his concerns were for the working hours and conditions of bakers, and that he prosecuted Australian bakers along with migrant bakers. Bread delivery times were also closely regulated and there were numerous prosecutions for deliveries outside the prescribed hours. Life could be difficult for an honest baker trying to 'earn a crust' in a competitive industry.

### **History talk: The Stockade - Carlton's forgotten prison**

One hundred and sixty years ago, the site of what is now the Carlton North Primary School was a prison. It opened in 1853 and operated for 13 years until 1866, when it became an asylum for the insane, and later a school. Join Jeff Atkinson from the Carlton Community History Group as he presents a vivid picture of the penal system in gold rush Victoria.

Bookings essential.

**Tuesday 20 November 2018, 6 till 7pm  
Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre  
249-251 Faraday Street, Carlton.**

## Local History News

### Talk on the natural history of pre-European Richmond

On Sunday 25 November, a talk will be given at the Richmond Library by Dr Gary Presland on 'The Natural History of Pre-European Richmond'. At the time Europeans first settled in what is now Richmond, it was a place of diverse natural history. Perched partly on volcanic river flats, and partly on a sandstone ridge, the area supported a range of vegetation types — riverine, grasslands and wooded slopes. These, in turn, provided habitats for diverse fauna. Dr. Presland will provide an overview of the complete natural history, from the underlying geology to the birds and animals.

*Sunday 25 November 2018 at 2.30pm, in the Richmond Library, Church Street, Richmond. Check the website of the Richmond and Burnley Historical Society for updates.*

### Restoration and placement of First World War gun

In 1919, a large German gun, a Heavy Field Howitzer that had been captured by Australian troops at the end of the First World War, was brought back to Melbourne as a prize. For nearly a century it sat in the Darling Gardens in Clifton Hill. However in 2013, it was removed and has now been restored and is about to be re-sited. In October the City of Yarra sought the public's views on where the restored gun should now be placed.



How bread was delivered to homes in Melbourne up until the 1950s. (Photo: Aussie-mobs)

### Richmond rate book records 1857 to 1902 available on USB

An index of some 360,000 names of the owners and occupiers of properties in Richmond between 1857 and 1902 has been produced by the Genealogical Society of Victoria and the Richmond and Burnley Historical Society, and is now available as a USB. This is an invaluable resource for genealogists who might have had relatives living in Richmond.

*'Index of Owners and Occupiers of Properties, 1857-1902'. USB - \$45.00 available from the Genealogical Society of Victoria, Level 6, 85 Queen St, Melbourne.*

### Melbourne – 'The Maddest Place on Earth'

A book has recently been released on the history of mental institutions and the treatment of the mentally ill in Melbourne in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the cover says: 'Gold-fuelled Melbourne was booming, but dwelling in the fault lines of the proud young colony was an alarming fact – Victoria had the highest rate of insanity in the world'. The story of colonial Victoria's quest to deal with insanity is told in the book through the lives of three English newcomers – a gifted artist, an ambitious doctor, and an undercover journalist who sensationally exposed the lunatics' plight in Melbourne's press.

*'The Maddest Place on Earth' by Jill Giese. Price \$39.95. Available from most bookshops.*

### End-of-year meeting and celebration

You are invited to join the Carlton Community History Group for drinks and an informal meeting at the Great Northern Hotel (in the private dining room), to celebrate the end of another successful year of 'preserving Carlton's past and present for the future'. All welcome.

**Tuesday 11 December 2018, 6 till 9pm**  
**Great Northern Hotel, Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.**

## Owens and Dixon

When the pioneering Carlton baker Dugald Cameron died in 1908, the bakery he had established in the 1850s, together with considerable land holdings, went to his niece Mary Rimmington. The business continued in Cameron's name for several years and by 1910 was operated by Richard Owen Owens (known as Owen Owens). He was the son of a Welsh migrant and his family had a background in operating hotels and bakeries in country Victoria. Owen and his family initially lived on the bakery site in Victoria Street, Carlton, between Drummond and Rathdowne Streets. His daughter Vera remembers the old wooden building that seemed to rock even in the slightest breeze. In 1915, Owen's eldest daughter Florence married a baker, George Dixon. This was the start of the bakery dynasty of Owens and Dixon, with Owen's daughters Florence or Amy managing the business for most of the next fifty years.

The 1920s saw a major redevelopment of the bakery site (see photo below) with the removal of the rickety old timber buildings and houses along the Victoria Street frontage. These were replaced by a two-storey residence, office and shop facing Victoria Street. There were two large bake-houses and ovens, one facing Victoria Street and the other facing a laneway on the western boundary. This enabled increased bread production and *The Age* of 9 November 1923 reported that Owens and Dixon was selling more than 12,000 loaves daily.

The bakery business remained in the family after the retirement of Owen Owens, and his subsequent death in 1952. In March 1966, shares in the company were purchased by Sunicrust Bakeries Pty Ltd, and in March 1973 Owens and Dixon Pty Ltd was wound up voluntarily, bringing to an end the Owens family's long association with the baking industry.

(Information courtesy of the Owens family).



Owens and Dixon's premises in Victoria Street, Carlton, with their bread delivery vans lined up neatly in front. (Photo courtesy of the Owens family).

### Do you have an interest in Social Media?

The Carlton Community History Group is looking for someone with an interest in history and social media to look after our Facebook page. We would supply news items and photos for the page and answer any inquiries. But we need someone to manage the process and to make sure that the page is active – which it is not at the moment. If interested contact us at [jeffann@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jeffann@bigpond.net.au)

## Did you know

### Leaving the dinner at the baker's overnight

In Carlton in the early days, Orthodox Jewish women would take their Sabbath stews to the baker's of a Friday evening and leave it in the oven overnight, so as not to break the scriptural injunction against working on the Sabbath (Saturday).

### Bread for the poor

In 1929 when Melbourne was in the grip of a major economic depression, Dr John Dale, medical health officer to the City of Melbourne, devised a bread recipe that would ensure adequate nutrition for families in straitened economic circumstances struggling to feed their children. This so-called 'Dale bread' was produced in Carlton by Owens and Dixon bakery in Victoria Street. Loaves of bread baked by Owens and Dixon were air-lifted to regional centres in Victoria and southern New South Wales for distribution, while local distribution to families in Carlton was handled by the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society.

### A long-running bakery

The row of eight shops in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, close to Pigdon Street included a bakery when they first opened in 1891-92 and, except for a few years in the late 1890s when the effects of the Depression were very severe, there was a bakery on that site until the late 1960s. From 1912 it was run by Thomas Power, a young migrant from Ireland. After Tom's early death in 1925, the business was run by his widow and children. Power's bakery continued to trade until 1967, by which time supermarkets would have been a serious threat to small stand-alone family bakeries.

### Tell us what you know

The Carlton Community History Group welcomes enquiries from the public about people, places and events in Carlton. The main sources we use for research are publicly available and many are accessible online. Examples include newspaper articles on Trove, Sands and McDougall directories, Melbourne City Council rate books, probate files and birth, death and marriage records. When you make an enquiry, it is important that you tell us, in as much detail as possible, what you already know on the person or topic, and include a list of sources you have already checked. Copies of source documents (for example birth certificates) can also be helpful in answering enquiries.

## The bread wars

Bread might be a wholesome food, but the bakery trade was not always in a healthy position. Disputes, arguments and controversies were not uncommon.

In 1864, for example, *The Argus* published a series of letters implying that bakers were charging too much for their product, based on calculations of the price of flour and the number of loaves produced per ton. At a meeting chaired by Carlton baker James Weedow, the Master Bakers of Melbourne disputed the quoted figures and accused *The Argus* of publishing comments 'very injurious to their (the bakers) character and interests'.

In 1946, the minimum price for bread was fixed at 11 pence per loaf and North Carlton baker Harry Berland ran foul of fellow bakers by selling cut-price bread at 9 and 10 pence per loaf. The action was brought by the Bread Manufacturers of Victoria, whose members withheld supplies of flour and yeast from Mr Berland, effectively putting him out of business. Mr Berland maintained that he was able to keep his costs down because his wife assisted him in the business and she did the bread deliveries. He appealed to the Commonwealth Prices Commissioner, but to no avail. The Commissioner, Mr McCarthy, upheld the action of the Bread Manufacturers of Victoria and said he felt it was not appropriate for him to be involved in what he saw as a 'domestic' issue. By this time,

Mr Berland was in ill-health and he decided to sell his bakery business at 549 Drummond Street, North Carlton. The bakery was taken over by Young and Grinwald and was still trading as Leon's Bakery in the 1970s.

Two years later, in 1948, the *Labor Call* reported alleged standover tactics by the Master Bakers' Association to prevent customers from changing their bread suppliers. The proprietor of a Richmond café and sandwich shop was dissatisfied with the product quality and delivery service of her current supplier, McAlpins, and began placing orders instead with Universal Bakeries in Carlton. But after a few weeks the manager at Universal Bakeries told her he could no longer supply her bread, by direction of the Master Bakers' Association. She had no option but to return to her previous supplier.

**Interested in local history?  
Then join us in the Carlton Community History Group  
and help preserve our past for the future.**

**Are you interested in working on any of the following projects?**

- Researching your own family history as it relates to Carlton;
- Recording oral history, stories and recollections of former residents;
- Researching topics for future editions of this Newsletter;
- Helping to maintain our Facebook page;
- Publicising the Group and its activities;
- Seeking grants to fund specific projects.

**Sounds interesting? Then contact us to see how you can be involved.**

Email: [cchg@y7mail.com](mailto:cchg@y7mail.com) Website: [www.cchg.asn.au](http://www.cchg.asn.au)

## Remnants of early bakeries

Pictured at right is the parapet of a building at 202 Elgin Street, Carlton, next to the hotel on the corner of Lygon and Elgin Streets. The name on the parapet tells us that it was formerly the Caledonian Bakery. This bakery was established in 1859, initially in Drummond Street on the east side between Faraday and Elgin Streets, but then in 1864 was moved around the corner to 202 Elgin Street.



In Curtain Street in North Carlton there is a faded sign on the brickwork above a metal roller door that says 'P. Larkin Bakery'. This is all that remains of a bakery that used to operate there. Sands & McDougall directories list Larkin and Kolt, bakers, at 136 Curtain Street in 1937, and P. Larkin from 1939 to 1953.

**This Newsletter is produced and distributed four times a year. If you would like to be put on the mailing list, email the Carlton Community History Group at [cchg@y7mail.com](mailto:cchg@y7mail.com) or visit our website [www.cchg.asn.au](http://www.cchg.asn.au)**

**Carlton Community History Group,  
P.O. Box 148, North Carlton, VIC, 3054.**