



HOTHAM HISTORY PROJECT Inc.

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Chair's Report 2015-2016

This being our 21st birthday year, the Hotham History Project has been in a state of low key non-stop celebration which in turn has become a foundation for the next few years.

2016 began with our George Johnson exhibition at the Metropolitan Meat Market. Especial thanks to Peter Johnson, descendant of master architect George Johnson who designed our town hall, the municipal library and the adjacent council owned shops in Errol Street as well as the Metropolitan Meat Market.

Peter is himself an architectural historian and a stalwart of the St Kilda Historical Society and contributed his expertise to the Hotham History Project over the years. He and Bill Hannan, author of *Pride of Hotham* worked together to assemble the material for the exhibition at the Metropolitan Meat Market and personnel from the Arts and Culture Branch of the City of Melbourne, Adriano, Jy and Emma worked alongside them to put together an impressive display of George Johnson's work.

The exhibition is still there, set out along the corridor on the Blackwood Street side of the building and we have been able to guide visitors round the display and the interior of the Meat Market during local walks and the Open Melbourne weekend.

Our 21st celebrations reached their peak with a lunch at Amiconi's, a birthday cake by Rae and a general swapping of stories and memories among ourselves. A grand occasion which seems to have set several new projects in train and held very suitably at Amiconi's, currently the oldest continuously operating restaurant in the district. We would also like to thank Amiconi's for their contribution to the occasion.

This year is the centenary of Ruth Crow's birth. When they moved into North Melbourne in 1964, Ruth Hope Crow, then aged 48, and her husband Maurie set a new tone for radical intellectual life in North and West Melbourne. They were convinced and imaginative community activists. They encouraged us all to talk to each other and plan a people-centred future - one that would have all the qualities we crave: shared open spaces alongside those places in the community that drew people, (hubs they were called); adequate public transport so that the need for cars would lessen not grow and a building stock that was respected and well used.

Ruth was everywhere. Under the *nom de plume* of *Una Voce* she wrote regular lively pieces for the *Northern Advertiser*. She was a foundation member of the then North Melbourne Association. She was an organizer of the International Book Fair. She agitated locally for childcare, more and better schools, social equality. And she was a mentor to

Winsome McCaughey in her time as a councillor and Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne.

In various ways, Kay Oke, Mary Kehoe and I are collecting material about Ruth which you can expect to see surface in various forms over the coming year and Rae Nicholls has activated contact with the planners of the time whose work incorporated their values. If you have special memories of Ruth and Maurie, we invite you to talk to one of us so that our record of this remarkable team is as authentic as we can make it.

Our programmed 2015-6 events have been varied. During the 2015 Spring Fling, we had a street stall and in conjunction with the Arts House hosted visits to the clock tower of the North Melbourne Town Hall and excursions and story telling in the building itself. A summer walk prepared and guided by David Evans was an opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the local work of the Welsh builder, John Jones. David's paper on John Jones has been published in *Provenance*, the journal of Public Record Office Victoria.

In conjunction with the North Melbourne Library and local history librarian Heather McKay, we toured a selection of buildings whose recycled uses draw attention to the robust quality of much of our early building stock, arguably the most tangible aspect of our cultural heritage.

Talks were given during this last year by Dr. Karl Hessian on re numbering of houses in 1888, Susan Pierotti on the life and times of *City Kid* Lola Russel and Ian Jenkin on the coming of rail to North and West Melbourne. Thanks to all three for sharing their research with us.

We have had one showing to date of *The Last Anzac*, a filmed interview with Deirdre Langenheim. Later this year on 12 November we have planned a visit to Fawkner Cemetery to the pioneer graves moved there decades ago from the grounds of the present day Queen Victoria Market. And on 15 November is the launch by Richard Wynne of *Remembering Melbourne* a Royal Historical Society collection of photographs with informative text to which Hotham History was invited to contribute. Thanks to Mary Kehoe and Lorraine Siska for their meticulous work on this project.

Thanks to Kay Gibson, Carole Woods and Margaret Dean for their financial support, Bill Hannan and his helpers for regular contributions on behalf of Hotham History to the *North and West Melbourne News*, Guy Murphy and his contacts for maintaining our website and Heather McKay for her support and the extra effort that she puts in to hunt down obscure facts and also keep us in touch with various events and specials interest groups.

The members of the committee know that they all contribute to the sum of what we do. Deputy chair Rae Nicholls, secretary Mary Kehoe, regular minute taker Felicity Jack, treasurer Marlene Shanahan, I would like to take the opportunity to thank them all for the contributions of time, energy and work that goes into our program and has done so over this first 21 years .

And finally, thanks to our loyal membership drawn as it is from the community past and present.

Lorna Hannan August 2016