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Melbourne General Cemetery: the 'buried treasure' in Carlton

Terence Lane, formerly Senior Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, author and art historian, spoke passionately at the recent CRA Dinner about the heritage and cultural importance of the Melbourne General Cemetery. His interest in the Cemetery was renewed 18 months ago when he 'rediscovered' Carlton, and then he was particularly horrified to discover in January that a new mausoleum was proposed for the site.

In his interesting and informative talk, Terence related the 'ups and downs' of the Cemetery. Opened in 1853, it was designed as a public garden (with a similar plan to the Fitzroy Gardens) and was a popular attraction, with thousands of visitors on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The 'heyday' of the Cemetery was in the 1880s, when the thousands of trees planted by Baron von Mueller matured, and there were also waterfalls, rockeries, grottos, grassy areas, flower beds of annuals. The gatekeeper, a 'person not to be meddled with', took very seriously his job of ensuring that 'undesirables' did not enter, and apparently, often complained about 'the wicked ways of those Blues fans' who regularly used the Cemetery as a short cut from Lygon Street to Princes Park!

However, in the first decades of the 20th century, the Cemetery (and the concept of a public park) declined and there was much vandalism and theft. Roads were given



Greta Bird thanks guest speaker Terence Lane

over to plots and the boundary trees were cut down. There was a small revival in the 1930s and the main entrance was moved from the western side on Princes Park Drive to the current College Crescent location. Again, between the 1940s and 1970s, there was a 'bad' period before the Cemetery was taken over by the Necropolis Trust (which also runs Springvale Cemetery) in 1980.

There is a vast array of styles of memorial in the Cemetery (pure Georgian with classical lettering and calligraphy, Edwardian, Deco and Moderne, and the Italian graves of shiny black marble) as well as materials used – sandstone, cast iron and code stone. There was a move to marble and granite memorials in the late 19th century. In recent decades, all available space has been sold off, crypts have been built, and the Mausoleum was built in 2004.

Many famous people are buried there, including Sir Charles Hotham, Burke and Wills and Justice Barry, and the Prime Ministers' Memorial Garden is near the main entrance. There are also some 'interesting' graves - Walter Lindrum's grave is in the form of a billiards table with cues and balls!

Today, there are many abandoned and damaged graves, and very little funding to maintain the Cemetery. Proceeds from the Heritage Trust's night tours of the cemetery are used for grave restoration but Terence strongly believes that what is needed is for the State Government to contribute funds for the renovation of the Cemetery. It is a community facility and should again be the 'treasure' that it once was.



CRA members and friends enjoying themselves at the recent CRA Dinner

Major victories for CoRBA-Melbourne (Coalition of Residents and Business Associations)

The struggle for local government democracy in our municipality continues. At the packed Council meeting on 28 April, a resolution put by Councillor Peter Clarke (after consultation with CoRBA) was passed unanimously

by Council. This was the second such resolution from Council, calling upon the Minister for Local Government, Richard Wynne, to immediately commence an electoral and structural review. At the first meeting of the new Council in December 2008, Councillors honoured their election promise in relation to the need for a review. They requested that Minister Wynne act upon this matter. After four months, Minister Wynne finally responded to Council, stating that a review would be conducted 'in due course'. However, any changes to the electoral system are slow to eventuate.

The last election demonstrated that civic disengagement is unacceptably high. In the November 2008 election, just over 60% of eligible voters actually participated. In other elections where attendance voting occurred, the participation level reached 80-90%. CoRBA asserts that a high level of voter disengagement is linked to the flawed system (see article below on the 'Victorian Electoral Commission Report'). We need it sorted before the next election.

The text of the Council decision is available on the Council website. [Go to 'Council and Committee meeting documentation/Agendas, reports etc/Finance and Governance Committee/View details and documents (Tuesday 14 April)']

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) Election Report

The City of Melbourne contracts management of municipal elections to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and as part of the legal compliance attached to elections, the VEC is required to present a report to Council. However, the specific details of the VEC contract are not made public and CoRBA was obviously keen to examine the VEC Election Report and access the data contained therein.

Why is the data in the VEC Election Report so important? It is important because it provides concrete evidence to substantiate CoRBA's contention that the electoral processes and the Council structure in our municipality are undemocratic, unrepresentative and unaudited. The latest VEC report on the 2008 election, explicitly reveals the various unacceptable elements in our election system – a flawed system that has been condoned for so long by the State Government. It reveals high levels of civic disengagement and a constituency struggling to understand eligibility criteria. It also reveals the impossibility of actually validating the electoral roll.

And how was this VEC Election Report presented to Council? CoRBA noted with alarm that Council Administration put the report before the full Council on 14 April 2009 – the last possible moment under the law.

Council meetings do not allow for public participation, thus making it impossible for the community to respond to the important data contained in the VEC report.

CoRBA members identified many issues of concern in the 58-page VEC Election Report and, in the interests of good governance, successfully persuaded Council not to accept the VEC report. Instead, it persuaded Council, as is proper, to refer it to the Finance and Governance committee. At a meeting of this committee, CoRBA and its affiliates were able to make detailed submissions on the serious matters in the Report. In fact, CoRBA formulated 18 questions on the contents of the VEC report. The Melbourne Business Council and the Southbank Residents Group also raised serious matters at the meeting. It is puzzling that the VEC Report, ostensibly a 'final report', actually states that work on the election is 'not yet complete'. In fact, the City of Melbourne requires the VEC to pursue non-voters. However, this may be a very difficult task indeed, given the legal constraints placed upon the VEC in this matter. None of the financial details of the VEC contract have been made public, including the increased costs of the security necessary under the current system.

CoRBA is pleased that Councillors on the Finance and Governance Committee recognised the need for the City of Melbourne Administration, in consultation with the VEC, to provide comprehensive answers to all of the 18 questions put by CoRBA as soon as possible – in fact within three weeks.

Heritage struggle in Swanston St – good news (a tiny bit anyway).

In 2006/07, the CRA successfully fought, with council support, to retain and restore a small weatherboard house at 864 Swanston St, which had been allowed to become derelict..

It was agreed that the front of the cottage would be authentically restored, including appropriate landscaping, and that a significantly reduced number of student apartments would be tacked on to the back, thereby covering the entire rear yard. However, we were dismayed to find that the developer had placed a huge, two-metre-high metal electrical box in the front garden of the heritage cottage.

CRA alerted Council planners, who contacted the developer who refused to replace the illegal box with a smaller one. The developer had also failed to complete the veranda work and the landscaping which included a planted screen around the electrical box. The developer then attempted to have the original permit amended to allow for the large electrical box. Fortunately, the authorities rejected this request. However, as no agreement

could be reached, a mediation meeting was held in September 2008 and a compromise was reached.

Seven months later, after further prodding by CRA and further wrangling by the Council, the developers have finally complied with the agreed permit conditions. We are pleased, but hardly elated, to report that the offending electrical box has now been partly screened, and several shrubs have been planted. This far from ideal outcome (see picture) was only achieved at the cost of considerable effort by CRA and expense by Council.



The old and new!

Melbourne@5million

The State Government is planning to house an extra million people in Melbourne over the next 20 years. A new planning document *Melbourne@5million* has now replaced the earlier *Melbourne 2030 plans*. Controversial new planning policy documents have engaged the CRA in recent weeks as we formally respond to the State Government and the City of Melbourne (CoM) about the New Residential Zones proposals and a review of the Planning and Environment Act. (More information is available from the Department of Planning and Community Development: www.dpcd.vic.gov.au)

These new planning documents are about enforcing high-density living in Melbourne as a response to Government economic policies which require ever-escalating population growth (currently 1500 people per week). Premier Brumby contends that more consumers are needed for economic growth; Planning Minister Madden states the Government aims to 'strengthen certainty and timelines in the planning process' and to 'streamline the growth area planning process'. The State economy is now apparently predicated on this Melbourne-centric growth, regardless of its implications for liveability, sustainability and the environment. Issues of land supply, water, transport infrastructure, health and education services, air quality, etc. are largely ignored by the Government in its drive for rapid population growth.

Decentralisation of population to regional cities and country Victoria is no longer on the policy agenda. Melbourne-centric development is very attractive to 'the big end of town' for short-term profit at minimal financial risk; developments beyond the city fringe hold little attraction. There has been no meaningful public debate on population growth. Is this the Melbourne we want?

Although the general community and local councils have largely rejected Government high-density residential policies, senior CoM bureaucrats are enthusiastic about it. High-rise living has not been widely embraced in Melbourne, especially in the suburbs. Much more prescriptive policies are now in the pipeline to force high-density living, of the kind that now exists along Swanston Street in Carlton, on a sceptical community. Plans for such development along suburban tram, bus and rail routes are now being 'fast-tracked' to accelerate housing construction and create jobs. The powers of the Planning Minister to overrule councils and to 'call-in' controversial projects have been significantly enhanced, as recent media reports confirm.

In Carlton, the Lygon St. Precinct has been declared a 'Major Activity Centre' which will exacerbate already intense development pressures. Likewise, our Victorian era heritage housing and streetscapes, currently protected by height and heritage overlays, may come under increasing scrutiny for higher density development. The environs of the World Heritage Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens are of particular concern.



High-density housing along the tramlines in Swanston St. Carlton. This intense development is likely to become a model for proposed housing along tram, bus and rail routes throughout Melbourne and suburbs.

The Government must be called to account over its Melbourne-centric population growth policies; issues of liveability and sustainability must be urgently addressed. Our silence will be viewed as acquiescence.

'Opportunities for Carlton' Project

The aim of the 'Opportunities for Carlton' (OFC) project is to explore innovative ways of improving the social, economic and educational outcomes of the community. The OFC network is comprised of residents, business people, students, police, local service providers, community groups, primary schools, RMIT and Melbourne University, hospitals, local, state and federal departments, Melbourne Museum, La Mama and the Carlton Football Club. It connects the Carlton community and government decision-makers.

The inaugural workshop to establish the network was held on 10 September 2008. Fifty-one community members attended. Discussions produced project ideas which were grouped together into four themes. A working group was set up to produce an action plan for each of the themes. These action plans were combined to form a Community Plan for Carlton, which was endorsed at the second workshop of the network on 1 December 2008.

Presented below are the four themes and what each group is working on:

Carlton Work and Learning

- The ICT Hub project has been allocated \$5000, so stay tuned for its development!
- The Employer Round Table is progressing well, with Lindsay Tanner keen to be involved and a date to be confirmed in late July.

Carlton Together

- Received a presentation from Web Partners to look at how the group can progress development of a Carlton website.
- Exploring the concept of a 'Village Square' between the Church of All Nations, Carlton Primary and Neill Street.

Healthy Carlton

- A number of the organisations on the Healthy Carlton working group together hosted a fantastic festival for Harmony Day.
- Developing a range of translated information tools for Carlton, focusing on health, family violence and safety.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

- Trip to Yuille Park Community College/ Wendouree West Lifelong Learning Hub was successful and provided members of the group with good background information for Carlton.
- A further visit to Caroline Springs is being organised to see another, different example of how schools and community facilities can work together.
- Local residents who wish to participate in the OFC project should register their interest with the Secretary of the Carlton Residents Association – secretarycra@gmail.com.

Community Events

Burnley Neighbourhood Centre Workshops

The Burnley Neighbourhood Centre is holding a course on sustainable living. The four Footprints workshops (20 and 27 May and 3 and 10 June) are designed to encourage people to make positive changes towards reducing their environmental 'footprint'. The workshops are relevant to all living arrangements and any income level, and require no prior knowledge or experience. The cost per participant is \$25. Further information can be obtained from Simone Gardiner at burnleync@yarranet.net.au.

Harmony Day

This year, Harmony Day was a lovely sunny day and hundreds of adults and children enjoyed activities at the playground area and open space between the Carlton Primary School and the Department of Housing flats. Once again 'McDonalds' Farm', with its array of young animals, was a popular attraction, as was the face painting, Ethiopian coffee, barbecue and craft stalls. The local community radio was also on hand to broadcast throughout the afternoon, and music groups entertained with a variety of music styles.



Adults and children all enjoyed the Harmony Day activities.

'Communities in Control' Conference: 15 and 16 June

This conference is being organised by Our Community (a world-leading social enterprise that serves as the national gateway for community groups and schools) and Centacare Catholic Family Services. With a wide range of speakers and workshops, the conference aims to address such questions as: What lessons must be learned from the events of recent months that have at times plunged our world into chaos? How can we build the resilience and creativity needed to rethink our approaches to social, environmental and economic development, and learn to adapt to new ways of doing and being? How can the community sector, business, government, academia and the media come together to pursue solutions to the complex problems before us?

For further information, email service@ourcommunity.com.au or phone (03) 9320 6800.

Intelligence and Crime Prevention Bulletin

The Melbourne CBD Branch of the Victoria Police (which includes the Carlton Police Station) has recently launched a monthly Intelligence and Crime Prevention Bulletin. The Bulletin is designed to provide proactive information on local issues of crime, public safety and road safety. It also offers an avenue for feedback and communication with your local police. Comments, queries and suggestions can be emailed to CRIMEPREV-MEL@police.vic.gov.au or by phoning 92475495. The current Bulletin focuses on laptop security – particularly relevant as it was reported at the last Police Community Consultative Committee meeting that laptop thefts had increased 30% from last year.

(The Bulletin can be accessed via a link on the CRA website: www.carltonresidents.org.au.)

Planning Reference Group Report

The CRA Planning Reference Group has a new convenor, Helen Macnamara, and a new email address: planningcra@gmail.com. Many thanks to former convenor Robyn Dalziel for all her work, and for continuing to provide backup when required.

Planning activity has been lower than usual, probably due to the financial crisis.

Recent CRA actions include:

- Re 330 Cardigan Street. The developer is objecting to conditions attached to the permit granted by CoM. CRA will not be appearing at VCAT but will write a letter in support of the CoM.
- Re 323 Lygon Street (Cicalata café). In 2005, as part of a renovation, developers installed – without prior Council approval – a noisy rooftop extractor fan which was extremely close to a residential area. In 2008, retrospective approval for the renovation and fan was granted by Council, subject to compliance with EPA policy conditions. Cicalata is seeking to have these conditions overturned by VCAT. Since a finding in favour of the applicant would set a dangerous precedent with implications for the amenity of all Carlton residents, the CRA will appear at the VCAT hearing in June to defend both the CoM decision and the rights of residents.

Community Centre – now or never?

Past editions of Newsflash have documented in detail the ‘saga’ of the Kathleen Syme Centre (KSC). To read those articles, go to the CRA’s website: www.carltonresidents.org.au or contact the CRA Secretary at secretarycra@gmail.com.

Where to from here?

The CRA has approached local Minister Bronwyn Pike on numerous occasions over recent years. While she gives verbal support to the project, the issue has not progressed with relevant colleagues. She, like us, has written to Health Minister Daniel Andrews, and received the same response. At our last meeting with Minister Pike, she informed us that, contrary to previous advice, the Victorian Property Group and the Minister for Finance hold disposal authority over the site when the Royal Women’s Hospital tenants vacate it in 2011. Clearly, former Lord Mayor John So and Dr Kathy Alexander, CEO of CoM were under the misapprehension that the Minister for Health was the responsible Minister when they approached him to discuss purchase of the building on 22 June 2008.

The State Government is continuing to ignore Carlton’s need for a centrally located Community Centre. Perhaps it is time to once again seek community involvement in our campaign to acquire KSC. We will require your wholehearted support, and will shortly advise on how you can help.

Cultural Precincts Enhancement Fund

Author Arnold Zable recently chaired a meeting designed to capture ‘Stories’ of Carlton as part of a \$2m. project to bolster Lygon Street’s marketability. Former Premier Steve Bracks allocated approximately \$8 million to ‘enhance’ the three major cultural precincts in Melbourne: Lygon St (Italian), Little Bourke St (Chinese) and Lonsdale St (Greek). The CRA put forward carefully thought-out strategies on how to ‘enhance’ our precinct (which is code for market to visitors), while simultaneously addressing the needs of ‘locals’. After all, we argue, without the locals Lygon St. would degenerate into a Disneyesque ‘Italia Downunder’.

The public relations company The Reputation Group recently sought input from CRA and others, with a view to developing a range of ‘story-telling media’ for installation in Lygon St. Those funding the project appear to want decoration; the community wants value for the \$2 million investment.

Repeatedly, the CRA has made the following key points in relation to this **Cultural Precincts Enhancement Fund** investment.

No matter how dominant and celebrated the Italian presence has been and continues to be, Lygon Street has also made room for Jewish, Greek, Irish, Chinese, Scottish, Lebanese, Spanish, Indian, German, Thai, Jamaican and Malaysian immigrants. And let’s not forget the here-and-now cultural impact of 10,000-plus students (domestic and international), Horn of Africa refugees, an influx of new residents from the suburbs and the 16,000 day workers and visitors bringing life to Carlton each workday. For those who have worked, studied, partied or lived in Carlton, there is a sense of ‘ownership’ in relation to Lygon Street. It is a unique place with a remarkable history that deserves to be remembered beyond mere short-term memory clichés.

We must not ignore the contribution of the Arts community in Carlton – past and present. The recent successful battle to save La Mama is testimony to the strength of commitment to the Arts in Carlton.

What we *really need* is a multi-purpose space (our proposed Community Centre/Library – see the update above) in which to hold or host various exhibitions and

events of social, commercial and cultural significance in the precinct. We need a place which would draw tourists to Carlton, much as the Chinese Museum does to Little Bourke St and as the Greek Community Centre will do in Lonsdale St – a place with the capacity to support and enhance the lives of the local community as well. We have the ideal building for such diverse functions *right here* in central Carlton – the iconic Kathleen Syme Centre. It will be available in the near future and we want those with the necessary clout to actually listen to the Community.

We need the Cultural Precincts Enhancement Fund to genuinely support Carlton, to give the community what it needs. Surely those driving this project will see the need to recommend a ‘whole of government’ approach to enhancing our cultural and social life. The CRA is ever hopeful and was pleased with the most sympathetic response from all other participants.

CRA Membership

Welcome to new members!

The CRA welcomes three new members to its Reference Group teams – Ian Kerr, Ben Curnow (Membership Secretary) and George Janko (Minutes Secretary).

Are you interested in becoming a member of the Carlton Residents Association?

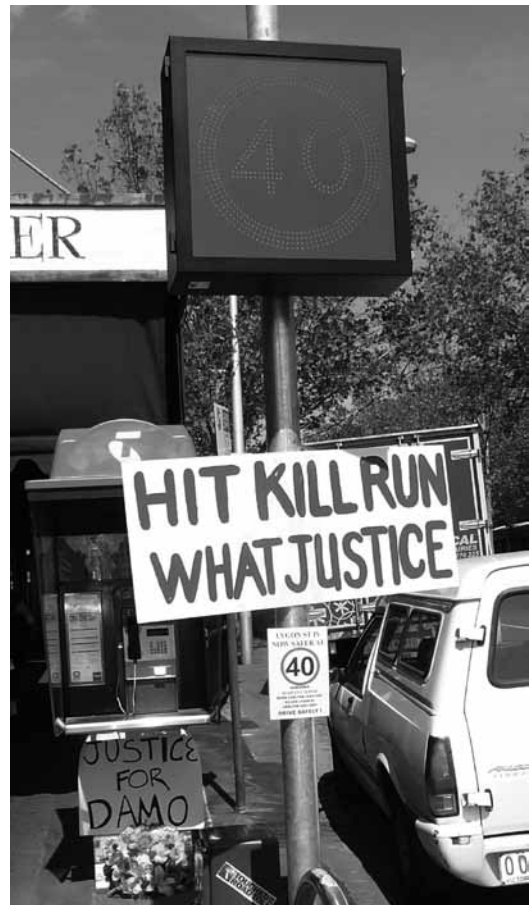
If you are, please contact the Membership Secretary on secretarycra@gmail.com for an application form, or download one from the CRA website at www.carltonresidents.org.au.

Lygon St Precinct 40kph: success at last!

The long-sought 40kph speed limit through the Lygon Street Precinct was finally achieved in mid-April with the switching on of the red electronic signs which had been installed at intersections a month earlier. CRA has been involved in a decade-long battle to bring this essential road safety facility to fruition. We gratefully acknowledge the unstinting support and lobbying efforts of the Cooper family following the tragic hit-run death of Damian 18 months ago, at the Elgin St intersection. We are now urging traffic police to ensure compliance with the new speed limit. As the Precinct has been a ‘hoon zone’ for many years, it may take some time to effectively implement the 40kph speed limit.

Our streetscapes: trees or cars?

Since our foundation in 1996, the CRA has pursued a policy of greening Carlton’s streetscapes and returning median car parking space to green space. While our overall success has been minimal, we have recently achieved



*Flashing 40kph electronic sign near Elgin St
(with memorial contributions from the Cooper family)*

increased tree plantings in Faraday and Cardigan Streets (yet to be completed), on the basis that no on-street car parking space was lost (despite the mass of under-utilised off-street parking). We were also instrumental in keeping the 180 trees in Lygon Street.

Following a public meeting hosted by the City of Melbourne (CoM) at CoAsIt in 2007, residents of Faraday Street lobbied CRA and CoM for increased tree planting in the area Drummond to Rathdowne Streets (six trees were in place). Council staff subsequently developed an imaginative plan for 16 new street trees to be planted with a loss of up to 6 of the 60 on-street car spaces and presented it to the nearby Faraday Street community.

Local business interests, who had not attended the earlier Public Meeting, became vehemently opposed to the plan and lobbied residents to reject it because of loss of ‘free’ on-street car parking. An argument used by CBA during the Lygon Street tree saga was again raised: ‘If you want trees, live in Doncaster’. On balance, the Council decided not to proceed with the proposed tree planting because of strong local opposition. The harsh appearance of this section of Faraday Street is in stark contrast to other nearby treed areas. One could question the priorities in Carlton – car parking or the environment!

In the meantime, RMIT has outlined a plan to close a section of Franklin St, between RMIT and the City Baths, to create a new urban park in the City. A similar idea contributed by CRA and Sir James Gobbo, to close Faraday Street between Lygon and Drummond Streets, to create a piazza between La Mama and Brunetti's was rejected by the CBA and Council staff in 2008.



Faraday and Rathdowne Streets intersection: Faraday St looking west: an area dominated by on-street car parking with just 6 street trees. By contrast looking east: an area of 20 trees and median greenspace.

What is it now? Formerly the Lemon Tree Hotel – now the Lemon Tree Children's Centre

Long time residents of Carlton will remember the Lemon Tree Hotel that stood on the corner of Grattan and Rathdowne Streets. It was often a subject of controversy over its use. It was also where Ray Lawler lived and penned *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll!* More recent residents will remember it as an abandoned, boarded-up building, and sometime 'roof' for the homeless.

Construction on the site began in 2008, and on 15 September 2008, the Lemon Tree Children's Centre opened its doors. The Centre is operated by the StarBright Learning Exchange and the children's program is being developed by Gowrie Victoria.

Proceeds from The Lemon Tree Children's Centre support the operations of the StarBright Learning Exchange which is a not-for-profit organisation whose main aim is to establish links between children's centres in Australia and South Africa. The organisation believes that children are the key to South Africa's future and there is a special focus on children who have been orphaned, infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. One of the organisation's goals is to establish a cross-cultural education exchange program between Australian and South African early childhood educators and childcare staff from early childhood learning centres (such as the Lemon Tree Children's Centre), to enhance skills and understanding of each other's work and social cultures.

Currently, over 90 children (from babies to kinder) attend the Centre, where the central philosophy is 'learning through play'; where there is lots of positive encouragement and guidance; where each child and family is recognised as being unique; and where the need for children to develop an understanding and respect for others is an essential part of the Centre's program.



The Lemon Tree Children's Centre

CRA Membership

To join the Carlton Residents Association, please see www.carltonresidents.org.au/ for a membership form.