

BRIDGING TWO WORLDS: JEWS, ITALIANS AND CARLTON
EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF VICTORIA



Mr Joe Gagliardi, Mrs Agnes Rush, Mrs Rita Arceri (far right) and her daughter Carol Proietto in front of Felice Gagliardi's violin hospital at the exhibition.

A major exhibition on Carlton, the heartland of Melbourne's Italian community, was prepared by the Society, and launched on 31 August, 1992. Italians, and the Jews who lived here before them, had many similar experiences in Carlton while they were becoming settled, and for this reason the Italian Historical Society and the Jewish Museum of Australia decided to work together to document the process of migration and settlement for both communities. For both, Carlton was a bridge between old Europe and the new country.

The exhibition will be on display for at least one year, until August, 1993, in the first gallery of the Museum of Victoria in Swanston Street.

To present the exhibition, we developed a partnership with the Jewish Museum and the

Museum of Victoria which breaks new ground in museum practice in Australia. We believe the project demonstrates the positive benefits of multiculturalism, both in the content and subject matter of the exhibition, and in its methodology and working arrangements.

During the preparation of the exhibition a group of researchers worked tirelessly for the Society to collect material about Carlton. The Italian community responded warmly and enthusiastically, and many beautiful photographs were loaned to the Society, together with objects and other memorabilia, many of them items lovingly treasured for many years. During the research process, approximately 1300 photos were added to the Society's collection along with documents, letters and papers.

Among those who helped the curator tell the Italian story were: Angela Bonacci, Sarina Cassino, Olga Cavedon, Marcello D'Amico, Maria Irwin, Carmel Italiano, Fiona McFarlane, Bette Maiuto, Laura Mecca, Adele Murdolo, Anna Scariot, Delfina Sartori, Nadia Stefani, Maria Tence, Maria Triaca Harris, Di Veitch, and especially Gabrielle Belgiovane, Adriana Bella, and Teresa Pagliaro. The curator, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien wishes to thank all for their valuable contributions. Most importantly, without the on-going support of Co.As.It. for the work of the Historical Society, the exhibition would not have taken place.

Also warm thanks are due to all the members of the Italian community who provided photos, correspondence, documents and objects, or who otherwise shared their Carlton experiences and memories with us.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and its associated body the International Diabetes Foundation made a grant to the project of \$42,000, and the Department of Ethnic Affairs presented \$25,000. In addition, we received generous financial support from both communities, for which we are most grateful. Sponsors from the Jewish community were the Gandel, Lew, Pratt and Smorgon Charitable Trusts/Foundation.

The Italo-Australian Foundation, the Barro Group, the Valmorbida Family and the Grollo Family very kindly sponsored the exhibition from the Italian community, and we wish to thank them most sincerely.

Countdown to Opening Night...



On Saturday, two days before the opening, construction work was still underway. Painting, carpentry, the installation of sound and lighting, the placement of objects and the positioning of perspex all came together finally, and by the time the first guests arrived no-one would have guessed the previous rush.

BRIDGING TWO WORLDS: JEWS, ITALIANS AND CARLTON

THE EXHIBITION IS ON DISPLAY DAILY

from 10.00am to 5.00pm

at the

**MUSEUM OF VICTORIA
328 SWANSTON STREET
MELBOURNE**



**LAUNCHING OF THE EXHIBITION
BRIDGING TWO WORLDS: JEWS, ITALIANS AND CARLTON
at the
MUSEUM OF VICTORIA
on MONDAY, 31 AUGUST, 1992**



*Dott Carlo Coen, Dr Franco Schiavoni, Mr Giorgio Mangiamele, Mrs Danielle Kemp, and Mrs Mangiamele
Below are the speeches delivered on the occasion.*

**DR RAY MARGINSON,
PRESIDENT,
MUSEUM COUNCIL OF VICTORIA**

Prominent among the Museum of Victoria's objectives is the commitment to providing communities access to cultural resources. It was therefore, with great enthusiasm, that the Museum welcomed the opportunity of working with the Jewish Museum of Australia and the Italian Historical Society in the development of the exhibition **Bridging Two Worlds**. We hope that this innovative partnership will provide others with a model for shared cultural planning and activities, as well as providing a most effective means for exploring and understanding our country's culturally diverse past and present. It also provides the Museum with a benchmark for future joint community programmes. We look forward to the possibilities and challenges ahead.

**MR. JOHN GANDEL
CHAIRMAN,
JEWISH MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA**

Mr Chairman, Madam Premier, Joan Kirner, Sir Zelman Cowen, Ministers, Mr Phil Honeywood MP (representing the Leader of the Opposition), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

As chairman of the Jewish Museum of Australia, I have taken great pride in being associated with my co-hosts, Sir James Gobbo, Chairman of the Italian Historical Society, and Dr Ray Marginson, Chairman of the Museum of Victoria, in the creation of this Historic Exhibition. The three host organisations have combined magnificently to bring this exhibition to fruition.

It has been made possible by generous sponsorships from both public and private



Mr John Gandel and Sir James Gobbo.

sources, some of which have been mentioned already. In acknowledging all of these sponsorships, I would like, on behalf of the Jewish Museum and the Jewish community as a whole, to single out those enthusiastic supporters of our Jewish Museum who have been extremely generous in their assistance. The Smorgon family, Solomon and Rosie Lew, and Richard and Jeanne Pratt. Also, those many people in our community who have loaned their personal artefacts and contributed in many other practical ways. They, with the many volunteers, the three curators - Helen Light, Anna Malgorzewicz and Ilma O'Brien, and other sponsors and professionals are deserving of our special thanks.

Having been born in Carlton myself from migrant parents escaping to a new free country from the Europe of the 1900s with all of its persecutions and problems, this exhibition has become for me, as I am sure it will become for many of you, a major journey in nostalgia and sweet memories of times gone by, and of people who are perhaps no longer with us.

Australia today is the product of the merging of millions of people from more than 100 different

countries. The Italians and the Jews are just two groups who make up this culturally rich society which is one of the demographic phenomena of the modern world.

Carlton has long been an exciting, vibrant and changing area, demonstrating the culturally diverse expression of Australia's changing society over the years. Today, with the exception of Israel, Australia has the highest percentage of overseas born people of any country in the world. The Jews and Italians, with their historically different backgrounds, have both had major, but similar impacts on this diverse society.

For example, the generosity of Italian and Jewish-Italians towards local philanthropic causes and for the well-being of their Kith and Kin overseas is well documented. Jewish donors to local charitable causes are estimated at some four to five times community averages and the Italian community's record of support for regular appeals such as Victorian Charity Queen and for special projects like the Vaccari Village is legendary.

It is appropriate that both the Italian and Jewish communities should be associated with the Museum of Victoria in presenting this Exhibition. The Italian and Jewish influence in the development of Australia has been noteworthy from the earliest days of European settlement. The depiction of their role in the early days of Carlton is simply a magnified reflection of their impact on Australian life generally.

Apart from the Aborigines, the Jews were the first ethnic group of non-Anglo/Celtic non-Christians in Australia, with not less than 8 Jews arriving at Botany Bay with the First Fleet in 1788. Similarly, several Italians, mainly ex-Sicilian sailors, captured by the British and transported to the penal colonies, came to Australia with the early convicts and free settlers. At least one Italian was a First Fleeter in 1788.

Who, in those days, could ever have comprehended the waves of migrants to follow those early pioneers. Australia's culturally diverse community is not a hotch potch of different attitudes, customs and ideas. It is, in reality, one total Australian community with common aspirations and a unity of purpose. Our



Mrs Magnavacca, Mrs Dina Grollo and Mr Bruno Grollo viewing part of the display.

differences are the ingredients of our strength bound together with a social cohesion that is demonstrated by the manner in which this Exhibition has been conceived and implemented.

The Italian and Jewish contribution to the professions and to commerce has been quite remarkable and this Exhibition records that many of these successful and prominent Jewish and Italian families had their beginnings in the homes and shops in Carlton. Perhaps, the most notable would be the Smorgon family interests, whose three pioneering brother founders opened their first Kosher Butcher shop in Lygon Street in the 1920s.

Toto's Pizza House in Lygon Street was probably the first of the thousands of Pizza Parlours that exist in Australia today. While it is not generally known that an Italian Jeweller unwittingly played a major role in starting the 1851 Gold Rush when he purchased one of the first two nuggets found by a shepherd near Ballarat.

As this Exhibition depicts the strength and vitality of early culturally diverse life in Carlton, it is appropriate to mention in the presence of the Premier and many Parliamentarians that Victoria was the first Government in Australia to give statutory recognition to the concept of a multicultural society through the provisions of the then Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Act 1977, introduced by Walter Jona and supported by the whole Parliament.

That first Ministry of Ethnic Affairs also had its Italian-Jewish foundation. The first Minister (Walter Jona) was Jewish and the first Assistant Director of the Ministry (Sauro Antonelli) was Italian born. Mr Antonelli, now head of the office of Ethnic Affairs, and Mr Jona are both here today.

Those of us closely linked with this Exhibition's three sponsoring organisations are all mindful of history and destiny. We are deeply conscious of the heritage of modern Australia and of the spirit and heartbeats that have changed its face over

the years. We are all gratified by this opportunity to assist in the presentation of an Exhibition that will contribute greatly to an important area of community education and cohesion at this challenging period in Australian history.

I would like to thank all of you for being present and for your support, and to wish you a wonderful experience in viewing our Exhibition.

Now it is my pleasure to call on one of my Co-Host, Sir James Gobbo, to speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Italian Historical Society Co.As.It.

Sir James, a leading Jurist, has played a leading role in many diverse areas, particularly in the promotion of harmony and goodwill between various ethnic groups which make up our society. His achievements have been recognised far and wide, for he not only holds prestigious Imperial and Australian Honours, but he has also been decorated with the Knighthood from the Government of Malta and by the very special commendation of The Order of Merit of The Republic of Italy.

**SIR JAMES GOBBO
CHAIRMAN**

ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CO.AS.IT.

It is an honour to speak on such an historic occasion. My links with Carlton are both institutional and personal.

The institution which I represent is part of CO.AS.IT., the Italian community organization which this year celebrates the 25th year of its existence. All those years it has been based in Carlton. We began as tenants of a kindly Jewish landlord Mr. Steinberg, in MacArthur Place. Then we moved to our present headquarters at the corner of Drummond and Faraday Streets, where we were next door neighbours to the site of a famous Jewish restaurant, Cohens, now Donnini's.

My links are also personal as I was born in Carlton and lived in Newry Street and later, after a childhood in Italy, returned and eventually settled in Carlton. Our first home was in University Street, near Tibaldi's salami factory.

Later we moved to 501 Drummond Street, a house with a great deal of character and a long garden covered with grape vines. At the rear was a sleep-out, where for years we had as a friend and lodger Chenno Baggio - who still bakes some of the best bread in Melbourne as San Remo Bakery.

After I returned from Oxford, my new wife and I also settled in North Carlton, yet again in Drummond Street at the very end where those beautiful elm trees adorn the road. There we had Jewish neighbours across the lane and a few paces up the street was a small but very busy Jewish school. Again we had grape vines and we bottled our own wine - in beer bottles. Three bottles of the 1957 vintage are in the Exhibition. I am not sure what was the name of the vintage. I think it was North Carlton Barolo.

The two communities that did so much to enrich and transform Carlton were of course significant as migrant communities far beyond Carlton. In the history of migration, two Ministers stand out as having a decisive role in the development of Australia's migration programs. I refer to Arthur Calwell and Harold Holt. Both enjoyed a close and friendly association with the Jewish and Italian communities.

Arthur Calwell had part of Carlton in his electorate and came to many Italian functions. I believe that his quite remarkable and courageous support for an expansionary migration program sprang from his personal links with our two communities.

I have a personal debt to express to him for he was always encouraging my parents to make sure they kept their children at school. In that context I also have to acknowledge my debt to my mentor and teacher, Sir Zelman Cowen who helped me reach Oxford. Whilst still a Carlton resident I had the good fortune to have Arthur Calwell and Sir Zelman Cowen as guests of honour at my 21st Birthday party. You will therefore understand my pleasure that Mary Elizabeth Calwell is present tonight and that Sir Zelman is about to open this Exhibition.

This brilliant Exhibition is a testament to many good things. It reflects the generous and far-sighted hospitality of the Museum of Victoria and the skill and goodwill of its staff and consultants.



Sir Zelman Cowen with Sir James Gobbo photographed on opening night, standing beside the Kadimah and the harp of Matt Vita.

It tells how Carlton bridged the cultures of the Old World and the New. It tells how two communities came together to contribute to a new society. It tells of the shared values of Jews and Italians especially their religious fervour, their concern for family and their love of music. It reflects the special talents and dedication of its three curators, Dr. Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, Anna Malgorzewicz and Dr. Helen Light. The Italian Community would want me to pay tribute to Ilma for her sympathetic insight in helping to tell their story so well.

The Exhibition also reflects the generosity of our sponsors. On behalf of both communities and the museum, I thank the International Diabetes Institute and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Can I assure those two splendid organizations who are represented here tonight by Professor Zimmet and Rhonda Galbally, that I

cannot imagine any two communities that place such importance on the value of good fresh food on the family table as the fountain of so many other riches.

I thank also the Ministry for Ethnic Municipal and Community Affairs which through its Minister, the Honourable Caroline Hogg provided valuable funding assistance.

The Italian community has been generous in its support. I refer not only to the many valuable treasured objects that have been lent by the donors, all or nearly all of whom are here tonight but also the four Italian sponsors, the Grollo Group and the Valmorbida family. All are more or less Carlton born and bred. They will, I know, share with so many, great satisfaction at the artistic success of this splendid Exhibition.

**THE RT HON
SIR ZELMAN COWEN
AK GCMG GCVO QC DCL**

I am very pleased to be asked to open this imaginative and evocative exhibition which tells of the multifaceted lives of these two communities who made their Australian landfall in the setting of Carlton. In a larger context - I mean extending beyond Carlton - my links with both communities are very real. With the Jewish community they are obvious, and over the years they have grown stronger with the Italian community. As Governor-General I participated in a variety of Italian community events; during those years on a short visit to Italy, I was made a Doctor of the University of Turin in a colourful ceremony and later, during my years at Oxford, I established a good friendship with President Francesco Cossiga, and that had a special significance when at a ceremony in the Quirinale Palace, he made me an Italian Cavallieri. Not least because of my links with the Italian community in this country, that gave me special pleasure. Maybe it breaks the rules, but I wear the badges of the Italian Order and the Order of Australia together on this occasion.

I am not a Carlton Jew; I was born and lived throughout my boyhood in St Kilda. But there are many links with and remembrances of Carlton. As a barmitzvah boy, sixty years ago this year, part of the celebration was a family lunch at Mr Cohen's Continental Cafe, and that was not my only visit to that well remembered place. I remember the good smells and excitement of Passover shopping at King and Godfrees. Throughout the latter years of the 1930s I was a student at Melbourne University set in a Carlton environment. I remember, then and later, visits to the Kadimah, and I deeply regretted my imperfect knowledge of Yiddish, though it was readily possible to sense the intense vitality of that distinctive Carlton Yiddish culture.

Then when later I came as Professor to Melbourne University in the early fifties - and that stretched into the middle sixties - I took much pleasure, in the sights and tastes of Italy, as the Italian community grew and spread; it was a lively and warm environment. My hair was

attended to by Mr. Angerame: with gusto and personal friendship. I remember that link with warmth, and there are other good memories.

This exhibition testifies to the way in which in their times and in their places, in the varied manifestations of their lives, Italians and Jews found homes and established life patterns and communal identification in Carlton. The notions of Jewishness and Italian-ness, are not, of course, perfectly coincident, but one can readily identify connections. Both cultures lay stress on the life of the family and that found expression in the life patterns of Carlton. Both had strong religious identifications. The community organisations of both communities flourished, and that contributed much to the vitality of life in Italian and in Jewish Carlton. The two communities in their shops and businesses, their activities, their living side by side contributed much to a colourful, vigorous changing Australian society.

There will be many here today who will have memories and experiences not very different from my own; there will be many whose past, and it may be present, life experiences have links with Carlton as part of their Australian life experiences. I believe that all who view the exhibition with its well chosen evidences and record of Jewish and Italian life and lives in Carlton will see how these two cultures have enriched and diversified the life of this Australian community.

The exhibition has been planned and produced as a shared endeavour of the Italian Historical Society, the Jewish Museum and the Museum of Victoria. It is justly claimed that this partnership is unique in Australian museum experience, and it certainly provides us with an excellent opportunity to enrich our knowledge and experience of multicultural Australia. I thank all of those who have planned the venture and who brought it to fruition. It is a moving and a warming story.

I have great pleasure in declaring this exhibition "The Jews and Italian of Carlton" open.