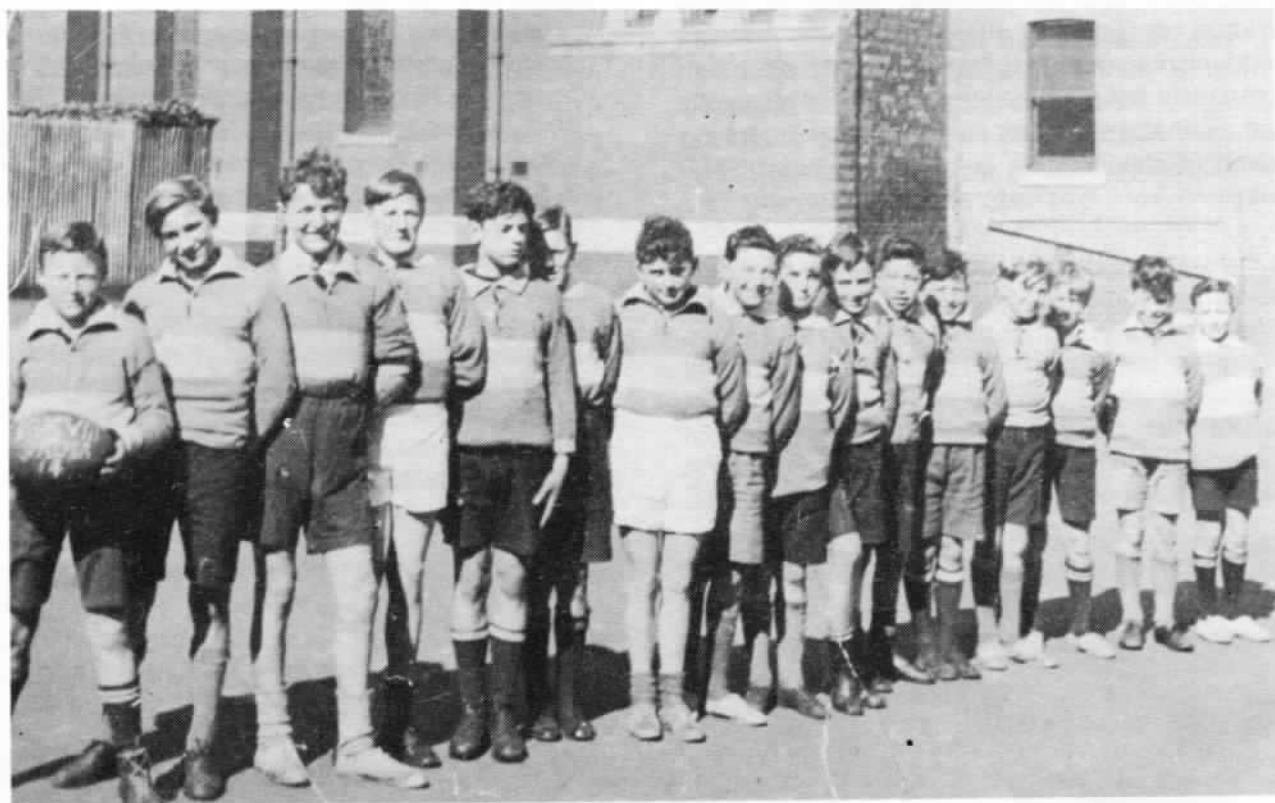


GROWING UP IN CARLTON

by

Teresa Pagliaro



The under-fourteen football team at St George's in the mid 1930s.

The lives of children growing up in Carlton were divided between school and home.

During the 1930s, Italian children in Carlton, in the main, attended St George's School, the parish school of the Sacred Heart church in Rathdowne Street. Their numbers steadily increased with wave after wave of immigration. The grotto between the school grounds and the church is remembered by all for this was the focal point for the major events in their lives.

After school, on weekends and holidays they spent their time in a variety of ways. In comparison with the 1990s, theirs was an essentially simple life and their toys and pastimes unsophisticated. One of the particular advantages of living in Carlton in comparison with other inner suburbs, was the large amount of open public

space. The parks, gardens and squares provided easily accessible areas where the children could play. The squares off Lygon Street (Argyle and Pelham), Rathdowne Street (Murchison, McArthur and Curtain) and Grattan Street are examples of these.

The squares could be seen dotted with children. In winter, the boys spent the cold and drizzly Melbourne afternoons playing football. Some have said that it was rare to see a real football and that they made their own. There were several ways of doing this. An empty cigarette packet, preferably the larger Capstan sort, was rounded out and the centre was filled with other packets which had been flattened out and folded over and over. String or rubber bands around the outside held it together. Even although it was not the size of a football, its particular shape allowed

the boys to kick a torpedo punt. An alternative method was to fill an old sock with rags and paper and tie it in a knot. This formed a central core which was wrapped around with paper and tied with string. Football, of course, was played also at school. Sometimes matches between St George's and St Michael's were organised at Princess Park, which was also a favourite venue of many children on Saturday afternoons where children frequently queued up to "tag a ride". An adult with a season's ticket was entitled to take in his family free, so that if someone came alone to attend the match, a child waiting would be allowed a free entry.

In the summertime, the children played cricket in the Carlton squares. "Tip and run" was a favourite variety designed to allow everyone to have a chance to bat and make runs. Another summer pastime which passed the hours was swimming. Children flocked to the nearby Carlton baths but frequently too they travelled together down Swanston Street to the South Melbourne beach.

Sometimes they went with their families. Ilda Benini remembers:

We used to go to South Melbourne. We used to get the tram... there were two benches where you could sit and there was a roof on top for the sun. We used to go very early so we could get one for ourselves, because otherwise people came and took them first. We would go with our friends, early ... six o'clock in the morning on Saturday or Sunday with our basket of things. South Melbourne was the nearest because we could go with the tram. No one had cars in those days. Not Italians, anyway. So you had to go where you could go with the trams... There was a cable tram that went right down to South Melbourne on the beach.

Picnics in the 1930s tended to be reserved for special occasions. Mrs Cattapan recalled that on Christmas day the family went to Studley Park, taking roast chicken and salad. if someone owned a car or utility truck, a large group went - Werribee



Luciano Anceschi's seventh birthday party in Carlton in 1951.

gorge, Warrandyte, Eltham and Seaford were popular destinations.

At home, children spent time playing with bilycarts. These were made from fruit boxes, with a board down the centre as an axle, and pram wheels with a piece of rope or thick string to steer with. Frank Gasparini remembers that races down the Barkly Street slope to Nicholson Street were very popular. On Saturday they put the bilycarts to a different use. They waited outside Victoria Market, with other boys, aged about eight or nine, offering to take home for about threepence large loads of shopping for the women who lived in Carlton, West Melbourne or North Melbourne.

For some of the girls, the afternoons and evenings were spent doing mending, knitting and sewing. This included crochet work and embroidery. As they grew older they started making items for their glory boxes - bed covers, mats, tray cloths and bed linen.

For most children there were a variety of chores. Those, for example, whose mothers were working, had to prepare and cut up the vegetables after school for the evening meal. In the weekends on Saturday morning they generally did the cleaning, scrubbing and polishing the linoleum floors, before they were allowed out to play.

Sometimes on Saturday afternoon they went to the pictures. Frank Gasparini recalled that it was possible to get into the fleahouse for half price if you arrived late or at half-time. On Sundays some went to church and afterwards to coffee. Another common way of spending Sunday afternoons, particularly in the 1930s, was walking in the Exhibition Gardens. Time was spent with the family and visiting family friends. Often they visited paesani. Mrs Donato recalled the meetings of her family with other Viggianesi, the regional group well known for their large number of musicians:

...We would get together and I can remember even until my late teens during the War even my mother and her two brothers would come over to our place and I'd be on the piano, Uncle Frank on the cello... and we would have singing... Well, as I said, a typical Sunday would be a family day, we would have lunch; but after Sunday night's dinner, the family would come and we would have little soirees or they would sit and talk and the men would be outside playing cards and the women talking, if not, it was Saturday which was the women's day to get together. We would go mostly to my grandmother's sister's... it was a get together, and as we all grew

up they would be teaching us how to sew, knit, crochet and cook...

Describing her childhood years of the 1950s, Inez Binotto contrasts her life with those of her children. With far fewer toys she and her cousin, Fabiola, made their own fun. They spent a lot of time in the playgrounds of Newry Street playing un-supervised. In this they had more freedom than their own children. They frequently played in the streets, climbing trees. Given that toys were few, neighbourhood children shared those they had. These included marbles, jacks and pick-up-sticks. As children they always became involved in their parents' social activities.



Inez Donazzan with cousin Fabian Tasca and uncle Luigino Tasca gardening in the backyard in Canning Street in 1963.