



NEWSLETTER
of the
ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CO.AS.IT. - VICTORIA

JULY - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER, 1991

VOL 2, NO 3

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Mr. Tom Florio, Mildura.

About the newsletter

The newsletter aims to provide, to those who are interested in the history of the Australian-Italian communities, an outlet for the circulation of news, the exchange of information and the notification of future activities.

We welcome your suggestions for items to include in this newsletter, and invite readers to contribute newsworthy articles and short notes.

The Newsletter will be published four times each year. Subscriptions are available at \$10 per year, (postage included).

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NEWS

EXHIBITION TOUR COMPLETED



Remembering many hours of similar work.

The *Australia's Italians* tour of outer metropolitan and country areas of Victoria finished in August.

The tour was funded by The **Victorian Health Promotion Foundation**, and the **Food and Nutrition Program** was chosen as the Sponsor, to promote the health message of "The Italian Contribution" to good food and good health.

The exhibition toured Victoria between 11 May, 1990 and 25 August, 1991. It was on display at 10 venues, covering a total of 28 weeks. Approximately 17,000 visitors saw the exhibition, and 10 opening functions were held to launch the exhibition, one in each location. Many school children were among the visitors, and follow-up project work was undertaken in many schools.

People travelled for miles from surrounding towns, frequently by buses especially organised

for the occasion. The Director of the Ararat Gallery wrote concerning the opening there:

From the Gallery's point of view we were not only thrilled by the numbers but I was personally pleased by having a largely new audience and for them to be welcomed by such a warm occasion.

The Director of the Mildura Gallery reported:

Public response to the exhibition during the month of March was extraordinary, as visitation figures were the highest for that month in the last twelve years. This is even more significant if one takes into account that the picking season was on in earnest.

I have been associated with many exhibitions over the past seven years, but *Australia's Italians* is one of the very few that appealed to both primary and secondary schools.

The Geelong Art Gallery stated that the opening function attracted 600 people, and reported a large increase in attendance numbers during the month of the exhibition:

All in all, the February attendance record of the gallery shows a figure of 3,317 of which the majority, if not all, went through the exhibition. This figure, compared to our monthly average attendance for 1990 of 1,984, shows a considerable increase.

As part of this record attendance for February, we received the visit of 17 groups of 11 different primary schools of the Geelong region and Melbourne, totalling 1022 students."

In an unexpected and unsolicited gesture, a teacher from Geelong brought a large number of students' projects to our office in Melbourne, and we were pleased to note the understandings achieved. We believe that this is illustrative of the use made of the exhibition in schools throughout the state.

The Society was extremely pleased by the very large amount of excellent local material which came forward for the exhibition and which was an important means of generating grass roots publicity and excitement.

The exhibition was structured in such a way that the local material could be incorporated into the various themes of the exhibition, thereby becoming an integral part of each presentation. This meant that the local material was not merely an add-on section, but became part of the larger exhibition. Methods of displaying local material included albums, display cases and the use of temporary frames. This assisted in placing the history of local communities in the wider context.

The Society is most grateful for the funding from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation which made the tour possible.

GRANT FROM THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

This year the Society was a successful applicant to the Australia Council, making it the first grant we have ever been awarded by this national funding body. The grant received was from the Literature Board, under the Publishers' Program. We were one of the 30 publishers who received funding. The grant is to publish three works - two plays by Nino Randazzo, Victoria Market and Bread and Roses, and an autobiography by Monte Sala.

NEWS FROM ITALY

The Italian version of the exhibition is continuing its travels, and is now in the Veneto area. It was opened in Treviso on 22 September by Mrs Matilda Raffa Cuomo, first lady of the State of New York and wife of Mr Mario Cuomo, Governor of New York. The exhibition, hosted by the Provincial Government, will be on display at the headquarters of the province until 13 October. The Treviso hosts produced a handsome catalogue of the exhibition.

Cittadella is the next venue, and the opening will be held on 27 October, during the annual Fair.

CARLTON PROJECT

Research is progressing well for the exhibition on the **Jews and Italians of Carlton**. Many people have been contacted and have made photos available for copying. Some areas for which we still need photos and information are Women's Work, both inside and outside the home, and backyard activities such as bocce, wine making, and preparing tomatoes. We are building up quite a good collection of school photos, and are keen to add to what we have, so please bring along your photos and old school project books and exercise books, and maybe we will do something special on schools and children's experiences in Carlton.

Photos and information about all occupations including tailors, builders, bakers, musicians, shopkeepers and others are still being sought so please contact the Society if you can help.

PUBLIC MEETING ON CARLTON

As part of the activities associated with the Carlton project we held a public meeting at the Society on 25 August, 1991. Among those present was a group of enthusiastic participants in the project and the gathering was addressed by our Chairman, Sir James Gobbo, who spoke about his reminiscences of Carlton. Sir James spent much of his young life in Carlton, where his family made their home. A transcript of Sir James's address is printed on Page 5.

EXHIBITION FROM UMBRIA

A photographic exhibition, La terra delle promesse about emigration from Umbria has arrived in Australia, and will be on display at the State Bank Galleria from 28 October to 10 November.

CARLTON REMEMBERED

TEXT OF AN ADDRESS TO THE ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY by

SIR JAMES GOBBO

SUNDAY AUGUST 25, 1990

This is the first of a series of meetings to stimulate discussion and interest in an exhibition being prepared for next year as a joint project of the State Museum, the Jewish Museum and our own Italian Historical Society. It will tell the story of the Italians and Jews of Carlton. It will thereby tell an important part of the story of that suburb which has been one of the more interesting suburbs of any city in Australia. It holds something special over other suburbs and it is important to try and convey that. What has brought that about? I would like to think that those two groups made a special contribution to giving Carlton its special character.

I propose to reminisce with you on a few things that made Carlton special for me. I suppose I ought to start at the beginning and say that I was born in Carlton in 1931, in the Women's Hospital. We used to live down in Newry Street, North Carlton, my parents having migrated to Australia in 1927. I cannot recall anything of that particular event I assure you. My mother told me of one embarrassment. There were very strict rules about visiting at the Women's Hospital in those days, and my father could never get used to that. In Italy the hospital system operated entirely differently. The relatives were at the bedside or nearby most of the time. Indeed they even brought food in and they



Regina Gobbo and son Flavio, Antonio Gobbo second on right, and friends
at their Newry Street home in 1928.

were expected to help with the care of the patient. My father was kept at bay and did not like it one little bit. He used to stand in Grattan Street and call out to my mother in Italian. He also apparently brought dishes of ravioli and pasta to make sure my mother - and I - did not suffer from undernourishment.

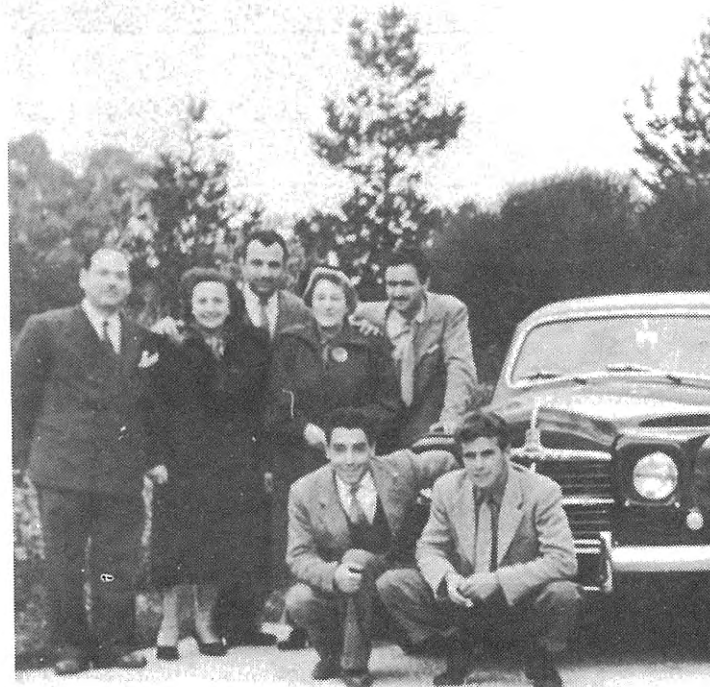
We survived that and then returned to Italy where I was brought up as a child. We came back here in 1938, so at this point I was truly a migrant. I did not speak any English and I went to school initially at St. George's in Carlton. We then went to North Melbourne where my parents conducted a restaurant with the unlikely name of "The St. Kilda Grill Room". Why anybody would have a restaurant in North Melbourne called "The St. Kilda Grill Room" I never have been able to discover. In later years a new owner called it "L'Alouette". We returned to live in Carlton at 501 Drummond Street in 1947. It was a house which had been modernized by a man called Mardegan. Mardegan and Negri were concrete contractors. The house had beautiful internal polished stucco, which now costs the earth to have done with a special paint finish. It had a long rear garden with grape vines and then a shrine at the end, where there was a Madonna with a light that came on special occasions. All of that was pulled down when the Housing Commission put up those dreadful concrete flats. This house and its neighbours could never, on any view have been regarded as a slum but, because there were a few old houses in the block, the Commission pulled everything down except the nearby hotel. One of the buildings that fell was the Jewish Synagogue and I came into that story much later because, when I was a barrister, one of my specialties was appearing in cases that deal with compensation for acquisition of property - I actually appeared for the Jewish Synagogue in their claim for compensation in 1968. By then the Synagogue had a congregation of only some six persons, all of whom lived in Caulfield and Balwyn. We were awarded \$88,000.

Between 1947 and 1965, save for four years overseas, I lived in Carlton or North Carlton. I saw an enormous transformation during that time. In 1947 Carlton had not one Italian restaurant or Italian coffee shop. Italians conducted one grocery store and a couple of fruit shops. We find that hard to believe. But in the space of approximately ten years the Italian character of Carlton was firmly created.

One of the important things about Carlton is that in the immediate post-war era there were many

terrace houses whose owners took in lodgers who either slept in sleep-outs or in the house. It was a very common practice and Carlton was a kind of dormitory for the early post-war migrant waves. What we tend to forget is that most of the early migrants who came to this country, especially from Italy, came as males on their own as a first step, and then brought their wives and family afterwards. These men had a very lonely time of it. They were living in very spartan accommodation. These old Victorian terraces lent themselves admirably to that sort of thing. There would be a kind of sleep-out affair part of which was a canvas awning. When the Jewish families and the Italian families moved out, whether to St. Kilda or Caulfield or to Bulleen or Doncaster and were replaced by the academics and the trendy set, all of that very useful and cheap accommodation disappeared. For many years we had a lodger at 501 Drummond Street. This man now owns one of Melbourne's best bakeries where beautiful "pasta dura" bread is made. The bread is baked slowly and, as a result, it is well cooked and has real flavour.

The whole story of the single men of Carlton is important. It leads into the story of the espresso bars and the important role they played - a sort of home-away-from-home for a lot of male Italian migrant men. There was a downside too. At one point, some of the espresso bars were places which were agencies for brothels, not to put too fine a point on it. It is one of the stories that could perhaps be pursued as part of the work done for this exhibition.



Mrs. Santospirito with immigrants at Bonegilla.

Until 1969 there was no CO.AS.IT. The welfare services for the Italian community were really provided by the few Italian Chaplains in the Catholic Church and, in particular, by a committee called the Archbishops' Committee For Italian Relief, the chairperson of which was a Mrs. Santospirito. She lived at 79 Bouverie Street, Carlton opposite the Carlton Brewery. Mrs. Santospirito's "office" was in the back of the house. There would often be a queue of people down the corridor, out into the street, and even sometimes around the corner into Queensberry Street. In 1951 there were large numbers of Italians coming here as migrants. They were coming at the rate of about 20,000 a year and then there was a recession, the kind we have now. At that time a number of them were up at Bonegilla Camp and there were riots there because they could not find jobs. Our society did not tolerate unemployment in those days. I have had made available to me a trunk full of papers belonging to Mrs. Santospirito. This is a great resource because it contains much of her records of her charitable work. For example, she ran an ad hoc employment agency. She found out what

jobs were available and helped place Italians in them. She was a great note-keeper so she would have notes such as : "Miss O'Neill, 63 Saunders Street, West Coburg, to repair hearth". Directions would follow as to how to get there. She would then translate all this for the Italian who wanted the job and off he would go. Her papers provide a remarkable store-house. Mrs. Santospirito would even put ads. in the paper. In the *Argus* of February 1953 this appears: "Men, Italians, available, all kinds of work, also skilled tradesmen, ring or write 79 Bouverie Street, Carlton". A typical reply is this:

"Dear Sir, Noticing your ad in the Argus I was wondering if you had an Italian who could do fern cutting, scrub cutting. I have a 500 acre property at Tooradin North, 5 miles from Tooradin. It has a house on it and I really want a man, part-time, that I could give him ten acres or so to grow potatoes for nothing and he could keep up to four cows if he wanted to. If you think anything of this let me know at once. There is a school in the middle of the property. Awaiting your reply, H.C. Vale, 9th February 1953".



Mrs Santospirito (left) and Mrs Cincotta (Sinelli) receiving an award from the Italian Consul-General in the presence of Archbishop Mannix in 1958.

It's interesting that a system of finding jobs in an ad hoc way was carried out by this unusual lady. She kept good records and the Society has the carbon copies of much of what she wrote. There are literally hundreds of letters and each tells a story. I suspect that, if we could do it in a way that did not offend their privacy, some of these people would love to be able to come back and make a public tribute to the work that this woman did, all of which was completely unpaid and went on for years.

In 1944 there was the famous "Pyjama Girl" murder trial. The Pyjama Girl murder, for those who do not remember, was about a dead woman who was found in her pyjamas lying under a culvert in Albury in 1938. Her face was partly burnt. An attempt had been made to burn her body but it had not succeeded. It had been wrapped in a blanket. The body was preserved

in a formalin bath for at least six years. Then a great saga began to identify the woman. There was a parallel case of a missing heiress and it was essential to find the heiress in order to make a distribution of the fortune. So there were next of kin coming forward saying that the body was that of Sandra Morgan, the missing heiress, which would enable her money to be distributed. One thing that went wrong was that the police had an Albury dentist examine the fillings of the teeth but he got the description wrong and the description that was sent around actually came to the dentist who had done her teeth. He came forward and said he thought it looked like Linda Agostini whose teeth he had looked after. The police looked at his notes and what the Albury dentist had said, and sent him away. If they had listened to him they would have identified the woman immediately or within a few weeks.

16-12-47- PENTRIDGE
COBURG
VICTORIA

Dear Mrs. Santospirito,

When Father Modotti spoke to me of your activity on behalf of our Community he also added that you had offered to come and visit me. While grateful, I felt it was neither right nor fair to impose on you to such an extent. Prisons are necessary, but are not nice places to come to, even as visitor and I did not wish to be the cause of submitting you

For six years this saga went on, until 1944, when one Agostini was arrested. He had lived where the murder had occurred, namely 589 Swanston Street, Carlton. If you know Swanston Street, just before you get to the city, on the right there is a hotel on the corner, and there used to be three shops beside the hotel. The Agostinis lived above one of these shops and then two doors up was an Italian grocer from Naples called Castellano. Castellano was our next-door neighbour later on in North Melbourne, and Castellano always used to tell my father - as father told me later on - that Mr. Agostini had a very deep secret. In 1944 the great secret was found and he was charged with the murder of his wife. He confessed that he had had a quarrel with her in the bedroom and she had taunted him and placed him under great provocation. Part of his story was that it was an accident with a gun. There were, however, bruises on the body. He said these were caused by her body falling down the stairs as he was taking it away.

Now, what has all this got to do with Mrs Santospirito? Well, one of the nice letters that we have been given is a letter written by him. He was convicted of manslaughter, not murder, he ended up in Pentridge and he served three and a half years. Then he was deported to Italy. He was befriended by her during that time. He was a journalist and quite a sensitive sort of

person and this is the first part of the original letter that he wrote to Mrs. Santospirito dated 16th December 1947 from Pentridge:

"Dear Mrs. Santospirito, When Father spoke to me of your activity on behalf of our community, he also added that you had offered to come and visit me. While grateful, I feel that it was neither right nor fair to impose on you to such an extent. Prisons are necessary but are not nice places to come to, even as a visitor, and I did not wish to be the cause of submitting you to the humiliation of entering the gate of one. Father Modotti agreed with my view but wish I should remember you and wrote your name on the prayer book he has just given me so I shall always have it for the time when I might need you. That time has now come."

He asked for her help to prevent his deportation and she did write to Arthur Calwell, and then we have Arthur Calwell's original reply to her saying it could not be done. It is interesting to find a person of such sensitivity who could write in that way. He did not have an entirely unhappy time at Pentridge because he became the gaol librarian because of his journalistic skills.

Another area of work that Mrs Santospirito did was, of course, landing permits and the bringing out of people; but her friendship with Arthur Calwell was very important. That is a very interesting way

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to wish you and family the greetings
for Xmas and New Year -

Sincerely yours

Toni Agostini

P.S. From Father Gabriele's last visit - June last -

I understood he would have call again -

Not having seen him since I am led to

believe he might have returned to Italy.

If you can send me a line of acknowledgment

ment for the present - I shall be more at

ease the coming weeks - But as this letter

is being sent to you not through the ordinary

channel - please don't mention it -



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

OFFICE OF THE
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION,
PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

(Written at Sydney)
21st February, 1948.

Dear Mrs. Santospirito,

I return herewith the letter sent to you by Mr. A. Agostini which you forwarded on to me for an expression of an opinion as to whether or not he is to be deported.

In July last, while I was absent abroad, the Acting Minister for Immigration, Senator Armstrong, approved of Mr. Agostini's deportation and, in the light of all the circumstances, I am afraid there is no possibility of that decision being reversed.

The necessary papers to effect the deportation were signed by Senator Armstrong about the same time as the decision was made that he must be sent back to Italy.

With kind regards from my wife and myself to yourself and all the family,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

(ARTHUR A. CALWELL)
Minister for Immigration

Mrs. A. Santospirito,
79 Bouverie Street,
CARLTON, Vic.

Final page of Agostini's letter.

Arthur Calwell's reply to Mrs Santospirito.

for Arthur Calwell was also a great friend of the Jewish Community. He was a strong proponent of Jewish and Italian migration to Australia. These things were not popular. Not only was it unpopular because Italians were seen as the aliens, but we tend to forget that even just before the war the attitude of some Australians towards Jewish migrants and Jewish refugees was very poor. I was just looking at an article that reports the *Bulletin* of 1938 describing with great suspicion the large number of Jewish refugees, and it contained the suggestion that Jews be sent to Tasmania which would be renamed Jewmania. That sort of attitude and public opinion had to be turned around both in relation to Italians and in relation to the Jewish settlers who came here and Arthur Calwell was very much involved in that. I think that his humanity, which really grew out of his friendship with those two communities, was the launching pad for our

migration program because, without his conviction that these settlers were good Australia, we would never have had anything like the great open launching into migration. The attitude amongst a lot of his colleagues was very anti-migration, and very suspicious of bringing in numbers of people.

I think back to other matters of Carlton history and the growth of its cosmopolitan character which really started in the 1950s. I was at boarding school for some years and when I went to the university, we lived at 501 Drummond Street. I persuaded my parents, even though they were very reluctant about it all, that I would do better work at university if I could live in University College. My parents pointed out that they had bought this house right near the university so I could just go to lectures on foot and here I was going off to live in Newman College which was only 100 yards away.



James Gobbo with his parents at home in Drummond Street in December 1951 on the night of the announcement of his winning the Rhodes Scholarship.



Ero Milani and granddaughter Gladis at the University Cafe in 1960.

In my days at university, on coming down into Carlton there was nothing Italian available. There was Jimmy Watson's which has, of course, an Italian connection through the Virginas. There was a Jewish restaurant - Cohen's - now Donnini's. There was a place we students called Nick the Greek's that served, unashamedly, unromantically Australian food - steak and eggs and food like that - nothing that could pass for Continental food and that was that, right up to about 1952 when I went to England to study.

By the time I came back in 1956 there was the beginning of it. We then had the University Espresso Bar and that marked a complete opening out with some Italian butcher shops and some Italian delicatessens. It took off from that time.

There was an Italian boot shop in Lygon Street - Fontana's - and he is still alive and living in Doncaster and we are going to interview him soon. Then there were some tailors - for example, Cavedon, who has a relation playing for

Carlton at the moment - and there were a number of other tailors who all had their shops in Lygon Street. We also had the Bowling Green Hotel which was a meeting place really for people from the Italian community, especially the Juventus Soccer Club crowd who used to have their reunions there.

I should have mentioned before that, St. George's had a hall which was used for a dance and, for a while, it was every week and then once a month. That was the place for young men to go and, under the sort of watchful eye, of the Parish Priest, Italians would allow their daughters to go there for a dance. Among the things that Mrs. Santospirito left is the note book that records the takings for each week for the hall in the early 1950s including the amounts raised, the amount paid for the band and so on. The attendances were usually 500 to 600 per week.

I hope that some of the flavour of Carlton, as I saw it, can be conveyed in the Exhibition next year and that we may find valuable material like that left by Mrs Santospirito.

ITALIAN LINKS WITH KITCHENER'S HUNDRED

by John C. Trinca

Among the doctors who answered the urgent call from the British War Office for volunteers to join the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in World War I were two descendants of Italian migrants, namely Cyril Checchi and Alfred John Trinca. These men became members of a select group which later came to be known as Kitchener's Hundred. The story of Kitchener's Hundred has been told recently in 'Chiron', the Journal of the University of Melbourne Medical Society.

Field Marshall Lord Kitchener became head of the War Office shortly after the declaration of war between Great Britain and Germany on 4 August 1914. Despite the predictions of most military and political strategists that the war would be over by Christmas, Kitchener thought otherwise and began planning for a large army to be built up over a period of three years. However, by the end of November 1914, the war had reached a perilous stage for the allied forces which had suffered catastrophic losses in the early battles in Belgium and France. At the beginning of 1915 it became apparent that Britain could not sustain adequate medical services for both its expanding army and its civilians without help from the Dominions.

On 8 February 1915, the British War Office dispatched a cable to the Australian Defence Department requesting one hundred medical practitioners as soon as possible for service with the RAMC in Europe. The Minister for Defence appealed through the lay and medical press for volunteers while the universities agreed to bring forward the examinations for final year medical students so that they could be available for immediate service on graduation. The response to the call was dramatic, especially at the Alfred Hospital, where the Medical Superintendent and three of the four Resident Medical Officers (RMO) resigned in the course of a week to join the RAMC. At the Melbourne Hospital two of its ten RMOs, namely Cyril Checchi and Harold Dew, sought, and were granted, leave of absence in order to join the RAMC - only three weeks before their term of office was due to expire at the end of April.

Checchi and Dew were among the group of

twenty RAMC recruits, including Alfred John Trinca, who left Melbourne in the S.S. 'Orontes' on 14 April 1915. Trinca had recently returned from Sydney having seen service in the RAN as surgeon to the Hospital Ship 'Grantala' which took part in the capture of Rabaul in September 1914.

Cyril Checchi was the son of Ettore Checchi, a distinguished engineer and surveyor with the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, who migrated from Florence,



Ettore Checchi with his guitar in retirement.

Tuscany, in 1874. Another son, Leo, eighteen months older than Cyril, also became a doctor. Leo had the misfortune to suffer a serious head injury when struck by a flying stump while watching a cricket match as a schoolboy at Brighton Grammar. His life was endangered and he was ill for many months. The point of the stump

embedded in his skull and penetrated his brain. His powers of concentration were affected and his schooling was interrupted. To conceal the wound Leo, ever after, kept his hair plastered over the depression left in his skull.

The Checchi brothers enrolled as medical students at the University of Melbourne in 1909, but Leo was unable to pass second year and left the university. Not revealing his head injury, Leo Checchi enlisted in the AIF in 1915, was commissioned lieutenant and served with the 21st and 38th Battalions until demobilised in June 1918. He was badly gassed in France. When stationed in Egypt, he met by chance his brother Cyril when the latter happened to swim across the Suez Canal one day. After the war Leo resumed his medical studies at the University of Melbourne, but his health could not tolerate the city dust and summer climate and he was again unsuccessful. He then went to Edinburgh University where he completed the medical degree. Leo Checchi spent the rest of his life as a general practitioner in Wales. He

died after contracting pneumonia when going out to treat patients during a particularly severe winter spell. He was nearly 90 at the time of his death.

Alfred Trinca was the son of John Andrew (Giovanni Andrea) Trinca, who was born in Grosotto, Lombardy, in 1844, emigrated in 1863 and was a pioneer sawmiller and builder in Gippsland. Alfred's younger brother, Francis Louis (Frank) Trinca, also graduated in Medicine at the University of Melbourne. He enlisted in the AMMC in 1916, served in Mesopotamia where he was awarded the Military Cross "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During an attack this officer, although suffering from fever, carried out his duties with great energy and total disregard of danger. Later, he accompanied the troops in a counter-attack, attending to casualties in the open under fire, and setting a fine example of endurance." After the war Frank Trinca was in general practice in Caulfield before specialising in rheumatic disease in Collins Street.

To return to Kitchener's Hundred. On 8 April 1915



The Trinca family at home in Lisson Grove. Brothers Alfred and Francis became doctors.

the Director-General of Medical Services announced that the selection of one hundred medical men for the RAMC had been completed. Although the rank and conditions of service offered in the RAMC were inferior to those pertaining in the corresponding Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC), Cyril Checchi and Alf Trinca deemed it an honour to have been selected for service in the British Army. Cyril Checchi recalled the voyage on the 'Orontes' as one of luxury without any of the usual wartime restrictions. The vessel

knew what to do with them. Eventually the Australian Agent-General found them accommodation. They were given one week's leave, during which time they were outfitted with uniforms. They then went to the RAMC training unit at Crookham, near Aldershot, and some were fortunate enough to be billeted in private homes near the camp. The training was strict - drill starting at 6 a.m., route marches, horse riding classes at the Aldershot Riding School and numerous lectures, but no clinical work.

After completing his training in August 1915, Checchi was posted to a convalescent camp in Malta and then to No 17 Stationary Hospital at Cape Helles on the Gallipoli peninsula. He remained there until the evacuation of all allied forces in December 1915. After the return of his unit to Egypt, Checchi found he was the only Australian among the British and Canadian medical officers. A high-ranking officer wanted to appoint another Canadian to his position and Checchi was discharged from the RAMC after one year's service. He returned to Australia on the "Runic" and re-enlisted in the AAMC. However, Checchi's service with the RAMC was not recognised by the Australian Army authorities, with the result that he found himself inferior in seniority to men who had

ORIENT LINE.

Line of Messengers by

S.S. "ORONTES"

9,025 Tons.

F. S. SYMONS, COMMANDER.

FROM BRISBANE, 4th April : SYDNEY, 7th April ;
MELBOURNE, 14th April : ADELAIDE, 19th April ;
FREMANTLE, 20th April, 1915.

The Hon. the BATHUR RAJA-	Sir David HARDY
GOPIA CHAKRA OF MADRAS	Dr. L. H. HENDERSON
Mr. E. H. ADAMS	Mr. Alex. JARL
Mr. H. W. BENSKIN	Mr. V. A. JULIUS
Dr. W. A. H. BIRGELL	Mr. J. V. KEANE
Dr. BIERIE	Miss KEANE
Dr. W. A. BOWMAN	Mr. J. G. KIDD
Mr. A. T. BRINE	Mrs. KITE
Rev. Father BIERDIE	Mr. and Mrs. A. E. LEIGHTON
Miss BUCK	Mrs. LEE and child
Lieut. W. W. A. BURNS	Mr. Norman LESLIE
Mr. M. BUTLER	Mrs. H. LESLIE
Dr. G. C. BURY	Dr. W. C. MARSDEN
Mr. J. D. CARSON	Mr. and Mrs. McCOLL
Dr. CHECCHI	Mr. E. Trenchard MILLER
Mr. E. J. COX	Dr. MOREL
Miss G. E. COX	Mr. NATHAN
Rev. C. F. CROMIN	Dr. W. S. NEWTON
Mr. Luigi de MADDA	Miss C. NICHOLAS
Dr. H. P. DEW	Mr. and Mrs. W. NICHOLSON
Mrs. ELLIOTT	Rev. Father O'DONNELL
Mrs. ELMAN and child	Miss P. O'CONNOR
Mrs. EAMES and child	Capt. H. PETER
Mrs. P. W. N. FAUGHANSON	Dr. PONSFORD
Miss FORREST	Dr. PRITCHARD
Mr. and Mrs. H. FRICK	Mr. W. J. REID
Dr. T. E. GEORGE	Dr. W. ROBERTSON

Alf Trinca and Cyril Checchi on the 'Orontes'.

was unescorted but encountered no enemy attack during its six weeks, 12,000 miles trip from Melbourne to Plymouth. The 'Orontes' was in the Mediterranean when the Gallipoli landings took place. Alf Trinca was elected leader of the twenty RAMC recruits. He acted as their spokesman and organised their inoculations against small pox and typhoid.

After disembarking at Plymouth, they travelled by train to London where they were not expected. There was no sense of urgency and nobody

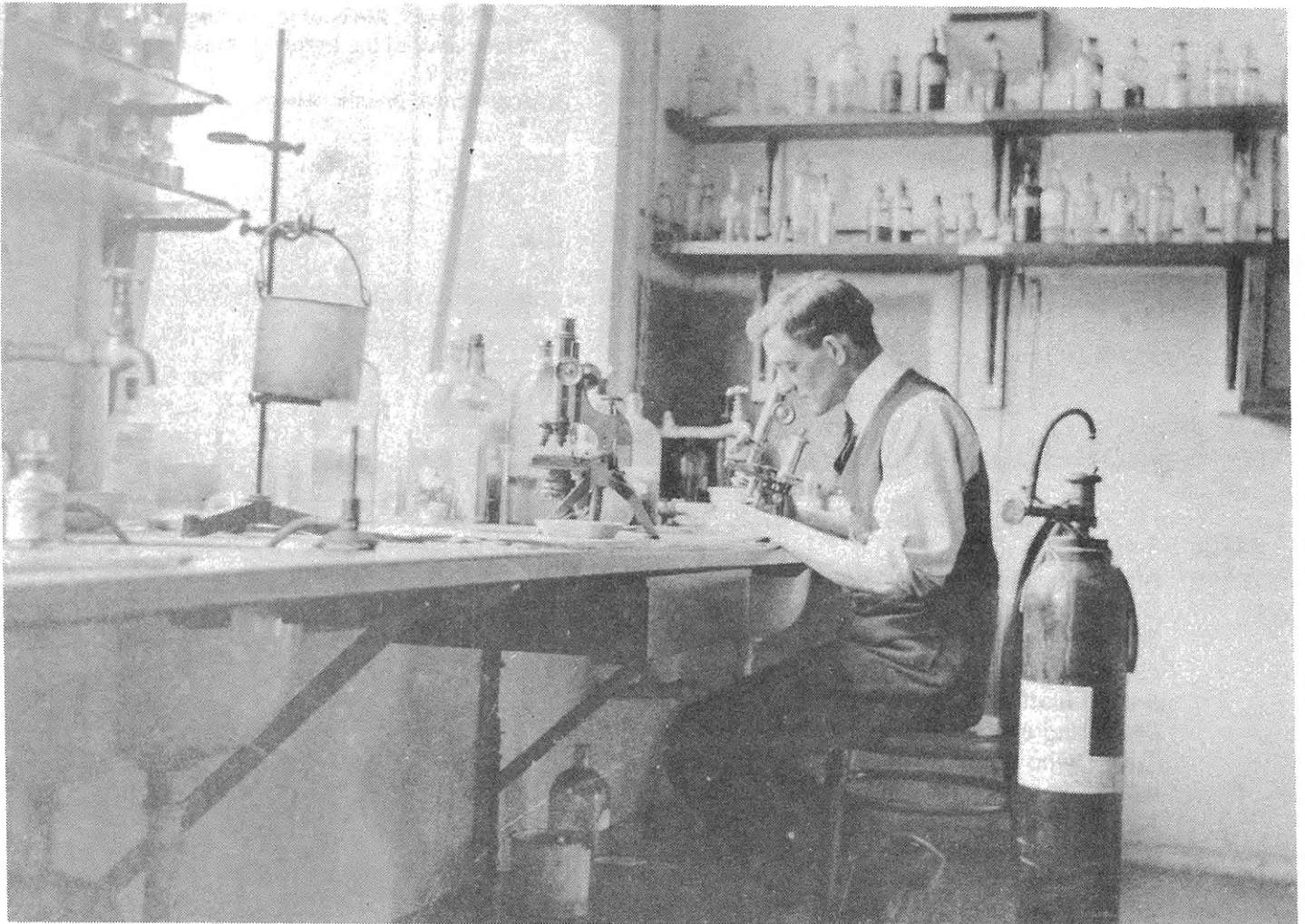


Cyril Checchi in Medical Corps uniform.

joined up after him, who had seen no active service or were on the reserve list and had yet to undergo training. To add insult to injury, Checchi discovered, after the war, that he was not entitled to the Gallipoli Medal awarded to the members of the ANZAC force who served in the Gallipoli campaign. Eventually, after the lapse of sixty years Cyril Checchi was awarded the Gallipoli Medal, mainly through the efforts of Bruce Ruxton, President of the Victorian Branch of the RSL.

Alfred Trinca volunteered for service on 5 August 1914, the day after war broke out. At the time he

accompanying press announcement from the Melbourne 'Herald' states the Dr Trinca was chosen from fifty applicants. The 'Grantala' left Sydney on 30 September 1914 and joined the Australian navy vessels which took part in the capture of Rabaul two weeks later. The 'Grantala' then proceeded to the naval base at Suva, Fiji, where she remained until the defeat of the German Pacific fleet near the Falkland Islands in December 1914. After returning to Sydney the 'Grantala' was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government to search for the trawler 'Endeavour' which was missing on a voyage from Macquarie Island to Hobart. Alfred Trinca volunteered to



Alfred Trinca at work in his laboratory.

was Clinical Pathologist at the Alfred Hospital and Honorary Anaesthetist at the Melbourne Hospital. He was appointed naval surgeon to the hospital ship 'Grantala' which was being hastily fitted out in Sydney in preparation for the RAN attack on the German squadron which was believed to be in the vicinity of Rabaul. The

remain on board the 'Grantala' during this search, which was unsuccessful, but not without its dangers. Trinca's discharge in Sydney from the RAN coincided with Kitchener's call for one hundred medicos. On his return to Melbourne Trinca lost no time in applying for appointment in the RAMC.



Alfred Trinca in the RAMC.

After completing the training course at Crookham, Trinca was posted to France with a field ambulance. Later, while serving at a casualty clearing station he was threatened with a court-martial for defying a British Army order prohibiting emergency surgery in the front line. Trinca, who always maintained that his first duty was to save lives and limbs, had seen wounded men die as a result of long delays in initiating definitive treatment. He continued to operate on the wounded and many lives and limbs were undoubtedly saved, but he was soon arraigned before a high-ranking board which included the head of the RAMC. Apparently, the latter was so impressed with A.J. Trinca's arguments that he ordered the proceedings to be stopped and he is believed to have remarked: "This man should be decorated, not castigated". As a result, new orders were promulgated permitting surgeons to perform emergency procedures at the front. After being wounded by shrapnel and suffering a severe serum sickness reaction from an anti-tetanus inoculation, Alfred Trinca was posted to No. 12 Stationary Hospital, Rouen. From

August 1916 to April 1918 he was Surgical Specialist at the Marseilles Stationary Hospital. Altogether, he served more than three years with the RAMC. However, neither this service with the RAMC nor his earlier service with the RAN has been recognised by Australian authorities. As a result his name and those of thirty-seven other Victorian members of Kitchener's Hundred are missing from the Honour Roll at the Shrine of Remembrance.

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Cyril Checchi retired from medical practice in his 90s and still lives in country Victoria.