



Fitzroy History Society Oral History Project 2015-2017

Transcript of interview with Val Noone and Mary Doyle

(Interviewed by Meg Lee and Alison Hart from the Fitzroy History Society
at 268 Gore Street, Fitzroy on 5 August 2015. Revised 19 April 2017 by Val Noone and Mary Doyle)

Val Noone and Mary Doyle have lived in the same house in Gore Street since the 1970s. They began their time in Fitzroy with an open house which included homeless people and draft resisters in King William Street Fitzroy in late 1971. With others and support from local churches they then established a communal house in Gore Street. They made the feature of having an evening meal to which anybody could come. This was innovative way to support individuals in difference to institutionalised care and support systems. They speak about their work in Fitzroy and the changes they have seen over nearly fifty years living in the same house and working in the area, and provide numerous interesting anecdotes about their neighbours and many of the businesses which used to operate in Fitzroy.



START OF TRANSCRIPT

Val Noone: Well I came into Fitzroy to join a group of people led by Mary Doyle, who later became my wife, and my brother Brian Noone, who were running an open house which included homeless people and draft resisters in King William Street Fitzroy. I came in in the last weeks of 1970, but effectively I came into Fitzroy in 1971 and I joined that household.

And to give you the overview, after many fruitless months searching for a house to rent, Mary and Brian were able to rent a property owned by the Catholic Church. In 1971, the new parish priest, a man called Gavin Fitzpatrick, replacing the absolutely superb Luigi d'Astegno who was supportive of the whole project – wanted to then extend Sacred Heart School and make that the playground, so two terraces were pulled down, one of which was the house Mary, Brian and friends were renting.

That's also the time that the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church and the whole block was being flattened for the Atherton Gardens Estate. We've got photographs taken in '69 and '70 and '71 of that being pulled down and stuff like that. So that happened, then that household largely moved here, to 268, and 266 Gore Street. We wanted to keep the open house project going, but by this time we split it into two households. We came here to Gore Street in July 1971 and a few others moved to 79 Bell Street, which my brother Brian took on.

We ... it was very hard to get a property that was suitable ... for three, four, half a dozen young people and three, four, half a dozen homeless people as well. Then a group of us decided to buy a place cooperatively but banks couldn't handle that at the time. There was no provision for group ownership.

You've probably heard some of the others talk about communes in this area and so on. But we found a very friendly bank manager who said look ... well we found an estate agent through a guy called Lou Hill, who was working for an estate agent, later he was a magistrate and an MLC. Lou was, in fact, a tenant here in this house and he knew it was coming on the market, and that the other one beside was coming on the market. So a group of us decided that between us we could buy the two and we knocked a hole along that wall – so we had our communal house. So to give you the overview, we came here and in 1974 Mary Doyle and I married and by 1975 we had a baby, so we then started to cut back on all that sort of thing. ...and we sold off that house, 266, paid out all the various shareholders and Mary and I then bought this house, and we've actually been in this house since '71, but we've been the sole owners since '76.

Then, just to give you the overview, in 1980 when Mary's mother was very sick we considered moving out to Sunshine where she was, but we decided to stay,



and renovated. The part that you are in now, this is the new work on this house. It was a four room [3.20] cottage with a lean-to fibro kitchen and bathroom where we're sitting now.

We've got pictures of a fair bit of this stuff by the way – when I see these exhibitions down at that place across Johnston Street – 14 photographs maybe, and they call it 'an exhibition' – I thought if we put Mary Doyle's Fitzroy up, we could get 200 photographs.

Facilitator 1: that was at the Colour Factory?

Val Noone: Yes at the Colour factory – did you go to that? Yes they're good photos. ... and about twelve months previously, they had one of Italian shops – do you remember that one?

Facilitator 2: No, but I have seen the more or less permanent exhibition at the Italian Museum in Carlton [in Faraday Street]

Val Noone: Oh yes, they've got that place – that's great over there. Well, Luigi d'Astegno was the parish priest at All Saints in 1968-69 and into 1970, he also went on to leave the priesthood and married as I had done, and became the key person and maybe director of COASIT, the Italian Assistance Association, which is housed in the same building as the museum.

Facilitator 1: So the homeless situation in Fitzroy was very ...

Val Noone: Fitzroy was known as a very low socioeconomic area, in which a large number of homeless men, the focus was on homeless men. Homeless women gravitated a bit to ... there was a hostel called Regina Coeli run by the Catholic Church in Flemington Road and there was [stop to answer door – Mary Doyle enters the room]...

What was the last thing we said?

Facilitator 1: We were talking about COASIT and the homeless situation ...

Val Noone: The homeless situation was ... the person who has a great story to tell is my wife Mary Doyle. She was a social worker at St Vincent's, and she was the first social worker in what was known as the Alcoholism Clinic. There was a very innovative move in the '60s to start a clinic especially dedicated to that issue, and of course the main factors then were a large number of homeless men. Many of them were WWII veterans who had worked on the Snowy Mountains [tape stops to say hello to Mary Doyle]. ...So that was a very good step forward and an innovative program. She got to know a lot of the homeless men around here and so on (06.05).

Facilitator 2: Were they young men, or mostly older?



Val Noone: Well, we thought they all looked old, but for instance, a couple of the men we knew very well, whose funerals we went to and so on, would have been 30 or 40. ...I'm thinking of a fella called Charlie Davis, and another one called Noel Black, and they were both quite young really. But the others, what would they be? They'd be returned men from the war, they'd be 45, 50 I suppose.

So Mary... My brother Brian had worked for a while at the Gill Memorial, and then he worked at the Hanover Centre. So there were four or five young people in that group. Mary Doyle, Brian ... I'll put these names down for the record ... Brian Noone, Chris Tucker, Judy Chow, Bernard and Deirdre Slattery – they started this household. And Mary became a bit of an anti-social worker for a while to get away from the institutional ... to try and do something on the ground [unclear] see how that all worked out. So soon some of those guys came and lived ... we would have a sort of a mixed household. We made the feature of having an evening meal to which anybody could come. That was the 'open house' – not everybody could stay because we didn't have enough room.

Mary Doyle: We wanted it to be small, to learn how to take personal responsibility for what came to us.

Val Noone: But there were young homeless people around in those days, but I think ... alcohol would have been the drug of preference and methylated spirits would have been the main form of drug for a number of those. They would mix Fanta, or something with it. Anyway that's ... to tell you how the open house originated.

Mary Doyle: The open house grew out of a sense that institutions were not treating people with respect. And out of our decision to try to live a simple self-sufficient life in an area where homeless and disadvantaged people felt relatively safe, that is, Fitzroy at the time was the nearest Melbourne had to a 'Skid Row'. Our aim was to see if we could live side by side with them to share our lives, to learn. and we were seeking a s 'safe haven' for discussion and action on social change, for example, on the Vietnam War and the Moratorium.

At no stage did we ever apply for, or accept, outside funding. We were very aware of the danger that "he or she who pays the piper calls the tune".

Val Noone: then as the late '60s unfolded, the issue of the Vietnam War became a big one as well. And all of us were active in the various campaigns. We had a Fitzroy Moratorium Committee and a guy called John Davidson arranged the showing of anti-war films over at the Uniting Church, I think by then it had become the Uniting Church, what year did the Uniting Church come into existence? [June 1977, The Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Congregational Union of Australia formed the



Uniting Church]. About the time it was starting, anyway so we had a quite exciting six or seven years through all that stuff, you know.

Then comes the phase where we sort of cut back to being a nuclear family and stuff. A number of our friends from that activist era then started to move out, and naturally enough they are buying homes with a bit more space and so on. But we took an option to stay here, and to send our kids to school here. Our children went to primary school at Sacred Heart and to secondary school at Collingwood College, which was then called Collingwood Education Centre. It was exceptional, it was a P-12 (08.51) school and very ... great group of teachers when we went there, who had combined a sort of pastoral approach towards the kids who had troubles, towards also providing a stream, a chance for others to do really well. Both our kids got into Melbourne Uni from Collingwood College.

So we've been active in the neighbourhood all through ... and we've seen the fight against the freeway, we've seen the establishment of one-way streets and the street closures and so on – and we had to fight very hard. Motorists would come ... we had temporary barriers for a while and they would come in and take the bluestone away and then drive their cars through, and we'd go and put the bluestone back and Council would eventually... And you get people coming in now ... I hate to see residents using the one-way streets the wrong way and I think they don't know that they have a lovely quiet area because it was fought for. You don't just get streets closed off, just by chance. Because as a bit of a spin-off from the opening of the freeway, we had more clout to do that with the Council. And a terrific Mayor called, Bill Peterson, you will all know about Bill.

So anyway, we've been here ... I just wanted to tell you something about all that neighbourhood stuff straight away to give you an overview of our time here. So we became active in the residents' group, we had a thing called the Gore Street Area Action Group, which we already have a talk on record from me for the Fitzroy History Society, but one thing we've done here since about the late '70s I think, is we've had a Boxing Day street party – and it's remarkable what you can do by having one event a year, which you try and get people to come together, for friendliness and neighbourliness, but also for security – it's better to know who's in your neighbourhood and stuff. And that's really ... Mary's got a sizeable photo album of that from over the years and you can really trace this block over that 30 or 40 years ... we've been here now for 44 years in this ... we came here on the 11th of July 1971 to this house.

Facilitator 2:

And there's still a lot of permanent residents here as opposed to rental properties?



- Val Noone: There's a mixture, a lot of ... permanence is an interesting word, a lot of people buy and don't stay and a lot of people rent, but there would now be only one other person in this block who was here when we came in. What's a block – how many houses? ... ten each side or something, plus flats.
- Facilitator 1: And you were talking about an Aboriginal family in the house that's currently being renovated ... were there many other Aboriginal families in this area?
- Val Noone: When we first came, that house where Lloyd Robson and Rosemary Kiss lived (11.37) and where Rob and Sarah Spence and their family now live, was a rooming house, you know, the upstairs veranda and the downstairs veranda were closed in with fibro and there were little kitchenettes, we've been in there, with those little cookers that you could put on a table, with a sort of hot plate on top and a sort of grilling thing underneath them.
- Just as we were about to take possession of 266 we had a window broken by a young boy, who we chased to see where he went, and he went back into there and his fierce mother and grandmother, who said he'd done no wrong ... but they were Aboriginal people who we got to know. But over the road in those two flats, Norma, who had three children, and they were there right into the '80s. They grew up with our kids, they were lucky enough to get a house through the Aboriginal Housing Co-op. One reason why some of the aboriginal groups moved out of Fitzroy was that they got opportunities for housing that were better ... instead of renting and so on.
- What did you ask me about ...permanency in the neighbourhood? But it does seem to be fairly mobile, doesn't it?
- Facilitator 1: You're not far from Pastor Doug Nicholl's Church there ... you would have seen many glorious Sundays?
- Val Noone: When we came it was already a Greek Evangelical – I use that word in the technical sense. So not a Greek Orthodox Church, but a Greek Protestant, Evangelical Church, which must have flourished in the '60s and '50s, but by the time we were here in the '70s they were all living in Bulleen and beyond, coming into church. But, anyway when they sold and it was bought by ... I've forgotten who bought it, Cantor – the bloke who's big in art and stuff ...
- Facilitator 1: ...He was into textiles and furnishing textiles and modern design ...
- Val Noone: Yeh, yeh, well they took the Greek Church sign off and of course underneath it was revealed "Church of Christ, Aboriginal Church, Pastor Doug Nicholls".
- Facilitator 2: Oh so it wasn't common knowledge until then?
- Val Noone: It hadn't been. We had heard, but we didn't know you see. So I got photographs of that, which now the sign is gone, and through the historical society we ended up getting a plaque put on the Church, through the Council.



And when it came to the centenary of Doug Nicholls birth, they had a memorial service, and they asked could they use that church and Rob Spence and I went to ...did a fair bit of work to make that possible, because the then resident – Cantor – was very open minded and that, and they had a service there, well, a memorial event, (14.30) for Doug Nicholls on that occasion. That's good really and there's a new book out on the Aboriginal Advancement League called *Fighting Hard* by Richard Broome and the opening chapter about Fitzroy, I've re-read it twice already. I don't often re-read chapters, but it's a really good little chapter or two about the early days of Aborigines in Victoria. There's already been a little bit of a project in the Council looking at the history of Aborigines in this area, but I think this little study is ... puts that account very well.

Facilitator 1: So, just going back to your street parties ...Val – how extensive is your block, is it just people in Gore Street?

Val Noone: We originally only took it to between Greeves and St David, but I have to say about the mobility thing of residents, the last few years we aren't getting as many from the block, 'cause they sort of come and they go and stuff, but we've got more people who've been around here for a while who relate back to us.

Facilitator 2: So do you just close off the block?

Val Noone: No, no we ... I think we might have one year, but all that Council stuff it's become fairly fraught and all that stuff. Perhaps this got stopped when they started opening the supermarket on Boxing Day. We used to park a car or two, so we could play cricket, but the Police came down on us like a ton of bricks, and I got a fine. We now just have it ... we bring out a barbeque, people bring a table, and you know a Weber BBQ and a few chairs and people bring the left-overs ... it's Boxing Day see, so they can bring the left-overs out and we run from about 12 till about 6pm and they come and go. But I really recommend it, I think it's a really simple ... Now with the trees if you get three or four cars not to park then we claim that little area there.

Facilitator 1: And who were the people that were there Val, were they young professionals, families living over the time in Fitzroy that you have been here...?

Val Noone: If we put our minds to it, we could tell you, the one surviving person is Maria Camilleri, a Maltese migrant, who came in the 1950s, whose husband died in the building of the underground railway and she's been widowed with three sons. But there's been quite a strong Italian group in the next block between here and Johnston Street. The Marascos and the Cardamones, I mean their families have been around this area for a long time. Sam Marasco you may know – he's been a character in the whole area ... Sam would be a 'must' interview by the way. Is he on your list? Alright then ... they intermarried, the



Marasco's parents are dead, but Sam would be, I guess, somewhere about 60 I suppose now. He grew up and went to school here, but he's one of those people who remembers things – and he keeps things – he's got memorabilia from here to next week (17.49). Fitzroy Football Club especially, but also Italians in Fitzroy and stuff ... Sam would love to be a part of it – I told him this was going on. He really knows, he'll tell you all about the Fitzroy Football Club. I was going to say something else about Sam and that whole area ...

... there's the Italian group there, but there were a fair number of Greek people. The milk bar on the corner of George and St David Streets and the milk bar on the corner of George and Moor Streets which were both running and thriving when we came in here – the one on George and Moor lasted till almost 2000 ... They were busy businesses you know. We used both of them ...

Facilitator 2: And you'd get groceries and stuff there, not just bread and milk?

Val Noone: Yes, fill-ins and ... I mean there was no supermarket here until the '80s. I mean there was Coles down the other end. But I remember the Coles down the other end when it still had the stained wood counters and all that sort of stuff. So we've seen a lot of changes.

The changes in the area – the ethnic ... So Greeks were strongest in ... that's what I was going to tell you about ... Joy Damousi has written about ... she gave a talk to the historical society ...

Facilitator 1: She's a professor at Melbourne Uni...

Val Noone: Yes, she's an ace historian on other things ... So I'm a sort of funny interviewee in a way – I mean my own story is interesting, but I'm also sort of semi-professionally interested in the history of the whole thing anyway. So I'm happy to just ... if this is a bit of a jumble take it as you find it and ...

Well, anyway a number of the Greeks are still scattered but they're dying off now, but the number of Greek households in this immediate half mile area is still ... the Italians and Greeks by and large, and I don't know what the sociologists would say, by and large the Italians and the Greeks following what the Australians had done twenty or thirty years before, moved out in a bit of an arc to the north and north-east. The Irish strains, well the old Australians of Fitzroy and Collingwood I think sort of moved up the line more than out that way. I think the Italians and Greeks went to new suburbs like Bulleen and Balwyn and stuff – they're very strongly Italian and Greek I think.

Facilitator 1: Who were the agitators for action for improving the neighbourhood Val, like the supermarket and the one-way streets – were you the genesis of that?

Val Noone: No, it was a very widespread social movement, it's hard to separate (20.59) just how it all happens, but the upsurge of residents groups coincides with the



opposition to the Vietnam War, it coincides also with the upsurge of interest in Aboriginal rights, the referendum around '67 and the support for land rights.

Facilitator 2: Do you think the Vietnam War thing was a little bit of a catalyst for getting people together?"

Val Noone: It was a very big catalyst, but I think the movement was underway anyway – I'm a bit interested in sorting that out actually – I've been asked to give a talk to a group of, what's called the Old Paradians – people who went to the Christian Brothers College Parade, my cohort. And the title I've given it is 'The old New Australians 1945-1975'. You know, what happened to that group as we grew up and ... I'm born in 1940, for the record there, and I was born in South Melbourne and I had the first six years of my life there, and then we moved out to Bentleigh, and that was then out in the sticks. My parents were working class, my father was a fitter and had been a blacksmith, and my mother was a dressmaker, and I got scholarships that got me into secondary college and then I went to study to be a priest, and then as you heard by the 1970s, I left the priesthood and got married and so on.

I mention all that to say – something I was going to say – what happened to this cohort of people, I look at things like the folk music revival of the 1960s gave a greater sense of community – it's all connected and of course of which the biggest catalyst was the Vietnam War because you were actually at loggerheads with the State, you were at odds with the Government and the whole social system. So we started to think we needed another sort of society ... I think we had been brought up in a period of unprecedented prosperity. 1945, most people of my ... I'll speak for my generation – though our fathers and mothers still had to work overtime to get that money, it wasn't a piece of cake for them, the great post-war economic boom – they all worked after hours, extra hours, overtime on weekends. But we did get more. We got refrigerators and cars and things and so on. And education, with the Commonwealth scholarship people could get into Uni. But it's also this period of this great anxiety about nuclear war. You know we grew up since 1945 thinking there could be war, once China and Russia got the bomb and all that stuff. So I think there's a few things ticking away whereby we start to question the consumer society in some small way, you know the move to communes and wholemeal bread and brown rice and brown sugar.

Mary has a great story about the homeless men sitting around this table, and when she put brown sugar on the table they said "Oh gee you must really be going bad", and they all went out and bought sugar for us.

But that awareness of the environmental stuff was all ticking (24.10) away. We hosted here, we had a group house, so I remember people coming for the first



Radical Ecology Conference, in about '72 or '73 and people came from interstate. I wasn't in that particular organisation, but our good friend Geoff Lacey was, and there was a period I think, of people thinking about themselves in not just self-promotion. You know I think sometimes they try to portray the protest movement as self-indulgent, and all the talk about marijuana doesn't help that. You know people who promote marijuana as the symbol of the revolution, you know I think that is a mistake. Certainly some people went down that path, but I think there was a period when a whole group of ...this cohort of people took an interest in homeless people, Aboriginal people, Vietnamese people and stuff. There's really quite a high moral aspect to this.

Facilitator 1: Which reminds me Val, of the Green Movement in Sydney harbour, to save those Moreton Bay figs, which was an activist group coming from the Unions. We are workers, but we have a conscientious consideration for the type of work we are doing and we don't want to take those fig trees.

Val Noone: Wasn't that a great moment – those Green Bans and Jack Munday.

Facilitator 1: Well showing anti-war films to the locals Val –

Val Noone: Yes that was fun

Facilitator 1: That would have generated a few conscientious objections?

Val Noone: Well, as always, we did things like door knocking and putting out leaflets. We were into talking to people where they were at. But you also had the ... the Greeks have always had a fairly left-wing group around, but there were Macedonians, and Serbs and all sorts of groups; and they always had their own internal differences and so on. But we got support. I remember a bloke called Slobodan, a tram driver on the Serbian side – he became a big activist in our anti-Vietnam stuff.

But all that story probably needs to be taken a bit more slowly and written out, but I'm happy to give you a few leads.

Facilitator 1: In terms of the activist movements around Melbourne for the Vietnam War – Fitzroy must have been pretty strong in that, to the point culminating in the Moratorium?

Val Noone: When you watch movie clips about the '60s and stuff they always show these clips about students, because a number of the people that had gone into media had come out of that background and they remember that, its stuff ... you got confrontations and stuff. But I think the strength of the Moratorium movement was that it was pretty suburban. I'm actually backing away from saying that (27.14) Fitzroy was the strength ... Fitzroy was good, but the strength was that you had groups in Moorabbin, Heidelberg and Sunshine and Preston and I remember a discussion and somebody said "Oh they're all little



old ladies joined the moratorium, they're not very radical" I remember Joe Broderick saying "That's the strength of it, that you have got the little old ladies". We didn't just have little old ladies, because of course we had young people as well. But it was an extraordinary moment that you had people of all sorts and shapes and sizes.

Facilitator 1: It's almost to the point that Fitzroy's made a commitment of naming that square opposite the library Whitlam Square.

Val Noone: On that corner where the Ralph McLean statue, or whatever it is – I hadn't been more than a week in Fitzroy when I went around in the morning to get my newspaper from the shop that was on that corner opposite The Napier Hotel and it had been pulled down overnight. The demolition of that corner was done very rapidly.

Then I think, you'd have to ask the people who know council, Renata Howe and them would know this – I then think the community groups got active and said "You're not going to put a development up there", and the Council I think bought that land. Do Council own that land?

Facilitator 1: I think it's a public space now. So was that the beginning of the redevelopment in that area do you think? What else do you remember?

Val Noone: The pulling down of the Atherton Estate area is the big one. That's the last time a high-rise was put up. From there no further. So the opposition to that failed, but the opposition to that ... but in particular Brookes Crescent is the turning point – you follow that ...

Facilitator 1: Laurie O'Brien and Keith, who was in the history group when I first joined, they were very involved in that.

Val Noone: The group around Brian Howe and Arthur Falkner, are you aware of ...what was it called? ... based in the church in Napier Street, down by Gertrude which is now in private hands? Centre for Urban Action is what they called themselves. But all sorts of groups came in behind the Brookes Crescent fight ...and that stopped them, they never did another high-rise after that. And they did the walk-ups, and they did the renovations ...I mean some of them, they just renovated old terraces, but they also built one or two levels too.

Facilitator 2: So when was it they wanted to put a high-rise up in Brookes crescent?

Val Noone: Oh yes they wanted to put them everywhere, that was '73 or 4 (30.34).

One group in that whole thing is young conscientious objectors and draft resisters on the run from the police. I mean we'd have had a fair few coming and stayed with us over those years you know.

Mary Doyle: Including Roger Napthine



- Val Noone: Roger Naphine, the brother of the former Premier. Yes we ran into him at Ex Libris the book festival at Port Fairy two or three years ago, I was speaking down there and he made the speech – and I said I knew your brother Roger and I was impressed with him as a person, he didn't say "we've gone our own ways Roger and I" He just said talked about Roger's health problems. He obviously respected him and respected Roger's friends, it was very nice.
- I've tried to give you a picture of the years we've been here in one go and there's a million stories in between.
- Facilitator 1: Val, can you give us a sense of where you bought your things and how you bought them. I mean you talked about the original Coles store ...the original counters and so forth.
- Val Noone: We had phases of doing Vic Market, but we actually joined a fruit and vegie co-op before Friends of the Earth started we had a bloke called Justin Moloney used to go down at 5am to the wholesale ... there are lots of those things that are thought now to be the latest ideas, but we were doing them in those years. We shopped at Sammy Lefkatiditis fruit and vegie shop, that's where we got our fruit and vegies. Sammy's place, Sammy and Kathy, Sammy's just died. He's either related to, or closely connected to some of these Greek families in this area, but he actually lived at Altona. Sammy's shop was in Smith Street where the electronic goods place beside the ...right at the bottom here, near the chipper, the Rock Salt and Vinegar. When you talk to Mary, it'd be better to ask her about where we shopped.
- Well I'm a bit different, I started buying from Friends of the Earth, which was ...then Soul Food came in. Friends of the Earth and Soul Food both started organic stuff. One of the guys who worked at Soul Food, John Gordon, then started a stall at the market, so there are now three to four organics stalls at Vic Market, but there wasn't initially. I still shop at Vic Market, but I really haven't got my thoughts marshalled on where we shopped.
- Mary Doyle: There's a story that some people can remember of this person, Val, going round to the corner of George and St David's in his dressing gown to get milk from the milk bar.
- Val Noone: Well it's our neighbourhood that we owned and [laughs] (34.53).
- Talking about food and stuff, when we had that open house, the homeless guys were a range, some of those guys are not right out of it, right, and there were a couple of them there, in particular Jimmy Scanlon who had a sort of a shed at the back of Lamana's. There was another Italian fruit shop up there in Smith Street ... not far back from Gertrude Street, about where that Japanese restaurant is now and that was Lamana's fruit shop and he used to earn his keep by unpacking the fruit boxes in the morning when they came in. But he



would keep us supplied with fresh fruit and vegies. I mean, the common table, people would bring stuff. If they went to the Salvos and got given a loaf of bread or a cake they'd bring it and put it on the table. I mean sharing has a momentum of its own.

Facilitator 1: Did all your neighbours work full-time Val? What sort of jobs would they have had?

Val Noone: Well our household was self-sufficient, we never had a grant from any organisation or church or government, we always ...enough of us were working that we always ... I worked, I had a job right through '71 driving for Sunicrust. Mary worked at Cardboard Converters – what was it called? Paper Converters.

Mary Doyle: But our neighbours ...

Val Noone: Well lets work our way through that ...

Mary Doyle: George Watts was well and truly retired...

Val Noone: Not when we first came. George Watts was sort of like the tally clerk down at the British United Shoe Machinery. You know that that whole area was dominated by ...Those units behind you, that converted warehouse and that grey painted place was joined together with the three-storey, now four- storey joint on the corner which you'd probably know as – well it's Dummets anyway. That was all Dummets Shoes, and we'd come in here and you'd now be hearing clickety clack clack, clickety clack clack clack. "Would Mr Brown please come to the front and bring up the product, you know, whatever it was." So the shoe industry was still very big, leather, and printing was big in this area. George was ... he must have been able with books and stuff like that. He was in the Masonic Lodge which was a feature of life in the area and he would go out on Tuesday night with his dicky suit and all that stuff and I would think the British United Shoe Machinery was pretty much the same as George, but he was a great neighbour to us.

Our neighbours on the other side, Ian Murphy worked at the brewery and his wife Beryl worked at Briggs and Neeter ...

Mary Doyle: When we wanted to do an extension he came in here, this was the back veranda, and he said "What do you want to do an extension for"? and we said "My mum might be coming to stay" and he said "Why don't you just put a bit of something across here, you know just close off a bit... I spent most of my ... ". Well he wouldn't have said adulthood, sleeping on the front veranda upstairs ...he was sixteen, and before that he was living in a house in St David, between Gore and Smith, and he lived till he was 95, so his whole life he was living ... In 1983 or 2 or something, when we were doing it, or ... 1980, he was disgusted to think we were going to extend.



- Val Noone: Instead of just putting the fibro on the front veranda and ... He grew up, as a boy, sleeping behind a canvas blind on the upstairs veranda. Remember those canvas blinds that they had, with little doorways in them and little windows in them.
- Facilitator 2: And was that relatively common in ...
- Val Noone: Yes ...
- Mary Doyle: 264 was built out onto the veranda and then 258 where the kids cleaned the [speaking over] that was built out like that as well.
- Facilitator 2: I'm guessing people didn't bother with permits ...
- Val Noone: No I wouldn't think so.
- Mary Doyle: But they were rooming houses ...
- Val Noone: Or extended families, you forget how many, I mean this site there were probably about eight people...
- Facilitator 1: And that's what we're going back to ...more intensive housing...Now Val, most of those people had full-time work?
- Val Noone: So, yes, Mary started ...George retired midway through our time here, but he was a clerk ...some sort of ...he kept some of the books of what came and went down at the Shoe Machinery. On our block, in 264, Ian Murphy worked at the brewery ...
- Facilitator 2: So people tended to work locally?
- Val Noone: Yes, I mentioned Maria Camilleri's husband worked on construction, on the underground, and was killed on that. Alma was a widow, we could probably do a bit of a run-around, get some idea ...
- Mary Doyle: The two houses that are between 280, and 268, there's 270 and 272, the next two houses were all part of this Mattei Brothers ...
- Val Noone: Plaster statue business – are they on your list? (41.36)
- Facilitator 2: I'm not sure we are catching you Mary, if you could move a bit closer?
- Mary Doyle: 274 and 276 were part of a complex which was based in Mattei brothers, M-A double T-E-I, I think, and they ...
- Facilitator 1: They're down there on Johnston Street...
- Mary Doyle: ...Mattei Brothers had those two houses, the Church and all the houses along Greeves Street, and along into Hargreaves – there were a whole lot of little cottages and all of those little cottages, plus the two on this side, plus the Church were all Mattei Brothers plaster cast statues. And somewhere in the ...I don't know when ...'80s, they sold and they actually came in and invited us to



see what it was like. So we went in and saw that it had been a church. You could tell it had been a church, it was still a church, just left ...filled up with statues of Our Lady and the Sacred Heart and all the ones that we'd all known when we were kids.

Val Noone: And you know, also lions and Greek goddesses and stuff

Facilitator 2: And so they were all still separate? They weren't joined up inside?

Mary Doyle: Oh no these were separate, these other houses all remained separate and I don't know whether they've sold them, but they've certainly done them all up and they're all private ...

Val Noone: They're all leased

Facilitator 1: You mentioned John Cantor, now he was in textiles wasn't he, and down opposite Safeway in that stretch there was a big fabric, textile place there?

Val Noone: That was Blooms

Mary Doyle: Bloom? Bloom? Just here? After it stopped being shoes, it became Blooms textile. But they only had the front bit. Then [talking over]

Val Noone: We fought the council and VCAT about Blooms because ...

Facilitator 1: Blooms was still there in 1991

Val Noone: yeh yeh yeh

Mary Doyle: If you went upstairs onto our balcony you would be able to see the four storey building which was Blooms, this little house, one house here which ... that's the only one that hasn't really been done up. And then two big houses beyond there that were done up to ...like we were all sort of overwhelmed. It was the first time that ...those two grey places – they are enormous. And they were saying "it's a full European kitchen, it was the first time they were selling things of that. (45:01)

Well the memory of this, I don't remember too much about it, except that one summer night I'm sitting at the counter here, and I'm sitting there and Val's upstairs watching the tennis and I hear screaming, a woman screaming and I call out to Val – or he hears it – and anyhow, Val goes racing around the corner and I ring the police. And we were assuming this woman's been attacked, or you know or something and I don't know at what point Val finds out, but she has come in and found her husband, or partner, had hanged himself. Aahhh and she found him in there. And he turns out to have been the brother of the guy who used to own the Church.

Val Noone: Yes Cantor I think. Yes we need to check that name 'Cantor' - and I'll do that for you. Because I don't want to give you the wrong ...



Mary Doyle: Yes it was his brother. Yes it was awful. He'd moved out because he needed some space or ...and she came to find him...

Val Noone: But I told you he was the one who helped put on the Doug Nicholls Centenary
(46:30)

END OF TRANSCRIPT