

q book: THE GRAND LADY OF ST KILDA

175 years of food, fun and funkiness

St Kilda identity and RockWiz host, Brian Nankervis, will launch *Acland Street: The Grand Lady of St Kilda* by award-winning historian, Dr Judith Buckrich, at 6pm, Thursday 23 November at the St Kilda Army & Navy Club, 88 Acland Street, St Kilda.

The lavishly-illustrated, hardcover book explores the history of Acland Street since it became St Kilda's first named street in 1842, taking its name from Thomas Dyce Acland, the owner of the schooner *Lady of St Kilda* which gave its name to the suburb.

"The fortunes of Acland Street have ebbed and waned along with St Kilda's," Dr Buckrich said. *"They grew rapidly during the Gold Rushes and the boom that followed, dipped in the 1890s' depression, rose again after World War 1, fell catastrophically in the Great Depression, and started to climb again in the 1980s. It's been home to the wealthy and the poor, to Jews escaping Nazism, and to a motley of musicians, artists, gays, sex workers and radicals. It is a place where the rich and down-and-out, respectable and disreputable, highbrow and lowbrow, have always jostled for space and dominance."*

Dr Buckrich said that there's hardly a Melburnian who hasn't been to Acland Street.

"Acland Street has a special place in this city's heart – and its collective memory. So many of the hundreds of people I have met and corresponded with over the course of writing the history love Acland Street with a passion that I have never heard expressed for any other place. Not the unpleasant passion of nationalism, but the tender feeling for somewhere that has given great joy and passion," she said. *"Acland Street can also claim to have a place in the affections of people all over Australia – if they have ever been to Melbourne, it's odds on that they've been to Acland Street to sample its continental cakes, cafes, art galleries, live music and 'vibe', before or after a visit to the beach, Luna Park, or the Esplanade Art and Craft Market."*

Acland Street has witnessed many firsts that are not widely known, Dr Buckrich said.

"Acland Street was home to Australia's first official LGBTI organisation, the Daughters of Bilitis, in 1969. In 1993 had the first centre for people with HIV/AIDS, and in 1995 boasted the first internet café in Australia. With its unique combination of ethnic, sexual and cultural life, cheap but gloriously decaying flats and boarding houses, and numerous music venues and excellent public transport, the street was, for a while, the most dynamic of any in Melbourne," she said. *"Its proximity to the beach and the entertainments of The Esplanade proved a romantic, if world-weary, setting for baby boomer inhabitants living the new and wilder life of the 1960s-1980s."*

Researching and writing the history has been a very personal project for Dr Buckrich who fled Hungary with Communist father and Jewish mother in 1958, following the aborted 1956 uprising.

Over the past 175 years, Acland Street has been home to many extraordinary people including Henry Jennings, lawyer and philanthropist who, in 1860, held out on behalf of the Wurundjeri people at Coranderk near Healesville against members of the Board of Protection for Aborigines, Dr Buckrich said.

Dr Buckrich has made her living from writing plays and histories and explores her life in her recently published memoir, *The Political is Personal*. She has written histories of St Kilda Road, Collins Street, the Port of Melbourne, Montefiore Homes, the Royal Victorian Institute of the Blind, Prahran Tech, and Melbourne University Boat Club. Her history of Ripponlea Village won the 2016 Victorian Community History Awards Local History – Small Publication Award.

Acland Street: The Grand Lady of St Kilda is published by the Australian Teachers of Media Inc. (ATOM), a non-profit organisation whose editor is affiliated with the St Kilda Historical Society. To fund publication, it set up a pozible crowd funding campaign.

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To purchase *Acland Street: The Grand Lady of St Kilda*: <http://theeducationshop.com.au/books/acland-street-the-grand-lady-of-st-kilda-delivered/>

