Melbourne Waifs & the Newsboys'

Historical Society, Vol.72, Part 2,

October 1986, pp.116-129.

Katharine Susannah Prichard

Laws & Regulations

City of Melbourne Town Clerk's

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Illustrations: Newsboys Roger Ward 2005

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Edith Onians. Read all about it

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John Ramsland, 'Edith Onians,

## CREDITS

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### CITY GALLERY

The City Gallery is funded and managed by the City of Melbourne. This small gallery offers visitors a free program five exhibitions per year about Melbourne's cultural, historical and artistic life interpreted mainly through Council's Art + Heritage Collection and its archives. Each exhibition draws on the expertise of a guest curator.

Melbourne Town Hall Swanston Street, Melbourne

Monday IOam – 2pm Tuesday - Thursday IIam - 6pm Friday Ham - 6.3Opm Saturday IOam - 4pm







By Andrew Brown-May. EXHIBITION CURATOR

In its collective historical subconscious, Melbourne misses its newsboys! The newsboy theatres, pubs and emporiums. — that pocket-sized urban

thousands of boys across the in the city. metropolis who did the morning paper round in all weathers on at tram stops and street corners.

figure on Melbourne's streets, experiences and representations from the mid 10th to the mid of Melbourne's youngest public 20th centuries, and has been servants, the societies and etched into popular memories clubs formed to foster their

of the city of old and indeed the well-being and promote their "public nuisance", "street Arab", city of living memory. Over the interests, and the regulatory or "boy problem", the newsboy last century — apart from the framework of juvenile labour was variously condemned,

Melbourne, plying their trade and characters of the city of old. immigrant society. In part too it is a celebration of Under the Clocks at Flinders the tens of thousands of boys The history of the newsboy is Street Station, or outside who for a brief moment in their also the story of the transition own lives trod a very public stage from childhood to being an on the streets of the central city. adult. The juvenile seller was a anti-hero — was once a familiar This exhibition captures the Nostalgia for the vanished cries popular figure in 19th century and peculiar lingo that used to cartoons, representing the brash echo across the city streets at voice of the native-born, streetmodernity that in very many Street Trading Board brought respects has improved the lot of regulation and protection to the the city's youth.

goes. Countless politicians and

personal voices across time. As its vanished newsboys!

stereotyped, or rescued. Peddling their precious commodity of news. It is also a spur to memory, as the newsboys were an important foot or bike — some 15,000 in text and image it evokes a part of the city's information boys cried "Erald" in central sense of loss for some of the ways economy, particularly in an

Melbourne Town Hall

peak hour, is balanced with a wise and very much urban recognition of the progress and Australia. From the 102Os the sale of newspaper by children in an era when they were still a vital Every millionaire was once a part of the city's economy, as newsboy — or so the saying well as their family's livelihood.

footballers, mayors and union Around I9CO, the city newsboy leaders, started out as pint-sized was recognised by his bellentrepreneurs. Being a petty bottomed trousers, a coat entrepreneur may or may not adorned with buttons, a black have been the first rung on a handkerchief around his neck, ladder of self-improvement, but and often bare footed rather than for much of the city's history, it wearing boots so he could run was an important source of extra faster. The boys had their own income for many working-class pitches, gangs and hierarchies boys from the city and inner — the leader of the mob could suburbs, particularly Carlton, have his mates around him in South Melbourne, Fitzroy, a trice with a quick whistle. Richmond and North Melbourne. Crutchey, Tabby-cats, Spud, Little Charlie, Snowy, Curley, Although the cry of the newsboy Sport, Jack, Cock-eye, Battler, was once an everyday sound in Spud, Fossie, Dicko, Soldier, Melbourne's streets, it is much Morry, Tom, Ginger, and all harder now to hear their own their mates - Melbourne salutes



"Had" - Melbourne Punch, 28 March 1872, Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne

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### FIRST NEWSBOY

the only two dailies.

1923, The Herald, 2 May

I have looked forward to seeing you but the Fates seem to be DEAR MISS - I have been doing

1922, Keith Murdoch to Edith Onians

It is wiser and less expensive to save Children than to punish criminals.

1909, Try Boys Gazette

### MISLEADING NEWS CRIES

Police Court Proceedings Against Two Boys Special inspectors have recently been employed by The or false news.

1929, The Herald, 10 September

nothing can take away.

1919, Edith Onians to Lady Margaret Stanley, president of the Newsboys' Society.

NEWS ITEMS DEAR MOTHER, — I am 150 presents from the public while the Board to have been guilty Onians to send me one?

*19*05

preventing us meeting. However, no good at the rabbits this last next time you are anywhere month on account of the rain. within cooee of the "Herald" It has been raining up here for office do come in, and I will two weeks, with hardly a stop, so leave any engagement to see you trapping is not all honey, as some people think. I see that about you in the "Weekly Times" and what they say is nothing but the red truth, and what they said "that if anyone tried to harm you they had better look out for themselves." All I can say is. God help them if I or any of the older boys got hold of them, as God knows I would never have got on only for you learning me the right path to take. I am sorry I can't get hold of a good fox-skin to send you, but as soon as I get one I will send it to Herald in an effort to stamp out you, and would you like a pair the practice of some newsboys in of rabbits? Kindly let me know. the city who call out misleading Remember me to Mr Griffin and all the boys.

I9I0

### REGULATIONS

The Committee remembers with A licence issued under these especial gratitude the many visits Regulations may be suspended you have so gladly paid to the or cancelled by the Board if boys' homes for they know how the holder of such licence these visits have gladdened the trade without being clean and mothers' hearts and given them decently clothed; enter for the a bright and happy memory of purpose of street trading any your sweet womanliness which premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor; enter or ride upon a moving tram, train, or bus for the purpose of street trading; beg or solicit gifts or

am pleased very much with litter which results from the engaged in street trading. New Claimant of Title Mr Thomas my new home, and I like my operation of his street trading, 1026 Street Trading Act McTaggart claims to be the oldest boss. I milk 2 cows and ride make any unnecessary noise newsboy in Victoria, and sold a lovely little pony, and I can in the calling of his wares in a papers in the late 1840s when ride lovely. I have got 6d, and public place, or obstruct any When threading London's the Herald and the Argus were I am sorry to say that I lost my street or thoroughfare to the crowded streets, how shall I miss mouth organ. Will you ask Miss inconvenience of the public those boys, Who congregate in using the same; absent himself Bourke-street, making such a from school without reasonable dreadful noise, Who vend the excuse; refuse to comply with Argus "stronaries," and beg the direction of any officer you to peruse. The damp sheets duly appointed to supervise 'steaming' with some seventeen street trading under this Act; days' later news. be convicted of an offence, or 1850. Melbourne Punch, 23 June be proved to the satisfaction of

miles from Melbourne and engaged in street trading; fail of dishonesty in street trading. am still very happy, and I am to remove from the street any or of unseemly behaviour, or of getting on very well, and I waste paper, or any débris or the use of bad language whilst

My job is sellin' papers to the crowds that passes by And I'm up to all the capers when I'm shoutin' out my cry, Cause when the news is dull and there isn't much to say — Well! Yer gotta spice it up a bit in a brezzy sorta way.

1050, Sgt E. Hurlstone, R.A.A.F.



"Wise in his Generation" - Melbourne Punch, 14 May 1874. Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne

fiddles, and breaking our necks No person, whether licensed to get to the Dardanelles to have under this Act or not, shall a slap at the Turks. You can let employ in street trading any me know when any of the boys male person of or over the age of are coming over, so that I can 12 years and under the age of 14 meet them. Remember me to years who is not licensed, or any

> 1915, City Newsboys' Society Annual Report.

Billy G. and all the boys.

# MELBOURNE. 14 AUGUST 1027

not appreciate the fact that the from that of Britain, cannot If so, that is quite wrong. That of local concernment, to small etc., is being put into practical delicately couched, the witticism. the self-sacrificing folk who give and more direct. the under-dog a chance.

1928, City Newsboys' Society Annual Report.

City Newsboys' Society, Annual Report 1952

male person under the age of 12 years, or any female person under the age of 21 years. 1926 Street Trading Act

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That the colonial newspaper Dear MISS, - Some people press must be different in its may think that the old boys do literary and political aspects Society has done noble, self- be doubted. The articles are sacrificing work in giving them usually referable to more a sporting chance to make good. confined topics — to subjects motto on the wall of the Society, partisan warfare, or to personal "I shall pass this way but once." animosities. The meanings are less effect by your old boys. We may the reproof, the menace, the be silent on it, but, all the same. political disquisitions, are all put we pass it on, and we cannot forward in a coarse relief, or, to adequately express out thanks to speak mildly, they are plainer

> 1853, William Westgarth, Victoria: late Australia Felix.

Box,..." Evald, sir? Evald? Evald? Evald? Evald?"
BETTERD((1?) PRESSERS (snappinky)..." No?"
Box,..." Well, yer needs't be so nosty; yer serve once in my line yers

"Cheek" - Melbourne Punch, 26 November 1874. Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne

... I had tried to enlist before, but they would not take me, but an old paper boy I knew told me a way, so I went down to town and got through. I had to walk to Melbourne, as you will remember I did not have my fare.

1915, City Newsboys' Society Annual Report.

the moment. I had tried to enlist copper, will be sorry to miss me, before, but they would not take I suppose. I have still got the me, but an old paper boy I knew card that Lady Carmichael gave told me a way, so I went down to me the night we presented her town and got through. I had to with the bouquet. I wish they walk to Melbourne, as you will would soon put us in Gallipoli; remember I did not have my fare. this place is getting dead I have never been beaten yet in monotonous. The best day is anything. I celebrated my 16th pay day. I have seen all the main or 17th birthday (I am not sure places here. Miss Onians passed which) on the troopship in the through here when she went on Red Sea. I know that you would her holidays, didn't she? The sooner see me doing a bit for my Sphinx has got its nose blown country than knocking around off by Napoleon when he was corners getting grabbed by the fighting here. We are as fit

I seem to act on the impulse of coppers. Mr B., the Collingwood

MELBOURNE

Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, State Library of Victoria



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- Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Recordds, State Library of Victoria

in coats, coals and cabbages, but such a general demand for these man most passionately craves. the newsbov sells you cathedrals papers? Why, for example, do The Age, undated clipping and palaces, he offers you the the people of the smallest and in Melbourne City Newsboys' House of Parliament and the most remote settlement want the Society Annual Report 1956 stock exchange; he holds in his news? Why cannot Bulman's hand all earth's most imposing Gully be satisfied with Bulman's The "Wants" of 50,000 appearance of a phenomenon structures and all the ships that Gully? Why cannot Horseshoe

The point is that the whole Creek? Why should they trouble the "Board and Lodging" of eight pages, equal in area to world is wrapped up in every their heads about the great hundreds of good Samaritans, the that of the great Thunderer of paper that the newsboy sells. world beyond? sets out from a store to carry the woven into the texture of our the "Impoundings" of jealous paper to the homestead over the humanity.

EGYPT, 8 JULY 1915

EGYPT, 8 JULY 1915 hill, are both like Atlas — they A man may live in a hut or a of theatres and circuses, and To my old friends, Miss Onians bear the entire globe with them. humpy at the back of the bush, Salles Valentino, the "Starting" and Mr Griffin, Watching these boys — the one or away at the other end of of coaches, the "Sailing" of I know I ought to be ashamed scurrying to and fro among the nowhere, but he will fret for a steam and sailing packets, the of myself for writing after doing crowds and the other trudging vista of far-off continents and 'Proclamations of Insolvency," you such a bad turn, but it has

The city urchin who weaves his It is not idle curiosity. It is the was among the traffic to effect expression of a passion that, "Sales by Auction" of battalions 1850. a sale, and the country lad who like all our master passions, is of knights of the hammer,

with a few test matches and the bush — a natural question distant islands. The wares in Sell," the "Money to Lend," the similar trifles thrown in for good arises. Why, among people of which the newsboy deals are "Rewards" to discover "Murder measure. Other tradesmen deal all kinds and classes, is there the very commodities that every or Stolen Property." the "Notices

immigrants, the inquiries of Creek be content with Horseshoe thousands of "Missing Friends," supplement to a daily newspaper "Goods on Sale" of whole legions Printing House-square. of upper-world merchants, the William Kelly, Life in Victoria,

of Partnership" brought such myriads of advertisements to the foremost journal, that six of its capacious pages were unable to contain them, causing the in the colony, in the shape of a

along the dusty track through long for the romance of IO,OOO the "Houses and Lands to Let or always been the same with me;

## LAD FROM BRUNSWICK his possibilities, we, his parents, "NEWSBOY OF YEAR"

Fourteen-year-old Bob Urguhart. of West Brunswick, has been chosen by the secretary of Edith Onians the Newsboys' Society (Miss Edith Onians) as "Newsboy RE CITY MANACEMENT... of the Year — 1947". "It is the most wonderful thing that has happened to me," he said, when told of his good fortune." His prize is a free visit to Tasmania, sponsored annually by The Herald. He has been a newsboy for two and a half years. At his "pitch" near the King's Theatre in Russell Street, he has made a reputation with his happy grin and smartness in juggling papers and pennies. His ambition is to be an architect. At present he attends South Melbourne Technical School and the money he earns as a newsboy goes towards extra books for study and replacements for clothes worn out by energetic schoolboy life.

1948, The Herald 20 January.

They've done a University course in Human Nature and the rest is just post-graduate work.

1946, The Herald 3 August.

# CHILD KNITS SCARF FOR NEWSBOY

Betty Pickering, of Ardmillan Road, Moonee Ponds, sent along a scarf with the message, "Will you please give it to s little newsboy to keep him warm? I am nine years of age. This is the first knitting I have ever done. so I hope he will not notice some mistake at the start."

1931, The Herald, 15 August

his guardians, his Government, are apt to be at least as much to blame as he.

Newsvendors & traders greatly hinder traffic. Compared with the traders, however, newsvendors exceed the limit of patience. Standing in the middle of the street, dodging here and there, often rude, aggressive and offensive, is it not now time they were licensed (as in Sydney), compelled to only occupy certain out-of-the-way spots, & absolutely forbidden to shout. Their shouting is outrageous. There is no necessity for such shouting, which is mainly indulged in to please the offender's love of sound of his own voice. Newsvending without a licence or infringing these rules should be heavily penalised. Females and children under 15 it would be desirable not to have so trading on streets. 1015. Arthur G. Vial to Town Clerk of Melbourne

## NOISE & BARBARISM

Carlyle says that NOISE is one of the chief characteristics of efforts towards its elimination the civilised world seems to recognise the axiomatic nature of his assertion.

objection to a boy shouting his Mayor of Melbourne "Herald" along a deserted street, it is necessary in order to attract. These newspaper vendors in 1916, City By-Laws Officer to the attention of people who are themselves cause a certain the Town Clerk in their houses, & it can annov amount of obstruction to the no one but in our crowded footpaths, but the fact of TRICKS TO I believe sincerely that no boy — thoroughfares, where the boys having an advertisement, which SELL PAPERS I had almost written no one — is can mingle with the populace usually consists of a piece of Technically a young news irreclaimable. Every voungster & bring their wares under the cardboard about 20 inches by vendor was fined £1 vesterday with a mind born into Australia notice of everyone, it is obvious 18 inches, suspended from their for making a violent outcry is a potential source of wealth that not a single extra sale can shoulder by a cord, & in many in Swanston street, and

... it is obvious that not a single extra sale can be effected by all this hideous howling, which is therefore as utterly useless as it is irritating.

IOOI, Disgruntled citizen to the Mayor of Melbourne



"Latest Intelligence" - Melbourne Punch, Vol. 1. 1856. BARBARISM, & by the gradual Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne

howling, which is therefore as hands, or placed close handy utterly useless as it is irritating.

Of course there can be no IQCI, Disgruntled citizen to the

and happiness. If he fails to fulfil be effected by all this hideous instances another held in their causing a disturbance, but the

against a verandah post, or up against the wall of a building, tends to aggravate the nuisance considerably.

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consideration the fact that the long suffering stupid public. boy was also selling newspapers IOI2. A Citizen to under false pretences. The the Lord Mayor offence is a very objectionable and gratuitous one ... This is not Every generation of the streets pure mischief, or chicanery it is squinter Cock-eye. equally deserving of punishment; Fdith Onians and all newspaper proprietors are anxious to see the practice suppressed.

1914, The Herald, 20 February

I have to take this liberty of writing to you ... that is so many small boys running about the streets selling newspapers, at all hours of the night, more so now the factory Act is enforced as they are not allowed to work as soon as school is over, they start & sell papers, not so much that they are compelled to. for a great many of them are tradesmens sons, & have good comfortable homes, but just merely for pocket money. It is much to the injury of poor old WHAT IS A BOY? people & cripples who cannot Boys come in assorted sizes. struggle to get a living.

1888. Charles Evans to the Town Clerk of Melbourne.

# RE NEWSBOYS ON STREETS

These boys parade the streets A boy has the appetite of a abolish them would inflict no five thumbs on each hand. calling. They earn very little, Dad, trains and fire engines. and what they do earn is at the Nobody else can cram into one creature. You can lock him

magistrate admittedly took into convenience and expense of the

the first time that it has occurred, has a boy nicknamed Curley, and whether it arises from a just as it has at least one Ginge, disorganised sense of humor, or a white-haired Snowy and a

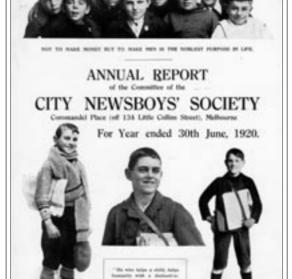
THREE MELBOURNE NEWSBOYS, GIQ2OS, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation ecords, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria



work, and have a very hard weights and colours. They are found everywhere, on top of, underneath, inside of, climbing on, swinging on, running around or jumping to. Mothers love them, older sisters and brothers tolerate them, and Heaven protects them.

in filthy clothes, stand in the horse, the digestion of a sword middle of the paths, hinder swallower, the energy of a one's progress and are for ever pocket-size atomic bomb, the emitting loud cries ... Mainly, curiosity of a cat, the lungs of a evesores, but they are offensive enthusiasm of a fire-cracker, and to our hearing particularly. To when he makes something he has

trouble on anyone. For their He likes ice-cream, knives, eaten apple, three feet of string, you can't lock him out of your own part, it is silly to say they Christmas, comics, the boy across two lumps of chewing gum, two heart. are earning their living at this the street, water, large animals, pennies, etc, etc.



CITY NEWSBOYS' SOCIETY, ANNUAL REPORT 1920, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria



their hideous shouting is dictator, the shyness of a violet, The street as an evil influence on juvenile morals, depicted in a publicity brochure objectionable. They are not only the audacity of a steel trap, the FOR THE NEWSBOYS' SOCIETY, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria

pocket a rusty knife, a half- out of your workshop but

1050, in Melbourne City A boy is indeed a magical Newsboys' Annual Report



Edith Onione the "NEWSPOVS' EDIEND The Bulletin 13 March 1925. University of Melbourne

Thousands of men and women in Melbourne ... owe their escape from evil conditions of their youth to the loving and eager care of Edith Onians ... But she was not concerned with the political and economic problems which lay behind the desperate poverty and pressures them skilled employment. To which forced children to earn a few shillings in the hazardous business of selling the news on from the newsboys' standpoint, their need to earn money, and was content to defend them and their interests with selfless single-mindedness. I began to realise that poverty, and the circumstances which led to it, demanded more drastic treatment than Edie's loving kindness and temporary aid could cope with.

1963, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Child of the Hurricane, Sydney; Angas & Robertson

the approved stamp of their are newspapers. The townsman who wraps his wares in that the eternal scheme of things. class — smart, chaffy, and free deems them equally essential to protective covering. of the trammels of orthography his well-being Nearly everybody. The newsboy is selling news, it but in earthquakes, war and and pronunciation. They call can read, and nearly everybody is news and not paper that his revolutions, in fires, famines and the "Argus," the "August," has leisure to do so Again, the customers want, and, in the end, pestilences, in assassinations.

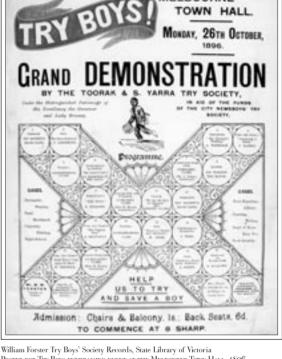
and every thing else but its proper and heathen name. ... at each populous point of the city, rival news-boys make both day and night hideous with their constant and competitive vellings of "Melbourne Argis," "Melbourne Erald." "Melbourne Age." "Melbourne Evening Mail." "Melbourne Punch," "Melbourne NoteBook." "Melbourne Examiner." "Melbourne Leader." Melbourne every thing else which could possibly be twisted into the name of a newspaper.

1859, Frank Fowler, Southern lights and shadows

## **OBJECTS OF THE CITY** NEWSBOYS' SOCIETY

To Provide a Club for ALL BOYS who want help. To safeguard boys living in criminal surroundings. and to discourage them from vicious habits and associates. To encourage the good in boys, and to guide them to higher ideals. To teach boys trades, and to obtain establish a fund through which boys may but clothing and repay To provide clean, healthy games, where boys may spend their greater. spare time and always find a R.E.N. Twopeny, Town life friend And in every way to HELP in Australia, 1883 A BOY HELP HIMSELF.

This is essentially the land of newspapers. The colonist is by nature an inquisitive animal. who likes to know what is going on around him. The young colonial has inherited this A superficial observer may say and the news alone, that matters. proclivity. Excepting the Bible, that he is selling a paper. He is He who thinks of a newsboy as Shakespeare, and Macaulay's doing nothing of the kind. He is merely a vendor of paper fails to 'Essays,' the only literature no more selling papers than any recognise both the dignity of the The Victoria newsboys are of within the bushman's reach other tradesman is selling paper boy's office and his vital niche in the "orgies," the "Hardjest," proportion of the population they think so little of the paper abdications and coronations,



Poster for Try Boys fundraising event at the Melbourne Town Hall, 1896.

who can afford to purchase and that they toss it aside as soon as in weekly instalments. To give subscribe to newspapers is ten they have read the news that it city streets. She saw everything boys good hot nourishing meals, times as large as in England; contains. hence the number of sheets The actual paper dispensed by and an attractive resting-place issued is comparatively much the newsboy counts for less than

# A BOUOUET FOR. THE NEWSBOY

big way. He deals in immensities. counts for nothing, it is the news,

the paper sold by a bookseller. The man who buys a book buys it for the sake of its contents; but, having absorbed those contents, he likes to keep the book on his shelves partly for consultation and partly for display. But the The newsboy is in business in a paper sold by the newsboy

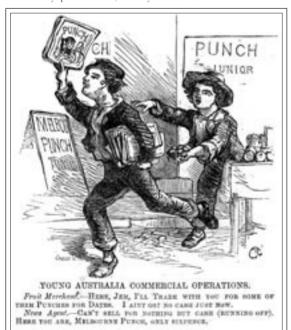
A newsboy deals not in paper,

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"Phenomenon of an Extraordinary Age" – *Melbourne Punch, Vol. 1, 1856.* Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne



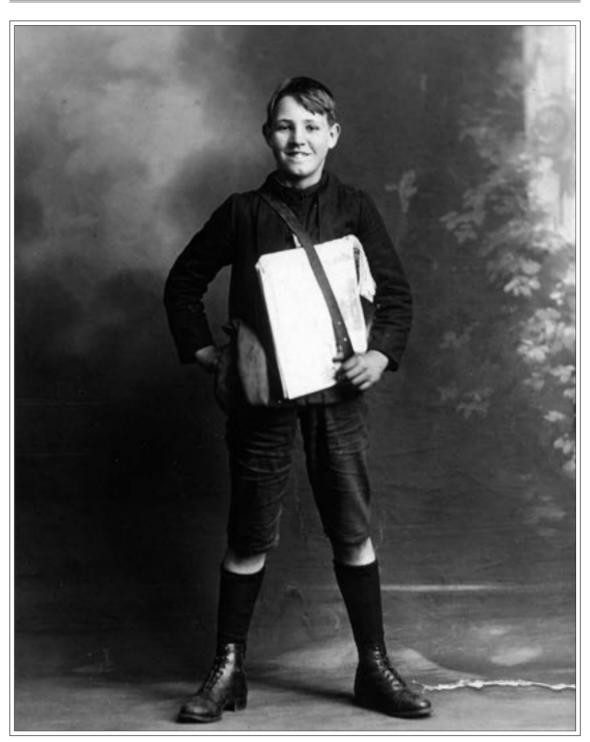
"Young Australia Commercial Operations" – Melbourne Punch, Vol.1. 1856. Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne



"Макіng Light of Him" – Melbourne Punch, 5 May 1859, Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne



"A Dead Bargain" – Melbourne Punch, 18 September 1856. Baillieu Library Special Collections, University of Melbourne



A PINT-SIZED URBAN ANTI-HERO, c.1920s, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria

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Studio shot of four city newsboys, atg2Cs, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria

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A newsboy on part of the Block in Collins Street, t880. (Artist: S.T. Gill). La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria



Newsboys at Exacy Dress party, c1f92Cs, Melbourne Newsboys' Club Foundation Records, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria



Mark Strizic, At Flinders Street Railway Station-4, 1954 Mark Strizic photographs courtesy of Gallery ICI



Mark Strizic, Newsboy, 1954



Mark Strizic, At Flinders Street Station-5, 1956