

Games we played

In my time the Collingwood streets teemed with children playing all sorts of games. These days the traffic is too frequent, fast and deadly to make the street a playground.

For the girls it was skipping and hoppy, well that was what we called it, I suppose it was our version of the English hopscotch, where you would chalk a series of squares on the footpath, usually number them and then you had to hop from one to the other without standing on a line or overbalancing. All this was done to several chants like 'One two buckle my shoe; three four knock at the door; five six pick up sticks' and so on. It could be an art form and the girls were usually far better than the boys.

Skipping, I think, was the favourite and the girls would chant as they twisted the rope either by themselves or with a girl at each end of the rope twirling it as others jumped in. It could get really crowded depending on the length of rope, and you were out if you tripped on the rope. The last one out was the winner.

Nowadays there are plastic skipping 'ropes' but back then we prized our piece of rope and took great care of it.

For the boys cricket and football were the most popular, but of course we had to make do with home-made equipment. We didn't have real footballs, far too expensive, and the plastic ball of today had not been invented,

We would fold together pages of a newspaper, usually The Sun, which was about the same size as today's Herald Sun. We would fold them very tight and tie them with string in the middle.

Of course, they didn't bounce but we could punt them and in end to end games fly for marks. Some skilful players could even 'dropkick' them. Heard of that kick?

Our cricket bats were usually discarded by the local factory teams and were usually too big for us and we used tennis balls which really fizzed through if you rolled them in the water in the gutter.

The wicket was a rubbish bin or a fruit box which we scrounged from the local greengrocer. Naturally we would pick sides and the game was played in deadly earnest.

These days if you tried to play on the street, especially on the road, you could be cleaned up by cars; even in those days we had to keep moving the wicket. Once, trying to make a second run, I was collected by a passing cyclist. He was more upset than I was hurt. Mind you the opposition said I was run out and had to give up the bat.