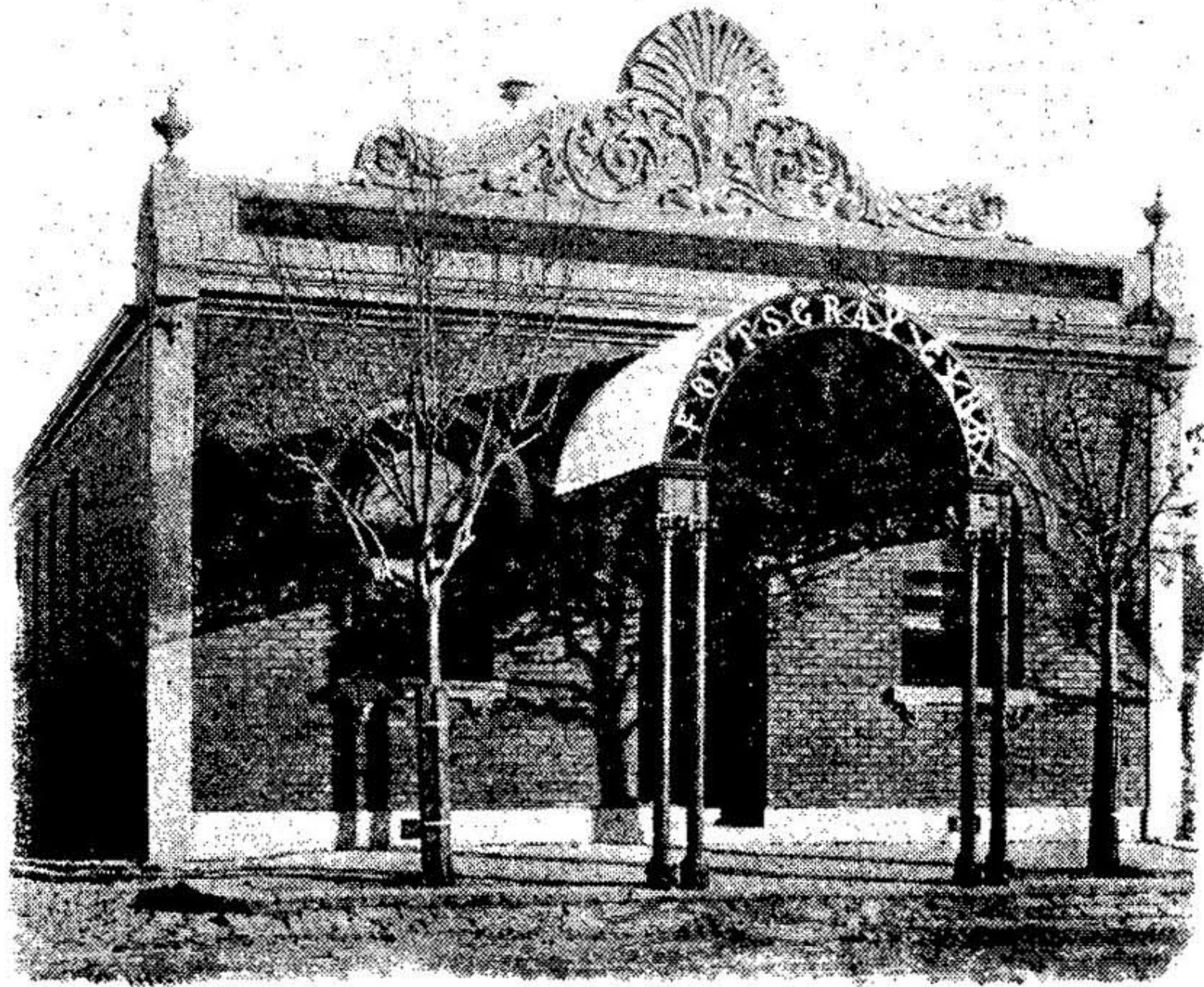


The Footscray Club.

ONE evening towards the end of 1894, in the halcyon days of cycling in Australia, Mr. T. K. Irving called a meeting of those interested in the pastime for the purpose of forming a club.

Some 20 enthusiasts met, and appointed Mr. Irving as first secretary and Dr. C. L. M'Carthy as



Alma] View of the Exterior.

first chairman of the new-born club, which was christened "The Footscray Cycling Club."

A vigorous committee was elected, and in due time a programme of sports and runs was drawn up, and from the very start the events proved of such an attractive nature that every cyclist in the district was induced to throw his lot in with the club.

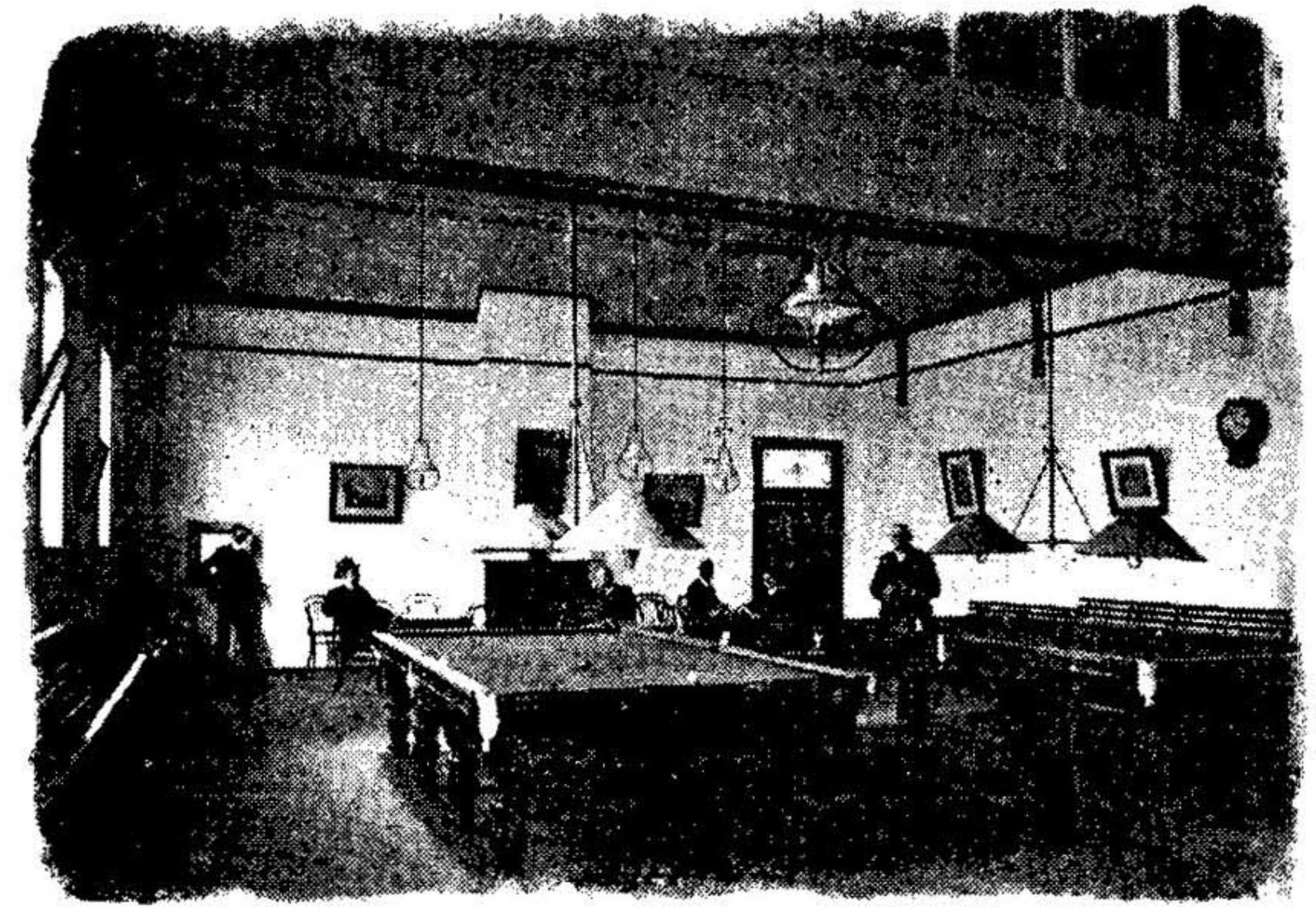
The committee's next move was to secure rooms wherein to hold its business meetings, which were now getting, week by week, more numerous attended, and a shop in Nicholson-street was secured on lease. Here, for ten years, the club was housed, where it developed side by side with its sporting obligations those social qualities that to-day give it civic pre-eminence.

At this period of its history weekly and subsequently bi-weekly runs were inaugurated, and oftentimes the streets of the city would be enlivened on a Saturday or holiday afternoon by long strings of cyclists in procession pedalling to the toot of the captain's bugle. Lady cyclists were invited to participate in these runs and pageants, and subsequently were admitted as members.

Early in the club's career a series of sports meetings, probably the best of their kind ever seen in the city, were held, the prizes inducing the most prominent riders of the metropolis to compete. The membership roll now exceeded 200, and the club was one of the strongest units in the then powerful League of Victorian Wheelmen. It sent sturdy representatives each year to compete, not only in the Austral Wheel Race—the classic event of the cycling world—but also in all the champion road races; and to facilitate the training of its members it spent over £100 in constructing a banked track on the western reserve.

In the meantime, the purely social side of the club was developing by leaps and bounds. Evening entertainments—gay, festive and erudite—were held in lavish profusion, so that many who never got astride a bicycle in their lives eagerly sought admission, attracted by the social advantages which such membership conferred.

Billiards, bagatelle and various parlour games were subsequently added, and so the club became indelibly hall marked as the first permanent social organisation of the city.



Alma] Interior of the Club's Premises.

As the years rolled by, however, and as cycling as a sport began to wane, there were less and less outdoor inducements offered to members to enjoy themselves, whilst, on the other hand, there grew an ever-increasing demand for ampler indoor club life; and so, in 1904, the committee was confronted with the problem of having to find larger premises. As a consequence, negotiations were entered into with Mr. A. Rey, and in July of that year the club found itself installed in their new premises, which consisted of a billiard-room 31 x 35, committee and other rooms. Two new full-sized billiard tables were purchased and many other accessories of a modern club introduced.

It was thought by the committee when they took possession of these rooms that the club's requirements would be satisfied for at least a decade to come. But, with the rapid growth of the city, members' requirements grew apace, and, at the end of 1908, the committee saw itself again confronted with the need for ampler accommodation. It lost no time in securing a block of land in Paisley-street, near Nicholson-street, and, at the beginning of 1909—Jubilee year—was in a position to instruct its architect, Mr. Ernest Williams, to submit plans and specifications for an up-to-date club premises. Mr. Williams, as an old club man, knew just the requirements of the committee, and on 27th February Mr. Lowe, the successful tenderer, started operations in conformity with the plans chosen. On the 26th May the club took possession and celebrated the official opening in the form of a complimentary concert to the president, Dr. M'Carthy.

The building, which is of brick, has an ornate front and an ornamental arched verandah. It is 80 ft. deep by 33 ft. wide, and consists of large reading and committee rooms, a billiard-room 41 x 31, a temperance bar and lounge rooms, storerooms and out offices. It is built to carry two or more stories, so that the committee have no misgivings as to the future accommodation of its members. Mr. Wm. Smith, another member of the club, acted as clerk of works.

With the decline of cycling, lady membership ceased, and of late the committee has been impressed with the incongruity of the club's title. At a recent general meeting of members, therefore, it was resolved to alter the constitution of the institution, with the result that the club is now known as the Footscray Club. It is a purely social club, and is to be conducted on the lines of the standard social clubs the world over. It is non-political and is essentially democratic, as may be gleaned from the modest annual subscriptions and the nominal charges for the club's internal privileges.