

## Biography



### John 'Bunny' Whiting

John 'Bunny' Whiting was a gangster, boxer, rabbitoh, opportunist, sly grog seller and pieman. He was known as “the pieman slogger” because even though he was billed to be boxing in the ring, he would setup and sell pies out the front before the game then duck in and fight and then afterwards be selling more pies as people left.

He scored the nickname “Bunny” as he had been a rabbitoh, selling rabbits as a hawker around Fitzroy and Melbourne.

Like a lot of these gang members of the twenties, he had grown up in a large, poor, family in a tough neighbourhood in the 1890s. Both parents drank, the kids ran around the neighbourhood uncontrolled. His sister, Jessie, who is buried nearby, was made a ward of the state at 14 after being found to be working as a prostitute. His older brother, Ted, was a well-known and successful criminal and gang leader with a lot of sly grog shops, brothels and quite a few coppers under his control. Ted and Bunny, both boxers and criminals, ran with the Fitzroy gang and were involved in the ‘Fitzroy Vendetta’, a gang war with Squizy Taylor’s gang.

Bunny was never a great boxer but he was known for the number of fights he’d had – over 600. AT one of his later fights, the Sporting Globe called him an “evergreen veteran” and said that he “does not seem to have aged. His chin looks as strong as ever:... still a gleam in his brown eye”.

He continued selling pies and saveloys before and after the games. In summer he sold ice cream and was even seen selling fruit boxes to the crowd who were trying to see the Duke and Duchess of York (King George and the Queen mum) when they were in town to open Parliament in 1927, “calling out “Grandstand for a bob!”. Apparently he sold them all.

According to police reports he was 5ft 3½ with a sallow complexion. In 1919 he was done for selling sly grog and served 6 months in gaol.

In 1922, Bunny’s bride, May, after two years of marriage sued Bunny for maintenance after he had beaten her and gone to live with another woman. May was heavily pregnant at court and claimed that “my husband has a pie cart and coffee stall and employs men”. She claimed he was making 9 or 10 pound a week. The newspaper report described how the judge interrogated May about accusations that she had attacked Bunny with scissors, was “fooling around with boys” and “being kissed by boys” (the newspaper report wrote this in capitals!) She was asked whether she had ever been kissed by other boys, whether she drank and had she gone into a hotel by herself. Bunny said he was living with his mum, had very little money and had given her what he could afford. He ended up having to pay her 20 shillings per week.



Remembering that his older brother had some of the local police force on his side, it is very likely that other crimes that Bunny might have been involved in went unpunished. There was one crime, though, that was all over the papers...

In 1923 Bunny attacked a man with an oyster knife, stabbing him in the head SEVEN TIMES and putting him in a serious condition in hospital. The papers called it a domestic dispute but the fact that the victim recovered and took off with Bunny's wife as soon as he was able. They were both called for in court as witnesses but didn't show.

Bunny was 80 when he died. This gravestone looks more modern than the 1964 death date so I can only assume that family added it later.

