

# CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL  
AND DISTRICT  
Camberwell Historical Society



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**Principal Patron:** Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey, AC  
**Patron:** Her Worship the Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Coral Ross

## GLEN IRIS WESLYAN CHAPEL

### Neville Lee, OAM

Neville Lee, OAM was a Councillor of the City of Camberwell from 1956 to 1964. He served as Mayor 1961-1962. He was a foundation member of the City of Camberwell Historical Society.

In 1864 the Hon Alexander Fraser, later Minister of Public Works, and a strong supporter for the founding of Wesley College,<sup>1</sup> chaired a public meeting in a tent on the Glen Iris Reserve<sup>2</sup> to discuss building a local church. Glen Iris was nothing more than a scattered collection of small farms but the meeting enthusiastically agreed to accept the offer of the mortgagor to sell the 1857 Independent church building at Hartwell<sup>3</sup> for fifteen pounds.

The Wesleyan minister who was scheduled to address the meeting failed to appear. It was learnt later that he had lost his way trying to cross the Gardiners Creek flood plain. However, using the Wesleyan Church as the nominee, they applied to the government for a grant of land from the Glen Iris Reserve to build a Wesleyan Chapel.

On receiving a grant of one acre from the Reserve,<sup>4</sup> funds to build the Chapel were guaranteed by Tom Robinson,<sup>5</sup> market gardener, who had bought the *Glen Iris* farm, and Bill Bainbridge<sup>6</sup> who owned a bacon curing business on the corner of High Street and Glen Iris Road. Noted church architects, Crouch and Wilson, produced plans for an unpretentious, early English rudimentary Gothic church, in keeping with John Wesley's edict that churches should be 'plain and decent'. Anything grand was considered popish. The bricks were carted from the ill fated Hartwell Independent Church and the first services were held in the Chapel on 7 May 1865.<sup>7</sup>

The early records demonstrate a healthy disdain for religious affiliations. The collection plate was being filled by Wesleyans, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Tea and scones were the only offerings at the tea parties but no one seemed to object.



Weslyan Chapel, Glen Iris. 1922. Photo J Hemingway  
From [www://: http://history.glenirisuniting.org.au/preface.html](http://history.glenirisuniting.org.au/preface.html)

Satisfying their need for a religious centre was not the only matter of concern for those early settlers, they were also troubled by the lack of a school. The spanking new Chapel promised an ideal haven; the trustees for the church agreed, and the Glen Iris Rural School opened for business also in 1865.

By 1872 enrolments at the school had expanded to a point where the government agreed to fund a 'State' School. A further two acres was set aside from the Reserve and bricks were recovered from the Mechanics' Institute which had been partly built a little further north along Glen Iris Road. These bricks still can be identified in the gable section of the school which carries its name.

Attending church on a Sunday morning was very much a middle class obligation. But also it must have been a welcome distraction from the grind of milking the cows, harvesting the trees from the Ashburton for-

## CONTENTS

Meetings for 2014	Page 6
History is Bunk	3
New Heritage Listing	4
Centenary of City	5
Principal Patron	5
Retirement from Committee	5
BHSA	5
Last meeting	6



rest and earning a living. So much so that by 1876 the Chapel could not accommodate all the worshippers. It was decided to add a fourth bay to the building.

This addition was carried out so sympathetically to the architect's original classically simple design that until recently it was only from the slight change in the colour of the slates in the roof that it could be detected

By 1896 the Anglicans were anxious to celebrate their communion in a more 'catholic' manner and began holding separate services at the school. The loss of their patronage almost resulted in the closure of the Chapel. However community wisdom prevailed and the Anglicans returned to the fold, renting the chapel for 2/6d. per week, and holding their services during the morning while the nonconformists met in the afternoon.

One of those more fashionable events dear to the ladies' hearts occurred on the afternoon of 30 July 1902 when, despite the persistent drizzle, the Chapel was packed to witness Amy Kerferd exchange marriage vows with Fred McWhinney.<sup>8</sup> The bride's father was the Hon. George Kerferd<sup>9</sup> a Supreme Court Judge and former Premier of Victoria. His name is perpetuated in Kerferd Road. George Kerferd and another influential resident and former Premier, Hon James Munro (Munro Ave, Ashburton) together with Hon Alex Fraser were mainly responsible for the grant of land and funds to establish both the Chapel and the School.

In 1908 the Anglicans decided to go their own way, named their parish St James, and built a small wooden church in High Street near the railway line.

Due to a lack of understanding of building techniques the Chapel began to suffer from rising damp. By 1922 the damp was so destructive that all the internal wooden fittings had to be replaced and the exterior treated with a cement stucco. To the casual observer the Chapel disguised its heritage and presented the appearance of being a 1920-1930's building.

Until 1920, Glen Iris was still a small farming community. But the open paddocks now attracted the attention of the returning WWI veterans. As the population boomed, so did church attendances. The Methodists (they had changed their name from Wesleyans in 1902) envied the Presbyterians and the Baptists their new buildings and in 1932 added a much larger church to their site. Despite it now being redundant, the Methodists respected the history of the Chapel and allowed it to stand as a tangible reminder of the community's Christian heritage. From time to time the Glen Iris Primary School rented it to cope with student overflow.

A new ingredient was introduced in 1977 with the

creation of the Uniting Church. This led to the vacating of the Glen Iris Road site in favour of the more modern and larger complex in High Street on the corner of Allison Ave, now a centre for the Buddhist community.

Sporadic income was derived from both the former church and the chapel however very little use was made of it by the Uniting Church. In 1999 the church adopted a plan to use the \$1.8m site for a modern religious centre. A clear site was preferred for the development although some concern was expressed at the prospect of demolishing the little old Chapel.

The architects prepared documentation for the development which was submitted to Boroondara Council in December 1999, together with an application for a planning permit.

However, early in 1999 the Council Officers had been dismayed to discover that during 1986-1990 there had been only 'a very preliminary assessment' which 'gave the site ... no heritage protection' (20/1/99). After investigation and report by a heritage architect, together with a detailed costing of restoration by a construction cost consultant, the Officers decided to recommend to Council that a heritage overlay be placed on the Glen Iris Road site (6 September 2000).

In May 1999 the National Trust wrote to the Council 'opposing any proposal to demolish the building'<sup>10</sup> and added, 'Recently another early Wesleyan church designed by Crouch and Wilson in Flemington was demolished and this situation must not be repeated.'

In October 2000 Heritage Victoria declined to add the Chapel to the Victorian Heritage Register and expressed their view that the property was not "of significance to the State of Victoria" but that it was 'significant to the City of Boroondara and the Glen Iris locality'. They unsuccessfully encouraged the Council to add it to the Boroondara register.

In November 2000 the Councillors considered their officer's recommendation but after intensive lobbying by the Church, rejected them in favour of issuing a planning permit<sup>11</sup> subject to certain conditions mainly relating to parking.

In December 2000 an application was lodged with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for a review of the Council decision. VCAT refused to hear the Application for Review on technical grounds.

Others had, meanwhile, taken action to nominate the building for local heritage protection and this time Heritage Victoria didn't hesitate. On 18th April 2001 they placed an order on the site. By July, the Council had changed its mind and agreed with Heritage Victo-



ria's proposal to protect the church.

To fund the project, the church disposed of a number of its local properties. This involved the closure of two pre-school centres. To partially allay community outrage the original plans for the site were revised to include a kindergarten. Other facilities, which could be made available from time to time to the school, were included in the plans. The church also had an agreement to protect the building and a 120-year old Morton Bay Fig tree until preservation issues had been resolved; all other buildings on the site together with the tree were demolished. Rev. Brian Carey, the project manager for the site said, 'the tree had been removed by accident.'<sup>12</sup>



The Chapel 2002. Neville Lee photo

Under a compromise agreement the church was permitted to demolish the rear two of the four sections to the chapel building retaining, with alterations, the original portico entrance. The chapel was incorporated into the new buildings comprising a worship centre,

kindergarten and school facilities. Glen Iris Wesleyan, Glen Iris Methodist, Summerhill Road Methodist, Hartwell Presbyterian, Hartwell Uniting, Glen Iris Presbyterian, Glen Iris Uniting and Glen Iris-Hartwell Uniting churches combined to form the Glen Iris Hartwell Uniting Church which was officially opened in April 2007.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the original plan has been completed although the church still lacks sufficient finance to build the worship centre.

#### Endnotes

1 ADB Vol 4, p214

2 The meeting was held on Monday, 10 October. *South Bourke Standard*, Friday, 14 October 1864, p2

3 The location has not been properly established with most sources stating Hartwell while others say near the corner of Rosedale Road.

4 Temporarily reserved 12 Dec 1864. Confirmed in *Victoria Government Gazette*, 6 January 1865, p26.

5 Thomas Robinson was a member of the Boroondara Road Board and Shire of Boroondara 1861-1874 and 1875-1878. Described as a 'gardener' in the Church history 'Glen Iris A Social History' <http://history.glenirisuniting.org.au/>. Allan described him as a surveyor. Allan, J Alex, *The History of Camberwell (Victoria) 1841-1950*, unpublished MS, 1954.

6 The Church history incorrectly records his name as Thomas.

7 'Glen Iris A Social History'

8 *The Argus*, Saturday, 16 August 1902. Amy Elizabeth Kerferd, born at Kew 1869, was seventh of nine children born to George Briscoe Kerferd and Ann Martindale. Frederick Alexander McWhinney, born at Richmond in 1871 was the second of eight children born to Thomas Arthur McWhinney and Catherine Ann (Kate) Evans.

9 George Briscoe Kerferd had died in 1889.

10 The Trust had classified the church building on 18 August 1988.

11 'Council changes sides on church', *Progress Leader* 3 July 2001

12 'Bulldozers move in', *Progress Leader*, 30 July 2001.

13 The Glen Iris Hartwell Uniting Church', *Burwood Bulletin*, June-August 2007.

## IS HISTORY BUNK?

### WHAT HENRY FORD REALLY SAID

Some sayings develop a life their own. For example: *Money is the root of all evil; all that glitters is not gold; music hath charms to soothe the savage beast*. The correct quotes are: *The love of money is the root of all evil* (1 Timothy 28 6:10); *All that glisters is not gold* (The Merchant of Venice Act II - Scene VII); *Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast* (William Congreve 'The Mourning Bride'). So it is not surprising that automobile manufacturer Henry Ford is reported as saying that *History is bunk*.

Did he really say this? Well, yes and no! He commented in a number of ways about history being bunk but what he said in 'American Legion Magazine' in 1932 was,

*When I went to our American history books to learn how our forefathers harrowed the land, I discovered that the historians knew nothing about harrows. Yet our country has depended more on harrows than on guns or speeches. I thought that a history which excluded harrows, and all the rest of daily life, was bunk. And I think so yet.*

This seems to show that Henry Ford supported a rounded telling of history.

Camberwell had no wars that we know of, and probably no major speeches (unless we can count Bob Menzies' election campaign launch speeches in the Canterbury Memorial Hall as major). But there must be many stories about farmers, graziers and market gardeners. We would be pleased to publish them in *Camberwell History*. [Ed]



## NEW HERITAGE LISTING IN CAMBERWELL

CAMBERWELL TRAM SUBSTATION  
30 STATION STREET CAMBERWELL Victorian  
Heritage Register (VHR) Number H2324

Heritage Victoria has advised that seven tram substations, Ascot Vale, Carlton, Camberwell, South Yarra, Brunswick, Elsternwick and Maribyrnong, were included in the Victorian Heritage Register in December.

The Statement of Significance for Camberwell is:

### **What is significant?**

*The Camberwell Tram Substation, constructed by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) in 1925 as part of the works required for the electrification and expansion of Melbourne's tram system.*

### **History Summary**

*The M&MTB was formed in 1919 to electrify, integrate and extend Melbourne's existing cable and electric tram routes. Following the formation of the State Electricity Commission (SEC) in 1920 electricity to power the electric tram lines was taken from the state grid system at substations. These converted the SEC's alternating current (AC) to direct current (DC) at a lower voltage which was then fed through overhead wires to operate the trams. Between 1925 and 1940 the M&MTB progressively electrified the old steam-powered cable tram routes, built new depots and substations, extended the existing tram lines and added new routes. The design of the Camberwell substation is attributed to Alan G Monsborough, the M&MTB's architect, who was responsible for the design of all tramway buildings during the formative years of the electric tramway system. It was built to house the equipment to power the tram lines through Camberwell to Burwood. The building continues in use as a substation.*

### **Description Summary**

*The Camberwell Tram Substation is a symmetrical Inter-war Stripped Classical style building of brick with a gabled corrugated iron roof. It has a rendered parapet with 'MMTB' inscribed above the front entrance, and rendered dressings around the openings. Along the north side there is a lower brick skillion in a similar style but without openings. The substation has a large central front entrance for the movement of electrical plant, tall steel-framed windows and clere-story lighting on the north side. The original electrical equipment has been replaced, but the building retains its original roller door on the front entrance and the overhead pulley once used to move heavy equipment within the building.*

*This site is part of the traditional land of the Kulin*



*Nation.*

### **How is it significant?**

*The Camberwell Tram Substation is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria and satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:*

*Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history*

*Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects*

### **Why is it significant?**

*The Camberwell Tram Substation is significant at the State level for the following reasons:*

*The Camberwell Tram Substation is historically significant for its association with the development of Melbourne's transport systems in the early twentieth century, and with the role this played in the development of Melbourne and its suburbs. It is significant for its association with the development by the M&MTB of an integrated electric tramway system in the city and suburbs from the 1920s. The Camberwell substation is one of four 1920s substations which survive relatively intact, and these, individually and as a group, help to demonstrate the scale of the electric tram network developed by the M&MTB in Melbourne and its suburbs and the infrastructure required for this work. (Criterion A)*

*The Camberwell Tram Substation is architecturally significant as an example of the application of the Inter-war Stripped Classical style to a utilitarian industrial building and is a demonstration of the scale and quality of the works undertaken by the M&MTB. It demonstrates the form of the first substations constructed by the M&MTB in the 1920s as part of the electrification and expansion of Melbourne's tram system and reflects the aim of the M&MTB to emphasise its modernity and strength through the architecture of its buildings. (Criterion D)*

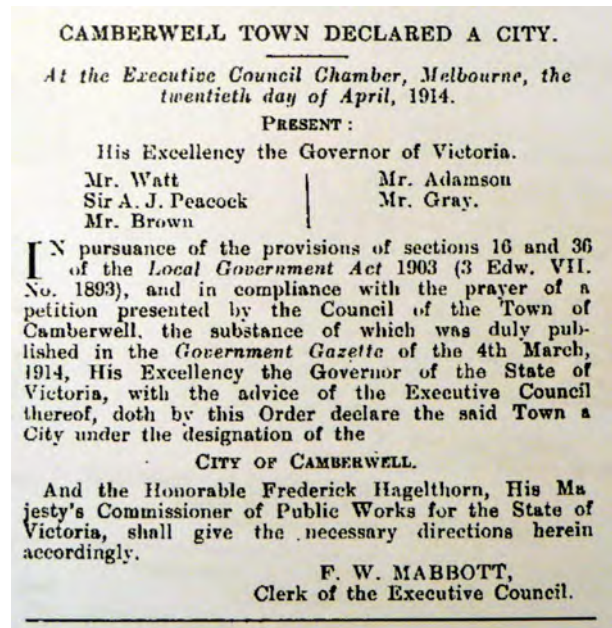
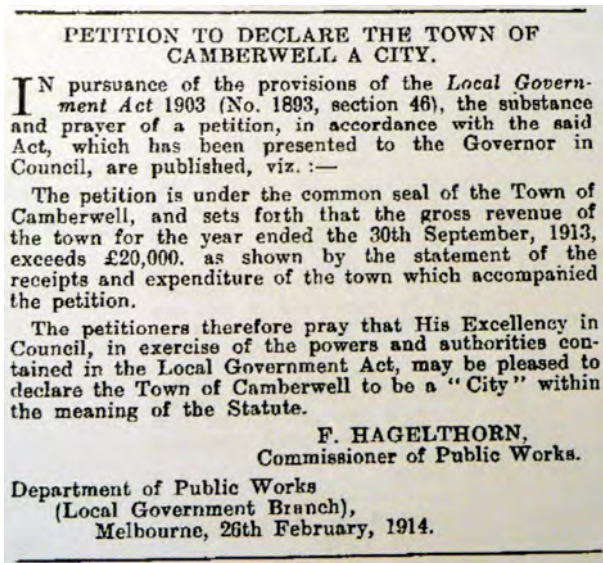
The Riversdale Road tramline opened in three sections in 1916: to Wattle Valley Road 16 October, Highfield Road 9 November, and Warrigal Road (the Boundary Road) on 22 December. [Ed]



## 100 YEARS AGO

20 April 1914

With the proclamation of the City, Henry Rooks, Mayor of the Town became the first Mayor of the City of Camberwell .



The Town of Camberwell was established on 15 May 1906. The Town's first Mayor was John B Maling.

*Victoria Government Gazette*, 3 Mar 1914 p1185, 2 and 9 Apr 1914 p1897

## PRINCIPAL PATRON

The Society's Principal Patron, distinguished Australian historian Professor Geoffrey Blainey, AC has been awarded the University of Melbourne's inaugural Tucker Medal, in recognition of his substantial contributions to the University, the Faculty of Arts and to public life

The award is named after Thomas George Tucker (1859-1946), a prolific and celebrated scholar and the foundation Dean of the University's Faculty of Arts. It is one of the University's top awards.

## RETIREMENT FROM COMMITTEE

With great regret we announce the resignation in February of Stephen Watson as Treasurer of the Society. Stephen became Treasurer following the Annual meeting in 2010 and has worked tirelessly for the good of the Society.

He undertook the setting-up of a comprehensive accounting system that has provided the Committee with accurate and timely financial information; he spent countless hours bringing the Society's rules into line with government legislation and regulations; he wrote operating policies, and, in 2013, he was involved in the Society's Jubilee Celebrations. Navigating through insurance issues was another major contribution as were the formulation of a number of successful grant applications to the Boroondara Council.

Stephen Watson will be sorely missed from the Committee of the Society.

Personal note from the CHS Archivist. Stephen set-up the Society's office and his assistance in moving plan chests and filing cabinets from a donor's premises was yet another example of how he was prepared to 'pitch-in' to get things done. He also chaired the Acquisitions Committee and brought practical sense to issues relating to new additions to the collection. His contribution to the Society cannot be overvalued. (TJH)

## BOROONDARA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES' ASSOCIATION

Former President Volkhart Wehner has been appointed as CHS's second representative on this committee. The President is the other member.



## MEETINGS FOR 2013

All meetings will be held on the fourth Tuesday of each month in the Meeting Room, Camberwell Library, 340 Camberwell Road, Camberwell at 8.00pm.

**9 March Excursion Aviation Museum Workshop, Lilydale.**

The Australian National Aviation Museum now hold 52 airframes in a growing collection. This tour will be of the workshop where a group of volunteers works on the restoration of historic aircraft.

**20 March Excursion Tour of Public Records Office**

PROV holds records of Victorian Government departments and authorities including the State's courts, local councils, schools, public hospitals and other public offices. The records date from the establishment of the Port Phillip District in the mid 1830s right through to today. This tour will show how these records are kept and accessed.

**22 April Dr Ross McMullin "Farewell, Dear People: Australia's Lost Generation of the Great War".** Ross McMullin is well known for the quality of his research and writing and the prize-winning book on which he bases this talk is no exception. He is also a captivating speaker. He will talk about ten young men of exceptional promise killed before their careers were able to blossom.

**27 April Excursion Visit to Bolobek Garden, Mt Macedon**

The Oswald Symes created Bolobek from 1911 and held the property into the late 60s when it was sold to Robert and Joan Law-Smith. Lady Law-Smith enhanced the garden and it has become a Heritage garden of great significance.

**21 May Excursion Visit to Stonnington History Centre - 1255 High Street Malvern**

The Stonnington History Centre is an archive dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of the City of Stonnington and its antecedents, the former Cities of Malvern and Prahran. It compares favourably with the PROV for its facilities and professionalism

**24 June Bruce Postle "50 years of history through photography"**

In 27 years as a photojournalist with *The Age* Bruce Postle has become one of Australia's most celebrated photojournalists. His talk coincides with an exhibition of his work at the Monash Gallery and the publication of a book.

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## LAST MEETING

**25 February** Valda Street was the secretary of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop for 16 years and gave us her recollections of working with him in a talk entitled 'The Sir Edward Dunlop that I knew'. We were highly entertained by her frank and humorous comments. 'Sir Weary', as some of his patients called him, was not entirely the warm and fuzzy old man most of us assumed him to be. He had a mind like a steel trap and very definite ideas on what he wanted. He liked to know everything and was a member of 43 organisations. Not altogether popular with his fellow surgeons he nevertheless had a loyal clientele of patients. He operated until he was 75 and practiced until he died at 86.

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### CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

ABN 79 935 200 741 Incorporation No A0041541Y

Affiliated with The Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Inc

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