

# CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL  
AND DISTRICT

Camberwell Historical Society



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**Principal Patron:** Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey, AC

**Patron:** His Worship the Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Jim Parke

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A special emphasis was placed this year on the commemoration of Gallipoli and WW1. In collaboration with the other historical societies in Boroondara, the RSL and with Council support this was accomplished very successfully. The book *Boroondara Remembers: Stories of World War 1* is available for purchase from the Council. I thank all those for the success at CHS and the enjoyable year we have had. Thank you especially to our committee and all those who gave their help throughout the year. Thank you also to the membership for your continuing support. I look forward to another good year in 2016 and wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

George Fernando

## NEW PATRON

It has been our practice to invite the Mayor of Boroondara during the term of his/her office to be the Patron of our Society. As such, we thank the incoming Mayor Cr Jim Parke for agreeing to be our patron. We also thank Cr Coral Ross for the help and support given to us by her during her two year term as Mayor and for being our patron during that time.

## HISTORY OF BROWNS JEWELLERS



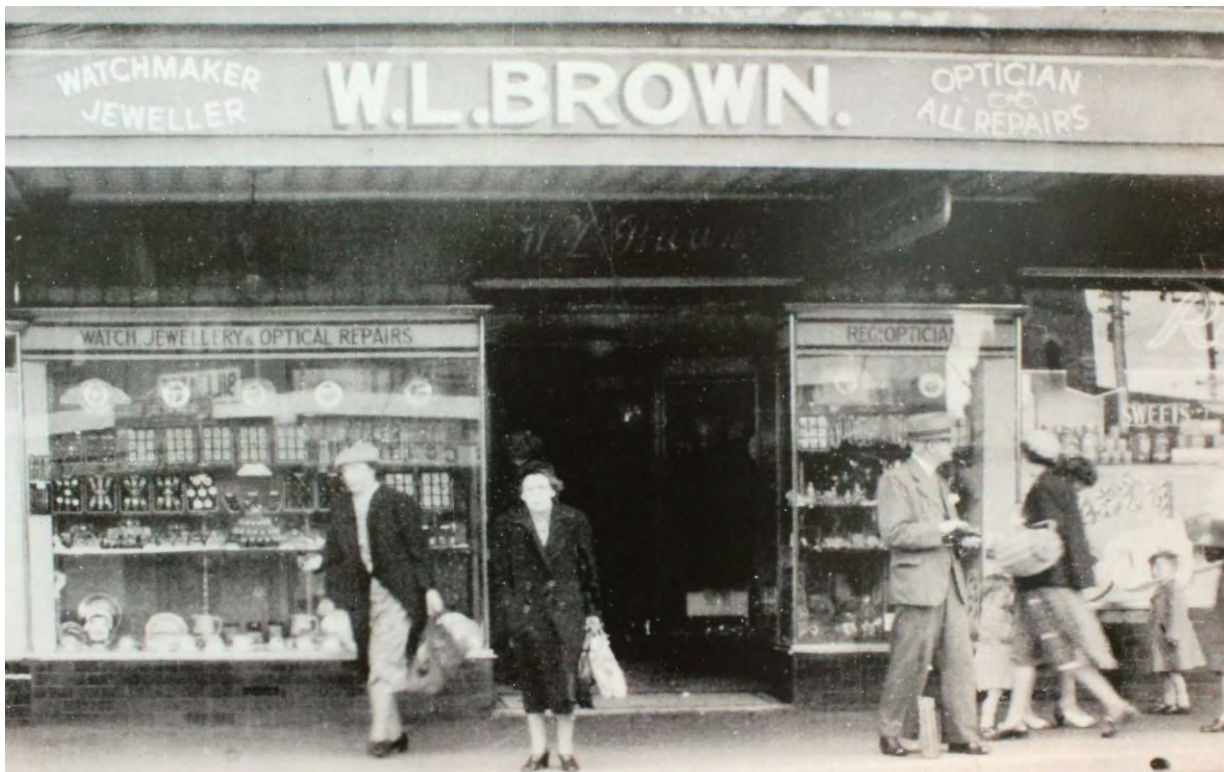
### William Leslie Brown

Returning in 1919 from active service at Gallipoli and the Western Front in France, Artillery Sergeant William Leslie Brown commenced business at W. L. Brown the Jewellers in a small shop opposite Camberwell Primary School in Camberwell Road. He had completed his jeweller's apprenticeship prior to his overseas service with the AIF and to get his business started, he was able to make most of his stock. His specialty was 9ct and 15ct brooches and watch and neck chains, for which he melted, rolled and fashioned each link.

Some years later he moved into his first shop in Burke Road. It was one of two shops in the foyer of Holland's Picture Theatre. The first films shown there were silent but in later times movies with sound were developed and shown. It is now the site of Priceline. The Rivoli Theatre opened nearby shortly after Holland's. Fletcher Jones was on that site for many years.



In 1927, W. L. Brown moved one door down from the Junction, next to the famous meeting place for young people, Six Ways Milk Bar. He established workshops upstairs and in the old hotel cellars. The business expanded to include watchmakers, clockmakers and of course jewellery makers and repairers, with a staff of fourteen. Business flourished up to 1939. Most of the staff was lost to the Army, as they were all qualified tradesmen.



During the Second World War, William Leslie's wife Myrtle helped him to survive very stringent stock restrictions and the small rations of goods from faithful suppliers. He was a highly respected member of his industry and of his clientele. W.L. Brown retired after fifty-one years in business.



### Leslie A Brown

Leslie Brown (Junior) was born in 1925. He was educated at Auburn South Primary School and Scotch College. In 1942 he joined the RAAF Air Training Corp, first at Camberwell Grammar School and then Frognall in Mont Albert Road. Before housing the RAAF, Frognall was home to three generations of the Laycock family.

Leslie joined the RAAF at 18 and eventually sailed on the USS Evangeline for the South West Pacific. He was stationed on Labuan Island, North Borneo after it was taken by the Allies and was there for the Japanese surrender. Labuan Island was an important staging place. Many POWs passed through the Island and Japanese officers formally handed in their swords and other weapons there.

Leslie went on to volunteer with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and went to Japan for fourteen months. He was an honour guard with the Royal Welsh Fusilliers and also worked with the 82nd US Air Borne Division. While on duty in the Palace in Tokyo, Leslie once spoke with a 10-year-old boy, now the Emperor of Japan.

Leslie re-entered the jewellery business in 1947. He studied and graduated as a gemologist, diamond technologist and jewellery valuator. He was at times president at the Victorian and the Federal levels of the Jewellers Association and the instigator of forming individual associations of Retail, Wholesale and Manufacturing into one industry association which still exists today. He was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Camberwell in 1956.



**Casualty** This is no frame-up. AC1 L. Brown, of Melbourne, has dislocated his shoulder during combat course. Proving course makes them tough, he went on light duty the same afternoon.

Leslie is married to Yvonne. They have three sons, a daughter, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He retired in 2003, after fifty-seven years of service.

Today, three generations on, Browns is in the hands of Leslie's son Craig, the grandson of William Leslie. Browns Jewellers are now in their 93rd year, the oldest existing Camberwell family business. In 1995 Browns moved to the Camberwell Arcade location from their shop in Camberwell Junction.

# CAMBERWELL *has everything*

"Any increase in business within Camberwell, especially if large concerns come to the area, must surely be of great benefit," says Les Brown.

## New business in Camberwell tipped to stimulate trade

"Camberwell has been a thriving shopping area for many years, and there is no reason why it should not continue, and even increase its popularity among shoppers," said Mr. Les Brown, jeweller of 556 Burke Road.

Les Brown takes a very active part in local affairs particularly with regard to commerce. He is vice-president of the Camberwell Chamber of Commerce, and feels that the chamber would be a more powerful unit if more local shopkeepers would take a proper interest in it.

Mr. Brown welcomes the coming of Myers in any shape to Camberwell. He said, "Any increase in business premises within Camberwell, especially of large concerns, must surely be of benefit to the shopping area as a whole and a great stimulus to trade".

"Of course," he continued, "it will be up to individual shops to see that they keep their business by offering service, perhaps by more promotion of their business through advertising, and by brightening up their shops."

The problem of parking in Camberwell for shoppers, is, in Mr. Brown's opinion, about to be solved for the next few years.

Plans are in hand to roof over the existing car park at the back of Burke Road, between the shops and Station street, to provide another deck which will effectively double the number of parking spots.

The plan to deck over the present car park is now before council and members of the chamber hope that the outcome will be satisfactory, and that work can begin on the project in the not too distant future.

The basis of finance suggested by the chamber to raise \$620,000 to build the second deck is through continuation of the separate rate after 1974, its termination date, to net \$280,000. An increase in the separate rate by approximately one-third would bring a further \$100,000, and contributions by developers in lieu of on-site parking facilities, \$120,000. It is estimated that the sale of properties in Station Street which were purchased with parking meter money adds a further \$120,000 to the total.

With the coming of the Myers Lindsay store on the far side of Station Street, and the amount of parking facilities they will have to provide, Camberwell will have some of the best parking facilities of any suburb.

On the question of the ring road proposal, Mr. Brown thought that the sooner this scheme can be implemented the better.

He has seen the change that such a ring road can make in Mount Eliza and at Werribee.

"At first there was a good deal of opposition to the proposed ring road which would take the through traffic away from Mount Eliza. The shopkeepers made the point that without through traffic they would lose much of their business.

"Time has however proved them wrong. Now people who live or have weekend houses in Mount Eliza shop with pleasure in the township, and the number of shops has doubled. Werribee's experience has been much the same," Mr. Brown added. "There is no reason why the same shouldn't be true of Camberwell."

W. L. Brown, jewellers, has been established in Camberwell for 51 years, making it one of the oldest businesses in Burke Road.

Although W. L. Brown is now semi-retired, and Les Brown's son Gregory is still learning the diamond trade, it's a family business in the best tradition, and quite often on a Saturday morning customers can take the pick of three generations of Browns in the shop.

Les Brown joined his father in business after the war as a qualified gemologist, and has now just taken his final exam in a post-graduate diamond technology course.

Twenty-year-old Gregory will be the fourth generation to have worked in the diamond trade, and in the family business.

The business is mainly concerned with manufacturing and restyling diamond rings, repairing watches, (four fully trained watch repairers are employed on the Burke Road premises), and W. L. Brown have been agencies for Tissot and Omega, two great names in watches, for over 40 years.

Gold work is another speciality of the firm, especially for mayoral chains, Masonic regalia and Rotary jewels, and they have just completed a medallion which was presented by the Australian Gas Council to the Institute of Gas Engineers in the UK.

Another part of their business is devoted to imported English and Bohemian crystal.

Apart from his business, family, and study course, Les Brown still finds time to be very active in Camberwell-Rotary, is president of the Victorian branch of the Australian Jewellers Association and deputy president of the Federal body.

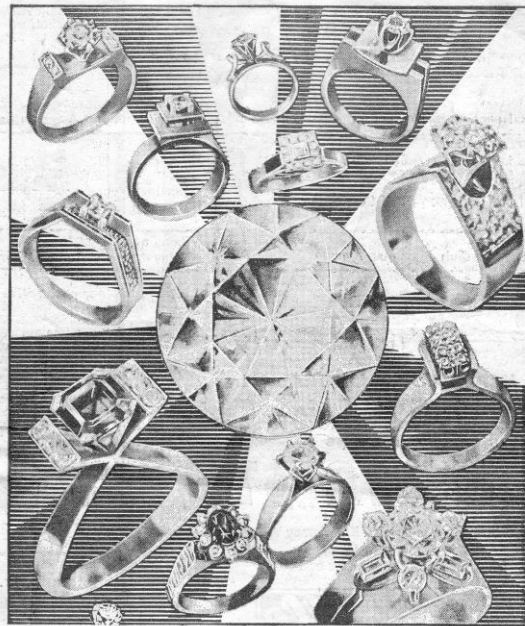
STORY:  
KAY TURTLE

ART:  
IVAN ROWLEY



Les Brown

## Diamonds are forever



**W. L. Brown** THE JEWELLERS  
WATCH SPECIALISTS - DIAMOND MERCHANTS - OPTICIANS

MANUFACTURING JEWELLERS

556 BURKE ROAD  
CAMBERWELL, 3124  
Phone: 82 4364

125 MAROONDAH HIGHWAY,  
RINGWOOD, 3134  
Phone: 820 8664

# HISTORY OF THE CAMBERWELL POTTERS



Given at the 10th Anniversary of the Camberwell Library in 1965.

Joyce Hogan 1917 - 2011

Transcribed from her written notes.

"It all began through Camberwell Library."

This (statement) always prefixes any account of Camberwell Potters.

In 1961 a librarian, noticing how many women were borrowing books on pottery, asked for pieces of their work for a display at the library.

From a list of names supplied, fifteen women aged from the mid-20s to the mid-40s, decided to meet monthly to discuss books and their potting problems and experiments and generally to widen their knowledge.

Membership has now increased to thirty. Though known as the Camberwell Potters, enthusiasm for this common interest brings members from suburbs as far apart as Templestowe and Glen Waverley. Members have had various reasons for taking up pottery. One bonsai enthusiast wanted just the right pots for her plants; another floral artist decided to make her own containers. Finally, pottery itself became absorbing.

As members work individually at home, or in small groups, or attend classes at different schools, a wide variety of original earthenware is produced from garden planters to dinner sets to jewellery.

Speakers and demonstrators at the monthly meetings, films on ceramics, a valuable course of lectures on ceramic chemistry, visits to local potters' studios and subscriptions to ceramic publications, have all been stimulating. Exhibitions were held (annually) from 1963 to 1970.



*Free Press  
4-3-81*

# Cop Shop star to open sale



Ceramics and pottery will be on exhibition and sale at Kintore Epilepsy Centre, 818 Burke Road, Camberwell, over the Moomba weekend.

On Thursday 5 March at 6.30 pm, invited guests will meet popular television personality Lynda Stoner (pictured) who will officially open the exhibition.

The 1981 Queen of Moomba will also be at the opening.

The exhibition features works by the Camberwell Potters, and will run until Monday 9 March.

Entry is free, but proceeds from the sale will assist the work of the Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria.

The exhibition is open from 10 am to 5 pm daily over the Moomba weekend. For information, telephone 29 4433.

The group is indebted to Mr. Bald of the Camberwell Library who provided the ideas and opportunity; to Mrs. Mavis Annois for her vision and guidance as chairman in forming the group, and for the hospitality of her home; and to Mrs. Joyce Hogan, our friendly and able president for three years.

Members have welcomed the Library's well-stocked art shelves and appreciate having a part in its tenth anniversary.

When I commenced pottery my main interest was in making floral art containers but pottery has now taken over from floral art and we make bowls, lamp bases, canisters and flower pots.

## CAMBERWELL SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL 90th ANNIVERSARY

On 20 November 2015 Camberwell South Primary School celebrated 90 years of Education.



Photograph supplied by Camberwell South Primary school

## MEETING REPORTS 2015

### Oct 7 **Town Hall Gallery Archives tour**

A group of members met at the Hawthorn Arts Centre for a tour of the Town Hall Gallery stores. CHS was the first group given the privilege of a tour of the back areas of the Gallery. Many works of art and items of historical interest for the City of Boroondara are held in these collections. Kent Wilson, who spoke about the collection at our AGM, conducted the tour.

### Oct 27 **Chris Long Films of Historic Events from the 1890's**

Chris presented a series of film clips from the earliest experiments with recording motion. He started with the earliest known Australian cinematographer Ernest Jardine Thwaites, who lived in Sunnyside Avenue Camberwell.

Films shown were made from 1878 to 1897, giving us a glimpse of history as recorded on pioneer films. These included the 1896 Melbourne Cup, Queen Victoria with her family, the Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II; and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

### Nov 24 **Bryony Cosgrove *Portrait of A Friendship***

Bryony Cosgrove spoke about editing the book of the letters which detail the fifty-year (1950 - 2000) correspondence between writers Barbara Blackman and Judith Wright. The letters were published as *Portrait of A Friendship* in 2007.

Barbara and Judith first met in Brisbane in the late 1940s. In the early 1950s, Barbara and her husband, painter Charles Blackman, lived in the old coach house loft behind what was then a crumbling mansion at 45 Chrystobel Crescent, Hawthorn. This was to be home to the Blackmans and their daughter and son for ten years.

Both Judith Wright and Barbara Blackman were fine letter writers. Judith was inclined to pop in a poem at the end of a letter and ask Barbara if she thought it was any good. The matter-of-fact tone in which these poems are referred to places them in the context of a day's work.



Camberwell Historical Society visit to the Town Hall Gallery

## NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new member:  
John Pesutto MP

## CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY DONATIONS TO THE COLLECTION

Camberwell Historical Society welcomes donations of the following items relating to the former City of Camberwell:

Photographs and prints, documents, letters and diaries, maps and plans, books and pamphlets  
Reminiscences of former residents and people who worked in the area.

## MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS FOR 2016

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. April and May will be held in the Meeting Room Ashburton Library, High Street Ashburton.

- Feb 23**      **Brian McFarlane** - *Double Act: The remarkable lives and careers of Googie Withers and John McCallum*. This talk about two remarkable actors, their marriage and their long careers, is based on Brian McFarlane's recently published book.
- Mar 22**      **Professor Miles Lewis AM FAHA** – The Melbourne Mansion. This talk will survey the evolution of the Melbourne mansion.
- Apr 26**      **Carolyn Landon** - *Banksia Lady: Celia Rosser, botanical artist*. Celia Rosser's achievement in painting the entire genus of Banksia led to international acclaim.  
(Meeting Room Ashburton Library, High Street Ashburton)

## CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Reminder that the Society's financial year operates from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June and subscriptions are due and payable on or before July 1<sup>st</sup> each year. Thank you to those members who have paid their subscriptions.

Contributions to *Camberwell History* contain the opinions of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Camberwell Historical Society, its committee or members.

## CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

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*Camberwell History* is printed in the office of Josh Frydenberg, MHR, Federal Member of Parliament for Kooyong