

# CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL  
AND DISTRICT

Camberwell Historical Society



No. 40

March 2020

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Principal Patron: Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey, AC  
Patron: Her Worship the Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Cynthia Watson

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**George Fernando**

Our meetings for 2020 started with a talk on the Mallee region by Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM, FAHA and FRHSV. He is President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Professor Broome spoke about the early British settlers in this region and contrasted this with the Indigenous people and their sustainable use of the land's resources.

Congratulations to our Camberwell Historical Society member Carole Woods who has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2020 Australia Day Honours for her services to history. Carole is the Secretary of the Royal Historical Society.

Members of Camberwell Historical Society participated in a recent workshop on oral history run by Sarah Rood of the organization Way back When.

We acknowledge the work of Camberwell Historical Society member Christine Branagan to preserve the historic mansion Beulah in Prospect Hill Road. Beulah was upgraded to a "contributory" status as a result of the hard work of Christine and her fellow conservationists. This story is told below.



## BEULAH: THE STORY OF A COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE HERITAGE PROTECTION FOR A LANDMARK LOCAL CAMBERWELL MANSION

**Christine Branagan**

The Friends of Prospect Hill Heritage  
Overlay

Left: Beulah, View from Prospect Hill  
Road May 2019.

In December 2019 the Councillors at Boroondara voted unanimously to protect and re-grade Beulah to “Contributory”. The story of the work to protect the mansion began in May 2019.

Set towards the top of the hill on Prospect Hill Road, Beulah has a large, mature garden full of fruit trees. It sits on the corner of Prospect Hill Road and Kingsley Street; its impressive tower overlooks Prospect Hill Road, Kasouka and Kingsley streets.

This area is one of the oldest parts of Camberwell and is full of Victorian and Edwardian houses that have been lovingly and painstakingly restored and maintained by local residents. The Prospect Hill Heritage precinct (HO159) was created by the council back in 1991. Since that time the heritage homes in the area have flourished under the protection a Heritage Overlay gives to an area. Many houses have been restored to their former glory. Most houses have modern extensions and renovations to the rear, ensuring the protection of the historic streetscape while enabling a modern lifestyle.

Local residents see themselves as caretakers and guardians of these heritage houses. Not surprisingly then, to say that those who live in the area appreciate and want to preserve the heritage building they are the caretakers of for future generations of Melburnians is an understatement. Locals love the area and these historic buildings mean something very important to them.



Left: Beulah from Prospect Hill Road, at the corner of Kingsley Street, May 2019

### **May 2019: The shock that Beulah was not protected**

A small group of locals realised in May 2019 that the house had somehow slipped through the protection net. It had been owned by only four families in its 130-year life and the most recent family had owned the home for about seventy years. Somehow, Beulah had not been identified and protected at the time of the setup of the HO159 overlay in the 1990s.

At this time, when we are seeing so many local heritage homes demolished right across Melbourne, locals realised that this historic and unusual Gothic Victorian Landmark might be at risk. Initially, a small group contacted Boroondara Council’s Planning Department and the then Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Jane Addis, and requested that the council find a way to protect the house. They explained that the locals in the area had assumed Beulah was already protected. The council, with the Mayor’s support, agreed to carry out an independent heritage review.

So began a community campaign that grew over several months and eventually involved hundreds of locals signing paper petitions and sending in written submissions to the council. Locals leaflet dropped the area and created an online petition that 1300 people signed. The Friends of Prospect Hill Overlay was set up. The group decided to carry out extensive research into the mansion’s architecture and history. The group was able to access wonderful

support in this task from many people who wanted to help preserve the house. There are too many to mention and thank by name here, but we are very grateful for all the work and help.



These people included many local residents, heritage experts living in Melbourne, architects, local historical societies, historical librarians in Boroondara and at the State Library and local politicians. The City of Boroondara undertook their own independent heritage review and decided that the house was indeed “Contributory” to the Prospect Hill Overlay and should be protected.

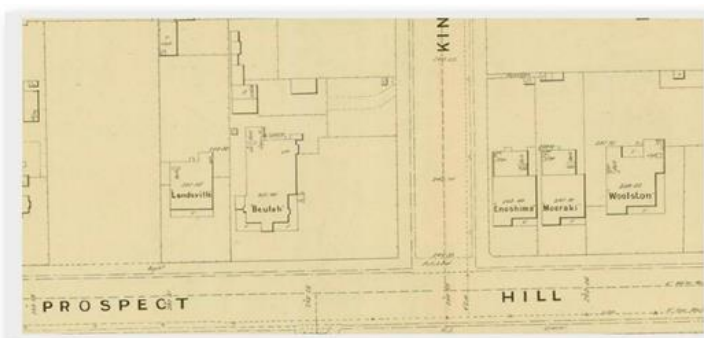
Left: The tower at Beulah. May 2019

Heritage protection for a house in Victoria is a process which is fraught with hurdles and barriers. It is highly regulated at local and State government level. Heritage experts with history, architecture, legal and planning expertise each have their input to ensure a property meets all the heritage protection criteria that Victoria uses.



Above: Historical images of Beulah SLV (c1950s)

Below: MMBW plan of Beulah (C1905)



Sadly, even a very obviously heritage building must prove itself worthy of preservation and protection from potential future demolition. The research into the house and the independent heritage review carried out by Council’s heritage consultants revealed that the house is truly an historical and architectural gem and quite a special place.



Beulah appears by name and in images in State archives and its past owners have been significant to the story of the development of Melbourne and Camberwell. In particular, they are linked to the history of the development of finance, engineering, innovation and art in Victoria.

### Facts about Beulah

- Beulah is one of the oldest Victorian houses (c1886) on Prospect Hill Road and within the heritage precinct.
- Historical images of Beulah appear in the Victorian State Library collection, and archives relating to at least three of its past owners are held there.
- Beulah is highly likely to have been designed by a prominent local architect and at significant cost, as were many of the large houses on Prospect Hill Road between the 1870s and 1900.
- The recent independent heritage report by Context states that the house would probably be heritage graded as a “Significant” house had it not had some alterations made to its roof castellations.
- It is on the Victorian Heritage Database and has been recognised by National Trust Victoria since the 1950s as a locally significant house.
- It is recorded as a Victorian era mansion in an important University of Melbourne Heritage Architectural Database called the Melbourne Mansions database, which was created by eminent architect and historian Professor Miles Lewis.
- Its architectural style is Victorian Gothic in influence and it originally had parapet crenellations on its roof and tower as can be seen in the black and white photos. It has several rare and unusual architectural features, in particular its tower and exterior window decorations.

### Historical significance and association with the life and works of persons of importance in history

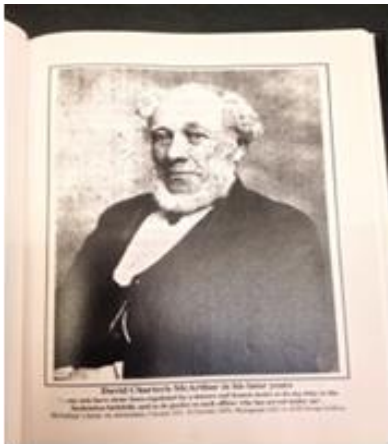
We found in our research that two owners of the house have associations with significant events and developments in the history of the early Colony of Victoria, with Melbourne and with internationally significant engineering innovation and history. A third owner and family, the Robinsons, are associated with an historic Melbourne business that was a significant stained-glass window producer and supplier of architectural and building supplies in Melbourne for 100 years.



Left: Photograph of Caroline McArthur (State Library of Victoria collection from “A Colonial Gentleman”, by Tosolini. Manuscript about the life of D. C. McArthur)

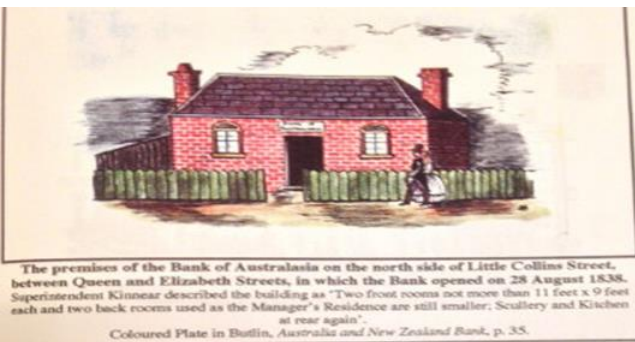
**Caroline McArthur** (1807- 1890). Widow of David Charteris McArthur (1808-1887). Caroline purchased Beulah in 1888 not long after her husband’s death, either as a house or as land, from George Watts, a contractor.

Caroline was an early colonist who arrived in 1838, at around the same time as Superintendent Charles Latrobe, when Melbourne was little more than a couple of streets with buildings and tents. She and her husband knew Governor La Trobe, Sir Redmond Barry, the Hentys and many other early important figures, and were prominent citizens themselves.



Right: Photograph of David Charteris McArthur (State Library of Victoria collection from “A Colonial Gentleman”, by Tosolini. Manuscript about the life of D. C. McArthur)

**David Charteris McArthur** was key in the development of banking in the Colony of Victoria, opening the first bank in Melbourne. He was involved in the setting up and directing of many of the most well-known civic institutions including the Botanic Gardens, the State Library, the Mechanics Institute and the Austin Hospital. He was also an early member of and the President of the Melbourne Cricket Club (1858-67) and of the Melbourne Club.



Left: Drawing of the first bank in Melbourne on Collins St and home of the McArthurs in 1838. (ANZ Bank archives)

Caroline initially lived with her husband in the city in the tiny brick cottage that was the first bank branch in Victoria. She and her husband hosted W. C. Grace, the famous cricketer, at their home in Heidelberg while he stayed in Melbourne for the first cricket

matches between England and the local Melbourne teams. Caroline is mentioned in an early *Port Phillip Patriot & Advertiser* in the 1840s as having jumped out of her carriage in the city when the horses bolted.

William Westgarth, a prominent merchant, financier, politician, and historian at this time and a contemporary of her husband from 1840, described her as “The Venerable Mother of Melbourne Society”. He mentions her in the State-archived “Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne” that he wrote in 1886.

### **Elizabeth (Greer) Robinson (1839-1931) and her sons.**

Beulah was purchased by Elizabeth Robinson after Caroline McArthur’s death in 1890. Elizabeth was born in Ireland. She married Edward Gayner Robinson (1830-1880) in Melbourne in 1862. Edward Gayner Robinson had set up a well-known and successful commercial business in the city in the 1850s, partnering in the business Brooks, Robinson and Company that operated for 100 years in Melbourne.

Right: Photo of Brooks, Robinson and Co premises on Elizabeth Street, Melbourne (c1900s, Source: State Library of Victoria)

Brooks, Robinson and Company was a glass and architectural supplies / hardware business, whose products included such items as mantelpieces, wall coverings and shop glass fronts. The company also created well known, fine quality stained glass windows that were installed in numerous significant churches, buildings and houses in Melbourne, including St Paul’s Cathedral and the Princess Theatre.



Elizabeth and Edward Robinson had seven sons but three died as infants. The Robinsons owned several local properties at the time of Edward's death in 1880 and appear to have been living at "Triohanga" on the corner of Auburn Road and Harcourt Street in Hawthorn, with an estate valued at £12,000.

Not long before Elizabeth purchased Beulah from Caroline McArthur's estate, a Brooks Robinson stained glass window, commemorating the late David Charteris McArthur was donated by Caroline McArthur to St John's Church in Heidelberg.

Elizabeth's son Edward Gayner (1876-1897), died aged 20 while living at Beulah with her, according to probate documents. He is described in his will as a "Commercial Traveller". Her other sons Henry Greer, Thomas Goodbody and Walter Fergus, presumably also lived there with her at Beulah. Thomas and Walter were still in their teens when she moved there. We know one became an accountant and another a farmer according to later title documents.

**Anthony George Maldon Michell** (1870-1959) owned Beulah from 1939-1949. He was an internationally renowned inventor and engineer. He is described in one of several biographies of him as:

"the Melbourne engineer who, through his study of the physics of lubricative fluids, developed his thrust bearing for ships, the invention that revolutionized ship propulsion and made it possible for huge battleships and cruise liners to be built."

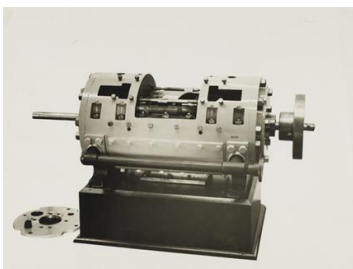


Right: A. G. M Michell (Source: State Library Victoria)



Michell was awarded the James Watt International Medal of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, London, in 1942. This is equivalent to winning an Oscar, or Nobel Prize in the world of engineering. In 1964 he was honored posthumously by the University of Melbourne. He invented and patented several ideas and inventions. In the 1890s, he and his family lived in Camberwell for a considerable time.

Left: The Michell Thrust Bearing and the Crank less Engine. (Source: Melbourne Museum)



**What can we learn from the story of the community work to achieve some protection for Beulah to preserve it for future generations of Victorians?**

**Vigilance:** Do not assume that every important place in our suburbs is already protected. It was by chance that we realised Beulah had not been protected. Your local council can tell you within a few moments via a call, or an online check if a place near you is heritage protected.

**Involvement:** Do not leave the task of heritage protection to others. Get involved to protect what's important to our community.

**Councils need help:** The council is working hard to prevent the loss of heritage, but local people also need to get involved to bring these houses to their attention.

**Heritage and Heritage architecture** are important: Look all around the world and we know that significant architecture and history are important.

**Fight to preserve heritage:** We have some world-class residential architecture here in Boroondara and we need to be loud and proud about that and fight to preserve it for everyone. There is a need for more discussion and debate in parliament about the current ongoing loss of heritage architecture and the need to make improvements to the regulations and laws that protect it.

Let's hope that Beulah will still be here in another 130 years. By then it will be 260 years old.

As a quote in a National Trust Victoria Advocacy booklet for locals trying to protect heritage places says:

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead**



## THE FOUNDING AND FOUNDERS OF THE EAST CAMBERWELL TENNIS CLUB

On 21 April 1920 around twenty people met at the East Camberwell Pavilion Croquet Green, which was part of the East Camberwell Bowling Club, very near East Camberwell Station, to discuss the formation of the East Camberwell Tennis Club.

The driving forces appear to have been a Mr R. R. Thomas and Mr A. S. W. Higgs. Mr Higgs was the chairman for the first meeting, but Mr Thomas was proposed to be the provisional President for the club, with Mr Higgs nominated as Secretary. During the meeting Mr Thomas proposed that the subscriptions be 21/- for ladies and 30/- for gentleman, and that the club would provide balls on Saturdays and Public Holidays!

On 12 May a second meeting was held with Mr Thomas the Chairperson. This time about 30 people attended, including Mr F. F. Read representing Camberwell Council. He would later that year become a Vice President of the club. It was at this meeting that the name East Camberwell Tennis Club was formally proposed and agreed, that the location in Riversdale Park was confirmed and royal blue and gold approved to be the official Club colours.

Several further meetings were held between May and November 1920,



and in October, it was proposed that Mr Clements Langford be President of the club, with Mr Thomas along with Mr George Coghill and Mr H. Malcolm as Vice Presidents. But Mr Coghill and Mr Malcolm declined the offer, and over the next month it was agreed that Mr Thomas would be the President, with Mr Langford, Mr Read from Camberwell Council, and a Mr R.A. MacPherson as Vice Presidents, and Mr Higgs as Secretary. The Vice Presidents were largely patron-like, providing local credibility and in a couple of cases significant financial support.

Some information remains about a number of these leaders. The Secretary, Mr Arthur S. W. Higgs, lived for many years at 99 Prospect Hill Road, and early committee meetings were held in his house. That Edwardian cottage is still standing today, a couple of houses east of the railway line. He was also involved with the East Camberwell Bowling Club as Secretary in the 1920s. He was a patents examiner.

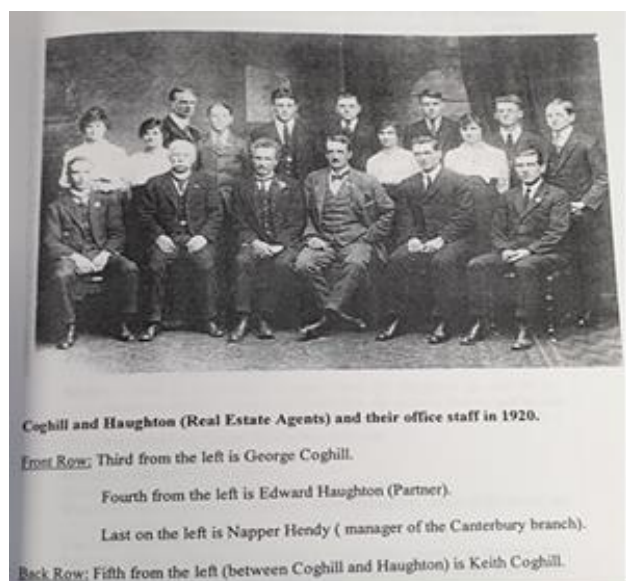


The The President was Robert Raymond Thomas, known as Ray (left), and he lived at 28 Faversham Road Canterbury in the early 1920s. His profession at that time was listed as bank clerk but around then he established a very successful bus company with a friend, Les Gordge. Earlier, at the age of 20, he enlisted with the AIF in 1915 and served in Gallipoli and France. William Thomas (Ray's father), Ray and other family members moved to 24 Margaret Street Canterbury in about 1923. That house is still standing and still looks very grandly Victorian. William was the Headmaster of Deepdene Primary School from 1913-27. Ray Thomas married Mary (known as Mollie) Lorimer, of 26 Trafalgar Road in Camberwell (a pretty Victorian home still standing today) in early 1927, and around that time moved to 18 Black Street in Mont Albert. Interestingly, a Miss M. Lorimer was at the Annual General Meeting in 1921, as was a Miss J. Lorimer. Ray met his wife at the Tennis Club! Further, Mollie's younger sister, Janet, also married an East Camberwell Tennis Club committee member, and friend of Ray's — Les Gordge. Gordge was also at that AGM in 1921, becoming a committee member that year, and he married Mollie's younger sister Janet in

late 1926.

Ray Thomas became an accountant and then a Director and Chairman of Directors of a large Bearings company later in his career. He lived at 26 Trafalgar Road in Camberwell in the 1950s (the house owned by Mollie's parents when they married). He was on the RACV Council, on the Board of Richmond Technical College and a committee member at Kingston Heath Golf Club. It was while playing there that he died in 1960.

While George Coghill did not take up a Vice President position, he was still one of the major financial contributors who helped to get the club off the ground. Debentures were issued,





with 6% interest accruing, and George Coghill contributed £20 to help fund the club's growth. Only Clements Langford contributed more (£25). (In all, £260 was raised to help fund the building of courts etc.) George Coghill was locally well known at the time. He ran a major real estate company and was briefly the Mayor of Camberwell. In 1918 he became a councillor, and in 1921 he was elected mayor, but in a re-count it was found he had lost his seat by twenty votes. He lived at 17 Monomeath Avenue in Canterbury.



The other person to decline a Vice Presidency was Harley Malcom (left), who was a long-time secretary of the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia, and a top tennis umpire. He was also briefly the Australian Davis Cup Captain. He lived in Balmoral Crescent in Surrey Hills. And while he declined the position, his valuable advice in relation to the construction of the courts etc was noted in the minutes.

Clements Langford (listed as Clement in electoral rolls for many years) was a renowned master builder, indeed a President of the Master Builders Federation of Australia, and in 1919/20 built a house just up the road from Riversdale Park, at (now) 612 Riversdale Road in Camberwell. That lovely house was called "Riversmount", and it also still stands today. He built many major buildings in Melbourne, including Myer, Georges, the Herald

building in Flinders Street and the Comedy Theatre, but his major claim to fame was building the spires of St Paul's Cathedral, at cost. He also loved tennis, having courts at his house in Richmond (before moving to Camberwell) as well as at his beach house on the cliffs of Sorrento. In the 1920s Langford was chauffeured around Melbourne in his Rolls Royce, and when he died in 1930 the Lord Mayor of Melbourne was one of the pallbearers.



The second Vice President was Mr F. F. Read, Frederick Fitzwalter Read, of the legal firm Read & Read. He was Mayor of Camberwell three times and served on cCouncil for almost 30 years from 1905 to 1934. He lived at 1 Waterloo Street in Camberwell. Read Gardens, near "Broadway" in Camberwell are named after him. He was also heavily involved in getting the East Camberwell Bowling Club off the ground in the 1910s and was a Vice President (and later Life Member) of that club.

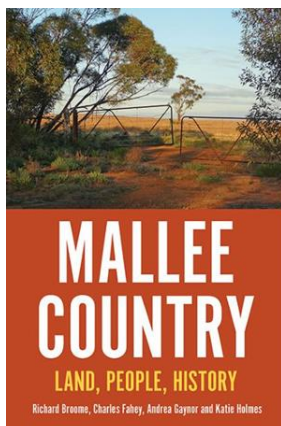
Very little is known of the third Vice President, Mr R. A. MacPherson. Perhaps he was Ronald Alexander MacPherson, a manufacturer, and perhaps he lived at 437 Riversdale Road in Hawthorn East around 1920, then at 31 Myrtle Road in Canterbury in the early 1920s and in the mid-1920s at 16 Allambee Avenue in Camberwell.

Through the work of Mr Thomas and Mr Higgs, and the support of the Vice Presidents (and other key committee members such as Mr Halligan and Mr Duncan, as well as Misses Duncan, Logan and Leitch), six courts were built over the course of the next two years, with the first ball being hit on Christmas Day in December 1920. During those two years, Mr Langford and Mr Read each attended one committee meeting, and each further donated Two Guineas for

competition prizes. Indeed, the club made such good progress over those early years that an article appeared in *The Herald* on 10 November 1921 with the headline “A Model Tennis Club”. The first sentence read “East Camberwell Tennis Club is a model for other metropolitan districts”, which is an attribute still aspired to today.

## REPORT OF MEETINGS 2020

**25 February 2020     Emeritus Professor Richard Broome     Mallee Country**



Richard Broome AM, FAHA and FRHSV is Emeritus Professor of History at La Trobe University and President of the RHSV. He is the author of fifteen books, two of them prize winners. His latest, *Mallee Country. Land People History*, was written with three colleagues: Charles Fahey, Andrea Gaynor and Katie Holmes. Charles Fahey explored Australian labour, rural and mining history. Andrea Gaynor focused on environmental history, and Katie Holmes sought to understand the experience of Australian settlement. Richard Broome focused on the Aboriginal phases of the history of Mallee Country's human settlement.

Professor Broome contrasted the land use and attitudes in Britain and in Australia. In Britain, land equalled power. Land was inherited. Land was tied to economic and political power. The Big House was the focus of landed power. This power intensified between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scientific farming added value to the land owned. The Enclosure Acts eliminated common areas and increased large acreage. Seven thousand people owned eighty per cent of England. In Australia 500 squatters controlled an area four times the size of England.

European attitudes to land were very different from those of the Aboriginal peoples. Genesis promotes dominion over nature. Exploration indicated a seemingly unlimited area of available land. John Locke's ideas of ownership through labour were prevalent. The farmer versus the hunter gatherer. The hunter gatherers have no right to title of the land as they did not labour over it, thus no treaty was offered during Australian colonisation. The settler's ethic of hard work, time and discipline added value.

The Mallee country was remote, inhospitable, waterless, impracticable scrub. Europeans were looking for agricultural country. Most Europeans had a poor view of Aboriginal work even though there was plenty of evidence to the contrary: the Gunditjmara people's Budj Bim eel traps, the making of communal nets being but two examples. The Europeans sought arable pastoral lands to exploit, the Aboriginal people used land to live sustainably and spiritually for over 2000 generations.

## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30TH JUNE 2020

**Thank you to all members who have renewed their subscriptions for 2020**

**Details for renewal are on the back page**



## VALE JOAN GLOVER

Joan Glover, a long-term member of Camberwell Historical Society, passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday 22 January aged 98.

Perhaps Joan's favourite interest was gardening, whether it was her own garden or Bishops court gardens. The Bishops court garden was designed by Joan's great-grandfather, Charles Swyer, around 1854. It was thus very apt that Joan became a volunteer in restoring the grounds of this prestigious East Melbourne property.

In 1940 Joan decided she needed to contribute to the war effort and she joined the Army as a civilian. After initial training Joan sorted prisoner of war records and transcribed overseas cables. Joan then moved to help in the Army pay office.

While Joan was holidaying at Erskine House in Lorne, she was introduced to John Glover. He was on two months' leave from New Guinea where he worked with the Vacuum Oil Company. In 1942, John and Joan became engaged, and in 1943 they were married in Melbourne Grammar Chapel.

Vacuum Oil moved the family many times, including to Fiji. Here both Joan, John and their small daughter embraced the Fijian way of life. Joan volunteered for Red Cross to become their Welfare Officer for the Suva area. One of the highlights of her time in Suva was an invitation to the State Ball for the young Queen Elizabeth on 17 December 1953. In 1955, the family returned to Melbourne.

Joan joined the congregation of St John's Church Camberwell. She became an active member of the Archive and Anglicare groups and participated in the many activities including the winter dinners and the church fetes.

The most important things in Joan's life were family and service to others. She will be remembered for her grace and warmth, sense of fun, resilience, abundant energy, persistence, compassion and love of people and animals.

## GRILL'D CAMBERWELL

We would like to thank Grill'd Camberwell for their donation of \$100 through their Local Matters program. We appreciate their community spirit.





## **DATES FOR MEETINGS 2020**

Evening meetings are held at Camberwell Library Meeting Room,  
340 Camberwell Road, Camberwell

Afternoon meetings are held at 25 Inglesby Road, Camberwell

Tuesday 24 March 2020 8pm      **Due to the potential health problems associated with the  
spread of Covid 19, all meetings are cancelled until  
further notice.**

Tuesday 28 April 2020 8pm

Tuesday 26 May 2020 8pm

Saturday 20 June 2020 2pm

Saturday 25 July 2020 2pm

Saturday 22 August 2020 2pm      AGM

## **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, diaries, maps, plans, books, pamphlets, and reminiscences of former residents and people who worked in the area.

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 SUBSCRIPTIONS RENEWALS 2018**

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June. Subscriptions for the 2019 – 2020 financial year were due and payable on or before July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Single \$30 Family \$40. Camberwell Historical Society, BSB 633-000 Account No 142260678 Cheques to Camberwell Historical Society, PO Box 1274, CAMBERWELL 3124

## **CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC**

ABN 79 935 200 741      Incorporation No A0041541 Y  
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President — George Fernando; Secretary - Adèle Fernando-Swart; Treasurer – Peter Huggan  
Committee members — Bryony Cosgrove, Alister Bennie and Jennifer McArthur  
*Camberwell History*: Editor — Adèle Fernando-Swart

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*Camberwell History* is printed in the office of The Honourable Josh Frydenberg, MHR, Federal Member for Kooyong, Treasurer of Australia, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party