

# CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL  
AND DISTRICT  
Camberwell Historical Society



No. 43

December 2020

ISSN 1838-0875 / ISSN 2208-1828 (Online)

Principal Patron: Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey, AC  
Patron: His Worship the Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Garry Thompson

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**George Fernando**

I am pleased to announce that Cr Garry Thompson, following his appointment as the Mayor of Boroondara, has accepted our request to be a patron of our Society. We wish him well for his forthcoming term of office and thank him for accepting the role of our patron. I would like to thank Cr Cynthia Watson for her support during her time as Mayor of Boroondara.

I thank all those who helped make this year a success for CHS. 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 2021 and wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Our meetings for 2021 will recommence via zoom with a meeting on 23 February at 7pm. Our March and April meetings are also planned to be on zoom. I trust that members are continuing to stay safe and that soon we will be able to get things back to normal.

Volunteers are needed to help scan drawings and historical files especially as we have a large new collection of beautiful drawings of local houses donated by Margaret Picken and we have many files still to scan from our collection. You will find her story in the previous newsletter. Thank you to those members who have already helped the committee with the backlog of scanning.

## THE REVEREND EDWARD THOMAS COX (1852-1930)

**‘An outstanding personality [with] a pair of merry, sparkling eyes’ (Sir Irving Benson)**

**Dr Volkhard Wehner**

When driving along Toorak Road towards the city, just before reaching Burke Road, on the left side of the road one can see the spire of a red clinker-brick church. Formerly, this was known as the South Camberwell Methodist Church. It is now the South Camberwell Gospel Hall. On entering the building, inside the spire a brass plaque on the wall bears the following words in black and red letters:



The Revd. E.T. Cox Memorial Spire  
 Erected in Memory of Revd. Edward Thomas Cox  
 For 52 years a beloved minister of the Methodist  
 Church whose faith and vision largely inspired the  
 building of this church 25-10-1930



There had been a timber church at South Camberwell since 1915; this new brick building would now replace it. Its official dedication and opening took place on 25 October 1930. Alas, by that time the Reverend Cox had passed away. He had died on New Year's Day 1930.

Left: The former South Camberwell Methodist Church in more recent times

What sort of man was Reverend Edward Cox? What is known about his life and doings?

Edward Thomas Cox was born at Ballarat on 29 July 1852. His father, Giles Cox, a Wiltshireman from Collingbourne Kingston, had arrived in Victoria the previous year with his wife Ann, their three children and some other relations. They had immigrated under a unique scheme operated on the initiative of Lord Bruce by the Wiltshire Emigration Association between 1849 and 1851. Its aim was to resettle destitute (but legally unblemished) Wiltshire rural families in the Australian colonies. The scheme lapsed in 1851 after bringing 258 needy persons to Victoria and South Australia.

After 122 days at sea the Cox family group disembarked from the *John Knox* at Point Henry, Geelong, on 15 July 1851. Within four weeks, on 12 August, the *Geelong Advertiser* splashed the news of gold discoveries at Buninyong, and immediately Giles and his family made their way there. As news of richer gold discoveries at Ballarat followed only a week later, on 21 August, the Cox group soon transferred there. For the twelve years that followed the family was continuously on the move, including at Yarrowee Creek and Magpie in 1858, at nearby Cherry Tree Flat by the early 1860s, and at several other locations. Once or twice Giles, who was variously described as a miner, a farmer, and a timber carter, attempted to purchase land, but each time he failed due to lack of funds. While the family was on the move, Edward and several other children were born. Their final stop at Cherry Tree Flat proved disappointing, and Giles started working a small acreage nearby where he grew potatoes, onions and barley which he sold to mine workers. It was not until 1865 that he could lease 20 acres (8 hectares) at what is now Ross Creek, which he eventually bought, and where he was able to build a permanent home for his family. The 1869 *Land Act* allowed him to successfully apply for an additional 134 acres (54 hectares).

By 1865 Edward was 13 years old, but few reliable details can be found of his schooling other than that he briefly attended the short-lived Ross Creek Common School in that year. As his future development shows, however, he must have been a fairly bright lad. He was a voracious reader, as was his father. Giles' grandson Leonard Cox claimed his grandfather was literate and well-read.

Until 1870 the details of Edward's life are scant. Leonard Cox, commenting on his father's mechanical dexterity, and the fact that he owned a fine collection of tools similar to those used by watchmakers and jewellers, surmised that Edward may have been apprenticed to a jeweller or watchmaker in Ballarat. He showed little inclination to join his father and elder brother Leonard Giles on the farm at Ross Creek. This left Giles to work his property on his own for many years after Leonard Giles died prematurely.

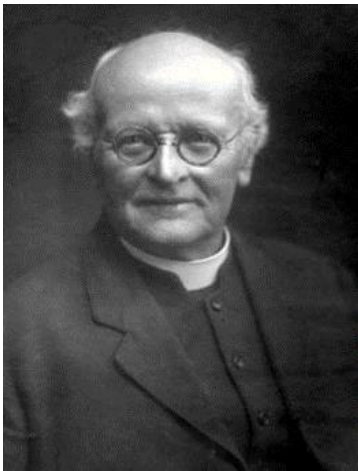
Nominally of the Anglican persuasion, Edward was befriended by a prominent Ballarat businessman and lay reader at the Lydiard Street Methodist Church, Henry Bell, who was later to become the MLA for Ballarat West. At Henry's urging, Edward joined the church as a parishioner in 1870, and on Henry's recommendation he was made a lay reader and Sunday school teacher in 1873. In 1876 Edward was encouraged to apply for training for the ministry. The minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1877 list him as a 'probationer' of the church, with his first posting to the gold settlement of Walhalla. A probationer's training was essentially based on 'on the job' study followed by regular tests. Normally the probationership extended over four years—in Edward's case it went on for five. Alas, the Walhalla congregation was too small (23 members) and deemed to be not viable, and thus the church was subsequently sold, and Edward was transferred to St Kilda. The usual practice was that ministers were transferred to a new parish ('circuit' in Methodist usage) every three years; for Edward these transfers were more frequent because he was not married.

Right: Isabella Bell

What followed was a seemingly endless life of moves and transfers. The St Kilda posting lasted only a year, followed by a year each at Elmore (1879), Rutherglen (1880), and Wangaratta (1881). At Wangaratta Edward was married to Isabella Bell, the daughter of his erstwhile mentor and friend Henry Bell. As will become clear later in this narrative, Isabella was the complete opposite to Edward in character, though it is a moot point whether the adage of 'opposites attract' applied in this case. Edward was kindly, full of humour, always with a friendly smile on his face, generous to a fault, popular, and everyone's friend: a true 'child of the south'.



Isabella was quite the opposite. She was stern, iron-willed, business-like, a true northerner. The Bells, who described themselves as 'Scotch' on the manifest of the ship that brought them to the Colony of Victoria in late 1852, were Cumbrian people with roots in the Borders and on the Isle of Man. They were a tough lot, capable and purposeful but perhaps lacking in a degree of charm. Isabella was almost archetypal of the 'breed'. Even as a young woman she had exercised discipline over her father and brothers. Now it was Edward's turn to be ruled. In Ballarat, Isabella had been a teacher at the Dana Street school; her report card describes her as 'excellent'. After Wangaratta, the next postings for the young marrieds were two circuits in northern Tasmania: first Westbury (1882-4), followed by Mersey near Devonport (1885-7). After that they moved to Geelong West (1888-90), had a 'homecoming' to Lydiard Street, Ballarat (1891-3), then to Prahran (1894-6), Geelong (1897-8), to Adelaide, where first they went to Kent Town (1899-1901) and then to Archer Street, North Adelaide (1902-4). Thereafter it was back to Melbourne: Armadale (1905), Malvern (1906-7), Carlton (1908-10), Moonee Ponds (1911-14), and finally Camberwell, which was a part of the Hawthorn Circuit (1914-18).



By 1918 Edward was sixty-six and due to retire - in Methodist parlance, he became 'supernumerary'. However, as he had virtually no savings or other income, he felt he had to continue as a locum preacher, to be paid on a sessional basis. To coin a phrase, he had to 'preach for his dinner'. While this suited him quite well, for Isabella this was not good enough, even though by that time she had squirreled away enough money to buy a home of 'her' own—the first in her 38-year marriage. As their son Leonard recalled, 'My own father was himself like this: an inveterate reader, with a brilliant mind. But hopeless in business, and in the end all the family business affairs were run by my very able mother.'

Left above: Edward Cox c.1910



Immediately after the transfer from Moonee Ponds to Camberwell in 1914, Edward, Isabella and their children—two daughters and one son (Leonard) moved into the manse next to the Methodist church in Camberwell Road, now the Kumon Education Centre. Their eldest son, Arthur, had left home long ago; a male child had died in infancy in 1892. Two further brief residential moves brought the Cox's to Aird Street (1917) and then to 3 Royal Crescent (1918-19)—both in Camberwell.

Above: Church and manse in Camberwell Road

It was then that Isabella was able to put down the deposit on a house at 17 Leura Grove, East Hawthorn—just west of Burke Road. Shrewd as always, she paid £600 and six years later sold it (to her son!) for three times that amount. In 1925 she bought a house at 37 Park Road, close to the South Camberwell Methodist church, where Edward had become the de facto incumbent preacher.

Notices in the *Spectator and Methodist Chronicle* and various daily and regional papers indicate that Edward, apart from the South Camberwell church, was regularly preaching at other Methodist churches in and around Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew. This was not surprising: he was a gifted speaker, famous for his humour and quite unconventional addresses, and he was sought after for special church occasions in the metropolis, the country and even South Australia. The number of references to 'Rev. E.T. Cox' listed in various papers is quite considerable. A writer in the *Geelong Advertiser* remembered Edward's sermons as 'full of humour' but also as presenting 'a fine argument for the value of spiritual ideals in national life' (*Geelong Advertiser*, 20 April 1920).

In 1927 a journalist writing under the pen name of Qui Vive, who on the evidence appeared to be a former parishioner from Edward's North Adelaide posting earlier in the century, noted the fiftieth anniversary of Edward's 'taking the cloth' in the *Adelaide Observer* with these comments: 'There are many Methodists in South Australia, and particularly of Archer Street, North Adelaide, who will remember the Reverend E.T. Cox. When they do recall this eloquent philosopher and wit, it may surprise them that this is the jubilee year of his ministry. A recent

photograph of him shows a smiling face, merry eyes and a canopy of silver hair.’ The writer then describes Edward’s ever-present pipe and the cloud of smoke emanating and continues: ‘Mr Cox is now, and has ever been, one of the most picturesque personalities of Australian Methodism ... His mind penetrates to most profound depths, from the philosophy of Meredith to Einstein’s theory of relativity. Mr Cox had the most attractive and unorthodox style from the pulpit, and in emphasis on a point often twirled the cord attached to his pince-nez around his index finger [while his] repartee was scintillating and alert.’

Sir Irving Benson, prominent broadcaster and publicist, told Leonard Cox that ‘everyone liked him. When we were talking outside the [church] hall informally, if anyone said, “E. T. Cox is up”, we all hurried in.’

The large number of press references to Edward’s appearances at various churches and festive events eventually become scarce, and by mid-1928 disappear altogether. It seems that his health was by then declining, perhaps aggravated by his smoking habit. His grandson Hugh Catchlove, who remembered his grandparents very clearly, writes in his Memoirs that Edward was ‘a dear old fellow, completely bald and rather short but a very happy sort of a fellow [who] smoked cigars ... Grandmother Cox made him go outside to smoke the cigars and also she made him stay in a little damp bedroom at the back of the house where he got pneumonia’. Whatever the complete truth may be, it was his son Leonard, who had become a noted physician, who nursed him back to health. Edward’s sudden death, at the home of his daughter Leila Scott at Elsternwick on New Year’s Day of 1930, was totally unexpected.



Soon after his passing Isabella cleared out all her late husband’s letters and personal papers. All were consigned to the fire, as though she meant to expunge all evidence of his life. The wide-ranging library Edward had built up over a lifetime, purchased with the few pennies his wife had allowed him as pocket money, was likewise dispersed, possibly given away or thrown out.



Left: Isabella with her two daughters and their families (late 1930s)

The limited documentation pertaining to Edward’s life leads one to make a number of reasonable assumptions. For example, the stipend he could expect to receive would rarely be adequate for a family of seven, putting a great deal of pressure on family life. This small income was often supplemented by donations from parishioners—usually in kind—that would help. Evidence suggests that this was more common in

rural circuits, but country postings had the disadvantage of more difficult living conditions such as unmade roads that made travel and visits to needy parishioners hazardous, or the lack of access to medical services. The frequent moves rarely allowed close friendships to form which would particularly affect the children. It is therefore not surprising that an energetic and dynamic

woman like Isabella would become resentful if not bitter, particularly in light of her son Leonard's recollection that his father could never resist the begging appeals of some of his parishioners. It seems he was capable of literally giving away the shirt off his back, to Isabella's great dismay. In all this it is almost miraculous that Edward never lost his temper; his humour and his sunny outlook on life never wavered.

His old friend and admirer Sir Irving Benson's long and detailed obituary in the *Melbourne Herald* describes and summarises Edward's remarkable life with warmth and empathy. He concludes: 'This kind, tolerant, lovable thoroughgoing Christian had the benediction of all who knew him, and he will be missed by his fellow ministers, among whom he was a brother beloved.' Obituaries also appeared in the *Age*, the *Adelaide Register News Pictorial*, the *Australasian*, the *Argus*, the *Advertiser* (Adelaide), the *Chronicle* (Adelaide) and the *Advocate* (Burnie, Tasmania).

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## THE BLACK BRIDGE, GARDINERS CREEK

### George Fernando

This is a story about a bridge, a railway-line and a creek. The bridge was demolished, the railway-line closed but the creek keeps flowing.

The Black Bridge was built for the Outer Circle Railway in 1889 to span Gardiners Creek and its flood plain. It was a single line timber trestle bridge with 31 spans each 4.5 metres long. It was called the Black Bridge, possibly because of the coating of black tar covering its pylons. The engineer in charge of the construction of the Outer Circle Railway was John Monash.

The Waverley Road to Riversdale section of the Outer Circle Line opened in 1890, but the Waverley Road to Ashburton section of the line closed in 1895. During an inspection in 1932 of the unused section between Ashburton and Oakleigh the bridge was found to be virtually intact apart from having a few planks missing in the top deck and some minor fire damage to three base supports.





Trains transporting timber from Gippsland to Melbourne terminated in Oakleigh. The timber needed to be moved further into the city. The construction of the Outer Circle Railway was proposed by the government to bypass privately owned railways and join Oakleigh to the city arriving from the north-west into Spencer Street Station. This train-line ran through much of today's City of Boroondara. The line was also meant to serve passengers to and from the city. A suburban railway line was thought to lead to future suburban development. Waverley Road, Norwood (Ashburton), Hartwell (Burwood), Riversdale, Camberwell, Shenley, Deepdene, East Kew, Willsmere, Fulham Grange and Fairfield Park were the stations on this line. At Fairfield, passengers transferred to the Hurstbridge line to the city. Commuters often used other modes of transport as train travel was very slow.

The government acquisition of an ailing private railway company enabled the use of its tracks to the east of Melbourne. A link between Flinders Street Station and Spencer Street Station was constructed. The Outer Circle Railway became unnecessary before it was built, but land speculators encouraged the government to continue with its plans. The Outer Circle Railway was shut down a mere six years after its construction.

The Black Bridge was a timber trestle bridge. In Melbourne there is an extraordinarily good trestle bridge at Eltham, and many people have travelled on the splendid trestle bridge at Monbulk in the Puffing Billy. In Kilcunda near Wonthaggi, running across a beach is another beautiful trestle bridge. Other charming timber trestle bridges can be seen at Noojee, Stony Creek bridge near Nowa Nowa and a 770-metre bridge in Orbost - the longest in Victoria. The two Gippsland bridges sadly perished in last year's bush fires. The National Trust has classified most of these trestle bridges. The Black Bridge did not stand the test of time. The bridge was sold for its wood at the beginning of World War II for £500. Some of the timber pylons remained long afterwards.

Walkers and cyclists can travel along the old route of the Outer Circle. Gardiners Creek meanders on peacefully making its 17-kilometre journey from Blackburn Lake to where it joins the Yarra River near St Kevin's College in Toorak. Also, in Ryburne Avenue on the corner of Solway Street, I took note of the new footbridge over the creek. The new Solway Bridge was built in late 2011 after the old bridge was washed away in a flood in February of that year.

<http://outercircleline.com.au/about-me.html>

<https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/about-council/history-and-demographics/local-history/local-history-trails/outer-circle-railway-anniversary-trail>

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<https://www.weekendnotes.com/historic-trestle-bridges-and-rail-trails/>

### **Vale Peter Michael Stephens 1955 - 2020**

Peter Stephens, CHS former committee member, passed away in October after a two-year battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Sylwia, daughter Emma, his father, brother and sister. He was a parishioner at St Oswald's Anglican Church Glen Iris.

Peter was very interested in flying. He had his pilot's licence before his driver's licence. Another interest was space and astronomy. He attended astronomy lectures at Swinburne. Other interests included maps, war gaming historic battles with model soldiers, historically accurate model making, and walking. He liked planning for walking groups. He was a classical music buff, loved opera and researched every opera that he attended.

## Heritage issues

There is a campaign to get interim protection for an early Boyd house on Tannock Street in Balwyn North. Council decided belatedly to pursue protection but haven't been able to get interim protection in the meantime. Here is the link for the petition. <http://chng.it/p5d7nZN8cM>



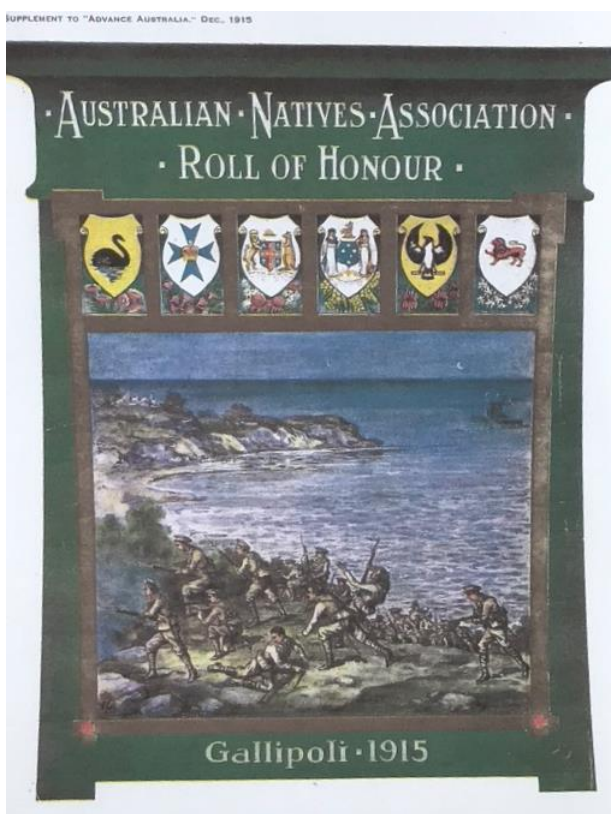
## DONATION FROM AUSTRALIAN NATIVES' ASSOCIATION, CAMBERWELL BRANCH

**Rosemary Kelleher,**  
Secretary, ANA Fraternal

Australian Natives' Association Ex-President's Certificate of Mr. L. C. Bromilow for Camberwell ANA Branch no 208, established 1903/1904. The certificate is dated 1918. The Camberwell Branch of ANA was a significant Health Insurance Friendly Society, with a membership of 635 people in that year. Messrs J.J. Longmore and P.E. Norwood represented ANA Camberwell Branch at the Annual ANA Conference, held March 1921 at the ANA Hall, Bendigo in that year. Along with Hawthorn ANA, Camberwell ANA vigorously promoted the case for decimal currency at ANA annual conferences as early as 1909.

Left above: Ex-President's Certificate for L.C. Bromilow

Left below: Australian Natives' Association Roll of Honour, Gallipoli 1915



Australian Natives' Association was established in 1871 in Melbourne as a Health Benefit Friendly Society for Australian-born colonial men. It also provided its members with social activities and opportunities to learn about meeting procedure, debating, self-development and organising events. ANA played a key role at community level in the drive for Federation and the development of Australia's social, educational, health and economic policies. Many members of ANA branches achieved civic office and made notable contributions to the development of Australia as we know it today. A book by noted historians Professor Emerita Marian





Quartly and Professor Emeritus John Lack is soon to be published in association with ANA's 150th Anniversary.

ANA amalgamated with Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows in 1993 to form Australian Unity Health Insurance. The social and cultural activities of ANA were continued under the name Australian Natives' Association Fraternal. They are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the formation of ANA on 24 April 2021. ANA Fraternal is in the process of distributing many of their historic artefacts to museums and organisations for which they have relevance.

Left: Supplement to 'Advance Australia' December 1915, which names 42 members of Camberwell ANA Branch

## DONATION OF CONCERT PROGRAMS

Programs for various concerts that were held in Camberwell in 1923 and 1924 have been donated by Gillian Skerry, a granddaughter of the Dickens family, previously of Moorhouse Street in Camberwell. Mainly these concerts were held at the Town Hall and Camberwell Church of Christ.

## REPORT OF MEETINGS 2020

**22 September 2020**

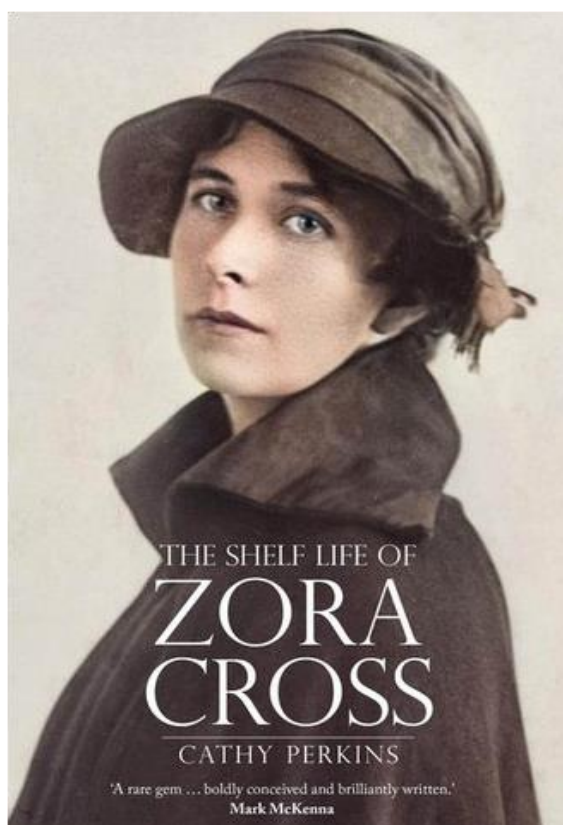
*The Shelf Life of Zora Cross* by Cathy Perkins via zoom

Cathy Perkins' biography *The Shelf Life of Zora Cross*, 2019, has received outstanding reviews and was recently shortlisted for the NSW Premier's History Award. Cathy Perkins edits the award-winning *SL* magazine and other publications at the State Library of New South Wales. She has worked as a book editor, in a bookshop, and for the Australian Society of Authors. Her essays on Zora Cross have been published in the literary journal *Meanjin*.

Australian poet and journalist Zora Cross caused a sensation in 1917 with her book *Songs of Love and Life*. Here was a demure-looking young woman, celebrating sexual passion in a provocative series of sonnets. She was hailed as a genius, and many expected her to endure as a household name. While Cross's fame didn't last, she kept writing through financial hardship, personal tragedies and two world wars, producing an impressive body of work. Her verse, prose and correspondence with the likes of Ethel Turner, George Robertson (of Angus & Robertson) and Mary Gilmore place Zora Cross among the key personalities of Australia's literary world in the early twentieth century.

Cathy introduced herself by giving us highlights of her career and how it led to the discovery of Zora Cross as an author and prolific letter writer. She both talked about and showed pictures of Zora and other literary figures with whom Zora had correspondence.

Zora Cross's 1917 book of *Songs of Love and Life* was initially turned down by George Robertson, but he happened to read an advance copy and immediately purchased the publishing rights. He wanted Norman Lindsay to illustrate the book, but Lindsay refused, saying that a woman could not possibly be that creative. Despite his misogynistic attitude, Lindsay did do the artwork for the front cover. *Songs of Love and Life* attracted widespread attention because of its erotic content and sold out in three days. It sold 4000 copies between 1917-1918. George Robertson and Zora Cross had an intense relationship by correspondence. When Zora signed the book contract, she was 27, excited, intimate and effervescent in her writing.



Zora Bernice May Cross was born in 1890 in Eagle Farm, Brisbane, but the family lost money in the depression and they moved to Gympie. When Zora was 15 they moved to Sydney. Zora had a lifelong interest in acting. She went to Sydney Teachers' College, combining her teaching career with writing and acting until she married in 1911. The marriage didn't last, and she lost a child. She later was to form a lasting relationship with David McKee Wright, whom she married in 1923. They lived in the Blue Mountains village of Glenbrook where they had two daughters, Davidina and Maeve (known as April).

Zora had poetry published in major journals, as was her eulogy to her younger brother who died during the war. Zora wrote about controversial subjects for the time such as sex, childbirth, Aboriginal communities, and the effects of war on the women who are left behind. Her attitudes and values were considered unsuited to her time.

Her ephemeral work was easier to find than her published work Cathy Perkins was to discover. Letters are often dismissed as by-products of an author's work, but Zora's letters were part of her creative achievement. She had long-term correspondences with many literary people such as Ethel Turner, Mary Gilmore, Bertram Stevens, and John Le Gay Brereton. There were bulging folders of letters in the Angus & Robertson archives, many written by Zora to George Robertson.

Using the pen names Bernice May, Rosa Carmen and Daisy M, Zora contributed regularly in the 1930s to the *Australian Women's Mirror*. As Bernice May she conducted a significant series of interviews with contemporary Australian women writers such as Jean Devanny, Iris Norton and Llywelyn Lucas. Information about these women would have been lost if Zora had not written about them.

In later years Zora drew on a lifetime interest in Ancient Rome and Julius Caesar. Throughout her life she supported herself and her children by acting, teaching and as a freelance journalist. The Commonwealth Literary Fund, (precursor to the Australia Council for the Arts) prompted by the Fellowship of Australian Writers, awarded her a pension. She died in 1964 in Glenbrook.

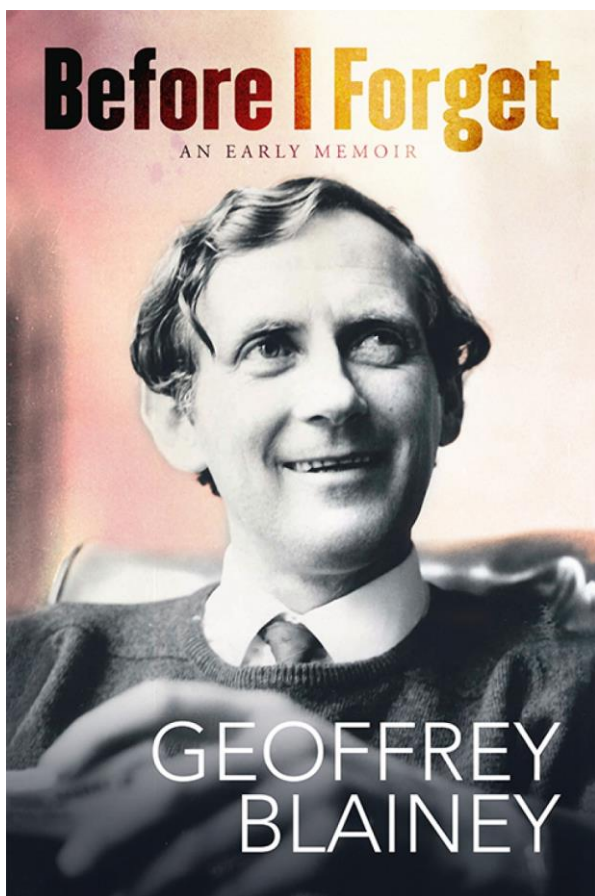
There are twenty-one boxes of her papers in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, many damaged by fire or flood. Many are not transcribed.

‘Oh, bury me in books when I am dead, Fair quarto leaves of ivory and gold,  
And silk octavos, bound in brown and red, That tales of love and chivalry unfold.’

Excerpt from ‘Books’ by Zora Cross, *Songs of Love and Life*, 1917

27 October 2020

***Before I Forget* – an early memoir by Professor Emeritus  
Geoffrey Blainey via zoom**



Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey is the Patron of Camberwell Historical Society. He wrote *A History of Camberwell* in 1964. Professor Blainey was awarded a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in the Australia Day Honours list of 2000 for his service to academia, research and scholarship. In 1988, Geoffrey Blainey was one of five intellectuals awarded gold medals by the United Nations for ‘excellence in the dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of mankind’.

Professor Blainey started his talk by urging people to write their own memoirs to prevent loss of personal stories. A memoir can only mention a fraction of the things that have occurred in lifetime. Remember that memory is fallible, you may remember something vividly but not correctly. Always check your facts where possible. Technology can be very helpful. When writing, there are two tasks involved: what to say and in what order should it be presented.

Professor Blainey went on to say that he started with his early life because you cannot write about people still living without sometimes hurting them. *Before I Forget* was started when he was 70 but completed in 2018. The later years, 1970-1980, volume 2, is not proving to be as pleasurable to write as volume 1!

He talked about some of the other books he has written and some of the highlights about writing them. In *The Peaks of Lyall*, for instance, he writes about Queenstown which has the only gravel football field and has had famous footballers come from there. He also said chance encounters with other people or writers can uncover very interesting stories. He talked about the murder of a school friend in Leongatha in 1935. The murderer was sentenced to death, but the case went to the High Court due to an insanity plea, which was very controversial at the time. Geoffrey researched the events to check his memory and he suggested that anyone writing a memoir should always do the research to check the facts surrounding their own stories.

24 November 2020

**Anthony George Maldon Michell, (1870–1959) engineer and inventor by Stephen Phillip via zoom**



Stephen Phillip is a mechanical engineer who usually lives in Melbourne, Australia. His fascination with Michell began while he was a student at Melbourne University.

**Early years**

George was born on 21 June 1870 in London, second son and youngest of five children of John Michell (pronounced Mitchell), miner, and his wife Grace. His parents, both from Devonshire, joined the gold rush to the new colony of Victoria in 1854 and settled at Maldon. The town was a collection of huts and tents. It was a very rich gold area.

George was born during the family's visit to England in 1870–73 but spent his childhood in Maldon. In 1877 they moved to South Yarra, Melbourne as John Michell, George's brother had

been awarded a scholarship at Wesley College. George attended South Yarra State School.

In 1884 the family once again returned to England. They moved to Cambridge, England for John to go to university. George gained distinctions in classics and mathematics at Perse Grammar School, Cambridge, and attended lectures in physics, chemistry, mechanics and classic Greek art at the University of Cambridge before returning to Victoria in 1890 to study civil and mining engineering at the University of Melbourne. He graduated with first-class honours (B.C.E., 1895; M.C.E., 1899).

George was taught by W.C. Kernot, and the civil and hydraulic engineer Bernhard A. Smith. Michell and Smith jointly developed and patented a design for a regenerative pump. In 1902-03 George was also an examiner of patents in the Victorian Patents Office. He established his own consultancy business in 1903, dealing with projects for irrigation, water supply and sewerage.

**Michell Truss**

Existing trusses were bulky and inefficient. In 1904 Michell published in the *Philosophical Magazine* (London): 'The limits of economy of material in frame-structure'. The Michell theorem, derived from this, has been employed as a basis for computer programs. This work on structural optimisation was ground-breaking but was ignored for about fifty years, when it became used in aircraft fuselage frames. It has recently appeared in architecture as well.

## **Patents**

Michell was a member of the Institute of Patent Attorneys of Australia and from 1931, when he became a registered patent attorney, he prosecuted all his own patent applications: regenerative pump (1901), water turbine, water meter (1904), Michell thrust bearing (1905) and Michell crankless engine (1917). In addition to his thrust bearing, his inventions included journal bearings, pumps and turbines of special types, the Michell viscometer, a telegraph cypher system, a cypher decoding machine and, finally, the Michell crankless engine.

## **Michell Thrust Bearing**

Existing thrust bearing designs were bulky, inefficient and prone to overheating and failure. A.G.M. Michell showed that it was possible to apply film lubrication to flat thrust surfaces and journal bearings, the result being the now widely known and universally adopted Michell bearing. Arising from Michell's research work on the mechanical properties of liquids and the mathematical studies of fluid motion viscosity and lubrication, a patent was taken out in England and Australia on 16 January 1905. In a few years his invention completely revolutionised thrust bearing technology, particularly in the field of marine propulsion and steam turbines. His invention made it possible to build ships up to the size of the *Queen Mary*.

In 1920 Michell Bearings Limited was established in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. Principal shareholders at that time were Vickers, Fairfield Rowan, John Brown Engineering and Cammell Laird. A hundred years later, the design for thrust bearings remains very similar to Michell's original design.

## **Crankless Engine**

The crankless engine invention application was made on 19 June 1917. The engine is in the form of an oblique slice of a solid cylinder mounted on a horizontal shaft. As the shaft rotates the oblique slice reciprocates back and forth. A group of pistons operate in cylinders arranged at equal intervals around the shaft. Contact between pistons and 'slant' is via Michell slippers. Thus, with an oil film intervening, no metal to metal occurs. Motion is purely harmonic and the weight of the 'slant' and the pistons is determined by a single formula which results in a complete balance at all speeds.

In 1920 Michell formed the Crankless Engines company to develop and manufacture engines with an intriguing design that eliminated the crankshaft found in most automotive and stationary engines. The engines did not require the connecting rod and bearings found in most engines and as such could be lighter and more compact. A Fitzroy workshop produced pumps, compressors, automobile engines and aero and gas engines. Construction numbers were assigned to fifty-four machines and of these at least forty-five were built. The company ceased active operations in Australia in 1928 but design and building proceeded in England and the United States. The principal overseas manufacturer, George Waller & Sons of Stroud, Hampshire, England, had by 1971 built 116, mainly gas, compressors, ranging in capacity up to 500,000 cubic feet (14,160 m<sup>3</sup>) per hour.

Michell's outstanding designer was Louis Sherman, a Queensland engineering graduate who became Crankless's representative in England and then worked in the United States. Two of the machines he designed, an 800-horsepower petrol engine (1929) and a 2000-horsepower opposed piston diesel engine (1943) are held by the Smithsonian Institute, Washington; an automobile engine built in Melbourne in 1923 is in the Museum of Victoria.



In his private practice Michell had been consultant to the Mount Lyell Mining & Railway Co. Ltd; designer of the pumping machinery for the Murray Valley irrigation works; and investigator (1919) for the Victorian government of the hydro-electric possibilities on the Kiewa River. He gave up his practice in 1925 to concentrate on the manufacture of the crankless engine and spent several years overseas, returning to Melbourne about 1933.

### **Michell Family Properties**

The family purchased property in Camberwell in 1891 in the Kasouka Estate for £204, and in 1895 a two-storey Italianate mansion 'Monda' on the corner of Kasouka Road and Prospect Hill Road.

John and Grace Michell and the children John, George, Amelia and Grace all lived together. Only one daughter, Elizabeth, ever married and had children. The Michells owned 'Monda' for sixty-two years. Sons John and George established a remarkable garden with a clever watering system.

The Michells attended St Johns Anglican Church in Burke Road, walking to attend services. George and Grace attended in the mornings, John and Amelia in the afternoons.

In 1911 George purchased land in Bunyip and called the property 'Ruramihi'. He built a small wooden house and established a large orchard and cool store, and ran sheep and horses while creating a sanctuary for wildlife. He considered it 'a sanctuary ... essential to his mental health and comfort'. George sold his harvests from 'Ruramihi' in a shop in Fordham Avenue, Camberwell.

From 1939-1949 George owned 'Beulah' at 61 Prospect Hill Road. He also acquired many commercial properties: six shops in South Yarra, two factories in Carlton, and four other houses in Camberwell.

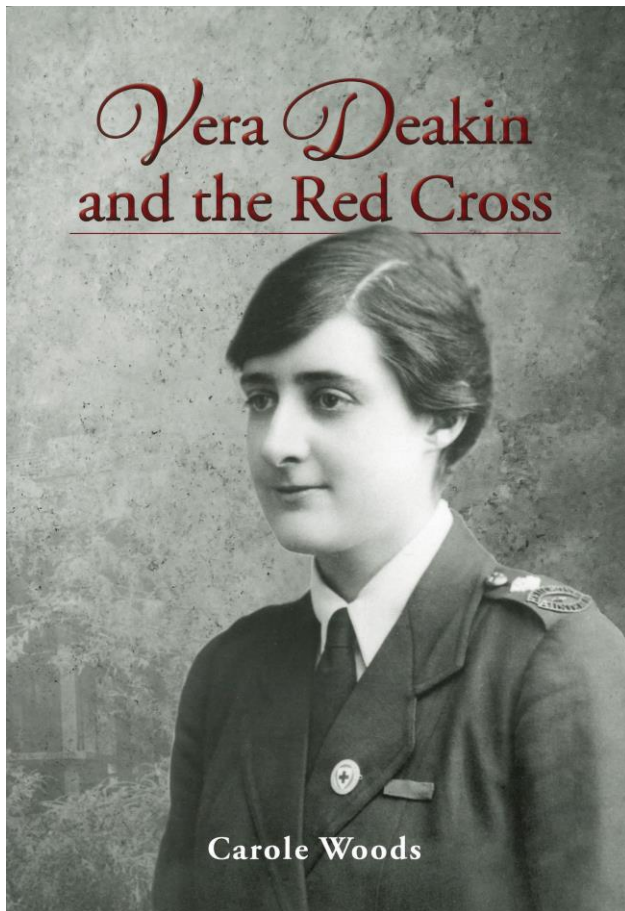
### **Later years**

George has been described as being 'of medium height, of slight build, with sandy hair and moustache, keen intelligent eyes and ... round wire-framed spectacles'. He was quiet, shy and retiring, modest and well liked. He did not participate much in civic life. George became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1934; he received the University of Melbourne's Kernot medal in 1938, and in 1943 was awarded the James Watt International Medal by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, London. His achievements have been likened to those of James Watt.

In 1950, at the age of 80, George Michell published his book *Principles of Lubrication*, a work which demonstrates his facility in expressing his orderly process of thought. On the title page is the working motto of his life, a quotation from Leonardo da Vinci: 'Theory is the Captain, practice the Soldiers'. Of distinctive style, the book is wide-ranging yet concise, original and thorough, and provides a good starting point for students of the subject.

Anthony George Maldon Michell was the last remaining family member, residing in Camberwell until his death at the age of 88. Sadly, his lifetime of great achievement closed with his complete loss of mental capacity. He died at Camberwell on 17 February 1959 and was buried in Boroondara Cemetery with Anglican rites, leaving an estate valued for probate at £174,009. The library of the Michell brothers was presented to the University of Melbourne but was not retained as an entity; A.G.M. Michell's personal records were destroyed. The A.G.M. Michell award was created in 1978 by the Institution of Engineers, Australia, to perpetuate the

memory of one described by Professor John Crisp as 'arguably Australia's most versatile engineer'. A bronze plate in the civil engineering building at the University of Melbourne also commemorates his name.



### ***Vera Deakin and the Red Cross* by Carole Woods**

Vera Deakin, daughter of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, was motivated by imperial fervour during World War I to sidestep the Australian government's restrictions on women's service.

At the outbreak of the war, she was studying music in Budapest but quickly joined the fledgling Australian Red Cross and sailed to Cairo. There she became founding secretary of the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau, an organisation devoted to finding information on behalf of the relatives of Australian soldiers who had gone missing or been wounded or killed during the war.

She was 23 and formidable. A self-styled despot, she welded a disparate group of women into a committed team. Scientist Sir David Rivett said Vera brought 'an infinity of consolation to so many people'. In 1916 she

moved the bureau to London. In 1918, at just 26, she was awarded an OBE for her service to the bureau. She led similar work for the Red Cross in Melbourne during World War II.

In 1920 after a whirlwind romance, Vera married Captain Thomas White, an Australian pilot who had served in the Mesopotamian campaign before being captured by the Turks. She undertook varied welfare work together with lifelong service to the Red Cross.

Vera was honoured during her lifetime but later largely forgotten. The centenary of World War I revived interest in her and the Enquiry Bureau's 32,000 case files on missing soldiers. Now Carole Woods has captured this significant figure in Australian history through her perceptive and poignant biography. Carole explores Vera's humanitarian activism within the defining events of the 20th century and shines a light on a woman who defied society's expectations in order to help those in need.

Carole Woods OAM, is a Fellow and Honorary Secretary of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. For seven years she chaired the judges' panel of the Victorian Community History Awards. Her books include *Vision Fugitive: The Story of David Allen* and *Beechworth: A Titan's Field*. She lives in Camberwell and is a member of Camberwell Historical Society.

## **DATES FOR MEETINGS 2021**

Meetings are currently being held via Zoom although we hope to be able to change this.  
Zoom links will be sent prior to the meetings.

<b>23 February</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Zoom 7pm</b>	<b>Wayne Doubleday</b>	<b>Melbourne tramways</b>
<b>23 March</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Zoom 7pm</b>	<b>Carole Woods</b>	<b>Vera Deakin</b>
<b>27 April</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Zoom 7pm</b>	<b>Ross McMullin</b>	<b>WWI</b>

## **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 SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS 2020**

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1 July to 30 June. Subscriptions for the 2020 – 2021 financial year were due and payable from 1 July 2020. 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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*Camberwell History*: Editor — Adèle Fernando-Swart

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