

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 Garry Thompson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

George Fernando

Our meetings for 2021 continue to be on zoom. Just when we thought we could go back to actual meetings, we faced yet another lockdown. Our next meeting on Tuesday 22 June at 7pm will be on Zoom. Our speaker Tony Tibballs will talk about the cinemas and theatres in the Boroondara area in “Back to Flicks in the Eastern Suburbs”.

Our member Carole Woods OAM spoke about Vera Deakin at our March meeting. Her book *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross* was launched at the Shrine of Remembrance on 25 May by Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria. Dr Ross McMullin spoke on 27 April on the topic “Never Forget Australia”- Villers Bretonneux. Dr Gary Presland spoke on 25 May about Pre-European Aboriginal culture in the Camberwell area.

VERA DEAKIN AND THE RED CROSS

Carole Woods OAM Book Launch - 25 May 2021 - The Shrine of Remembrance



Left to right: Dr Garry Nolan AM, Chairman Victorian Divisional Advisory Board, Australian Red Cross; Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM, President Royal Historical Society of Victoria; Mrs Judith Harley, daughter of Vera Deakin White; Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria; Mr Anthony Howard AM QC; Carole Woods OAM FRHSV and Mr Thomas Harley, grandson of Vera Deakin White.

Photo Nico Keenan, Courtesy Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

<https://www.governor.vic.gov.au/all-speeches/vera-deakin-and-red-cross-book-launch>

Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria, launched the book *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, written by Camberwell Historical Society member Carole Woods OAM. Other speakers included Dr Garry Nolan AM, chair of the Victorian Divisional Advisory Board and member of the National Board of the Australian Red Cross and Mr Tom Harley, grandson of Lady White (Vera Deakin). Associate Professor Rick Chew, director of the Arts Academy at Federation University, arranged the music.

FUNDING WIN FOR HISTORICAL PARK IN THE HEART OF CAMBERWELL

Meg Boyle, Chair of Camberwell Green

Local community group Camberwell Green has campaigned since 2016 to restore an historic park in the heart of Camberwell. A huge step towards seeing this vision become a reality occurred this month when local state MP, Mr John Kennedy, announced an extra \$1.05 million funding towards returning the carpark on Reserve Road to play space that will extend Camberwell Primary School's play area during school hours and be open to the community outside these times. This brings the funding commitment to a total of \$1.76 million and will enable the car park to be transformed with landscaping and sensory gardens.



Left to right: Ms Nina Taylor MLP, Ms Meg Boyle, Chair Camberwell Green, Ms Janet Gale, Principal Camberwell Primary School, Mr John Kennedy MP

A well-attended May event to celebrate Mr John Kennedy's announcement was moved indoors due to rain. Camberwell Green presented Mr Kennedy MP and Ms Nina Taylor MLP with native plants to thank them for showing commitment to a future with green space for the community. Ms Janet Gale, principal of Camberwell Primary School also spoke at the event and there was loud applause for former Camberwell Green chair, Cr Victor Franco who led the campaign for many years.



Left to right: Camberwell Green Volunteers Anna Yang, Sarah Groves-Taylor and Tina Lienert

The win for the community group shows how the persistence of many is important in making change. Camberwell Green is entirely made up of volunteers who are passionate about seeing their community space improved for the future and acknowledging the history of the area. Many individuals gave hours of their time to gather signatures, build a website, lobby politicians, create

visuals and document the history of the original gardens.

Local historian and member of Camberwell Green Bryony Cosgrove, who has researched the history and significance of the park, noted, “This area was set out for use as public gardens from as early as 1882 with plans showing the beautiful pavilion and gardens that were subsequently built.”



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The new garden layout and design is yet to be decided, but Camberwell Green Chair Meg Boyle stated, “We hope to be able to work with all stakeholders collaboratively to create a beautiful green space for everyone in the community to enjoy. With many new councillors now elected to Boroondara City Council (BCC), there is a real opportunity to work together to create a vibrant precinct all the way from Camberwell Junction to the civic centre.”

Works won't be able to start until the issue of Committee of Management of the land is resolved. Currently, Boroondara City Council are the Committee of Management (COM) for the State Government-owned land. However, the Department of Education will likely be appointed the new COM and the Victorian School Building Authority would then manage the allocated funds and the works to convert the carpark to gardens and play space.



As planning and community consultation for the park progresses it is hoped that some historical aspects of the site can be incorporated into the new design. The gardens were laid out in an aesthetically pleasing way and were able to be enjoyed for recreation activities by the community for over a century before a large section was asphalted first for a playground for Our Lady of Victories School and then converted to a carpark.

Camberwell Green will continue to campaign to local council for the middle section of Reserve Road to be closed, with turning circles created at either end. This will allow for a better designed, flowing green space to be created, and a safer park for the hundreds of children who attend

the local school and utilise facilities such as the Camberwell Library.

The vision for the whole area to once again be a vibrant, well-utilised parkland and community hub is a significant step closer to becoming a reality.



BRIGADIER GENERAL HAROLD “POMPEY” ELLIOTT

Memorial Service 23 March 2021

Pompey Elliott is a revered First World War hero. To us he is also remembered as a famous resident of Camberwell. His large portrait graces the walls of the Camberwell RSL. Each year a ceremony commemorating his death is held on 23 March at his graveside in the Burwood Cemetery. This moving service is organised each year by the Friends of the 15th Brigade and is attended by our President George Fernando. Dr Ross McMullin delivers the eulogy each year. Students from his former school in Ballarat attend the service and lay wreaths. A special flag is carried by David Laird who attends the ceremony every year.

At the 2021 ceremony, Dr Ross McMullin, the author of two books on Pompey Elliott, delivered the following eulogy.



BRIGADIER GENERAL HAROLD “POMPEY” ELLIOTT EULOGY 23 March 2021

Dr Ross McMullin

In the final year of the war Australian soldiers were influencing the destiny of the world more than any Australians have done either before or since. In the context of battles involving Pompey’s brigade in 1918, the primary focus has understandably been on the Villers-Bretonneux counter-attack or the great advance accomplished on 8 August 1918, when no Australian brigade advanced further than Pompey’s men and the chief German strategist, Ludendorff, concluded afterwards that only one side could now win the war and it wasn’t his.

Pompey was of course delighted with the accolades from admirers that Villers-Bret was the finest thing yet done in the whole war by any soldiers from any nation. But a striking aspect of what the Australians did in 1918 was that this assessment kept being made. Four months after Villers-Bret the same thing was being said of the AIF’s brilliant victory at Peronne and Mont St Quentin. Pompey was extraordinary at Peronne, and this is what I’ll be focusing on today.

The context is crucial. In August and September 1918 the Australians are trying to drive the Germans back with relentless pressure. The Germans are resisting very capably. Pompey keeps emphasising in his letters at the time that the tactical direction of the enemy’s retreat is outstanding. As an army they are still fighting very skillfully. Even if some of their newer younger soldiers are not always of the highest calibre, overall they are still redoubtable with

determined machine-gunners and lethal artillery. And the AIF is such a diminished force, with numbers declining to such an extent that battalions are having to be disbanded, and our men are exhausted, not having had a rest for months.

And the other thing about the context is that Peronne is such a formidable fortress, with a moat and massive ramparts (as those of you who've been there will know), together with inaccessible marshes and the Somme River, which the Germans have made impenetrable by blowing up the bridges. Moreover, the Germans were intent on holding up the Australian advance at Peronne for at least a month and were defending this formidable fortress with specially picked men who had volunteered for the task of holding up the Australians and were determined to do so.

Pompey distinguishes himself at Peronne in a number of ways.

When he first arrives in the area, his brigade is located south of Peronne where the Somme runs north-south (the AIF is advancing towards the east). As soon as he arrives, he goes forward for a remarkable personal reconnaissance out into no-man's-land, attracting enemy fire in the process; he comes across an old German dugout that was ahead of what were then the most advanced AIF positions, and declares, "This will do for brigade headquarters". The staff officer with Pompey at the time wrote afterwards that "Probably on no other occasion during the war did a general establish his headquarters in advance of his front line".

Another legendary Pompey episode at Peronne occurs a little later when he tries to ginger up his battalion commanders to get their men across the Somme. But the colonels are satisfied that all that can be done is being done. With a contemptuous snort, Pompey says, "Damn it, I'll take them over myself", and proceeds to hazard his way — under fire — across a damaged bridge that is no certainty to support his hefty frame. Sure enough, he eventually falls in with a spectacular splash. Signallers amuse themselves spreading the diverting message far and wide that "Pompey's fallen in the Somme" with such gusto that the entire Fifth Division communications are blocked. And there is a memorable sequel — the arresting sight of Pompey clad only in a shirt while his other clothes are drying, strutting about uninhibitedly, directing developments and dictating messages.

As a result of his vigorous, dynamic leadership, men of his brigade did try to advance south of Peronne, but the patrols sent forward found progress impossible. The river and oozy marsh mud were difficult to penetrate, and the enemy resistance was fierce.

Pompey was then summoned to an evening conference by his divisional commander, General Hobbs. For the second time in 48 hours, the car dispatched to collect Pompey and take him back failed to find him in the dark, so once again he had to trudge a long way back across part of the old Somme battlefield. It was an extremely challenging area to traverse in the dark, and he had a very difficult time. He did not find Hobbs's HQ until 2am and Pompey was very weary. When he was told what the Fifth Division was supposed to be doing in a few hours' time, he was appalled. Hobbs had arranged for the 15th Brigade to attack in precisely the way that Pompey's patrols had just proved was impossible. And what the 14th Brigade had to do — manoeuvre a long way and then attack Peronne — was even worse. Pompey told Hobbs bluntly that for the 14th Brigade to attack Peronne in that manner would be far too demanding for already exhausted men.

Pompey felt a strong sense of friendly comradeship with the 14th Brigade. His brother George had died a year earlier while serving in the 14th Brigade, and two of the 14th's leaders — the brigade commander Cam Stewart, and the revered battalion commander Norman Marshall — were friends of Pompey's and had served under him in the 15th Brigade before joining the 14th. Pompey was keen to help the 14th Brigade whenever he could.

On this occasion, after 2am on 1 September 1918, with units about to undertake an operation that Pompey strongly felt would prove disastrous, he wasn't sure what to do. All he could come up with on the spur of the moment was a startling idea to move his men across the enemy's front to support the 14th Brigade in the attack on Peronne. As he wrote at the time,

I was satisfied that unless something like that were done the 14th would be badly defeated, [as] they had been allotted far too big a task for their strength, and although my own proposal seemed to me hairbrained ... should the enemy discover what we were [up to], there was this bare chance that the enemy would never dream that anyone would be mad enough to attempt it, and the occasion required desperate measures.

Hobbs was very concerned, of course, to hear this fervent assessment from Pompey, but he knew Pompey was familiar with the state of affairs in the front line and Hobbs in his rearward HQ was not. In the end Hobbs authorised Pompey to implement his highly unorthodox proposal. This is what Hobbs wrote in his diary about that night: "I have been up against many trials, difficulties and problems in my life, but never have I had to face such an awful responsibility and danger as the position I had to deal with last night ... I shall never I think have a tougher problem to solve." Charles Bean concluded in his *Official History* that the assistance Pompey gave the 14th Brigade at Peronne was of "almost unparalleled generosity".

The upshot later on was that some confusion arose in the fighting at Peronne, and the acting commander of the 58th Battalion, Major Harold Ferres, who had sustained a bloody thigh wound in the operation but managed to keep going though limping heavily, ended up with a decision to make. He could either wait for Pompey and other superior commanders to sort out the confusion, or he could act boldly on his own initiative and attack. He decided to attack. The Germans resisted fiercely, but the 58th proceeded methodically from house to house through the town. It was a tough fight, but the 58th performed brilliantly and Peronne was conquered.

Meanwhile other Australian formations captured the dominating nearby bastion of Mont St Quentin. Monash, writing at the time, asserted that the combined victories at Peronne and Mont St Quentin have been "rightly described as the most brilliant single feat of the whole war". Hobbs agreed, and so did the senior British commander General Rawlinson.

After such exploits you might have thought that the 15th Brigade was entitled to a rest. Not so. Pompey wrote to his wife after the battle:

Katie, the poor old brigade! It would break your heart to see all that is left of them, the bravest wan, haggard and drawn, the others like men in a sleep walk almost, [but nevertheless] tomorrow we fall in again to follow the enemy.

The day after the 58th defeated the enemy in Peronne, Pompey saw a copy of an order directing the 14th Brigade to advance along the valley beyond Peronne. Once again, he was appalled, once again he felt protective about the 14th Brigade, and once again he acted decisively. He was

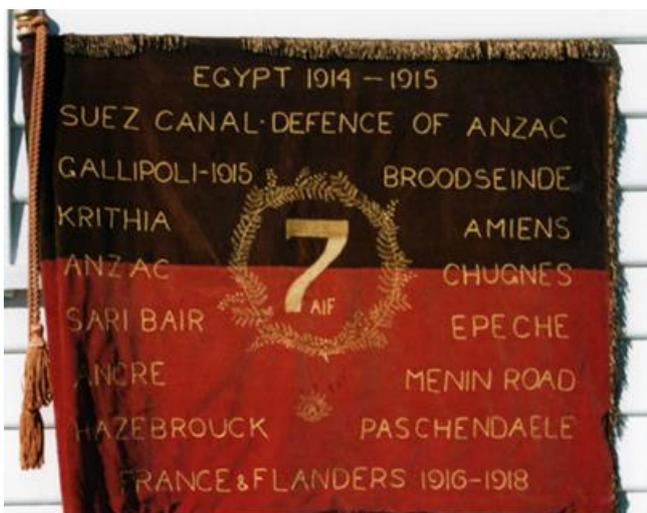
sure he knew much more about the situation up there than his superiors; the 14th Brigade would be slaughtered by Germans overlooking the valley, and he decided to phone Hobbs about it. He told Hobbs that if the operation went ahead he would arrange for his 15th Brigade to support the 14th as much as possible, but on the following day he would resign his command because he was no longer prepared to put up with men being wantonly sacrificed due to the lack of proper reconnaissance and awareness by senior commanders. Now it was Hobbs's turn to be appalled, and he hastily called a conference. At this conference it became apparent that Hobbs and his staff were basing their decisions on an incorrect map. Hobbs agreed that Pompey's criticism was correct, and the proposed operation was cancelled.

During the next few days, when Hobbs attended parades involving units in the 15th Brigade, he strongly praised Pompey's leadership at Peronne, and went so far as to declare publicly that there was no finer general in France.

THE 7th BATTALION A.I.F.

“Cede Nullis” “The Story of our Flag”.

David Laird



The 7th Battalion Flag has been carried by the Battalion every year on ANZAC Day and at other official and private Battalion ceremonies since 1925.

The history we have is anecdotal and has been passed down through the families of the Battalion. The flag was commissioned by Mrs Kate Blannin-Ferguson, in 1925.

In 1914 a 16-year-old Clarrie Wignell of Euroa (Later L/Cpl Wignell Regimental, number 20, Military Medal and Bar) had enlisted in the AIF and was sent to

Broadmeadows Army Camp for basic training. It was there he met and became firm friends with Lance and Daryl Blannin-Ferguson.

On ANZAC Day 1915, Private Lance Blannin-Ferguson Reg. No. 687 was one of many men killed in action. Thirteen days later, his brother Private Daryl Gardner Blannin-Ferguson Reg. No. 688 was also killed in action. Their widowed mother was tragically distraught at the news of the death of her only sons. Their deaths had a lasting impact on her, from which she understandably had difficulty in overcoming throughout her life. Mrs Blannin-Ferguson was listed as next of kin on her sons' war records.

At the end of the war, she was visited by Clarrie Wignell, who embodied the sense of kinship, loyalty and family that was the hallmark of the 7th Battalion and all other Battalions of the Australian Infantry Forces. Clarrie kept in touch with Kate, who grew very fond of him. When the ANZAC Day marches became a more regular feature of life, Kate commissioned a seamstress to create the flag as a fitting tribute to the young men who had served: something

more fitting, to her mind, than the official Battalion colours. She gave it to Clarrie as a personal gift and it immediately took pride of place at the front of the Battalion marches, memorial and church services, where it has been paraded ever since and continues to be. It is embroidered with the names of famous battles that her sons never got to attend.

Before Clarrie's passing he asked that the flag be taken care of by Fred Laird (Son of Sergeant Fred Laird Reg. No. 2379). Fred took custody of the flag and he promised Clarrie that it would make appearances at every engagement, where it has always held pride of place. These include the Melbourne ANZAC Day March, the Camberwell RSL and the Wattle Park Lone Pine ceremony.

Attempts have been made with Trustees of the Shrine and the RSL to preserve it for posterity and display it to the public, however as it is a private item and not an official flag, there was no interest shown. The flag continues to grace ANZAC Day parades with a strong contingent of 7th Battalion families to escort it.

Fred Laird passed away in September 2010 and had entrusted me with the flag. I was present when Clarrie made a gift of the flag to Fred and I was also asked by Clarrie to make sure the tradition carried on when my father eventually passed away. I made a promise to Clarrie that day, and, by extension, the entire 7th Battalion.

As our flag was created for two boys who perished at Gallipoli and one boy who survived the enduring horror that was the First World War, it represents our perennial memory of the men who did not return and of the men who did return, the benefits of whose deeds and sacrifice we continue to enjoy today.

During research into the Blannin-Ferguson boys, I discovered that they had an older brother who enlisted in a different battalion in Sydney and returned to Sydney at the end of the war. A simple White Pages enquiry on the surname Blannin-Ferguson allowed me to contact Anne-Blannin Ferguson, whose grandfather was the missing son. Anne is very familiar with the story of her great uncles, but had no idea of the existence of the flag until we spoke in 2011. Anne is now a very welcome and regular attendee at the Melbourne ANZAC Day March. The flag continues to unite the 7th Battalion family to this day.



As a final note of interest, the renowned military researcher Lambis Englezos, who discovered the mass Australian grave in Fromelles in 2008, is certain he has found the final resting place of approximately 148 Australian Soldiers at Krithia. The name Daryl Blannin-Ferguson is inscribed on the memorial at Krithia, but he has no known grave. By the bonds created through this flag, it is possible, when Lambis gets permission to recover the bodies, we will be able to DNA test a living relative, and, potentially give a young man a grave of his own and a refreshed memory, over 100 years after his demise.

Above: Clarrie Wignell and his Banner in the late 1980s.

FRIENDS OF THE 15th BRIGADE

Graham Williams, Editor of the Friends of the 15th Brigade Newsletter

The 15th Brigade of the First AIF was formed in Egypt in 1916 and consisted of four Victorian Battalions. It was part of the 5th Division and was under the command of Brigadier General H. E. “Pompey” Elliott from 1916 to 1918.

The Friends of the 15th Brigade was formed in 1993 by Jacqueline Todd, Lambis Englezos and Robin Corfield, author of *Don't Forget Me Cobber*, an enquiry into the battles of Fromelles. The aim of Friends of the 15th Brigade is to share information, preserve memories and arrange commemorations associated with the 15th Brigade.

Lambis Englezos AM heads the group and is renowned for his persistence and efforts in discovering the mass graves of Australian soldiers killed at Fromelles and their re-burial at Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery. Friends of the 15th Brigade hold four commemoration ceremonies each year. The first commemorates the death of Pompey Elliott and is held at his gravesite in the Burwood Cemetery on the anniversary of his death, 23 of March. Other ceremonies are held at the Shrine of Remembrance in conjunction with the Shrine Governors and staff to commemorate the significant engagements of the 15th Brigade. These are:

- The Villers-Bretonneux service, 24 April, where the 15th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Pompey Elliott, played a major part in retaking the village of Villers-Bretonneux. This service is held on the lawn area at a Battalion tree in the grounds of the Shrine.
- The Fromelles Service, 19 July, remembers the 5533 Australians killed wounded or captured in this disastrous 18-hour battle. This service is held at the “Cobbers” statue in the Shrine grounds.
- The Polygon Wood service, 26 September, remembers a pivotal battle involving the 15th Brigade during the Passchendaele campaign and is also held at a Battalion tree in the Shrine lawn area,

Friends of the 15th Brigade produce a newsletter each year, containing the stories submitted by relatives of soldiers of the 15th Brigade and sometimes the diaries of these soldiers. It also allows members to share their stories of pilgrimages to the battlefields in memory of their relatives. The membership of Friends of the 15th Brigade currently stands at 345 and operates by donations only. If you are interested in joining, please contact our Secretary Ms Maria Baker on papbaker@bigpond.com

REPORT OF MEETINGS 2021



23 March 2021 – Carole Woods OAM – Vera Deakin’s Search for the Missing (a presentation via zoom)

Carole Woods OAM has been the Royal Historical Society of Victoria’s honorary secretary for 12 years and a member of the Publications Committee since 1989. She is a Fellow of the Society. Carole has been a judge of the Victorian Community History Awards for 20 years, and for 7 years chaired the judges’ panel. Competitions give prestige to the winners and incentives for the writing of history, and the public gets the benefit of the writings.

Carole's work has kept these competitions going and she has made an enormous contribution to history in Victoria.

Carole curated the RHSV exhibition 'The Australian Red Cross in the Great War' and another based on her book *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*. Her publications include *Beechworth: A Titan's Field*, and *Vision Fugitive: The Story of David Allen*. Her latest publication is *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*.

In 1920 some 16,000 Australians remained missing. Increasingly from October 1915, relatives sought assistance from the new Australian Red Cross Wounded & Missing Enquiry Bureau in Cairo, which was dealing with cases from the Gallipoli campaign. This bureau was directed by an accomplished and compassionate young woman named Vera Deakin.

Vera's father, Alfred Deakin, was an innovative cabinet minister in Victoria, a powerful proponent of Federation and three times prime minister of Australia. Although an entertaining companion to his three daughters, he never ceased to instil seriousness of purpose. Pattie Deakin, Vera's mother, set an example in welfare leadership as President of the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society, and foundation president of the Victorian Association of Crèches and the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria. Pattie advocated crèches and kindergartens as a way of helping working women and reducing the neglect of children.

While in London after Britain's declaration of war on Germany, Vera quickly became frustrated at the lack of opportunities for women to serve. Back in Australia, Vera felt similarly frustrated. During the First World War the Australian Government employed only nurses among women for the war effort. Australian women wanting to serve the Empire during the war joined a variety of voluntary aid organisations. Vera and her mother Pattie participated in the work of the new Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society and its Victorian Division, both launched in August 1914.

Vera and her friend Winifred Johnson went to Cairo in 1915. Winifred did not want to languish at home while three of her four brothers enlisted. Under Pattie's influence, Alfred and his son-in-law Herbert Brookes agreed to support Vera financially.

The Australian bureau was patterned on and cooperated closely with the British service. Like its British parent, the Australian bureau had the threefold aims of obtaining information about the missing, ascertaining details of the death and burial of those killed or who had died of wounds, and keeping relatives informed about sick and wounded soldiers.

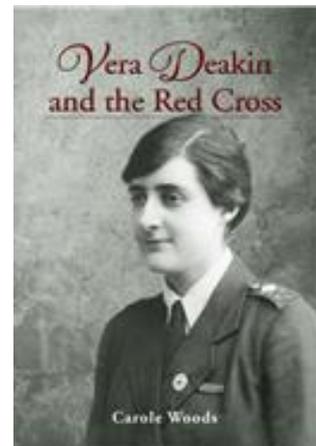
After the transfer of Australian troops from Egypt to France in 1916, Vera moved her staff to London and opened the Australian enquiry bureau at 54 Victoria Street in May of that year. When these premises became impossibly cramped, the bureau moved to a mansion at 36 Grosvenor Place. In July 1916 the Australian Red Cross opened a prisoners of war department under Mary Chomley, which worked alongside the enquiry bureau and sent parcels of food and clothing to Australian prisoners of war in Germany and Turkey: in mid-1918 this department was assisting 3050 men interned in Germany and 136 in Turkey. Meanwhile, the enquiry bureau developed a prisoners of war index based on lists of prisoners compiled by German military authorities and sent to the Red Cross in Geneva.

Vera continued as secretary and took charge of cabling. Winifred was assistant secretary while Marjorie Syme, a cousin of Winifred, supervised the sorting and assessment of many thousands of searchers' reports. Lilian Whybrow, a Melbourne University graduate who had joined the bureau in August 1916, managed the group that wrote letters.

The enquiry bureau's statistics for 1917 documented the magnitude of the tasks performed. During 1917 the bureau received nearly 27,000 cabled enquiries from Australia and cabled 24,600 replies. Posted enquiries numbered over 9000 and another 11,400 enquiries arrived from Britain and France. Searchers' reports amounted to nearly 33,000.

Vera demonstrated impressive leadership skills at the enquiry bureau. She welded office volunteers from disparate backgrounds into an effective team, set an example by her own dedicated work, conferred closely with leading colleagues, clearly defined the bureau's goals and motivated staff to realise them.

In 1918 Vera received the OBE for her humanitarian work. She married Captain Thomas White in 1920. They had four daughters and lived in South Yarra. Vera was the traditional supportive wife when her husband represented the electorate of Balaclava in the Federal Parliament, held ministerial office in the Lyons and Menzies governments and became Australian High Commissioner in London. When Tom White was knighted in 1952, Vera became Lady White.



Vera was dedicated to the Red Cross and during the Second World War, she and her friend Lilian Whybrow (now Mrs Scantlebury) revived their enquiry work for the Victorian Division in Melbourne. They were co-directors of the Victorian bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War, and Vera was Commandant in charge of volunteers in Victoria.

Remembrance of the fallen was a strong theme in the lives of both Vera and Tom White. Vera established the Victorian branch of the Anzac Fellowship of Women in 1935. She continued as president until her death aged 86 in 1978. The Anzac Fellowship planted a pin oak in Vera's memory in King's Domain opposite the Victoria Barracks.

Vera was one of the very few women to rise to high office in the Red Cross overseas service during the First World War. Her enquiry work during two world wars developed into the Australian Red Cross tracing and refugee services that continue as core services today. Her other remarkable legacy is the collection of records generated by the Australian Red Cross enquiry bureau during the First World War; the Australian War Memorial has made 32,000 enquiry bureau cases available on its website. The destruction of the records of the British enquiry bureau has heightened their value. These plain eyewitness accounts, testifying to the intense suffering and relentless brutality of war, are part of the bedrock of the Australian archive on the First World War.

The enquiry bureau records became part of the historical archive used by the Australian-British joint project in recent times to locate, try to identify and re-inter bodies of the missing from the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916. The bureau records were used in conjunction with archaeological research and DNA. Mike O'Brien, retired major general, says that the continuing

identification research into the missing Australian soldiers at Fromelles means that Vera's work remains 'alive' to this day.

Vera gained recognition in her lifetime but she and her team of Australian women subsequently faded from historical view, largely because of preoccupation with male participants in the war and the demeaning treatment of volunteer work in our society. The commemoration of the centenary of the First World War again turned attention to a young woman from Melbourne who at the age of 23 led the Australian Red Cross search for the missing. This was a major national humanitarian wartime service with international significance.



27 April 2021 - Dr Ross McMullin - "Never Forget Australia": Transformation at Villers-Bretonneux (a presentation via zoom)

Dr Ross McMullin has written two books on Pompey, and his biography *Pompey Elliott* won awards for both literature and biography. His multi-biography *Farewell, Dear People: Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation* was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History. His other books include *Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius*, which was highly commended by the judges of the National Biography Award.

<http://www.rossmcmullin.com.au>

Pompey Elliott was Australia's most famous fighting general in the First World War. It has been said of Elliott that he could do some things with Australian troops no other commander could do. Elliott knew it and was humble about it. After Polygon Wood he wrote to his wife:

It is all due to the boys and the officers like Norman Marshall ... It is wonderful the loyalty and bravery that is shown, their absolute confidence in me is touching - I can order them to take on the most hopeless looking jobs and they throw their hearts and souls not to speak of their lives and bodies into the job without thought. You must pray more than ever that I shall be worthy of this trust, Katie, and have wisdom and courage given me worthy of my job.

The immense German onslaught in March 1918 caused Britain's gravest crisis of the First World War. Australians rushed to the rescue, influenced the destiny of the world more than in any other year. The culmination of their contribution in the conflict's climax was the stunning counterattack at Villers-Bretonneux. It was acclaimed as the war's most brilliant exploit, and no-one was more significant in battle than Camberwell's own Pompey Elliott.

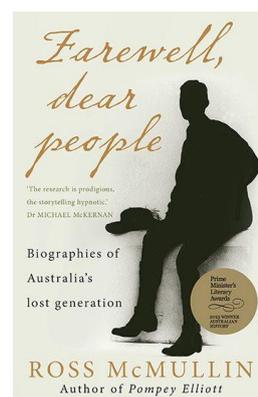
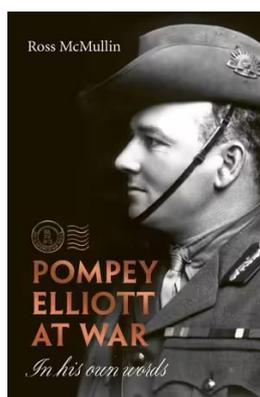
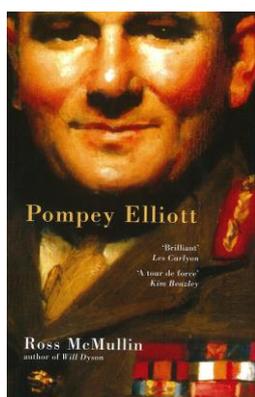
There were more casualties in 1917 than at any other time in Australia's history since European settlement: 77,000 casualties, 22,000 deaths. The eight-month campaign in Gallipoli had 26,000 casualties and 8000 deaths. It was a year of the worst defeats, the most POWs captured, a year of ghastly slaughter and great dread for families. It was a great juggernaut of destruction. Conditions in the trenches in winter made survival a grim ordeal.

In March 1918, the Germans launched an immense offensive that drove the British back no less than 40 miles. There was widespread genuine concern that after years of fierce fighting, awful hardships and frightful casualties, Britain and its allies might well lose the war. At this critical time Pompey wrote:

I was never so proud of being an Australian as I am today ... The gallant bearing and joyous spirit of the men at the prospect of a fight thrills you through and through. You simply cannot despair or be downhearted. Whatever the odds against, you can feel their spirits rising the more the danger seems to threaten. It is glorious indeed to be with them.

The culmination of their important 1918 contribution was the celebrated counterattack that recaptured the tactically vital town of Villers-Bretonneux. What the Australian soldiers did in 1918, both in defence against the German onslaught and also later that year when they spearheaded the offensive that brought eventual victory, prompts the conclusion that Australians were influencing the destiny of the world more than they had ever done before and perhaps since. As Pompey wrote:

I ... have seen them triumph in battles, and have greeted them beaten, but never disgraced, returning from a stricken field—they were proud moments; but I have never been prouder than when ... we marched, at night, 26 miles. ... When I arrived at General ... Monash's headquarters ... his staff officer said, 'They will never get here'. But at the appointed hour the whole brigade marched in intact, in close and beautiful order ...



25 May 2021 – Dr Gary Presland - Pre-European Aboriginal culture in the Camberwell area (a presentation via zoom)

Dr Gary Presland studied history at LaTrobe University and archaeology at the University of London. For the past forty years his major research interests have been in the Aboriginal history and natural history of the Melbourne area. His books include *First People* and *First Residents of Melbourne's Western Region*. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

At the time Europeans settled in the area of Camberwell, it was part of the estate of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Kulin Nation. The Kulin Nation refers to a particular social organisation or gathering or clan. The Wurundjeri-balluk clan was split into the willam (white gums) and the baluk willam (wetlands). Gary talked about the original landscape and the social life of local Aboriginal people before white people took their lands. When Europeans first arrived in Victoria, early in the 19th century, Aboriginal people had been living here for tens of thousands of years.

In the Kulin eyes there was no difference between the people and the country they lived on. So there was a strong identification with the place where they were born. All people in a clan spoke

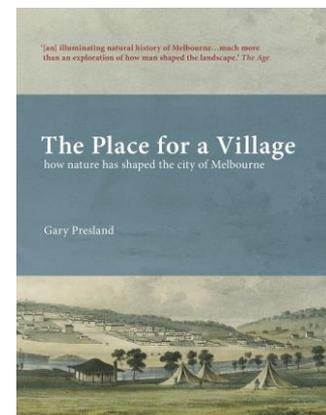
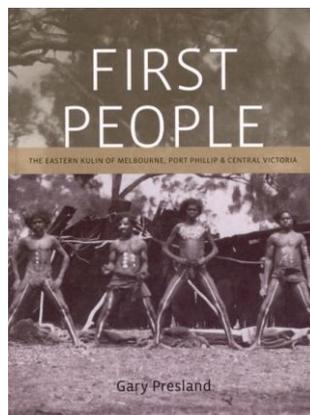
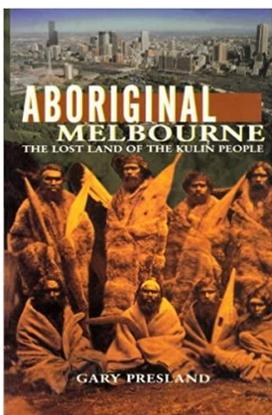
a particular language. Where a number of clans spoke the same language, they are known as a language group. Traditionally people lived within smaller groups or bands of 12 to 18 people. There were strict marriage rules where people could only marry the opposite moiety. Marriages were arranged. Women were given in marriage when they were old enough to have children, usually around 14 or 15. Men married when they had acquired enough knowledge, around 30+. Women moved to live with their husband's group. Each group had a clan head who spoke for the group, but long discussion occurred to get the mob's opinion prior to meetings.

Kulin clans were united by an array of social and religious connections, established over many generations, through intermarriage. These clans identified with particular tracts of land within which they could operate as an independent group. The religious and familial obligations of individuals, however, required regular movement within the wider territory of the Kulin Nation. The Kulin clans were able to survive and maintain something of their culture.

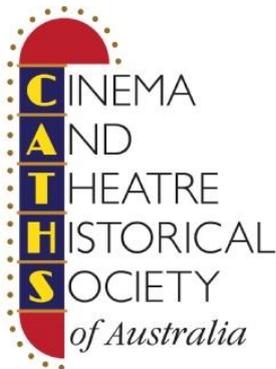
"This will be the place for a village!" John Batman wrote in his journal after he sailed up the Yarra River in June 1835. Gary suggested that it was the geology of Melbourne, and its effect on river courses and soil quality that led Batman to that decision. Gary looked at the geology, meteorology, botany and zoology of the area to recapture the lost landscapes of Melbourne, using historical information and remnant vegetation data in the reconstruction.

Indigenous people both responded to but also manipulated the environment so that early settlers did not see a virgin landscape, even though they may have perceived it that way at the time. Both Indigenous people and the white settlers who supplanted them have had to operate within features that were laid down millions of years ago through the geological formations that have shaped Melbourne's topography.

The Camberwell area was mainly grassy woodlands; around Glen Iris it was grassy plains and in the Box Hill area grassy forest. In a traditional society the men hunted, and the women gathered. Myth 1 about the society was that men provided most of the food through hunting. In fact, women gathered most of the food. Myth 2 was that hunter gatherers lived a hand to mouth existence, constantly chasing food and water. This was wrong as the daily needs of the group could be met in four or five hours of work each day. There was plenty of time for various activities. Wetlands were important. They were like supermarkets are for us. Fire was a means of caring for country as well as achieving more food. Burning every three to five years led to open woodlands and landscapes which were attractive to European pastoralists.



NEXT MEETING:



“Back to the Flicks”- the history of Cinema and the Theatres in the Eastern Suburbs, A presentation via zoom by Tony Tibballs.

Tuesday 22 June 2021 6.45pm for 7pm.

Please book. The zoom link will be sent.

Tony Tibballs is a member of the committee of The Cinema and Theatre Historical Society of Australia Inc. which was formed in Melbourne in 1989. CATHS has an extensive archive collection located at the Prahran Mechanics Institute local history library in Melbourne. Check the website for details: www.caths.org.au. Tony’s special interest is in the beautiful architecture of theatre buildings. One of his trades was assisting with leadlight / stained glass window restoration in historical buildings.

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEW MEMBERS

Camberwell Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: Nerida Muirden and John and Sue de Araugo.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30TH JUNE 2022

All membership subscriptions are due after 1 July 2021

Subscription renewal: to be returned to:

The Secretary, Camberwell Historical Society Inc., PO Box 1274, Camberwell, 3124.

Subscription Rate:	Ordinary membership:	\$30.00
	Family membership:	\$40.00
	Corporate membership:	\$40.00

Please include Name, Address, Postcode, Telephone, Mobile, Email

Details for direct or internet banking:

Camberwell Historical Society Incorporated,
Bendigo Bank, BSB 633-000, Account No 142260678

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2021

Meetings are currently being held via Zoom. Zoom links will be sent prior to the meetings.

Tuesday 22 June	2021	7pm Zoom	Tony Tibballs - Back to the Flicks in the Eastern Suburbs
Saturday 24 July	2021	2pm	Steve Stefanopolous – Stonnington
Saturday 21 August 2021		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 SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS 2021

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1 July to 30 June. Subscriptions for the 2021 – 2022 financial year are due and payable from 1 July 2021. 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

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PO Box 1274 CAMBERWELL 3124 Tel: 9885 9927

Web address: <http://www.chs.org.au>

email address: enquiries@chs.org.au

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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