

CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL
AND DISTRICT
Camberwell Historical Society



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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

George Fernando

We have recently received disturbing news that the State Government's proposed budget cutbacks will impact on every not-for-profit historical group interested in using the Local History Grants Program, administered by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV). The intention of this program is to help preserve, record and share Victoria's history.

Such grants have, in the past, supported locally focused projects to assist with the preservation, cataloguing and digitising of valued historical collections, held by these groups on behalf of their local communities, as well as important research projects. The Society is concerned about the short and longer term impacts these proposed funding cutbacks will have on the operations of local history groups.

All members of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies, including Camberwell, have been urged to also express our concerns about the impact these proposed budget cuts will have on the future operations of any groups relying on such grants to support the provision of their valued preservation and research activities, on behalf of their local communities.

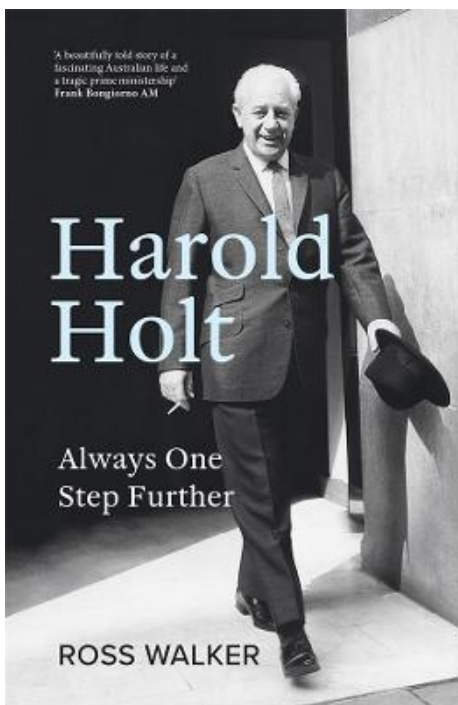
We don't believe that this is the time to implement budget cuts to the Local History Grants Program administered by PROV, that will limit committed volunteer members of local historical groups to achieve their full potential. We will let the minister responsible for these grants funding, and your local member, know how widespread our concerns are. Recent community actions were successful in achieving the continued support of TROVE.

DONATIONS

A donation of a photograph of Hannah Helena Hooke, Mayoress of Hawthorn, in front of 'Fairholme' from around 1892 or 1893 was received from Rosemary Hooke. Inscribed 'Fairholme Mr Copeland's residence, Camberwell'.



REPORT OF MEETINGS 2023



28 March 2023
One Step Further

Ross Walker - *Harold Holt: Always*

Ross Walker was for many years a high-school teacher of English and English Literature. He has published several books and many articles. He has a doctorate in American literature, and specialised knowledge of Australian and American politics, especially during the 1960s.

Harold Holt: Always One Step Further, details Holt's life as both a person and a politician. The book focuses on the character and personality of Holt, on his unusual life rather than on his bizarre death. The story is told in three sections: Holt's life from childhood, leading up to his prime ministership, his first year as prime minister, and his second and tragic, final year. Harold Holt is a man whose significant political legacy has long been overshadowed by the controversial and conspiracy-laden circumstances of his drowning at Cheviot Beach on the Mornington Peninsula.

Harold Edward Holt (5 August 1908 – 17 December 1967) was the 17th Prime Minister of Australia, from January 1966 until his disappearance and presumed death in 1967. The challenge of writing the biography was that Harold Holt has relatives and friends still living. Sam Holt declined to be interviewed. In writing Ross tried to make connections and see patterns of behaviour. One clearly marked pattern is Holt's habit of placing himself in harms way.

Harold Holt was born on 5 August 1908 at his parents' home in Stanmore, Sydney, New South Wales. He was the eldest of two sons born to Olive May and Thomas James Holt. Harold's younger brother Clifford was born in 1910. The family moved around as Tom tried different careers. His parents separated and in 1920, Cliff and Harold began boarding at Wesley College, Melbourne. Wesley provided much needed stability. Harold was a popular and talented student, winning a scholarship in his final year and graduating second in his class. At his final Speech Night, no one from his family was present. Harold was a risk taker in sport at school. It was a lonely and difficult childhood. The boys generally spent school holidays with their relatives or with schoolmates, rather than with his parents – his mother died in 1925. Their mother's death had a huge impact on the boys – Cliff wouldn't go back to school, Harold willed himself to continue.

In 1927, Harold began studying law at the University of Melbourne, living at Queen's College on a scholarship. He represented the university in cricket and football, and was also active in various student organisations, serving as president of the Law Students' Society and of the Queen's College social club. Holt won prizes for oratory and essay-writing and was a member of the inter-university debating team. He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1930.

Harold Holt was admitted to the Victorian Bar in late 1932 and opened his own legal practice the following year. Holt's involvement in the practice declined once he entered politics and ceased altogether in 1949, although he did not formally retire until assuming the prime ministership.

In 1933, Holt joined the Young Nationalists, the youth wing of the United Australia Party. He secured the patronage of Robert Menzies, with whom he shared a similar background and political views. Holt was twenty-seven years old when he entered parliament, making him its youngest member. When Robert Menzies became Prime Minister in April 1939, he made Harold Holt one of four ministers without portfolio.

Holt enlisted in the Militia in February 1939. In May 1940, Holt enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force with the intent of becoming a full-time soldier. Holt's brief military career came to an end because of the Canberra air disaster on 13 August 1940, which killed three senior government ministers. Holt was sworn in as Minister for Labour and National Service on 28 October, and formally resigned from the army the same day. In April 1941, Holt sponsored and oversaw the passage of the *Child Endowment Act*, which introduced a universal child endowment scheme- newspapers labelled him "the godfather to a million Australian children".

Harold Holt became Treasurer from 1958–1966. His achievements included major reforms to the banking system and the planning and preparation for the introduction of decimal currency. It was Holt who convinced Cabinet to call the new currency the "dollar" rather than the "royal". He oversaw the creation of the Reserve Bank of Australia. Holt's enlightened approach to industrial relations saw the number of working hours lost to strikes fall dramatically, from over two million in 1949 to just 439,000 in 1958. He also had ministerial responsibility for the Melbourne Olympics in 1956.

Holt was sworn in as Prime Minister on 26 January 1966, following the retirement of Robert Menzies. Holt was the first Australian Prime Minister born in the 20th century and the first born after Federation. As Prime Minister, Holt's first overseas trip was to South-East Asia in April 1966, where he visited Malaysia, Singapore, South Vietnam, and Thailand. He toured Cambodia, Laos, South Korea, and Taiwan in March and April 1967, and had planned to visit Burma, India,

Indonesia, Japan, and Pakistan in 1968. Most of those countries had never been visited by an Australian Prime Minister. There were also several reciprocal visits from East Asian leaders.

Holt's government expanded Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and maintained close ties with the United States under President Lyndon B. Johnson. While visiting the White House, Holt proclaimed that he was "all the way with LBJ", a remark which was poorly received at home.

Holt and Johnson developed a personal friendship. They were the same age, and had first met in 1942, when Johnson visited Melbourne as a naval officer; afterwards they shared a similar career trajectory. Holt visited the U.S. twice while in office, in June and July 1966, and on the latter visit was invited to stay at Camp David. He and Johnson reportedly played tennis, lounged by the pool, and watched movies together. In October 1966, Johnson made the first visit to Australia by an incumbent American President.

In 1967, the Holt government amended the constitution to give the federal government the power to legislate specifically for Indigenous Australians, and mandated counting Indigenous people in the census. The constitutional amendments required a referendum before they could be enacted, which passed with over 90 percent of the vote; it remains the largest referendum majority in Australian history.

The Vietnam War was the dominant foreign policy issue during Holt's term in office. He was a strong supporter of Australian involvement in the war, which had begun in 1962. He held that "unless there is security for all small nations, there cannot be security for any small nation". The government's handling of the war initially enjoyed broad public support and was considered a key contributor to the landslide election victory in 1966. By the end of the following year, however, opinion polls were showing that public sentiment had turned against the war, and previously supportive media outlets had begun to criticise Holt's decision-making.

Harold Holt had serious difficulties in his private and public life. His brother died in March 1967. His private life was messy, his sons were living apart from their wives, he was in poor physical and psychiatric health at the time of his death, and he was unable to sleep properly.

Holt loved the ocean, particularly spearfishing, and had holiday homes at Portsea, Victoria, and Bingil Bay, Queensland. On 17 December 1967, while Holt was spending the weekend at Portsea, he and four companions decided to drive to Point Nepean to watch sailor Alec Rose pass through The Rip on his solo circumnavigation attempt. On their way back to Portsea, Holt convinced the group to stop at remote Cheviot Beach for a swim before lunch. Because of the rough conditions, only one other person, Alan Stewart, joined Holt in the water. Stewart kept close to shore, but Holt swam out into deeper water and was seemingly caught up in a rip, eventually disappearing. Holt had remarkable lung power and could free dive to 6m.

Holt's disappearance sparked one of the largest search operations in Australian history, but no trace of his body was ever found. It is generally accepted that Holt overestimated his swimming ability. Conspiracy theories have included suggestions that Holt faked his own death, was assassinated by the CIA, or was collected by a submarine so that he could defect to China.

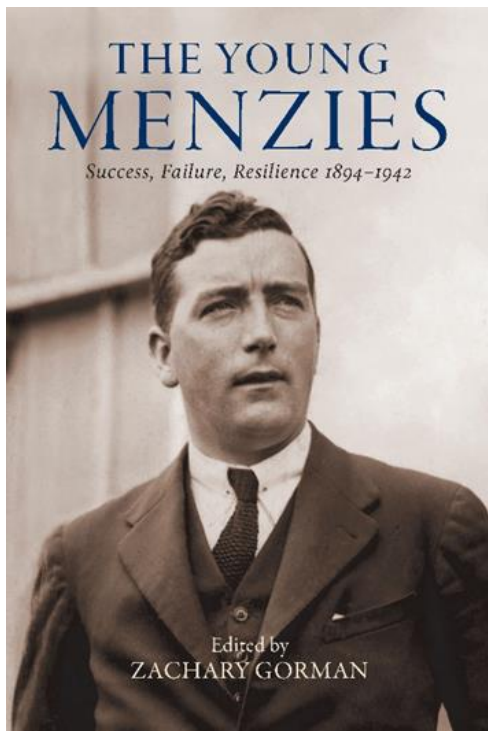
Holt was an enthusiastic sportsman and avid swimmer. Unfortunately, he had a careless, reckless streak and courted danger in his personal life, seemingly taking risks without care for the possible consequences. Holt's death embodies the contradictory elements of his life. In politics he created

middle of the road solutions and policies that made good sense, but he slept little, worked very hard and indulged in dangerous recreational activities.

23 May 2023 Dr Zachary Gorman - *The Young Menzies*

Dr Zachary Gorman is the academic coordinator at the Robert Menzies Institute. A professional historian, Gorman has worked as a researcher and academic since 2013. He has written two books, *Sir Joseph Carruthers: Founder of the New South Wales Liberal Party* and *Summoning Magna Carta: Freedom's Symbol Over a Millennium*, and edited two others, the 250th anniversary edition of *Captain James Cook, R.N.: 150 Years After* and *The Young Menzies: Success, Failure, Resilience 1894-1942*.

As the nation's longest-serving prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies implemented policies that laid the foundations of modern Australia. *The Young Menzies: Success, Failure, Resilience 1894-1942* consists of 10 essays which explore the formative period of Menzies's life, when his personal outlook and system of beliefs that would help shape modern Australia were being formed. This period was the time in which Menzies first attained power, though in difficult circumstances, when the focus of the nation was on survival.



Sir Robert Gordon Menzies KT AK CH QC FAA FRS (20 December 1894 – 15 May 1978)

Robert Menzies was the 12th and longest-serving Prime Minister of Australia. He held the office twice, from 1939 to 1941 and from 1949 to 1966. Altogether he was Prime Minister for over 18 years – still the record term for an Australian prime minister. He was born on December 20, 1894, and died on May 15, 1978.

Robert Menzies regarded speaking in Camberwell as a bad omen. He would only speak in Melbourne CBD. The original Camberwell Town Hall political speech was 95 years ago.

Robert Gordon Menzies was born in Jeparit, Victoria. He was the fourth of five children born to Kate and James Menzies. Menzies was the first Australian Prime Minister to have two Australian-born parents. He had two elder brothers, an elder sister, and a younger brother. The

Menzies family had moved to Jeparit to take over the general store. Menzies' rural background had a great influence on him. He was raised with a strong Presbyterian – Methodist work ethic, with an emphasis on duty and the need to give back to the local community. His father was too generous in times of hardship to the local community for the store to be a great success. Menzies was a prolific borrower from the local Mechanics' Institute.

During Menzies's childhood, three of his close relatives were elected to parliament. His uncle Hugh, his father and another uncle, Sydney Sampson. Each of the three represented rural constituencies, and were defeated after a few terms. Menzies's maternal grandfather John Sampson was active in the trade union movement.

Menzies was a scholarship boy when scholarships were extremely rare. He topped the state school examinations in 1907 at the age of 13. This financed his secondary education. He and his family moved to Melbourne in 1910, where he enrolled in Wesley College. In his third and final year at Wesley he won a £40 exhibition for university study, one of 25 awarded by the State Government.

In 1913, Menzies entered the Melbourne Law School. He was socially active as a student, a debator, won a variety of prizes, exhibitions, and scholarships and graduated as a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) in 1916 and a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in 1918. In 1916, Menzies became president of the Student Representatives' Council and editor of the *Melbourne University Magazine*. Menzies was also president of the Students' Christian Union, a founding member of the Historical Society, and a prominent member of the Law Students' Society.

During World War I, Menzies served his compulsory militia service from 1915 to 1919. His two older brothers served overseas but the family decided he should not enlist. They believed that having two of the family's three adult sons serving overseas was a sufficiently patriotic contribution to the war effort, and that the family's interests would be served best by Robert continuing his academic career. This would have ongoing political repercussions for Menzies.

After graduating from the University of Melbourne in 1916 with first-class honours in Law, Menzies was admitted to the Victorian Bar and to the High Court of Australia in 1918. Establishing his own practice in Melbourne, Menzies specialised chiefly in constitutional law which he had read with the leading Victorian jurist and future High Court judge, Sir Owen Dixon. The Engineers High Court case raised Menzies's profile as a skilled advocate, and eventually he was appointed the youngest ever King's Counsel in 1929.

Robert Menzies was elected MLC for East Yarra in 1928. He was made a minister without portfolio in a new minority Nationalist State government led by Premier William McPherson. In 1929, he founded the Young Nationalists as his party's youth wing and was its first president. Holding the portfolios of Attorney-General and Minister for the Railways, Menzies was Deputy Premier of Victoria from May 1932 until July 1934. Menzies role is central to the establishment of the United Australia Party.

In August 1934, Menzies resigned from state parliament to contest the federal Division of Kooyong and Menzies won easily. He was immediately appointed Attorney-General of Australia and Minister for Industry in the Lyons government. In 1937 he was appointed a Privy Counsellor.

Menzies became deputy leader of the UAP then on 18 April 1939, Menzies was elected party leader and on 26 April 1939 Menzies become the Prime Minister. On 3 September 1939 Britain and France declared war on Germany. Menzies responded immediately by also declaring Australia to be at war in support of Britain and delivered a radio broadcast to the nation on that same day.

Menzies was especially worried about the military threat from Japan. Australia had very small forces and depended on Britain for defence. He hoped that a policy of appeasement would head off a war with Japan, and repeatedly pressured London. Menzies did his best to rally the country, but this was compounded by his lack of a service record.

Just before the September 1940 election, on 13 August 1940, three members of Menzies's cabinet had been killed in an air crash along with General Brudenell White, Chief of the General Staff; two other passengers and four crew. This event weakened Menzies's government and his success came to an end. Menzies resigned the prime ministership on 27 August 1941.

Country Party leader Arthur Fadden was elected as Coalition leader and Prime Minister. Menzies was bitter about this treatment from his colleagues, and nearly left politics, but was persuaded to become Minister for Defence Co-ordination in Fadden's cabinet. The Fadden government lasted only 40 days before being defeated on a confidence motion. On 9 October 1941, Menzies resigned as leader of the UAP. He was replaced as UAP leader by former prime minister Billy Hughes.

Menzies rediscovered his passion for politics and built up a large popular base of support by his frequent appeals, often by radio, to ordinary non-elite working citizens whom he called 'the Forgotten People'—especially those who were not suburban and rich or members of organised labour. From November 1941, he began a series of weekly radio broadcasts reaching audiences across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. A selection of these talks was edited into a book bearing the title of his most famous address, *The Forgotten People*, delivered on 22 May 1942. It was in losing office that Menzies was given the impetus to develop his vision for post-war Australia. He was also a founding member of the Liberal Party of Australia in 1944.

24 June 2023 Ken James Ellis Bankin (1903 – January 1936) ‘School teacher by profession, wanderer by inclination’

Ken James is a retired secondary teacher who lives in Camberwell. Ken has written and published more than 60 local histories. In 2016 Ken and his co-author Pam Baragwanath won the Victorian Community History Award for *These walls speak volumes: a history of Mechanics’ Institutes in Victoria*.

Ellis Matthewman Bankin was born in Victoria and the family moved to Melbourne in 1919. He was to lead an extraordinary life of travel about which he would write articles which were published in *Walkabout*, *Australian Cycling Magazine* and *Australia Motorist*. In 1936 there were 390 news items around Australia about his death.



Ellis Bankin

Teaching Career

1922 – 1926 Kew East, T.H.T. Bamawm S.S. near Rochester, H.T. Mosquito Creek S.S. near Bendigo

Granted leave from teaching January 1926 - September 1928

UNITED STATES: Ellis held many different jobs while travelling extensively.

October 1928 - June 1931. H.T. Tarcombe S.S. near Seymour

Granted leave from teaching June 1931-January 1933

GREAT BRITAIN 1931-1933 – travelled extensively walking and by bicycle

1933 - 1936 H.T. Badger Creek S.S., Healesville, H.T. Dunkeld S.S., H.T. Bolton S.S., Mallee, Glenroy S.S.

Bolton State School Temporary Head Teacher May 1933 -June 1934

Glenroy State School June 1934 – January 1936

MALLEE BIKE RIDE - BOLTON TO MELBOURNE RETURN

26 December 1933 – 11 January 1934 - 428 kilometres each way

22 boys, average age 13, two oldest were 15.

Each boy wore a khaki shirt and floppy hat with neck flap. For much of the ride each boy carried on his handlebar his own equipment of two shirts, three changes of underclothing, and pairs of socks, spare pair of shorts, sandshoes, two blankets and towel. The boys rode in nine double files, strung out at two-length distance between files. Ellis Bankin rode on the right-front of the leading file, and a small boy pacemaker rode on the left. Two Melbourne friends rode midway down the line. The two oldest boys made up the rear file.



Outside the Bendigo Post Office

BOLTON TO BENDIGO

Day 1. Bolton to Sea Lake

Day 2. Sea Lake to Wycheproof

Day 3. Wycheproof to Wedderburn

Day 4. Wedderburn to Bendigo

Day 5. Rest day at Bendigo

Day 6. Bendigo to Melbourne

BENDIGO TO MELBOURNE

Days 7-8. Morning in Melbourne. Afternoon ride to Healesville. Stayed overnight. Taken around the sights including Badger Creek S.S. Afternoon ride back to Melbourne.

Led out of Melbourne for Healesville by Ossie Nicholson

Days 9-10. Sightseeing around Melbourne

Day 13. Melbourne to Bendigo. Left from Bruce Small's Malvern Star store, Elizabeth St.

Days 14 -17 Bendigo to Bolton. 10 am on 8 January, arriving on 13 January.

Led out of Melbourne for return trip by Hubert Opperman



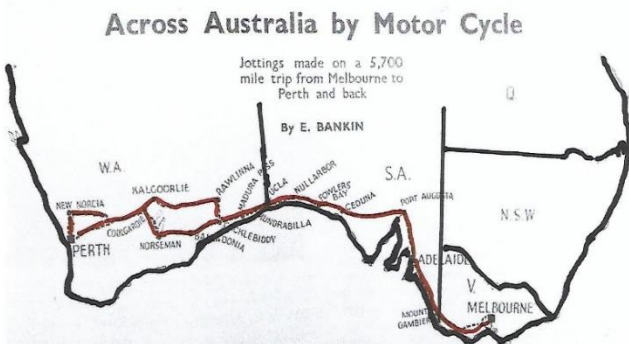
MOTOR BIKE TRAVEL

Ellis purchased a Triumph Model 31 350cc side valve motorcycle in November 1934. He made panniers to carry fuel, food, water and clothing and made extraordinary trips, often following bush tracks.

Tour 1: Melbourne – Perth return

January 1935

9177 kilometres across the Nullarbor



Tour 2: Strezelecki Track, May - June 1935



Tour 3: Alice Springs via Port Augusta return

September – October 1935

4830 km in 10 days



Tour 4: Broken Hill, Birdsville, Alice Springs & Ayers Rock (Uluru)

20 December – 16 January 1936



DATES FOR MEETINGS 2023

Saturday 25 July 2023	2pm	Liz Yewers - The printer and the painter: James Beveridge & William Dargie
Saturday 26 August 2023	2pm	AGM
Tuesday October 24 2023	7.30pm	Ross McMullin – <i>Life so full of promise</i> sequel to <i>Farewell, Dear People</i>
Tuesday November	7.30pm	Chris Long – Early Film of Melbourne: new discoveries

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS 2023 - 24

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1 July to 30 June. Subscriptions for the 2023 – 2024 financial year are due and payable from 1 July 2023. 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 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, INC

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***Camberwell History*: Editor — Adèle Fernando-Swart**

The Society's logo is taken from an illustration by, and used with the permission of, Bill Beasley.