

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 Lisa Hollingsworth

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

George Fernando

It is with great sadness that I acknowledge the recent passing of several members and friends of Camberwell Historical Society: Peter Lord, Chris McDonald, Gwen McWilliam OAM, Mary Drost OAM, Neville Lee OAM.

There will be a memorial service for the anniversary of the death of Brig-Gen Harold 'Pompey' Elliott on 23 March at 11 am at Burwood Cemetery. This will be followed by a presentation and forum on Pompey Elliott with Ross McMullin at the Camberwell Pompey RSL.

I congratulate our member, Mrs Barbara Alderton on her recent OAM award for service to the community through a range of roles. Like nearly every other country in the world, Australia has a system of honours and awards so its citizens can be recognised for excellence, achievement or meritorious service and contributions to our society. Australian honours are unique in that they were designed for the community to make nominations. Australia gives honours to recognise, celebrate and say thank you to those who make a difference, those who achieve their best and those who serve others.

MRS BARBARA CECILIA ALDERTON OAM

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division For service to the community through a range of roles.

Community

- President and Coordinator, Maroondah Brits.
- Volunteer, Elsie Salter House, Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services, 1999-2016.

Girl Guides Victoria

- Member, Trefoil Guild.
- Divisional Commissioner, 1993-1995.
- District Commissioner, 1984-1989.



- Assistant Brownie Leader, 3rd Canterbury Brownies, 1977.
- Founder and Leader, 4th Canterbury Brownies 1979-1984.

Girl Guides Tasmania

- Founder and Leader 3rd Burnie Brownies, 1976-1977.
- Assistant Brownie Leader, Burnie Brownies, 1974.
- Founder, Midway Point Brownies, 1969-1974.
- Volunteer, 1967-1969.

Moorfields Community for Adult Care, Uniting Church

- Coordinator and Chief Nurse, until 2000.
- Former Coordinator, Mont Calm Day Hospital.
- Registered Nurse, Mont Calm Nursing Home, 1977-1989 and 1991-1995.

BOROONDARA HERITAGE GROUP FOR ADVOCACY AND PROTECTION

Boroondara recently introduced a community heritage nomination process. Local residents nominated an important house on Burke Road Camberwell after discovering the original specification document proving that Christopher Cowper was the architect.



On 4 March 2024, the Urban Planning Delegated Committee at Boroondara Council all voted unanimously in favour to ask the Planning Minister for permission to commence a Planning Scheme Amendment process which would commence a heritage protection process for Barrabool at 508-510 Burke Road Camberwell. Should the Minister permit this there will be another stage of community consultation during which all interested parties and the community can make submissions.



Barrabool was designed by eminent architect Christopher Cowper who strongly influenced Boroondara's character from the 1890s to the late 1920s. He was as a resident of Boroondara, residing in Linda Crescent Hawthorn and later in Studley Park Road Kew. Cowper was best known for his extensive residential development of the Queen Anne homes in the garden suburb environs of Grace Park Hawthorn where he designed 33 houses.

Barrabool 508-510 Burke Road Camberwell

In his later residential work, however, at 508-510 Burke Road Cowper favoured the Attic Bungalow. The heritage report states that one of the reasons Barrabool is so important to conserve is because the house illustrates the later part of Cowper's oeuvre and provides the "missing link" in Cowper's work between late Federation era Attic Bungalows and full-fledged interwar bungalows of the late 1920s by his practice.



Shenley Croft 7 Mangarra Road Canterbury

On 5 February 2024, the Urban Planning Delegated Committee at Boroondara Council all voted unanimously to apply a Specific Control Overlay on 7 Mangarra Road Canterbury, which will "*seek to ensure any future development of the property includes the reconstruction of the heritage building*". Council is waiting for a response from the Planning Minister. This Individually Significant heritage protected c1905 Queen Anne house was damaged by fire in December 2023. Police have determined the cause to be arson.

Members of the community can make a nomination using the Council link: <https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/planning-building/planning-and-heritage/heritage/nominate-heritage-place>

CAMBERWELL WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER: Henrietta Dugdale



Information from *Henrietta Augusta Dugdale: An Activist 1827-1918* by Susan Priestley, who gave a talk to Camberwell Historical Society on Henrietta after the publication of her book.

Henrietta Augusta Dugdale (14 May 1827 – 17 June 1918) started the first female suffrage society in Australia. Non-conformist, provocative and quick-witted, her campaigning resulted in breakthroughs for women's rights in Australia.

Henrietta Augusta Worrell was born at St Pancras London on 14 May 1827, the second surviving daughter of John Worrell and Henrietta Ann (*née* Austin). She was the seventh of eleven children, and one of only two daughters to survive. Henrietta outlived three husbands. She married her first husband at 14. She had three sons but none of them had children. Her first two husbands were ships officers, while her third husband came from Montreal, Canada. Henrietta and all her husbands arrived in Victoria in the same year, 1852. She lived with her second husband, William Dugdale, in Queenscliff. In 1872 she moved to Riversdale Road, Camberwell. She travelled regularly to the city and became active in public debate.

Henrietta's claim of a first marriage at 14 does not fit properly with her official marriage in 1848 to a merchant navy officer, J. A. Davies, with whom she came to Australia in 1852. After Davies' death she married ship's captain William Dugdale in Melbourne in March 1853. They settled at Queenscliff, where their sons Einnim, Carl and Austin were born. Henrietta was a vegetarian at a time when few people had even thought about this.

After separating from William Dugdale in the late 1860s, she moved to the Melbourne suburb of Camberwell, where she remained until a few years before her death on 17 June 1918 at Point Lonsdale. Her third husband, Frederick Johnson, whom she married in 1903, predeceased her.



Her campaign for 'equal justice for women' began with a letter to Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper in April 1869. It peaked during the 1880s in radical public debate as a member of Melbourne's Eclectic Society and the Australasian Secular Association, through her utopian allegory *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*.

In June 1882 the Australasian Secular Society was formed. In 1883 Henrietta Dugdale gave her first public lecture. Henrietta, who had publicly advocated women's suffrage from 1868, and Annie Lowe formed the Victorian Women's Suffrage Society in May of 1884, the first Australian women's suffrage society. The Society called for votes for women on the same basis as men. That same year, Henrietta wrote a scathing judgement of the Victorian courts, and their inability to protect women from violent crimes. Published in the *Melbourne Herald*, her words cut straight to the core of the issue: 'Women's anger,' she wrote, 'was compounded by the fact that those who inflicted violence upon women had a share in making the laws while their victims did not.'

Melbourne at this time was a leading hub in political debate. In the 1880s Victoria boomed in many areas such as railways, telegraph lines, low-cost printing and education (including girls' education) up to tertiary levels. Public debates were reported in the press and were also distributed as pamphlets. This 'free thought' was worldwide and eventually led to ideas such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. In the political arena, advanced liberalism held sway with ideas such as anti-slavery, women's rights, and a revolution in attitudes towards the European monarchies. There were diasporas caused by the Irish famine and by the gold rushes. The suffragette movement was fostered by the utopian ideals of the milieu.

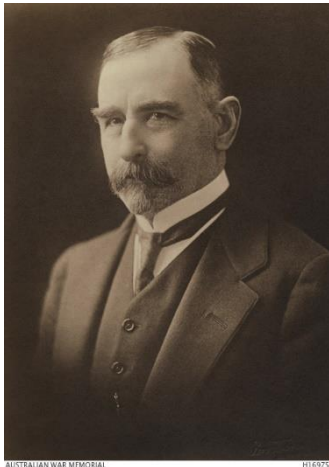
In 1902 Federal legislation gave the franchise to women to vote. It took nineteen private members' bills from 1889 before Victorian women gained the vote in 1908. Henrietta was acknowledged as a suffrage pioneer when Australian women attained the vote and the associated right to stand for federal parliament in June 1902 (a world first) and when the State of Victoria belatedly followed suit in December 1908. Henrietta died on 17 June 1918 in Point Lonsdale.

Sir John Michael Higgins, G.C.M.G., K.C.M.G., and Chevalier De Legion D'Honneur, of 'Holyrood', 816-822 Riversdale Road, Camberwell, from 1901 to 1924 (Part 2)

Gretta Cockerell

Continuing from Part 1, published in the *Camberwell History*, December 2023 edition, article on pp. 8 – 14:

"The story of one of Australia's and Boroondara's forgotten heroes - Sir John Michael Higgins", continued.



Left: Photos of Sir John Michael and Lady Frances Anna Higgins.

Source: Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum (both photos).

While researching the history of Compton Street, Canterbury which was subdivided in 1919 from market gardens owned by early Camberwell's Dunn family, I was directed to a 1908 photograph from the Canterbury Primary School Archives by long-term Compton Street resident Doug Walker. (See photo next page.) Researching the history of Compton Street has resulted in the discovery of some prominent persons of note who have lived in the street itself and 'just around the corner'. The 'Holyrood' mansion stood out in the background of a 1908 photo of the newly built Canterbury Primary School, taken in a southerly direction from the 'Eyrecoat' and 'Cullymont' mansions in Molesworth Street, which also shows the market gardens where Compton Street now stands. The owner of 'Holyrood' at the time of the photo, John Michael Higgins, seems to have been forgotten in Boroondara, where he and his wife Frances Anna lived from 1901-1924. This is the time when he did his amazing work for Prime Minister 'Billy' Hughes in an honorary capacity for the Commonwealth during World War I; he was bestowed with the KCMG (1918) and then GCMG (1934) honours by the King, and later, the Chevalier de La Legion D'Honneur by the French Government (before 1934).

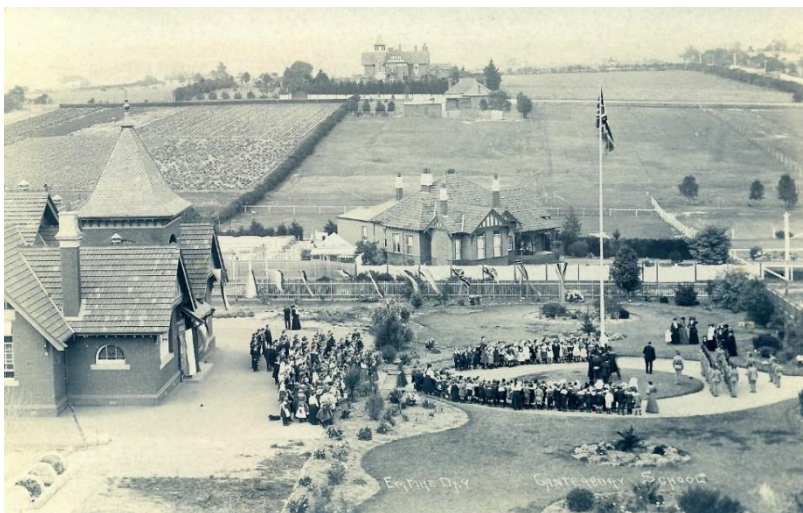


Photo of house and heritage citation info from Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, Vol. 4A, Part 1, Butler, G., McConville, C., and Associates and also refer to: vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

An expansion of the some of the notes in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry which follows:

- Sir John Higgins obtained early experience at Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd – re: 'an analyst with a NSW mine',
- and 'settled in Melbourne': at 'Holyrood', Riversdale Road, Camberwell.

- Through his work at the British Australian Wool Realisation Association (B.A.W.R.A.), he was enormously instrumental in helping Australia to prosper while 'riding on the sheep's back'.

Higgins, Sir John Michael (1862–1937) by Helga M. Griffin, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9 , 1983 <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/higgins-sir-john-michael-6663>

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* references the following facts about Sir John Michael's life and work:

1. 'an analyst with a N.S.W mine' (the early Broken Hill Proprietary Co.)
2. metallurgical chemist at Dry Creek Railway Station (S.A.) reduction works until 1900.
3. metals consultant in Melbourne from 1901 (whilst living at 'Holyrood') with Chapman, Higgins and Co.
4. acquisition of pastoral holdings in NSW and Qld., retaining an interest in Wool technology.
5. 1914: independent Metallurgical Adviser to the Federal Government at Prime Minister W. M. Hughes's request (WW1).
6. 1915: established the Australian Metals Exchange, to wrest back control of Australia's metals production from its war enemy after hostilities had started.
7. 1916: founder and government nominee on the Zinc Producers' and Copper Producers' associations.
8. 1916: November, chairman of and government nominee to the Central Wool Committee (on same principles as the metals exchange).
9. Company adviser to the Federal Treasury
10. 1918: K.C.M.G. (Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George) for service to the nation, as one who had 'laboured himself almost to a standstill for over four years in patriotic service' per acting Prime Minister W.A. Watt.
11. 1921: founder and Chairman of Directors of the British Australian Wool Realisation Association Pty. Ltd. (B.A.W.R.A.), the largest public company in Australia, to realise the wool carried over from the war period, together with a temporary London directorate.
12. 1926: Trustee for the Wool Selling Brokers Commission Trust until the final clearance of BAWRA wool in 1932.
13. Member of the Victorian committee of the Commonwealth Institute of Science and Industry (the early CSIRO).
14. Vice Chairman of the Metropolitan Gas Co.
15. Victorian Director of the Bank of New Zealand.
16. Chevalier of the French Legion of Honour, bestowed by the French Government.
17. 1934: G.C.M.G. (Knight Grand Cross of the most distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, awarded by the King of the United Kingdom).



In addition, Castlemaine Art Gallery was visited by the author in June 2023, where some of the household collections of Sir John and Lady Higgins as at their final home at Toorak in 1941 (held by his sister) are on display; part of the Higgins Bequest - their catalogue lists 324 items including antique furniture. Other items can be viewed by prior appointment. Some photos of just a few items are shown on the previous page.

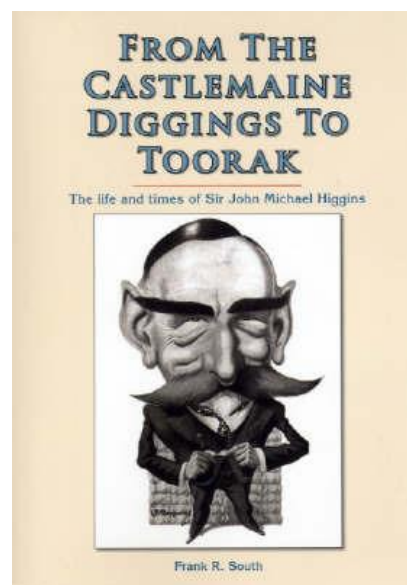
A connection can be made between the efforts of J.M. Higgins and BAWRA (British and Australian Wool Realisation Agency), and the Aird Street, Camberwell mansion “Wanganella” which was owned by the Peppin family of the Wanganella merino stud of 1858. They bred the famously successful “Peppin” merino sheep in the Deniliquin, N.S.W. region, which assisted Australia’s wealth to “ride on the sheep’s back” and was so economically important to the nation that it became the emblem for the silver shilling of our pre-decimal currency, prior to 1966.¹

In 1881, Mrs. Elsie Peppin (nee Aird) and family moved into the residence in Camberwell formerly known as St. John’s Wood and named it “Wanganella”. George Peppin Snr. had died intestate in 1871, and her husband George Peppin Jnr. had died in 1877 in Melbourne. All the NSW stud properties had been sold in 1878.²

Subsequent owners of the former Peppin studs continued the successful breed onwards to the present time. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and also Rupert Murdoch both attended a Wanganella stud auction in the 1970s.

After contacting both the publisher (retired) and the author of the J.M. Higgin’s biography in May 2023, a return letter was received from Janet South in June where she indicated an interest in “some physical form of recognition for John Michael”. We have contacted the Secretary of St. Dominic’s Priory, the Boroondara Council and also various Castlemaine groups and authorities to suggest the above, in June 2023.

The Preface of the biography, *From The Castlemaine Diggings to Toorak - the life and times of Sir John Michael Higgins*. by Frank R. South p.p.xii -xiii briefly outlines the contribution he made in diverse fields to Australia, Britain (and the Commonwealth) during periods of crisis and uncertainty in the early years of Federation - the First World War, the post-war years and the Great Depression. During his varied working life, he was able to turn his mind to and become so proficient in metallurgy, pharmacy, wool technology, finance, economics and administration that he gained the respect, if not always the agreement, of the leaders of government, industry and commerce, not only in Australia but also internationally particularly in Great Britain. His work had a lasting impact in that it helped to accelerate the process of development of two of Australia’s most important industries (metals and wool) from separate State entities, governed by State laws and regulations,



¹ Wanganella and the Merino Aristocrats” by Timothy Lee, Hardie Grant, Melbourne, 2011, p. 9.

² Camberwell Historical Society newsletter, chs.org.au, December 2018, p.2 of 12., article by owner of “Wanganella” Mr. Peter Lord, Aird Street, Camberwell.

to national organisations. He made his services available to the nation substantially in an honorary capacity.

One of the most outstanding lessons of the biography for me concerns the state of certain Australian primary industry contracts at the time of the outbreak of WW1 and the destination of Australian raw resources (via intermediaries) to certain countries for processing; lessons which are still very appropriate 100 years later.

'WANGANELLA', CAMBERWELL, VICTORIA

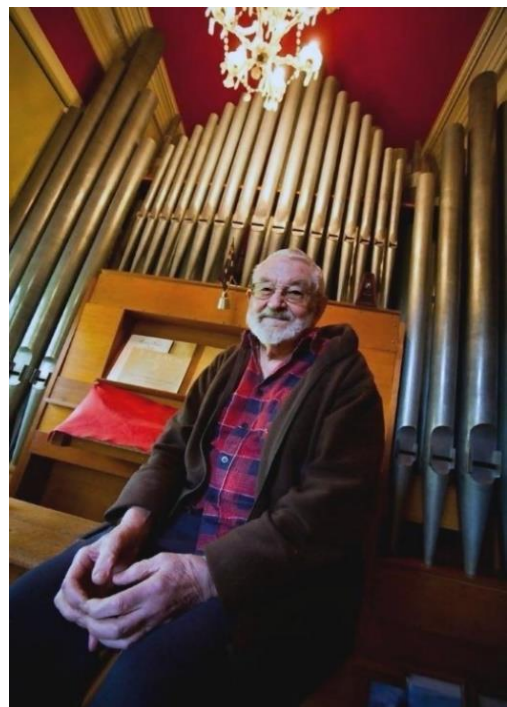


The two-storey mansion, originally called 'St John's Wood', was built in 1870 and in 1881 renamed 'Wanganella'. It was originally on a large block of land with gates on Riversdale Road. The block was reduced to its final size in 1956. It was designed in a stuccoed Italianate classical idiom with a Doric colonnade to the north and east. The building is heritage listed. The front of the house faces the original entrance from Riversdale Road. This has been owned by the late Peter Lord and Dawn Lord since 1962.

Vale: Peter Richard Lord (1 January 1929 – 17 December 2023)

Camberwell Historical Society member Peter Lord died in Queensland on 17 December 2023. He was just short of his 95th birthday. Peter was the son of Sid and Stella Lord and grew up in Glen Iris and Balwyn. He received his secondary education at Scotch College, where he took an interest in drama and music. Peter started a course at the Melbourne Technical College in electrical engineering and worked in this field for a short time; he was later a laboratory assistant at the Defence Standards Laboratories at Maribyrnong where he caught up with many well-qualified and innovative staff. He was later assistant manager at the Modern Printing Company where he was head of its lithographic department.

The 1956 Olympic Games, based in Melbourne, was a significant milestone in Peter's career where he was responsible for sound recording, also working at the Davis Cup. In 1959, he and Peter Watson set up Victorian Film Laboratories in Guest Street, Hawthorn which became a leader in its field, processing film for such television programs as *In Melbourne Tonight* and *Pick a Box* as well as the film *On the Beach*. Here he met his future wife Dawn, who has survived him.



Peter was very fond of motorbikes and bike racing and owned several Ducati bikes. He competed in, and followed, these races throughout Australia – even on the Isle of Man.

I first met Peter in early 1966 when the Society of Organists (which I had just joined) was planning a recording tour of historic organs in the Victorian Goldfields region. Peter brought along his A-grade Nagra open-reel tape recorder. Over the Queen's Birthday long weekend, we visited Daylesford, Clunes, Dunolly, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Kyneton. It was almost a voyage of discovery as some of these organs were generally unknown. The results were used in an audio-visual presentation and articles in the Society's newsletter. I believe I am the only one of that tour group now alive.

Peter went on to make many first-rate sound recordings of organ concerts, particularly for the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord, which ran from 1971 to 2005. These were used to make vinyl recordings and cassette recordings for sale and provided a wonderful insight into many significant concerts.

Peter lived in a splendid heritage-listed Victorian mansion 'Wanganella' in Aird Street, Camberwell built in 1870, which he bought in 1962. Its spacious rooms were host to many post-concert receptions over the years – he was a most generous host. In the drawing room was a large Schiedmayer grand piano (flanked by the Ducati bikes). In the dining room, Peter had constructed a two-manual pipe organ using parts supplied by Hill, Norman & Beard; it was finished in 1968 and is still there. Many fascinating artefacts filled the rooms. Peter and Dawn sometimes hosted visiting celebrities there.

In his workshop, Peter had lathes for turning metal objects, mainly of brass. He made some brass weights to depress keys while organ tuning – and even two brackets for supporting two Victorian candlesticks (that I had bought in Castle Cary, UK) attached to the Joscelyne organ in my Canterbury home. In the grounds were rare examples of agricultural equipment – even an army tank! A tall wooden flagpole had been rescued from 'Glen Tana', a demolished Victorian mansion in Elsternwick, and moved to Camberwell.

Peter joined the Organ Historical Trust of Australia at the time of its inception in 1977 and frequently took out enhanced levels of membership. He was also a long-term supporter of the Camberwell Historical Society, the Society of Organists (Victoria), the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Royal Victorian Historical Society.

Peter is survived by his wife Dawn, sons, grandchildren, great grandchildren and one great great grandchild.

John Maidment

Vale: Mary Drost OAM (13 October 1931- 4 January 2024)



Mary Drost OAM, a tireless campaigner for the protection of Melbourne's heritage and tree cover, passed away peacefully at Knox Private Hospital early in January at the age of 92.

She was born Mary McMahon in 1931, in the coal mining town of Kurri Kurri, NSW, the second of five children, and only daughter. In 1938, her parents bought a home in Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, where she spent most of her childhood.

Image from <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/>

She passed her matriculation at Korowa Anglican Girls' School. After working for a year and a half, Mary made a sudden decision to travel to Europe by boat. She and a girlfriend hitchhiked and stayed at youth hostels on their way around Europe and the UK.

Out of Copenhagen, she and her friend met two young Dutch boys. One of them, Peter Drost, thought enough of Mary to introduce her to his parents in Holland, and fly to Australia to be with her after he finished his agricultural science degree. They were married in 1956, and their first house was in Blackburn. Mary was dismayed by the clearing of native trees in Blackburn at this time and was instrumental in the formation of the Blackburn Tree Preservation Society. The society helped save a lot of trees and retain Blackburn's original charm.

When her husband Peter was offered a position in Indonesia, Mary accompanied him, and spent a considerable amount of time there, travelling extensively. Her later campaigning was informed by her wide knowledge of other cities, and her desire that Melbourne not follow down the same path as Jakarta and the rest. She believed that their liveability had suffered from overdevelopment. She was elected as a Camberwell councillor in the 1990s and was instrumental in achieving heritage listings in local streets. She promoted the protection of heritage homes and tree canopy. After her time on Camberwell Council, she formed the Boroondara Residents Action Group. She was the prime organiser of protests against plans to redevelop Camberwell Railway Station for office buildings and luxury apartments. In one of these protests, she was joined by actor Geoffrey Rush and the late comedian Barry Humphries.

They encouraged her to broaden her campaign against overdevelopment. She did, setting up Planning Backlash as a network of resident action groups. Planning Backlash supporters engaged in heritage protection, support for tree canopy cover and open space, and sought to give residents a say in planning issues.

Mary led Planning Backlash with distinction and conviction for the best part of two decades, only passing the baton on after she reached the age of 90. She was an inspiration to many civic-minded locals fighting their own battles.



Mary Drost with actor Geoffrey Rush and the late comedian Barry Humphries at Camberwell Railway Station.

Mary's energy was truly remarkable. She attended State Parliament regularly to debate strategy policy issues with ministers and MPs, and to oppose proposals which threatened heritage. Outside parliament, she organised rallies, engaging her networks to oppose specific measures. She routinely attended Boroondara Council planning committee

meetings, speaking against development proposals that threatened heritage, and engaging with individual councillors. Indeed, she continued to attend meetings and have her say even after her 90th birthday, right until her admission to Knox Private.

She wrote submissions to government, government agencies and to VCAT about both specific issues and about wider policy matters. She lent her experience and support to groups throughout Victoria. She helped bring activists together and keep them in touch with each other. One of her great strengths was networking and communication. She had a wide list of supporter groups and supporters, who she regularly kept in touch with. She encouraged them to make their views known to the relevant authorities. This work fostered civic pride and social cohesion. It was a powerful antidote to the greed and short-sightedness that passes for much of modern planning policy.

She described herself as a proud NIMBY (not in my backyard), believing that people had not only a right, but an obligation and responsibility, to protect the neighbourhood in which they lived. Of course, she never sought to shift the problem elsewhere, as is implied in the NIMBY jibe. She actively helped residents and groups right throughout Melbourne and Victoria.

Her interests were far from exclusively local. She received a Dutch award for presenting samurai swords, associated with the Japanese surrender of Indonesia, to the Dutch at the end of World War II, to a Dutch museum. And she campaigned energetically for the return of the Elgin Marbles from Britain to Greece.

She was awarded the Order of Australia in 2009. Mary led a long and outstandingly productive life. It is often said that in your life you should try to 'make a difference'. By this yardstick, Mary succeeded spectacularly.

From: *Activist campaigned for Melbourne's heritage and tree cover* by The Hon. Kelvin Thomson January 31, 2024. Kelvin Thomson is the convenor of Planning Democracy (formerly Planning Backlash) and was an ALP member of the House of Representatives for Wills in Victoria from 1996 to 2016. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/activist-campaigned-for-melbourne-s-heritage-and-tree-cover-20240131-p5f1c6.html>

Vale: Gwen McWilliam OAM (23 November 1933 – 21 January 2024)

Gwen Barton McWilliam (*née* Nelson), OAM, BA was a well-known and esteemed authority on the history of Boroondara and the author of a large number of books and pamphlets about the City. She was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia in 2001 ‘for service to the community of Hawthorn and district, particularly through the research, documentation and publication of its history’. This award could equally have been made for her service to the community of Camberwell, which was no less significant.

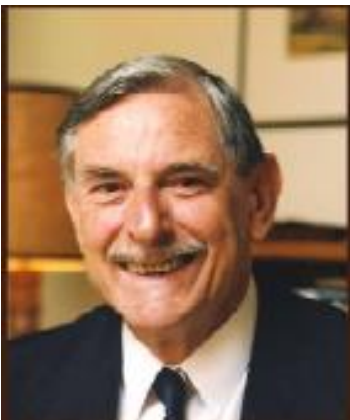


Gwen McWilliam was made an honorary member of Camberwell Historical Society in 2000 in recognition of her work. She was also a life member of the Hawthorn Historical Society. Gwen’s legacy lives on through her meticulous research and insightful publications. Gwen’s research and publications extended to Kew, Camberwell, Canterbury, Surrey Hills, Glen Iris and Ashburton. One of her notable contributions was a paper delivered to the Camberwell Historical Society in 2000. Gwen discussed the origin of Camberwell place names. A substantial part of the paper related specifically to the naming of Camberwell itself. Gwen cast doubt on existing theories and delved into the roots of this vibrant community.

Gwen’s publications also reflect a particular interest in the history of housing styles, street names and education. Her best-known book, *Hawthorn Peppercorns*, was published in 1978 and *Across the River to Kew, in Boroondara: a study of the early years of settlement* in 1986. Following Council amalgamations in 1994, she published *Boroondara Musings* (2012) which was comprised of weekly articles first published in the Progress Leader in 1996.

Gwen was married to Ian McWilliam. They had four children: Deed (Gina), Jac, Toot (Karen) and Tone (Tony). She also had four grandchildren: Sam, Maddy, Pia and Ivy. A service in Gwen’s memory was held at Villa Alba Museum.. Her work continues to inspire those passionate about local history and heritage.

Vale: Neville Charles Lee OAM (20 November 1926 – 23 January 2024)



Neville Lee, OAM was a Councillor of the City of Camberwell from 1956 to 1964. He served as Mayor 1961-1962. He was a founding member of the City of Camberwell Historical Society. On Australia Day 2001, Neville Lee received a Medal in the Order of Australia for his contributions to the local community, scouting and Rotary International.

Neville Lee made a remarkable contribution to the City of Boroondara through both his work in Council and his numerous charitable endeavours. Living in Boroondara for all of his 97 years, Neville’s strong sense of community and desire to help others inspired his active involvement in Council and with many local not-



Wesleyan Chapel, Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris

for-profit groups. Neville was instrumental in the fight to save the Wesleyan Chapel in Glen Iris.

Neville wrote *'Ashburton through the Ages'*. Meticulously researched and published in 2014, the document charts the history of the Ashburton area since the time of the Wurundjeri to the early 2000s. It went on to win best short history for 2016 at the Prahran Mechanics Institute and a Local History award from the Victorian Public Records Office. He also wrote *Living in Camberwell: the story of my life: an autobiography*.

Neville Charles Lee grew up at 7-9 Valley Parade in South Camberwell in the 1930s in one of the oldest houses in South Camberwell. Neville attended South Camberwell State School, Malvern Grammar, and Melbourne Grammar then Dookie College until the family farms were sold. Neville then went to University of Melbourne to study Commerce. Always interested in politics, Neville joined the committee of the Camberwell Young Liberals. After University, Neville worked in his father's business, Commercial Copying Company, eventually taking it over. The business thrived as it was responsible for the replication of countless government documents during and after WWII.

Neville Lee married his late wife Helena on 17 February 1950. They built a home in the Solway hill area that was still mostly open paddocks. Neville selected the lot that would be come 20 Baird Street. When his daughter Gillian was due to attend kindergarten, there was no room in the local one, indeed there were few places available in Ashburton. An exasperated Neville wrote to the kindergarten's committee to complain about the dearth of suitable early learning opportunities for Ashburton children. Marie Mossheim, a member of the committee and the editor of the women's section of the local newspaper, Progress Press, called him and said she would publish his letter in the next issue to help publicise the problem.

Neville was a rare Ashburton resident. His university association with the Young Liberals meant he was on a first name basis with members of the State Government. He also had Federal Government connections too. This was a time when all federal and state parliament seats around Camberwell were blue ribbon conservative and Victorian MPs were a stronghold of the ministry.

Yet, Neville lived among the middle and working class of Ashburton. He saw the developmental challenges the community faced firsthand, especially with the influx of new residents in the housing commission area. He knew many of the returned servicemen himself and recognised the unaddressed trauma they suffered that affected their ability to work and raise their families.

Neville's first taste of public life came at just 29, when he won an election to become the south ward councillor for Camberwell. In September 1956, Mayor Albert Fordham welcomed Neville Lee, the youngest councillor to sit on the City of Camberwell Council. Neville discovered a Council deeply in debt, with a huge gap between expenditure and real income. The City required a rate rise of 40 per cent merely to maintain the existing services. The Councillors voted 7-5 to

raise the rates this high. An immediate backlash occurred, but the Councillors stood their ground and with the increased revenue, laid the foundation to affect real progress and financial stability in Camberwell.

Neville had not forgotten his original reason for standing for Council: improving pre-school education in Glen Iris and Ashburton. During 1957, he suggested the Council provide a £2,500 interest free loan to communities prepared to finance the construction of kindergartens. Council funding for the Glen Iris and Ashburton kindergartens was approved and over time, the loan plan became embedded into Council policy and as a result, the local communities were able to build some 24 kindergartens in Camberwell, including Estrella, Rowan Street, Alfred Road, and Summerhill Park.

During Neville's time on Camberwell Council, he proposed several ideas that are still in place today and have been adopted by other Councils across Australia. These included: the signs naming each suburb; the pet registration system; and on-the-spot parking fines by parking inspectors, instead of police officers. South Ward residents readily re-elected Neville to another term in 1959. In 1961, he was appointed Mayor. As Mayor, Neville oversaw the construction of roads and drainage around Bath Road, Baker Parade, and from Dent Street to Gardiner's Creek. As Mayor, Neville forged even greater connections with local charitable groups.

Neville considered his most significant bequest to the community to be the establishment of the Ashburton Senior Citizens Welfare Committee, now known as Ashburton Support Services. The group quickly realised they needed to establish a reliable and substantial source of income to be financial sustainable. The Committee established an Opportunity Shop. The project commenced in August 1962 in the empty former post office on railway land in Welfare Parade. It consistently generated £10,000 profit a year. The Ashy Op Shop has raised over \$20 million for senior citizens' welfare over the past 50 years. Today, the Ashburton Support Services includes Samarinda Lodge and several independent living cottages. The Opportunity Shop still provides the major source of funds.

By 1964, Neville began to realise that his family and business required more of his attention. His children were now 13, 11, 9 and 8 and their expenses were growing. He abruptly resigned from council. During the next decades Neville became an active member of Melbourne South Rotary Club; a Scout leader for Camberwell South District; a committee member for the South Melbourne Football Club; the President of the Glen Iris Cricket Club; a Freemason, among other civic appointments.

Neville passed away on 23 January 2024 at Cabrini Malvern. He was the husband of Helena (dec) and father of Janette (Ray dec), Gill (Arthur) and husband Lee, Douglas (Mac) and wife Vicki, Ian and partner Marianne, Grandfather of Charles, James and Andrew, Emily, Laura, Eva and Will, Michael, David and Katrina. Neville was also Great Grandfather to Harry and Ted, Wilks and Leo, Amelia and Theo, Leo, Isobel, Zoe and Lachlan, and Ruby. He was brother to Douglas (dec) and Peter. A man of great integrity and humour, leaving a legacy of community service and family love. A memorial service was held at St Oswald's Glen Iris.

Craze, Sarah (2022), [Neville Lee and the fight for Ashburton's kindergartens \(sarahcraze.com\)](https://sarahcraze.com)
Lee, Neville (2016,) *The story of Ashburton through the ages* [Ashburton-Through-the-Ages-revised.pdf \(chs.org.au\)](https://chs.org.au)

Lee, Neville (2008), *Living in Camberwell: the story of my life: an autobiography*.

Vale: Ruth Christian Macdonald (26 November 1926 – 12 February 2024)



Camberwell Historical Society member, Ruth Christian Macdonald (*née* Hamilton) was born in West Moolap just out of Geelong in 1926. Her father, James Hamilton, was chief engineer at the Cheetham Salt Works which was across the road from their house. Her mother, Laura Hamilton, ran the family household looking after the six children: Irvine, Mac, Alex, David, Lucy and Chris.

Early Christmas holidays were often spent camping along the Anglesea River while her brothers were camping at the Scout camp. Other holidays were spent with the relatives back in Ensay, as well as down at the family holiday house 'Ilfracombe' near Paynesville on the Gippsland Lakes.

Chris went to school in Geelong. She first attended St Andrew's Presbyterian School, before moving to The Hermitage Church of England Girls' Grammar School, where she attended for nine years from 1934-1943.

After completing school, she went to the Gordon Institute in Geelong where architecture was the only course that sounded interesting to her. She was one of the first two females to study architecture. However, the best thing about being at the Gordon Institute was meeting Kenneth Macdonald there. He was doing fourth year and Chris was doing first year. The start of a long, beautiful relationship.

After four years at the Gordon Institute (1944-1947), Chris spent a year working at Marcus Martin & Tribe Architects in Melbourne. She then continued her course for two more years at the School of Architecture at Melbourne University. Chris's mother then became ill, so she withdrew and went home to look after her. During that time, she worked at Buchan, Laird & Buchan in Geelong. When her mother was better, she worked with Best Overend Architects in Melbourne from 1950 to 1952.

Chris then resigned as an architect to get married to Kenneth Bell Macdonald on 2 October 1952 at Christ Church, South Yarra. They started married life buying a house in Mitcham. They eventually moved to Canterbury in 1956 to a bigger house to accommodate their growing family, and two of their parents. Chris and Ken had three daughters: Janet, Fiona and Catriona. She devoted her life to looking after the family. Any spare time was taken up with charity work at Meals-on-Wheels, Red Cross Calling and volunteering at Strathcona where her daughters went to school. She was an active member of the congregation of St Paul's Anglican Church in Canterbury.

Chris also had a huge impact on the local Canterbury Girl Guides. She took on the role of Canterbury District Commissioner for seven years (1972-1979) and then Division Commissioner for Canterbury, Balwyn, North Balwyn and Greythorn for a further five years (1979-1984). She was an active member of the Carine Trefoil Group from 1972 until 2024. Chris and Ken were also

some of the initial members after the war to start the Melbourne Scots Dancing Circle as part of the Melbourne Scots Society.

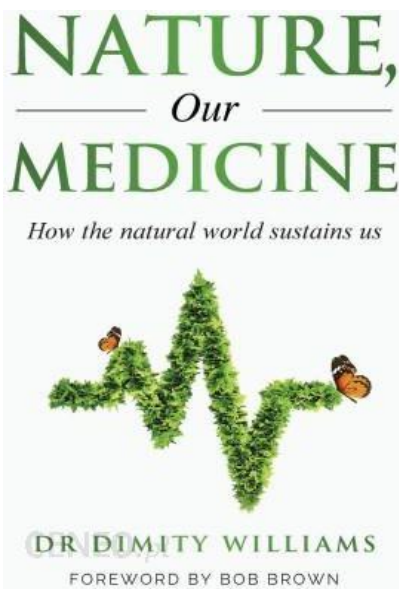
Chris's passion for family history took her overseas to England, Scotland and Wales, visiting relatives, castles, stately homes, churches and graveyards. Many holidays consisted of crawling through cemeteries and parish records. For a long time during the 1960s and 1970s, Chris was the person in charge of the Genealogical Society of Victoria Library, located upstairs in the Block Arcade, where she was on hand to help people research their family history. She was a member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, as well as a passionate member of the Camberwell Historical Society. She took part in activities with other Historical Societies including Geelong, Port Fairy and Warrnambool, with particular interest in the Port Phillip Pioneers Group.

A big focus for Chris was keeping in touch with relatives at family gatherings and reunions. She owned a large collection of books about early Australian history and was always gathering more facts for the family tree. Her passion for and memory of family history will be remembered as truly remarkable.

Fiona Prossor

REPORT OF MEETINGS 2024

27 February 2024 Dr Dimity Williams – *Nature: our medicine*



Dr Dimity Williams is a mother, nature lover, and family doctor. She has worked as a family physician for 25 years in inner Melbourne on Wurundjeri Country and enjoys looking after the whole person from pre-conception to old age. Dimity has completed additional training in obstetrics, paediatrics and mental health, particularly mindfulness meditation.

Dimity has worked in environmental advocacy with multiple organisations from grassroots community groups to large associations. Dimity is an alumna of the Centre for Sustainability Leadership, a co-founder of the Kids In Nature Network, and founder of Doctors for the Environment Australia's Biodiversity Special Interest Group. Passionate about integrating nature into healthcare, she has written and spoken about the 'nature: health interface' in various forums and delights in issuing nature prescriptions. *Nature: Our Medicine* is her first book.

Dimity started by stating that the state of the environment is our biggest public health problem. Not only do forests stabilize the environment and clean air and water but being in nature has mental and physical benefits. As a founder of Kids in Nature Network, she is pleased that, in the 10th year, Nature Play Week activities in 2023 were attended by 5000 children and families.

Biodiversity

Everything has not been discovered or named yet. Soil has millions of organisms and fungi; root systems look like lungs. Science and colonisation have not necessarily been a good thing for the environment. The rubber tree and its industrial benefits was discovered in Brazil, cultivated in the

Botanic Gardens in Kew, England which then led to plantations of rubber trees throughout Asia, leading to the destruction of native rain forests. The same thing is happening with palm oil plantations now.

Dimity mentioned a few scientists and people who have made a difference.

Edith Coleman from Blackburn made a groundbreaking discovery about orchid pollination. She was an authority on echidnas, mistletoe, stick insects, spiders and birds. And she was the first woman to be awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion. Her scientific research began in her own backyard and moved into the bush beyond. Her output was prodigious but her achievements are now overlooked and underappreciated.

Bush medicine and indigenous knowledge is becoming more prevalent, helped by the work of people such as Lionel Lauch, a Gunditjmara Kirrae Wurrung-Bundjalung man, residing in his home country on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Lionel has a passion for expanding and sharing his vast knowledge of cultural practices, stories, production of artefacts and traditional tools, bush foods and medicines, healing, building practices, artworks, music, dance, traditional ceremonies and contemporary engagement programs.

David Suzuki, academic, science broadcaster, and environmental activist, has since the mid-1970s been known for his television and radio series, documentaries and books about nature and the environment.

Lynn Margulis was an American evolutionary biologist. Margulis transformed the current understanding of the evolution of cells with nuclei. In 2002, *Discover* magazine recognised Margulis as one of the fifty most important women in science. Margulis was also the co-developer of the Gaia hypothesis with the British chemist James Lovelock, proposing that the Earth functions as a single, self-regulating system.

Barry Marshall, an Australian physician, and John Warren, an Australian pathologist, were awarded the Nobel prize for re-discovery of the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, and the major role it plays in causing many peptic ulcers, challenging decades of medical doctrine.

Greta Thunberg is a Swedish environmental activist known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action for climate change mitigation. Thunberg's youth and blunt speaking manner fueled her rise to the status of a global icon and began a youth environmental action movement.

Climate change and other threats

We have developed toxic relationships with nature and are disconnected from it. Many of today's health challenges rise directly from our misuse of the environment: fossil fuels, lead levels in the blood of children, health problems arising from bushfires, mental health issues, obesity, sleep problems, zoonosis diseases such as HIV, Hendra virus and COVID.

Nature Connection

Looking at nature is therapeutic; nature sounds have been shown to have a positive effect in intensive care units, and patients in beds with views of nature recover better. There is a three-day effect where health and stress show marked improvement after three days of nature therapy, which was pioneered in forest schools in Europe and was used at the Blackburn Nature School that operated until the 1960s. Dimity is using Nature Prescriptions to help her patients.

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2024

Meetings are held at 25 Inglesby Road, Camberwell

Tuesday March 26	2024	7.00pm	Zac Gorman - <i>The Menzies Watershed</i>
Tuesday April 23	2024	7.30pm	Lambis Englezos AM – <i>WWI and Frommelles</i>
Tuesday May 28	2024	7.30pm	Ian Penrose – <i>The history of the Yarra River</i>
Saturday June 15	2024	2pm	Em Prof Richard Broome AM – <i>Billibellary's different courage: Wurunjeri's responses to colonisation</i>

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 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, INC

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