

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

At the last AGM held on 24 August 2024, the following office bearers were elected for 2024 - 2025 financial year: President - George Fernando; Secretary and Public Officer - Adèle Fernando-Swart; Treasurer position unfilled and committee members - Jennifer McArthur, Alister Bennie and George Demetrios. Since the AGM, Siobhan Barker has agreed to be Acting Treasurer until a permanent Treasurer is appointed. We farewell Bryony Cosgrove and Roy Alderton from the committee, and I thank them for their work for CHS.

I draw to your attention the State Government's Camberwell Activity Centre Plan and Boroondara Council's response to the plan. I attended the community forum on Sunday 15 September 2024 where the Council informed the community about the State Government's proposal for Camberwell. Many concerned residents attended. Approximately 4,700 homes with heritage overlays are in the proposed zone. Further information can be found by following the links on the Council webpage.

CAMBERWELL JUNCTION ACTIVITY CENTRE PLAN

The Boroondara Council is very concerned about the Victorian Government's major changes proposed to meet housing targets. The following appears on their website:

The Victorian Government is proposing to almost double the number of dwellings in Boroondara by 2051, with a target of 67,000 new dwellings. Council recognises the need for more housing, which we planned for in our Housing Strategy. However, to achieve the 67,000 new dwellings, the Victorian Government is proposing major changes to housing and new development approval processes.

Summary of changes: Housing Statement and related planning reforms

- Announced in September 2023 through a media release, the Housing Statement set Victoria a housing target of 2.4 million new homes by 2051, with Melbourne's housing target being 800,000 new houses in 10 years.
- These targets do not match the population projections by Victoria in Future (VIF), the Victorian Government's own population model, which usually underpins long term plans and strategies.

- To achieve this, a range of significant planning reforms were foreshadowed to facilitate the delivery of additional housing.
- This included identifying Camberwell Junction as one of 10 Major Activity Centres for fast-track implementation of planning controls via the Activity Centres Program.
- The aim is for the development industry to deliver majority of new housing.
- No commitment made to physical and social infrastructure delivery to support such an increase in housing and population.

Plan for Victoria and housing targets for Boroondara

- *Plan for Victoria* is proposed to replace *Plan for Melbourne 2017-2050*, which is the key planning policy driving the future of the state's growth.
- Following a first phase of high-level consultation in late 2023, an open call for feedback on '8 big ideas' was made, however no draft plan was released for review.
- In June 2024, the Victorian Government then released draft housing targets for all Victorian councils.
- Boroondara has been allocated the target of an additional 67,000 dwellings to the 70,000 currently existing in our municipality - almost double the number of dwellings in our city.
- This housing target is meant to be achieved by 2051 and will require annual development levels to be at least 3 times what they have been over the last 10 years.
- Final submissions on these draft targets and the '8 big ideas' were due by 30 August 2024.

Draft Plan for Camberwell Junction

- In August 2024, the Victorian Government publicly released a *Draft Camberwell Junction Activity Centre Plan* (along with 9 other centres across Melbourne) via a media release.
- This will set the future direction and building heights for Camberwell Junction.
- The 'activity centre area' is consistent with Council's adopted Camberwell Junction Structure and Place Plan, which was developed based on extensive research and consultation with the community. Council is supportive of this activity centre area.
- An additional 'catchment area' that extends a further 800 m from the activity centre area encompasses approximately 10,800 properties and will allow for development height up to 6 storeys in heritage areas and low-scale single dwelling neighbourhoods. This catchment area includes 48% heritage properties. Council is not supportive of this 'catchment area'.
- There is a notable absence of detail about how this draft Plan will be implemented.
- The State has made no commitments to provide funding for local services and infrastructure to support this housing or for the loss of tree canopy and open spaces.

Changes to the way apartments and townhouses will be approved

- These proposed changes to planning rules were released to certain stakeholders and councils on 29 August 2024, with no broader community consultation.
- These changes come from a vague mention of reforms in the *Housing Statement*.
- The Victorian Government proposes to change ResCode, which is the planning rules for single dwelling developments that require a planning permit (including lots under 300 square metres and apartment developments up to a height of 4 storeys).
- The Victorian Government is proposing to convert ResCode standards to operate as 'deemed to comply' provisions, which essentially becomes a checklist for approving residential developments. These changes will remove qualitative assessment by local planning officers to consider local context.

- The ResCode changes remove the right for neighbouring residents to appeal to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).
- The Victorian Government only allowed a limited time for feedback from select stakeholders on these far-reaching changes.

More information

- read a Council [letter sent to our residents on the Victorian Government's changes to planning](#)
- read Council's [media statement on the draft housing targets](#)
- read Council's [media statement on the draft Camberwell Activity Centre Plan](#)
- read council officer reports tabled at our public meetings:
 - [Boroondara Submission to Plan for Victoria and Draft Housing Target](#) (26 August 2024)
 - [Victorian Government's Draft Camberwell Junction Activity Centre Plan](#) (2 September 2024)
 - [Residential Development Assessment Policy \(ResCode\) proposed changes - Submission to Department of Transport and Planning](#) (16 September 2024)
- see how Council consulted the community on supporting extra housing in Camberwell Junction in our consultation [Shape the future of Camberwell Junction\(open in new window\)](#).

What you can do

You can advise the Victorian Government on whether you support or oppose these changes.

- *Draft Camberwell Junction Activity Centre Plan*: Survey closes 29 September – go to [Camberwell Junction Activity Centre](#) or email camberwell@vpa.vic.gov.au
- Plan for Victoria, including the housing targets: even though submissions closed on 30 August 2024, we encourage you to email planforvictoria@transport.vic.gov.au
- Email the Minister for Planning at sonya.kilkenny@parliament.vic.gov.au

THE WOMAN IN THE MOSAIC AND HER STORY

Dr Volkhard Wehner

In our family we own what to me is a prized mosaic. It depicts the head of a Madonna-like woman, set off against a golden background. You could easily be thinking that this work was created many centuries ago, and you might ask yourself who might have been the artist who created it. Could it be a Byzantine artist choosing a beautiful local lady to pose for his work, much like Leonardo da Vinci chose a Florentine beauty to pose for his painting of the Mona Lisa? Or might it be a Roman, perhaps even an early Christian, who created a work in the image of the Mother of Christ?

Of course, I know the answer, and it is a rather simple one. The artist in fact was Melbourne-born Barbara Cox, and the year the mosaic was created was the Melbourne Olympics year of 1956. Barbara had just completed her Fine Arts degree at Melbourne University, and the opportunity of a part-time job at an impromptu 'workshop' set up by the noted mosaic and mural artist Napier Waller at Melbourne's Exhibition Buildings was too good an opportunity to miss. Napier Waller had been appointed by the Commonwealth to create a series of mosaics to be eventually installed in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, which was then under construction. It was the work under Napier Waller and his assistants that gave Barbara the inspiration to create a mosaic of her own.



Mervyn Napier Waller (1893-1972), born at Penshurst in Western Victoria, had by the mid-1950s built up an Australia-wide reputation as a mural and mosaic artist as well as a stained-glass window artist. Among his most well-known mosaic murals were created for the University of Western Australia, for Melbourne's Newspaper House in Collins Street and for the dining hall at the Myer Emporium. Appointed by the Government, between 1952 and 1958 he designed and oversaw the creation of the wall and ceiling mosaic murals for the War Memorial's Hall of Memory as well as its stained-glass windows. A veteran of World War I who had lost his right arm at the Battle of Bullecourt in May 1917, he was ably assisted in his work by his companion, later wife, Lorna Reyburn, a New Zealand-born artist. Lorna oversaw the practical aspects of the project: the hiring of artists and helpers, the finances, material supplies, etc. Of the helpers—art students, wives of ex-servicemen, volunteers; over the six years of the project there would be many

dozens of these—Barbara Cox was one.

Barbara recalls several artists participating in this large art project, including her aunt Ruth Newbury and the daughter of the 'Heidelberg artist' Walter Withers, Margery Withers. There were others. Their job was to copy Napier Waller's design onto hundreds of numbered sheets of paper, each of which was then annotated with coded marks indicating the colour of the small squares of glass called tesserae (singular: tessera) which were to be glued to the marked spot. Over six million of these tesserae were eventually used and glued down, one by one. The completed paper sheets are called mosaic tiles or mosaic sheets.

In the 1930s Napier Waller had visited Italy and studied the magnificent mosaics at Ravenna, at Venice, as well as at Rome's St Peter's. Since the Island of Murano near Venice had for centuries been the home of glass and tessera making, it is very likely that all of the material used in the War Memorial project came from that source.

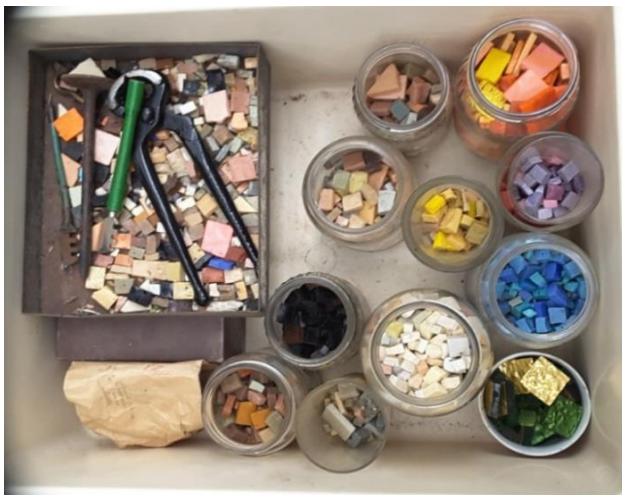
Barbara was assigned to what were to become the wall mosaics for the Memory Hall, commemorating the Australian Military Forces in World War 2, represented by four figures: an airman, a soldier, a sailor and a nurse. Her job was to prepare mosaic tiles by glueing the appropriate tesserae onto the numbered and colour code-bearing paper sheets, ensuring that the golden tesserae—gold leaf had only been applied to one side—were glued face-down. Sometimes, if a tessera did not quite fit the space on the marked paper, Barbara had to trim it down to size.

In such a great undertaking there obviously was some wastage; some tesserae were rejected as misshapen and were discarded, others broke, and some fell on the floor and were eventually swept into big waste bins. At the end of the day Barbara could collect some of the wasted tesserae—as she was allowed to—and took them home. These she would eventually use to create her own mosaic. Its design was entirely her own. The fact that this writer considers her small mosaic to be a beautiful piece of art has nothing to do with the fact that he eventually married the artist...

The hundreds of mosaic tiles were eventually shipped to Canberra and set into the walls of the newly finished Hall of Memory under the supervision of Napier Waller and of two Melbourne mosaic specialists. After ensuring that the sheets successfully adhered to the wall the paper was carefully peeled off and the little gaps were filled out, to reveal what today are considered among the largest and most beautiful mosaics in the world. This final step brought to a close a great artistic but also technically extremely demanding project. The Governor General officially opened the Hall of Memory on May 24, 1959. Soon afterwards an Imperial Honour was bestowed upon Napier Waller, the creator of its mosaics and stained-glass windows.

The work in the Hall of Memory represents Napier Waller's greatest achievement, and it is doubtlessly his final major work which in the meantime has become an enduring national treasure. In the 1960s his health gradually deteriorated, and he died in 1972 at his home at Ivanhoe.

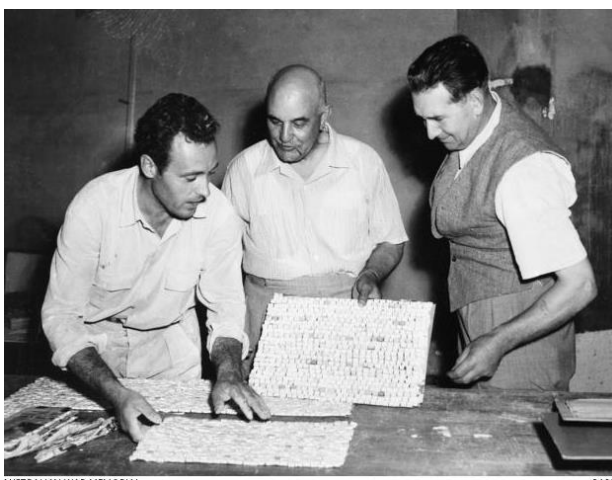
Barbara Cox's artistic talent eventually extended to ink and pencil sketches, watercolour painting and to sculpture in several media. However, her artistic potential never came to full fruition due to family commitments, but also due to the enduring social depreciation of the work and talents of women artists—and of women generally—that pervaded Australian society during much of her lifetime.



Left:
Barbara's spare tesserae and some of her tools



Right
A section of the 10-metre high mosaic of a sailor, one of the four wall mosaics in the Hall of Memory. Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial. (Part of AWM item 90409.001)



Left:
Napier Waller (r) with mosaic experts Aldo Rossi (l) and his employer Severino de Marco of the Melbourne firm of de Marco Bros.(c), examining some of the completed mosaic tiles. (Reproduced courtesy AWM item 042349)

Acknowledgement:

This writer has greatly benefited from talking to Barbara Wehner about her work under Napier Waller. Much useful information was received from several staff members of the Australian War Memorial.

Interview with Barbara Wehner nee Cox; information provided by the Research Centre of the Australian War Memorial; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; numerous entries under appropriate names and subjects found on the internet; Trove Newspapers and gazettes.

Camberwell Historical Society welcomed the donations of a book, postcards and a commemorative newspaper from Surrey Hills Historical Society and a photograph from Hawthorn Historical Society. We have received donations of Fairholme pictures from the previous owners. We have had further donations of books from Dr Joely Taylor. Camberwell Football Club (1886 – 1994) donated 132 items of historical memorabilia including annual reports, flags and pictures. Some images of the donations are included.



Fairholme Estate Advertisement

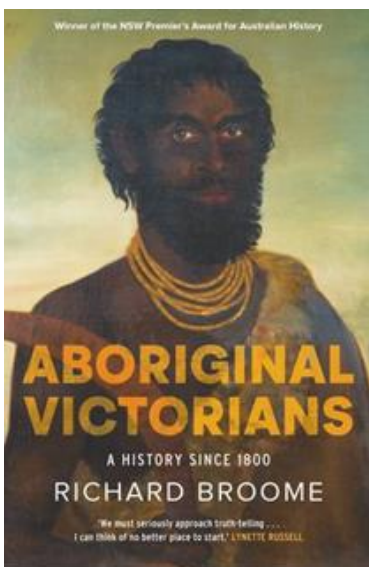
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Fairholme



REPORT OF MEETINGS 2024

15 June 2024 Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM - Billibellary's different courage: Wurundjeri's responses to colonization Combined meeting with Hawthorn Historical Society



Professor Richard Broome AM, FAHA, FRHSV, FFAHS, President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Emeritus Professor in History La Trobe University, is the author/co-author of twenty books and many articles on Australian and Indigenous History. His book *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800* (2005) (first edition) won the NSW Premier's Prize in Australian History and the Victorian Community History Book Prize (2006-07). It has just been updated in a second edition 2024.

Billibellary's Different Courage: Wurundjeri's Responses to Colonisation.

Billibellary was a pivotal figure in the early history of Aboriginal-European relations in Victoria. He was a Wurundjeri Woiwurrung ngurungaeta or clan headman. Billibellary was an insightful leader who sought to negotiate on behalf of his people instead of using physical force towards newly arrived Europeans. In essence,

Billibellary chose conciliation over warfare. He was one of 8 Aboriginal leaders who met with John Batman on 6 June 1835 and signed his agreement to acquire a vast tract of land in the Port Phillip Bay (Nairn) area. Billibellary persevered with diplomacy and used such interactions to become proficient in 'imperial literacy'. This approach was by no means an act of surrender, as

he learned to speak English and carefully observed European ways to better understand the interlopers.

Aboriginal responses to devastation on the Port Phillip frontier show that they were shaped by colonisation and also shaped themselves. Their responses encompass choosing conflict, adaptation and transformation.

Australia's conquest was about land not labour or resources. The people had to deal with new microbes and diseases, animals and plants, and the loss of a staple food – the yam daisy. The impact on the Aboriginal world was devastating. The land was taken rapidly, their resources were depleted. Violence and resulting trauma resulted. Disease devastated the population which had no immunity. Their culture was ruptured as with the deaths of elders and song lines were not passed on. The popular view was 'they would fade away'. Colonisation effects are ongoing - Yoorrook Commission, Portland hearing, historians' panel, community yarning and evidence, and the Alcoa battle.

The Aboriginal response was Victoria-wide conflict and sporadic warfare. Conflict was not universal. Less conflict occurred around Melbourne. In 1835 the Daungurung threatened Fawcner, who did not understand the 'native' requests. The Woiwurrung around Melbourne were peaceful.

When John Batman explored the Yarra river and its tributaries he met Billibellary, one of the eight ngurungaeta he with whom he signed a treaty on 8 June 1835. Billibellary led five Woiwurrung clans - bunjil or waa. The treaty was significant as it was the first and only documented time when European settlers negotiated their presence and occupation of Aboriginal lands. The treaty was immediately repudiated by the colonial government in Sydney. The 1835 proclamation by Governor Richard Bourke implemented the doctrine of "*terra nullius*" upon which British settlement was based, reinforcing the concept that there were no prior landowners to British possession and that Aboriginal people could not sell or assign the land, and individuals could only acquire it through distribution by the Crown.

Aboriginal Responses: Adaptation

Men joined the Native Police Corps. They were led by Billibellary. They had power and horses as Aboriginal policemen. After about a year Billibellary resigned from the Native Police Corps when he found that it was to be used to capture and even kill other natives. He did his best from then on to undermine the Corps and as a result many native troopers deserted, and few remained longer than three or four years.

In 1845 a school was established on the banks of the Merri Creek to, in European terms, educate and civilise Wurundjeri children. For the first year or two the school enjoyed strong enrolments, largely due to the support and encouragement of Billibellary, who sent his own children along. However, there were conflicts over the teaching of a European curriculum and the demands for the teaching of Aboriginal lore and ceremony.

Aboriginal Response: Transformation

The Northern Territory cattle industry was based on Aboriginal stockmen. New actions, new meanings and new ways of being came about.



Billibellary (1800c- 1846)

Wurundjeri willam ngurrangaeta - waa. He was a song maker. His family owned Mt William quarry. It was a key industry. Barak tells Howitt that Billibellary is the most eminent Kulin. Billibellary rejected conflict, pioneered adaptation, initially supported both the school and the native police corp. He was a friend of William Thomas.

Successors:

Charles Never – gentleman,

Thomas Bungaleene – Odd Fellow,

William Barak (1825c-1904) - educated in a European school, Christian, founded and defended Coranderrk, inspired Maloga mission petition of 1881, farmer and artist.

William Cooper (1860-1941) - Maloga petition 1881 inspired his political activism, letters/lobbying, Aboriginal Australian Advancement League 1933, Day of Mourning 1938 and radical hope of being equal citizens.

Doug Nicholls (1906-1988) - Cummerajunga athlete/footballer, Cooper's protégé, Church of Christ pastor, Gore Street Church. Doug helped found and led the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League.

21 July 2024 Dr Peter Yule – 1880s Land Boom and Crash.

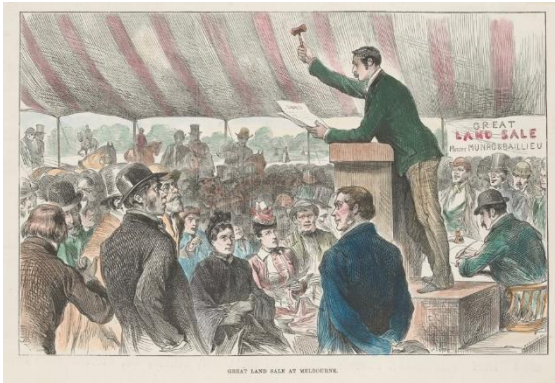
Combined meeting with Hawthorn Historical Society

Dr Peter Yule is a research fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. He has written widely on Australian military and economic and medical history. He has written over 30 books including many Western District local histories as well as books on topics ranging from the Collins Class submarine project and Australian National Airways to the Baillieu and Buxton families. Peter is a Councillor and Fellow of the RHSV.

The Melbourne land boom of the late 1880s was one of the greatest speculative booms in history, rivalling the tulip bubble in Holland in the 1630s, the South Sea bubble in England in 1720 and, more recently, the boom in mining shares in Australia in the late 1960s. Every boom is followed by a bust, and the depression in Melbourne in the early 1890s was ferocious: land prices crashed (often to less than ten per cent of the boom-time high), many new housing estates were abandoned, unemployment soared, and Melbourne's population fell. It was a social and economic disaster, worse in Melbourne than the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In 1887 and 1888 Melbourne property prices doubled, tripled and quadrupled in months. Thousands of acres were subdivided, and property values were totally unrealistic compared with England or other places.

Various factors influenced the growth in Melbourne property prices, but the main factor was the soaring population growth (70%) in the 1880s. A small number of land speculators did very well from the population's desire for housing ownership.



The good seasons of the 1880s were followed by a decade of drought. Export prices for wheat and wool fell, capital inflow from England ceased and by 1889 the construction of new houses exceeded demand. Companies failed and banks closed their doors in April 1893. Money circulating in the economy fell by 50%. Recovery was slow, with some land prices not reaching their land boom highs for many decades. Income per head didn't meet pre-crash income until 1909.

The fortunes of the Baillieu and the Buxton families illustrate the course of the land boom and bust. James George Baillieu arrived in 1853 and married Emma Pow in the same year. They had 14 surviving children. The third child, William Lawrence Baillieu, built the family fortune aided by his 5 younger brothers through stockbroking and real estate. In 1887 Baillieu and Munro had 20% of Melbourne's real estate market. In 1888 they made an extraordinary profit, the equivalent of \$40 million in today's prices.

At the height of the boom, William Lawrence Baillieu and his father-in-law, Edward Latham built 'Konwsley', now called 'Raheen' in Studley Park Road, but they had barely moved in when the economy crashed and they were forced to sell. Both Baillieu and Latham made secret compositions with their creditors, paying only a few pence in the pound on their enormous land-boom debts. As the economy slowly recovered, W L Baillieu and his brothers bought cheap land in East Camberwell and built a family enclave in East Camberwell. By 1900 W L Baillieu was again a wealthy man, the greater part of the family's new fortune coming from gold mines in Maryborough and Scarsdale.

The Buxton family is now into their fifth generation of real estate and land developers in Melbourne. William Buckhurst prospered as an estate agent and land developer. In 1869 he was joined by his nephew John Buxton. The firm did well in the property boom. James Hunt was Buckhurst and Buxton's biggest client during the land boom. He was later declared bankrupt. The firm suffered during the property bust. In 1892 William Buckhurst Jr was declared bankrupt. William Buckhurst senior owned 50 properties in South Melbourne and although the income from rents fell during the depression, money from rents meant he lived comfortably. John Buxton struggled to stay financial as the real estate business income fell badly. He had borrowed little during the land speculation times. Hughenden mansion in Middle Park was the family home. He bought lots of property during the depression.

24 August 2024 - Annual General Meeting and Members' Show and Tell

George Fernando stated that with the AGM each year there is an opportunity to acknowledge those who support Camberwell Historical Society. He thanked Boroondara Library for their help and Boroondara Council for providing CHS with the use of the room at 25 Inglesby Road. George thanked all those who have contributed to the running of CHS and the work we do. He thanked the committee for their work throughout the year and also thanked every CHS member for their ongoing membership and support.

The Committee was elected for 2024-2025 financial year and comprised: President, George Fernando; Secretary and Public Officer, Adèle Fernando-Swart; Treasurer, unfilled at the AGM

and Committee members – George Demetrios, Alister Bennie and Jennifer McArthur were elected. Siobhan Barker has agreed to fill the position of Treasurer until a permanent Treasurer is found.

After the AGM, John Maidment presented memorabilia from his father's war service including medals and photos. Elizabeth Golding talked about the recent donations of Fairholme memorabilia including historic photographs, a drawing, a poster and the contract for building Fairholme. General discussion was held about heritage issues. The new high-density zoning of suburbs and Boroondara Council's response was raised by Di Gilles.

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2024

Meetings are held at 25 Inglesby Road, Camberwell

Tuesday 24 September 10am ANZ Bank Museum visit

Saturday 12 October 2024 10am History Walk Riversdale Road – limited numbers

Tuesday 22 October 2024 7.30pm TBA

Tuesday 26 November 2024 7.30pm Dr Daryl Moran – Australians in Burma during WWII

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 2024 - 25

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1 July to 30 June. Subscriptions for the 2024 – 2025 financial year are due and payable from 1 July 2024. Single \$30, Family \$40. Camberwell Historical Society, BSB 633 000 Account No 142260678 Cheques to Camberwell Historical Society, PO Box 1274, CAMBERWELL 3124.

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

ABN 79 935 200 741 Incorporation No A0041541Y
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Acting Treasurer – Siobhan Barker

Committee members — Alister Bennie, Jennifer McArthur and George Demetrios