

CANTERBURY HISTORY GROUP



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Newsletter March 2022

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Greetings to all members and friends of the Canterbury History Group

Our March meeting will **not** be at the Parish hall. It has been replaced by our dinner.

**On Monday March 28th
 at 'Chicken or the Egg', Maling Road Canterbury**

at 6.00 pm

SPEAKER: Loretta Smith author of 'Spanner in the Works. The Extraordinary story of Alice Anderson and Australia's first all-girl Garage'

MENU:

Entree of 3 Dips, bread
 Choice of 2 mains: Chicken Satay with rice and salad OR
 Grilled barramundi with saffron aioli with chips and salad.
 Red and white wines or soft drinks
 Coffee or tea with something sweet.
 (The serves are generous.)

COST: \$ 55.00 per head, inclusive.

We would prefer not to collect the money on the night. Please could you pay by 22nd March either by transfer online with your name to BSB 633000 Acct 152 694 303
or by deposit into this account at the Bendigo Bank, Maling Road
or by dropping the money in to 34 Bryson Street with your name.

Can you state your preference for fish or chicken with your RSVP by 22nd March
 If you have food sensitivities and need alternatives please let us know.

RSVP Neil Curry 9830 5896 or email: wilsonoz@optusnet.com.au.

Planned Meetings: Note dates: April 26, May 23, June 27, September 26

APRIL: TUESDAY 26th April at 8.00 pm in the Parish hall. (Monday is ANZAC day)

In order to mark the 80th anniversary of the fall of Singapore, our member, Jenny Norvick and Leila Griffiths will tell us about their father's experiences of escaping from Singapore and being interned in prisoner-of-war camps in Sumatra. The conditions were as brutal as those in Changi but not as well publicised.

Leila's father, Dr Eric Bode, grew up in Balwyn Road, the grandson of German immigrants. His grandfather came to Melbourne as an engineer to help establish the sugar beet industry in Victoria and his grandmother arrived as a bride. Neither Jenny's or Leila's father talked about their war experiences but when recounted, they're amazing.

‘CANTERBURY A HISTORY’ 2nd Edition

We are delighted to announce that Canterbury History Group has been awarded a very generous sponsorship grant of \$5750 by the Community Bank as part of its Community Investment Program. It will be used to print a second, revised edition of ‘Canterbury A History’. This publication sold out in 2020 and we hope the second edition will be ready to print within a few months.

The Bendigo Bank in Maling Road has been a very good friend to Canterbury History Group, providing exhibition space for us over the years. It continues to sell ‘Visions of a Village’ for us, without commission, and has provided window space for us to advertise it. We look forward to their sponsorship.

March 17th CELEBRATION OF THE INSTALLATION OF THE GOLDING PLAQUE

Simon Golding, Douglas Golding (donor), the Mayor Cr Jane Addis and CHG President Neil Curry in front of Abingdon Apartments in Canterbury Road, Canterbury where the plaque has been installed. This is the site of Douglas Golding’s great grandfather’s boot and shoe factory. Douglas is 91 and initiated the project nearly 2 years ago, in memory of his grandfather Herbert.



Nearly 20 members of the extended Golding family, as well as representatives from community groups, gathered on Thursday afternoon in the Camberwell Hockey Club to celebrate the opening of the plaque. Cr Jane Addis spoke about the important contribution which Alfred Golding made to the early Canterbury community as an employer with his factory and as a generous benefactor. His hall above the factory was the venue for many community activities.

Canterbury History Group catered for the event and provided a display of photos which family members have recently contributed. Before this, we had no photos of Alfred Golding although

we had information about the factory and knew where the family had lived. We had even produced a Golding Trail pamphlet. Douglas Golding who had travelled from NSW, spoke of his family memories and contributed a photo which we believe to be of Goldings former 2nd factory in Mont Albert Road just below the cr of Balwyn Rd.

Alfred and Kate Golding had 10 children and at this celebration there were descendants of probably 6 of them. As they shared their memories of previous generations, over afternoon refreshments, we wished we could have recorded them. There have been promises of more photos and we hope for an exhibition when we are settled into our new home in the Old Library next year. The gathering reinforced the value of recording and writing even apparently trivial memories of the past and sharing them.

We would like to thank Cr Addis for her important contribution and her continuing support of heritage, Chris Don and Abingdon body corporate for their unanimous support, Joanne Marchese for designing the beautiful plaque and providing specifications to the manufacturer, Peter Magalotti of Melbourne Enamelling who did an excellent job and delivered the plaque on time, Ray Gruchy who recorded the event with photos, Emily Grant from Local and Family History at Boroondara Libraries for providing photos and finally Douglas Golding for his very generous donation.

An article about Alfred Golding and the factory was included in CHG Newsletter Sept 2021.

John Beswicke 1847-1925 presentation given at our AGM February 28th 2022 by Ann Hawker

John Beswicke was an architect who practised in Melbourne between the 1870's and 1915. Heritage citations note Beswicke as eminent, prolific, noted, well-known and as one of the more innovative and eclectic designers in Melbourne at the time he practised. He was undoubtedly talented, industrious and influential.

His father's family came from Oldham near Manchester and his mother from County Tyrone in Northern Ireland and both families were free settlers. His father was listed as a clothier and he and his wife had 7 children; one Eliza, died and a later child was also named Eliza. Parents were listed as mill-owners but closed the mill. This was due to the American Revolution which resulted in the cessation of cotton imports from England, as well as the invention of the flying shuttle and the move from water to steam power. As all historians know, there is always a number of causes both long and short term which are catalysts to events.

Changes in family fortunes, bankruptcies and social unrest led to the Beswicke's decision to migrate to Australia. The working class suffered as did the bankrupt mill-owners; thousands were unemployed and starving people were eating nettles from the moors mixed with other greens boiled and mixed with oatmeal. We should never forget the sufferings of people of bygone eras.

John Beswicke was the son of Charles Beswicke and Elizabeth Keys, who had both arrived in the Port Phillip district in the 1840s. In 1847 Charles married Elizabeth when he was aged around 40 and Elizabeth was 18. They had 3 daughters and 2 sons, John being their second son. John went to Geelong Grammar School.

In 1862 aged 16, he was apprenticed to the firm Crouch and Wilson where he continued to work for 18 years. While there, he worked on projects such as the Deaf School and Blind Institute built in the 1860s in St Kilda Road, the main building at MLC in Hawthorn in 1882, and numerous churches, as well as some

of his own projects. A prolific and successful designer, he is known to have designed some 300 buildings, including 203 houses, 8 banks, 14 churches, 44 commercial buildings, 11 hotels, 15 institutional buildings such as hospitals, 45 shops and 6 large townhalls.

The practice of Crouch and Wilson passed to the sons of the principals in 1881, when Crouch retired. Ralph Wilson left to join Beswicke and create Wilson and Beswicke on 2 January 1882, until Wilson's death in 1889. After this, John Beswicke was often in a sole practice as J. Beswicke, but also in other partnerships including Beswicke and Hutchins (1889-90) and Beswicke and Coote (1890-93).

Amongst his prolific output was a series of grand houses in Harcourt Street in Hawthorn, many for his family, from the 1870s to 1900. Of 15 buildings built in this area, 14 are still standing. His father Charles had bought land in Harcourt Street in 1873 and moved from Geelong into a house at No 5, which was designed while

John was still at Crouch and Wilson. John Beswicke's own residence, 'Rotha' at No 29 was built in 1887, and in 1900 he built even grander 'Talana' on the corner of Auburn Road for his wife, but she preferred to stay at 'Rotha'.

See Right: Rotha with Beswicke, his wife Mary and steam-driven car.



Some of his houses feature distinctive corner turrets with 'candle snuffer' roofs, his own house Rotha sports the first example, with square ones on the three houses at 5, 7, 9 Yarra Street, Hawthorn, with later examples on 'Redholme', (Warwillah) and 'Talana'. Another distinctive feature is the use of decorative gables on each face of a bay window, also seen on his own house 'Rotha' and in simpler versions on single storey houses.

Beswicke was associated as a consulting designer with a number of property and building companies in the boom period of the 1880s. One of these was the Australian Property and Investment Co. He was invited to a limited competition called in 1888 by the company to design a 12 storey office building on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Flinders Lane, which was won by Henry Hardie Kemp. However, Beswicke was included in the project as he had studied tall buildings, and probably provided technical advice - it became known as the Australian Building. The remarkable structure was amongst the world's tallest at the time, and it remained Melbourne's tallest until the 1920s, and was demolished in 1980.

He designed a number of notable shop/ office/ residence blocks in a distinctive eclectic style; there are two such blocks in Auburn Village in Hawthorn, on Auburn Road, near Burwood Road, and a larger one on Brunswick Street, Fitzroy that is now named after the architect as the Beswicke Building. Shops such as the Auburn Shopping Village have been listed as one of the best surviving examples of boom time commercial premises in Victoria.



As can be seen, John Beswicke was a prolific architect during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. He commenced practice as an architect 13 years after a competition for the design of the first Government House in Victoria and 10 years after the Victorian Institute of Architects was formed. The majority of Beswicke's designs were built before federation in 1901. Much of the body of his work is still standing today which is a testament to his skills as a designer and talent as a draughtsman, as well as his ability to supervise the construction of substantial buildings.

One of his most significant legacies is the design of over a dozen mansion houses for his family and acquaintances in Harcourt Street Hawthorn which now constitutes a significant streetscape of Victorian houses and have been described as, 'a concentration of nineteenth century mansions with a high level of design...a precinct without parallel in Melbourne'. His home, Rotha, is an example of his picturesque taste in domestic work. Others have been described as flamboyant, extraordinary and elegant.

A dapper and urbane gentleman, he was a keen sporting shooter, motoring enthusiast and inventor as well as a devoted family man. (see above left) He was a disciplinarian with a humorous streak and had a wide circle of friends and associates.

A wonderful example of Beswicke's domestic architecture is at 3 Fermanagh Rd Camberwell. Here we can see the extensive use of arched columns and the beautiful decorative cast iron fence which is original. Sailing ships used cast iron as ballast as they were notoriously buoyant and it also had the added advantage of being used in manufacturing in the early days of the colonies. The arched doorways are beautiful and there is extensive use of leadlight over the doors. Note the Italianate balustrading on this

particular home. As you will see below, it is similar in style to Cullymont, Canterbury.



In Canterbury, three Beswicke designed houses still stand in Victoria Avenue. Number 7 Victoria Avenue with its sumptuous interiors. 13 Victoria Avenue with its striking similarity to Tourmont, the main building of Fintona that we will see later. 21 Victoria Avenue with beautiful decorative lace on the balcony and gracious interiors.

Left : drawing of duplex house Cullymont, 4 Selwyn Street and 2 Molesworth Street, Canterbury (Eyrecourt)

Built in the late 1880s, Cullymont was 2 separate houses on two separate titles each with its own frontage on different streets; they shared a common party wall. The two houses are very similar with large bay windows, colonnaded balcony verandahs, elaborately panelled front doors surrounded by stained glass depicting Shakespearian characters and it has stained glass sky lights above the staircase. The tower house section was built for Mr Alexander McCully and his son John McCully hence the name Cullymont. They are first listed as residing there in 1890 and lived there for only three years. Curiously the land was not owned by McCully until 1891 and then only the Molesworth Street side was owned by him. Equity Trustees Co Ltd owned Selwyn Street lots when the McCullys lived there. [Suggesting bankruptcy during the 1990's land bust]

Originally there were stables and a coach house but these were demolished by Elizabeth Jensen between 1952 and 1956. She built a house for herself on a site in Leeds Street and lived there until she died in 1956 aged 80. There was an orchard on the Molesworth /Selwyn St corner and a tennis court on the Molesworth/Leeds corner. Number 2 Molesworth St became Eyrecourt from 1900-1967.

The Beswicke Fintona connection:

TOURMONT was created for the home of David York Syme, an important Victorian business figure. Both Murray, the original purchaser, and Syme the first resident, are critical figures in the history of Victoria if not Australia. Murray combined his newspaper interest with wine-growing and service in local municipal politics; Syme was an influential member of the Victorian corporate world, a successful business man who imported goods and made his fortune as Chairman of the Melbourne Steamship Company. They were probably a cut above other Canterbury residents in political and economic influence. Tourmont reflects some of this local standing. The building's later career as a private girls' school indicates another phase in the history of the suburb, when its mansions were turned to new uses.



L: 'Tourmont', later Fintona, showing decorative brickwork, gabled slate roof and fine lacework of the return verandahs. Family members are seated in the carriage.

The name Tourmont was selected by David and Eliza Syme when it was built in 1891. Tourmont was built on land

which had originally been part of Andrew Murray's *Balwyn – home of the vine* (100 acres) which was purchased in 1859. The land was later sold to Mr Perry (whose wife Miss Snowden had a brother Edward who established 'Monomeath') and then leased to Mr. Cherry in 1876.

In 1890 David York Syme and his wife Mary Eliza Syme purchased 2.375 acres in Balwyn Road from Mr. Cherry. In 1891 the Syme family built Tourmont for a cost of £2553/5/8. The house was designed by

the architect, John Beswicke, whose family came to have a long and distinguished connection with Fintona. ‘The house took a year to build and consisted of a hall, dining room, parlor, bedroom, kitchen, store room, pantry, lavatory, cellar, upstairs 6 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, linen closet and a Tower room. Outbuildings were a weatherboard wash house with copper, wood and coal house. The internal fittings are good. The Hawthorn Brick Company produced the dark, machine pressed bricks of the house and the slates were imported from Wales. The floors of the entrance hall and lobby, drawing room and dining room are of New Zealand Kauri pine. Exterior walls are 15.5 inches reducing to 11 inches on the upper floor. They have a 2 inch cavity as a preventative against damp. The situation is the highest in Balwyn Rd and value of the house is four thousand pounds sterling.’

Tourmont was used as a family home and Mary Eliza was a well known person and held many At Home and other functions at Tourmont. She was involved in many organizations in Melbourne and with her husband she travelled extensively. Her brother [NSW politician and later Prime Minister, Sir George Reid] was in politics so Tourmont was often a setting for political dinners and entertainment of overseas guests. Kate Brooke (Syme, 1999), a current member of staff, is a descendant of David and Eliza Syme and Kate’s family have had a close association with the school for many years.

In 1933 the Estate of David York Syme Senior was offered for sale and in 1934 the property was purchased by Miss Margaret Cunningham for five thousand pounds and Tourmont has been the central building of Fintona since the School moved from its earlier locations in Mayston St in the early 1900s and from Burke Rd. Miss Cunningham made Tourmont her home with an intention of opening a school and in 1935 she bought the goodwill of Fintona from Miss Hughston. The building of classrooms at Tourmont was commenced and Fintona Girls’ School was moved to Tourmont in 1936. In 1939 the Assembly Room (now the Meeting Room), Art room and Prefects’ Study were completed.

In the various photos [which Ann showed us] of Tourmont over the years, one constant remains: the magnificent presence that this building generates and has done so since it was constructed late in the 1890s. Tourmont remains an icon for not only Fintonians but for all of us. Today it is an icon for a number of reasons:

- It reflects the heritage and history of the area
- It signifies the heritage of Fintona: Tourmont is an enduring symbol of Margaret Cunningham’s determination and that of her staff in dedicating a lifetime to the development of girls’ education.
- It displays the importance of symbolism in cultural life and draws attention to this.
- It reminds us of our responsibility to ensure that the integrity of such significant buildings is preserved and the spirit contained within is carried forward into the future.

Tourmont stands for the education of women throughout the years. I am not sure that is what John Beswicke intended when he designed Tourmont, but it is to his credit that his designs have stood the test of time and have provided the versatility which has enabled the preservation of such an important part of our heritage. We still now enjoy and utilize some of the significant buildings designed by John Beswicke which are still standing in our community today and we need to maintain our stewardship of these to ensure their longevity for the future. John Beswicke was a foremost architect of his era. We need to celebrate and acknowledge his contributions to architecture, our community and to the State of Victoria.

Ref: K.C.B. Bethell, John Beswicke 1847-1925 Heritage Architect, Rotha Press, Camberwell, 2011

Thankyou Ann for a fascinating talk, extensively illustrated by wonderful photos. Suzanne Woolley provided many of the local ones. Unfortunately, we're only able to include a few here. In this article the streets and houses have been underlined so that you could walk a ‘Beswicke trail’ through parts of Hawthorn, Camberwell or Canterbury and see the houses for yourself. Pages 139 to 146 of Bethell’s book above gives a complete list of Beswicke’s architectural works, including Hawthorn and Malvern Town Halls. (editor)
