

# CANTERBURY HISTORY GROUP



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**Newsletter February 2023**

Happy New Year to all members and friends of the Canterbury History Group.

**Our first meeting and AGM** will be held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February at 8.00 pm. in St. Paul's Parish Centre, Church Street, Canterbury. We suggest you be there at 7.45 so that we can start at 8.00 pm.

Our speaker, Dr Bronwyn Hughes, is an art historian with specialist research interest in stained glass and other monumental art forms. In 2019 she received the Order of Australia Medal for services to the Visual Arts. In 2022, The International Year of Glass, Dr Hughes published *Lights Everlasting: Australia's commemorative stained glass from the Boer War to Vietnam*. It was based on 10 years' research and writing.

Dr Hughes is a glass artist herself as well as a teacher, lecturer and consultant to heritage architects and organisations. She is keen 'to raise awareness of the great historical legacy we have in glass' and promote its wider use within a sustainable society.

The first stained glass installed in Victoria dates back to the 1860's, and became extremely popular during the land boom, so it is not surprising that we find significant examples across Boroondara as well simpler versions within our own houses. Dr Hughes will select examples to show us and she is recommended as an entertaining speaker.

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## Meeting dates for your diaries:

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February AGM at 8.00 pm St Paul's Parish Centre – see details above.

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June

Winter recess

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September

October History Month Dinner Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>

Monday November Christmas Lunch at 12.00 noon

## Canterbury History Group News:

- We still hope to be in our new Heritage Centre in the old library in the Canterbury Gardens by mid-year but there have been further construction delays.
- With Surrey Hills Historical Society, we are working on our new websites - funded by a Boroondara Council Community Strengthening Grant
- The revised 2nd edition of *Canterbury A History* by Don Gibb with Jill Barnard is available from Bendigo Bank Maling Road, the chemist or the Canterbury News Agency for \$49.00. It has a glossy insert of old photos and is selling well.
- We have submitted an application for a Triennial Grant to cover running costs in our new Heritage Centre as well as costs involved in making our archive accessible to the community.

## TROVE - AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

In mid-January Rosalie Triolo and I accompanied VCE Australian History teachers to some of our key national cultural institutions in Canberra hunting for resources for their students. Most institutions were managing on very tight budgets due to an 'efficiency dividend' placed on all cultural institutions by recent governments. Only the Australian War Memorial seem to be in good health and expanding massively in three directions on its site.

Of most relevance to the history sector is the National Library of Australia. This is a wonderful institution with great collections, and like other cultural bodies, willing to share them with all Australians, especially students at all levels across the country through its digital classrooms.

The Australian National Library is the home of Trove, the aptly named digital archive which now hosts 6 billion items and is visited 22 million times a year, placing it with the ABC in the top 15 Australian digital domains. It is the go-to site for all researchers, be they family historians and genealogists, community history researchers, journalists, policy makers or academics. Trove is also the way many cultural institutions, large and small (including the RHSV), reveal their catalogues and thus collections to a global audience.

Just on Christmas, which is why I and many others missed it, came an announcement from the ANL that it may have insufficient funds to continue Trove from this July. See *The Conversation* 23 December 2022 <https://theconversation.com/troves-funding-runs-out-in-july-2023-and-the-national-library-is-threatening-to-pull-the-plug-its-time-for-a-radical-overhaul-197025>

This is truly disturbing news. Trove democratises knowledge, bringing it to all Australians who cannot travel to institutions to access resources. It is an essential tool in today's knowledge economy and worth every cent spent on it. It should not, it must not perish or be degraded. It is currently clunky and needing an upgrade.

The government is currently reviewing cultural policy so it would be a travesty if Trove is degraded or worse at this time. If you are as concerned as I and many others are about this, please write to the Honourable Tony Burke, Minister for the Arts PO Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 or email [Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au) Refer to the value of Trove to you and your organisation. Remind the minister how it has revolutionised research and democratised knowledge. And reiterate that if Australia is to have a vibrant cultural policy for tomorrow, Trove is an essential tool in sharing Australia's stories and identities.

**Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM**  
**President RHSV**

*Many petitions have been started arguing that Trove should continue its vital job holding the nation's memories and providing us all with a chance to understand and know our own history. Sign them all! These are the ones of which the RHSV is aware:*

<https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN4747>

[https://www.change.org/p/fully-fund-trove?redirect\\_reason=no-signed](https://www.change.org/p/fully-fund-trove?redirect_reason=no-signed)

<https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN4745>

*This is the second part of the illustrated talk which Loreen Chambers gave at our September Meeting 2022. Loreen's talk not only enriched our understanding of the development of Canterbury but also of Melbourne within a broader world context. A condensed version, Part 1, appeared in our November 2022 Newsletter where Loreen took us as far as the 1880s. Part 2 relates more specifically to Canterbury.*

## **PART 2:- Canterbury & the making of a suburb: Mansions to Bungalows**

### **MANSIONS .**

Canterbury's 'golden mile' along Mont Albert Road retained some fine houses and were at the heart of country estates for professionals and businessmen and others who saw themselves as colonial gentry. They inevitably had scenic views looking towards the City and to the Dandenong Ranges. On these hills they could also take advantage of sea breezes which were considered highly desirable in an area of flat landscape. Only Kew with its connotation of Kew Gardens could rival such a location. Men like Snowden and Murray, Carter and Vial built their homes here surrounded by large estates.

On the other side of what became the Canterbury Gardens the land remained predominantly farming.

Most men lived close to a railway station and travelled by foot or by horse drawn vehicles to the railway station and from there to their office, factory or shop, although women at home relied on deliveries to the side door of groceries, milk and meat, delivered by the tradesman in their horse and cart

**Edward Snowden** was a lawyer living at *Monomeath* in Canterbury Road<sup>1</sup>. He built his 5 roomed house in 1863 with a kitchen on 5 acres (2 hectares). By 1881, he owned 15 acres (6 hectares) on which he grew shrubs, pine & cypress trees as well as vineyards (some of the wine which he sold). All these were high status plantings. The house was demolished 1949.

**Andrew Murray** arrived 1859 from Scotland. He was Editor of the Argus newspaper and a winemaker. He built *Balwyn House* on a 100 acre property, 30 of which were vines & 10 acres of gardens and orchards. His house contained drawing and dining rooms, a parlour, 3 bedrooms, kitchen, servants' room (for the women staff), a cool wine cellar and also out-buildings, comprising stables, a coach house, sheds and wine vault and cellar. The workmen lived above the stables.

**Ernest Carter** was a successful dentist who built *Shrublands*, an impressive 2 storey brick and stucco mansion. He had also planted vines and pines by 1881. *Shrublands* was painted by William Tibbits (1837-1906) c1882 and was probably commissioned by Ernest Carter. The couple had 14 children and they needed this large house. It was eventually sold to St John's Home for Boys run by the Church of England before it returned to private ownership. Tibbits was a well-known figure often to be seen riding his bicycle from one gold field to another in the Ballarat area where he painted homesteads and houses for landowners.

**Oliver Vial's Roystead**<sup>2</sup> was built in 1886, and had two owners before it was turned over to institutional use and bought by Camberwell Grammar. The first owner was the tea merchant Oliver Vial who built *Roystead* and lived there for some time. The next owners, the Macneils, lived there between 1903 and 1926. Alexander Macneil, a merchant and importer, purchased *Roystead* from Oliver Vial in 1902. Macneil owned Briscoe & Company, the wholesale ironmongers and merchants of 396 Little Collins Street. It had a ball room, and a cloakroom, a drawing room, a sitting room, dining room and opening off that was a housemaid's pantry. There was a kitchen, larder and scullery, a laundry and ironing room and a servants' hall. The kitchen gave onto a large vestibule off which there was a washroom and toilet and a large day nursery. Upstairs was a broad landing and four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a night nursery

<sup>1</sup> Don Gibbs with Jill Barnard, *Canterbury A History*, Canterbury History Group Inc & The Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 2022, 39.

<sup>2</sup> LV Hansen, *By their Deeds: A Centenary History of Camberwell Grammar School 1886-1986*, Camberwell Grammar School, 1986, pp. 155-157.

with a door leading to a passage at the back of the house where there were 4 small bedrooms for the maids, their back stairs leading steeply down to the kitchen. There were six children. A cook and a nurse and a house parlour maid, a housemaid-laundress were responsible for the running of the house. No doubt gardeners managed the grounds.

The occupations of these heads of households were the following: a lawyer, dentist, tea merchant and an import exporter. This reflects the professional and mercantile character of these successful men.

### **VILLAS and COTTAGES**

Then, as the children of the Gold Rush reached marriageable age in the late 1870s there was pressure on land for housing. For the burgeoning middle class, Canterbury became a haven for those crossing the industrial flats to the Eastern side of the Yarra where they could build villas and cottages. When the railway line opened in 1882 beginning with seven services a day, developers were busy subdividing the hill tops and later the flats. Many new Victorian and Edwardian villas were then built close to Canterbury Road and along Prospect Hill Road. Plans for subdivisions had been drawn up on either side of the railway line with a new station. The attraction of Canterbury by the 1880s was that there were a number of fine homes lending their prestige to anyone wanting to build a villa in an area which was known for its healthy lifestyle - away from noxious miasmas. It was not too poor and not too rich but had the stamp of a well-bred society.

Brick villas were the choice of most middle-class bank managers, clerks, and doctors. The use of iron lace work on verandas, and variegated brick work were two of the most attractive features of this era. Houses often had 6-10 rooms with 18 foot (5.5 m) ceilings which often had elaborate plaster work. Pretty coloured and etched glass panels around the front door welcomed the visitor to the front door and into the front parlour, beyond which was a dining room and three or four bedrooms, an indoor kitchen and beyond that a wash house with a copper and a toilet. Around the fire places were more decorated tiles. If they had been built after the turn of the century, sewerage pipes had been laid, water piped to the house and gas lighting and even ovens installed, surely four of the most advanced features of the age as far as women were concerned.

Skilled workers such as shop keepers, clerks, teachers, jewellers and accountants took up the bulk of workers living in Camberwell around the area off Riverdale Road and later in Canterbury after 1896 in Logan's estate. They moved into better quality and new 4 and 5 room timber cottages on the lower side of Logan's Paddock close to the railway. These were on smaller blocks and distinguished by coloured glass panels of ruby and bright green at their front doors and simple tiling round the fireplace in the front parlour.

The hill top section of 'Arklow Hill' farm, owned by Michael Logan, wood-cutter, builder and farmer<sup>3</sup> (who had bought 150 acres in 1850) was subdivided in 1885 and called the 'Claremont Park Estate'<sup>4</sup>. It ran between Prospect Hill Road and Maling Road village. An advertisement stated 'business men ... who are aweary (sic) of the toil and dust of town can retire to ...[its] salubrious air.' Less favoured land like Logan's, down the hill, was opened up for sale in 1896.

### **THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1890's**

But the 'suburban dream' in fact was not realized in Canterbury until after 1905, and many blocks remained weed-invested until after World War 1. Not only had would-be landowners paid too much but in fact too much land had been subdivided in the expectation that the population would be there. Gibb and Warmington have noted that a study of rate books show that sales and subsequent building was slow... and land proved impossible to sell.<sup>5</sup> Unemployment rose to levels greater than what was experienced

<sup>3</sup> Gwen Mc William . *Early Canterbury* (Camberwell: Camberwell City Libraries.1994) 2

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* Hand annotated map compiled by G. McWilliam. 'Estates for sale in Canterbury after the extension of the railway in the early 1880s.' Dates given are approximate and are based on sale plans held in Camberwell City Libraries and newspapers.

<sup>5</sup> Gibb and Warmington. *Visions of a Village: Canterbury Shops and Shopping 1880s-1990s and Beyond* 3

during the 1930s which often hovered close to 30%. We do not have firm statistics but the toll can be charted by other telling factors, such as 56,000 men who left for the gold fields of other states or even South Africa. By 1893, after numerous bank crashes, people in some areas had moved into cheaper housing, living with other families in boarded up verandahs, or were living on the streets or living near the municipal tips in shanty towns. Jill Eastwood cites the sad statistic of 6,500 gas stoves on hire purchase which had been repossessed, a sign that the middle class too was feeling the effects of unemployment. Would-be suburbanites often remained in the older crowded suburbs of Richmond and Hawthorn, the end of the dream of owning a 'house of one's own'<sup>6</sup>.

Did those who might have bought in Canterbury return to rented houses in the inner suburbs as Davison has suggested<sup>7</sup>, or did they come to Canterbury because they could rent cheaply from desperate landlords? Certainly, the impact of the Depression can clearly be seen in Hawthorn as its ownership ranged from 51% to its peak of 64% in 1888-9, falling back to 53% in 1891 and dropping to 34% in 1901.<sup>8</sup> Cheaper rent or houses here and in Richmond would have been more attractive. The dream of owning 'a home of one's own' was quickly extinguished during the terrible 1890s Depression.

### **A CASE STUDY: CLAREMONT PARK ESTATE**

Whilst most of the streets in the Claremont Park estate at the top of the hill below Prospect Hill Road, for example, were being laid out by the late 1880s, there were insufficient houses built to warrant a Directory listing at all for Canterbury till 1892. Cross Street, in the centre of the estate, between 1892 and 1930 shows an almost yearly change of tenants for six houses. Four houses had long term occupiers who may have been owner/occupiers. Others had fairly steady occupants with male heads of house. A number of the occupiers were women, possibly widows and some were clearly unmarried women conducting business from home, such as providing singing lessons and in another house, knitted goods. Rarely were there vacant houses. There were 2 blocks without a house which were not built on till 1920 and 1925 when the 1920s land boom occurred.

Slow growth is revealed graphically in the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works map for 1905: about half the house blocks in Claremont Park were without houses, on the Logan estate (1896) further down the hill there were few streets laid out and only eleven houses built in total, with Milton Street largely paddock.<sup>9</sup>

The suburban ideal was, however, to be gradually realized in these older estates like Claremont Park Estate and the Logan Estate in the land boom after 1905. After this the housing style was to change to Edwardian/Federation style houses of red brick and verandahs with wooden fretwork replacing wrought iron lace work.

Building activity slowed again during the Great War and then during the 1920s Californian Bungalows were built on the remaining vacant blocks. In other parts of Canterbury, a post-war boom did occur in response to Council policies to open up rural land, as well as to demographic factors, such as the return of soldiers from the Great War and in consequence a surge in family formation. In particular, after 1923, as a result Camberwell, which had a stock of 7,600 buildings, had another 51,000 constructed. The quality of housing was improved and was more consistent than in the old Edwardian estates.<sup>10</sup> New estates were opened on farmland on the other side of Prospect Hill Road from the Claremont and Logan's estate namely the Hassett (1927) and the Prospect Hill Road estates (1937) and these quickly filled up.<sup>11</sup> These

<sup>6</sup> Jill Eastwood *Melbourne: The Growth of a Metropolis*, Melbourne, 1983, p.83

<sup>7</sup> Graeme Davison. "Suburbs and Suburbanisation" in *The Encyclopaedia of Melbourne*. Brown-May, Andrew and Shurlee Swain (eds.). 694

<sup>8</sup> Graeme Davison. *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, 181 Table 11

<sup>9</sup> Sands & McDougall Ltd. Directories. Melbourne. Photocopied sections only for Canterbury. 1882-1930. Map of Town of Canterbury in 1905 Directory. See Appendix 3

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Blainey. *A History of Camberwell*. (Melbourne: Jacaranda 1964) 84-85

<sup>11</sup> Department of Lands & Survey, Melbourne. For Camberwell Canterbury Surrey Hills & Balwyn area. 1921 and 1929

subdivisions such as the Hassett Estate in Canterbury (and the nearby Golf Links Estate) have come to epitomise the best of suburban design of the 1920s.

Canterbury State School (no. 3572) which served all these estates had experienced overcrowding from the time its first eight class rooms were built in 1907. In 1907 it had 400 pupils, in 1910 it had 500, in 1915 730 and this continued for the next few years. Students were being quartered in the hall, the cloakrooms, the staff room and even in the newly built nearby St Paul's church (1892) where its timber hall on Highfield and Church Street (named after a couple who had a farm there) was used for a classroom.<sup>12</sup> The 'suburban dream' had arrived with the Californian Bungalow, distinguished by its heavy low porches with barley sugar or Doric columns, and the single garage at the side.<sup>13</sup> Camberwell High School opened in 1941 with an enrolment of 350 girls and boys. (Canterbury Girls High School was opened in 1928).

An important focus of the 'suburb' was the shopping centre. From the mid- 1880s there were a variety of shops clustered around the station in Canterbury and Maling Roads, many of whom had changes in tenants in the 1890s: two timber merchants, a wood yard, a painter, a boot maker, real estate agent, bakery, butcher and Malone's Canterbury Club hotel. Long-term tenants, however, by 1900 were a plumber and iron monger, a post office, Chinese laundry, a dressmaker, a real estate agent, green grocer and grocer, newsagent and tobacconist.<sup>14</sup> By the end of the 1920s, however, basic goods and services were added to by upholsterers, haberdashers and confectioners, as well as a petrol station and a picture theatre.<sup>15</sup> Canterbury had finally become a suburb.

Below: Canterbury History Group Lunch Ruby T's Maling Road November 28<sup>th</sup> 2022



<sup>12</sup> Blake, L. J. (General Editor). *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria. 1973, 423

<sup>13</sup> Robyn Boyd. *Australia's Home*. Ringwood: Penguin 1968. First published Melbourne University Press.1952. Chapter 7: 'Informal Interlude'.

<sup>14</sup> Gibb and Warmington. *Visions of a Village: Canterbury Shops and Shopping 1880s-1990s and Beyond*. 8-9

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*,12-14