



## Surrey Hills Historical Society Newsletter: April 2022

Meetings of the Surrey Hills Historical Society are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month (February to November) at 8pm.

**Venue: Maitland Room of The Cottage of the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre at 1 Bedford Avenue, Surrey Hills.**

Entry is from the rear of the building, accessed from Zeplins Lane, which runs beside the building.

Note that parking is no longer available in the railway car park, due to LXRA works.

Supper follows the presentation; a contribution of \$5.00 goes to the Neighbourhood Centre.

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Members of the Society and others are committed to documenting the history of the area of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills through the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre Heritage Collection. We meet most Mondays, 10am-3pm. The collection is open to the public at this time. For further details email: [heritage@surreyhillsc.org.au](mailto:heritage@surreyhillsc.org.au)

Items and stories from the collection appear on the Surrey Hills History Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Surrey-Hills-History-887879524593056/> and on Victorian Collections at <https://victoriancollections.net.au>

### **Surrey Hills Historical Society committee:**

President / newsletter: Sue Barnett

Vice-President: Euan Walmsley

Secretary: Max Beaton

Treasurer: Alison Dews

General Committee: Dorothy Duncan and Keith Wilson

Ex-Officio: Arthur Tonkin

Newsletter editor: Sue Barnett

Address for postage: C/o Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre  
157 Union Road, Surrey Hills, 3127

### **Next meeting - NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM THE USUAL 3<sup>RD</sup> TUESDAY**

**Tuesday 26 April at 8pm**

### **John Torpey: A journey exploring Boroondara's early private schools**

John Torpey is a member of Hawthorn Historical Society and a long-time Hawthorn resident. His historical research was piqued by an interest in why some non-government schools, such as the seemingly successful Irving's Hawthorn Grammar and Coutie's Hawthorn College did not survive, while schools such as Camberwell Grammar School or Siena College have continued to this day.

John began this research in mid-2015 and after many hours gleaning information from Trove and PROV's records, and visits to the State Library of Victoria, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the libraries of Hawthorn and Kew, he finally published '*Boroondara's Private Schools 1851 to 1951: A century of non-government education in the City of Boroondara*'. As Ken James and Pam Baragwanath found with mechanics institutes, every time he thought he had completed his list of all the schools, he would find another. Equally frustrating was the paucity of information about some schools.

John will take on his journey, review the factors which contributed to success or failure, with particular reference to schools in the Balwyn, Canterbury and Surrey Hills areas.



The photo on p.1 is of MLC in Canterbury – December 1937: For a short time, Methodist Ladies College operated a branch school at 31 Hopetoun Avenue, Canterbury in a building previously operated as a small private school run by the Misses Hester. This photo was taken at the final break-up party. Courtesy of Canterbury History Group.

A copy of John’s book can be obtained from the Hawthorn Historical Society for \$29.90.

[www.hawthornhistoricalsociety.com.au](http://www.hawthornhistoricalsociety.com.au) or [hawthornhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:hawthornhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

## Tuesday, 17 May meeting at 8pm

### Rachael Cottle: ‘Women in the Victorian Railways’

Women were employed by the Department of Victorian Railways (VR) since its formation in 1856, in over 30 positions including Station Mistress, Gatekeeper and Waiting Room Attendant; in administrative roles and in the Refreshment Services Branch; and from World War II, as Porteresses, Ticket Checkers and in workshops. Despite the significant contribution women made to the Victorian Railways, women have been marginalised in official railway records and in heritage collections.

Kitty Windsor, Rachael's grandmother, shared a job as gatekeeper with her mother at the Springvale Road level crossing, Tunstall and was the inspiration for Rachael's research.



Refreshment room staff, Bendigo Railway Station, circa 1929;

Photographer: Kalma Studio

Source: Museums Victoria [Item MM 4048] – in the public domain.

Rachael is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University and holds a Master of Cultural Heritage from Deakin University. Rachael is also a Research Associate at Museums Victoria working with a Victorian Railways collection.

Rachael's research aims to redress the absence of women of the Victorian Railways by tracing their history. This research includes working conditions; industrial disputes; women’s roles during World War II; and changes to employment following the women’s liberation movement

Above: Kitty Windsor courtesy of Rachael Cottle

## Rhoda Bell (1894-1952) – An ‘ordinary’ woman who found her voice and became a spokesperson for social justice – before it became a catch phrase.

Following Mary Bell’s wonderful presentation about the Bell family of Surrey Hills in March, with Mary’s assistance the following profile of Rhoda Bell was compiled. Hers was one of the graves visited on the Box Hill Cemetery tour on Monday 14 March as a contribution to Women’s History Month. The tour acknowledged the achievements and significance of a variety of women, known and unknown.



Rhoda was born in Lilydale and in 1916 at the age of 22 married into the Bell family, who had moved to Surrey Hills from Box Hill. Harcourt and Lucy Bell lived in Windsor Crescent <sup>1</sup>with their 10 children and Rhoda married Robert (Bert), their youngest son. Her father-in-law Harcourt Bell was a talented engineer and formed the printing firm Bell & Valentine, which amongst many other ventures printed for the Age, Argus and New Idea, as well as tickets for Victorian Railways. All Bert’s brothers worked in the company.

Rhoda’s values were influenced by living through both World Wars and the Great Depression. Two of Bert’s brothers served in WW1 and this strongly impacted the whole family. Pacifism became one of Rhoda’s strongly held values, strengthened when one of her sons was called up in 1941.

After their marriage, Rhoda and Bert stayed close to the Bell family home, settling in Warwick Avenue, where they had 5 boys between 1918 and 1929. When the

Depression came, the extended Bell family managed - perhaps better than many, by sharing available work in the family business.

Rhoda’s son Graham recalled this time in his memoir: “A series of guys trying to make a living were supported one way or another by my Mum. Mostly, we didn't know their proper names, but ‘Our Friend’ came to the door every two weeks and we bought countless pairs of shoelaces, tins of boot polish and tooth paste, he also sold ‘Malted Cocoa’ which I'm sure Mum knew was just Cadbury's cocoa mixed with sugar and put in a fancy carton, but it was our staple cocoa drink for many years. ‘Dirty Dick’, an oldish guy, very poorly clothed, did a lot of unnecessary digging in our fairly large unkempt garden.” Throughout her life Rhoda modelled generosity, compassion, equality and fairness.

It was after the cessation of WW2 hostilities that Rhoda became more visibly socially and politically active. She was a leading member of the Surrey Hills Auxiliary working to support the new Box Hill Hospital. At some stage she joined the Communist Party and in 1949, she became President of the Victorian branch of the New Housewives’ Association (NHA). This had formed in NSW in 1946 and although the name may now sound conservative, the organisation was a working-class body which attracted Communist women. It campaigned for the reduction and control of prices, especially of household commodities; equal pay for women and increased child endowment; and the establishment of municipal markets in order to bring cheaper goods to housewives. In 1949 the NHA supported the trade-union demand for a 30-shilling increase in the basic wage.

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<sup>1</sup> No 92 on corner of Tower Street – large block with a tennis court; replaced by units.

In 1950 the NHA changed its name to reflect a broader base beyond women in the home; this resulted in the formation of the Union of Australian Women. Rhoda was elected to the committee, and was Vice-President of the Victorian Branch in 1952, the year she passed away.

Apart from improving the status of women and children, early goals included disarmament and a halt to nuclear testing, equal distribution of wealth, increased welfare services, equal pay for women, equality for Indigenous Australians, abortion law reform, and opposition to the White Australia Policy.

That year Rhoda was one of 2 delegates representing the Victorian Branch of the Union of Australian Women and the leader of the Australian delegation to the International Conference in Defence of Children in Vienna. It was while she was at this conference that Rhoda became ill and was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

As women are now aware, ovarian cancer is often described as the silent killer as its presenting symptoms are often mistaken for other benign conditions, especially ones affecting the gastrointestinal system, or simply as menopausal symptoms.

Rhoda was hospitalised and treated in Moscow before being flown back to Melbourne. After a short stay in the Alfred, she died at home. One has to wonder what else she would have achieved had she lived longer.

## **What lies behind street names – Kingston Road and surrounds by Phillip Dews, a resident since 1980.**

Kingston Road runs between Chatham Road, Canterbury and Robinson Road, Surrey Hills, adjacent to, and north of, the railway line. Chatham Railway Station (opened in April 1927) is accessed from Junction Road (running from the railway line to Croydon Road), at the western end of Kingston Road. One other road, West Road (originally Cross Road) runs into Kingston Road from Croydon Road, to the west of Junction Road. The western end of Kingston Road, from Chatham Road to Junction Road, originally ran immediately adjacent to the railway line, however, the 1912 subdivision of the area included the enclosure of W Creek in a brick barrel drain so that the road was moved down the hill and an access laneway was left behind the houses that were subsequently built.

The land through which Kingston Road runs was originally part of the Surrey Hills Railway Station Estate (formerly Fysh's Paddock). From around 1900, Camberwell City Council opened a depot on land at the corner of Kingston Road and Robinson Road, which had previously been brickyards (Mills' before 1890, then Edmond's). In 1910, the depot was partially fenced as a cattle enclosure for the area, and a tarpaving shed was added in 1912. In 1917 part of the depot was gifted to the Army (with the proviso that it be returned to the Council if the Army no longer required the site). While the western end of the site officially remained as a Council Depot, the Army occasionally requested use of the western land for training. Further land was added to the gift over the intervening years, with the entire site now a Defence Department establishment. The Army Depot was used as the enlistment centre for World War 2 and is now home to B Company 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Royal Victoria Regiment, a Reserve unit. An Air Force cadet unit (No 1 Flight Eastern Suburbs) also used the site from 1945 to 1947 when it relocated to RAAF Froggnall in Mont Albert Road. The Air Force returned to the site in 1985, with 2 permanent (demountable) buildings being added from 1990. Also, circa 1990, the Naval Training Ship Melbourne moved to a permanent building on the site.

The Camberwell Target Rifle Club (formed in 1917) occupies a building beside the Army depot, which, according to the club website, was first occupied in 1957 after the club had moved around sites in Canterbury and Surrey Hills.<sup>2</sup>

SH2168: Camberwell (small bore) rifle club in 1941, location unknown although initially thought to have been taken in the Robinson Road grounds. Identities are: Back L to R: Pat Green, Bill Saunders, Cliff Wenborn  
Front L to R: Alan Jeffs, Albert Harbert, Arthur Barnes.



A subdivision of the western ends of Sir Garnet, Croydon and Kingston Roads was put up for auction in March 1891. West Road was not in the plan of subdivision, with the blocks facing Kingston and Croydon Roads. This subdivision ultimately failed and in 1912 the land between Chatham Road, Croydon Road, Junction Road, and the railway line was re-subdivided into approximately the current format. It is of note that the 1891 plan included dividing the area at the western end of what is now the Canterbury oval into building blocks, along Chatham Road, and a road (Anerley Avenue) through what is now the Canterbury Oval with the Recreation Reserve to the east of this road.

Number 6 Kingston Road does not appear on the early subdivision plans, however, there is evidence that the house was brought to site on a bullock dray from Richmond in the 1880's.



In the 1960's and 1970's, Number 14 Kingston Road is believed to have been owned by the late James Egan, a well-known artist who has works hanging in such places as Buckingham Palace and Moscow Parliament.

Editor's note: Egan died in July 2017 at his home near Ballarat. He was equally at home painting landscapes and people but his paintings of birds are particularly evocative. Some of his works can be seen on his website:

<https://www.jamesegangallery.com.au/gallery.htm>

REF: <https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/4820724/passing-of-a-larrikin/>

The land for Numbers 16 ('Bonnie Doon') and 18 Kingston Road were bought by Mr Archie Kingston in 1914, who built Number 16, then subdivided and built Number 18 in 1917.<sup>3</sup>

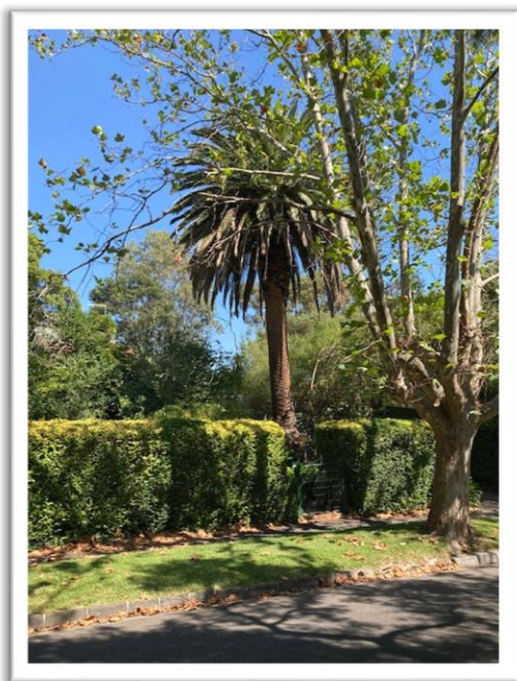
<sup>2</sup> Further research is continuing on the history of the Camberwell Target Rifle Club and will appear in a future newsletter.

<sup>3</sup> Archie Edwin Kingston (1883-1961), carpenter, is listed as living in Croydon Road in the 1919 electoral rolls. By 1924 he had moved to 44 Faversham Road and by 1936 he was listed as a farmer in Bundoora.

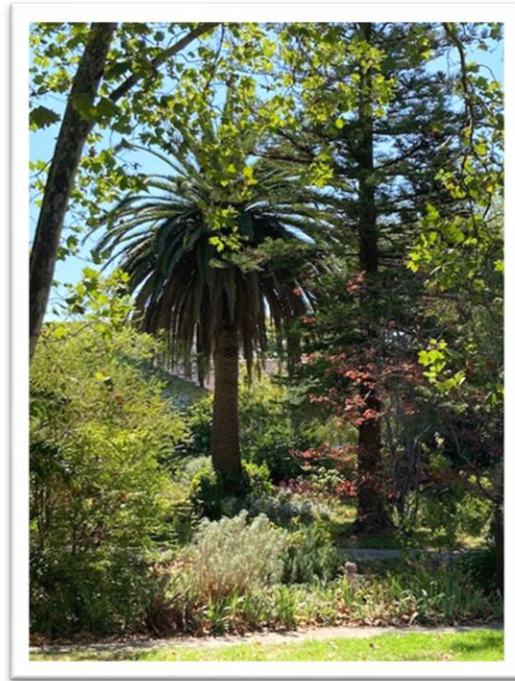
The site that is now the Surrey Hills Day Care Centre (c 2005) on the corner of Junction Road and Kingston Road started life as a house which was then converted to the Knight and Wells builder's yard. In the 1980's one of the builder's sons used the site as an oil recovery depot, concentrating on removing home heating oil installations as these had fallen from favour due to the cost of the oil. After this business closed it was used as a paint stripping operation and was then converted to its current use. The property at 1a Junction Road, on the corner of Kingston Road, was a milk bar from the 1950's into the 1970's.



The north side east of Junction Road was first developed circa 1910, with most houses being named. Few houses on the west end of the southside had names. The southern side area, east of Junction Road, was not developed until the 1940's, possibly because of the continuation of W Creek along the north boundary of the railway line. However, Numbers 30 ('Kingston') and 32 ('Lumah') are recorded as being occupied circa 1900-1910. The townhouses at Numbers 44 and 46 were developed in the 1970's from the merging of the 2 properties. The 2 standalone terrace-style houses at 15 and 17 Kingston Road were in place circa 1900, and are believed to have been cottages for the farm workers. The mature palm trees situated on 12 Kingston Road and 1 West Road are thought to be the entrance to the original farm house in Guildford Road.



1 West Road



12 Kingston Road

Development of the northeast side of Kingston Road started around 1900, with houses such as 'Hexham', 'Wistow', 'Berwyn', 'Claxton', 'Lanark', 'Carinya' ('Belgravia'), 'Lumeah', 'Herblen', 'Llangibby' and 'Bylmhill' in place by 1910. A dairy at Number 51 (owned by George Ray) faced Number 11 Robinson Road. Three units running east from the corner of West Road stand on the site of what was an Exclusive Brethren Meeting Hall. (Bricks from the demolition of the Hall were used to create the driveway and rear patios at Numbers 14 and 16 Kingston Road). Two houses in Junction Road were occupied as flats by church members.

This research has thrown up some unanswered queries that I am continuing to chase with the assistance of local history librarians from the Boroondara Library Service. Thanks to the Royal Victorian Regiment Association and the Camberwell Rifle Club for their inputs.

### **A little bit of church organ history**

John Maidment OAM has a passion for church organs and their history. He has been documenting, researching and speaking about them for many years. More recently he has developed a website which he is adding to on a regular basis. Recently I was able to assist him with the photo below of the organ installed in the Wyclif Congregational Church. Here is part of its entry on the website, which can be accessed through this link - <http://www.ohta.org.au/organs/organs/SurreyHillsCong.html>

The foundation stone of Wyclif Congregational Church was laid on 13 September 1890. The building was extensively described in the press. The Box Hill Reporter's coverage in part described it as follows: "Comfortable sitting accommodation is provided for 225 persons; but, in cases of necessity, 300 can be seated. Gas will be provided by the Box Hill Company. The cost of the whole, including seats, will be £1360; and when finished it will be one of the neatest and most economical of the Congregational churches in the colony. Mr. Stanes, of Surrey Hills, is the builder, and the architects are Messrs Elleker and Kilburn, of Melbourne."



The organ was built before 1918 by Mr Dudley of Armadale for residence of Charles Stickland, 115 Miller Street, North Fitzroy. It was installed Surrey Hills in 1919 by Meadway & Slatterie and rebuilt and enlarged in 1924-25 by Geo. Fincham & Sons Pty Ltd with alterations in 1934 by C.W. Andrewartha. It was removed in 1975 and broken up, with parts going to St George's Anglican Church, Mont Albert in 1976 when the case and façade pipes, one of the great slider chests and the console shell were used by Bellsham Pipe Organs to build a single manual organ of six speaking stops. This was removed in 1999 when this church closed. The remainder of the organ went to the late J.A.H. Brooks, who resided at the time nearby.

## An appeal to members – help us stock a stall at the Ephemera Society of Australia’s ephemera and collectables fair on Sunday 22 May

Clear out a cupboard, a desk or chest of drawers! We’re looking for unwanted items of printed and other ephemera - things such as advertising, badges, books, cards, comics, games, manuals, menus, newspapers, pamphlets, postcards, posters, programs, swap cards, tickets, timetables and so on.

Contact Sue if you think you might have something suitable.



### Some additions to the heritage collection

ALP /DLP Victorian Branch Member’s Yearly Ticket Books from the Brennan / Baldie Collection



Context: Thomas William Brennan (1900 – 1966) was a Victorian politician who was born in Surrey Hills to labourer Patrick William Brennan and Kate Kealy. He attended school in Carlton and at St Joseph's CBC North Melbourne in 1915. After leaving school, he studied law on a part-time basis at the University of Melbourne. He joined the Labor Party in c1925, became a political journalist and was the editor of The Tribune Catholic newspaper for two years.

After finishing his law degree in 1935 Tom became a solicitor. From 1945-1955 he was on the state executive of the ALP, serving a term as president from 1950 to 1951 and as a Victorian MLC for Monash Province from 1952. However, when the split in Labor politics occurred in 1955, Tom Brennan moved to the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). He lost his seat in 1958, but continued to contest elections for the DLP until his death in 1966. Tom lived at 228 Union Road with his mother, Kathleen Brennan and sister, also Kathleen.

These and many other articles associated with the family were found in the roof space by a previous owner of the home. The material was largely paper based and contained in boxes and suitcases. It was not in a particular order. Most was very dirty with surface grime and cobwebs. The material has been culled where appropriate, items relevant to other collections have been passed on, but those of direct relevance to the Brennan family have been kept and conservatively cleaned.



Items: Signed by Tom Brennan, these booklets covering the Federal electorate of Kooyong (State electorate of Balwyn) and Federal electorate of Deakin (State electorate of Box Hill) contain information of potential interest to family historians.



### Tin hat appeal badge

A relatively recent addition to the collection of material relevant to WW2 is this tin hat appeal badge. Tin Hat Day was established in 1922. It raised funds to benefit returned soldiers who had fallen on hard times after WW1 and during the Great Depression. It continued on during WW2 and into the 1950's. This badge dates from c1940.



The badge was modelled on the British steel combat helmet known as the Brodie helmet, designed and patented in London in 1915 by John Leopold Brodie. Colloquially, it had many names including the shrapnel helmet, battle bowler, Tommy helmet, tin hat, dishpan hat, tin pan hat, washbasin, and in the United States the doughboy helmet. The German Army called it the Salatschüssel (salad bowl).

The inscriptions on the badge read: Centre: MY TRIBUTE TO THE FIGHTING FORCES and around the rim: TIN HAT APPEAL / RSL WAR SERVICE FUND.

Tin Hat Day was a significant annual event over several decades. Badges such as are not rare; they were sold in large numbers, but as ephemeral items, relatively few of those sold were retained. Our collection includes a number of interesting pieces of ephemera relating to WW2 and it is hoped that in the future we will be able to suitably display these.

### ANZAC Day 2022

There will be a Dawn Service in the Surrey Gardens again this year. Local school students will speak on some aspects of life on the home front during WW2. Local woman Kitty McEwan is one individual whose role will be featured. She lived at 'Colliquill' at 14 Balmoral Crescent, Surrey Hills and was Superintendent of the Victorian Woman's Land Army.

*You are invited to attend the annual*

# ANZAC Day Dawn Service

**LEST WE FORGET**

***Monday 25th April, 2022***

***Assemble at 5:45am for 6:00am start***

***The Shrine, Surrey Gardens, 88-90 Union Road, Surrey Hills***

***Pre-arranged priority seating is available upon request.  
Apply by email to [shpa3127@gmail.com](mailto:shpa3127@gmail.com)***



## **Forthcoming 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Barnabas' Anglican Church, Balwyn**

Built in 1872, this church has a strong association with the Maling family and held its first service on 22nd December 1872.

President of Balwyn Historical Society, Matthew Ety-Leal has sent some preliminary details of several special gatherings being planned to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> milestone. These include St Barnabas Day to be celebrated on Sunday the 5th of June and the Balwyn Historical Society meeting to be held at the church on Sunday the 9th of October. Maling descendant, Philip Barton will speak about the Maling family and Matthew will speak about their connection to the church.