

CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

PO Box 243 Camperdown 3260 camperdowndhs@gmail.com www.camperdownhistory.org.au
 Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/camperdownhistory>

Volume 26 - No. 2

NEWSLETTER

April, 2016

President

Maree Belyea

Vice President

Bob Lambell

Secretary

Heather McDowell

Treasurer

Frank Rose

Committee

Gillian Senior
 Ray Watson
 Jan Whamond
 Rob Wuchatsch

Hello to all members – from Camperdown and from further afield,

Our Exhibition **“Our Inspiring Women – Out of the Shadows”** is still current at the Heritage Centre and we are pleased to report that it’s creating quite a lot of interest from our visitors. They often express their appreciation of the work we’ve done in researching and putting the display together – which is very pleasing. (We do like a bit of appreciation!)

The Annual Robert Burns Festival is coming up very soon and we will be open at special times for that. Our next event for members and friends is called “Celebrating Chocolyn” and promises to be a very pleasant Sunday afternoon with two interesting speakers.

There are two pages reporting our activities over the past three months. There was a trip to Melbourne for the “Soldier On” Exhibition at the Treasury Building and we have hosted many, many visitors who have shared their stories with us and found our research facilities to be very useful.

Our main article continues the story of the Theatre Royal with information about films, concerts, balls and other activities from the 30s to the 50s.

We are happy to welcome new members Vicki Couzens, Jillian Debets, Patricia Lilley, and Lyle & Julie Tune to the Society. We look forward to welcoming them at one of our functions before too long.

Gillian Senior Newsletter Editor

Camperdown Heritage Centre

241 Manifold Street
 Camperdown 3260
 PO Box 243
 Camperdown.

Opening hours

Tuesdays and 1st Sunday
 of month, (Market Day)
 10am-3pm
 Or by appointment

In this issue:

- P1.** From the Heritage Centre Collection.
- P2.** Coming Events
- P3-4.** Heritage Centre Jottings and news.
- P5-7.** The Theatre Royal 1930s to 1950s

**From the Heritage Centre Collection:
 Hand Mirror – Venetian Mosaic Glass c.1860**



This hand mirror is part of Our Inspiring Women Exhibition in the section devoted to Isabella Dawson. It is typical of the type of mirror she would have had on her dressing table in that era. There’s a story attached to it which is told later in the newsletter.

COMING EVENTS: MAY 2016 - JULY 2016

Tuesday 10th May, 10.30 am: Executive meeting at the Heritage Centre

Camperdown Robert Burns Scottish Festival Friday, 20th May to Sunday 22nd May, 2016.

At the Heritage Centre: Robert Burns Portrait from National Gallery of Scotland; The Story of the Statue in Pictures (Continuous Slide Show); Notable Scots of Camperdown & District – Books 1, 2 & 3 – \$5 each.



Special Opening Hours:

Saturday 21st 10am to 4pm
Sunday 22nd 10am to 3pm

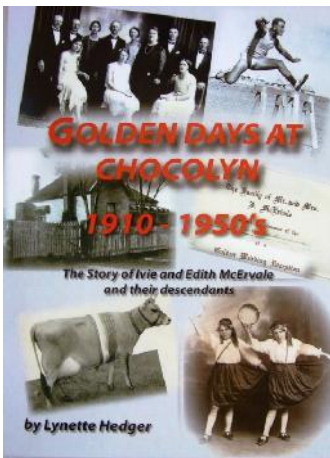
The CDHS is co-ordinating the Speakers' Program at the Old Council Chamber

Sunday 5th June

1.00 pm at the Camperdown Heritage Centre

Celebrating Chocolyn

We have a couple of very interesting speakers lined up to talk to us:



Lynette Hedger has recently published her book of the history of her family in Chocolyn.

It mainly relates to the McErvale family who settled at Chocolyn in 1910 but it also includes a picture of life in the area from 1910-1950s. It includes the school, the hall and the Polio outbreak in 1935. It is a very interesting read.



Unveiling of Memorial Plaque at the site of the of Chocolyn School - 6/5/2012

Our other speaker is Alan Fleming, who was a major organiser of the Chocolyn Soldiers Settlement reunion held in May, 2012.

For that occasion, Alan produced a booklet containing a concise history of the development from the first white settlement by the Manifold brothers.

**Members: Please bring a plate of afternoon tea.
Visitors most welcome.**

Tuesday 12th July, 10.30 am: Executive Meeting at the Heritage Centre.

HERITAGE CENTRE JOTTINGS AND NEWS

Volunteers Visit Melbourne

Eight intrepid CDHS volunteers took the early train from Camperdown to Melbourne on Wednesday, 6th April. After a restorative cup of coffee, we set off for Treasury Building where we saw the WW1 Soldier Settler Stories, "Soldier On". The exhibition covered the Mallee, the Murray River District and our own region, including Chocolyn, Bookaar, etc. We saw a number of our own artefacts which were loaned to the exhibition – a plough, a washtub, etc. – and watched a video featuring Jock Hay and Jim Kidman (among others).



We were then able to explore the building – the Premier's Office, the gold vaults, the history of the architect – who, incidentally, was only 19 years old when he won the contract – and much, much more. All really interesting.



After lunch at the Treasury Cafe, we managed to join a tour of State Parliament House (at the top of Bourke St.). This was another very interesting, fascinating, and educational tour with an expert guide who made the whole experience most enjoyable.

We finished our touring with a visit to the foyer (and the ladies' loo) at the Windsor Hotel – MOST impressive – and a ride around Docklands on the free tourist tram which deposited us at Southern Cross Station. Not quite finished with our discoveries, we explored the factory outlet floor at the Bourke St. end and found the old Transport Mural displayed on the very back wall of a large store. Sadly, for those who remember it in all its glory, it's hardly visible through glaring lights and air conditioning ducts.

We completed our rather long day with something to eat in the Food Court and then staggered onto the train at ten to seven. We managed to stay awake by sharing many anecdotes, crossword puzzles, and laughs, finally arriving at Camperdown Station around 10pm. Phew!



Some of our older members will remember this wonderful mural of Transport Through the Ages.

What a busy day!!!

Sunday, 3rd April was the first Sunday of the month so we were open for business. And busy-ness we certainly had!

A total of 27 visitors arrived through the day and kept Maree busy with research, and Sue and Gillian busy answering questions and showing people around.

It turned out that there were two quite large family groups visiting Camperdown on that weekend: 24 from the combined families of Hickey, Walter and Killworth and we had about 10 of them in during the morning. They discovered that the shop they were looking for, run by Killworth & Gaylard, was right next door where Snout in the Trough is now.

There were about six people from the Perrett family in the afternoon. The second lot said that they had 'run into' the first group a couple of times as they made their separate ways around the town. Both groups were having a wonderful time catching up with each other, finding old buildings lived in by their various ancestors and relatives, taking photos and telling us all about it!!



Group outside 15 Church St. It was run by the Walter family as a Working Men's Hostel in the 30s. They also, at one stage, had the Casino Café.

Typical of surprising discoveries sometimes made while searching family history was the story of a child adopted out as a baby and discovered four years ago. She was there with her newly discovered sisters and cousins and had been welcomed into the extended family, most of whom were there in Camperdown. As one of the ladies said: "It's been a weekend of eating and drinking, tears and laughter and it's all been wonderful!"

Another interesting visitor

We never know who might be visiting us, and some days we find ourselves hosting someone who finds our collection of special interest. This was the case on Tuesday, 5th April, when we overheard a woman explaining to her friends that our hand mirror – featured on the front page of this newsletter – was quite valuable and was made of Venetian Mosaic Glass.

Quickly grabbing a notebook, we asked for any other useful information she might be able to share with us. We discovered that she was a mine of information having been an Antique Dealer for many years. She identified various items on display, estimating their dates and telling us how they should be cared for. Materials such as tortoise-shell, leather, bone and ivory all need special care to protect them against deterioration.

We now have quite a bit of work to do with all our new knowledge: cleaning, protecting and labelling the various items.



It was originally owned by Arabella Cook (nee Bone), who turns out to be the Aunt of our HC Co-ordinator, Jan Whamond. The family came to the district in 1892 and lived out along Cressy Rd.

CDHS Material for Government Website



Mentioned on FaceBook back at the beginning of March, we had a very interesting visit from historian, Dr. Richard Reid, who is currently working on research and writing for a Department of Veterans Affairs website called the “Anzac Portal”. He was at our Heritage Centre to collect material for an area called ‘Great War Memories’ which focuses on stories from WW1 based on objects and memorials in towns and districts from all over Australia.

We had heaps of subjects for him to choose from, including the Log Book kept by Signaller F. A. Robertson – who went on to become Mayor of the Town of Camperdown – Mrs. Collie’s Scrap

Books, various letters and photographs from Camperdown Servicemen and the records of a parade called “Our Heroes’ Day” which was held in Camperdown in 1917.

Before he left us, he showed us the website he is working on which can be seen at: www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au/history/great-war-memories As far as we know, our own story is not on the site yet.

Dr. Reid was very impressed with our “superb collection of local history material ranging across a variety of topics.” He also commented on our “professionalism”, our Website and our “corporate image” (the red t-shirts with logo!!). It’s nice to receive a little unsolicited praise!

More Visitors in April

Friday 15th brought a group of Probus members to the Museum who were hosted by Maree Belyea and Frank Rose. They were filled with praise for our display of Inspiring Women and particularly delighted that our printing was big enough that they could read it!! (We strive to please!)

A member of this group was Lesley Alves who had been responsible for the Significance Assessment of our collection quite some years ago. From the Melbourne University, she was at that time doing the assessment on behalf of Heritage Victoria.

The Centre was also open on the afternoon of **Sunday 17th** to accommodate visitors who travelled to Camperdown on the special **Steamrail Victoria** excursion train, “Otway Explorer”. We are always happy to open up for special events and share with visitors our exhibitions and our history – and generally our visitors are very impressed with the town and with our Museum.



For the Children (and some Adults!)



During our very busy couple of days with lots of visitors, we found we had quite a number of children included in the groups. We quickly brought out the items we usually have ready for school groups to be able to pick up, handle and use. That has decided us to provide a ‘touch table’ which includes a typewriter, a set of kitchen scales, an old rotary egg whisk, etc. etc. all of which are usable. We have found that the typewriter, particularly, receives a lot of attention from women ‘of a certain age’! The children, of course, have to be shown how to use it!

THE THEATRE ROYAL

In our Newsletter of July, 2012, we brought you a short history of the original Mechanics' Hall which was badly damaged by fire in 1927. At that time, we promised to continue the history of the new Theatre Royal in a later newsletter. That time has now come – only four years later!

Our Sources for this article:

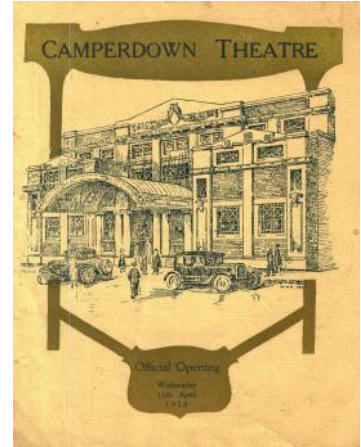
On the 13th April, 2003, the Lions Club of Camperdown hosted a gala concert and exhibition at the Theatre Royal to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the opening of the new hall. A lot of the material used in this newsletter comes from their records and archives of that event, much of which had been researched by Maree Belyea. Maree also acknowledges the Camperdown Chronicle and Allan Willingham as her sources.

THE NEW MECHANICS HALL.

(Taken from article by Maree Belyea acknowledging research by Allan Willingham)

A fire in March 1927 prompted a decision to re-build the hall rather than repair. Local architect Warburton Pierre (Perry) Knights was appointed and tenders were called for the new building and demolition of the original hall. Cant & Bennett from Footscray won the contract on a tender of 7193 pounds. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs J.C. Manifold on 1st December, 1927.

On 11th April, 1928 the new hall, to be known as **The Camperdown Theatre**, was ready for its opening night. With a beautiful interior in keeping with the handsome exterior, a wide foyer, carpeted staircase ascending to the upstairs circle, bigger stage, more convenient dressing facilities, elaborate and tasteful fittings, such as magnificent draw curtains, drop scenes, and window and lighting arrangements, it was a theatre to be proud of. New well padded comfortable seats and good acoustics all complemented the extremely up-to-date new facility.



OFFICIAL OPENING

The official opening of the **Camperdown Theatre**, held on 11th April 1928 was a gala occasion. There were speeches from Mr. H. E. Carter, President of the Mechanics' Institute Committee, and from Councillor Oman, President of the Shire of Hampden. Then Mrs Desailly was given the honour of 'switching on' the music, which was the National Anthem played on a panatrope, and the "large audience loyally rose to their feet and joined in the refrain".

In contrast to the earlier opening of the old Mechanics' Hall, instead of a live performance, the main attraction was a Cecil B de Mille movie, "The Volga Boatman". This was introduced by the Camperdown Theatre Orchestra which played "a selection of operatic classics and popular airs". From then on, the theatre became the hub of social and cultural activities for the district.



A 1925 Brunswick 'Panatrope'

THEATRE SHOP

For over seventy years the Theatre Shop served the Mechanics' Theatre as booking office and for the sale of refreshments. Mrs Wordly was the proprietor for nearly twenty of those years until 1947, when audience numbers could total up to 850. It would have been quite a task to serve so many people with their milk shakes, ice cream, soft drinks and bags of lollies during a short interval.

Patrick Scott bought the business in 1947 and was there until 1954. Other proprietors followed until the shop was closed in 2000.



Patrick Scott.

A search through old Camperdown Chronicles gives us a picture of the wide range of activities that took place in the new theatre.

CAMPERDOWN THEATRE.
SATURDAY'S BIG ATTRACTIONS!

THE BISHOP MURDER CASE. A Mystery That Will Keep You Thrilled and Guessing to the Very End. Featuring: Bushy Billbone, Della Brown, Ronald Young and George F. Marion.	"IN OLD ARIZONA." With Edward Lowe, Warner Baxter and Dorothy Burgess. A Terrific Love Drama of the Open Plains.
MUSICAL REQUEST NUMBER:	MICKY THE MOUSE CARTOON: "Springtime." "DESERT ROSE."

SKATING SKATING!
NEXT WEEKS SESSIONS—
TUESDAY AND THURSDAY.
AFTERNOON: 2-5; and EVENING, 7.30-10.30.
Outlookers .. 1/- Use of Skates .. 1/- Skaters with own Skates 1/6

MECHANICS' THEATRE, CAMPERDOWN.

The 1930s

In the 1930s there were many and varied activities: skating, concerts, ceremonies, dances and regular showings of films. The film stars of the day were Deanna Durbin, Wendy Hiller, Gene Autry "The Singing Cowboy", The Marx Bros. and George Formby. Laurel and Hardy also made their first film in that era.

FOURTH ANNUAL TOUR.
THE ROYAL BLIND ENTERTAINERS.
(Representing the Last Word in the Modern Training of the Blind)
Assisted by Leading Metropolitan Artists.
MECHANICS' THEATRE, THURSDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY.
POPULAR PRICES. NO TAX.
Dance may be arranged after Concert by consent of Local Secretary

CAMPERDOWN THEATRE.
MAKING THE GRADE Blinded by the fury of passion
—by the despair of a lost love
she had not reckoned with.
THE LETTER
A HILARIOUS VERSION OF
THE LION AND THE MOUSE.
A MIRROR OF AMERICAN LIFE
FEATURING
EDMUND LOWE & LOIS MORAN.
A MASTERPIECE OF
SCREEN COMEDY.
MECHANICS' SATURDAY, TO-NIGHT
BOOK AT WORDSLEY.

STARRING
JEANNE EAGELS
WITH
D. P. HEGGIE.
DRAMA THAT WILL HOLD YOU
SPELLBOUND. WITHOUT A
DOUBT THE MOST ASTOUNDING
DRAMATIC OFFERING OF THE
YEAR!
MECHANICS' SATURDAY, TO-NIGHT
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE.
MECHANICS' SATURDAY, TO-NIGHT
PHONE 66.

Royal Blind Entertainers

On the 1st February, 1930 there is a concert by "The Royal Blind Entertainers – Representing "the last word in the modern training of the blind." These concerts were an annual event from that time until the 1950s. A concert advertised for 4th February, 1955 promises: "A Non-stop Variety Entertainment of Magic, Music, Mirth and Sensational Acts. Attend this concert as a thanksgiving for your sight."

A New Name

In March, 1934, the committee leased the theatre to Messrs Charles Odlum and Roy Chiltern. The lessees contracted Warner Bros First National Pictures Limited to show their films which meant that the theatre was temporarily closed for minor upgrades. It then re-opened on 9th March, 1934 as the **Theatre Royal**, the name that is retained to this day.

28th January, 1936 – The death of King George V.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

THEATRE ROYAL TODAY. SHOPS WILL CLOSE.

For the Memorial Service to honour the memory of the late King, shops in Camperdown will close from 2.25 pm until 3 pm today to permit their staffs to attend. The service will commence at 2.30 pm and will be attended by Col. G. A. Street, M.P. the President of the Hampden Shire Council, returned soldiers and other prominent Camperdown citizens.

The 1940s

By 1939 the world was engulfed by war and dances held in the Theatre Royal now made mention of the soldiers camped in the district.

27th January, 1942:

YOUNG PEOPLE ENJOY THEATRE ROYAL DANCE

In response to a request from the young people of Camperdown, the management of the Theatre Royal arranged a dance last night, which was greatly enjoyed by a large gathering, including about 100 soldiers from district camps.

The films, as well, echoed the war, with Laurel and Hardy starring in an army comedy: "Great Guns"

1945 saw a celebratory Victory Ball arranged by the "Camperdown Branch of the R.S.S. and A.I.L.A. (the original name – now shortened to R.S.L.).

February 1949 saw two very different events at the theatre:

Theatre Royal
Attractions

"Great Guns."
Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy appear in their first comedy in more than a year in 20th Century-Fox's "Great Guns," which is scheduled to open at the Theatre Royal on Friday and Saturday.
In this new comedy about Uncle Sam's new Army, Stan and Ollie conduct a blitz on the blues as two "nitwits" in khaki who are a pain in the sergeant's neck.
Directed by Monty Banks. "Great Guns" features Sheila Ryan, Dick Nelson and Edmund MacDonald.
"Down In San Diego."

CROWD VISIT 1949 FORD DISPLAY

The exceptional interest and spontaneous approval evinced by the crowds who flock to view the premiere of the revolutionary new 1949 Ford V8 custom sedan at the Theatre Royal last Tuesday leaves no doubt of the eagerness of the public to appraise the first completely re-designed post-war Ford offering.a representative of the "Chronicle" had a short ride in the new car. Immediate impressions were the smoothness of the ride, its general road holding qualities and the remarkable ease of steering.

BOXING BOXING

Theatre Royal, Camperdown

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21

(Proceeds in aid of Camperdown Hospital)

The Only Appearance of the

FRENCH BOXING TEAM

—By courtesy of Stadiums' Ltd

PIERRE MONTANE, Champion Lightweight of France.

PIERRE LANGLOIS, Welterweight.

TONY TONIOLO, Middleweight

JEAN JOUAZ, Bantamweight.

ANDRE FAMECHON (who recently defeated Frankie Flannery)

EMILE FAMECHON, Bantamweight (who fought Rinky Monaghan for World's Title).

Only Australian Appearance of **EDDIE MILLER**

(Featherweight Champion of Australia before his return to England to contest the Empire Featherweight Title)

LOCAL CONTESTS OF THREE ROUNDS

MAIN SIX ROUNDS BOUT

Between Camperdown District Champion and Melbourne Stadium Boxer.

Referee: JACK WARNER (Stadium's Overseas Representative).

Prices: Ringside, 7/6; Others, 5/-

(Box plan at Scott's Theatre Shop. Phone 66)

And the appearance of the French Boxing Team – by courtesy of Stadiums Ltd.

Lessees:

Later lessees of the Theatre Royal were Mr Alf Maynard and then Mr George Butterfield (1948 to mid '60's). Mr. Roy Chiltern continued working at the theatre mainly as projectionist throughout these years.

The 1950s

During this decade, Camperdown was hosting a number of city entertainments. The Council of Adult Education brought The National Ballet Company starring two Latvian Dancers and in January, 1951, the Tivoli Theatre production of the "Jubilee Pantomime, Old Mother Hubbard" came to Camperdown.

There were regular balls – St. Patrick's Church, the R.S.L., Football Clubs, Apex and many other organisations in the town held balls there every year. The bands were The Rhythm Quartette and Sloan's Orchestra. The schools held Speech Nights and festivals and every week there were films. They were starring Alan Ladd, Dorothy Lamour, Charles Laughton, James Stewart, John Wayne, Clarke Gable, Gary Cooper all names that will be remembered by many of our older members.

1954 saw the C.A.E. bring the play "Bell, Book and Candle"; and the local Repertory Company had become a regular user of the theatre, usually producing two or three plays per year.

To be continued.....

Having now run out of space for this continued record of the activities in the Theatre Royal, there will have to be another 'episode' in a later Newsletter to cover later decades.

There are many records and photographs of the 1960s in our archives and 'some time' in the future, they will be included in a further article.

