

A RICH HISTORY

THE STORY OF BUNDOORA HOMESTEAD



Bundoor
Homestead
Art Centre



WELCOME

Welcome to Bundoora Homestead Art Centre.

Bundoora Homestead is built on lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have lived and shared culture on Country for tens of thousands of years. From its earliest habitation, through to the communities who frequent the galleries and gardens today, people have been drawn to the site for its proximity to fresh water, its position as one of the highest vantage points in the Melbourne region, as a place to visit loved ones and to appreciate contemporary art.

Bundoora Homestead Art Centre has a complex, multi-layered history, and through this publication we provide just a taste of these stories. We will continue to build on this knowledge with our permanent Truth-Telling space, our continually changing exhibition program and our workshops which provide multiple ways to explore the site's history, learn about the people who lived and worked here, and uncover the unique features of the heritage listed house and gardens.

Darebin City Council wishes to acknowledge the immense contribution of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation whose stewardship and generosity of spirit has provided insight into the significant history and ongoing living Aboriginal culture of the land on which Bundoora Homestead stands.

Darebin City Council also thanks the ANZAC Centenary Major Grants Program and The Copland Foundation, whose support assisted us to research, record and publish these important records of the Homestead's history, and the communities who continue to contribute to its rich and ever-evolving story.

If you have any information that may add to our understanding of the history of Bundoora Homestead, we warmly welcome community contributions.

We hope you enjoy your visit.

Leah Crossman
Director, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre



WURUNDJERI COUNTRY

Aboriginal people have occupied the land on which Bundoora Homestead Art Centre is located for more than 40,000 years. This is the traditional country of the Wurundjeri-willam people of the Woi Wurrung language group, who have lived and travelled throughout the region for generations.

Before European invasion, the area surrounding Bundoora Homestead was a grassy woodland bordered by Darebin Creek, which provided fresh water and abundant food resources for local clans. When the Darebin and Merri creeks flooded, the Wurundjeri would move to higher land for shelter and firewood, including to Mount Cooper, on whose elevated slopes Bundoora Homestead now stands. Mount Cooper was an important ceremonial and camping ground. Its silcrete outcrops were used to make stone tools. Scar trees throughout the region show evidence of bark removal for the construction of canoes, shields and bowls for daily use.

INVASION AND DEVASTATION

Invasion of Victoria began from the early 1800s, when farmers, businessmen and convicts arrived from Britain via Van Diemen's Land, as Tasmania was then known. Some Aboriginal people believed them to be temporary visitors, just passing through. Instead, they violently displaced the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community and all Aboriginal people who lived here.

ABORIGINAL PLACE NAMES

Bundoora was named after Keelbundoora, a Wurundjeri man and the nephew of William Barak (Barak), a very important Ngurungaeta (leader). Darebin (or darabin) is the Woi-wurrung word for 'swallow'. The return of the Welcome Swallows and the hatching of butterflies marks the beginning of the regeneration and Women's Business season. This period of the Kulin calendar runs roughly from August to October. Some Welcome Swallows make their home here on the Homestead building.

Edward Noyce (1816-1854), Collins Street – Town of Melbourne, Port Philip, c. 1840, lithograph
Courtesy State Library Victoria





CARING FOR COUNTRY

Caring for Country is a set of responsibilities and privileges that guide most of what Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people do. It involves looking after all that lives and relies on Country. Among what Aboriginal people work to protect is the people, the flora and fauna, the waterways and land.

Djirri Djirri Dancers performing at the launch of Darebin's FUSE Festival, 2019
Darebin Council



LIVING CULTURE

Aboriginal heritage and living culture has remained strong in Darebin in the face of displacement, disenfranchisement and policies of assimilation. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are involved in all sorts of industries, and live diverse lives. Today we honour the important contributions of Darebin's Aboriginal community to the national struggle for Aboriginal rights and social justice, and celebrate Aboriginal living culture.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which Bundoora Homestead stands, and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

Megan Evans, Les Griggs, Ian Johnson, Eleain Trott, Ray Thomas, Millie Yarran with the Aborigines Advancement League. St Georges Road Koori Mural, refurbished (detail), 2013
Darebin Public Art Collection

SMITH FAMILY ERA

So what is a house like this doing in Bundoora?

In 1899 John Matthew Vincent Smith (1857–1922), a prominent identity in the horse breeding and racing industry, acquired the 606 acres of land known as Bundoora Park for use as a horse stud. In the same year, he organised a public architectural competition for the design of a new house for his family, and out of sixteen entries the winning plan was awarded to Melbourne architect, Sydney Herbert Wilson.

The fourteen-room, two storey mansion was built in 1900 and formed the centrepiece of the large estate. The house originally consisted of an entrance hall, grand stair hall with oval stained glass ceiling, a drawing room (probably converted to a billiard room by 1910), parlour, dining room and service wing. Upstairs, eight bedrooms and three bathrooms were situated off wide balconies, where the city of Melbourne could be seen in the distance, along with sweeping vistas towards the Dandenong Ranges in the southeast, and across to Mount Macedon to the north-west.

Three full-time staff maintained lavish gardens, which stretched to Plenty Road.

Smith, his wife Helen, and their four children lived here for almost two decades, and employed a large staff. Their descendants maintain a strong connection to Bundoora. In the years before the outbreak of World War I, the Smith children married and moved away to other properties in Victoria and England, and in 1920, John Matthew Vincent Smith, by then elderly, sold Bundoora Park to the Commonwealth Government.

Opposite above: Smith family on the front steps of Bundoora Homestead, 1915
Courtesy Smith family collection

Opposite below L-R: John Matthew Vincent Smith, c. 1900, Helen Smith, c. 1900,
Smith family children, c. 1900
Courtesy Smith family collection





WALLACE

The Greatest Sire in Australia

From 1900-1920, Bundoora Park operated primarily as a horse and cattle stud, famous in racing circles for the quality of its horses. One of Bundoora's most famous residents was a dark chestnut stallion called Wallace. A majestic galloper, Wallace was the son of Melbourne Cup winner, Carbine, and by the time he was just three years old had won the Caulfield Guineas, the Victoria Derby and the Sydney Cup. He sired many famous race horses, including Melbourne Cup winners Kingsburgh and Patrobas.

He is buried in Bundoora Park and his headstone, along with the original stables, can still be seen today.

Above: Wallace with Strapper at Bundoora Park, c. 1904
Courtesy State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Collection

Opposite left: Adelaide Smith in the garden at Bundoora Homestead, 1911
Courtesy Andrea Traeger collection

Opposite right: Adelaide Smith reading a book on the fence at Bundoora Park, 1911
Courtesy Andrea Traeger collection

ADELAIDE FRANCIS SMITH (1892–1988)

Parlour Maid

I worked with my mother (Lillian Thomson, the Housekeeper) at Bundoora Homestead. I was a maid and my duties commenced every morning when I opened the windows, if the weather permitted, of all the lower rooms in the house. I would then light the fires, clear away the ashes, clean the hearths, and polish with a leather the bright parts of the range, doing it as quickly as was possible, so that I wasted no more time than was absolutely necessary.

After putting on the kettle, I would go to the dining room to get it in order for breakfast. I laid the cloth and set the table, that done I shut the dining-room door. Back in the main house I swept the hall, shook the mats, cleaned the doorstep and the brass knockers. After cleaning the boots that were absolutely required, I washed my hands and face, put on a clean white apron, and was ready for Mrs Smith when she came downstairs. I carried the urn into the dining room and left the family to breakfast that had been prepared by cook and laid out and served by another maid.

After I had my own breakfast, and whilst the family were finishing theirs, I would go upstairs to the bedrooms, open all the windows, strip the clothes off the beds, and leave them to air. I would then come downstairs and clear away the families' breakfast things. Back upstairs to make the beds and clean and dust the room—all this before lunch. I set the lunch table and waited on the family. Two hours in the afternoon were mine. These I spent outdoors playing with the dogs, reading a book under the big gums or doing some of the darning and mending... In the evening, I once again laid the table and waited on the family at dinner. Evenings, after dinner, were also mine but it was usually to bed early, ready for another day.



BUNDOORA CONVALESCENT FARM AND REPATRIATION HOSPITAL

1920 saw the beginning of the long period of use of Bundoora Homestead as a place of accommodation and rehabilitation for returned servicemen.

Following World War I, the Commonwealth Government was called on to provide treatment for returned soldiers suffering from trauma and mental illness as a result of their war service. Bundoora Park was identified as a prime location for the establishment of a convalescent farm, for its isolation, high altitude, surrounding open country, and proximity to Mont Park Psychiatric Hospital.

In 1920, Bundoora Convalescent Farm catered for approximately thirty patients. The prevailing opinion at the time was that fresh air and gentle work would restore these men to themselves, their families, and regular employment. Treatment consisted of fruit, flower and vegetable growing, dairying, and other farm work. But as the years wore on and patient numbers increased, the need for complex, long term care became apparent.

In 1924, Bundoora Convalescent Farm changed its operations and responsibilities to become Bundoora Repatriation Mental Hospital– the first psychiatric facility established in Victoria to meet the specific needs of returned servicemen with an accepted psychiatric illness due to war service.

From 1920 until 1993, this site was home to hundreds of returned servicemen suffering from mental illness and severe trauma. Sometimes it took years for their conditions to emerge, but when they did, it often meant they were unable to sleep, work, maintain relationships or stay in one place. Some experienced debilitating symptoms such as delusions and psychosis. These men were rarely encouraged to talk openly about what they had seen or done during the war, and the experience haunted their lives and the lives of their families.

Opposite above: Residents at Bundoora Repatriation Hospital, 1970
Courtesy National Archives of Australia, B6295, 2604D

Opposite left: Single room in Acute Ward, Bundoora Repatriation Mental Hospital, 1961
Courtesy National Archives of Australia, A7342,V8

Opposite right: Upstairs Ward, Bundoora Convalescent farm, c. 1920
Courtesy Australian War Memorial, H12897



At this time, there was little understanding around trauma and mental illness. For some returned servicemen and families, it was important that their mental illness was acknowledged as being a consequence of their war service, due to the social stigma associated with mental illness generally, and a place at Bundoora was considered preferable to a general asylum.

Following World War II, admissions at Bundoora continued to rise, cases became more complex, and the trial of new therapies commenced, led by Dr John Cade (1912-1980). Following a brief stint as a medical officer at Bundoora in 1939, Dr Cade had himself served in World War II, where he spent more than three years as a prisoner at Changi. As a prisoner of war he observed the psychological disturbance of fellow soldiers suffering from their internment.

Upon returning home Dr Cade resumed his position at Bundoora Repatriation Mental Hospital as a medical officer, and set about finding a pharmacological treatment for his patients. In a disused kitchen of an old ward that served as his research laboratory, he experimented on guinea pigs, and even on himself, and discovered a correlation between urine toxicity and manic depression. Through trial and error, he found that lithium salts protected against this toxicity and worked as a mood stabiliser in patients with manic depression (now known as bipolar depression).

The discovery of this cheap, effective medication had a global impact, revolutionising the management of mental illness by providing an alternative to the existing approaches of prolonged hospitalisation and shock therapy. The results of Dr Cade's lithium experiments were published in the Medical Journal of Australia in 1949 and in 1950, he was promoted to the inaugural position of medical superintendent and psychiatrist

Dr Cade was also a great advocate of the benefits of occupational therapy and supervised a considerable expansion of this program at Bundoora in the late 1940s, assisted by the Australian Red Cross Society.



Right: Dr John F Cade, 1971

Courtesy National Archives of Australia, A6180, 23/9/71/12

Opposite: Nurse standing in dining room,
Bundoora Repatriation Mental Hospital, c. 1930s

Courtesy Australian War Memorial, H19372



Red Cross volunteers were the news and nerve centre of the hospital. They played a prominent role in the day to day welfare of patients throughout its operation, organising a comprehensive schedule of recreation and entertainment that included sporting activities, concerts, film screenings, a reading and picture library service, workshops in basket weaving and wicker furniture production, and an innovative music therapy program, Music in Mental Hospitals, which operated with great success for almost forty years.

After significant expansion throughout the 1930s and 40s, the hospital continued to develop its facilities and services throughout the 1950s and 60s, as patient numbers reached a peak at around 408 in 1963, but by the mid-1970s, very few patients under the age of fifty resided at the hospital, and therapy programs designed for elderly patients were introduced.

In the 1980s the increased need to provide aged care services to patients led to a shift in approach to the care of returned servicemen, with smaller, specialised facilities in locations closer to patients' homes and families favoured. In 1993, after operating for more than seventy years as a repatriation facility, the hospital was formally de-commissioned.

HENRY JUDGE 'LOFTY' CANNON (1914 – 1980)

Coming Home

Henry 'Lofty' Cannon was a long-term resident at Bundoora Repatriation Hospital. Known as 'Harry' to his family and 'Lofty' to his army mates, he enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps, AIF, in 1940 and was posted to the 2nd/9th Field Ambulance Unit. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant before departing for Singapore. When Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1942, Lofty, along with 15,000 other Australians, became a prisoner of war (POW) in Changi for the duration of World War II.

As a POW, Lofty endured frequent bouts of malaria and dysentery as well as tropical ulcers and rheumatism. In 1943, he was sent to Kanchanaburi camp in Thailand as part of a medical party, to nurse survivors of the Thai–Burma Railway working parties. There he met satirical cartoonist and fellow prisoner, Ronald Searle, with whom he maintained a friendship for many years following the war. Searle credited Lofty with saving his life.

Lofty was fortunate to survive his experience as a POW and make it back to Australia in 1945, but in 1946 he was classified as medically unfit and discharged from the AIF. At this time, the psychological trauma of his war experience began to manifest—he suffered residual symptoms of anxiety and constant headaches.

By 1949, Lofty was living on a soldier settlement farm in Tresco, with his wife and son, but within a few years his health deteriorated. He became addicted to painkillers and alcohol, and his increasingly antisocial behaviour strained his relationship with his family. The family left Tresco and Lofty was admitted to Bundoora Repatriation Mental Hospital.

In a 1966 letter to his war-time friend, Ronald Searle, Lofty wrote: 'My eyesight is going fast and I keep thinking I am chained again to the Burma Railway and so to set my mind at rest my own people have locked me up again.'

Opposite: Pen and ink sketch by Ronald Searle depicting 'Lofty' Cannon (wearing a Red Cross armband) reaching out to Searle emerging from mosquito netting in 'Ward 5', Kanchanaburi camp hospital, Thai–Burma Railway, 1943

Courtesy State Library of Victoria, Pictures Collection, Gift of Mrs Jillian Parkes



Although deeply troubled, Lofty managed to function rationally for periods of time. It was during the late 1960s that he revived and edited the hospital newsletter, renaming it Outlook. He wrote of the difficulties of fitting back into family life in a poem entitled 'So You Want "Out"!'. In recognition of his military service, Lofty was awarded the 1939–45 Star, Pacific Star, Australian Defence Medal, War Medal 1939–45 and Australian Service Medal 1939–45. He remained at Bundoora until his death in 1980, aged 65.

"Unfortunately, in some cases, it doesn't matter how — trial leave or the dream called discharge — as long as [you] get either and go to that vague place called HOME. Be warned, be prepared for some rude shocks, for even if you have had weekend leave for years, when you come home to stop permanently you will soon find you are a stranger in a strange new place."

Lofty Cannon, excerpt from poem 'So You Want 'Out'!', c. 1968-70

SAVING BUNDOORA HOMESTEAD

The closure of Bundoora Repatriation Hospital in 1993 marked the beginning of a long process of decommissioning the site and a campaign to save Bundoora Homestead from demolition.

Following its transfer to the State Government, the entire hospital precinct, including Bundoora Homestead, was scheduled for redevelopment as a private residential housing estate. During this period almost all of the hospital buildings and amenities were demolished, and it was only through the actions taken by staff of the Bundoora Repatriation Hospital, the Preston Historical Society, the Preston City Council, La Trobe University and members of the local community that Bundoora Homestead was saved.

In 1997, Bundoora Homestead was gifted to the City of Darebin and after months of planning, substantial restoration work commenced in 1999. Bundoora Homestead's appearance had suffered a steady decline since the Smith Family era. The interior was painted peach and aqua, the verandahs were enclosed, period features were missing, and an extensive concrete fire escape protruded from the second storey. It took over nine months to complete the restoration of Bundoora Homestead to its Smith Family era grandeur—a process which involved a number of experts and artisans.

By 2001, restoration works were complete and the property was certified by Heritage Victoria and registered with the National Trust. In this same year Bundoora Homestead reopened as Bundoora Homestead Art Centre.

The determination and commitment of those involved in the campaign to save the Homestead resulted in the protection, restoration and heritage listing of this historic house, and as a result, the preservation of a valuable chapter in Victorian social history.

Today, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre operates as a historic house, café and thriving contemporary art gallery, presenting a dynamic program of exhibitions, events, residencies and development opportunities for artists.

Opposite above: Interactive art play session during *One on One* 2019, Curated by Olivia Poloni

Opposite below: Installation view: *Salon of Spirits* 2017, curated by Jake Treacy



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BUNDOORA HOMESTEAD ART CENTRE

Wed-Sat / 11am-4pm

Free admission

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Cover image: Bundoora Convalescent Farm, c. 1920s
Courtesy Australian War Memorial, H19366

