



Heritage

COMMONWEALTH GOLF CLUB Inc.

December 2009

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF CGC

In November 1999 RMIT issued a press release announcing the launch of a multi-media CD-ROM called LIGHTS OF OUR PAST, AUSTRALIAN STAINED GLASS, opening with:

Q: "What do Sydney Town Hall, St Mary's Cathedral (Sydney), the Commonwealth Golf Club (Melbourne), Brisbane Grammar School, the University of Sydney, Flinders Street Station (Melbourne), Cranbrook School (Sydney), and Mt Buffalo Chalet all have in common?"

A: *All these Australian buildings contain extraordinarily beautiful stained glass windows, with some windows dating back to early colonial days.*

The press release then noted that one of the authors of this CD-ROM was a Ms Bronwyn Hughes, a stained glass consultant who was awarded a Master of Arts from the University of Melbourne for her thesis "Twentieth Century Stained Glass Windows in Melbourne". After some difficulty we were able to contact Ms Hughes seeking further information.

In reply Bronwyn Hughes wrote: "I was very pleased to receive your e-mail and to read you are giving recognition to those two delightful windows at Commonwealth Golf Club. My attention was drawn to them some years ago, firstly by a

member of the Club and then later I corresponded with the artist's daughter, Mrs Silley, who has since died.

The artist was William Wheildon, the stained glass artist and head of the stained glass department at Brooks, Robinson & Co Melbourne. He was also a foundation member of Commonwealth GC and, according to his daughter, gave the windows as a gift to the new clubhouse. Like all artists employed over the years by the firm, Wheildon had been trained in England, first in Warwick and Birmingham before his recruitment to Brooks, Robinson in 1905. He worked at the company until 1938 and died in 1941. Many windows made by him, but never identified by a signature of either the artist or firm on the glass, adorn Churches across Victoria and interstate. He also painted in his leisure hours and occasionally exhibited his work.

I was very lucky to gain access to two job books that recorded the orders taken into the stained glass department between 1923 and the mid 1960's, however could find no record of the Commonwealth GC windows.

Presumably this was a job he did privately."

A search of the minutes regarding the building of our clubhouse has to this date found no reference to the



commissioning of the windows and so it appears we have had a very skilled and generous foundation member in William Wheildon.

As a footnote: Some time before the Club's 75th anniversary, the thought that the Club should have its own club wine label came up. The Wine Committee of the time, Norm Mann and Peter Bassett, tried its hand at wine label design, but they felt their efforts always looked more like beer labels. Then Norm's wife Nan suggested that the stained glass windows in the dining room be considered. This was then quickly adopted and has proved very popular since.

Peter Slattery,
Heritage Sub-Committee