

Then & Now – Abrecht Bird Jewellers

We recently featured in industry-based magazine – **Jeweller Magazine** – outlining our four generations of history. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our business as one of the longest-standing jewellers in Melbourne. Read Leon Corn's article below.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leon Corn is co-director of Abrecht Bird Jewellers, one of Melbourne's most prestigious jewellery businesses, with a history dating back more than 145 years.



Beginning as two separate family businesses in Melbourne, the origin of Abrecht Bird Jewellers dates back to 15 December 1875 when, as a 17-year-old, Friedrich Robert Abrecht migrated from Pforzheim, Germany to Melbourne and founded jewellery manufacturing business Fred Robt. Abrecht.

Originally located in the City Chambers on the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets, the young Friedrich sold findings to local jewellery manufacturers – one of which was J Bird & Son.



Above, L to R: Fred Robt. Abrecht's founder, Friedrich Robert Abrecht, who immigrated to Melbourne from Pforzheim, Germany. J Bird & Son, founded by diamond setter John Bird. The J Bird & Son workshop in 1949

Right: The Fred Robt. Abrecht office was subjected to a devastating robbery in 1910 – at the time, the largest Melbourne had ever seen – from which Friedrich Abrecht never fully recovered



"The 145-year history of the business has created a wealth of experience in producing high quality jewellery ..."

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The Principles of Integrity and Honesty set down by our forebears have laid the perfect foundation on which we can continue to build and further practise the ideals of 'Quality without Compromise'

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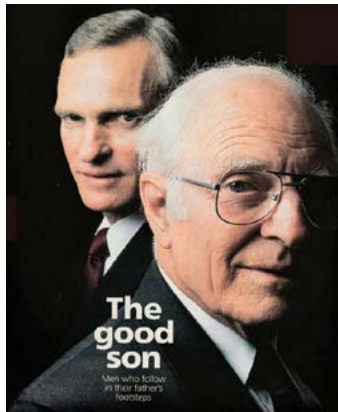
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J Bird & Son was founded by Birmingham-born diamond setter John Bird and his son Leigh in 1910, with premises on the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets and then at 343 Little Collins Street. Friedrich Robert Abrecht passed away in 1913, two years after a devastating robbery at the office. His sons, Herbert Brisbane 'Bris' Abrecht and Percy 'Pop' Abrecht, took over and switched the focus to the importation of diamonds and gemstones, as well as the manufacture of fine jewellery. During the Great Depression, Fred Robt. Abrecht quietly moved into jewellery retail when it acquired the failing Dumbrells Jewellers on Bourke Street. Fred Robt. Abrecht and J Bird & Son enjoyed success throughout the first half of the 20th century, expanding interstate and building their reputations for high quality design and jewellery manufacture – both with customers and the jewellery industry alike. Both businesses were awarded the Lord Mayor's Generational Family Business Commendation, which is given to businesses which have employed three or more generations of a family. In late 1991, a serendipitous meeting occurred between John Bird's grandson, David Bird, and myself, Leon Corn, son-in-law of Friedrich Abrecht's



Peter, the fourth generation of the Bird family to take over the J Bird & Son business, with his father David (featured in an article in The Age)

Greg John, who joined the business as a partner in 2000 and was previously workshop manager at Fred Robt. Abrecht; Eleanor Hawke; and Yuki Mathwin. Having experienced one of the toughest years in over a century in 2020, myself, Peter, and the Abrecht Bird staff have come through without too much of a downturn, thanks in part to government assistance and to the clever use of social media. For most of the year the office was closed, but the email list saved the day.

The 145-year history of the business has created a wealth of experience in producing high quality jewellery, as well as completing challenging restoration work. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to uphold the traditions of our founders and their successors, and at the same time, realise how important it is to keep up to date with the latest trends in fashion and marketing. Quality products, ethical business practices and loyal hard-working staff are at the heart of Abrecht Bird Jewellers. This gives customers the confidence to continue to place their loyalty and trust in such an experienced organisation – and when it comes to jewellery, trust is paramount.

Quality products, ethical business practices and loyal hard-working staff are at the heart of Abrecht Bird Jewellers

grandson Noel Abrecht. David had come to collect a job, to find that Fred Robt. Abrecht was on the verge of closure after 117 years in business.

David introduced me to his son, Peter Bird, and the two businesses successfully merged to form Abrecht Jewellers, renamed Abrecht Bird Jewellers in 2007.

After ceasing trade work, Abrecht Bird has focused on individual handmaking for private clients, employing a staff of seven – three jewellers and four in administration. More recently, a gallery has been developed to showcase the awards and artistic talents of the workshop jewellers:



The Abrecht Bird Jewellers team today – (L-R) Greg John, Yuki Mathwin, Stephanie Tkalcovic, Eleanor Hawke, Kylie Beachley, Peter Bird and Leon Corn.

To quote the first words imparted to me from my father-in-law Noel: 'The customer's jewellery is one of their most precious possessions, which they are leaving in your care – always remember that son.' Succession plans are always in Peter's thoughts as he approaches his 70th birthday, and some

discussions have been undertaken to explore the options. Hopefully, the Abrecht and Bird names will live on, perhaps without any family involvement, but continuing in the same tradition as the past 146 years.

Original article published at Jewellermagazine.com.

Staff News

Meet the Staff – Mila

Congratulations to our jeweller Eleanor and her husband Tom on the safe arrival of their daughter Mila. Mum and Mila are doing well.



Vale Mr David Bird

It is with great sadness we farewell Mr David Bird, father of Peter Bird. David passed away peacefully on Friday 7 May at the age of 96. He will be dearly missed.

To read Mr Bird's jewellery industry recollections from his time at Abrecht Bird, please visit our website and view our blog: <https://abrecht.com.au/vale-mr-david-bird/>.

Gift Ideas

Pictured below, left to right:

1. 9 carat yellow gold ruby hoop earrings \$635
2. 18 carat white and rose gold Argyle pink diamond earrings \$2,765
3. 9 carat yellow gold ruby and diamond hoop earrings \$715
4. 18 carat white gold blue chalcedony and blue diamond ring \$2,250
5. 18 carat white gold diamond solitaire stud earrings 2 = 0.84 ct \$5,825
6. 18 carat yellow gold diamond stud earrings 2 = 0.50 ct \$2,700
7. 18 carat white gold diamond solitaire stud earrings 2 = 0.40 ct \$1,900





Workshop Experience

As a manufacturing jewellery company, we often get asked by clients what the difference is between handmade and computer aided design (CAD) or cast jewellery. In previous newsletters and emails, we have highlighted many in-depth discussions on this topic. We believe it is critical to educate our clients in what they are buying, and the processes and skills required to hand make their one-off items of jewellery.

During your visit to the workshop, our friendly and highly skilled jewellers will go through a brief introduction into some of the processes/tools used and the importance of hand manufacturing. Then it's time to get your hands dirty as you get to roll out your metal using the rolling mills, draw it down using the draw bench, anneal (soften) the metal using a micro torch and begin the basic shaping.



"... the workshop experience is the perfect way to add that special touch of sentiment."



Abrecht Bird is one of the very few manufacturing jewellers left in Melbourne; with this in mind, we have decided to open the Abrecht Bird workshop to our clients and offer them the unique opportunity to take part in our 'Workshop Experience'. We are offering you the opportunity to step into the shoes of a jeweller for a couple of hours and see firsthand what it takes to create all the beautiful works of art that continuously come out of our onsite workshop.

Our jewellers will document your time during your workshop experience by taking a series of photos of you working on your item of jewellery. Once the item has been completed, we will present you with copies of these photos to keep and show your loved one that you helped in the making of their beautiful new item of jewellery.

Whether you are looking for an engagement ring, new item of jewellery for a birthday/anniversary, or looking to remodel some old, cherished pieces into something new – the workshop experience is the perfect way to add that special touch of sentiment.

Eleanor Hawke
FGAA



Some recent bespoke pieces custom designed between our customers and our jewellers

Gallery News

We are excited to announce an upcoming exclusive exhibition through our Artists Gallery. International award-winning enamel artist, Debbie Sheezel, is an inspirational gift to the creative art community in Australia. We are proud and honoured to have the opportunity to share her unique talents with our jewellery family.



As well as being a two-time winner of the prestigious Saul Bell Design Award in the US in 2016 and 2019 (when she also took out the overall Best of Show category), and the Australian Jewellery Design Award in 2019, Debbie is also renowned for her three-dimensional enamelled works: 'The Tree of Life' at the Montefiore Homes in Melbourne and the amazing 16.5 metre long 'Daintree Mural' at the Brisbane International Air Terminal.

More details soon ...



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Milestones

Happy 21st to our Master Jeweller Greg John. Greg has been part of the Abrecht Bird team for 21 years and hand crafting and designing bespoke jewellery for 52 years!

Read about our dedicated and talented master jeweller on our blog page: <https://abrecht.com.au/meet-our-staff-greg-john-our-master-jeweller/>.



Congratulations also to Peter Bird celebrating 40 years at Abrecht Bird Jewellers. A milestone testifying to his knowledge of the industry and dedication to helping our clients.

Read more about Peter on our website and his history in the business <https://abrecht.com.au/meet-the-staff-peter-bird/>.

Gift Ideas



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Pictured page 5, from left to right:

- 8. 9 carat white gold sapphire and diamond ring \$775
- 9. 18 carat white gold diamond circle necklet \$2,375
- 10. 18 carat rose gold diamond crossover ring \$7,800
- 11. 18 carat white gold South Sea pearl and diamond drop earrings \$2,085

Pictured above, from left to right:

- 13. 9 carat yellow gold peridot and diamond ring \$1,320
- 14. 18 carat yellow gold Tahitian pearl and diamond pendant* \$1,140
- 15. 9 carat white gold sapphire and diamond ring \$1,845
- 16. 18 carat white gold baguette and brilliant cut diamond ring \$7,475
- 17. 9 carat yellow gold sapphire and diamond ring \$2,750
- 18. 18 carat white and yellow gold aquamarine and diamond pendant \$3,410
- 19. 18 carat rose gold amethyst and diamond ring \$4,950
- 20. 18 carat white gold three diamond necklet \$2,905
- 21. 9 carat yellow gold garnet and diamond ring \$1,155
- 22. 18 carat white gold solitaire diamond slider necklet \$1,750

*Chain not included

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