

Keys to the collection— Form

Charles Brownlow

Charles Brownlow—sporting legend
and silversmith?



1861 Charles Brownlow was born on 25 July at Cullin Lane, Geelong, just three years after the first ever recorded game of what we know today as Australian Rules Football. His father, also named Charles, was a book binder in Oxford in the United Kingdom, who in married Eliza Whitaker from Releigh, Essex, and shortly after voyaged to Australia.

1880 The teenage Charles played his first game in the blue and white colours of the Geelong Football Club. In the same year Brownlow began his football career. He completed a silversmith apprenticeship. His teacher was an outstanding silversmith of the time, Edward Fischer (1828–1911). The German-trained Fischer was responsible for a number of ornate Geelong horse racing cups. In the 19th century, Geelong was a centre for silversmiths. Brownlow combined his silversmithing with a general business, which included a china warehouse and a tobacco shop. He hung up his shingle in the mid–1890s—a time of severe economic depression—and focused on football instead.

1883–84 Brownlow captained the Geelong Football Club.

1885 He retired as a player, and was club secretary until 1923, and president of the Victorian Football League (VFL) from 1918 to 1919.

1924 Brownlow died on the 23 January at home in Sydney Avenue, East Geelong. His blue and white house at that address is still standing.

Mounted emu egg—

It is appropriate that Charles Brownlow, a football-playing silversmith, is commemorated by a medal that is the AFL's most prestigious individual honour. Brownlow's finest surviving work made in the late 1880's, which is part of Geelong Gallery's permanent collection, is a silver mounted emu egg. The practice of mounting emu eggs was common at the end of the 19th century, when Australians had a keen interest in the flora and fauna of their nation. Brownlow mounted the egg in finely engraved silver with scrolled handles decorated with fern fronds. The *finial* (the pointed motif standing at the top of the object) is moulded in the form of an emu amongst native grasses.

**Geelong
Gallery**

AusVELS level 2 to 6

geelonggallery.org.au/learn

Charles Brownlow
Mounted emu egg 1890s
silver, emu egg and
ebonised wood
Collection: Geelong Gallery

G E E L O N G
E E L O N G
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Charles Brownlow

Australian 1861–1924

Mounted emu egg 1890s
silver, emu egg and
lebonised wood
38.0 x 23.8 (diameter) cm
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Dorothy McAllister Bequest
Fund, 1995

Questions

Who is eligible to be a Brownlow medal winner? What does a winner need to do to take out the award?

Research

View different kinds of trophies you have seen around your school, in clubs or at home, and make rough drawings of them. Describe the trophies in detail and compare how they differ from this piece by Charles Brownlow.

Activity

Create drawings for a trophy for your local sports club, ballet school, book club or other club. In your drawings, illustrate the special character of the club as a way of making the trophy design unique. Construct your trophy from recycled materials, such as old drink tins, plastic containers, paper, magazines and small found objects.