

THE RAILWAY COMES TO KEW: 1884 – 1887

by

Andrew Frost

ADDRESS: 24 Ridgeway Ave, Kew, Vic, 3101.

CONTACT DETAILS: (03)9817 5481. awcmfrost@hotmail.com

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Andrew Frost is a retired secondary teacher and a resident of Kew, a suburb of Melbourne. He researches aspects of Kew history using resources at the Kew Branch of the Boroondara Library Service and the State Library of Victoria.

ABSTRACT:

This paper describes the processes used by the Kew community to have a railway built to Kew in the 1880s. It is argued that the Kew community lobbied the colonial government in a half-hearted and reluctant way, unlike other districts in Melbourne. The paper also discusses the issues involved in fixing the route of the railway and problems of construction. The success of the railway is evaluated.

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INTRODUCTION.

Melbourne in the 1880s was transformed from being a walking city to a “more sophisticated urban pattern of a business and industrial city centre surrounded by suburbs from which large numbers commuted by engine-powered public transport.”² Hence the provision of railways and tramways was not only a private “good” (for private consumption,) but also a public “good” (to assist general economic development.) Thus it is no wonder that it can be claimed that during the debate on the 1880 Railways Bill (the Patterson Bill) railways “were regarded as a public service to which all districts were entitled as a matter of course.” As a result during the preparation of the 1884 Act (the Gillies Act) “...the parliament was besieged by deputations of local worthies urging their districts’ interests...”³

This paper describes the processes by which the people of Kew, primarily through the agency of the Kew Borough Council (hereafter referred to as “the Council”) eventually attained a railway line to Kew in 1884. The main sources for the paper were Kew Borough Council Minutes and the local newspaper, the *Kew Hawthorn Express* (hereafter referred to as “the *Express*”) from 1882.

Problems relating to establishing the route, and during construction are also described. Issues surrounding the political difficulty of attaining a railway are discussed. It is argued that unlike other districts seeking a railway, the Kew community lobbied in a half-hearted manner. It was only when Kew’s claims were rejected by the Government that Kew lobbied in an aggressive way and achieved success.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO KEW.

Why did the people of Kew want a railway? The Kew Mayor told the Minister for Railways at a deputation in July 1883, that there was considerable inconvenience felt by Kew inhabitants travelling to the city using buses. It was suggested that the poor service provided by buses might affect the property market in Kew. It was pointed out that other suburbs had experienced land value rises of 100%, but Kew was only going up by 5% and was being “left behind.” There was a feeling that a railway would open the up the district for land sales, and population would follow.⁴

¹ In citations in footnotes, Kew Borough Council will be shown as KBC and the *Kew Hawthorn Express* will be shown by KHE.

² Garden, Don. *Victoria: A History*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne. 1984. P217.

³ Davison, G. *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press Carlton, 1978, Pp 155 – 157. Davison, G “Public Utilities and the Expansion of Melbourne in the 1880s,” in Schedvin C.B. and McCarty J.W (ed.) *Urbanization in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970. P 79.

⁴ KHE, July 27, 1883. October 16 1884. March 9, 1888.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN KEW BEFORE THE RAILWAY.

As has been suggested above, there was considerable inconvenience in the transport arrangements from Kew to the city before the railway was built. What were those arrangements?

Prior to railway and tram services, buses operated in Kew. The bus services started to operate in 1876. The service started with two horse buses, but these were replaced with one horse wagonettes. Basically, buses were horse drawn carriages. There were two routes: from Kew to Hawthorn Railway Station with a connection to the city by train, or from Kew to Richmond, connecting with the horse tram to the city. Of course, many people walked, rode or drove their own conveyances to Melbourne.⁵ In Parliament in 1884 it was stated that there were 116 buses a day travelling to and from Kew.⁶

Naturally there were problems with this service.

Safety concerns were occasionally mentioned in the *Express*. In 1882, a journalist was travelling “on top of” a bus with three horses, (which indicates that he was travelling in a double decker,) when it crossed a rather rickety temporary railway bridge over Power Street, Hawthorn, on the way to Kew. He said that an accident over this bridge would involve 52 passengers. He also suggested that horses that hauled the buses “have been known to run away.”⁷ At least one accident occurred at Richmond when a wagonette’s axle broke due to weak welding by a blacksmith.⁸

Then there were complaints about overcrowding. Gentlemen had to give up their seats for the ladies! There were reports of bus drivers being fined for overcrowding, but as the *Express* suggested, “...does not the extra profit on overloaded buses allow ample margin for fines?”⁹

There were also complaints about the scheduling of buses to meet trains, and buses not waiting for passengers transferring from trams and trains. Sometimes the buses did not come at all, and at other times two or three would arrive at once. For instance, in Richmond in May 1884, some ladies gave up waiting for a bus, and started walking. After walking 400 yards, a bus arrived, and a little bit further on three more arrived. In addition, the trains on the Hawthorn line were often late.¹⁰ There were reports that there were not enough bus services to meet the number of trains: in October 1883, people sometimes had to wait for two or three trains to arrive at Hawthorn Station before there was a bus, as there were only 46 bus services for 74 trains to Hawthorn.¹¹ The lack of services on Sundays was especially a concern. One Sunday in March 1884, the majority of passengers had to walk home. To add insult to injury, when the walkers arrived in Kew, they saw three buses travelling in the opposite direction.¹²

There were reports that the buses were sometimes unable to climb the incline to the station at Hawthorn and ladies had to walk to them in the rain. The horses were not strong enough to

⁵ Vaughan, W. D., *Kew's Civic Centenary*, Kew Melbourne, 1960. P.44.

⁶ Victorian Parliamentary Debates, October 16 1884, P 1811.

⁷ KHE, 8 September 1882.

⁸ KHE, January 9, 1885.

⁹ KHE, March 10, 1882.

¹⁰ KHE, May 16, 1884

¹¹ KHE, October 19, 1883

¹² KHE, March 7 1884.

pull the conveyances up the hill.¹³ The journey was too long and there was a reduction in the subsidy paid by the Government, which increased the fares for passengers.¹⁴

The bus company had experimented with “fare boxes” into which passengers would place their fares. However the system meant the company lost revenue and passengers complained of being trampled by others as they tried to put their fares in the box – “corn trampling” as it was called. To the relief of all, the bus company reintroduced conductors.¹⁵

The Council pursued all complaints with letters to the Omnibus Company, the Railways Department and the local Member of Parliament. Sometimes the Council was successful in redressing the various concerns, or at least received mollifying replies of good intentions. At other times they were not successful, such as in the reinstatement of the subsidy on fares that had been removed.¹⁶

In the final analysis, as the editor of the *Express* opined, the bus company would have to put on extra bus services. This would involve them in extra expenses and unless there were at least 80 extra passengers a day, or the subsidy was increased, neither of which was likely to occur, people would have to put up with the service as it was.¹⁷

Hence the need for a rail link to the city from Kew. Or a tram. Or both.

The Council expended years of effort to have a railway line reach Kew. It was opened in 1887 after many years of lobbying. The story shows the surprisingly “modern” way the Council used its influence to achieve its ends: pressuring Parliamentary representatives, building alliances with other Councils, opinion polls, deputations, public meetings and letter writing. This process shows how well people in Victoria understood parliamentary democracy, and were able to use this understanding to achieve their ends: a better standard and quality of life for themselves and their families.

There were three phases in lobbying for the construction of the railway line to Kew in the 1880s:

- Phase 1: Lobbying for a railway to be built: 1880 – 1884.
- Phase 2: Lobbying concerning the route and site of the Railway Station: 1885 – 1886.
- Phase 3: Constructing the line: 1886 – 1887.

A. PHASE 1: LOBBYING FOR A RAILWAY TO KEW: 1880 – 1884.

1. Introduction.

The major events of this phase revolved around Colonial Government legislative programs to fund new railway lines. Each new Railway Bill, or rumour of such a Bill, caused a flurry of activity by the Council. There were three Railway Bills proposed in Victoria in this period. First, in 1880, there was the Patterson Bill. Kew was omitted from the Bill. Second, there was

¹³ KHE, February 23, 1882.

¹⁴ KBC Minutes. 23/8/80, Book 3, P 448. 31/5/81, Book 3, Pp 572/573. 7/2/82, Book 3, P 658. 7/3/82, Book 3, P 660. 19/9/82, Book 4, P 38. 1/5/83, Book 4, P116. 12/10/86, Book 4, P 619.

¹⁵ KHE, January 6, 1882.

¹⁶ KHE, November 17, 1882.

¹⁷ KHE, November 16 1884.

the abortive Bent Bill in 1882. Kew was included in this Bill, but the Bill did not proceed due to the fall of the Government. Third, there was the Gillies “Octopus Bill” in 1884. As we shall see, Kew was not initially included in this Bill, but was included through an amendment.¹⁸

The Council took a leadership role in marshalling a variety of influential sources of support. Until 1884, there was no obvious person or group of people agitating to get a railway to Kew except the Council.

2. The Gillies (Octopus) Bill – 1884.

The Bent Bill lapsed with the fall of the O’Loghlen Government, so it was not till 1883 that the Council started to lobby once more for the inclusion of Kew in the new Gillies Railway Bill. In 1883 there was concern that the new Government was going to cut back on railway construction. The *Express* felt that this would mean the “slaughter” of the Kew railway, and that the Minister would need to be lobbied strongly.¹⁹

Thus, in the middle of 1883, it was suggested by the Council that a deputation of the whole Council attend upon the Minister to lobby for a railway to Kew. There was some disagreement about this, as some Councillors felt that the local Member of Parliament, Mr Walker MLA, should take up the issue with the Minister, and a deputation could follow up if necessary. The Council decided to go ahead with the deputation, but this half-hearted response by the Kew Council showed some complacency and reluctance to agitate strongly for a railway.

The deputation was held in late July 1883. The Mayor told the Minister that the deputation did not want to “hamper” the Government in the matter of the railway to Kew, but Kew did not want to be left out through lack of effort by the residents of Kew. Just what the Mayor felt was meant by “hampering” the Government is not clear, but one senses that he was being apologetic for pressuring the Government. Once again some diffidence about lobbying is suggested by this approach by the Mayor.

The Mayor added that Kew was a thickly populated suburb and that the residents were inconvenienced by the current transport arrangements. He said that the railway to Kew had been promised in the past but nothing had happened. The Council had not approached the Government in the past because the inhabitants were not the “right colour,” but now, (presumably, because the Government had changed,) the residents of Kew wanted to “obtain their just deserts.” The Minister (Mr Gillies) told the deputation that he thought he knew all the arguments in favour of the line and that he would take them into consideration when railway construction was discussed in Cabinet.²⁰ To all intents and purposes, this sounded like a positive response from the Minister, and may have reinforced the sense of complacency in the Council and local Member of Parliament.

In March 1884, the Council asked for a deputation to meet with the Minister once again. In April, an editorial in the *Express* expressed doubt about whether the Kew line, despite its “utility,” would be included in the Bill.²¹ Here was a warning that all was not going according

¹⁸ Davison, G, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981. P 157.

¹⁹ KHE, April 6, 1883.

²⁰ KHE, July 27 1883.

²¹ KHE, April 11, 1884.

to the Council's plan. The Council suggested another deputation to the Minister in May, but the local Member, Mr Walker MLA, told the Council that the Minister had all the facts before him and all had been done to get the line, so a deputation was not necessary. The Council agreed and cancelled the deputation. Certainly the Kew Council was not "besieging" Parliament like other districts! Kew was not lobbying aggressively – it was passive and heart-hearted in its approach.

In August 1884, the matter reached a climax, and the local Member, at long last, asked the Council to prepare statistics for the Minister, and suggested a deputation. The Minister said that while he could not promise, Kew's claims for a railway would receive full consideration.²² Hawthorn Borough Council also chimed in with support along with the local Member of Parliament.²³

But, despite this reassurance, Kew was not included in the Bill. The Kew community then took a more aggressive approach.

In October an angry public meeting was held in support of the railway to Kew. 1,400 signatures were collected on a petition to Parliament. Other municipalities were asked for support, which was forthcoming from many, but not the Shire of North Ovens, which "believed that Melbourne was well served while country districts were neglected."²⁴

The public meeting was "largely and influentially attended" at Kew Town Hall on October 15. There was anger at Kew not being included in the Railway Construction Bill. Speaker after speaker claimed that the Government had treated the district with great injustice. Five main areas of concern were raised by the residents of Kew and the local Member, Mr Walker MLA.

First, Kew had been neglected. The district had waited for 20 years for a railway. Kew "as usual," received very little assistance from the Government apart from the new Post Office. Second, the proposed tramway as a substitute for a railway was unsatisfactory. The tram was tedious. A tramway would undermine the colonial finances because it would draw away passengers from the Hawthorn line and the revenue lost would go to a private company.

Third, Kew's claims for a railway were strong – it had a population of 5,500 and the inconvenience of the buses put off visitors, potential investors and home owners. As a result, Kew lagged behind other districts.

Fourth, the Government's arguments were spurious. The tramway was not a suitable alternative and the cost of the railway, whatever it was, would be recouped since the Kew railway would pay its way. Any delay would only increase the cost of the railway.

Finally, there was concern that the people of Kew had not supported the railway sufficiently. They were too "mealy mouthed," supine and too "highly respectable." As a result Kew was ignored by the Government.²⁵

The Council sent a deputation to the Minister as a result of the public meeting. The Minister told them that additions had been made to the Bill, and Kew was now included.²⁶

²² KHE, August 22, 1884

²³ KBC Minutes. 2/9/84, Book 4, P 299. 14/10/84, Book 4, P 314. 28/10/84, Book 4, P320.

²⁴ KBC Minutes, 28 October 1884. Book 4, Pp. 323, 325

²⁵ KHE, October 17, 1884.

²⁶ KBC Minutes. 28/10/84, Book 4, P323. 11/11/84, Book 4, P 336. KHE October 24, 1884.

3. The Parliamentary Debate – October 1884.²⁷

The Minister for Railways, Mr Gillies introduced the Railway Bill on October 7, 1884 in the Legislative Assembly. He informed the House that the line to Kew was left out of the Bill. Clearly the starting point of the Bill was the Bent Bill of 1882. All but three lines of that Bill were included in the new Bill. There were two reasons for leaving Kew out. First was the cost - the line would cost 80,000 pounds and that it would terminate in a cutting 17 feet deep. The second reason was that two tramway lines were being built to Kew.

Mr Walker drew attention to the omission of Kew from the Bill on the same night. He said that the necessity of the line to Kew had been acknowledged for 15 or 20 years, and the construction of the line had been unanimously approved in the Bill in 1882. He rejected the reasons for not including the line in the Bill.

First, he said, if the criterion of not being able to extend the line from the terminus was used, then the line to Brighton would not be included in the Bill, because that line would end up in the sea! The tramways would reduce the usage of the line from Hawthorn to Melbourne and the State would lose all that revenue to a private company. As for the cost, any engineering difficulties could be surmounted. He felt sure that he could get the House to support him and get the line to Kew included in the Bill.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bent, added his support to the line to Kew on October 14, when debate resumed. The Kew line was “a pet line” of his. The cutting would not be necessary if the line terminated in the Recreation Reserve. He said that “everyone knows” that the line would pay for itself, and that the Railways Department was well aware of these facts.

Mr Walker returned to the fray on October 16. Why, he asked was the proposed line to Glen Iris included and the Kew line was left out? The Glen Iris line must cross the Yarra River, which was very expensive, and there were not 100 houses within half a mile of either side of the proposed line, while the Kew line would serve “a large and populous borough...containing 5,500 inhabitants.” There were 116 buses per day carrying traffic from Kew to Hawthorn and Richmond. This did not include the numbers of people who walked.

He said that the old Hobson’s Bay Railway Company had gone to the trouble of surveying the line and promised to construct it, and that company was not likely to spend money on “a useless project.” The line was included in the 1878 and 1882 Bills and was passed then without demur. Why was it omitted now? Is it reasonable, he rhetorically asked, to construct one suburban line (Glen Iris) in the hope of attracting population, and at the same time, to leave out another where there is already a large population? He believed that there was no township in the colony with the population of Kew that did not have a railway. He asked for justice for Kew.

When Walker asked again, on what principle Kew was to be deprived, another member, Lt-Col Smith interjected: “It is because you have given indiscriminate support to the Government!” Mr Walker chose to ignore the comment. The Member for Collingwood supported Mr Walker because of the inconsistency of including the Glen Iris line, but not Kew. Mr Walker did not have it all his way: the Member for North Gippsland claimed that he was inconsistent, and that he wanted the Kew line included because it was in the 1882 Bill, but he also wanted to exclude the Heyfield to Bairnsdale line, also included in the 1882 Bill. Here was the opportunity for some backroom trading of support for support.

²⁷ The source for this section is the Victorian Parliamentary Debates, October 1884.

When the House discussed the Bill in Committee on October 23, the Government included the Kew line in the Bill. Not a word was said about this in discussion in Committee. The Committee passed the amendment to the Bill on October 23. It was included in Schedule 56. The schedule clearly outlined the route of the line, and it was to terminate “south of Wellington Street.”

So, Kew, after five years of deputations and pressure was included in the famous 1884 “Octopus Bill” as an amendment. Presumably in the excitement of the Bill being passed, people did not note the legislated terminus point.

B. PHASE 2: LOBBYING ABOUT THE ROUTE OF THE RAILWAY, 1885 – 1887.

Immediately, the Council began to lobby for its preferred route for the railway and its terminus. In November 1884, the Council sent its preferred route to the Minister, who agreed to consider it. This route would take the railway from Hawthorn Railway Station, west of Power Street and terminate at the Kew Hotel. This was considered the most convenient and economical route.²⁸

However, as detailed planning ensued in 1885, there was some nervousness in Kew that the Railway Department might change this route to terminate at the Kew Recreation Reserve.²⁹

The Minister for Railways and the Commissioner for Railways visited the sites in May 1885. They said that there were difficulties with the Council preferred site: the gradient was too steep and the legislation nominated Wellington Street as the place where the line had to terminate. The Minister preferred the Recreation Reserve as the site of the terminus.³⁰

The Council did not agree with this route and a public meeting was held to protest in August 1885. There was disunity shown at this meeting. There were two different views about where the terminus should have been located: Mr Thompson’s Paddock or Dr Ralph’s Corner. Both these sites were closer to the business section of Kew, and thus more convenient for the residents. But many residents were also concerned that if there was more fuss from the residents, the Minister might defer construction, and Kew would never get a railway. They were concerned that any change to the terminus would require a legislative change, and that this would take a long time, or would be deferred indefinitely and the Kew railway would be put on the shelf. In the end, it was decided that a poll of the opinion of residents should be taken.³¹

As expected, the results of the poll were in favour of the more central location for the terminus, but only 331 of the possible 761 voters bothered to vote. Once again, this indicates lack of concern by many residents. There was a deputation to the Minister concerning the wishes of the residents. The Minister agreed to do a costing of the change of the route to Thompson’s Paddock. In November, the Railways Department wrote to say that the costs of alternative routes to Kew were too great and that the terminus was to remain at the Recreation Reserve.³² Another deputation was sent to the Minister in December 1885 asking the Minister

²⁸ KBC Minutes. 25/11/84, Book 4 P336. 9/12/84, Book 4, Pp 342/342. 23/12/84, Book 4, P 344. KHE, November 21, 1884. December 12, 1884.

²⁹ KHE, April 3, April 17, 1885.

³⁰ KHE, June 12, 1885.

³¹ KHE, August 28 1885.

³² KHE, September 4, 1885, September 11, 1885, November 13, 1885.

to consider an amending Act to extend the line beyond Wellington Street, but to no avail. - the Department would not change the terminus from the Recreation Reserve.³³

Contracts were let in April 1886. The line was to be constructed by the end of March 1887. It was noted that earthworks for the line were heavier than normal.³⁴ There the matter lay, despite the fulminations of the recently formed Kew Railway League, which was formed amidst the furore in November 1884, because it was felt that the Council had not been forceful enough in its lobbying efforts.³⁵ Unlike the first phase of lobbying, where there had been unity amongst all parties involved, the second phase was racked with disunity about the terminus, and rancour between the parties. There was much muttering about “influence” and “interests” determining the views of various people, including the local Member, Mr Walker, and parties. All such accusations were vague and unsubstantiated.³⁶

C. PHASE 3: CONSTRUCTION OF THE LINE: 1886 – 1887.

Construction of the line started with a sense of optimism that the work would be completed “within months.” “Vigorous” work started on May 3 1886, with a large number of men and drays at Grace Park in Hawthorn.³⁷ There was concern that the station at Kew would be constructed in wood, but the plans revealed that it was to be brick. A successful deputation argued for the station to be as close to Wellington Street as possible. The Council facilitated the construction by allowing the contractor to cross footpaths when required, so long as they put down a crossing.³⁸

Optimism diminished over time as the project proceeded. In May 1887, there was concern that work had been brought to a standstill and that perhaps the project would not be completed for many months to come. Apparently the site looked abandoned with only one or two workmen seen “pottering” about. There were no signs of tenders being called for the Kew station.³⁹ By September 1887, the Railway Commissioner told the Mayor that the line would be open by 31 October. “We’ll believe it when we see the first train start,” commented the skeptical Mayor.⁴⁰

So disgruntled were the community and the Council about the time the line took to be approved, the line’s terminus and the delays in construction, that the Council decided that there would not be any celebration of the opening of the line. The *Express* stated that this must have been “about the first time, in the history of Victoria, that the opening of a railway line has been allowed without municipal festivities. But then this is a unique line altogether.” The *Express* commented that the line “had not given satisfaction.”⁴¹

In the Kew Court, Peter Woolf, a railway worker, was charged for being drunk. He was fined five shillings. The Police Sergeant explained, that on learning that Woolf was the only man working on the line, he was bailed forthwith! The *Express* commented that after this

³³KHE, December 11, 1885. January 8, 1886.

³⁴ KHE, April 9, 1886.

³⁵ KHE, November 20, 1885.

³⁶ KHE, October 23, 1885. January 22, 1886. July 22, 1887.

³⁷ KHE, April 16, 1886. May 7, 1886.

³⁸ KHE, August 6, 1886. September 3, 1886. November 26, 1886. December 10, 1886.

³⁹ KHE, May 6, 1887. June 10, 1887. June 17, 1887.

⁴⁰ KHE, September 2, 1887.

⁴¹ KHE, October 14, 1887.

incident, Woolf was back on the job, this time with a mate, and they were “working like niggers (sic).”⁴²

By mid November the *Express* was noting more activity by workers. The starting date was pushed back to December 12, 1887 due to timetabling problems. Then December 19. On December 23, the railway was reported to be open for traffic. The *Express* stated that “though far from what it might have been,” the line was very convenient, as shown by the crowded trains that were operating. There were 39 trains a day each way at 20 minute intervals during the busy periods, and 40 minutes at other times.⁴³

WAS IT WORTH THE EFFORT? THE KEW RAILWAY: 1888 – 1890.

In this section, some evidence is presented to evaluate the amenity to the people of Kew of the new railway in the first few years of operation after 1887. As has been noted above, there was some scepticism in Kew as to the usefulness of the line, considering the position of the terminus in an inconvenient location. For instance, the *Express* in December 1888, after noting that the railway had been a “gratifying success,” commented that it had been predicted to be a failure.⁴⁴

Statistics on passenger numbers record a steady increase in each of the first three years of operation as shown in the following table. Freight usage inwards also grew after a small decline in 1889/90. The railway seemed to meet the needs of the population, both for passenger and goods traffic.

KEW RAILWAY STATION USAGE.⁴⁵
1888/89 – 1890/91.

YEAR	OUTWARD PASSENGERS (Numbers)	OUTWARD REVENUE (Pounds, rounded)	GOODS OUTWARD (Tons, rounded)	GOODS INWARD (Tons, rounded)
1888/89	511,250	6,809	529	11,618
1889/90	650,919	7,363	485	10,682
1890/91	714,159	8,237	429	14,324

There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that the railway was a success. The Mayor reported with obvious glee that he had come from the city in 14 minutes and the trains were crowded. The *Express* reported that the Kew Horse Tramway had opened to the public about the same time as the railway, but that people preferred the railway because they could travel to the city for 7½ Pence as against a Shilling for the Tramway, and the train took a quarter of the time the tram did. No doubt said the *Express*; the Kew railway was “a great convenience.”⁴⁶

There were, however, some issues of concern that reduced the amenity of the railway. None of these were enough to stop people from using it.

⁴² KHE, October 21, 1887. October 28, 1887.

⁴³ KHE, December 16, 1887. December 23, 1887.

⁴⁴ KHE, December 7, 1888.

⁴⁵ Victorian Railway Commissioners Reports For Years Ending 30 June 1889, 1890, 1891. In Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1889, 1890, 1891.

⁴⁶ KHE, December 16, 1888. December 23, 1887.

First, the station which was only a temporary building till the brick station was built, was called “Shantyville” by the *Express*.” It said that the station looked like it was accommodation for the inmates of the Lunatic Asylum. The *Express* said it was a box with a fireplace, and looked like a collection of navvies’ huts.⁴⁷ The stop to the outer gate was above the roadway, which caused people to trip. The toilets, which were unsewered like the rest of Kew, were inadequate. They probably smelled. In response to these complaints, the Railways Department agreed to flag the entrance to the station.⁴⁸

Second, there were complaints about the comfort of the passengers. The carriages were old, dirty and dilapidated, and some were without glass in the windows. An Editorial in the *Express*, complained about the crowded trains from the city to Hawthorn, where a Hawthorn Councillor had to travel in the Guard’s Van, and an ex minister of the Crown and the Hawthorn Mayor had to walk the whole length of the train in order to obtain a seat! First class passengers had to travel in Second Class and ladies were “crowded up in smoking carriages, unable to obtain seats elsewhere.”⁴⁹

Third, there were complaints about the frequency of services. The Council was continually trying to increase services throughout 1888 and 1890. It wanted more services especially on Saturday mornings and wanted all trains to stop at Richmond. The 1890 request for 20 minute services and two express trains per day was rejected by the Railways Department.⁵⁰

Finally, there was concern over the arrangements for goods traffic at Kew. The levels were wrong at the goods siding. The bottoms of the trucks were not level with the floor of drays that either delivered to, or picked freight up from the trains. It is possible that this is one of the reasons goods traffic declined in 1889/90, as it was reported that it was cheaper to go to Hawthorn Railway Station to deliver and collect goods than at Kew.⁵¹ In July 1888, a successful deputation visited the Railways Commissioner about the possibility of a new goods siding to be built.⁵²

Despite all these complaints, in June 1888 the traffic through Kew was reported to be increasing daily. In May 1889, the *Express* reported that the Kew line would eventually pay a return on the “enormous outlay,” as the traffic was increasing rapidly and that the Kew trains were crowded especially in the mornings and nights.⁵³ In summary, although there were some teething issues and problems with the railway, Kew people were willing to put up with them for the speed, convenience and cheapness of the service.

THE POLITICS OF THE KEW RAILWAY - 1883/4.

⁴⁷ KHE, November 25, 1887.

⁴⁸ KBC Minutes. 19/6/88, Book 5, P 290. 19/9/88, Book 5, P 313.

⁴⁹ KBC Minutes. 9/4/89, Book 5, P 473. KHE, May 17, 1889.

⁵⁰ KBC Minutes. 17/1/88, Book 5, P 180. 28/2/88, Book 5, P 210.

KBC Minutes. 22/5/88, Book 5, P 272. 3/7/88, Book 5, P 292. 9/4/89. Book 5, P 473. 3/7/88, Book 5, P 292. 9/4/89. Book 5, P 473. 28/8/88, Book 5, P 333. 23/10/88, Book 5, P 363. 25/2/90, Book 6, P 133. 25/3/90, Book 6, P 143. 1/7/90, Book 6, P 177.

⁵¹ KHE, June 22, 1888.

⁵² KBC Minutes. 17/7/88, Book 5, Pp 301, 303. 31/7/88, Book 5, P 314. 11/9/88, Book 5, P 337. 23/10/88, Book 5, P 363.

⁵³ KHE, June 22, 1888. May 3 1889.

The railway to Kew was first mooted in the mid 1860s by the Hobson's Bay Railway Company that ran a line to Hawthorn, and was rejected as too costly.⁵⁴ As has been described in this paper, it took till the end of 1887 for the line to be operational - a period of 20 years. Why did the Kew line go in and out of various railway bills? Why was it so difficult to persuade the Government to build the line in 1884?

First, the Government was reluctant. If the line was considered expensive in the 1860s, then it was more so in the 1880s. There were a lot of earthworks and cuttings to be constructed because the gradient for the line was steep. The cost of land kept on rising as time went by. The Government was aware that there was a tram line about to be constructed at the same time and presumably it did not want to duplicate transport arrangements for Kew. So, while taking on the vast majority of lines in the Bent Bill of 1882, it probably thought it could economise on the Kew line.

Second, it has been noted that, while the Council was pressuring the Government about the line, and enlisted the support of the local Member, Mr Walker, there was not much apparent support from the community at large and there was reluctance to press the Government too strongly.

The more aggressive approach to lobbying in response to the omission of the Kew Railway from the Railway Bill in 1884 only underlines the previous half-hearted efforts in the run up to the railway legislation being introduced into Parliament.

Third, maybe because Kew was a safe seat for the Government, both the Government and the Opposition could safely ignore it. Some evidence for this was discussed earlier. It was noted that the Mayor tended to be apologetic about the deputation and stated that the residents were not of the "right colour."

The public meeting to protest about Kew's omission from the Railway Bill suggested that Kew had received little help from the Government in the past. Then there was the interjection in the Parliamentary debate that suggested that the Government did not care about the local Member's constituents because he indiscriminately supported the Government. Kew was politically in the pocket of the Government and as a result could be taken for granted.

CONCLUSION

This paper has described the ways that the Kew community ensured that their needs for a railway were recognised by the colonial government. It was a long fight because the Government was reluctant to build a costly railway line, and because there was some reluctance in Kew to agitate aggressively. It was a fight fought primarily by the Kew Borough Council and the local Member of Parliament. The community did not get all they wanted in regard to the location of the terminus, but their usage of the railway was such as to suggest that in the end they were satisfied with the result.

ANDREW FROST B.Ec, Dip. Ed, B. Ed. Studs. (Monash)

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⁵⁴ Rogers, Dorothy, *A History of Kew*, Lowden Publishing Co, Kilmore, 1973. Pp184-185.