

*Serving the
community,
families, schools,
students,
historians and
other researchers*



IMAGES IN LIGHT

Many of our public and private buildings contain superb examples of 19th and 20th century coloured leadlight. Some of the best-known examples in public buildings and monuments are the ruby-glass panelled ceiling of the Springthorpe Memorial in the Boroondara General Cemetery, and the windows of Holy Trinity Church in High Street. Others are not as well known.

A number of private houses are now owned by organisations, such as 'Wilton' in Cotham Road, which was acquired by the Kew RSL in 1948. A consultancy report was commissioned by the RSL, which investigated the leadlight windows in the house¹. The writer of the report contended that the painted glass panels of birds, inset into a number of windows in the building, were probably executed by the firm of Smyrk & Rogers (1880-1903), who were competitors to the better-known firm of Ferguson & Urie (ca. 1854-99). [In time, the Kew Historical Society hopes to mount a photographic exhibition of stained glass in domestic interiors, in which the birds of Wilton will feature.]

When we visited nine significant houses in Kew, while preparing for our current exhibition at the Kew Court House (see p.3), we encountered a number of extraordinary leadlight windows and doors. Some of the most memorable were at Ivy Grange (1864), Ramornie (1890), Dalsraith [now Campion House] (1906), Heald Lawn (1913), and the Beament Residence (1925).

While Charles Vickers designed Ivy Grange, it is probable that the majority of the coloured and etched glass in its windows was commissioned during the construction of the tower wing in the 1870s. The intensity of cobalt blue glass panels, in which Scottish thistles are etched, are matched by other laminated and painted glass side panels of golden acorns on a ruby-glass ground. These ruby glass panels in the window beside the stairs to the tower surround large panes of frosted glass. The frosting was achieved by acid etching a sheet of plain glass in which decorative arabesques had been previously outlined using wax or another resistant substance to preserve the transparent areas.

Many of the techniques used by glass artists in the late 19th and early 20th century had been in use for hundreds of years.

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Leadlight panel, Dalsraith.
Kew Historical Society, 2014.

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Leadlight, Beament Residence
Kew Historical Society, 2014



VISIONS OF LIGHT (cont.)

The owner of Ramornie, 24 Pakington Street, explained how local children once called Ramornie the 'butterfly house', as the windows in the entrance hall, when illuminated, resembled butterflies in flight. On closer inspection, the butterflies are the red and orange fruit and green leaves, linked by curling tendrils. Each of the berries uses 'crown glass' which was spun to cause the molten bubble of glass to flatten leaving a thicker bull's-eye at the centre. This traditional glass blowing technique dates to the early 14th century.

The windows in Dalsraith, 99 Studley Park Road, and those at Heald Lawn, 5 Adeney Avenue, share many similarities, perhaps not surprisingly given Henry Hardie Kemp (1859-1946) was architect of both houses. The leadlight in the entrance to Dalsraith includes two panels of brown and gold Dutch Iris in the door, surrounded by side and upper leadlight panels depicting red poppies. The design reflects the prevailing art nouveau style.

Walter Burleigh Griffin designed the Beament Residence, 33 Uvadale Grove. Turnbull and Navaretti (1998) contend that "the leadlight front door, which is located (as usual) on the side of the house, is probably the best Australian example of geometric leadlight in the prairie School tradition"². While the geometrically arranged glass of the door and its surrounds are the best known examples of leadlight in the house, panels of geometrically-arranged leadlight extend across the front of the ground storey.

These, and other fine examples of domestic leadlight, are part of a broader exploration of architecture and decorative arts forming the 'Beyond the Gate' exhibition at the Kew Court House, open to the public every Friday and Saturday between 11.00am-1.00pm (closed 19 December to 15 January).

The houses and public buildings mentioned above represent a small proportion of the fine examples of leadlight in domestic and public buildings in Kew. The Society invites owners of houses or custodians of buildings to send to us photographs of fine examples of leadlight in situ. Or, if required, we could photograph it for you. We hope to include the best local examples, with the birds of Wilton, in a subsequent exhibition.

1. Hughes, Bronwyn, 'Smyrk & Rogers; Hughes & Rogers; Charles Rogers & Co. Stained Glass Manufacturers, Melbourne c.1884-1903', Hughes + Hughes + Associates, Mt Eliza, 2008.
2. Turnbull, Jeff & Navaretti, Peter, *The Griffins in Australia and India*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton South, 1998, p224)

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Lewis, Miles, '11.05.1 Glass'. Mileslewis.net. Accessed 28 Nov. 2014.

EDITOR

Kew Historical Society Inc.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Dr Keith Kendall
Vice President: Assoc. Prof. Don Garden
Secretary: Tony Michael
Treasurer: Margaret Robinson
Archivist: Robert Baker
Curator: Tony Michael
Members: Andrew Frost | Mel Lawrence | Mary Kelleher |
Debbie McColl-Davis

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Kew Historical Society holds monthly meetings in the Phyllis Hore Room at the rear of the Kew Library. Meetings are held at 8:00pm on the second Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise announced. Refreshments are provided. Meetings are open to members and non-members.

KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation and restoration of the historic Kew Court House complex. Volunteers staff the Kew History Centre on Level 1 three days a week: alternate Thursdays (11.00am-1.00pm), and every Friday and Saturday (11.00am-1.00pm). Look for our sign. At the Centre, you can ask questions about Kew's history and view displays from the Society's collection. Inquiries about houses and past residents can be made using the Sands and McDougall Directories.

NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is published quarterly and is distributed to all members. Some additional copies are made available to the community. If you would like a copy of a particular issue, please contact the Editor, info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au.

WEBSITE

www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES

See page 10 of the newsletter or contact the President, Dr Keith Kendall.
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EXHIBITIONS

BEYOND THE GATE

Kew Court House
188 High Street, Kew
Ends March 2015

A photographic exploration of nine significant houses in Kew, each selected to represent a particular decade from the 1840s to the 1920s. The exhibition focuses on the architecture and design elements of these houses, using historic and contemporary photographs and drawings. The exhibition can be viewed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11,00am-1.00pm, or by appointment.



Ramornie, 24 Pakington St. 2014

A MODEL KEW HOME

Kew Library
Civic Drive, Kew

Les Littlechild, with the assistance of Margaret Robinson, has mounted a display, focusing on a typical lounge-room of the 1920s and 30s. The exhibit uses objects and items from our collection. Les has also loaned some items from his personal collection. The display can be viewed during library hours.

PAST MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Tony Michael
Life on the Yarra at Kew: 1860s-1960s

Tony presented an illustrated talk about the Yarra River, focusing on the boathouses and on the area surrounding Dight's Falls. An entertaining feature of his presentation was his explanations of how he recorded and in some cases acquired the items used as illustrations.

OCTOBER MEETING

Cr. Jim Parke
Annual General Meeting
At his first talk to the Society, Cr. Parke spoke about those aspects of his life history that have contributed to his values. A new Management Committee was elected at the meeting.

DICKINSON LECTURE

Mrs Jeanne Pratt AC
A History of Raheen
Mrs Jeanne Pratt's lecture about her acquisition of Raheen, and the decisions required to maintain and enhance the heritage value of her house drew an audience which included Andrew McIntosh MLA, Jesse Serle, and the twin daughters of W.H.S. Dickinson. Mrs Pratt's lecture is to be the first in an annual series of lectures sponsored by the Society.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Tony Michael
Kew: Now + Then
In our final meeting for the year, Tony presented an illustrated talk describing what has changed in Kew as 'progress' has chewed up that to which we had become accustomed, to be replaced by what we see today.

FUTURE MEETINGS

FEBRUARY MEETING

Dolores San Miguel
The Secret Love Letters: A Family History
Phyllis Hore Room, rear Kew Library
Wednesday 11 February, 8:00pm
Reflections of an only child, growing up in Kew, with two adoring parents, whose romantic background caused many a tongue to wag! Dolores will have copies of her new book for sale at the meeting.

MCINTYRE LECTURE

* Ticketed event
The Hon. Chief Justice Marilyn Warren AC
Eureka! 160 years on
Just Theatre, Kew Court House
188 High Street, Kew
Wednesday 18 March, 6.30 for 7:00pm
March 2015 will mark the 160-year anniversary of the Eureka trials, arguably among the most famous trials in Victoria's history. The Eureka Stockade saw over 150 miners arrested, of whom just 13 went to trial, charged with high treason. Despite the considerable evidence against them, a citizen jury acquitted all 13 men. Victorians rejoiced, and justice was restored. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria reflects on one of Victoria's greatest legends, the trials that followed, and what it all meant for Victorians.

APRIL MEETING

Carole Woods: Red Cross Women at War - Leadership on the Victorian Home Front 1914-1918, &
Prof. Judith Smart: Women Waging War on the Home Front 1914-19.
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library
Wednesday 8 April, 8:00pm
A double bill describing elements of the Home Front in Australia during the First World War.

MAY MEETING

Assoc. Professor Don Garden
Rolling Countryside and Fresh Air: How the Environment Helped Shape Kew
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library
Wednesday 13 May, 8:00pm
There are many factors that shape the geographic development and nature of our suburbs. These, together with 19th century understandings of disease and health, led to suburbs such as Kew being the most preferred in Melbourne.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members: Alia Porter, Max Hardman, Felicity Renowden, and Richard Poore.

QUARTERLY BOOK SALES

A large crowd attended a highly successful book sale in the Phyllis Hore Room on Sunday 23 November. We would like to thank members and friends for the enormous effort that they put into setting up, serving customers, and dismantling the tables at the end of the day.

Our next Quarterly Book Sale will be on 22 February 2015.



Acquittal of the Ballarat Miners. Illustrated Australian News, March 1855. (PROV)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Society is a wonderful institution, rich in the history of Kew, and having existed for fifty-six years, is also rich in its own history and memories. It has been a privilege and honour to be the President of the Society for the past two years and I thank each and every one of you for the support that you have given me.

Behind the success of all organisations like the Kew Historical Society, there is a core of hard working members who make that success happen. I would like to thank your Management Committee Keith Kendall, Margaret Robinson, Robert Baker, Dione McIntyre, Tony Michael, Mary Kelleher, Les Littlechild, Don Garden, and Judith Vimpani. Unfortunately because of family circumstances Judith had to take three months Leave of Absence during the year under review, followed by her resignation from the committee.

Whilst all the members of the Management Committee were unrelenting in the support they gave to the Society, two outstanding contributors to the success of the Society were undoubtedly your Treasurer Margaret Robinson and your Archivist Robert Baker. Financially the Society is well provisioned for the anticipated disruption that will occur when the Kew Library redevelopment takes place. As you will note from the audited financial accounts the membership subscriptions have increased by 30 per cent over last year's figures. This growth in the membership is without any doubt attributable to the high quality of the Newsletter edited by Robert Baker. The Newsletter is the Society's flagship and is highly sought after by interested people who reside throughout Kew and in adjoining suburbs.

Two years ago your Management Committee adopted a Five Year Strategic Plan that focused on the following core values:

- Working with many individuals and organisations to realise a vision where the Society could contribute to the community in understanding the past, engaging in the present and working towards a better tomorrow.
- Taking history out to the community and embracing multiple cultures and viewpoints.
- Looking at new ways of collecting, caring for, sharing and interpreting the Society's archival collections.

To achieve these values your Management Committee set two goals:

- To look after the Society's members.
- To look after the Society.

Over the year under review your Management Committee has striven to achieve these goals, and as I step down as President, I am more than confident that under the guiding hand of your new incoming President, Dr Keith Kendall, the Society will continue to achieve these goals.

During the year under review the community has viewed some impressive exhibitions at the Kew Court House including displays about Trinity Grammar School, Sport in Kew, and Kew Living: 25 Years On. At the Kew Library there were exhibitions showcasing Kew High School, the Kew Football Club, the 'Kew Flyer' Road Races and the 'Model' Kew kitchen of the 1920s.

Numbers attending monthly meetings have been very pleasing. Even on those blisteringly cold Melbourne winter nights, the audience numbers were beyond expectation, which speaks volumes for the quality of the speakers that your Management Committee has chosen. The speakers covered a range of topics of historical interest including the Evolution of the Arts and Craft Gardens in Melbourne; Dr Tanya Warms the Chairperson of the Gallipoli and Beyond Committee describing a range of projects planned to commemorate the centenary of the Landing at Gallipoli; a History of East Kew; an illustrated lecture of the events leading up to the opening of the Kew Railway Branch Line in 1887; Dr Brenda Niall AO recounting what life was like growing up as a Catholic in Kew; and the History of Jews in the Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne.

The distinguished Australian medical research biologist Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE delivered the Third Annual McIntyre Lecture to a packed Just Theatre at the Kew Court House. Sir Gustav Nossal provided a personal reflection on the history of Melbourne medical research. Your Management Committee decided to replicate the success of the McIntyre Lecture series by introducing a second series of lectures to be known as The Dickinson Memorial Lectures named after the founding President of the Kew Historical Society, William (Bill) Dickinson MBE, Mayor of Kew 1946-47 and again in the Centenary Year of Kew, 1960-61. Mrs Jeanne Pratt AC will deliver the inaugural Dickinson Lecture on 16th October 2014 and amongst the distinguished guests will be the late Bill Dickinson's two daughters, Judy Goodes and her sister Janet Webster, both of whom were the co-foundation Secretaries of the Society from 1958 to 1960.

Your Society took a big step forward during the year under review with the introduction of its new website. In addition to bringing to you a regularly updated online website, it has enabled the Society to disseminate to the world-wide community the history of Kew and information about the huge number of irreplaceable historical treasures stored in our Archives Room at the Kew Library.



Old dormitory, Kew Cottages; later used as a therapy room and store, 1973. Kew Historical Society

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONT.)

In keeping with the Society's core values of taking history out to the community, two hundred Year 10 students from Kew High School were taken on an escorted history tour of the Kew Cemetery, followed by role-plays in the old Kew Court House. I would like to thank Dr Karen Lynch (Deputy Principal, Kew High School), Tony Michael, Mel Lawrence on the escorted cemetery tours, and Robert Baker, Andrew Frost and Margaret Robinson who were in attendance at the Court House.

Our thanks also to Lea Ram, Manager Boroondara Cemetery, and her assistant Lucy, for their assistance in once again making this event such an outstanding success.

As I said in my opening remarks, the success of the Kew Historical Society is due to a core of hard working members who make its success happen and I would like to acknowledge and thank each of the following wonderful members who have also contributed to that success: Valerie Bourke, Kerry Fairbank, Andrew McKinnon, Rodney Fernauld, Brad Miles, Anne Glasson, Virginia Kemp, Jan Walker, Kathleen Gervasoni, Slavka Jelovac, Deborah McColl-Davis, Judith Vimpani, and Mary Wilson. I would also like to thank our Honorary Auditor Max Sartori, and Andrew McIntosh MLA, Member for Kew and his staff for the assistance that they have given to the Society in facilitating the printing of the Quarterly Newsletter.

ALEX WILSON OAM
PRESIDENT

MAKING NEWS

150-YEARS AGO

OUTSIDE YARRA BEND

Four or five miles' sharp walk on a hot day by Johnston-street, across the bridge, leading to the Kew road—past pretty gardens, and beehives buzzing with busy bees—leaving the foliage of luxuriant vines, fruit gardens traced with ravages of floods, trees laden with cherries, strawberries peeping from out the dark shining green plants—leaving all these behind us, and across the well-turfed hill, till resting on its highest eminence, we met the breeze and drank in the beauty of the scene some 300 feet below us.

Sheltered on the southwest by a precipitous bank, which is clad with variegated native foliage to the margin of the water, ran the brisk current of the Yarra, stemmed at dangerously frequent intervals by ugly looking snags. On a kind of peninsula ... bounded on three sides by the river, and backed by smooth silver barked eucalypti—stood the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum, like a trim, cleanly little village, bedecked with elegant parterres. Chief over all the buildings stood the substantial blue stone residence of the superintendent, under the shade of a full flowering acacia...

Further on, and leaving the high road to Kew on our right, we descended by a narrow zigzag, stony, and extremely dusty car-track, to debouch on a lovely slope, relieved by gentle hollows, the velvet grass, green as the emerald, sparkled with wild flowers, as they caught the sun's rays through the waving leaves.

The slope was lightly timbered, and the fragrant blossoming acacia, with its dark feathery leaves alternating with the more cheerful green of the box, throw a pleasant shade over many a spot. On the lowlands fringing the river a thick growth of graceful little ferns kept nodding to the breeze, and amongst them, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies (if ever cows do such a thing) stood dreamy looking groups of short-legged fat kine—such as Rosa Bonheur loves to paint. Against the azure of the cloudless sky, high aloft, soared three or four white hawks, birds and crickets chirruped, and cattle lowed. Peace, rest, the soft-perfumed air, nature in her loveliest dress surrounded our poor mad brethren.

Bendigo Advertiser, 1 December 1864, p. 3. 5

100-YEARS AGO

KEW VOLUNTEERS

Besides responding generously to the call for financial assistance consequent on the war in Europe, Kew is supplying a very respectable quota to the Australian expeditionary forces. The contingent, which has landed in Egypt includes 54 Kewites, and others will be leaving with the second expeditionary force. A memento in the form of a solid gold boomerang in miniature was presented to each of the noble 54, the gifts having been provided by the Kew Traders' Association with the assistance of the Mayor (Cr. F. R. Ratten), the Hon. J. K. Merritt and Ex-Cr. R. G. Todd. At the meeting of the Association on Wednesday evening it was announced that the Mayor proposed entertaining Kew members of the second expeditionary force, and the association at once passed a sum of money wherewith to provide the local volunteers with mascots. There is some difficulty in obtaining a complete list of the men who are going forth in the service of their country, and in order that no one should be missed in the issue of invitations to the mayoral function and in the distribution of presents, friends and relatives of the soldiers are asked to furnish names at the Town Hall or 'Mercury' office.

The Argus, 8 October 1914



'The Yarra in Hyde Park', 1890-91. J.F.C. Farquhar, photographer. Kew Historical Society

BIRTH AND DEATH IN KEW

In October 2014, Australians learned of the death of Edward Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia from 1972-75. His death led Australians to reflect on his life generally, and his contribution to our society before, during and after his assumption of the role of Prime Minister.

It was probably a surprise to many Australians to learn that Gough Whitlam had a link to Kew. This awareness became widespread with national publicity resulting from the announcement that the house in which he was born, 'Ngara', 46 Rowland Street was to be demolished. The resulting debate about the heritage value of the house involved the City of Boroondara, staff of Heritage Victoria and the responsible Minister for Planning in the State Government. The Planning Minister ultimately issued an interim heritage order preventing the demolition from continuing.

As early as May 2014, the City of Boroondara had commissioned a report from Context Pty Ltd., in order to assess the heritage value of the house. The report from Context advised that there had been only minor alterations to the house over time, and that there were precedents for protecting the houses in which Australian Prime Ministers had been born or lived. Of the eight criteria for assessing the heritage value of a site, the report identified that:

Ngara ... is of local historical significance to the City of Boroondara ... for its special association with Gough Whitlam and his family, particularly his father, Fred Whitlam. The house provides tangible evidence of the modest middle-class circumstances to Fred and Mattie Whitlam just following their wedding in 1914, as well as an indication of their taste as the house was purpose built for them. In particular, it is recorded as the location of Gough Whitlam's birth, marking the starting point of the long and illustrious life of a man who was one of the major players in Australia's post-war history. (Criterion H)¹

While Gough Whitlam's parents were to move to Sydney in 1917 ensuring that the future Prime Minister's occupation of Ngara would be of a short duration, it is worthwhile considering how the house, and the families of his parents are linked to Kew.

His parents, Fred Whitlam and Mattie Maddocks married on 10 September 1914. By December of the same year, they had bought a block of land in Rowland Street. It was on this land that a modest-sized Federation villa was to be built for the couple by Mattie Maddock's father, Edward Maddocks. The house was to be completed in 1915.

At the time of the completion of Ngara, Fred Whitlam was employed in the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor's Office. He had progressed to this level after previously working as a clerk in the Victorian Department of Lands & Survey (1901-11).



'Ngara', 46 Rowland Street, Kew, 2014

When the Commonwealth Government set up the Federal Land Tax Office in 1911, Fred Whitlam joined the Commonwealth Public Service and began a period of employment in the tax office. In 1913 he was promoted to the office of the Crown Solicitor, Attorney General's Department, which was at that stage headed by Robert Garran. In 1917, Fred Whitlam was promoted to senior clerk, moving to the Sydney office in 1918. This resulted in the sale of Ngara on 25 October 1917, prior to the move. Gough Whitlam was 10 years old when, in 1926, his father was transferred to the new federal capital of Canberra.

The death of Gough Whitlam in 2014 prompted staff of the Boroondara General Cemetery to investigate whether there were any burials of members of the Whitlam or Maddocks families in the Cemetery. They discovered that his grandparents, Edward and Elizabeth Maddocks are buried there, as is their daughter Janet, and Edward's brother John Henry Maddocks, after whom Edward and Elizabeth's son was to be named.

The young John Henry Maddocks was Mattie Whitlam's (Maddocks) brother. During the First World War he was assigned to the 59th Battalion, embarking for France in June 1916. Less than a month later, the Battalion took part in the Battle of Fromelles. After the battle, Pte John Maddocks was reported missing in action. Following a court of inquiry in 1917, he was officially listed as killed in action on 19 July 1916, aged 22. His name and a record of his death in France are memorialised on the grave.

His sister, Elizabeth was the last member of the Maddocks family to be actually buried at the site. She was not however to be memorialised on the head stone.

1. Context Pty Ltd, 'Ngara, Gough Whitlam's Birthplace', City of Boroondara, 2014.

**LEA RAM
CEMETERY MANAGER
BOROONDARA GENERAL CEMETERY**

UNPACKING THE PAST



In early November, an interested group of members and friends of the Society attended a special meeting of our Collections Group. Joining me, were Janet Watson, Suzanne McWha, Kathleen and Clare Gervasoni, and Tony Michael. The purpose of the meeting was to investigate and evaluate a number of costumes and textiles that are currently stored in metal cabinets in our archive.

Because of the number of costumes in our collection, and due to the limitations of a two-hour meeting, we selected six items to view, photograph and assess. The items we viewed included the 1870s silk patchwork quilt, bought to Australia before or during the 1870s by members of the Denbigh family of Wimba; an 1860s cream silk and lace wedding dress (above); an 1850s peacock-blue silk and lace dress; a 19th century gentian-violet silk and lace dress; and a royal blue jacket and matching skirt with bustle.

We were all astonished by the beauty of each item and agreed that there was an urgent need to rehouse and conserve these and other similar garments/textiles in the collection.

Clare Gervasoni (Curator: Art & Historical Collections, Geoffrey Blainey Research Centre, Federation University Australia) recommended that the items were of a 'museum standard' and that each needed to be carefully stored in archival-quality polypropylene boxes. This measure was required in order to protect the frail fabrics and stitching.

The Society's problem with Clare's recommendation relates to cost. We have already applied for a grant to the Public Record Office (PROV) to conserve and exhibit our map and plan collection. We will not know the result of that application until June 2015.

Medium sized polypropylene textile boxes are expensive, costing \$63.95 each. A subsequent audit of costumes in the cabinets revealed that in addition to the 19th century costumes and quilt viewed on the day, a further five 19th century outfits and two frail silk parasols (ca. 1860, & ca. 1880) are also stored. So, to house most of the 19th century items, we will need to find funding for at least 10 polypropylene boxes as a matter of urgency.

Dione McIntyre, who has had a long-standing interest in the Society's textiles and clothing collection, suggested a solution to our problem. She has recommended that we initiate a local 'buy-a-box campaign'.

This campaign, which will be proposed to individuals, organisations and businesses, will allow us to archivally store these frail costumes and textiles according to the standards appropriate for a small museum. It will also mean that the costumes can be more easily viewed, photographed, exhibited and loaned to other organisations for exhibitions.

Because the Kew Historical Society is a not-for-profit organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, donations for conservation purposes are tax deductible. Our Treasurer, Margaret Robinson, will provide receipts for all donations. Our Collections Group will label each donated box with the donor's name, and report regularly on progress towards our target.

If you would like to inquire about 'donating-a-box' for the Society's costume collection, please contact me by phone 9855-2852, Mobile 0438-370-967 or by email. Or send a cheque to the Society using the Donation form on the final page of the newsletter.

ROBERT BAKER
ARCHIVIST

NEW ACQUISITION

In November, Joan Carr of Belford Road visited the Kew Court House and explained that she wished to donate a Victorian-period black beaded and sequined evening cape to the Society.

Joan grew up in Brougham Street. She and her husband ran Carr's Motor Service in Cotham Road for many years.

The cape belonged to her grandmother Bridget Fitzgerald of Tilden, Central Victoria.

The evening cape joins many hundreds of items in our textiles and clothing collection. We would like to express our gratitude to Joan for her wonderful gift.



Joan Carr with her grandmother's cape, 2014

KEW IN THE 1890S DEPRESSION

PART 2: DISTRESS IN KEW.

Distress was a commonly used term in the 1890s. It was a catch all term that covered poverty, unemployment and personal financial stress, often due to old age and illness in an era without a social welfare system. When people's savings were exhausted, they were reliant on the charity of others.

There is no statistical data on unemployment and poverty in Kew (or elsewhere) in the 1890s, so anecdotal evidence must be relied upon to indicate the level of distress in Kew as reported in the *Kew Mercury* and at the Kew Borough Council. Distress in Kew grew from a rarely reported phenomenon in 1889 and 1890, to a flood of reported incidents and stories between 1891 and 1897. The *Kew Mercury* opined that there were "scores" of cases of poor people in Kew, who were too proud to solicit charity.

The first reported case of distress was in April 1891. There was a report of a family that was destitute due to illness. They had recently moved to Kew, and had no food, bed or bedding. Contributions from the community to help this family were requested. Local ladies donated money, furniture, clothing and bedding.

Individual churches were aware of poverty and distress. The parishioners of Holy Trinity Church were told that there was more distress in Kew than usual in 1892. Mr David Bowes was provided with 10 Sovereigns at the Salvation Army barracks, so he could buy a horse. He had had three horses, but they had died, so he did not have a way of earning a living. The ladies of the Kew Dorcas Society, a group within the Kew Baptist Church, reported that in 1891 it had relieved nine families, by providing food, clothing, firewood, or in a few cases, small sums of money. However, one Kew Councillor in 1894 wondered what happened to those people who were not church members.

On a request from the Council in 1894, the Kew churches provided a report on the level of distress in their congregations. Mostly, the churches felt that they were able to look after their own poor, so the Council felt that there was no need for further assistance.

One way to gauge the financial stress of a community is to look at the attitude to discretionary spending within a family or personal budget. One such item of spending are donations to charitable and community organisations. During the 1890s, there was an annual Hospital Sunday appeal. The evidence shows that people were cutting down on such spending. Donations in Kew were: 1890: £151; 1891: £173; 1892: £142; 1893: £125; 1896: £135. Police Sergeant McGrath asked some of the wealthier residents of Kew to make a regular subscription to the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society. He said that he was greeted with "nothing but pleas of hard times."

In June 1893, the Kew Junior Football Club bemoaned the lack of donations to the club, and that despite there being 400 people present at a match, only 4/4d was donated.



'Ratting on the Yarra', 1890-91. J.F.C. Farquhar, photographer. Kew Historical Society.

There was enough distress in Kew in 1891 for the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society to be formed. It was a non-sectarian organisation to provide relief for the poor. This organisation became the key relief agency in Kew for the rest of the 1890s. In fact, it was claimed that the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society was the "only local society that works in the cause of charity." If the poor did not get help from the Society, they had to go to the Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne.

It is difficult to interpret the statistical data provided in newspaper accounts of the activities of the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society. Nevertheless, reports in the *Kew Mercury* suggest that at any one time between 1893 and 1895, there were about 22 to 25 families being assisted by the Society. There was an annual peak in 1893 of 91 families. This annual total had reduced to 44 in 1895. This decrease was attributed to many of the unemployed leaving Kew, as well as the relief work available – especially stone breaking for the Council and employment in the Melbourne sewerage works.

Evidence of distress is sometimes found in the reports of cases in the Kew Magistrates Court. From 1892 there are reports of increased vagrancies in Kew. Before 1892, such reports of vagrancies were rare. In March 1892 Joseph Smith was charged with begging. He said he was looking for work, and all his life tried to lead a respectable life. Frederick Tiller was also begging, and had been unemployed for a long time. Another vagrant who was looking for work in Lilydale was told to go there and not return to Kew. Yet another man was found wandering the streets. He had no home and had a "weak intellect" and had spent time in the gaol hospital. In March 1894, a vagrant claimed that he had searched all over the colony for work, and that his last job was two years before. He was sent to gaol for six months. Another vagrant said that he was unable to gain employment for four years due to injury. A report of three vagrants in 1897 noted that they were begging and then spending the money on drink. They got three months imprisonment. An old man was charged with insulting behaviour. He was sick with a lung disease, and could not find work. He was kept on remand for a week till a friend could look after him.

KEW IN THE 1890s DEPRESSION (CONT.)

A man was fined 10s for not vaccinating his child. He could not pay the fine. The police went to his house to seize goods and clothing, but found the man had nothing worth seizing. In another case, a small boy was caught hawking without a licence. His father said that he himself was out of work and the boy was too young to be employed. So the boy helped sell needles, threads and fancy goods. His father said that they were “only trying to get an honest living.”

The Kew Court also dealt with large numbers of cases involving the non-payment of debt at almost every session of the court. These are also much more common than before 1892.

Suicides were also sometimes linked to economic distress. Kew was a convenient place for suicides, as the Yarra River and Studley Park provided secluded venues. In December 1892, John Dowling attempted suicide because he could not find employment. In 1892, the body of a greengrocer from Richmond was discovered in Kew. He had committed suicide. He was suffering from “fits of melancholia because of monetary embarrassment brought about by unlucky speculations.” A similar case of an Abbotsford man in monetary difficulties occurred in March 1894. In 1896 a baker who could not gain employment shot himself through the head.

The extent of unemployment is difficult to gauge, and is once again reliant on anecdotal evidence. In June 1892, Messrs. Poole and Weston, Painters and Decorators in Kew, advertised for an employee. Twenty anxious applicants were waiting outside at the start of business. In 1895 there were 60 applicants for the position of Librarian at the Kew Public Library. The *Kew Mercury* was concerned at the unemployment in the district and asked that the public be generous in its support of relief.

In July 1892, Councillor Gray at the Kew Borough Council meeting stated that there was a lot of distress amongst the working classes of Kew and there was no money for relief works. He suggested that the councillors make a donation of one or two guineas.

In April 1894 there was a petition to the Kew Borough Council to assist the unemployed of Kew. 40 unemployed signed the petition. The *Kew Mercury* said that the petition included a long list of names of “respectable” ratepayers, some of whom had been unemployed for more than two years. They were asking the Kew Borough Council to provide relief: road maintenance and stone breaking. They wanted work, not charity in “true British character.”

Unemployment and poverty had a variety of causes, often made worse by illness. A Chemist died leaving a wife and three children. He had lost his savings, and could not get work “due to depressed state of affairs.”

Non-payment of rates is an indicator of financial stress amongst residents. In June 1891, it was noted in the *Kew Mercury* that there was a large arrears in rates paid for the year: £670 was owing. By contrast, in 1889, there was only £177 overdue.

In January 1893, the Council found that 14 people were too poor to pay the Cleansing Rate (for night-soil collection). It was decided that all should be prosecuted, but that the defaulters would not be pressed for payment.

Kew Post Office, Court House and Police Station, 1890-91. J.F.C. Farquhar, photographer. Kew Historical Society



In June 1893, a further 26 ratepayers were prosecuted for defaulting on Cleansing Rate payments while 38 ratepayers were prosecuted for defaulting on rate payment. In March 1896, 61 people were to be prosecuted for non-payment of Cleansing Rates.

From 1897 onwards, the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society is barely mentioned in the *Kew Mercury*. The absence of anecdotes and reports on distress probably indicates that the crisis was diminishing from 1897.

At least in the mind of the local people of Kew, the 1890s brought a crime wave. Reports of thefts that were rare in 1889 and 1890, became commonplace during the 1890s, and there is no doubt that people blamed unemployment as the cause of the crime wave. Few of these larcenies ever came to court – but plenty were reported in the pages of the *Kew Mercury*.

The editor of the *Kew Mercury* commented: “housebreakers continue to pay special attention to this district, taking advantage of opportunities afforded them of raiding houses that have been left unattended.” In 1895, the editor pointed out that there was “a small boom” in burglaries and petty theft in the district, and that this was caused by the depression and lack of employment.

In June 1896, the editor once again commented on the “Burglary Boom” in Kew, and blamed the depression, because when people are unemployed and have a family to feed, “then some will revert to animal behaviour.”

The Argus reported that the Kew Borough Council felt there was a need for better police protection, noting that there had been a number of robberies reported to police, especially in the Barkers Road area. *The Argus* reported, in May 1894, that four men had been arrested in Collingwood in relation to house breakings and robberies in Kew and Hawthorn. They were charged with vagrancy and lived in a “squalid and dirty” house. A revolver was found there. It also reported that the Kew Council had voted to ask the police on night duty in Kew to be armed.

In summary, the above examples indicate that there was considerable distress in Kew during the 1890s: poverty, a crime wave, debt, non-payment of rates, suicides, vagrants, beggars and families needing assistance. These reports started in mid 1891 and diminished from 1897. While statistical data would be helpful in quantifying these effects of the 1890s depression in Kew, the evidence presented here shows that Kew was affected by the depression along with the rest of Victoria.

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6-22 March:	2015 Kew Festival
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8 April:	Monthly Meeting
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13 May:	Monthly Meeting

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