

# Scouting in Kew

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Scouting has long been a part of community life in Kew. Less than 12 months after the first 'patrols' of Scouts were formed in Australia, a Scout Troop had been established in Kew. That Scout Troop, known as the 1st Kew Scouts, is still in existence and celebrated its centenary in 2009.

While the initial surge in numbers subdued during World War I, numbers grew rapidly after the war ended. With the subdivision of farmlands in the north and east of the City of Kew, the population expanded rapidly and a number of new Scout Groups were formed: 2nd Kew (ca.1924), 3rd Kew (1925), 4th Kew (1925), 5th Kew (ca.1927), 6th Kew (1932), 7th Kew (1932) and 8th Kew (1930s).

World War II saw many scout leaders, then known as scoutmasters, undertake war service and some of the Scout Groups went into recess. Others kept operating with mothers running cub packs and the older Scouts running scout troops. The 1950s and early 1960s were perhaps the 'boom' period of Scouting in Kew, as old Scout Groups restarted and new Scout Groups formed: 10th Kew in 1953 and three new groups in 1958: 9th Kew, 11th Kew and 12th Kew. In June 1959 there were 555 Scouts registered in Kew.

By the 1980s interest in Scouting had waned. It became harder to attract volunteers to run the Scouts and fewer young people seemed to want to join. Many of the Kew Scout Groups amalgamated or closed and by 2008 there were only three Scout Groups left: 1st Kew, 4th Kew and 7th Kew (the last Group actually meeting in a Scout Hall in neighbouring Deepdene). Currently there are just over a hundred members in the two Scout Groups based in Kew.

All of the Scout Groups had a 'home'. The most desirable home was of course their own Scout Hall. Other Scout Groups met in church halls or school halls, often with their own 'den' and/or store built on the property. While some of these have been demolished or greatly modified, others remain pretty much as always. All of the Kew Scout Groups, until 1995, operated under the auspices of the Kew District Association, which met for many years in the now demolished South Esk on the corner of Cotham Road and Charles Street. The Kew Scout Groups are now part of the Boroondara Scout District.

Scouting is very much about the outdoors, and the Kew Scouts developed their own campsite at Warrantdyte on the Yarra River. This was, and is still is known as 'Cresco Park', the former City of Kew's motto 'to grow' or, in its Latin form, 'cresco'. Back in the 1920s, scout events were held at 'Kilby Farm on the Yarra River at East Kew', and in the 1940s, over the river in Bulleen.

The Scouts have always been an active part of the Kew community and contemporary newspaper articles often refer to Scouts participating in various community events and celebrations, forming guards of honour, entering floats in the Kew Festival Parade, and undertaking community service such as tree planting. Over the years, Scout rallies and displays were held in Victoria Park, as well as at Willsmere Park.

The annual swimming sports held in the old Kew Pool were a highlight of the local Scouting calendar for many years. A Cub 'lightning football premiership' competition was held for many years at Stradbroke Park (well before it was levelled) and various school ovals were called upon for the annual athletics competition. For many years, thanksgiving services were held to commemorate the birthday of Baden Powell, being hosted by a different local church each year.

Scouting is mostly undertaken at a local level, within a 'Scout Group'. Each Scout Group is responsible for recruiting its own volunteer leaders and obtaining a place for meetings. The leaders are supported by a parent committee, which amongst other things, has to raise the necessary funds for the Group's activities. Early fundraising took the form of dances and euchre parties, with the holding of concerts also popular. Bottle drives were a perennial favourite. In more recent years telephone book deliveries, the collecting of newspapers for recycling and selling confectionary were popular, with the selling of Christmas trees and 'Scout Raffle' tickets the current favourites.

Like any community organisation, local Scout Groups come and go. In Kew there has been up to twelve Scout Groups operating at the one time. A brief outline of all of the Kew Scout Groups follows.

### **1st Kew Scout Group**

The original Troop was formed early in 1909. By 1914, the Troop had 42 Scouts and met in a band hall (long since demolished) in Brougham Street. After meeting in various church halls, in 1925 the Group leased a block of land at the bottom of Disraeli Street from the then Kew Council and by 1927 had raised enough money to build a magnificent purpose-built Scout Hall on it. The Group was particularly strong through the 1930s, and again in the late 1940s and 1950s. Over the years the maintenance needs of the hall became overwhelming and, following negotiations with the Kew City Council, the Disraeli Street site was sold. The proceeds were used to construct a new Scout Hall on the corner of Kilby Road and Kellett Grove. This new hall opened in 1993 and remains the home of the 1st Kew Scouts as well as being used by a number of other community groups.

### **2nd Kew Scout Group**

This Group was sponsored by Trinity Grammar School and was formed around 1924. It first met in the school hall and by the 1960s was very strong. Following a fundraising drive, a Scout Hall was built as part of a new gymnasium constructed by the school in Stanley Street. The Group closed in 1986. One of its former Scouts, and a Scout Leader in the Group, Norman Johnson, later became the Chief Commissioner of the Victorian Scout Association, then Chief Commissioner of the Australian Scout Association and eventually the Chairman of the World Scout Bureau.

### **3rd Kew Scout Group**

There have been three 3rd Kew Scout Groups. The first was formed around 1925 but only lasted a year or so, when its members joined 4th Kew. A second 3rd Kew operated from around 1946 to 1953, meeting at St Paul's Anglican Church, East Kew, with the third and final 3rd Kew formed in 1954 and based at the then Baptist Church in Woodlands Avenue, East Kew. It was very strong in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It continued operating up to 1985, when it closed due to a lack of leaders and children.

### **4th Kew Scout Group**

This Group commenced in 1925, meeting at St Paul's Anglican Church in East Kew. Kew Council leased the Group land in Harrison Reserve, East Kew, and the Group erected a Scout Hall, which remains their home to this day. Over the years, the hall has been extended and outbuildings constructed. At one stage the Scout Hall was used as a kindergarten (before the Glass Street Kindergarten was built). The Group was very strong in the 1930s and 1940s and again in the 1970s and 1980s when, for a number of years, Scout camps were held every month. The Group currently consists of a Cub Pack, Scout Troop and Venturer Unit.

### **5th Kew Scout Group**

The 5th Kew Scout Group was originally hosted by Holy Trinity Church, Kew, and it continued to meet there from about 1927 until 1982 when the Group merged with 12th Kew. The Cubs and Scouts held their meetings in the parish hall; a special Scout den was formed in the upstairs part of the hall over the parish office.

### **6th Kew Scout Group**

This Group was also hosted by a church - Saint Hilary's Church of England in John Street. The Group met in the parish hall and built its own den (relocated many years ago to a campsite at

Taggerty), then a newer den and store (now demolished). The Group ran from 1932 until about 2005. The 1960s and 1970s saw a continuous stream of their older Scouts gaining the coveted Queen's Scout Award.

### **7th Kew Scout Group**

Another school-sponsored Group, 7th Kew, was set up by Carey Grammar in 1932. It first met in an old loft above the school's maintenance department. Finally, after many years of fundraising, a purpose-built hall was constructed, opening in 1967. The Troop was an important part of the school, with a number of teachers as well as older and former students taking on Leader roles. Over the years, the school became less supportive; the Scout Hall was demolished in the 1990s to make way for a new school building. The Scouts had to meet off-site and eventually the Group closed around 2008.

### **8th Kew Scout Group**

This Group met at the then Methodist Church hall in Highbury Grove. Formed in the early 1930s, the Troop lapsed during World War II, but was reformed and continued until the end of 1959, with the remaining youth members transferring to 3rd Kew. It had its own store room and shed at the church. A second 8th Kew formed in 1963, and offered cubbing and scouting to the residents of Kew Cottages. It ran for about six years.

### **9th Kew Scout Group**

This Group was based at St Paul's School for the Blind in Fernhurst Grove. It ran from 1958 to 1969.

### **10th Kew Scout Group**

This Group met at the Kew Congregational Church hall in Peel Street. The Group started in 1953 and lasted nearly ten years, closing at the end of 1961.

### **11th Kew Scout Group**

11th Kew was established in 1958 by the parishioners of St Anne's Catholic Church, East Kew. It grew from a Cub Pack to having Cubs, Scouts and Senior Scouts. By the late 1970s, there was less support from the church, and the Group relocated and then closed in 1983. It held its meetings in the parish's school hall and had its equipment store in the basement.

### **12th Kew Scout Group**

The last Group to be formed was 12th Kew, commencing in 1958. It was sponsored by the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and met in the parish hall. It had its own den and store in an upstairs room. The Group continued until 1982.

### **17th Kew Scout Group**

This Scout Group ran for a few years when the Cub Pack at 5th Kew joined together with the Scout Troop at 12th Kew in 1982. It operated until 1987, when the remaining members joined 1st Kew.

### **Sources**

Kew District Local Association (1959), 'Scouting in Kew Year Book 1958-59', booklet.

Miles, B. (1995), 'A Brief History of Scouting in Kew', Appendix to the Kew District Scout Association Annual Report, 1995.

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