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VANISHING LIVING HISTORY

Ron Setford and his wife Grace Setford lived in Tanner Avenue, East Kew, from c. 1946 to about 1995. A keen photographer, he recorded the changing face of Kew over a 20 year period. Apart from 30 photographs of built structures and places in Kew dating from 1960 to 1972, 145 of his 35mm colour slides chronicle the development of the Eastern Freeway, through the Yarra Valley, over a five year period from 1972 to 1977. This important photographic collection was donated to the Society by his granddaughter in January 2025.

The collection is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the mounts of the slides enabled him to describe and often date the point of view. Secondly, many of the photographs are of places at a point in time, that are missing from our collection. This is the case with the photograph that he shot in 1961 of the newly opened eight-storey headquarters of the Country Roads Board (built 1960, opened 1961) which dwarfed the adjacent single storey cream brick Denmark Street Baby Health Centre (built 1939). As much as these individual photos of parts of Kew provide insights into the period, and in many cases vanished buildings, the most important part of the collection is the series on the Eastern Freeway.

Four of his photos are included in our new exhibition entitled *Post-War Kew 1945–1960 : Continuity & Change*, which opens at the Kew Court House in March. The exhibition will remain open until September, after which it is planned to open an exhibition in October focussing on the Eastern Freeway. Ron Setford's photographs will form the centrepiece of that exhibition.

But returning to the image of the C.R.B. Buildings and the Baby Health Centre. It reinforces the transience of what seem to be essential services and built structures. The Denmark Street Baby Health Centre met a clear and growing need when it was opened in 1939. Designed by Roland Chipperfield, it superseded the original baby health centre that had been located in the Kew Town Hall in Walpole Street. Perhaps the anticipated number of mothers with babies diminished during the war years, although it clearly met a growing need when the baby boom of the post-war period hit Kew.

[Front page]

BABY HEALTH CENTRE AND C.R.B. HEADQUARTERS

Ron Setford, photographer, 1960

KHS

VANISHING LIVING HISTORY (from page 1)

Even more astonishing than the demise of the Denmark Street Baby Health Centre is the fate of the Country Roads Board towers, vacated by VicRoads in 2024, and intended for demolition after 65 years.

Ron Setford also shot a number of photographs of the Kew City Hall and Civic Offices in 1960 and 1972. The Kew Civic Offices were sold to Trinity Grammar School by the Administrators after Kew was unwillingly amalgamated into the new City of Boroondara. The photos of the 1972 Civic Offices show the white marble balconies at the front of the building that were later 'sold off' by the school, regardless of the façade's architectural integrity.

At the end of February 2025, the newly elected full Council deliberated the fate of the Kew Civic Hall, now the Kew Library, and the options presented by Council Officers for its future. One of these was to demolish the existing building and build a new purpose-built library. All of the options were, for the time being at least, deferred, perhaps indefinitely, although Council has approved essential renovations to the building. That the Kew City Hall had been identified by Built Heritage for Heritage Victoria as a significant example of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria does not appear to have been part of the civic discourse.

Like buildings and services, community groups which seem indestructible have also vanished. The financially secure Kew Bowling Club in Wellington Street (above right) decided to amalgamate with Auburn Heights Recreation Club in 1998. The newly amalgamated Kew Heights Sports Club was to last for only 14 years before it was sold to the Melbourne Cricket Club, which in turn sold it to Carey Grammar School in 2017. Fortunately, its loyal Bowling Club members ensured that their records were archived by the Kew Historical Society, and available into the future. The photograph of the Kew Bowling Club by Ron Setford complements that archive.

ROBERT BAKER



[above] **KEW BOWLING CLUB**
Ron Setford, photographer, c.1960
KHS

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

Public meetings of the Kew Historical Society are held in the Phyllis Hore Room at the Kew Library on the second Wednesday of each month (excluding the months of January, March, October and December). There is usually a guest speaker. Visitors are welcome to attend.

KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation of the Kew Court House. General enquiries can be made, and viewing of our current exhibition, on Fridays (excluding January 2024 and public holidays) between 11am and 1pm. Our room is on the first floor of the former Kew Police Station at 188 High Street, Kew.

KEW HERITAGE CENTRE

The Kew Heritage Centre, at the rear of the ground floor of the Kew Library, is generally staffed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 11am and 3pm. Entry is by appointment.

NEWSLETTER

This is published quarterly and distributed to all members. Additional copies are made available to the community. Past newsletters can be downloaded from our website.

WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/kew-historical-society

www.facebook.com/kewhistoricalsociety

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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed, and information provided, by the authors of articles in this newsletter do not necessarily mirror the views and values of the Kew Historical Society. We also rely on authors checking the accuracy of their data and apologise if errors of fact have been made.

HISTORY NEWS

2025 LECTURES

The Kew Historical Society holds two lectures annually in the Just Theatre at the Kew Court House. The first of these is the annual McIntyre Lecture, honouring life members, Peter and Dione McIntyre.

The March lecture on Wednesday 12 March will be given by Prof Richard Broome AM FAHA FRHSV who will describe *The Power of Place: Melbourne Lanes*. Prof Broome is President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and co-author of *The Story of Melbourne's Lanes - Essential but Unplanned*. Copies of the book will be available for purchase on the night for \$50 with all profits supporting the RHSV. Cash is preferred



MEMBERS

The Society welcomes Joel King, Fiona Leow and family as new members in 2025.

GRANTS & SPONSORS

In 2024-27, Kew Historical Society is supported by the City of Boroondara through a Triennial Operational Grant. A tied grant from the National Library of Australia is allowing the Society to have conserved four of our Henty costumes.



POSTAL ADDRESS

The Society's mailing address is PO Box 3147, Cotham, Vic. 3101.
Our email address remains info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

EXHIBITIONS

The first of four planned exhibitions for 2025 opens in March in our rooms on the 1st floor of the Kew Court House. The exhibition focusses on Post-War Kew between 1945 and 1960.

While the end of World War II heralded a new era, postwar restrictions on resources affected what could be built, how people worked, and the everyday lives of men and women. The following decade included monumental shifts in the social and cultural fabric of life in Australia more widely, and in also in Kew.

The exhibition explores how life changed in these years by examining the memories of people who lived in Kew at the time, the development of notable private and public modernist architecture, and the ways that innovation transformed the lives of Kew's residents.

The exhibition will be open from March to September 2025 on Fridays between 11am and 1pm. Group tours can be arranged by appointment.

Future exhibitions in 2025 include a large display of wedding fashion at Villa Alba Museum during the Australian Heritage Festival, a retrospective of the works of Viola Ayling and Grace James at the Town Hall Gallery in August and September, and an exhibition at the Kew Court House on the construction of the Eastern Freeway, opening in October.

DONATIONS TO THE COLLECTION

In 2025, we added two collections to our nationally significant collection.

The first collection includes the 175 slides of Kew, covering the period 1960 to 1977, by Ron Setford of Tanner Avenue, Kew East. The Society gratefully acknowledges this important donation by the photographer's granddaughter, Lauren Thomson. A number of the images are showcased in this newsletter.

A second collection includes many of items owned by members of the Norman, Eager and Mathie families of Kew. It includes loose photographs of many sizes, packets of photo negatives, three leather bound late 19th century photograph albums, and another early 20th century album; a journal of a trip to Europe in 1904; printed ephemera; and 2 quarto size box files of documents relating to the Kew Presbyterian Church. The earliest items date from the 1820s and were written exercises in calculations by John and Frederick Eager. We acknowledge the generosity of Felicity Pollock in making this donation.

THE KEW RESERVOIR

A WHITE ELEPHANT?

How many of you have travelled east along Cotham Road towards Burke Road and wondered what was behind the row of well-established conifer trees adjacent to the Kew Traffic School on the right-hand side? If you turn into the side street, Grange Road, then into the carpark, you will discern the Kew metropolitan service reservoir hidden beside the Traffic School with a children's playground and sportsground to the left. You will observe that it is a large metal-roofed storage tank, owned and managed by Yarra Valley Water, the roof fitted in 1986 to stop material contamination of the water.

Before presenting the history of this reservoir, let's review some history of Melbourne's water supply. Four main systems, Yan Yean, Maroondah, O'Shannassy and Upper Yarra, supply Melbourne with water. From its establishment in 1836, Melbourne drew its water supply directly from the Yarra River. The 1850s gold rush had transformed Melbourne into a major city, but more people meant more pollution from sewage, tanneries and other industries. This urban waste flowed into the river and the water became known as 'Yarra Soup', spreading diseases such as typhoid. To address this, ex-convict James Blackburn suggested building a reservoir at Yan Yean that, when completed in 1857, was the world's largest artificial reservoir.

From 1842 to 1853, the City of Melbourne had responsibility for urban water supply and sewerage. In 1853, the Commissioners of Sewers and Water Supply took over. Responsibility then passed in 1860 to the Public Works Department, then to the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) from 1891 to 1992, and finally Melbourne Water.

A previous article in a Kew Historical Society's *Newsletter No. 123, June 2018*, recounts the various solutions for water supply and the problems endured since the 1840s, to supply Melbourne, and Kew in particular, with quality water with adequate pressure, all the while competing substantially with the emerging suburbs for connection.

The residents of Kew most likely had an impatient wait while the Borough Council pestered the government to build the pipelines and reservoirs. In those very early days, the residents relied on rainwater tanks and bores, or the inconvenience of bringing water from Thompson's pump on the Yarra; or paying good money from 7s 6d upwards per barrel [about 80 cents for 550L] to have it carried by private water carriers to their home. That was expensive, despite the poor water quality. Some carried water in buckets from the Yarra, a mile [1.6 km] away, having lost a fair portion of it on the journey home!



KEW RESERVOIR, 1974

Courtesy Tony Michael Collection

However, the first indication of building a reservoir for Kew appeared in 1878 when *The Age* reported that the Council had accepted a tender for its construction. Nothing happened. Then once again the need for a Kew Reservoir was published in *The Argus* of September 1885 where a deputation from the Balwyn Outer Circle Railway League and the councils of Kew, Hawthorn and Boroondara had complained strongly to the Minister of Public Works, asking 'that the Kew Reservoir might be constructed without delay. The deputation was informed that a 7-inch drain to connect with the proposed reservoir was now being laid along Cotham Road, and when completed would afford increased pressure on that road and the adjacent district. The surveys for the Kew Reservoir were now in progress, and it was expected that tenders for the construction of the reservoir would be invited in about three weeks' time.'

The Kew Service Reservoir at 374 Cotham Road was eventually constructed in 1886 by the government Water Supply Department. Located at the most elevated point in Kew -782 feet [approx. 240 metres] above sea level - the walls were of mass concrete with an unreinforced concrete floor slab, its depth 14 feet [approx. 4metres], and it held three million gallons [approx. 11 million Megalitres].

Once constructed, at a cost including land, of £8663, the Kew Reservoir's usefulness came to an end in a somewhat unexpected manner, and it lay idle for many years. In 1891, a much larger scheme was commenced with the excavation of a new reservoir in Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills. The capacity of this new reservoir was 9,000,000 gallons, being three times that of the one at Kew and its cost, including land, was £19,952. It was named Surrey Hills Number One reservoir.

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THE KEW RESERVOIR (from page 4)

Unfortunately for the Kew Reservoir, the one at Surrey Hills was built on higher ground, and connected with the same main. The result was that if both bodies of water were used, that water at Surrey Hills would flow into the smaller one at Kew, as water finds its own level. What would have happened if the connection had been opened between the two reservoirs can only be imagined! An engineering gravitational bungle? The residents would certainly have obtained an abundant supply of water.

By 1913, the Kew Reservoir was not benefitting the public in any purposeful way. The enclosure comprised eight acres, six of which had horses occasionally grazing. The other two included the reservoir. Few of the residents knew what a picturesque spot existed in their midst. Its beauty was enhanced by the flora growing near the water's edge but a paling fence, six feet high, obscured the view. The water, although still, had not become stagnant, but existed at that time solely for the benefit of mosquitoes! An application had been made privately for the reservoir to be let as public baths. Another suggestion was that the property be converted into a park and lake. Others considered that the water should be drained out and the excavation filled to create a greater space for residential building. In the meantime, it seems the MMBW was contemplating using it in connection with the O'Shannassy scheme. Work upon this scheme had been an active project at various points between Surrey Hills and the O'Shannassy River, quite close to Warburton.

Meanwhile, nearly three decades later, in 1936, *The Herald* reported a re-distribution of water supply, saying that: "to secure the better distribution of Melbourne's water supplies, the Kew Reservoir will in future be supplied from an existing main in Whitehorse Road and a new 30" main from the Kew Reservoir will supply a section of Richmond. The section of Richmond concerned will thus in future be supplied from the O'Shannassy system instead of the Yan Yean system. Work has begun and will conclude with the erection of a dividing wall in the Kew Reservoir to permit one half to be serviced while the other half is in use." At last, the water storage tank in Cotham Road was opened on 22 September 1937 by the chairman of the MMBW, Mr David Bell, by turning the tap which released the flow of water. Also in attendance was Councillor A.F. Showers who avoided a shower!

Between 2019 and 2020, Yarra Valley Water upgraded the aging water mains around Melbourne's inner eastern and northern suburbs, some of which were built in the early 1900s, and earlier. Kew was one of the first established suburbs in the eastern suburbs and many of the water mains in the area were over 100 years old. A 1.5-kilometre-long water main and decommissioning of 2.6 kilometres of pipes was completed to make water flow more reliable in Kew and Balwyn. The water main supplies water from the Surrey Hills Reservoir to the Kew Reservoir and connects to existing mains at Denmark Street and Union Road.

Regarding the choice of trees on the perimeter of the reservoir, in 1881, the Water Supply Department embarked on a program of replanting the immediate environs of Yan Yean Reservoir and sought expert advice on the best species to plant around the reservoir from Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, Victoria's first Government Botanist and former Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. Von Mueller provided a detailed list of suggested plants, including trees for ornamental purposes as well as a number of exotic trees that would produce commercial crops. Von Mueller's most highly recommended trees, however, were conifers. Conifers thereafter became an integral part of the planting schemes for many water supply places and were typically planted along the aqueducts, such as the O'Shannassy and Maroondah aqueducts, as well as around the perimeter of the storage reservoirs, for example at Preston, Surrey Hills and Kew.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE KEW RESERVOIR
Tony Michael, photographer, 2009

Even today, service reservoirs are smaller reservoirs where water is stored just prior to distribution to consumers. The reservoir is the main source of drinking water supply for the Kew area, as well as a local Greater Western Water area. Historically, they were built to provide the dual function of balancing supply with demand and maintaining adequate pressure throughout the distribution network. This means that they can be filled gradually, with water from the storage reservoirs, during periods of low demand, but then have a relatively large volume, locally available, for rapid distribution when demand is high. In addition, they can sometimes assist with improving water quality by allowing water to settle and by filtering impurities.

The Kew Reservoir to this day is indeed not a white elephant! However, based on recent assessments and the age and poor condition of the reservoir, Yarra Valley Water is planning to decommission the reservoir in the coming years.

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JOHN HESKETH

FIRST CHIEF ELECTRICAL ENGINEER TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

John Hesketh (1868–1917) was appointed the first Chief Electrical Engineer to the Commonwealth of Australia in 1906 and also became a Kew resident in the same year.

Born in 1868 at Lytham in Lancashire, he had entered the railway telegraphic service at the age of fourteen. He was soon appointed as a telegraphist by the British Post Office in Newcastle-on-Tyne where his natural abilities led to his appointment to the engineering branch of the post office and work in the Newcastle Electric Supply Company. In 1892, he took up the position of Borough Electrical Engineer for the Blackpool Corporation where he was in charge of the electric lighting of the town and its electric tramways. Then, in 1896, aged 29, he was accepted for the post of Electrical Engineer to the Government of Queensland from among seventy applicants. He and Maria Laurie Hinnell married in April 1896, and the newly wedded couple embarked for the voyage to Queensland in the following month.

Coincidentally, in 1896, a Victorian government inquiry into their Post Office and Telegraph Department Engineering and Electrical Branch had identified problems with the existing telephone and manually connected exchange system, including delays in being connected, cross-talking [when other conversations could be heard during calls], being cut off before conversations ended, and buzzing sounds at night. The buzzing sounds and crosstalk were caused by electromagnetic induction that could only be rectified by expensive changes to the wiring system, which the Board hesitated to recommend. But steps were required to prevent interference with the telephone service by electric light wires through the city.



JOHN HESKETH AMICE MIEE AAIEE
p.48 *Eminent Queensland Engineers*, Volume II
Cossins, Geoffrey Ed.

As a result, the Victorian Postmaster General requested his Queensland counterpart for the services of the newly appointed Electrical Engineer to the Government of Queensland, to undertake an inspection and report on the telephone and telegraph services in Victoria. It appears that John Hesketh had become Australia's leading expert on telecommunications.

At a more local level, in June 1899, Kew Council decided that a telephone be placed at the town hall and that the Council should petition the Victorian Postmaster General to grant a telephone exchange at Kew. At that time, telephones in Kew were connected through the manually connected Hawthorn telephone exchange, which still displayed all the telephone service problems identified in 1896 inquiry. The Melbourne Telephone Exchange Company Limited had opened Australia's first telephone exchange in Melbourne in May 1880, two years after the world's first telephone exchange was opened in New Haven, Connecticut, and only four years after Alexander Graham Bell had patented his invention of the telephone. After telephone exchanges were opened in Ballarat and Sandhurst [Bendigo], the name of the company was changed to The Victorian Telephone Exchange Company. In September 1887, the Victorian Government took over the operation after two years of negotiations, having agreed to pay £40,000 for the business and goodwill of the company. Following the collapse of the banking system, and a period of deep economic depression in the 1890s, little was done to improve the Victorian telephone system.

After Federation in 1901, the former colonial post offices, including their telephone and telegraph services, were brought under the control of the new Australian Postmaster General. John Hesketh became a member of a committee of electrical experts from the states of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia which was appointed to deal with updating and unifying the telephone and telegraph systems of the former separate colonies.

Hesketh was appointed to be Australia's representative at the International Electrical Congress at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, and following the Congress he toured the USA, Britain and Europe to research and inspect the latest developments in telecommunications. On his return to Australia in 1905, his report, printed by order of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, was to form the basis for the further development of Australia's telephone and telegraph services.

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JOHN HESKETH (from page 6)

In 1906, John Hesketh was appointed Chief Electrical Engineer to the Commonwealth. This entailed moving his family to Melbourne, which at the time was the location of the Federal Parliament and Australian Postmaster General's Department. They took up residence in Kew at *Cromehurst*, at 99 [now 63] Wellington Street. Two sons had joined the Hesketh family in Queensland and the proximity of their new home to Trinity Grammar was no doubt one of the advantages of this location.



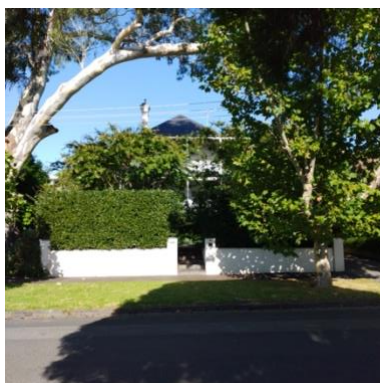
CROMEHURST, 63 WELLINGTON STREET, KEW

David White, photographer, 2018

It may have been a coincidence, but a former Queenslander, Justinian Oxenham, Chief Clerk of the Postmaster General's Department, was already living around the corner at *Esslyn*, at 75 [now 46] Charles Street. He had moved to Melbourne in 1901 after being appointed to assist another Queenslander, Robert Scott, who had become Secretary of the Postmaster General's Department. It was noted in the press at the time that former officers of the Queensland postal service seemed to be running the new Postmaster General's Department.

Despite a number of Kew Council deputations to the authorities, the disgraceful condition of the local telephone service, owing to the ineffectiveness of the telephone exchange at Hawthorn, had remained an issue at council meetings. In 1906, the Mayor of Kew suggested, not only that the problem extended beyond Hawthorn to the whole metropolis, but that it had become more serious since the new Federal Government had taken over the telephone service.

In 1910 the Hesketh family moved to *Rivington* at 39 [now 10] Gellibrand Street, Kew.



RIVINGTON, 10 GELLIBRAND STREET,

David White, photographer, 2025

Among the projects with which John Hesketh was involved at this time, was laying a new high speed submarine telegraph cable connecting Tasmania to the mainland, and the installation of high power wireless telegraph stations near Fremantle and Sydney, to enable communication with shipping.

John Hesketh also made a further visit to the USA, Britain and Europe in 1911–12. On his return his report advised that automatic switchboard equipment was now sufficiently advanced to economically replace manually operated switchboards in Australian telephone exchanges with more than 500 lines, suggesting that the development of the new system would be gradual, and that the present manual switchboard operators need fear no loss of employment.

The first automatic telephone exchange in Australia was opened in Geelong in July 1912. Its operation was deemed a success, signalling that the days of the army of telephonists, the 'hello girls', who operated the manual telephone exchanges across Australia, had become numbered.

On 17 July 1917, John Hesketh died at *Rivington* at the age of 49. He had been ill for some months with anaemia, possibly a symptom of leukemia. He had been granted sick leave of absence on full pay for six months from 16 March 1917. Following a funeral at Holy Trinity Church, Kew, he was interred at Boroondara Cemetery in Church of England /B/4020A, joining his younger brother, Fred Hesketh, who had died at *Cromehurst* on 5 August 1906.

His widow Maria Laurie Hesketh, and sons John Hinnel Hesketh and Charles Robert Hesketh, continued to live at *Rivington* following his death. Although obituaries mentioned that he had left a widow and a family of daughters and sons, I have not been able to find the names of any daughters in my research.

The family appeared to have become a part of the Kew community. Prior to his death, John Hesketh is mentioned addressing a Trinity Grammar Speech Day in 1913, when his sons in Grades V and IV received honour prizes. In 1914, "his fine voice was heard to advantage in two famous old English songs" at a social evening at Holy Trinity Church. There is also an intriguing connection with the Menzies family, who were neighbours of the Heskeths at *Cromehurst*. A family notice in *The Argus* in 1920 announcing the marriage of Robert Gordon Menzies and Pattie Maie Leckie advises: "(present address, 39 Gellibrand street, Kew)", and in 1923, John Hinnel Hesketh married Pattie's sister, Conyn Louise Leckie.

An automatic telephone exchange was finally opened in Denmark Street, Kew, in 1961, preceded in the 1940s by an exchange in High Street, East Kew and the Deepdene exchange at the corner of Cotham and Normanby Roads.

TYPHOID FEVER

A SLICE OF LIFE OVER THE SUMMER OF 1874-1875

In late November 1874, a man known only as 'butcher Sutton' of Bulleen Road [High Street], Kew, suddenly fell very ill. His temperature spiked at an alarming high. Aches, pains, chills and a major gastrointestinal upset; to say the least he had it all. His good friend, Independent Church goer, Thomas Greenhill, a Bulleen Road grocer, nursed him on the night shift. This was a typical Christian home nursing care approach of the era. It allowed the wife of an ill husband some rest from her role as a mother, wife, home maker, and presumably duties associated with a butchering business.

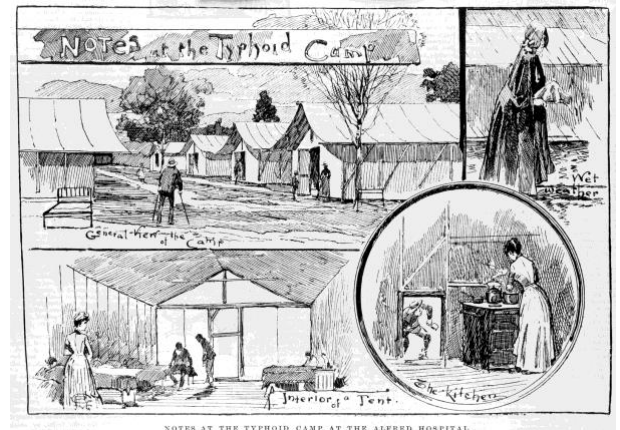
A short time prior to his illness, Sutton had converted his domesticated toileting facility to an earth closet sanitary system. It was considered modern and hygienic. The Central Health Government Inspector, Samuel K. Le Capelain, was responsible for sewerage and health issues. His job involved personally accessing Sutton's premises. He found it to be compliant with contemporary ideas on preventing transmissional diseases such as typhoid fever. Essentially, the grand closet was a seat above a bucket. There was a handle system related to a hopper of earth where a modern water flusher is positioned today. Depressing the handle delivered a quantity of earth into the bucket to deodorise and compost the bodily effluence. The bucket was emptied at regular intervals.

Despite this healthy system, Thomas Greenhill succumbed to the disease as Sutton returned to health. Subsequently, Greenhill's entire family fell ill. One child died after the appearance of the signature rose-red rash. This was the definitive medical sign of the late and fatal stage of typhoid fever. Thus, it was official there was an outbreak of typhoid in Kew. The health inspector assessed Greenhill's domestication as clean. More importantly, his toileting facility was a 'box closet' located above the 'earth system' in the garden. It was some 27.5 m from the living quarters of the property. For the health inspector, it well and truly passed sanitation standards.

Eighteen-year-old Robert Derrick died. A local smithy, he was the son of an old pioneering family, he was a mate of one of Greenhill's sons. Robert was living on the outskirts of the Kew village, then known as Prospect Hill. Today, the area is in the environs of Dan Murphy's Kew, the building being the site of the historic Prospect Hill Hotel.

The health inspector, via the colonial Victorian government, initiated printed material to be distributed to the Kew populace. The ill person was to be isolated from uninfected people, except the carer. All soiled bed linen and personal clothing associated with the patient was to be boiled or destroyed. All bodily 'evacuations' were to be disinfected prior to disposal. Interestingly, ventilation of the sick room was not mentioned in the Central Health Board circular.

The Kew community was, understandably, very concerned. Typhoid was a particularly unpleasant gastro-intestinal disease now known to be caused by bacterium, *Salmonella Typhi*. Social class, wealth, or lack thereof, age, sex and ethnic origin were no barrier to the macabre 'spirit' that could and did dance with death.



NOTES AT THE TYPHOID CAMP AT THE ALFRED HOSPITAL

George Ashton, illustrator, 1889
Courtesy State Library of Victoria

Successful colonial produce merchant, William Harrison Lamond had moved to the healthy height of Malmsbury and Walpole Streets, Kew in c.1863, abandoning the industrial pollution of Emerald Hill [South Melbourne]. Lamond's three sons, Gerald, Roland and Robert, aged eight, ten and twelve, attended the prestigious Kew High School [later Trinity Grammar] as day students. Rosa, their mother, found them feeling unwell on several successive days after returning home from school. She was convinced her three boys were suffering the effects of the 'noisome [extremely offensive]' smell emanating on the breeze from the vacant block located 55 metres from the school. The land was occupied by a very poor family living in a crude wooden shack. The smell, the health inspector soon discovered, was the famed imported Peruvian guano, combined with bone dust to create a fertilising composite. It had been introduced to Kew, and Victoria, by the 'intelligent farmer', William Wade of Belford Farm, North Kew. Ultimately, the boys did have a mild case of typhoid. All survived.

Kew High School boarder, twelve-year-old Francis Martin, succumbed to typhoid. After a period of acute disability, he rallied back to health.

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TYPHOID FEVER (from page 8)

Not so, the youthful, highly acclaimed rector of the school. Ernest Ingle who lay critically ill in his bed for 14 days before he was consumed by the disease, aged 32. As soon as he died, Ingle was buried, unceremoniously, in the Boroondara General Cemetery.

As with all people who were considered to have died of an infectious disease, they were buried immediately to prevent the spread of the 'spirit'. Thus, there was no Victorian era ritual of a night vigil with the body lying upon a wooden mortuary board. Often, the speed of burial left no time for a public newspaper notice. However, the death of this talented educator from Oxford, England, via Hobart Town, was publicly lamented far and wide, from the antipodes to the Mother Country.

The health inspector found nothing to incriminate the school in terms of a lapse of hygiene. Pure Yan Yean water had been piped to the school. On the premises, pristine drinkable rainwater was collected in an iron tank and the excess channelled into an underground drainage barrel to prevent stagnation through pooling of overflow water on open ground. The two-storey brick facility that was composed of classrooms, dormitories for resident students, and facilities for eating, recreation and staff-housing was considered sound by the health inspector.

Ingle's widow, Georgina, was left with three children, the youngest being 3 months old. Despite her husband's life insurance payout, Georgina was in a very unenviable position for a widow in the mid 1870s. She commenced a private ladies' school located in Walpole Street, Kew. Within two years she had emigrated to New Zealand and opened an exclusive girls' school. The Ingle case highlights the personal and social impact the disease had on family and community. A young family lost a breadwinner; and a community lost a major player in the development of private schools.

Strong social rituals were being abandoned out of necessity. At the same time the health inspector was under acute pressure to unravel the puzzle of the source of the disease. The idea of containing the disease was a critical part of the health inspector's role. But essentially, he was working in the dark. The science of epidemiology, the study of the transfer of infectious disease to reduce contagion, was far from the science employed in the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The health inspector was of the opinion that Sutton introduced the disease into Kew. Butcher Sutton's daily routine was to visit the North Melbourne Meat Market. As a piece of public health detective work, it sounds reasonable to conclude this may have been the case. However, it seems the disease was not traced back to its source from, or within, the Market.

Then, to complicate the issue, the disease broke out within the confines of the Kew Asylum. This was particularly unexpected. Being a walled fortress, the Asylum was isolated from the Kew village. It was also positioned on a particularly elevated piece of land, where the health-giving draughts of air flow were not hindered.

The health inspector, in co-operation with the chief-medical officer of the Asylum, believed the outbreak was not a spontaneous 'eruption' within the asylum grounds. The earth closets were certified as hygienic. The buckets were emptied daily. The common but dangerous practice of using human effluence to fertilise a vegetable garden had long ceased. All drainage of wastewater was piped away from the inhabited areas to fallow ground. The cow's milk was determined 'clean'.

Medically diagnosed 'idiot', Laura Frances Parker, aged 7, was transferred to the isolation ward in the tower where she died. A resident doctor of the asylum thought that typhoid was not particularly infectious. Another thought Laura had caught the disease from the excreta of a previous patient, despite all bedding and clothing of the infected person having been destroyed.

Yet another doctor argued Laura's death was due to the 'bowel disease that had impacted the fragile state of her lungs and brain'. Today, it would be considered she probably died of dehydration because of severe and persistent diarrhoea, given intravenous fluid replacement was not a known option in 1874-5.



KEW LUNATIC ASYLUM

J.W. Lindt, photographer, c.1878 – c.1894
Courtesy State Library of Victoria

Asylum superintendent, Dr Robertson, believed that one of two female nurses/attendants had introduced the disease from her perambulations around the village. The problem in proving his theory was that Nurse Adams and her fellow attendant were too 'deliriously' ill to be interviewed.

The health inspector then inspected the Kew Common [State] School, No. 1075. There were a large number of children attending the school, but unexpectedly, no reported cases of the disease. Yet, he was astonished at the state of the 'closet [toileting] accommodation' for the children at the school. The ancient cesspit system [a big hole in the ground to collect faecal sludge] was cleaned regularly. But the soil at the school was such that it created chronic effluent flooding. The Education Department was immediately notified of the situation. Rectification of the problem was achieved *post-haste*.

38 YARRAVALE ROAD

GROWING UP IN THE 1950S AND 1960s

I lived in Kew for the first 25 years of my life. The first 16 years were lived at 38 Yarravale Road, adjoining the Kew Boulevard, with my parents and three siblings. We later moved up the hill to 6 Holroyd Street.

In the early 1950s, life was pretty simple in Yarravale Road. There were vacant blocks around, and the Boulevard was quiet, with only the occasional hoon and we children roaming a bit where young children probably wouldn't now. We played down near the river bank with impunity. We didn't see any tiger snakes but heard that they were around. The gully between the two sides of Yarravale Road at the Boulevard was called simply 'the gully' and was not as overgrown as now. Indeed, we were known to mow the grass at the bottom to form a basic cricket area when we were not playing in our sloping backyard.

The *Sun* newspaper was delivered in the morning and *The Herald* in the afternoon. It would have been the afternoon edition of *The Herald* [as they also produced an evening edition and a late edition]. At times, the young boy – probably about 15, so older than us – would deliver our Herald on his bike. We would then go down to the river's edge where he would strip off, dive in and come up with a handful of golf balls from the river bed, from golfers overhitting their approaches to the golf green on the Yarra Bend course, on the opposite bank. He would then sell these back to the golf course. He probably ended up a wealthy entrepreneur.

My father, an architect, had designed and had built our home in 1946 after returning from World War II. The home was written up in the 1949 edition of *Home Beautiful*.



THE ORIGINAL 38 YARRAVALE ROAD
Courtesy of the author

The house had simple lines and pastel colours inside and was modern for its time. When I was about ten, he designed an extension to provide us children with our own bedrooms and our parents with an ensuite.

Under the house on the sloping site, was an earth-floored space for a workshop, and at some stage, I had an electric Hornby train set circulating on a large workbench. On that workbench was also a heavy iron foot last used for nailing leather stops into this aspiring young footballer's boots. Alas, the dreams of making the bigtime were never realised.

In addition to the newspapers, milk and bread were also delivered. The milk in the early 1950s came in a horse drawn cart, while the baker had a small van and delivered bread to our home via a little bread shute, built into the kitchen. This shute also doubled up as an access point for us children while we were very small, and for when we arrived home before our parents. When we were too big for the bread shute, it was necessary to push open a bathroom window to gain access. I am sure that security is generally better now. Neighbours in the early days were the Sharps next door at 36 Yarravale Road and the Cowans (Sir Zelman and family) at no. 34, the Williams family (Jewellers) up the hill a bit, and the Dannes opposite on the other side of the gully.

Bob Jane had the property behind us into which, over the years, my brother and I hit many a cricket ball and miskicked a few footies. The young Trowbridge twin boys were on the corner of Yarravale Road and The Belvedere. We would often walk home by ourselves from kindergarten (Little Ruyton) in Princess Street, Kew, which in hindsight must have somehow involved crossing Princess Street. The story goes that when our youngest sister was born, my brother and I (aged 5 and 4) ran home from kinder to see the new baby. The apocryphal story also goes that we were disappointed not to have a baby brother and went back to kinder.

After kinder, we were off to big schools, my sisters to Ruyton and my brother and I to Scotch College. From age about 8, we made our own way to school. This involved a three quarter mile walk up the steep Yarravale Road to the Kew Junction where we caught the number 42 tram along Cotham Road to Glenferrie Road, and the tram down Glenferrie Road to Scotch. My mother always said that the steep walk in the morning and back in the afternoon kept us healthy and was the reason we hardly missed a day's schooling. I doubt whether many ten year olds would be allowed to make, or maybe even be capable of, this independent travel today.

In 1966, unknown to us children, my parents sold 38 Yarravale Road and moved up the hill to a larger old home at 6 Holroyd Street.

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38 YARRA VALE ROAD (from page 10)

We had bigger bedrooms and more formal and informal living areas, but less space for kicking a football. Maybe, because my brother and I were well into our teens, we were kicking a bit further.

Our journey time to school reduced by about 5 to 10 minutes and we were rid of the steep hill where Yarravale Road meets Studley Avenue. We have walked that hill recently and it is still very steep! And we had walked it every day carrying our sports gear, a clarinet, and presumably our school bags.



38 YARRA VALE ROAD, CIRCA 1960
Collection of the author

Our house at 38 Yarravale Road is no longer there. It has been replaced by two very modern homes being now numbers 38 and 40 Yarravale Road. One evening in winter, walking home from school after dark – I would have been probably 17 – I passed the artist from *D'Estaville*, Alma Figuerola, on the corner of Barry Street and Holroyd Street, who just pointed to the stars in the sky – or maybe the distant lights – and said to me they are like jewels in the sky.

These are the memories of growing up as a schoolboy in Kew some 60 years ago.

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100 YEARS AGO MARCH 1925

METHODIST HOME MISSIONS. NEW COLLEGE OPENED AT KEW

Otira, Walpole-street, Kew, a splendidly situated residence, standing in about 2½ acres of ground, was recently acquired at a very favourable price from the executors of the estate of the late Henry Berry, for use as a home missionary training centre by the Methodist Church authorities. Throughout his life, the late Henry Berry displayed a great interest in the welfare of young Methodist preachers and at his death left a sum in trust

for the furtherance of his ideals. Out of this, £1,000 was set aside for the furnishing of the new training school, which has a capacity for fifteen students.

The Age, 2 March 1925, p.10

KEW WAR MEMORIAL – SITE OPPOSITE POST OFFICE ADHERED TO

After the removal of the Queen Victoria Memorial to the Alexander [sic] Gardens, shopkeepers have agitated to have the new war memorial also placed in the gardens. The Town Clerk of Kew, Mr H. Harrison, said today that the council could not further delay the erection of the memorial, the contract for which was let in 1924. The land had been transferred by the Postal Department to the Council, and when the memorial was erected, an additional 10ft. 6in of roadway would be provided.

The Herald, 16 March 1925, p.5

TYPHOID FEVER (continued from page 9)

A 'local interested person' wrote to the editor of *The Argus*. He could not see any correlation between Sutton's illness and that of the Greenhill family. Sutton was convalescent on Christmas Day, the Greenhill's started falling ill in the early New Year. The concept of an incubation period of 7 to 14 days had yet to be established. In fact, the incubation period can be up to 60 days. The person concluded Derrick's case could not be attributed to Greenhill's, and the Greenhill child to Sutton.

The death of the Greenhill child was, apparently, due to 'lack of strength' while Derrick died of a 'relapse'. In a child, diarrhoea and subsequent dehydration cause bodily debility. The writer was correct except for the causative factors of 'lack of strength'. Again, the writer's diagnosis of 'relapse', in the case of Derrick, may well be correct, but it is a poor interpretation of the capacity of a virile young man's immune system to fight disease.

Kew resident, legally qualified medical doctor, Thomas Sherman Ralph, had a 'cleanliness next to Godliness' approach to the prevention of the spread of typhoid. People had a moral obligation to maintain personal hygiene and a 'tidy living environment'. There was no specific direction on hand washing, washing vegetables, or boiling water. Bacteriology, the study of germ disease, and antibiotics, were sciences yet to be conceived in the mid-nineteenth century.

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