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NEWSLETTER

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JUNE 2020



THE THINGS YOU KEEP

Heritage protection has been with us for so long now that it has evolved a history of its own. Post war architecture might be seen as one factor which inspired the first phase of the heritage protection movement in the 1950s and 1960s when Nineteenth century buildings and places seemed to be swept away by an uncaring tide of modernisation. Discussion of, and agreement on, measures for its protection can be fraught with peril.

In an article on the former Methodist Men's Fellowship Hall (pages 8-9), the increased rigor and changes of emphasis that are occurring in heritage research are noted. Additional archival material is available, much of it now on-line in digitised searchable form. New themes such as Indigenous History, Women's History and LGBTI History have emerged. The historical time frame has expanded, the middle of last century now evokes a very different world from that of the pioneer settlers of Kew.

The *City of Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 2012) identified Post-Second World War places as representing the highest priority for further heritage study. Such places were amongst the most under-represented on the then current Heritage Overlay schedule and, at the same time, under the most frequent threat of demolition or unsympathetic alteration.

The draft Kew Heritage Gap Study formed part of a Municipal Wide Heritage Gap Study for Boroondara to address this and other heritage issues. Completed in late 2018 it applied the heritage overlay to eight new heritage precincts - Bradford Estate Precinct, Banool Estate Precinct, Burke Road Commercial Precinct, Clifton Estate Residential Precinct, Cotham Village Commercial Precinct, Goldthorns Hill and Environs Precinct, Iona Estate Residential Precinct, May Street Precinct and Thornton Estate Residential Precinct - extended six existing heritage precincts and applied individual heritage overlays to an additional twenty-one places in Kew.

Public exhibition of the draft study in early 2019 attracted a total of 95 submissions, including 28 supporting submissions, 11 partially supporting submissions, 53 opposing submissions and three that neither supported nor opposed the amendment. Consideration of the submissions by council officers and the heritage consultant led to the addition of 41 properties to the proposed heritage precincts.

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ARCHITECTURAL MODELS FOR THE NEW KEW CIVIC HALL, 1959

Donated by the family of Hugh Ferguson (pictured at right)

KHS

THE THINGS YOU KEEP *(from page 1)*

In April 2019 Council's Urban Planning Special Committee adopted the revised draft Kew Heritage Gap Study and resolved to commence the formal planning scheme amendment process. By this time, three properties identified as having contributory heritage significance had been demolished, and consent granted to demolish a further six.

An interim amendment to the heritage overlay was introduced on 19 May 2019, expiring on 12 March 2021, to bring the proposal under the planning scheme and protect further buildings from demolition while the proposed amendment was assessed at the Victorian Government level.

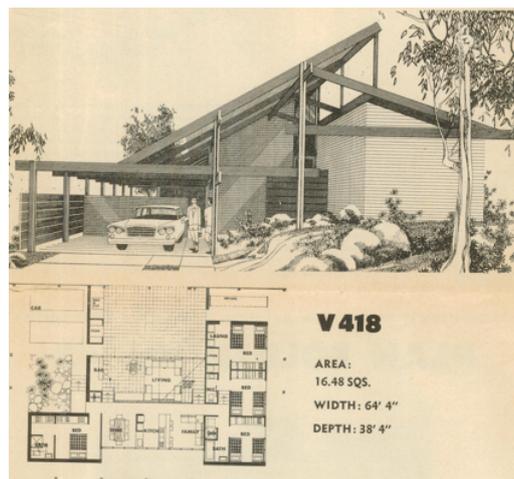
An independent planning panel was appointed in late 2019 by Planning Panels Victoria to review the draft Kew Heritage Gap Study, now known as Planning Scheme Amendment C294. Following site inspections by the panel, thirty-seven submitters were represented at the public panel hearings. In January 2020 the planning panel report was presented to Council. Recommended modifications included: abandon applying the heritage overlay to two of the properties within the proposed Clifton Estate Residential Precinct; remove the proposed Goldthorns Hill and Environs Precinct and the western side of the proposed Bradford Estate Precinct; and further investigate seven properties included in these precincts for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as individual places of significance.

Council officers have recommended acceptance of the Panel's key recommendations with the exception of the removal of the western side of Bradford Estate Precinct. Endorsement of the officers' response to the Panel's recommendations by Council's Urban Planning Special Committee is required before the amendment is referred to an Ordinary Meeting of Council for adoption and submission to the Minister for Planning for final approval. The report was due to be considered at the UPSC Meeting on 23 March 2020, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The matter has been deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

The issues and opinions surrounding heritage protection approach the complexity of medieval theology and the pace of the statutory planning process is slow, almost no one gets what they want..... and now a global pandemic has intervened.

DAVID WHITE

The Kew Historical Society has long been active in the local history and heritage field, working with local government and other organisations within Boroondara. We are able to contribute to heritage issues due to the active involvement of members and the depth and extent of our research library and archival files. You can assist in protecting heritage by participating in our Research or Collections Groups and their associated activities. If you would like to be involved, please contact our Secretary at - info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au



SMALL HOMES SERVICE DESIGN V 418
The Age

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

Due to the closure of the Phyllis Hore Room and the social distancing restrictions which are currently in place, the meetings of the Kew Historical Society are suspended until further notice.

KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation of the historic Kew Court House. At present, the Court House and exhibition are closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The current exhibition is available for viewing on the Kew Historical Society website. Please send any queries to info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

NEWSLETTER

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

WEBSITES

www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

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

Kew Historical Society Inc.

Inc. No. A0010789W | ABN 97 824 890 237

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HISTORY NEWS

MCINTYRE LECTURE

CONSERVING MODERNISM IN KEW

[by] Nigel Lewis

We were fortunate to hear Nigel Lewis present this lecture on 11 March, as it was one of the last KHS events before our venue at Kew Court House had to be closed because of COVID-19. Nigel took us on a tour via his slides, of houses built mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, by some of the outstanding Victorian architects of the period: Robin Boyd, Anatol Kagan, Roy Grounds, Graeme Gunn, Geoffrey Danne, John and Phyllis Murphy, and of course, Peter and Dione McIntyre, in whose honour the lecture is named.

Many of these houses are concentrated in the precinct around Belvedere, Carnsworth and Studley Avenues and Yarra, Stawell and Fenwick Streets, so can be called buildings of the 'Studley Park Modern' style. Not all, however, have been protected from demolition, as some had been altered from their original design and were not included in the Heritage Overlay of the area. It is possible to walk around the Studley Park area of Kew to observe the houses which are important examples of the modernist style. Among those that Nigel deemed most significant were:

McIntyre House, 2 Hodgson Street (Peter McIntyre, 1954).

Guss House, 18 Yarra Street (McGlashan & Everist, 1961).

Muspratt House, 14 Carnsworth Avenue (Geoffrey Danne, 1955).

Danne House, 5 Yarra Street (Geoffrey Danne, 1955).

Lyall House, 13 Belvedere (Anatol Kagan, 1956).

Clemson House, 24 Milfay Avenue (Grounds, Romberg & Boyd, 1959).

Haughton James House, Molesworth Street (Grounds, Romberg & Boyd, 1957).

Lawrence House and flats, Studley Avenue (Robin Boyd, 1967).

Nigel Lewis referenced valuable sources for those interested in further investigating these buildings *Neil Clerehan, Best Australian Houses* (Melbourne, Cheshire, 1961); and *Peter Wille - Out Driving* - an exhibition at the State Library of Victoria showing photographs of buildings including several of the Kew houses listed above.



ARCHITECTURAL SKETCH FOR THE NEW KEW RECREATION CENTRE, 1986

KHS

TRACING HER STEPS

Tracing Her Steps: Women in Boroondara Local Government was a feature exhibition at Hawthorn Arts Centre celebrating the women leaders who have served as Mayors in the City of Boroondara and former cities of Kew, Camberwell and Hawthorn.

The exhibition formed part of Council's 2020 International Women's Day celebrations on 18 March. The booklet *Tracing Her Steps: Women in Boroondara Local Government* was produced by Council to acknowledge 100 years since the first woman was elected to local government in Victoria. It details the contribution of women in our local government area by highlighting the 17 women who served in the highest position of governance within our municipality.

The first female candidate, Mrs E.B. Blagdon, stood for Council in the Power Ward for the City of Hawthorn in 1930 but was not elected. In 1948, Marie Dalley became the first woman elected to Council in the City of Kew. She made history once again in 1954, when she became the first female Mayor of Kew. In the years since these pioneering women ran their electoral campaigns, 53 women have served as Councillors and 17 have served as Mayors in the City of Boroondara and the former Cities of Kew, Camberwell and Hawthorn in order of their service as Mayor.

Marie Dalley JP (Kew)

Dorothy Yvonne Laver OAM JP (Camberwell)

Phyllis Catherine Hore JP (Kew)

Betty May Marginson AM JP (Hawthorn)

Kaye Cole JP (Kew)

Dr Rosalind McMillan AM (Hawthorn)

Sonia Jill O'Brien JP (Kew)

Jill Short (Hawthorn)

Laraine Patricia Beattie (Camberwell)

Barbara Van Ernst AM JP (Hawthorn)

Jane Laidley Nathan (Hawthorn)

Loretto Davey (Boroondara)

Meredith Butler (Boroondara)

Judith Voce (Boroondara)

Coral Ross (Boroondara)

Jane Addis (Boroondara)

Cynthia Watson (Boroondara)

Cr Marie Dalley and Cr Kaye Cole are profiled in our history of the chairmen and mayors of Kew. Our President, Judith Voce, was the first Councillor representing the Kew area to become Mayor of Boroondara.

FRIENDLY REMINDER

The annual member subscription to the Kew Historical Society is due on 1 July 2020. The renewal form is on the last page of this Newsletter. Where possible, please make your payment by EFT using the bank details on the last page and putting your last name and the word, membership, in the subject or reference line.

RANGE VIEW

A FORMER MANSION IN MONT VICTOR ROAD

This is a brief account of a house called *Range View*. Not the *Rangeview* in Mary Street, Kew which still stands, but another house which was built in the mid 1880s in Mont Victor Road on land originally purchased by Charles Vaughan on 16 October 1851. This was undulating land, wooded, fertile and beautiful. Well-to-do Melbourne residents took up the land and built country-style villas. Kew's elevation and undulating character have ensured the continuation of its charm as a picturesque and serene suburb.

In the mid 1880s, a Mr Long built his house in Mont Victor Road. It was a large, late Victorian two-storeyed Italianate style house, which he named *Range View*, hoping to enjoy its commanding views. Initially, he didn't live there because his wife found the country too lonely, as it was at that time the only house in Mont Victor Road.

Killerton, (later named *Moonbria*) the house of Mr George Frost, and *Myrtle Hill* were not too far away. *Hillsbury*, later named *Grange Hill*, was down across the fields and through bushland. Another house was *Woodlands*, originally owned by Mr Hughes, and later the home of Henry Phipps (Mayor of Kew 1876-7). *Woodlands* was bought by the FCJs (Faithful Companions of Jesus) (Genazzano) in September 1888. Rimington's Nursery, established in 1877, was on the east side of Mont Victor Road. Streets as we know them did not exist. One can imagine the dirt tracks, rough paths and bushland.



RANGE VIEW. MCALPINE BROS, RICHMOND, 1898

Courtesy Genazzano FCJ Archives

The FCJ nuns were looking for a temporary residence to which to move their boarding school, begun as Vacluse College FCJ, from Richmond. They initially rented *Range View*, residing there for two years – 2 May 1889 to April 1891 - while their William Wardell designed convent, Genazzano, was being built.

Eight sisters and thirty boarders lived at *Range View* which was filled to capacity. The children milked the cow and did other chores. French was spoken at the Saturday evening dinner table.

Memories of the Sisters who moved into *Range View* provide a charming picture of Mr Long's house and its environs:

'... It is built in the newest style and is ..., quite in the country at a short distance from our fine property 'Woodlands'. Our temporary dwelling is a two storeyed square building with a wing to the west; the north and east sides possess a double storeyed verandah ... This verandah is surmounted by a belvedere which commands a beautiful view

Within the house the rooms are spacious and well ventilated, the marble chimney pieces and the different ornaments are of a finish and elegance to which we are quite unaccustomed in our houses, we must say however that the apartments destined for the use of the community are more modest and quite in conformity with Holy Poverty.'

Water was a problem and had to be collected in pails from a tank ten minutes away. There was no gas. Candlesticks and candelabras were the order of the day. Optimism runs through both the recollections and the records of those early days. At Easter in 1891, the community moved into their new convent. Genazzano FCJ College began in earnest.

Mr Long and his family returned to *Range View* in 1891, living there until 1895. His daughters, although not Catholic, attended Genazzano. Subsequently, Mr Gardiner rented the house until 1898, followed by Judge Leo Cussen, (later Sir Leo) who occupied the house until 1902. Mr Warne then rented it and remained there until about 1916, when he died.

Range View, which stood in nearly five acres with lawns, gardens, orchards and stables, then became a school from 1921, named St Andrew's College and directed by the Reverend John T. Lawton (1878-1944), previously minister at the Presbyterian Church in South Yarra. Reverend Lawton, a pacifist, returned from duties in London where he had worked as chaplain for the Australian Imperial Force at the end of the First World War. Deeply impressed by Homer Lane's psychology of education, he resigned from his ministry, and like many in those post war years who tried to find an answer to social unrest and misery, opened his school. The new school incorporated Woodbury Ladies' College in Cotham Road run by the Misses Macey. Woodbury formed the nucleus of the new upper school. In effect, Lawton bought the Maceys' goodwill. Both Misses Macey taught at St Andrew's, Hetty Macey as headmistress. At the beginning of 1921, there were 128 students: 16 boys and 112 girls. The school attracted a reasonably wealthy middle-class clientele who were receptive to progressive educational methods.

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RANGE VIEW (from page 4)

In September 1921, approval by the Education Department was received and in November 1922, all sections of the School were registered – Secondary, Primary and Sub Primary.

Modifications and additions to the existing buildings were made, approved by the Education Department and opened in June 1922. New tennis courts were built in 1925. By now there were 176 pupils.



ST ANDREW'S JUNIOR SCHOOL, c.1926

Author's aunt, second back row, second from left.
Collection: Piesse Family

The School's motto was *Veritas Liberabit Vos* – 'Truth will make you free'. Pupils planned their own learning and were encouraged to participate in decision making. Classroom competition was banned. Prize giving was considered pernicious as Lawton saw it as a threat to real education.

The curriculum was varied and comprehensive and Lawton attracted talented staff. Miss Margaret Lyttle was the autonomous directress of the Junior School. Esperanto was taught and sometimes used at school performances. The emphasis was on informality and anti-authoritarianism. Girls later remembered Lawton's riposte to critics: 'This is not a school where we do what we like but a school where we like what we do.'

The 1930s Depression had an unfortunate effect on enrolments and there was discord between Reverend Lawton and Miss Lyttle, who subsequently resigned. Reverend Lawton retired at the end of 1931, when the School was leased and conducted by Miss Dumaresq until the end of 1933.

The Redemptorist Fathers were '...desirous of having ... a mission house in some convenient place whence we could conduct missions and retreats in accordance with our Rule'. *Range View* was suggested by Mr Hedigan, a house agent. The agent's account gives us an idea of St Andrew's generous facilities. In his description of the house, we learn that on the ground floor there was a drawing room, a dining room, a library, an office, an entrance hall, an inner hall, a breakfast room, a kitchen, a wash house, a scullery and three pantries.

Upstairs were six bedrooms. Outside was a large weatherboard school room, a two storeyed brick building used as a laboratory, two tennis courts and a basketball court, another large open classroom and a three-roomed hardwood dwelling.

Reverend Lawton was keen to sell. In 1935, the estate was bought for £5,125, by the Redemptorists and opened and blessed by His Grace Archbishop Mannix on Sunday 29 September 1935.

'Domestic Chronicles' were recorded to capture activities, gardening, plantings, repairs, improvements, modifications, animal husbandry, comments on the weather, visitors, etc., over the next 25 years; a snapshot of social history.

On Wednesday 3 March 1960, two acres, a considerable portion of the estate was sold in allotments. Ten residential blocks were sold, Majella Court was gazetted, and the building of the present monastery was begun with funds from the land sales. A plaque commemorating the completion of the Redemptorist Monastery of Our Lady of Good Counsel was blessed by the Most Reverend D. Mannix DDLLD on 25 December 1959, and the chapel on 18 December 1960.

The old mansion, *Range View* was demolished and the land on which it stood was sold. Remains of its history can be seen in old trees in suburban gardens, in the old fruit trees and in the flat land, probably courts and playing fields to the north of the Redemptorist Monastery in Majella Court.

The references used in compiling this account include a literature search as well as investigation in a number of archives. Special thanks are due to Professor Michael Kelly, for providing me with access to the archives of the Redemptorist Fathers; to Julianne Barlowe of Genazzano FCJ Convent, and to Preshil, The Margaret Lyttle Memorial School. I would also like to acknowledge the following individuals: Ruth Thomas, a granddaughter of the Reverend John Lawton; Stephanie Charlesworth (née Armstrong) and Marjorie Christie (née Shaw), close friends of Margaret Hollis (née Piesse); and Marjorie Brinsmead.

FELICITY RENOWDEN, 2020

COLLECTION NEWS

Since the last newsletter we have accepted a donation from Mr Peter Neville of subdivision plans, real estate brochures, and newspaper clippings.

Our collections are designed to encompass the cultural, social, political and economic history of Kew and its environs. If you would like to discuss donating an item to our collection, please contact our archivist – archivist@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF LOUIS KAHAN

1905–2002

Louis Kahan, the world-renowned artist and designer, was a Kew resident for more than 40 years but his story begins far away.

Between 1848 and 1914, Vienna's population multiplied five times while its Jewish population increased 35 times. Jews went to Vienna for many reasons, some were fleeing pogroms in Ukraine and Russia, while others went to join the Czechs, Serbs, Germans, Italians and Poles who made it one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Europe. This mixture of nationalities formed a multicultural, egalitarian, cultured and intellectual society. During the Nineteenth century as the capital of the Austrian Empire and later Austria-Hungary, it temporarily became one of Europe's biggest cities. Following the end of the First World War, Vienna became the capital of the Republic of Austria.

Into this exciting milieu came Wolf Kahan, regimental tailor to the Czar's troops in Kiev. Wolf and his wife Dina were among those who fled the 1903–6 pogrom in Ukraine to the safe haven of Vienna. Their son Ludwig, nicknamed Louis, was born in Vienna in 1905. Wolf opened a high-class tailoring business producing bespoke clothing for Vienna's elite.

Young Louis dreamed of becoming an artist, but upon leaving school, deferred to his father's wishes and became an apprentice in the family business. He had been a prolific drawer from an early age and during his apprenticeship sketched the costumes and famous clients who came for fittings. Although the onset of the First World War did not pose an immediate threat to Vienna, the city was affected by an embargo which created a shortage of food and clothing. It's not known what effect this had on the Kahan business, but Louis was able to successfully complete his apprenticeship as a master tailor and go to Paris in 1925.

There he joined the haute couture house of the famous Paul Poiret, initially as a tailor but quickly becoming a house designer. While working for Poiret, he met many artists including Matisse, Vlaminck and Dufy. He spent five years in Paris, at that time the art capital of the world, sometimes freelancing as a designer for stage and screen. In 1930 he returned to Vienna to help in the family business, but biannually visited Paris to sketch the fashion collections for Viennese magazines and journals. The business was a family affair, his mother and younger sister Vally being accomplished dressmakers. In 1936, he settled finally in Paris where he worked as an illustrator and fashion designer. Immersed in the vibrant cultural life of the city, he designed costumes for *Les Folies-Bergère*, and started life drawing in Montparnasse.

In Paris at the outbreak of Second World War, Louis' Austrian passport meant he was regarded as an enemy alien by the French military and he was not permitted to join the Army.



LOUIS AND LILY KAHAN, PARIS, 1990s

Private Collection

The French Foreign Legion, renowned for not being fussy, took him on as a Legionnaire. Louis spent the war years in Algeria where he eventually became a war artist. He completed over 2,000 portraits of hospitalised soldiers, later donated to the Red Cross, designed war posters, drew and painted portraits for colleagues and officers and decided to make art his career.

On his return to Paris after the war, he worked for *Le Figaro* as a staff artist, sketching the court scenes of the war trials. Soon, Louis mastered printmaking, a technique new to him, his usual mediums being pen and ink, sometimes washed with ink or mixed with snow, soft pencil and watercolour.

By 1947, Louis had not seen his family for nearly ten years, so decided to visit his parents and sister in Perth where they had lived since 1938, after Austria was annexed by Germany. En route to Australia, he visited the United States where he was reunited with fellow Viennese Otto Preminger and Billy Wilder, a childhood friend.

Jews who arrived in Australia as a result of events beginning in Europe in the 1930s were of necessity resilient, and focussed on making their way in what they may have seen as a cultural backwater. Many came from sophisticated and cultured backgrounds – a life that had been erased by the Holocaust - and they were determined to grasp the opportunities life in Australia offered. Melbourne is said to have absorbed more Holocaust survivors than any other Australian city. Some entered the arts in its various forms, academia, the professions and business while other highly skilled professionals became labourers, until they were able to re-establish themselves as educated and accomplished members of society.

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THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF LOUIS KAHAN (from page 6)

The theatres, operas and galleries they had left behind in Europe were sorely missed by these displaced people. The migrants formed close-knit supportive communities in their adopted homeland.

Louis worked in Perth for three years making friends and working feverishly on his painting and drawing. He became recognised as a serious painter and regarded these years as important in his artistic development. He loved the slow pace of life in Perth as it was a great contrast to previous places in which he had lived. When Louis arrived in Melbourne, after leaving Perth, he found a more sophisticated audience for his art.

Working with Stefan Haag, a Vienna Boys Chorister who had been stranded in Australia by the war, he designed the sets and costumes for *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *The Consul*, *Cosi fan Tutte* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann* in 1954. Louis' designs for the National Opera Company of Victoria and later for the Australian Opera were innovative, and as they did not build on previous interpretations, he was highly acclaimed.

Louis met Lily Isaac while visiting Perth. Following their wedding in 1954, they lived in Paris for five months visiting friends, and later in London. During this period, Louis worked as a theatrical tailor and illustrator for fashion journals as well as designing the costumes for *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* for the National Welsh Opera Company. Their daughter Rachelle was born in London during this period. Following a meeting with Yehudi Menuhin, Louis produced a series of musician's portraits which were exhibited at the Royal Festival Hall.

Returning to Australia in 1958, the family spent a year in Perth before a very successful exhibition there prompted them to move to Melbourne, where their daughter Dena was born in 1960. Louis taught life drawing and began to paint prolifically. His portraiture became a defining style, and in 1961 he submitted a portrait of Albert Tucker for the Archibald Prize. With his portrait of Patrick White he won the Prize in 1962. Both portraits were acquired by the National Gallery of New South Wales.

Louis was a versatile artist and experimented with pencil, charcoal, water colour and pen and ink. He was influenced by artistic movements but maintained his own style throughout his career.

In 1960, while visiting Lily's brother nearby, Louis and Lily decided to make their home in Kew. Louis came upon a tennis court for sale beside an established house and immediately bought it as a home site. He and Lily loved the peace and tranquillity of Kew and employed Ernest Millston, a little-known émigré architect from Czechoslovakia to design their modernist home. They moved in later that year immediately construction was completed. Lily recalls that initially, the house leaked as the windows had not been properly sealed against the weather. Their daughters Rachelle and Dena became students at Preshil in Kew and Louis donated paintings to the school to be auctioned for fundraising. Today Preshil has a significant collection of Louis' works including a portrait of Margaret Lyttle, the school's founder.

Around 1971, the architect Kevin Borland, himself a Preshil parent, designed the renovation and extension to the Kahan house and studio. A highly regarded architect, Borland also designed the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre in Armadale and the important *Paton House* at Portsea.

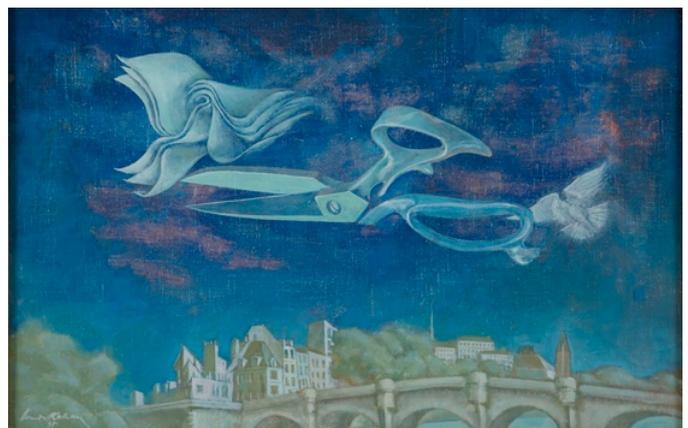
For 20 years, Louis created portraits and illustrations for *Meanjin*, a progressive literary journal. He also provided portraits to *Australian Painters* and *Uncommon Men*. The stained-glass windows in the synagogue of the Kew Hebrew Congregation in Malmsbury Street are a local example of his work. These brightly coloured windows are powerful and modernistic, showing Louis' commitment to providing integrated designs for the windows. Another of his stained-glass windows can be seen in the Queen's College Chapel at the University of Melbourne.

Louis was a talented painter, sketcher, draftsman and designer. Drawing was the basis for all his works, and he regarded this skill as essential for every artist. His works are displayed in the National Gallery of Victoria which holds 63 of his works, the National Gallery of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, the National Library of Australia and the state galleries of New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. He is also represented in public collections overseas, including the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris, the Albertina Museum in Vienna and in New Zealand, the USA and Israel. The depth and range of his skill is impressive and in 1993 he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for Service to the Arts. The extraordinary life of Louis Kahan and the contribution he made to the development of Australian art, in both variety and extent, is enormous.

In post-war monolingual Australia, his fluency in English, French, German and Italian must have been remarkable. Added to that was passable Spanish. Russian, the mother tongue of his parents, he never mastered. It was not a language spoken at home and he found it difficult to learn. Lily, Louis' widow describes her late husband as warm and loving; a gentle man with a wonderful sense of humour.

Louis died at his Kew home in July 2002, at the age of 97 years.

DESLEY REID, 2020



KAHAN, LOUIS (1905-2002), STILL LIFE OVER PARIS
Private Collection

FORMER METHODIST MEN'S FELLOWSHIP HALL

In the grounds of Andale School, behind the Kew Uniting Church in Highbury Grove, there is a small idiosyncratic classroom building. Designed in the Melbourne office of Walter Burley Griffin, it stands apart, a small vision from America's mid-western prairie.

Identified in the Victorian Heritage Register's listings as the 'Former Men's Fellowship Room', built circa 1919 to a design prepared in the office of Walter Burley Griffin, probably under the supervision of Roy Lippincott, it was classified by the National Trust in 1992. A 2016 heritage grading assessment prepared by Context Pty Ltd for the Kew Heritage Gap Study suggests a slightly different provenance for the building, identifying it as the 'Men's Fellowship Hall', dating it to 1922 and attributing its design to church member and architect Eric Nicholls (1902-65) who spent most of his youth in Kew. He studied at Swinburne Technical College before completing his articles with the Melbourne firm, Haddon & Henderson between 1913 and 1921. It was at this firm that he was introduced to Robert Haddon's pursuit of a distinctively Australian style of architecture. After 1921, Nicholls gained employment in the Melbourne office of Marion Mahony Griffin and Walter Burley Griffin. The Men's Fellowship Room is his first known independent design.

The difference between the entry on the Victorian Heritage Register and the 2016 draft heritage grading assessment histories is indicative of the increased rigor and changes of emphasis that have occurred in Australian architectural historical research during the twenty-four years which separate the 1992 National Trust Citation and the 2016 heritage grading assessment. During this time, additional archival material has become available to historical researchers, and the contribution of women in architecture, including Marion Mahony Griffin, has become more widely acknowledged.

In 1894 Marion Mahony was the second woman to graduate in architecture from the Boston Tech, now the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Following her return to Chicago, she became the first licensed female architect in the state of Illinois and a key member in the architectural office of Frank Lloyd Wright, before her marriage to Walter Burley Griffin. Her contribution to the architectural practices of both Wright and Griffin is now recognised as having been most significant.

In June 2006, the National Library of Australia acquired the records of the Griffins' practice. Named after the couple's Australian office partner, Eric Milton Nicholls, the collection was purchased from his children, the late Glynn Nicholls and his sister Marie. Assembled over some 40 years, it comprises over 2,500 items. As one might expect of architecturally related collections, it includes a considerable range of original drawings, maps, blueprints



ENTRANCE, FORMER METHODIST MEN'S FELLOWSHIP HALL
David White, 2019

and other reproductions, and photographs and lantern slides of the Griffins' public and private works, as well as views of structures under construction. Some of the drawings evince the hand of others working in the Griffins' studio, including, along with Nicholls, for instance, Roy A. Lippincott.

Roy Lippincott and his wife Genevieve, (Walter Burley Griffin's sister), had come to Australia in 1914 with Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin. Lippincott had graduated from Cornell University in 1909 and had assisted the Griffins with their design for Canberra, moving to Australia as their head draftsman. In 1921 Lippincott and Edward Billson, the Griffins' first Australian employee, won an international design competition for the Arts Building at the University of Auckland. The pair left the Griffin office and formed their own partnership. The Lippincotts moved to Auckland to supervise the construction of the new building and remained in New Zealand until they returned to America in 1939.

The departure of Lippincott and Billson left a significant gap in the Griffin office and a note of relief might be detected in Marion Mahony Griffin's recollection of 19-year-old Eric Nicholls' first appearance in the office in 1921, "As a blond youth just out of Manual Training School he dropped in to the office looking for a job. A look at his lettering was enough for me, so I told him to come in again. I thought he could be useful to Mr Griffin. "I think so", he [Nicholls] said. He was. Nicholls was an exquisite draftsman." Nicholls' response to Marion also suggests that he was not lacking in self-confidence.

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FORMER METHODIST MEN'S FELLOWSHIP HALL (from page 8)

Eric Nicholls' family, parents Edgar Henry Nicholls and Henrietta (née Beament), and his older sister Bertha Ada Nicholls, had moved to Hawthorn from Linton near Ballarat in 1914. Nicholls' father opened a business in Burwood Road Hawthorn. 'The Center' ironmongery and crockeryware emporium was located at 433 Burwood Road opposite the Salvation Army Citadel. [The site is now occupied by the Swinburne University of Technology's Advanced Technologies Centre.]

By 1915, the family were living at 151 Wellington Street, Kew. Edgar Henry Nicholls had been superintendent of the Linton Methodist Sunday School for 16 years prior to his departure from Linton as well as having filled all the other positions in the church open to laymen, and it seems that the Nicholls family became members of the congregation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Highbury Grove. This association seems to have provided young Eric with his first architectural commission.

The Griffin office was unusual in having a policy of encouraging its employees to take on commissions of their own and allowing them to make use of the studio and its facilities for this work. This may explain the confusion in the attribution of a building such as the Men's Fellowship Hall for architectural historians more versed in the English hierarchical tradition. Charles Dickens satirised this tradition through the character Seth Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit*; a greedy architect who, instead of teaching his students, lives off their tuition fees and has them do work that he passes off as his own.

The carefully detailed appearance of Nicholls' Men's Fellowship Hall design owes more to the American Prairie School background of the Griffins than the English Arts and Crafts approach of his teacher and first employer Robert Haddon, whose 1908 book *Australian Architecture: a technical manual for those engaged in architectural and building work* placed him in the vanguard of those seeking a uniquely Australian approach to architecture.

More or less square in plan, its steeply pitched Marseilles pattern terracotta tiled gable roof is trimmed with a deep, rough sawn timber fascia. The gable fascia line projects outwards towards the ridge and overlaps the angled fascias concealing the box gutters and boxed eaves over the side walls. This roof form is similar to that of the 1917 Lippincott house in Eaglemont and typical of the Griffins earlier work.

There are projecting bays in the centre of both gable end walls and grouped windows wrapping around each corner of the building. The windowsill line is extended around the building with a matching projecting moulding. Below this moulding, the round edged weatherboard wall cladding is mitred at all external corners to form a continuous plinth element. Above the moulding, the vertical elements of the window frames as well as the matching treatment of the door jambs and external corners of the projecting bays in the gable end walls, extend vertically to the underside of the projecting eaves.



JAMES BEAMENT (1864-1932) LANDSCAPE MURAL
David White, 2019

The central bays are also clad with round edged weatherboards and above the windows there are flat infill panels. The windows on the eastern side of the building have a geometric pattern of glazing bars applied to the outside face of the glass. The two doors in the northern wall feature bold prismatic decoration.

Inside, there are cupboards that are built into the projecting bays of the gable end walls and a continuous pelmet runs around the room at window head height. Similar pelmets concealing indirect electric lighting were a feature of many buildings from the Griffin studio. The pitched battened ceiling is at a lower slope than the roof above and in the internal gable ends above the pelmet there are murals depicting Australian landscapes.

The murals are attributed to Eric Nicholls' uncle, James Beament, whose 1925 house at 33 Uvadale Grove was also designed in the Griffin studio. A mural by Beament of a similar style was a feature of the foyer of the Capitol Theatre, although Marion Mahony Griffin, describing the Capitol Theatre in *The Magic of America*, remembers the mural as "...painted by Mr Nicholls of Melbourne." An intriguing possibility.

The citation on the Heritage Register refers to there being approximately 30 chairs, designed by the architect for use by bible students, remaining in the former Men's Fellowship Room and the neighbouring church buildings. These are of a Craftsman style typical of the Griffins' furniture, and are distinctive in their detailing. These chairs have disappeared from the site; however the National Gallery of Victoria Australian Decorative Art Collection holds two of these chairs, donated in 1992 by the Uniting Church, Kew.

DAVID WHITE, 2020

CHAIRS FROM THE MEN'S FELLOWSHIP ROOM, WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH, KEW (1919)

Eric Milton NICHOLLS (designer) WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH CONGREGATION, Kew (maker)

Courtesy National Gallery of Victoria



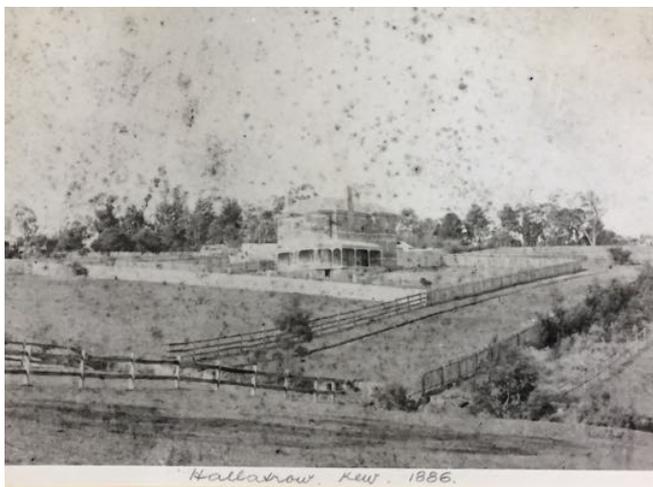
HALLATROW

A NOTABLE VILLA IN STUDLEY PARK

FGA Barnard's *Jubilee History of Kew* (1910) includes a photograph of 'Snow Falling at Hallatrow' [right], added presumably due to the novelty of the event rather than for the significance of the house and its occupants, which are otherwise unmentioned. *Hallatrow*, now with an address in Holroyd Street, has previously not been regarded as significant historically or architecturally. Perhaps this is due for a re-appraisal.

Hallatrow might have remained off the radar if Gregor Evans had not visited our archive in February with a number of items to donate. Among these were two nineteenth century photographs of his former family home at 6 Holroyd Street. Augmenting these were some documents written by a descendent of the first owner of the house.

As a resident of Studley Ward, but on the south side of Studley Park Road, a swift trip by car to view the house became necessary. Unfortunately the aspect from the street of the house was obscured by a high front fence and hedged trees. An aerial view using Google maps gave some idea of the size of the house, but its landholding was strictly diminished from that shown in one of the photographs of the house [below] that formed part of the donation.



HALLATROW, KEW, 1886
Gift of Gregor Evans, 2020

The photograph, while difficult to interpret due to fading and old foxing, shows the two-storey house surrounded by paddocks. Given the slope of the land, the camera must have been positioned to the northwest of the house, looking up towards the corner of Holroyd and Barry Streets. The photograph does not reveal the extent of the ownership of all of the treeless paddocks. All the land bounded by Holroyd Street, Princess Street, Wills Street and the Yarra River had once comprised Crown Land Allotments 60 and 61, purchased by Thomas Wills in 1845 and 1847, and used for farming until the



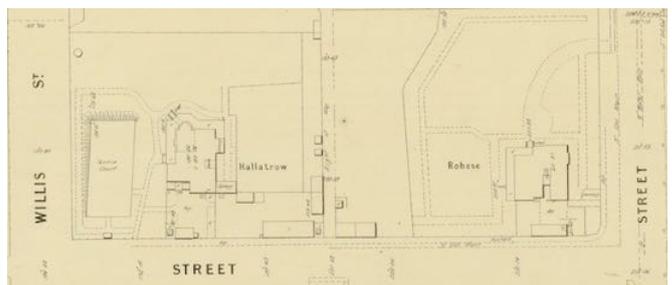
SNOW AT HALLATROW, AUG 1899
Gift of Gregor Evans, 2020

attempted sale of the land in the Rosebank Estate and Mt Pleasant Estate subdivisions of the early 1880s. Pru Sanderson in the *City of Kew Urban Conservation Study* (1988) observes that these subdivisions, at least at the first attempt to sell these new lots, were initially unsuccessful.

Perhaps that might explain why, in the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan No 1346 (MMBW, 1904), most of the land north-west of Barry Street in the 1886 photo of *Hallatrow* (left) remained open farming land. In 1904 only two houses are recorded on the plan (below) between Barry and Wills Street (later Stawell Street): *Rohese* and *Hallatrow*. The plan confirms some aspects of the 1886 photograph, where the inner fence clearly represents the extent of the newly built two-storey brick house.

To complicate matters further, streets in this section of Studley Park have often been re-named. What is now Holroyd Street was sometimes referred to as both A'Beckett Street West and Conran Street, while the northern section of Stawell Street was called Wills Street. The re-naming of streets in unsuccessful subdivisions within Studley Park seems to be a feature of the area.

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[Extract] MMBW DETAIL PLAN NO. 1346 (1904)
Courtesy State Library of Victoria

HALLATROW (from page 10)

So a preliminary investigation, based on subdivision plans, proved ephemeral and left un-answered basic questions such as who designed *Hallatrow*, when it was built and for whom. This is where a number of the items donated by Gregor Evans' proved invaluable.

One of these items is a document, written in 1986 by Jim Brodribb, the grandson of the first owner, Thomas Brodribb. In 'A Toast', he recounts aspects of his grandfather's life, including his birth near the village of Hallatrow, Somerset, in 1836, as well as details of his family's later occupation of the house. Information about the first owners of houses can often be scant but in this case, there is extensive information about Thomas Brodribb in both contemporary newspapers and published biographical material; including an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Volume 3, 1969).

In February 1923, when Thomas Brodribb died at the age of 87, contemporary newspapers were fulsome in their praise of his contributions to colonial life. They refer to his migration to Victoria 60-years previously, his role with Sir Frederick Sargood in establishing the Victorian Cadet Movement and his professional role as Secretary of the Victorian Department of Education.

Thomas Brodribb rose in the Department to be appointed an Inspector of Schools in the Western District. His appointment in 1869 was both supported and challenged in letters to *The Herald*. His qualifications as a Master of Arts (Universities of London and Melbourne) and his role as Headmaster of Christ School in Geelong were evidenced in his defence.

Seven years later, while conducting an inspection of schools in the Warrnambool area, he was to suffer a grisly accident when his carriage collided with another vehicle and over-turned. He suffered severe facial injuries and 'his lips were cut clean through'. Following his recovery, he was to suffer a bout of typhoid fever in 1882, and according to the *Riverine Herald*: 'now lies at his residence in Kew'. From this personal calamity, we are able to identify with some certainty that *Hallatrow* had been completed.

Thomas Brodribb is not only interesting due to his seminal role in colonial education but also for his personal associations. It was reported in 1883, that the famous English actor, Henry Irvine, soon to visit Australia, was his cousin. His grandson in 'A Toast' also noted that he was a close friend of Thomas Alexander Browne (aka Rolf Boldrewood), who revised his novel *Robbery Under Arms*, at *Hallatrow*.

While Inspector-General of Schools in 1894, it is recorded that he presented to the Idiot School at the Kew Lunatic Asylum a large album: 'illustrative of the methods used in the Kindergarten system of teaching'. Presumably, the album, '...filled with most beautifully executed examples of paper pleating, paper folding, "pricked work, which is then sewed over coloured silks and cottons..."', and '...by which elements of 'arithmetic are first taught', strengthened the '...perceptive faculties and enforcing the niceness and sweetness of touch' of the inmates.

The album was created by Miss Eva Evans of Mr Sergeant's State School in Carlton at the request of Thomas Brodribb. Brodribb was to continue as Secretary of the Department of Education until his retirement in 1894.

Later newspapers, apart from those recording his death and subsequent burial in the Boroondara General Cemetery, are largely concerned with the activities of his children and their spouses.

But, returning to *Hallatrow*, it was clearly an Italianate two-storey villa of eleven rooms, built c.1882 with the architect yet to be identified. Its orientation is primarily towards the Yarra River to originally take account of the views. Like many of its contemporaries, the interiors and exterior have been much changed over time, possibly resulting in it being overlooked as architecturally or historically significant.

When comparing the photograph (below) with the 1904 outline plan, one can see that the left veranda facing Holroyd Street has been removed, but also that the rather awkward looking projection is shown in the plan, rather than a bricked-in veranda. The main entry was always a portico at the side of the house, while its most characteristic rooms faced north towards the river.

The Evans family took a number of photographs of the house during the period of their ownership. The interior photographs depict gracious, large rooms with ceilings that were lowered at a date post construction.



HALLATROW, 6 HOLROYD STREET
Gift of Gregor Evans

And what happened about the snow at *Hallatrow*? Of limited importance to local tabloids and broadsheets, there is a sole reference to the event in an article about the 'Melbourne Hunt Ball' on Thursday 17 August 1899, where the floor of the Prahran Town Hall: '...was polished and slippery as the streets on the previous Monday were with the alleged snow fall'.

ROBERT BAKER, 2020

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