



## **KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. 61<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019/20**

On behalf of the Committee of Management I have great pleasure in presenting the President's Report for the Kew Historical Society's 61<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting.

It certainly has been an unusual year for the Society and your Committee in particular. Since March this year, COVID-19 has affected the normal activities of the Society in a number of ways as will be identified throughout this report.

Committee of Management meetings have been held every month and during the two lockdown periods were held using the Zoom app. Although there was some initial resistance by some Committee Members to using the technology, the meetings have worked well with better than usual attendance, with the added advantage that the meetings are usually shorter!

I would like to acknowledge and personally thank the following Committee Members for their commitment and many hours of voluntary work for the Society, and for their support of me in the role of President over the past year.

David White	Vice-President
Desley Reid	Secretary
Jerome de Almeida	Treasurer (since 4 December 2019)
Robert Romanin	Acting Treasurer (until 4 December 2019)
Robert Baker	Archivist
Judith Scurfield	Curator
Mary Kelleher	
Felicity Renowden	
Julie King	
Debbie McColl-Davis	
Richard Bowen	

In addition, I thank Members of the Society who served on the various sub-committees and working groups, our official photographer Noel Kelly, and Rae Nicholls who co-ordinated the catering roster for our general meetings until lockdown restrictions intervened.

Kew Historical Society is a widely respected organisation within the City of Boroondara and the broader Victorian historical community. Its strength is in its dedicated hard-working Committee, financial stability and good governance, the support of its Members, excellent research capabilities, and our extensive collection and archives.

We are fortunate to have the support of the City of Boroondara through the provision of grants, office space, archival/collection and display space, and meeting space at the Kew Library building, as well as at the Kew Court House. We sincerely thank the Council for the provision of these premises and the various relationships with Councillors and Staff.

A disappointment for our Society this year was the outcome of the 2020/21 Council Budget process with the decision to delay the Tuck Stand project until 2025 which had previously been identified in the 2018/19 Budget with foreshadowed expenditure to be completed in the 2021/22 budget year. Despite our concerted efforts and submissions to Council during the budget process requesting them to reinstate this project in the 2020/21 Budget we were unsuccessful. However, with the formation of a newly elected Council, we will now strongly advocate to Council that they revise the 2021/22 budget forecasts to bring forward the Tuck Stand design stage from 5 years hence to commence closer to the timeline previously advised and adopted in the 2018/19 Budget.

## **CONSTITUTION**

An important change for the Society occurred at the Special General Meeting held on 12 February 2020. Members present overwhelmingly endorsed the replacement of the former October 2014 Kew Historical Society's Constitution with a new Constitution, based on the current Model Rules for incorporated associations subject to changes to reflect the current practices of the Society. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Member Brad Miles in the preparation of the new Constitution.

## **GRANTS**

In 2019/2020 we were awarded a number of grants. The largest of these was from the Government of Victoria to conserve the 83 framed mayoral portraits in our collection. The project, supervised by the Public Record Office Victoria, involved a professional conservator cleaning internally and externally each portrait, repairing frames where required, applying new backing boards and refitting the hanging systems for each portrait.

In the second six months of 2019, we also finalised two grants awarded by the City of Boroondara in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Balwyn. These were Strengthening Communities Grants catering for the Creative Communities sector. The first of these grants was for researching, editing and publishing a local history on the history of the chairmen and mayors of Kew between 1860 and 1994. This was launched in conjunction with an exhibition at the Kew Court House of a number of the conserved mayoral portraits. The second grant enabled us to purchase three laptop computers which have been used by members of our Collections Group to catalogue items in our collection. As part of this grant, we provided training for other groups in Boroondara in the use of the Victorian Collections Content Management System.

The other grant we were awarded in 2019 was funding by the National Library of Australia for a consultant to write a Preservation Needs Assessment of our collection. In early 2020 we appointed staff of Grimwade Conservation Services to carry out this assessment, but site visits had to be deferred due to COVID-19. The original deadline of 2 November 2020 for the delivery of the final report has been extended by the NLA until 31 March 2021.

At the beginning of 2020, we applied for a number of grants from the City of Boroondara. The main grant was an application for a Triennial Operations Grant, which would guarantee core funding for our major activities for the next three years (2020-2023). We were pleased to

receive funding from the City, which will commence in the 2020-21 Financial Year. In early 2020 we also applied for two further Strengthening Communities Grants: the first to research, write, edit and publish a book on the history of Kew using objects in our collection; and the second to develop a purpose-built oral history studio at the Kew Court House. Both grant applications were successful. Finally, a small grant from the City of Boroondara was received to enable us to deliver services during and post-lockdown due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

I would like to publicly acknowledge each of these funding bodies, and thank each of our members who had a hand in developing and implementing these important projects.

## **COLLECTIONS**

The Collections Group, drawn from our membership, has met weekly in order to catalogue and manage our large and varied collection. Two ongoing projects include the cataloguing and rehousing of our subject files using accepted archival techniques. Other projects have involved the ongoing cataloguing of our collection which involves accessioning, labelling, photographing and describing each collection item. To date the group has published over 4,000 items online allowing people from around Australia to view and read about items in our collection.

In 2019, the Kew Historical Society was appointed a Class-B Place of Deposit for Government Records. Since this appointment, we have had discussions with a number of Government agencies about transferring items from their collections to the Society so they can be more readily accessed by the general public.

A key responsibility we accept as a collecting organisation is keeping our collections relevant and up-to-date. This has been primarily achieved through the generous donation of items by members and friends of the Society. I would particularly like to acknowledge two large donations to our collection in 2019-20. The first, involving many hundreds of items, was a donation by MCC Kew Sports Club of archives and materials acquired by the Kew Bowling Club, the Auburn Heights Recreation Club and the Kew Heights Sports Club. This major donation occurred just before the COVID-19 lockdown, but we managed to accession, photograph and publish each item donated. We would like to thank life members of the Club – Jan Mosley and Graeme Spry – for their assistance in making this donation possible. The second donation was made by Margaret Picken, a property illustrator during the period 1983-2005. Margaret donated over approximately 1500 illustrations, mainly from Kew, but also from other suburbs in Melbourne. These have all been photographed and published online.

## **RESEARCH**

The Research Committee met monthly throughout the year with meetings conducted using ZOOM in May and June 2020 as a result of COVID restrictions on gatherings.

Completion of the Kew Civic History Project has been their major task this year. This project was funded by a Strengthening Community Grant from the City of Boroondara. The book *From Municipality to City – Chairmen & Mayors of Kew 1861-1994* was launched in October 2019. Special thanks to our Archivist Robert Baker who has worked tirelessly on this project.

Members of the Committee have researched and written articles for the KHS Newsletter and responded to public queries. Commissioned reports have been prepared including for Parkhill at 20 Hillcrest Avenue, G. T. Thompson's connection with Hibernian house at 133 High Street and the Breen family of Kew bootmakers. Research was also carried out for Artemis

Media into Joan McDonald for an episode of *Every Family Has a Secret*, including filming of a segment in which David White appeared.

Thanks to all members of the Research Committee for their participation during an unusual year ably led by David White.

## **PUBLICITY**

### **Newsletter and eBulletin**

The Research Committee continued to produce a quarterly newsletter that was capably edited by our Archivist, Robert Baker. In particular, during the many months following extended lockdown due to COVID-19, interesting articles still managed to be well-researched using a variety of online resources. For those without access to email, printing and postage was an added challenge for the last two editions. It is of note that our Secretary, Desley Reid, received many complimentary emails regarding the excellent, comprehensive and informative editions of the Newsletter during this difficult and challenging period.

The monthly eBulletin, that informs our members of upcoming events and exhibitions, promotes local societies and their events, and sometimes includes short articles, continued as a way to regularly communicate with our Members. As a result of the pandemic lockdown, exhibitions and events across most Historical Societies had to swing into an electronic delivery format. It was thought that the eBulletin should be expanded in content to provide Members with additional reading and viewing weblinks to enable consumption of diverse and interesting material to fill the otherwise long, quieter days.

Thank you to Julie King for capably taking on the role of eBulletin editor.

## **EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS**

A report on events and exhibitions held is briefer than normal because we have not been able to hold many of our usual activities, due to COVID-19. However, we rounded out 2019 in fine style, with the launch of our first major publication, *From Municipality to City: Chairmen & Mayors of Kew 1861-1994*. The book was launched by the then Mayor, Cr. Jane Addis, at a special event on 16 October, which coincided with our annual Dickinson Lecture, and it was attended by members, friends, and family or descendants of several Mayors from the 1980s and 1990s. The exhibition, based on the mayoral portraits was shown at the Kew Court House between October 2019 and March 2020, and attracted a great deal of interest.

Our next exhibition, *On Parade: 46 Years of the Kew Festival*, had a much shorter viewing period as it opened just before Melbourne's first lockdown when the Court House had to close. However, it can now be viewed online through the Society's web-page, as can an earlier exhibition *Kew Illustrated 1891*.

Monthly members' meetings were, of course, among our main activities from July to November 2019. We participated in a "Show and Tell" evening, saw a Magic Lantern show, and were addressed by the Mayor at our Annual General Meeting in September. In October our Dickinson Lecture, part of History Week, was given by Dr. Helen Harris OAM, on *The Right to Vote - The Right to Stand: the role of women in local government in Victoria*. November's meeting was addressed by Ray Brown on the stained glass company Ferguson and Urie, and was illustrated with wonderful slides, including some of stained glass windows in Boroondara. In February we were treated to an entertaining talk by Julie Scott on *Horses, Water and Very Kind People*, about the Bills horse troughs which dot Victorian country towns and some suburbs, including our own. We were fortunate to be able to hold our

McIntyre Lecture just days before lockdown began and we heard Nigel Lewis, a well-known Kew architect, speak on *Conserving Modernism in Kew*.

From August 2020 we have been able to hold our meetings online, and that will be a story for next year's report. We also participated in Open House Melbourne at the Court House, last year in the building itself, with four tours given over the weekend of 27 - 28 July. This year the equivalent event was held online, with an hour long session guided by Bridget Flood of the City of Boroondara, Robert Baker and Judith Scurfield.

Thank you Judith and Robert for all the work you do as co-ordinators of events and exhibitions.

## **BOOK SALES**

During the 2019-20 financial year three book sales were held in the Phyllis Hore Room at Kew Library. Book sales were held on Sundays 18 August 2019, 24 November 2019, and 16 February 2020 with the room being set up on the previous day. The book sale planned for 17 May 2020 was cancelled as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Gross sales total was \$5,554, with a \$2,807 payment to Boroondara Libraries, resulting in \$2,747 net income for the Kew Historical Society.

Books for the sales are either donated by the public or are de-accessioned books received from the Boroondara Library Service.

The book sale relies on volunteers to run the sale on Sundays and for setting up on the Saturday before and packing up after the sale. In view of the aging membership of the Society additional volunteers have continued to be sought through the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre to assist with setting up and packing away. These volunteers have been most helpful.

Thanks to all KHS members who have contributed to the success of the book sales during the past year, particularly David White as the Co-ordinator and driver of the book sales.

## **EXTERNAL PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

The Society is a member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Boroondara Historical Societies Association. We are also members of Council's Tuck Stand Steering Committee and the Kew Court House Tenancy Committee, and the Boroondara General Cemetery Trust Springthorpe Memorial Conservation Project. In addition, we have been active participants in the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre workshops.

## **OUR FUTURE FOCUS**

Our first priority will be the opportunity for the resumption of face to face activities in Council owned facilities under our COVID-19 safe plan approved by Council. As restrictions are eased over the coming months we will implement a plan to physically re-engage with our Members and the broader community. Since March the Society has made many changes to its manner of working to accommodate the social distancing restrictions. I believe we have managed these changes well and will be in a good position to resume normal activities when possible.

The year ahead will be busy for the Committee of Management with the implementation of the two projects funded by the Strengthening Communities Grants. In addition, the completion of the Preservation Needs Assessment of our collection will be undertaken.

We are currently negotiating with Council Staff for the opportunity to relocate our office from upstairs at the Kew Library to downstairs in the former Camcare space. This will not only provide us with additional office space for our daily activities but it will enable better connection to our archives/collection at ground level.

We will continue to work with Council to facilitate and inform the Tuck Stand Heritage Centre development.

We will support and work with the Boroondara Cemetery Trust to pursue the financial requirements to implement the Springthorpe Memorial Conservation Project.

Proactive marketing will be at the forefront of our efforts to realise broader sponsorship and partnership ventures to facilitate and increase the awareness of the importance of history and heritage values to the broader community.

Importantly, we will encourage our Members to get involved in the Society's activities to ensure the Kew Historical Society remains relevant to its membership as well as a community organisation respected and recognised as a progressive repository of historical knowledge and artefacts.

**JUDITH VOCE**  
**PRESIDENT**