

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



UNCOVERED HISTORY

In 2022, Kew Historical Society received a Small Biannual Grant from the City of Boroondara which enabled the purchase of an overhead scanner which allows members to scan newspaper cuttings, journals and books. Previously, scanning these items was a laborious, time consuming process, using our flatbed scanners, which while excellent for scanning images at a high resolution are not as successful or fast at digitising text.

Cathy Dodson, a new member of our collection team, has embarked on a project to make accessible on *Victorian Collections* the “Fairyland Cottage” visitor books, which include messages and drawings made by children and adults when visiting Jim and Grace Tabulo’s house at 57 Malmsbury Street, Kew. To initiate the project, Dorothy Rogers monograph of the history of the house, at which her grandparents had lived in the nineteenth century, was digitised and published online as a single file. Then a single visitor book from the c.1959, which included photographs, messages and drawings, was scanned to test the capability of the scanner to capture different kinds of media and text which exceeded A3 paper size. The initial scan of the book was quickly completed. Once scanned, the software included in the scanner flattened the image of the page to take account of the natural curves in the paper, caused by binding and or stapling. To do this, the scanned images were cropped to match the exact edges of the pages and then saved.

The Fairyland Cottage visitor books were once held in our rooms at the Kew Court House, and visitors would often peruse the physical copies to find an entry they made as a child, fifty or sixty years previously. When the digitising of the books is completed, and uploaded to our online section of *Victorian Collections*, these entries will be discoverable and readable by past visitors to the house. Additionally, they will provide a rich source for the study of the social history of Kew and Melbourne from the 1940s to the 1960s, the period when the Tabulos owned the property and opened it as a local, interstate, and international tourist destination.

Sometimes the history of Kew in the distant past is easier to discover than what happened within the last 50 years. The last general history of Kew by Dorothy Rogers was published in 1973.

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[Front page]

GRACE TABULO, A MYNA BIRD, AND CHILDREN

KHS Collection

UNCOVERED HISTORY (from page 1)

Twentieth century newspapers, such as the *Kew Advertiser*, are not yet available on the National Library of Australia's online TROVE service, and copyright legislation prevents the digitisation and placing online of a number of state-wide newspapers published during the last 75 years, so the period 1970 to 2000 is often a blank canvas.

The other major project undertaken using the new overhead scanner is the digitising and publishing online of *The Kewriosity Sheet* (1979-83) and *Kewriosity* (1983-94). The scanning of these multi-page community newsletters, 158 all told, took only a number of sessions and many of these are now published online. Looking for example at the December 1979 issue of *The Kewriosity Sheet* which has a feature story on the Kew Elder Citizens, one realises how much easier it would have been for the authors of *Community Spirit in Action: a history of Kew Senior Citizens 1952-2022* to have had access to the numerous references to the activities of the 'Seniors' between 1979 and 1994.

These two newsletters, like the Fairyland Cottage visitor books, are a rich source of local history. Their varied content, which provides community news as well as information about Council initiatives makes one aware of how Kew during the period was a socially progressive community. The two newsletters, especially *The Kewriosity Sheet*, detail the activities held by community groups each month, such as a 'Pool Party for 14-20s' on Monday 14 December 1979, promoted by St Hilary's Church of England, to Film Sessions at the Kew High School Community Theatre in January 1980, with an admission cost of 50 cents.

Overall, perusing numerous newsletters, a number of observations can be made. Firstly, the population of Kew and Kew East must have been much younger then given the number of articles on new day care centres and kindergartens. Secondly, that regular updates and opinions about major infrastructure initiatives such as the development of the Eastern Freeway or of the proposed SEC Powerlines along the Yarra Valley were provided to residents. And finally, and perhaps ironically, planning for successive re-buildings of the Kew Recreation Centre seem to occur in each of the decades covered by the newsletters.

Issues already indexed can be viewed on *Victorian Collections*.

ROBERT BAKER

GRANTS & SPONSORS

KHS is supported by a Triennial Operational Grant from the City of Boroondara.



[above] **PAIR OF HAND EMBROIDERED PELMETS**
Nineteenth century
Gift of Anna French, 2022
KHS Collection

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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Sir Gustav Nossal AC, CBE

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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 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 10am and 4pm. 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

www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

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

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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

2023 MCINTYRE LECTURE

JOURNEYINGS: THE 69 TRAM TURNS 16 AND GETS A MAKEOVER

Professor Janet McCalman, AC



Janet McCalman began her book *Journeyings* with the 69 (now the number 16) tram on the first day of school in 1934. This introduces the characters for her biography of a middle-class generation as they travel to their respective schools. Her lecture will follow this generation in their private and public lives through the Great Depression, the Second World War and the long post-war boom.

For much of that time, their member of parliament was Sir Robert Menzies. It was an electorate that was prosperous but not without a social conscience, shaped by their formation in church schools, the Great Depression, and World War II.

This lecture will reflect on the 'moral middle class' of Sir Robert's Kooyong, and how it resonates now with the rise of the Teals.

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH, 7.30 FOR 8PM
'JUST THEATRE', KEW COURT HOUSE
188 HIGH STREET, KEW, 3101

TICKETS

In person lecture, with refreshments \$20

Tickets at door

or through Boroondara Arts - 9278 4770

JUDITH SCURFIELD

MEMBERSHIPS

For new membership applications and renewals, please use the printed form on page 12 of this newsletter, or the online form on our website, making your subscription payment to our bank account 633 000 171300288. Please send any queries to secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

EXHIBITIONS

KEW COURT HOUSE

Our first exhibition at The Kew Court House opens mid-March and will continue until *2023 Open House Melbourne* concludes in July. The exhibition will include artefacts from the Court House before it was renovated, copies of the original architectural designs of the complex, photos from the Victorian Police Museum, as well as images from the Save The Kew Court House Campaign, and the subsequent restoration of the building.

2023 AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

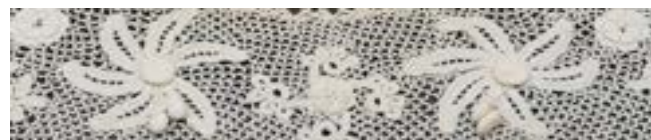
For a third year, we will be collaborating with Villa Alba Museum in an exhibition of fashion and textiles worn by Victorian women. From 22 March until 7 May, we will be displaying items over three weekends from 'The Age of Elegance: Fashion & Design in the Nineteenth Century'.

The exhibition will include items from our three major collections of nineteenth century costume donated by notable Kew families: the Hentys of *Field Place*, the Coombs of *Hope Mansell*, and the Weirs of Princess Street.

TICKETS

In person at door \$20

or through *EventBrite* (linked from Villa Alba Museum website)



THE COLLECTION

KHS has received, and wishes to acknowledge the following additions to the collection since December 2022:

- Clothing - a beige pure wool crew neck jumper designed by Prue Acton. Gift of Margaret Robinson.
- Books - a number of books on furs and furriers, from the collection of his father. Gift of Gerald Davis.
- Books - City of Boroondara Annual Reports 2001-7. Gift of Brad Miles.
- Clothing and textiles a large collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century outerwear, underwear and accessories owned by members and descendants of the Henty family of Kew. Gift of Ann James. (*See pages 3&4*)

ROBERT BAKER

NEW MEMBER

KHS is pleased to welcome Kelvin Li as a new household member.

THE HENTY COLLECTION

FROM MERINO DOWNS TO STUDLEY PARK



MIDNIGHT BLUE BODICE OF ALICE HENTY HINDSON

Gift of Ann James 2023

KHS Collection

This midnight blue bodice (*above*), which once formed part of a two piece ensemble, entered the collection, together with a large number of costumes, donated by Ann James, a descendant of Mary Ann (1821-81) and Francis Henty (1815-89) in January 2023. One might assume that as it is only part of a costume that its value would be diminished. [It is also missing one of its multicoloured velvet cuffs and sections of brown lace have come adrift, particularly from one cuff.]

However, a closer examination of the bodice, that belonged to Alice Frances (Henty) Hindson (1852-1932), youngest daughter of Mary Ann and Francis Henty, makes one aware of its aesthetic significance. Apart from the perfectly intact and lustrous silk that makes up the body of the bodice, its most striking features are the long and intact row of circular domed buttons at the front, and the velvet lapels and cuff, again with a background shade of midnight blue but with woven pink polka dots with blue centres. When the item was unwrapped, the quality of its exterior features were immediately apparent, however when opened, its quality was revealed with a lining of floral cotton chintz and extensive boning to maintain the shape. The fine stitching reinforced its superiority. The straps used at the waist to cinch the bodice closed bear the name of the dressmaker, a Mme Jay of London.

Other costumes in this important and generous donation are from an earlier era. Most notable is the wedding dress (*right*) worn by Mary Ann Lawrence on the occasion of her marriage to Francis Henty in 1842. This is one of the earliest surviving wedding dresses in public collections in Australia. Its design bears testimony to the influence on colonial fashion trends of the wedding dress worn by Queen Victoria at her marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in 1840.

Calculating its significance and value is a challenge. According to Henty family records, the wedding which took place at 8.00am on 5 January 1842 at St John's Church, Launceston, was a prelude to the couple catching the tide on their way to Portland two hours later.

What is evident is that the provenance of the wedding dress – the chain of ownership from 1842 to the present – within the Henty family is self-evident, as is its rarity. It is also aesthetically significant due to its design as a representative example of costumes of the period. What is harder to define is its historical [and commercial] value as a dress owned by the wife to be of Francis Henty, a member of the most influential European family to appropriate and farm land in Victoria in the nineteenth century.



WEDDING DRESS OF MARY ANN LAWRENCE, 1842

Gift of Ann James, 2023

KHS Collection

THE HENTY COLLECTION *(from page 4)*

Mary Ann Lawrence's husband, Francis Henty, was the youngest son of Thomas Henty, who with his family, their retainers and property had moved to the Australian colonies between 1829 and 1832. In 1834, Francis' older brother, Edward, sailed from Launceston in Van Diemen's Land to what was to become Portland in the western section of the Port Phillip District.

Francis Henty, together with the first flock of Merino sheep [in Victoria], followed some months later. The first and second generations of the Henty family established vast pastoral properties in the Western part of the Port Phillip District. Francis Henty managed *Merino Downs* near Casterton, while also living in his retirement at *Field Place* in Studley Park Road.

Mary Ann and Francis Henty were to have one son and three daughters. Apart from three dresses owned and worn by Mary Ann, dating from 1842, 1870 and 1880, most of the other costumes were owned by Alice Frances (Henty) Hindson, either before or after her marriage in 1875 to John Hindson. Apart from a very rare child's dress, worn by Alice in 1857 at the age of seven, the majority were worn by her as an adult.

Two of these are spectacular examples of fashionable attire of the 1870s, with a growing emphasis: 'on [the] back of the skirt, with long trains and fabric draped up into bustles with an abundance of flounces and ruching. The waist was lower in the 1870s than the 1860s, with an elongated and tight bodice and a flat fronted skirt.' [*History of Fashion 1840-1900*, Victoria & Albert Museum].

That the Henty women were abreast of the latest European fashion trends is apparent in Alice Henty's Bridesmaid's dress (*below*), worn by her at the marriage of her friend Miss Hopkins to Mr S.T. Staughtnton in 1874.



BRIDESMAID'S DRESS OF ALICE HENTY, 1874

Gift of Ann James, 2023
KHS Collection

The ivory silk satin jacket of this outfit is boned, tailored and fitted with many princess line panels. The front closure has handmade embroidered buttonholes and covered buttons. The collar and sleeves are decorated with gathered silk tulle frills. The peplum back features a silk cord bow decoration. The skirt with bustle and train features a central panel with hand ruching and silk satin piping. It is decorated with five rows of pleated silk tulle frills. The circumference of the hemline of the skirt is 381 cm [12ft 6 inches].

Many of these newly acquired Henty dresses will be exhibited over three weekends during the 2023 Australian Heritage Festival at Villa Alba Museum between 22 April and 7 May, supported by nineteenth century garments from our other collections.

Accepting this nationally significant collection of Henty costumes imposes on us certain responsibilities in relation to storage, conservation and exhibiting. Currently we are investigating potential grants from the Commonwealth Government and have gained approval to apply for a Significance Assessment funded by national cultural organisations. An immediate necessity is gaining mannequins through loan agreements with individual collectors or like organisations. It may also involve us purchasing additional mannequins so that we can mount each of the costumes for the exhibition.

Fashion historian, Nicole Jenkins, has viewed a number of items from this newly acquired collection and expressed admiration for the quality of a number of the outfits. Chief among these is a dusky pink polished cotton 'lobster-tail' bustle, which she thinks is the best example she has seen and is equal to those held in the Victoria & Albert Museum collection.

We are currently working out speakers for midweek lectures to be held during the period of the exhibition. We also intend to offer a guided tour of the exhibits for members. Clearly, we will require a volunteer for each room in which pieces are exhibited in the two advertised sessions per Saturday and Sunday on the three weekends on which the garments are exhibited. If you can assist, please contact Robert Baker or Judith Scurfield who will be drawing up a roster.

And finally, a very big thank you to Ann James who has entrusted us with her collection, and to Wendy and Richard Bowen who have been instrumental in the collection coming to Kew Historical Society. The new collection reaffirms the Society's costume collection as the most significant heritage collection of its kind in the City of Boroondara.

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PICTURE A LAND OF FILM AND OTHER THINGS

Kew Historical Society, in its archives, has an invitation card issued by the Mayor and Mayoress of Kew, councillor and Mrs David Samuel Moore Norris (mayoral term 1943–4) for a screening of *The Silver Fleet* and other films at the Rialto Theatre, Kew, on Thursday 10 August 1944 at 8 pm.

On Wednesday evening of the 31 August 1921, the Kew Rialto theatre was formally opened for business at 218 High Street. The manager was Kew resident Frank Rout (1866–1923). Previously he had been a manager of the spectacular Crown Theatre, Simmons Road [now Victoria Street], North Richmond, in association with a man known only by his surname 'Ferguson'.

In 1920, the Rialto Theatre Co P/L of Little Collins Street was formed to erect the cinema. Rout was known as thoroughly progressive in the conception of public entertainment via the new sensation, cinematography. Sometimes, it was referred to as 'Picture Land'. The principal architect was Kew born and educated Robert Guyon Wittlesey Albert Purchas, known as Guyon, (1862–1940). He was the son of the famed Kew resident colonial architect Albert Purchas (1825–1909) who was a long-term trustee of the Boroondara General Cemetery and instrumental in planting design, brick fencing, the iron entrance gates and the clock tower of the cemetery.

The exterior of the cinema building was an architectural wonder. People entered a sumptuous vestibule, before moving into the opulent screening room. It had the potential to seat 1,400 people. The seats were upholstered for comfort and tilted up to allow for easy pedestrian access to a seat. The seats were also tiered to allow for a maximum viewing experience. A system of fans allowed for the exhaust of hot air and replacement with fresh air.

The theatre's acoustics were state of the art. Worldwide Australian acoustic architect, H. Vivian Taylor detailed the wall panels that gave an auditory experience, which was exceptional for the time. Interestingly, there were no creditors and assets were £26,000. Rout even installed an Australian made 'electronic orchestration' of twenty instruments to accompany the silent film. It was composed of Australian wood that would expand and contract with extremes of temperature without affecting the sound.

Rout's son, Frank (c.1898–1967), known as Will or Bill, became assistant manager after his return from active service in France during WWI. After a prolonged illness Rout senior died in 1923 at an East Melbourne hospital and was buried in the Boroondara General Cemetery. His popularity was such there was a strong contingent from the cinematic fraternity, Kew public dignitaries and notable local citizens. All awaited his entourage at the cemetery gates after it left his residence at 46 Walpole Street, Kew.



Right: **EXTERIOR OF RIALTO THEATRE**
Courtesy of 'Cinema Treasures'

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AS IT HAPPENED ...

100-years-ago

- On 21 February 1923 James Venn Morgan the "father of Kew" celebrated his 100th birthday at his Charles Street home with his three daughters and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. (*The Argus*, 21 February 1923, p9)
- Following the sale of his house in Cotham Road former Prime Minister William Hughes removed his furniture to his Sassafrass residence today. (*The Herald*, 21 March 1923, p1)
- The Archbishop of Melbourne blessed and opened the new school building at St. Anthony's in Wellington Street on the afternoon of Sunday 18 March 1923. (*Advocate*, 22 March 1923, p10)
- At Collingwood yesterday, Harold James Howard, 90 years, grocer, of Denmark-street, Kew, was charged with having sold intoxicating liquor without having a licence to do so. (*The Age*, 29 March 1923, p13)

PICTURE A LAND OF FILM (continued from page 6)

After Rout's death the theatre was leased to Associated Theatres P/L of Bourke Street. The lease was for 15 years and included a clause to not 'carry on the business of motion pictures' within a radius of 10 miles [16 kms] of the Rialto, Kew. Thus, the Rialto had little competition. The rapidly developing 'Picture Palace', Hoyts, acquired the cinema in 1926.

In the year his father died, Rout junior married clerk Beryl Clarke at Holy Trinity Church, Kew. It was a society wedding and they commenced married life for a short period of time in Eglinton Street, Kew. Subsequently, they moved outside Kew, and it seems they no longer had any dealings with Picture Land. It must be noted that Will inherited a substantial amount of money on his father's death. Rout senior had become particularly financially buoyant through the new sensational technology of cinematography.

The first film projection at the Rialto was an American Metro remake of the 1913 version of *A Message from Mars*, a sci-fi fantasy comedy. That night it was followed by a tourist slide show of Norway. World renowned operatic tenor, Walter Kirby (1877–1934) was engaged to sing several vocal selections while on his Australian tour. Rout introduced live vaudeville and musical comedy to complement the filmic experience. His stage sets were renowned for their artistry, and he supplemented these with special lighting effects.

In 1952, manager Alan Downie screened *Alice in Wonderland*. It was such a sensation that the theatre was overwhelmed with white rabbits, presumably of the stuffed variety. He eventually wrote to the editor of *The Age* pleading 'NO more rabbits, please!' How he disposed of the rabbits remains a mystery as there was no further press report on his problem.

The theatre had numerous managers. In 1930 J.S. Walker introduced a special drawcard for children's matinees. For example, David Bell played the clown while an impersonation of Punchinello concocted sweets on stage for distribution, while the children watched the film. The cinema also functioned as a community centre. On his return from a WWII related overseas tour, Prime Minister Robert [Bob] Gordon Menzies was welcomed home to Kew. The Rialto was filled, and the excess crowd were directed to the Alexandra Gardens and the Drill Hall in Highbury Grove. Electronic speakers were erected so people could hear the speeches. The Kew Volunteer Defence Corps were issued with new 'tunics', and bayoneted rifles. They formed a guard of honour outside the theatre entrance. The Kew Fire Brigade Band played inside the theatre while the Kew Brass Band played in the street outside. The interior of the Rialto was decorated with the flags of Greece, United States of America, and Great Britain. The last being the Union Jack to also represent Australia and Empire.

On stage there was a patriotic tableau. Miss Strella [*sic* pseudonym] Wilson, an Australian-trained international singing sensation, sang operatic selections. The Mayor, Cr Walter John Price, [mayoral term 1941–2] presented the Prime Minister with a leatherbound printed copy of his personal address. Bob's speech was short, sharp and adamant: 'A Call to Arms'. The cinema was subsequently used as a local recruitment venue for the Australian Army.

In 1951 the Kew Mental Health Group held a fund-raising amateur mannequin parade within the theatre. The unmarried women of Kew paraded, on stage, in 'neck to knee bathers' and were photographed drinking milkshakes by press photographers. Miss Lynne Jennings won the title of Miss Mannequin of Kew and was awarded a pre-paid voucher to undertake a course to become a professional mannequin.

The theatre was an integral part of the soul of Kew. Television technology resulted in the demise of the cinema, which closed on 17 May 1961. But the building survived. After a non-descript business, the ex-cinema was purchased in 1966, by the religious organisation the Melbourne Revival Centre.

The famed Port Melbourne based contractor, Whelan the Wrecker, demolished the building in 1982 and in the name of progress, the theatre was bulldozed into almost 'lost history'.



INTERIOR OF RIALTO THEATRE
Courtesy of 'Cinema Treasures'

© 2023, SUZANNE MCWHA

STUDLEY PARK BOATHOUSE

MELBOURNE'S OLDEST BOATHOUSE

Since at least 40,000 years ago, the Wurundjeri fished, hunted and gathered food here. They were one of several clans forming the Woi Wurrung language group which collectively belong to the area drained by the Yarra River and its tributaries.

In 1803, Surveyor General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, and his party embarked on an expedition to Port Phillip and journeyed up the Yarra. Ending at Dights Falls, they proceeded inland for about half a mile (800m) on foot. This event is commemorated by a memorial cairn erected at the top of the Studley Park escarpment. By 1840, John Hodgson, who was born at Studley in the English county of Yorkshire, took a squatting licence over land on the eastern bank of the Yarra River and named the area Studley Park. He established the Studley Punt in the 1840s taking traffic across the river. The beauty of the Studley Park area was recognized by Charles La Trobe as a potential site for Government House and he engaged a gardener to lay out grounds by the Yarra on the site of Hodgson's house. La Trobe recommended the area's reservation in 1854 but permanent reservation by a Government Gazette did not occur until 1877.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was growing interest and enjoyment by residents in boating and other recreational activities on the Yarra River during the summer months. Boathouses and teahouses began to appear along the river on either side of Dight's Falls. Along with Studley Park Boathouse there were other boathouses of note, located along the stretch of the Yarra from Dight's Falls to Willsmere Road, East Kew: namely Macauleys (1910), Fairfield Park Boathouse (originally named *Willow Dell*, 1908), Rudder Grange (1904) and Chipperfield's 'Mooring's' and pontoon (1920). One could even board a Harding's Launch in the city, travel to Dight's Falls, walk over a hill and join another ferry at Studley Park Boathouse and then travel upstream for a picnic or party, Rudder Grange Boathouse Café being a popular endpoint.

Studley Park Boathouse is significant as it stands as Melbourne's oldest continually operating public boathouse on the *Birrarung* [Yarra River] and is possibly the oldest in Victoria. It is one of the two remaining boathouses along the Yarra, the other being Fairfield Park Boathouse.

In the early years of settlement, Studley Park provided popular picnic grounds on the outskirts of a rapidly growing Melbourne and was approached via a ridge on what was then named Johnston Street Bridge Road. A lot of muddy water has flowed past the boathouse at Studley Park since it was constructed for hire boats in 1893.



STUDLEY PARK BOATHOUSE, YARRA BEND PARK, KEW

Courtesy: Mat Connolley, 2006

It was the Burn family that established this first small boathouse business on the Yarra and soon after named the property *Riversdale*. The family operated the business for 76 years. Today, this same boathouse is known as the Studley Park Boathouse. William Burn, the proprietor, built boats that were a copy of Thames River boats and boat building and then canoe building became an important part of the business. An 1898 MMBW plan shows the *Riversdale* complex consisting of a separate residence and a combined boatshed and refreshment rooms with a small fernery behind. A second boathouse nearby was built by Donald Burn in the 1890s.

Floods were a major factor in the history of boathouses in the section of the Yarra above Dight's Falls. There are twenty-six major floods listed by Melbourne Water between 1839 and 1974. *The Weekly Times* [Saturday 23 March 1878] reported... 'rising, seething waters after very heavy rains completely submerged Mr Burn's house, and his family escaped with considerable difficulty. Besides a quantity of furniture, Mr. Burn has lost about thirty of his boats, but most of these he hopes to recover.'



From HARDINGS PICTORIAL RIVER GUIDE

Postcard folder, c.1932–c.1949. Gift of Diane Washfold, 2021

KHS Collection

STUDLEY PARK BOATHOUSE (from page 8)

The 1911 floods caused severe damage to the middle Yarra River boathouses leading to major rebuilding and even expansion of the buildings. At *Riversdale* this involved building new refreshment rooms on the upper level adjacent to the residence and rebuilding the boatshed, enabling hire boats to be stored underneath. A sign 'Riversdale Boat House' was erected on the balustrade facing the river; the wide verandah being a distinctive feature.

In 1928 a suspension footbridge was erected over the Yarra, east of the boat house, to provide access from the Kew side to the public golf links in the Yarra Bend National Park. It was named Kane's Bridge after Councillor T.J. Kane of Kew who was a member of the Studley Park Trust. Yarra Bend Park was officially reserved in 1877, and in 1929 it was joined with Studley Park to the south. The Victorian Government built the bridge even before there was a need for Sustenance projects. However, during the 1934 floods when the river rose to more than seven metres above its banks, Kane's footbridge was swept away and 'Sussos' were given the task of restoring it. Several canoe sheds along the river were also washed away but never replaced. During these floods, Burn's boathouse and outbuildings were almost completely submerged and although damaged, withstood the force of the waters. The buildings have not been set back by flooding since then and appear to be largely original.

As a popular recreation spot it was a favourite locale for many of Melbourne's famous characters like John Wren, who lived nearby, and Dame Nellie Melba. It has also been the location for Australian period films and TV series including *The Sullivans*, *Squizzy Taylor*, *Power Without Glory* and *Neighbours*.

Among many of the events held on the river was the 'Kew Canoe Carnival', held annually in the summer months from 1910 until the late 1930s in aid of charity. The location of the carnival was upriver from Macauley's boathouse at the Asylum Reserve at the old white bridge.



KEW CANOE CARNIVAL

Henry Beater Christian (photo), c.1939
Gift of Diane Washfold
KHS Collection

In 1942, the Burn family, with the approval of the Trust, transferred occupancy to Carl Sierrakowski (Sierrak) who was the proprietor of Rudder Grange boathouse further upstream. At this time ferries motored from Princes Bridge to Johnston Street Bridge and there was an idea that the river could be made navigable by constructing locks at Dights Falls. When that idea lapsed, Sierrak transferred the lease in 1945 to Mr Van der Sluys, previously of Rudder Grange boathouse. But, tragically, soon after taking over he died, leaving his wife and two young children (one being Peter Van der Sluys who has operated Fairfield Park boathouse since 1985) to carry on the business. The original boathouse and landing operated comparatively unchanged and in the 1950s, the inner-city park's popularity began to decline as Melburnians took to motoring and making daytrips or tours to outlying hills and beaches. Many city boathouses decayed with neglect and most closed. But Studley Park Boathouse survived, doubling as a rooming house and later a fibreglass factory, but always hiring out its old boats to the occasional rowing enthusiast. From the 1970s, there was a renewed interest in the Park and rowing. In 1983, the boathouse was extended with the construction of a kiosk. Tables and chairs were added at the boathouse and picnic spots below the car parks.

In 1992, a 21-year lease was granted to a family-controlled company, KRT Riversdale Pty Ltd, with interests in boating, restaurant and property development. Heritage architects developed a restoration plan and the boathouse was re-roofed, rewired and refitted while maintaining all its original character and charm. It also housed the Boathouse Cafe, a licensed indoor and outdoor venue located in the restored boatshed workshop.

While it remains a tranquil treed area with picnic tables and large umbrellas, there have been various dramas other than floods including the odd body floating past, and once, the discovery of a sawn-off shotgun and cartridges in a bag six metres under water led to an armed robbery conviction. Back in the early hours of Cup Day in 2016, vandals cut the chains to the moorings of thirteen boats, valued at about seven thousand dollars each, causing seven to ultimately be stuck on top of Dight's Falls, making immediate recovery too dangerous. In April 2021, a 47-year-old man drowned when his boat capsized. Police believe he was standing on the boat with a woman at Studley Park when it overturned, causing them to plunge into the river at about 12.15 am. The woman managed to swim back to the bank, but the man went missing underwater.

Under its current lease, Studley Park Boathouse has been closed since October 2022 for a major renovation, with the upgraded iconic site to re-open in early 2023. This is certain to attract more visitors to the boathouse.

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PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES OF KEW

In 1843, the present boundaries of the District of Port Phillip were set. In 1851, the Colony of Victoria separated from New South Wales just in time for the announcement of the discovery of gold at Anderson's Creek [Warrandyte]. Before that, Victoria's representatives had to go to New South Wales for parliamentary business, a fact much resented.

Some background is necessary to understand the evolution of Victoria as an independent state. Port Phillip District was created in 1839 when the Colonial Office in London reluctantly approved the previously illegal occupation of Crown Lands at Portland (1834) and Melbourne (1835). The islands in Bass Strait and Portland Bay on the mainland had been the abode of itinerant sealers and whalers. The first permanent settlers in Victoria were the Hentys in Portland, while Batman and the Port Phillip Association members settled in Melbourne.

Governor Bourke of New South Wales sent Captain William Lonsdale, as Police Magistrate, with some soldiers to Port Phillip in 1837. Charles La Trobe was appointed Lieutenant Governor and Chief Magistrate and he and his family took up residence in 1839. He selected a council of five to assist in the administration of the District. He was Chief Secretary with William Stawell as Attorney-General; Alistair Mac Kenzie, Colonial Treasurer; James Cassell, Collector of Customs; Redmond Barry, Solicitor-General; and Charles Ebdon, Auditor-General. This council lasted until 1843 when the present boundaries of Victoria were agreed.



WHITEHEAD'S MAP OF VICTORIA WITH ALPHABETICAL KEY, 1869
KHS Collection

Kew was included in the following electoral districts:

- 1843–1850 Port Phillip District – County of Bourke
- 1851–1856 Colony of Victoria Council – South Bourke, Evelyn & Mornington
- 1856 bicameral Legislative Assembly & Council – South Bourke Evelyn & Mornington (Assembly)

- 1877–1889 Boroondara
- 1889–1904 Eastern Suburbs
- 1904–1927 Boroondara
- 1927 Kew

PORT PHILLIP DISTRICT 1843–50

In 1843 the present boundaries of Victoria were agreed, and the Port Phillip District was represented by one representative for the City of Melbourne and five from the rest of the Colony. None of the elected were residents of Kew. The colonists were not satisfied with government by and from Sydney and in July 1851 Victoria separated from New South Wales. [Earl Grey was elected in 1848 as a representative despite being ineligible and absent.]

COLONY OF VICTORIA 1851-55

The initial government, a Legislative Council, was comprised of 30 members, 10 nominees and 20 elected members, with squatters and farmers dominant. Of the elected members, Melbourne was to have three, County of Bourke two, Geelong two and the rest of Victoria thirteen. At the time, Melbourne had a population of 23,000 and the rest of the state 31,000. In addition to La Trobe's Executive Council there were twenty elected members who included William Westgarth, John O'Shanassy, Henry Miller and John Fawkner. The enfranchised were men who owned or occupied property worth £10 per annum or who held a pastoral licence. The bias was towards the squatters – Melbourne and Geelong had 70 per cent of the population but only had seven of the 20 elected representatives. The Legislative Council was expanded in 1853, with the addition of nine rural and seven metropolitan seats to cater for Victoria's growing population.

VICTORIA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY & LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL 1856

The *Victorian Constitution Bill* was finalised in 1853 but didn't receive Royal assent until 1855; delayed by the Crimean War. The Constitution introduced a bicameral system of government. The 30 Members of the upper house, the Legislative Council, had to be over 30 years of age and own property worth more than £5,000. They would hold office for 10 years.

Voters had to be over 21 years of age, resident for a least one year, be literate, own or lease property worth £50, or occupy property worth £10, or lease Crown Land, or have a salary of £100 per annum, and, of course, be male. A lower house, the Legislative Assembly (the people's house) of 60 members, from 37 electorates would hold office for five years [later reduced to three years in 1859].

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES *(from page 10)*

The South Burke, Evelyn & Mornington electorate containing Hawthorn, Kew, Camberwell and other eastern municipalities had John Dane and Henry 'Money' Miller as its first representatives.

John Dane (1810–82), a former British army officer arrived in Melbourne in August 1851 and was appointed assistant gold commissioner in Bendigo in December 1851. He resigned in February 1852. In 1853 he became member of the Legislative Council for South Bourke, the same year he was buying land in Boroondara. Dane resigned in November 1865 and was replaced by Henry S. Chapman.

Dane seems to have been a restless person. He travelled frequently to Britain and on returning from one trip abroad he discovered he had been fleeced by his agent. He was involved in many activities but principally as a share and stock broker. [He was not a resident of Kew]. In November 1864, Dane was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly for Warrnambool but resigned in December 1865. He died in April 1882 at his daughter's house in Campbelltown, New South Wales.

Henry 'Money' Miller (1809–88) was born in Londonderry, Ireland and by 1828 he was a clerk in the Tasmanian Audit Office. He moved to Melbourne in 1839 and set up as a financier. By 1845 he was described as a 'merchant'. In 1849, Miller set up the Victoria Fire & Marine Insurance Company, while from 1852 to 1888 he was chairman of the Bank of Victoria. He also invested in property, both rural and metropolitan.

Miller built a house in Richmond, then a fashionable suburb. He was Richmond's first mayor. He also had a mortgage over Stephen Henty's house, *Findon*, in 1867 which he subsequently purchased in 1871. He later extended it into a mansion. The streets Findon Crescent, Kew and Findon Street, Hawthorn are named after the house.

From 1851 to 1856 Miller represented the electorate of South Bourke, Evelyn & Mornington. With the introduction of the bicameral system of government in Victoria in 1856, he moved to the upper house representing Central Province from 1856 to 1858 and Western Province until 1866. Miller was Minister for Trade and Customs in 1858–9, and in 1866 Minister for Railways. He retired from politics in 1867.

Henry Miller died at his home *Findon*, survived by his wife Eliza (Mattinson) and their four sons and three married daughters. He left an estate valued at nearly £2 million.

Henry Samuel Chapman (1803–81) was London born and educated. In January 1852, he was appointed colonial secretary to Van Diemen's Land, arriving there in April. He was later dismissed by the Colonial Office because of his opposition to transportation. Chapman joined the Victorian Bar in April 1854. In February 1855, he replaced Dane as the member for South Bourke.

In 1857, Chapman was elected to the Legislative Assembly and was appointed Attorney General. He drafted the 'secret ballot' legislation. Briefly premier in 1858, he resigned in favour of O'Shanassy, and was attorney general, in which office he drafted the legislation for equal electoral districts and triennial parliaments. [He was not a resident of Kew]. The Melbourne *Punch* portrayed him as a conceited, pedantic bore.

Chapman was the member for Mornington from 1861 to 1862, after which he resigned to become a Supreme Court judge. By 1864, he was in Otago, New Zealand, as a puisne judge. Tragedy struck the family in January 1866, when the *London* was wrecked in the Bay of Biscay; his wife, two of their six sons and only daughter drowned. Chapman died in Dunedin in December 1881.

William Foster Stawell (1815–89) was born in County Cork, Ireland in 1815. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, studied law at King's Inn, and was admitted to the Bar in 1839. He arrived in Melbourne in 1842 and practised at the Port Phillip District Bar from 1843. Stawell married Mary Greene in 1856 and bought a property on the Yarra River, Kew where he had built a bluestone house which he named *D'Estaville* [now 7 Barry Street] after his former home in Ireland. [Stawell lived in Kew but was not a representative of Kew.]



D'ESTAVILLE, c.1980
KHS Collection

Stawell was a member of La Trobe's Executive Council from 1843 to 1850 as Attorney-General. From 1851 to 1856, Stawell was Attorney-General in the Legislative Council as a nominee. He resigned in 1857 to become Chief Justice on Justice a'Beckett's retirement. He held this office until he retired in 1886.

William Stawell died in Naples in 1889. As already mentioned, he is remembered in the streets Sir William and Stawell on the sub-division of his former property and by the town of Stawell in the Western District of Victoria.

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