



**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY INC.**

ESTABLISHED 1958

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

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LADY ANN RYLAH

Veterinarian, author and leader in the Girl Guides Association

NEWSLETTER

No. 148

SEPTEMBER 2024



MASTERY OF CLAY

The collection of the Kew Historical Society [KHS] attempts to explore the complex story of Kew, and its broader social and cultural context within Victoria and Australia. Its collection differs from those of most historical societies as it has always concentrated on the collection of artefacts and artworks in addition to documents. The term 'artefacts can vary from items of personal clothing to domestic and functional items. Artworks in the collection are typically oil paintings or watercolour views of Kew. To date, we have collected neither sculpture nor ceramics. The absence of the latter in the collection is interesting in that Kew was home to two of Australia's most notable studio potters: Marguerite Mahood (1901–89) who lived in Stawell Street, and Klytie Pate, (1912–2010) a resident of Stevenson Street.

In February 2024, the granddaughter of former Kew resident, Viola Annie Ayling (1911–90), contacted KHS with the offer of a collection of ceramics created by her grandmother, who had lived at 128 Pakington Street. In her granddaughter's words: 'My grandmother was not anyone of note, just a housewife who had artistic talents, one of which was her pottery'. The approximately 40 ceramic pieces offered to KHS included vases, sculptures, biscuit barrels, lamp bases, plates and dishes, handmade by her using different techniques: wheel thrown, hand sculpted, pierce work and coil work.

After meeting Kerrie Winslett, Viola's granddaughter, on several occasions, Margaret Robinson and I chose what we considered the 15 most interesting items from her grandmother's collection, a number of which are pictured above. The pieces, based on stylistic grounds, were potted, glazed and fired in the 1950s and 1960s.

The use of the term 'women's work' to not only describe the unpaid work of the housewife but also the artistic fields in which women predominated such as tapestry, quilting, sewing, and weaving, while intended to redress a perceived gender imbalance in the arts, could also typecast the female artist as excelling in alternative fields in contrast to the mainstream artistic outputs of their male counterparts.

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[Front page]

PART OF THE COLLECTION OF CERAMICS BY VIOLA AYLING

Gift of Kerrie Winslett, 2024

Robert Baker, photographer, 2024

MASTERY OF CLAY (from page 1)

That a mastery of clay could have been achieved by a woman who had trained as a tailoress should not be surprising, given the evidence in collections of the output of highly skilled amateurs in a variety of art fields.

A close examination of the items donated by Viola Ayling's granddaughter reveals the influence of Australian studio potter, Klytie Pate (née Clytie Winifred Wingfield Sclater). Born in Castlemaine in 1912, Pate attended the Melbourne Technical College [now RMIT University] from 1933. Emma Busowski, writing for the Bendigo Gallery newsletter, noted that she was one of the first Australian ceramic artists to have their work acquired in 1947 by the National Gallery of Victoria. Unlike Viola Ayling, Klytie Pate held regular exhibitions of her work. Numerous examples are held in major public collections.

Pate's output included lidded jars, large bowls and vases, lamp bases, jugs, animals and birds, large decorated plates, wall tiles, tea sets and mugs. Taking these into account, one can identify similarities between Pate's work and that of Viola Ayling. These include a preference for earthenware rather than stoneware or porcelain, vivid use of glazes, and skilled decorative incising and floral motifs. An example of the latter can be identified on the upper left of the photo on page 1.

I have looked, without success to see whether Klytie Pate gave classes locally to explain the similarity of Viola Ayling's pottery to her own. It is also tempting to consider that Stevenson and Pakington Streets were not too far apart, and that proximity may have influenced stylistic similarities. Perhaps any areas of common design also arose from a shared interest in post war style, and/or the recorded popularity of Pate's pieces in exhibition. Whatever the answer, KHS is proud to add works by Viola Ayling, an unsung local potter to its collection.

ROBERT BAKER

GRANTS & SPONSORS

In 2024-27, Kew Historical Society is supported by the City of Boroondara through a Triennial Operational Grant. One off funding by the Bendigo Bank has enabled us to purchase a new laptop computer for use in meetings.

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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.



[above] **HOME OF VIOLA AYLING, 128 PAKINGTON STREET**
Gift of Kerrie Winslett, 2024
KHS

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PATRON

Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE FRS FAA FTSE

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Judith Voce

Vice President / Newsletter editor: David White

Secretary: Desley Reid

Treasurer: Byron Smith

Archivist: Robert Baker

Curator: Judith Scurfield

Members: Lisl Bladin | Mary Kelleher | Julie King | Debbie McColl-Davis | Margaret Robinson

MONTHLY MEETINGS

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

KEW COURT HOUSE

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

KEW HERITAGE CENTRE

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

NEWSLETTER

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

WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

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

www.facebook.com/kewhistoricalsociety

HISTORY NEWS

2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Kew Historical Society will conduct its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 11 September 2024 in the Phyllis Hore Room at the Kew Library, 1 Civic Drive, Kew. Vic. 3101.

Commencing at 8PM, our President and other volunteers will outline the activities involved in the success of the Society. We have been the recipients of some wonderful donations, some of which will be on display; mounted popular and exciting exhibitions; accepted grants from the Bendigo Bank, the City of Boroondara and other quarters which have assisted the Society to engage with the community.

Our hardworking Book Sale team has continued quarterly sales to raise funds for the Society and will report on the proceeds of their labour. Our collections and research teams will also report on the work done by both of those groups. We are very proud of our volunteers and hope that you will applaud them for their commitment to the Society and its role in the preservation of the history and heritage of Kew.

All members are invited to attend, and we have invited financial members to nominate for positions on the Management Committee. All the positions currently occupied will be open for election and voting will take place for nominees.

The Studley Ward Councillor, Nick Stavros, will attend the meeting as the Mayor is unavailable.

DESLEY REID, PUBLIC OFFICER

GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS

In 2024-25, KHS is the beneficiary of a number of grants & sponsorships. This includes Year 1 of a second three-year *Triennial Operational Grant* from the City of Boroondara.

In June 2024, we also received funding from Community Bank Inner East, Community Investment Program [a franchisee of Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited] to purchase a new laptop which will be used for improved connectivity with members and the broader community.



NEW POSTAL ADDRESS

Kew Post Office has now closed. The Society' new mailing address is PO Box 3147, Cotham, Vic. 3101.

Our email address remains info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au
Please amend your records accordingly.

DONATIONS TO THE COLLECTION

The Society actively seeks donations to its collection that tell the story of Kew and its environs. This is particularly the case with gaps in our collection. Donations since March 2024 include:

- An archive of material relating to Diggins family of Cecil Street, Kew, including documents, photographs, and costumes, donated by Richard Diggins.
- *Some work of Architect Charles Vickers B1825-D1883*, donated by David Stray.
- An 1840s Limerick lace wedding veil, other items of lace, and a nineteenth century bonnet belonging to Mary-Ann Henty (née Lawrence), donated by Ann James.

ROBERT BAKER

MICHAEL TUCK GRANDSTAND

The collection of Kew Historical Society has been located at Kew Library since 1987. The areas leased from the City of Boroondara at the Library no longer provide adequate space for collection storage and management, and the involvement of volunteers in administrative, research and collection activities. Accordingly, KHS and Hawthorn Historical Society have submitted a formal Expression of Interest to occupy level 1 of the yet to be renovated Michael Tuck Grandstand at Glenferrie Oval.

MEMBERSHIPS

These were due on 1 July 2024. 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 BSB 633-000, Account 171300288. Please send any queries to the Secretary: secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

NEW MEMBERS

Since June 2024, we have been pleased to welcome Verna Rieschild, and Stuart and Ben McLoughlin as new members.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

Subscriptions to the Society should be paid either by cash or cheque directly into our account BSB 633-000, A/C 171300288 at the Bendigo Bank, 278 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn, Vic. or by direct funds transfer. Please identify your payment by using your last name and the word Subs.

Donations to the Society should be paid directly into our account 633-000 171 300 395 at the Bendigo Bank, Balwyn, using your chosen payment method as above. Please use your last name and the word Donation in the reference or subject line. Donations to the Society are tax deductible. Please use the email info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au to request a receipt for your donation.

SMART'S BRICKYARD

Kew would seem an unlikely place to find traces of a nineteenth century industrial landscape.

F.G.A. Barnard wrote in his 1910 *Jubilee History of Kew* that:

'Kew can hardly be termed a manufacturing centre. The most important industry which was ever carried on, beyond those belonging to the soil, such as farming and gardening, was the extension of the brick making industry of Lower Hawthorn across the boundary into Southern Kew, where in the eighties Smart's brickyard turned out large quantities of excellent bricks, leaving behind it when operations ceased a legacy in the shape of a clay pit, which remains as a problem for municipal councillors.

A stroll around the area bounded by High Street, Barkers Road and Foley Street reveals that although Smart's clay pit has since been filled in and landscaped to become the Foley Reserve, a few traces of his enterprise still remain. A house at 8 High Street seems likely to have been *Shenstone Villa*, the home of George Smart (1831–89) and his family. Three workers' cottages at 9, 11 and 13 Foley Street may well be the survivors of cottages he had built to house his employees. Deep grooves in the adjacent bluestone lane linking Foley Street and the Foley Reserve are likely to have been formed by the heavy steel tyred wheels of the drays carrying loads of bricks from his brickyard.

Before commencing his brickyard in Kew, George Smart had been the licensee of the long disappeared *Brickmaker's Arms* in Barton Street, Hawthorn, where Smart Street and the Smart Street Reserve remain as reminders of his brickmaking activities in that suburb.

The earliest record of George Smart in Kew appears in the 1868 Kew Rate Book where he is listed as the owner of a house and brickyard in Bulleen-road [now High Street South]. In November 1868, an advertisement placed in *The Argus* by George Smart requested that brickmakers apply near the Beehive Hotel in Church Street, Kew.

In the 1869 Rate Book, Smart is listed as the owner/occupier of a house and land in Bulleen Road and owner of four rented cottages in Barkers Road which are occupied by brickmakers.

In April 1869, the *South Bourke Standard* reported alarm in the community when Mrs Smart, wife of a brickmaker living on the Kew road, initially thought to have scarlet fever, was diagnosed with smallpox and the Smart children were removed from the house as a precaution against infection. Community alarm apparently subsided following a re-diagnosis of gastric fever. Mid nineteenth century medicine seems to have been somewhat less than an exact science.



THE FORMER SHENSTONE VILLA BEHIND THE FENCE AT 8 HIGH STREET, KEW

David White, photographer, 2024
Collection of the author

Given that the Smart's brickyard was located across the Bulleen road from *Findon*, the home of Stephen George Henty, one might wonder whether Henty's decision in 1870 to relocate from his mansion to the country for his health was related in any way to this proximity and Mrs Smart's smallpox scare.

An advertisement placed by George Smart in *The Argus* on 10 August 1878 requested tenders to supply labour for the construction of a one hundred foot high chimney.

In December 1884, auctioneers Tate and Pratt's advertised an unreserved auction of brickmaker's plant at Smart's Brick Yard, Elgin Street, Hawthorn on Tuesday 9 December at 11 o'clock. Smart seemed to have been extending and diversifying his enterprise at this time, buying land in Ringwood, then an area of expansion for the Melbourne brickmaking industry, and taking up gold mining leases near Omeo in Gippsland.

It was reported that Smart had spent £12,000 on mines and machinery at Long Gully and Bald Hill Creek and had just got everything in working order before he died on 4 May 1889, after inadvertently drinking from a bottle of Rackarock oil while inspecting one of his mines. Rackarock was a patent explosive recently introduced to the Australian market as a safer alternative to dynamite. It consisted of cartridges of potassium chlorate, which when moistened with nitrobenzene, became an effective explosive charge.

After a coroner's inquest, his body was returned to Kew and on 7 May 1889 the Family Notices in *The Argus* included A.W. Padbury's invitation to friends of the late GEORGE SMART Esq., to follow his remains from his late residence, *Shenstone Villa* at the corner of Barkers Road and High Street to the Boroondara Cemetery, Kew.

SMART'S BRICKYARD (from page 4)

The Smart family grave and monument, occupies plots 1322 and 1323 within the Church of England C section of the Cemetery close to the Halfey Angel and Henty family graves.

Smart's probate documents include an inventory which provides a description of his property holdings at the time of his death, including his Kew brickyard. The brickyard is described as all that land being part of Crown Portion 74, Parish of Boroondara, with dwelling house occupied by the testator, two shops with dwellings attached let at a rental of £50 per annum each and five cottages, two let at a rental of 7/- per week, two 5/- per week to workmen, and the other let free to the manager of the brick kiln, and four acres or thereabouts on Main Road, Kew, on which is erected brick making plant. The list of plant includes 150,000 green bricks, 170,000 burnt bricks and 100,000 bricks in kiln in addition to two trucks, nine barrows, a fourteen horsepower steam engine and boiler, a Fawcett's Patent Brick Cutting Machine, and a 1,500 gallon tank.

George Smart's estate was valued for probate at £29,068, a significant amount of money for the time, particularly as the building boom of the 1880s was giving way to the economic depression and the banking crisis of the 1890s. In accordance with Smart's will, the estate was to be divided equally between his widow, Ellen Leah Smart, his daughters – 23-year-old Mary Jane, 19-year-old Margaret, and nine-month-old Adelaide Lucy Georgina – and his son, two-year-old George Melbourne Smart.

As was common at the time, the will includes a condition that in the event that his wife remarried, her portion of the inheritance was to be forfeited and divided equally between his children. Ellen Smart remarried in 1890, and again in 1897, and the condition of forfeiture appears to have caused a series of contests in the Supreme Court over the administration and redistribution of the estate.

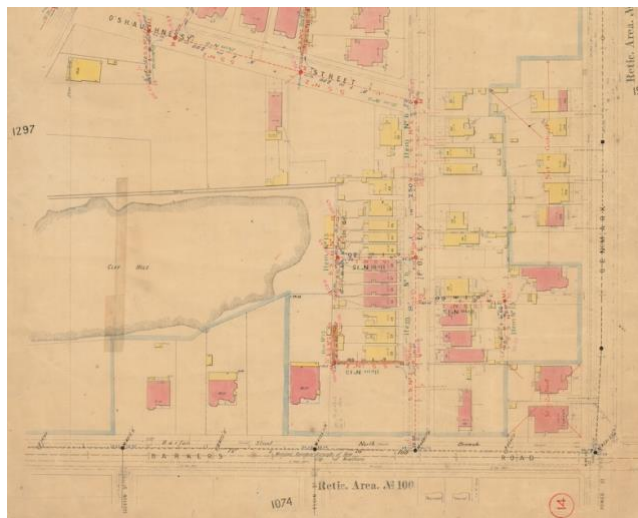
When his daughter Adelaide died in 1890, it was noted in the press of the day that she left an estate valued at £5,800. In 1892, his daughter Margaret married Charles Stuart Nott, a bank clerk who had been a tenant of the Smarts in High Street. He seems to have quickly become the owner of a number of the Smart estate properties following this marriage. By 1896, Smart's daughter Mary Jane had left Victoria and married Albert Mouan, a shopkeeper in Katanning, Western Australia. His son, George Melbourne Smart, was admitted to the Kew Asylum in 1908 and died there in 1911.

100 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 1924

NEW MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

The Eastern Motor Cycle Club – A new organisation – has been formed, with headquarters at Kew. Officials: Messrs J. H. Cooper, honorary secretary; A. W. Williams, honorary treasurer; H. Rowe, captain; A. Woolard, vice-captain; H. Dux, R. Speed, J. Roberts, W. Cross, P. Simmons, committee.

The Herald, 6 September 1924, p.2



[Extract] DETAIL PLAN No.1296

Geo. H. Grant, Surveyor, 1903
Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works
KHS

In 1894 the brickyard was listed in the Rate Book as occupied by Ah Chow, a gardener, renting from Mary Smart. By 1899, Ah Chow continued to occupy the land, but ownership had passed to the Bank of New South Wales.

In his book *Kew's Civic Century*, W.D. Vaughan relates that in 1910 the Kew Council was offered the 'clayhole' for £75, but that after an inspection by the Mayor, the offer was not taken up. In late 1911, Council appears to have changed its mind, finally purchasing the clayhole in early 1912, by which time the price had risen to £100. It then served as a convenient rubbish dump for many years and because of the frequent fires there, became the bane of the local fire brigade.

The annual tour of inspection by Kew councillors in October 1914 included a stop at the clayhole. The newspaper report of the tour noted that filling in the clayhole had included material from the Barker's Road cutting, which was being widened in preparation for electrification and extension of the former horse tramway to Strathalbyn Street, and that the reclamation area was to form the nucleus of a future reserve.

© DAVID WHITE, 2024

KEW GARBAGE LEAFLETS

Kew residents will receive leaflets relating to household refuse. At the Kew Council meeting last night it was proposed to have the pamphlets posted on the bins, but this motion was defeated in favor of posting them. The notices will draw attention to the necessity of providing proper garbage tins, instead of kerosene tins without lids. *The Herald*, 24 September 1924, p.5

ST GEORGE'S HOSPITAL

COTHAM ROAD, KEW

Let's imagine Cotham Rd, east of the growing 'village' of Kew in the early twentieth century, a pastoral district, which was displacing much of the native vegetation, an area soon to become sought after for residential purposes. There were a few grand villas on both sides of Cotham Road, and plenty of space for agriculture as well as pasture for household cows. Cotham Road was a beautiful road with great elm trees on the south side about 40 feet (13 metres) apart, providing continual shade. In those days many carriages and carts travelled up and down Cotham Road, and water troughs were placed along the way. There were nurseries and market gardens. The gentlemen wore top hats and the ladies' voluminous skirts and large hats.

On the corner of Normanby and Cotham Roads was a large Italianate villa called *Ellerslie*.



ELLERSLIE

Photograph, 1920s
Courtesy St Vincent's Hospital Archives Collection

Now it's 2024, and we drive past St George's Hospital, Kew, occupying the land along Cotham Road between Cecil Street and Normanby Road, and stretching north down the slope. There are buildings all over the site. *Ellerslie* is no longer there. Let's briefly explore the hospital's history.

Ellerslie at 283 Cotham Road, Kew, was the stately home of Mr and Mrs Edward Hughes in its 3.25 acre grounds. Their daughter, Florence Annie, inherited the home after her mother's death on 23 February 1911. Her mother died intestate. Florence was then living in rented rooms in Carlton.

On 27 May 1911, Florence Hughes conveyed *Ellerslie* by indenture to the Church of England Trusts Corporation for the Diocesan Mission to Streets and Lanes of Melbourne. Founded by Sr. Esther, the church sisterhood was doing impressive pastoral work in inner Melbourne and were greatly admired by Florence who suggested that *Ellerslie* be used as a rest home for the Sisters, whose order was now officially known as the Community of the Holy Name of the Redeemer.

Sr. Esther, the Mother Foundress, saw that the big house could be used to expand the Sisters' work by establishing a church hospital where people of moderate means could be nursed. The MMBW Detail Plan No.1597 of 1913 shows that *Ellerslie* was large, with many rooms, was connected to gas and water mains, had a bath upstairs, an underground water tank, a grotto in the north garden and steps leading down from the northerly rear of the home.

Thus did St George's Intermediate Hospital come into existence. Opened in 1912, this was the first Anglican hospital established in Victoria founded by the Sisters of the Holy Name. It was named after St George, an early Christian martyr, and venerated as a saint. The Sisters were frugal and resourceful and soon transformed *Ellerslie* into a hospital. Its rooms became wards, such as in the ward pictured below.



ST ETHELBURGA'S WARD

Photograph, 1914
Courtesy St Vincent's Hospital Archives Collection

From 1913, tram tracks and associated poles and wires transformed Cotham Road. The elms were removed, motor cars appeared, land was subdivided, medical practices changed and the norm of most births taking place at home was gradually replaced with hospital births. Midwifery and maternity facilities were needed in hospitals following World War 1. The needs of a growing hospital, changes in medical practice, and an urgent need for midwifery and maternity, as well as surgical and general services, continued to put pressure on the Hospital's administrators.

Nurse accommodation had not yet been prioritised. Some nurses new to St George's were offered simple bungalows and tents as accommodation. In 1929 a new nurses' block was opened with eight bedrooms and a sitting room. Accommodation was rented in nearby Normanby Road and Cecil Street. *Ellerslie* was converted into a nurses' home after the building of the General and Surgical Wing in 1937.

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ST GEORGE'S HOSPITAL (from page 6)

In 1950, St George's purchased *St Heliers* – built by Edward Dumaresq for his son, Alfred, a large 13- roomed home, at 52 Alfred Street – for use as a nurses' home. A short walk from the hospital it was renamed *The Grange*. It was demolished in 1982, despite a heritage overlay.

The Hospital responded to the rapid growth and settlement of Kew in the 1920s as well as later, during the post World War 2 baby boom. A midwifery block was opened in 1925 with 30 beds, next to the Mountain View tennis courts facing Cecil Street. The balconies were a favourite with many of the patients. This building also accommodated the Pathology and Radiology Departments and the Education Centre which included the Midwifery Training School, established in 1925. This training school prepared 1,093 midwife graduates between 1925 and 1980. One can only imagine the numbers of babies born.

In 1930, an X-Ray Department was established in a specially constructed building, opened in 1931, next to *Ellerslie*, facing Cotham Road. Financing a growing hospital with emerging needs was a constant challenge. The Church helped a little as did the Kew Council and many groups who arranged fundraising events or gave donations. In 1937, the new red brick wing, facing Cotham Rd and so familiar to many of us, was opened on Wednesday 4 August and blessed by the Anglican Archbishop. It cost £34,500.



THE ROSE SERIES, P.13056, ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL, KEW

Rose Stereograph Company, c.1920–1954
Courtesy State Library of Victoria

In 1949, the Sisters sold St George's Hospital to the Hospitals and Charities Commission; purchased on behalf of the Victorian Government. The hospital became well-known for its maternity, medical and surgical services. How many readers of this article were born in St George's, gave birth in St George's, have children, relatives, friends born in St George's? A great many I imagine.

Medical needs dictated plans for expansion and the constant need for funds. The first Lady Mayor of Kew, (1954-55) Maria (Ma) Dalley, a true philanthropist, deserves a mention here.

Cr Dalley refused to accept a formal presentation of the honour (of being appointed Mayor) at a 'return ball', insisting that the money be donated to St George's Hospital. £250,000 was her staggering personal donation which enabled further expansion.

In 1967, the X-Ray block was demolished as was *Ellerslie*. In 1969 the new midwifery wing was completed on the site of the original *Ellerslie* and blessed by Archbishop Woods. In 1972 the Children's Ward was opened. In 1977 the new Heale Wing was opened. (named after John Heale, President of St George's Board of Management 1962–76). In this wing is the Ellerslie Unit, a memory of the Hospital's beginnings in 1912.

From 1991, St George's Health Service began developing aged care services. From 1996–98 all acute medical, maternity and surgical services were transferred to other facilities. St George's Hospital (Health Services) now provides comprehensive aged care services, including geriatric inpatient care, evaluation and management, residential aged care, acute psychiatry and mental health services, and an assisted memory unit. There is a renal dialysis unit on site. The Hospital also offers a broad range of community based services.

In 1976, St Vincent's Health purchased a large property at 52 Sackville Street, originally named *Dunboe*, a private home, built in 1892. Sr. Francesca Healey, (Sisters of Charity) named it after the Infant of Prague in the belief that *Prague House*, its new name, 'was to give the incoming residents the security and home comforts they had not known for many years'.

In March 2001 St George's Health Service became St Vincent's as part of an arrangement with the Victorian Government.

On 15 August 2006, the residents of *Prague House* were moved from Sackville Street to the corner of Cotham Road and Cecil Street into a 45 bed, low-care residential aged care facility.

In 2020, a state of the art 90 bed aged care facility, named *Berengarra*, meaning 'the land around Kew', was opened. All rooms in this new facility have a single room with ensuite. The Victorian Government invested \$57.57 million to build this facility which can be seen from Cecil Street and Normanby Road.

Readers may be interested to know that Historic Birth Registers are still kept at St George's. All other archival material is kept in the St Vincent's Hospital Archives.

© FELICITY RENOWDEN, 2024

STOP!...

Where is the 'STOP' sign? It is not on the High Street pavement. Alas, it is still in the window. What is going on?

Daryl has died!

A Kew identity for many years, Daryl Mills, of *De Milles, Art Deco, Decorative Arts*, High Street, Kew, succumbed to the very unusual robust April heat of 2024. The year previously he had held a 'retirement sale', selling a vast amount of his life's collection of Art Deco objects via a public auction.

Peeping through his shop window, after the auction, he still had an eclectic collection of objects for sale. Vintage suitcases decorated with various faded destination labels that told a tale of steam travel around the globe competed with complementary objects such as Parisian scarves, hats, sunglasses, London-made wooden shoe-keepers and mid-twentieth century postcards. All evoked an era long gone with the advent of the 'jet set'. Outdoor cane chairs and matching occasional table adorned with a fine bone china tea set spelled out the faded era of the refined colonial afternoon tea ceremony.

Before his majority, Daryl took the 'Fun Ship', the *Fair Star*, on a one-way ticket, to London from Sydney. By 1969, the Swinging Sixties was a mature youth driven social movement. Daryl soaked up the scene. A job alongside Australian-German photographer, Helmet Newton, allowed Daryl to learn the art of fashion and the illustration of fashion design through the lens of photography. Glaswegian architect-designer, Rennie Mackintosh captured Daryl's imagination through the interplay of straight and curved lines to create an aesthetic design or form. French *Arts Decoratifs* [Art Deco] was the most dramatic influence on him. This was expressed through his collecting ethos and his personal 'sartorial language'. He was well known for his mauve French painter's overalls, well worn, as he traipsed around Kew, with an 'old ladies' style shopping jeep. His distinctive 'eyewear' never dominated his persona; its subtlety contributed, seamlessly, to his unique self-expression.

Daryl's style replicated itself through his artistic work. He was the art director for many Australian mini-film series well loved by the local television viewing social set. Included in his CV were *Kath and Kim*, *Wogboy*, *The Dunera Boys*, and *The Petrov Affair*. He was also the art director for Tim Burstall's 1975 thriller feature film, *End Play*.

In addition to being an Art Deco dealer, Daryl also lectured on the Melbourne and Sydney 'talk circuit' and practised as a horticulturalist and Plant Whisperer. His secluded private garden at the rear of his shop and top storey residence was a secret High Street garden. The only evidence of the garden, from the street, is a healthy 40 year-old Norfolk Island pine that thrusts its vertical green form upwards beyond the high fencing.



DE MILLES, ART DECO, DECORATIVE ARTS
Suzanne McWha, photographer, 2024
Collection of the author

Over the past few months, the contents of the shop have been slowly dismantled by two local auction firms. Bad luck to the man who, regularly, stopped long enough to admire the beautiful 1940s brown fedora hat on an original bentwood coat stand in the window. On learning of Daryl's death, the man wasted no time to trace the new location of the hat, but to no avail. Two ladies lamented the loss of the dozen very beautiful glass-blown tulips. As tulip do, their coloured heads languidly drooped, artistically, in the window. After some years the dozen became eleven when an auction packer broke the fragile stem of one. The ladies were aggrieved. Today all that remains, on the shop floor, is flotsam and jetsam going to an Op-Shop.

Daryl once explained, to a reporter, his 'personal affinity' to objects that expressed a 'pure language' of their own through 'form and function, quality and condition' and the 'journey' the artefact had taken to arrive in the here and now. For Daryl, this affinity to such objects was one of the 'major pleasures' in his life. This idea is embodied in a *petit enfant* wooden, red racing car with helmeted driver. It is vintage Brio of Swedish design. A push along toy for a toddler, the red form of the car body is simple – long and sleek to slice seamlessly through the air as it races on its dynamic white tyred wheels. The driver is at one with the car; he cannot be removed. The toy represents the mechanics of the automotive age. For Daryl, a free spirit, this translated as a notion of 'freedom', a fundamental human right.

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STOP!... (from page 8)

The Kew Historical Society also has an 'affinity' to objects through the acquisition of an eclectic array of items related to the history of Kew. The recent acquisition of a black and white photograph of 1935 is a case in point. The image is a formal portrait of Mrs Victor Higgins' [née Miss Jessie Anderson] wedding. It is a formulaic composition of herself and her bridal party in the mid- 1930s. Black and white photographs can and do withhold information.

A graduate of Design from Swinburne Institute of Technology [now Swinburne University of Technology], Jessie's dress was of 'unusual' design. It drew inspiration from the seductive romance ideologies of the American Silver Screen. The fabric was satin – smooth, slinky and shiny, the cut skimmed the surface of her body, to reveal while concealing. The colour was just short of nude, being 'delicate rose magnolia'. The design strongly incorporated Art Deco aesthetics; straight lines in dialogue with curved ones. However, the photograph is somewhat static in creating a 'pure language' related to the bride.

Fortuitously, the photograph was accompanied with the actual wedding dress and other items related to Jessie.

The dimensions of the dress reveal Jessie was not as slim as the photograph suggests. The gown is designed to have a visually slimming vertical effect in mimicry of the 1930's celluloid *femme fatale*. Jessie, along with others of her generation, was seduced by Euro-American female screen idols. Her dress is not *haute couture*, as was Princess Diana's 'Fairy tale' gown. Jessie's is custom made; not 'home-made', despite the probability that the garment construction site was more than likely, Cecil Street, Kew – the family home address. Skilled import has gone into the conception, design, pattern, cut and assemblage (sewing) of the garment.

It is more than likely, that the wedding dress was a collaborative operation between Jessie and her younger sister, Phyllis [Phil]. Also, a graduate of 'Swinburne', Phil became a very skilled civic ceremonial artefact embroiderer. Such embroidered objects were designed for longevity. In contrast, the wedding gown was not for perpetuity. The external stitching, both hand and machine, is superlative. Not so the publicly unseen interior of the garment. Today, as with many contemporary wedding dresses, the garment could be considered 'disposable' or 'recyclable'. But Jessie kept it.

Through education, and a working life terminating on marriage, Jessie can be seen as a New Age Woman - a female-driven movement that arose out of the ashes of World War I, and foreshadowed, as well as influenced, the dynamism of post-World War II Feminism.



JESS ANDERSON AND VICTOR DIGGINS WEDDING
Dickinson-Montfeath Studio, photographers, 1935
Gift of Richard Diggins, 2024
KHS

Jessie's wedding gown remained with Jessie, passed onto her son who donated it to KHS. It is as fresh as it was the day Jessie wore it to commence married life. As Daryl would say the dress has a 'Journey'.

The wedding gown's form and function combined with its quality and condition create a 'pleasured' history pertaining to a young Kew woman in the inter-war years. The black and white photographic portrait adds to the 'pleasure' through its ability to 'dialogue' with the dress.

It is with added 'pleasure' that the photographs of the wedding party and the wedding dress, are preserved in the KHS Collection for the benefit of future generations. Regrettably, the collection of Daryl Mills has been dispersed.

FULLSTOP ...

© SUZANNE McWha, 2024



REMAINS OF DARYL'S COLLECTION IN HIS SHOP
Suzanne McWha, photographer, 2024
Collection of the author

LADY RYLAH (1911–1969)

Ann Flora Froude Flashman was born at Rose Bay in Sydney in 1911, the only daughter of Dr. James Froude Flashman and Irene Flora Flashman (née Dewar). She attended two private schools for girls in Sydney: Shirley School and Ascham School, graduating from Ascham in 1929 with her Leaving Certificate.

Based on her Leaving results, Ann was admitted to the University of Sydney in 1930 where she enrolled in the four-year Veterinary Science course. It seems that Ann's expenses were paid by Legacy; her father, Lieutenant Colonel Flashman in the Australian Army Medical Corps having died in France in 1917.

Ann was a sociable and popular student and sportswoman who played intervarsity hockey.

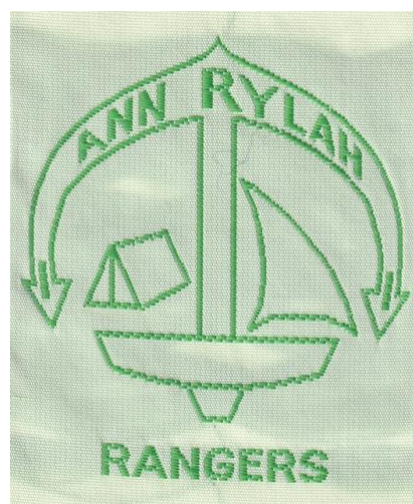
Although Ann was the first woman to be admitted to the Veterinary Science course at the University of Sydney, she was the second to graduate. Australia-wide, she was the fourth woman to graduate being preceded by Belle Bruce Reid, the first formally recognised female veterinary surgeon in the British Empire, who graduated from the Melbourne Veterinary College in Fitzroy in 1906; Margaret Keats from the Melbourne University Veterinary Faculty in 1923; and Patricia Littlejohn from the Sydney University Faculty in 1935. In 2006, among one hundred women veterinarians, Ann was posthumously awarded the Belle Bruce Reid Medal. This honour marked the centenary of the qualification and registration of Belle Bruce Reid.

Ann's graduation was delayed as she repeated both first and second years, not moving into third year until 1934. She graduated in 1936 with the S.T.D. Symons Prize for clinical subjects. Her entry to Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney, may have been the catalyst for increased female enrolments in the course. By 1949, the University had trained 29 women and by 1985 female undergraduates outnumbered males. Today most veterinary colleges in the developed world are graduating 70 – 80 per cent females.

Following her Sydney graduation, Ann accepted the position of the first paid veterinarian at the Lort Smith Animal Hospital in Villiers Street, North Melbourne, which opened in 1935. Her role included oversight of the Lost Dogs Home. On registering with the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Victoria in 1936, Ann became the third woman veterinarian in Victoria.

On 10 September 1937, eighteen months after moving to Melbourne she married Arthur Rylah, a Melbourne solicitor with whose family Ann had been billeted at 68 Walpole Street, Kew, during an intervarsity hockey tournament.

Following their marriage at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Kew, Ann and Arthur moved to Caroline Street, South Yarra, then to 26 Wimba Avenue, Kew before in March 1939, she purchased land in the Mont Victor Hill Estate, described by the developer as offering 23 Grand Residential sites. The Rylahs applied to the Kew Council to build a two-storey house at 15 Victor Avenue. The house was to include a dog hospital, cat room, pharmacy and surgery. Architects and engineers, R.M. and M.H. King, designed the combined brick home, veterinary hospital and surgery for the Victor Avenue property, to be constructed by builder W. Davis.



ANN RYLAH RANGERS BADGE
Courtesy of Girl Guides Association

As this was in a prescribed residential area, there were some objections to the establishment of a veterinary practice in this select neighbourhood. Initially, the application was not approved, but upon obtaining solicitor's advice, the Council offered no further objection to the erection of the building where Ann was to set up her veterinary practice. Ann conducted the practice under her maiden name, Ann Flashman.

Ann's husband enjoyed a high-profile career in Victorian State politics as the State Member for Kew. He rose to the position of Chief Secretary and Deputy Premier and was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in 1968. Ann was the official partner and hostess for Sir Arthur at political and social events until their separation in 1968. Following their separation, Ann continued to conduct her veterinary practice from 15 Victor Avenue until her untimely death in March 1969. Arthur had moved to his country house at Mt Macedon and remarried in October 1969.

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LADY ANN RYLAH (from page 10)

Another great interest of Ann's was 'Guiding'. In 1927, Ann joined the Girl Guides Association and in her final year at school was the popular leader of the Ascham School's own Guide Company. In 1928, Girl Guides Australia became a foundation member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

Ann had developed a love of writing while still at school and furthered this with a regular weekly column called 'Pet Talk' in *The Herald*, under the pseudonym 'John Wotherspoon'. In it, she gave practical advice about the choice, care and training of animals. Her column was so well received that she wrote two books on animal welfare under the same pseudonym. *The Australian Pet Book* was published in 1962, and the *Australian Dog Book*, published posthumously in 1971. Her book on guiding – *Australian Adventure: Guiding under the Southern Cross* was written and photographed under the name of Ann Rylah. Full of the joys of guiding as well as practical advice, this book was published in 1963. Ann was also a contributor to the *Australian Veterinary Journal* throughout her career, writing as A.F. Flashman.

Following Ann's early leadership of the Ascham School Guide Company, she became Lieutenant of the 1st Bondi Guide Company and Captain of the 2nd Randwick Guide Company. After her relocation to Melbourne, she became Captain of the 4th South Yarra Guide Company, District Commissioner for Kew from 1944–48, Division Commissioner, North East Suburbs 1948–53, Captain of the 1st Melbourne Cadet Company from 1954–62 and between 1956 and 1958 District Commissioner for Northcote. From 1962 to 1967 she held the position of Senior Branch Adviser for Victoria. In 1968 she held the posts of Lieutenant of the 4th South Yarra Company and Training Adviser for Victoria. She loved guiding and revelled in the opportunity to take guides camping. Ann took the Guide motto of a *Good Turn* every day very seriously and in 1956 she was acknowledged with an award for outstanding service to the Girl Guide Movement.

Ann's interest in sailing saw her establish the Ranger Sailing School in 1962 in an old weatherboard building on the Sandringham foreshore. Sea Rangers used the school until it was absorbed in 1980 into the new purpose-built Guide/Scout Sailing Centre, still at Sandringham, in a location a little closer to the water. Shortly after the official opening, a beautiful flagstaff and gaff were unveiled in Ann's honour together with a bronze plaque outlining her career. The flagstaff was made from two yacht masts from the original Ranger Sailing School.

Tapestry, a former 24-hectare Girl Guide Association property at Strathewen, which adjoined the Kinglake National Park, was purchased by Ann in two lots in 1951 and 1963. Initially, there were no improvements on the land.

Ann then purchased three redundant timber worker's huts from near the Strathewen Post Office which she transported to the property and joined together to form a building she could use as a base for country rambles, and the enjoyment of nature. For many years this was a venue for Ranger training and camping activities. Lady Rylah bequeathed the property in her will, to the Ranger Section of the Girl Guides Association of Victoria. It was sold by the Association in 1995.

Ann's life was cut short when she died at the age of 58 in March 1969. The circumstances were considered suspicious, with *The Herald* of 15 March 1969 reporting that Lady Rylah had been found dead in the backyard of her home by two young kennel attendants. The coroner ordered that her body should be cremated without an inquest, a decision which attracted considerable unfavourable comment in the press.

It was not until a year later, and in response to a column in the journal *Nation*, which was titled 'The Rylah Affair and Kew', that the coroner reiterated his conclusion that she had died of a cerebral haemorrhage; that there had been no suspicious circumstances, and that proper legal procedures had been followed at the time of her death. Having recently changed her will, her considerable estate, including 15 Victor Avenue, was left to her two children, Michael and Annabel. Annabel and her husband Lindsay Brownell continued the veterinary practice Ann had built up and run for 30 years.



ANN RYLAH'S FUNERAL AT HOLY TRINITY

J.E Rogers, photographer, 1969
KHS

At her funeral, held at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Kew, the Reverend Gordon Brown described Ann as: *One of those people possessed of a driving force which would not let her rest. In her professional and private life, she was a dynamo who would not rest until she had accomplished what she set out to do.*

Ann was a vibrant and hard-working woman who raised her family while running a successful veterinary practice, supporting her husband in his high-profile career as well as devoting herself to the Girl Guides Association for more than 40 years. Ann left nothing on the track.

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