

History of the Kew RSL / by John Torpey

The Kew sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia was granted its Charter on 1 January 1920. Its first president was Sam Kilduff, who served with the 24th Battalion in the First World War (1914-1918) and was badly wounded in Belgium.

The sub-branch initially held its meetings at the Town Hall, Walpole Street, before getting a lease on the former tram sheds on the corner of High and Derby Streets. Sometime in the 1920s, unable to find suitable premises, the sub-branch merged with Hawthorn sub-branch in its splendid building on the corner of Glenferrie and Manningtree roads, Hawthorn.

The Kew sub-branch was reformed at the end of 1931 at a meeting convened by Cr. Charles Parry, Mayor, and received its Charter on 1 January 1932 with Brigadier General Pat McGlenn as president. The first clubrooms, 'The Tin Shed', were on the south east corner of High and Mary Streets, and officially opened in July 1932. By 1946 a search for better premises was undertaken, and in the interim, the Club had access to two rooms in *Southesk* on the corner of Charles and Cotham Roads.

Doctor William Butler Walsh's *Wilton* on the northeast corner of Charles and Cotham Roads was acquired by the City of Kew Council in 1934 with the intention of building municipal offices, but in 1947 *Southesk* was bought and subsequently developed instead. *Wilton*, now being surplus, was sold to the Kew RSSAILA sub-branch in November 1948. Because it contained four flats, the sub-branch was unable to develop the building until the last tenant left in 1954. The opening of the new Clubrooms was in July 1955 with Roy Horking as president. The official opening in December 1955, was conducted by Sir Dallas Brooks, Governor of Victoria. Jim Rogers VC (Boer War) was among the members present. A liquor licence for upstairs was granted in 1958.

Substantial alterations, made in 1962, resulted in the current layout. Major refurbishment, external and internal alterations began in 2016, the completion of which is expected by May 2017.

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Copies of the full book, *The History of the Kew RSL*, are available from the author (jtorpey@bigpond.net.au)

or from the Kew Historical Society (info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au) for \$25.00.

