

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



## Kew's War Memorial

Over recent years the Kew War Memorial has been receiving a great deal of attention, not because it is in danger of being swept away by the forces of progress, but by debate about how it should be protected and preserved. Ultimately, we should all be grateful that we have a Council that is concerned about buildings of significance in the City of Boroondara and that it is prepared to seek out expert advice about how such structures should be maintained. More importantly, that it responds to community concerns about heritage decisions.

The Kew War Memorial is no stranger to controversy, past and recent. Cr. Vaughan in *Kew's Civic Century* (1960) recounts the controversy surrounding the original competition in 1920 for which prizes of £50, £15 and £10 were offered. While the first prize was awarded to Mr F. Bruce Kemp, his designs were ultimately not used, and Harry Tompkins' previously submitted designs were used instead. The City of Boroondara still retains Tompkins original designs.

To build the Memorial required the removal of a huge Moreton Bay Fig tree and the Jubilee Memorial Fountain. The latter had been placed on the site in 1887 to celebrate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Vaughan notes that there were deputations to Council objecting to the removal of the tree. He makes no mention of any special pleas for the fountain, which incidentally was relocated to the Alexandra Gardens.

The Governor of Victoria, the Earl of Stradbroke, opened Kew's new War Memorial in 1925. The Boroondara Library Service has a photo of the crowds that attended its inauguration.

More recently, apart from serving its purpose as a memorial to the fallen of Kew in the Great War, the monument has had attention drawn to it by issues such as land ownership, debate about whether it should be decorated at Christmas, and more recently about the repainting of the concrete 'drum'.

So, why has the drum, which rests on the eight, polished granite columns suddenly changed from 'yellow-olive' to off-white?

## Contents

- 4

**SOCIETY ACTIVITIES**  
 A special report on the McIntyre Lecture for 2013 and the Society's contribution to the Kew Festival and its theme 'Dancing in Kew'.
- 5

**THE STREETS OF KEW**  
 Part 2 of Andrew Frost's research into the disputes between Council and residents in the 1880s over the maintenance of streets.
- 8

**WHO WAS CHARLES VICKERS?**  
 An overview of the architectural practice of the nineteenth century owner of Ivy Grange.
- 9

**THE HOUSES OF R.G. MENZIES**  
 A two-page illustrated survey of the houses in Kew of Sir Robert Menzies.



**War Memorial, Kew (Postcard),  
State Library of Victoria (c1920-54)**

THE ROSE SERIES P. 13051  
COPYRIGHT

WAR MEMORIAL, KEW, VIC.

### **Kew's War Memorial (cont.)**

Kew architects, Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd were, in 2012 requested by Council to review the paint finishes of the Memorial, and to advise Council of the most suitable materials and colours, in order to return it to a finish that was authentic and appropriate to Tompkins' work, and to the style of the period. His very detailed report to Council was submitted in February 2013. The Society has received a copy as an interested party and is impressed by both the detail of the research into the Memorial's history and into the consultants' architectural analysis and recommendations.

The consultants conclude that 'the original finish of these surfaces was constructed of an off-white cement render finish designed to provide the effect of stonework to complement the granite columns and cenotaph'. (p.17)

In their Report to Council, Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd use historic photographs to augment the scientific and comparative analysis, including a photo from our Collection. An analysis of these photographs and of the oldest layers of paint work led them to observe that the incised lettering on the exterior of the drum, listing the campaigns, was not originally 'picked-out' in a different colour, but darkened at a later stage.

Architectural history and material conservation specialist Natica Schmeder provided a detail analysis of the paint layers for the report. She observed a 'heavy deposition of very fine black and brown particulate matter between paint layers, as well as thin reddish brown layers and spotting' (p.21). She concluded that the likely cause of this was the iron filings deposited by trams frequently travelling past. This was compounded by the use of cast iron brake blocks.

While at the time of writing, the drum appears to be a rather startling white, the Society believes that its concerns that the previous 'yellow-olive' colour did not correspond with the original appearance of the monument, and was rather closer to the 1950s rather than to 1925, have been fully responded to.

The Society waits with interest to see how the future treats this important part of our heritage and of the Kew Junction

precinct.

#### **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

2012-2013

President Alex Wilson OAM

Vice President/s Dione McIntyre / Philip Slobom

Secretary Judith Vimpani

Treasurer Margaret Robinson

Archivist Dorothy Benyei

Assistant Secretary Robert Baker

Committee members Don Garden / Rosemary Smart OAM

#### **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

The Kew Historical Society holds monthly meetings in the Phyllis Hore Room at the rear of the Kew Library. Meetings are held at 8:00PM on the second Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise announced. Refreshments are provided. Meetings are open to members and non-members.

#### **KEW COURT HOUSE**

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation and restoration of the Court House. A History Centre at the Court House, 188 High Street, Kew is staffed by members on Tuesdays 10:00AM-4:00PM, Thursdays 1:00PM-4:00PM and Saturdays 10:00AM-1:00PM. At the Centre you can ask questions about Kew's history and heritage and view displays of some of the Society's collection.

#### **NEWSLETTER**

This newsletter is published quarterly and is distributed to all members. Some additional copies are made available to the community. If you would like a copy of a particular issue, please contact the Assistant Secretary at

**Kew Historical Society Inc.**  
Inc. No. A0010789W  
ABN 97 824 890 237  
PO Box 175 Kew VIC 3101

## KHS NEWS

### COLLECTION

The Society gratefully accepts the following items that have been donated to our Collection by supporters and members of the Kew Historical Society.

A section of the original lettered terracotta facade of Byram (Tara Hall), including the words 'East or West' [Home is Best], was donated by Lachlan and Joan Richardson. The original location of the inscription can be seen in a photograph of 'Goathland' by Mark Strizic on the State Library of Victoria website.



Lachlan and Joan also donated a collection of railway memorabilia relating to the Kew railway. The collection includes tickets, timetables and newspaper cuttings.

Dione McIntyre donated a section of a Thames pulling boat from Burns Boatshed at Studley Park, named 'Wagana'. The section donated is the name plate. A photo-graph of the section can be seen on page 7.

Three albums of photographs taken by Eva Grant, a past member of the Society were donated by her niece, Julie Thomson. The albums include many photographs of Kew in the 1960s.

### BOOK SALE

18 August 2013

The next book sale will be held on Sunday 18 August between 1pm and 4pm in the Phyllis Hore Room at the rear of the Kew Library, Civic Drive, Kew. There will be lots of bargains. Please put this date in your diary.

## KHS ACTIVITIES

### PAST ACTIVITIES

#### KEW FESTIVAL

16-24 March 2013

A detailed report on the Societies contributions to the Kew Festival, and its theme 'Dancing in Kew' is included on page 4.

### PAST MEETINGS

**The Society holds monthly meetings in the Phyllis Hore Room at the rear of the Kew Library in Cotham Road. Meetings are held at 8:00PM on the second Wednesday of the month unless otherwise announced.**

#### MCINTYRE LECTURE

Emeritus Professor Graeme Davison

20 March 2013

In defining the evolution of the garden suburb in Australia, Graeme Davison identified the seminal influence of J. C. Loudon as a populariser of ideas particularly in *The Suburban gardener, and villa companion* (1838). His lecture provided examples of the evolution of the 'villa ideal' ranging from Sydney and Hobart in the 1820s to St Kilda and South Yarra in the 1840s. His explanation of the difference between town, suburban and country allotments made a great deal of sense to those of us who pore over historic maps of Kew.

#### THE TOSCANOS

Ms Joanne Toscano & Mr Joe Toscano

10 April 2013

Joanne Toscano has recently published a book on her family's history and she used the book to present a detailed account of her grandparents' lives. Her talk covered their triumphs as well as their struggles. Joanna described her family's first shops in Newmarket and Elwood and the difficult period they endured during the War. When the Toscanos first bought a shop in High Street, Kew, it was at 243, where they were to remain for ten years. At that time there were ten fruit shops in Kew. Then they moved to the present No. 207.

In the final part of the talk, Joe responded to audience questions and there was a very vivid discussion about people and places in Kew over the last 50 years.



#### THE TALE OF THE ENTERPRIZE

Ms Edwina Lampitt

8 May 2013

Edwina Lampitt presented a vivid, illustrated talk on the founding of Melbourne, comparing the contributions of John Batman and John Pascoe Fawcner. Edwina's presentation covered the background to settlement, including the chief participants' lives. A detailed description of Fawcner's ship, the Enterprize was provided as well as of the fourteen passengers aboard. Many of the points covered and the illustrations used engendered many questions from members. Edwina's talk concluded with an illustration of Fawcner's funeral procession in 1869.

### FUTURE MEETINGS

#### ARCHITECTURE OF BOROONDARA

Emeritus Professor Peter McIntyre

12 June 2013, 8pm

#### FROM BLACKBOARD TO WHITEBOARD

Mr Daniel Vine

10 July 2013, 8pm

#### ST GEORGE'S HOSPITAL TURNS 100

Hospital spokesperson

14 August 2013, 8pm.

#### THE RAILWAY COMES TO KEW

Mr Andrew Frost

11 September 2013, 8pm

Information about the October, November and December meetings in the Phyllis Hore Room will be published in the September Newsletter.



# 2013 Kew Festival

The Just Theatre was again packed to full capacity for the Annual McIntyre Lecture, where the prominent key speaker this year was Emeritus Professor Graeme Davison AO. The title of the lecture was "All that is essential to happiness" and the theme was the villa ideal and the first Australian suburbs.

The lecture surveyed the emergence of Australia's first suburbs in the 1830s and 1840s and showed how the English ideas of architects and landscape writers like John Claudius Loudon were applied to the Australian environment in places like Melbourne's sea and riverside suburbs such as Brighton and Kew. The lecture also posed the question, what is the longer term value of Loudon's legacy in an era when cities are becoming increasingly larger, denser, multicultural and environmentally vulnerable?



**Graeme Davidson (left) with Don Garden**

Again this year the Kew Historical Society participated in the Kew Community Festival. The Boroondara Cemetery walk attracted some 18 people and another 42 discovered Kew's historic buildings, homes and gardens on the History Heritage Bus Tour.

'Dancing in Kew' was the theme for this year's Kew Festival and the exhibitions at the Kew History Centre and the Kew Library again reflected the high standards set by the Society members.

Once again a lot of members worked tirelessly to make the Society's contribution to the Festival an outstanding success. Our thanks go to Robert Baker and Kerry Fairbank for the informative displays at the Kew History Centre. Thanks also to Les Littlechild for setting up the backing boards.

A special recognition also has to go to Robert who set up the audio-visual display. This was a first for the Society, in moving away from just having static displays into the realm of having continuous ongoing video messages about Kew's history. It has enabled history to suddenly become alive, and projects the image of the Society as a dynamic hub for those interested in local history.

Researching the historical content of the displays, Kerry and Robert were assisted by Associate Professor Don Garden, Kathleen Gervasoni, Dione McIntyre, Rae Nicholls and others from the Kew History Research Activity Group.

Archivist Dorothy Benyei and Dione McIntyre prepared the display case presentation of dance memorabilia from past eras enabling visitors to gain an appreciation of sociality that existed in the big homes of Kew's yesterday.

The success of the displays can be measured by the number of visitors who have visited the History Centre at the Kew Court House.

Manning the Kew History Centre during the Festival were Robert Baker, Dorothy Benyei, Ray Boothroyd, Andrew Frost, Anne Glasson, Kathleen Gervasoni, Astrid Judge, Virginia Kemp, Graeme Lindsay, Sue Littlechild, Rae Nicholls, Slavka Jelovac, Philip Slobom, and Judith Vimpani.

Contributing to making the second McIntyre Lecture such an outstanding success were Robert Baker, Associate Professor Don Garden, Slavka Jelovac, Margaret Robinson, Rosemary Smart OAM, Judith Vimpani, and Kristy Witmitz from the Boroondara Council.

The ever-popular Heritage Bus Tour would not have happened had it not been for the generosity of Philip Slobom.

Graeme Lindsay supported Philip on the day of the tour. Dorothy Benyei took the phone bookings, with Judith Vimpani and Margaret Robinson organising the bus, the parking and the publicity.

Our very warm congratulations to all those who were involved in the Festival presentation and activities this year.

## **Alex Wilson OAM President**

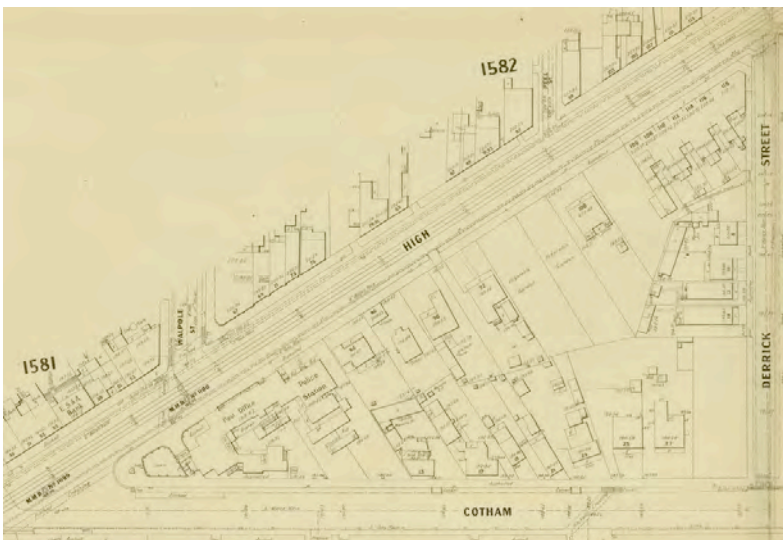


**Exhibition at the Court House**

# The streets of Kew

## Part 2

Andrew Frost



Conflicts over planning and infrastructure are not inventions of the twenty-first century. Some battles over the streets and drains in Kew in the late nineteenth century provide an insight into the workings of local government in Melbourne in an era when more basic concerns were paramount than today's concerns about appropriate development.

This article discusses three such battles – '**Derrick Street**', '**Mr Maidment's drain**' and '**Ermington Lane**' – between the Borough of Kew and its ratepayers about streets and drains in the 1880s.

These conflicts show a variety of strategies used by the Council to reach agreement with ratepayers to construct important works. These methods show Council's willingness to be flexible and negotiate and to avoid using coercive powers if possible. Not all ratepayers responded cooperatively.

**Derrick Street** was a private street on the margin of the business district of Kew and a well-used thoroughfare. We hear first about Derrick Street when the ratepayers applied to Council to have the street 'taken over' in January 1881. The Council agreed, after much debate, but ratepayers had to pay half the costs.

The argument of the majority of the Council was that there was an established policy that ratepayers of private streets either had to hand over the street fully-formed or pay half the costs if Council did the work. It was felt that to make an exception for Derrick Street would create a precedent for ratepayers of other private streets.

On the other hand the ratepayers, and a minority of Council, believed that there were extenuating circumstances in the case of Derrick Street. They believed that the costing by the Borough Surveyor was excessive. They felt the Council was partly responsible for the state of the street due to a channel on Bulleen Road, which deposited sand in the street. The Council had also put in some kerbing at the entrance to the street. Finally, the ratepayers believed that the street had become an important and convenient thoroughfare in Kew, and thus should be an exception to the policy on private streets. In the end a decision was delayed to allow the ratepayers to drain and form the street themselves.

And there the matter stood till September 1882, when Miss Reilly complained about rubbish on a block of land in Derrick Street. So, in October 1882 the Council agreed to take over and form the street with the ratepayers paying half the costs. The ratepayers did not want to pay, so the argument continued in Council into 1883.

Continued Page 6

This is a continuation of research on the work of the Kew Borough Council (hereafter referred to as 'the Council'.) in providing formed streets and drains. Sources for this article are the *Minutes of the Kew Borough Council* in the 1880s and one of the local newspapers, the *Boroondara Standard*.

Part I, which was published in the March Newsletter provided a general outline of the issues relating to public and private streets and their capacity to engender disputes between the municipality and its ratepayers over the responsibility for their upkeep.



H. W. de Mole

### Mayors of Kew

1880-81: W. J. Runting  
1882-83: H. W. de Mole  
1883-85: Francis Barnard  
1885-86: Henry Gray  
1886-87: E. A. Atkyns  
1888-89: H. de C. Kellett  
1889-90: J. M. Campbell

## The Streets of Kew: Part 2 (continued)

There was a standoff for a further 18 months, until the problem could no longer be ignored. In October 1884 the Inspector of Nuisances and the Health Officer reported that Derrick Street was a health hazard as there was no drainage outlet for waste water.

These reports changed the status of the problem of Derrick Street. It became an issue of public health, and thus the Council, acting as the Local Board of Health, had power to prepare plans and order the ratepayers to drain the street and pay all the costs, or let the Council do the work and charge ratepayers half the costs of the works.

By April 1885, the time for ratepayers to complete the works themselves had expired, so the Council proceeded with the work and required ratepayers to pay for their share of the costs. All ratepayers had paid by the end of April except Mr Whiddycombe, who refused to pay.

Mr Whiddycombe was warned to pay in October 1885. Legal action was taken against him in November. The Council lost the case on technical grounds. The Council, acting as the Local Board of Health, relaunched the legal action and won. The last we hear of Derrick Street is that seven day's notice was given to Derrick Street ratepayers to pay for the drainage works in May 1887. We presume that Mr Whiddycombe paid.

**Mr Maidment's drain** is an example of the way that the Council attempted to negotiate orders for works in an attempt to reach some form of amicable agreement with affected ratepayers by using a personal approach, rather than by relying on coercion.

In March 1886, the Inspector of Nuisances reported a 'nuisance', caused by a dirty water hole off Wellington Street. A drain was needed.

Mr Maidment of Butleigh Wotton owned nine allotments in Glenferrie Road. Council requested permission for a drain to be built through his land. The issue was the compensation that Mr Maidment required. The Town Clerk was sent to discuss the terms on which Mr Maidment would allow the drain to be constructed.

Nothing happened for a year. In May 1887, the Council sent another delegation to Mr Maidment. Over a period of three months, there were orders made on Mr Maidment to allow the drain to be built but no legal action was taken.

Mr Maidment was holding out for an offer of better compensation. Early in August 1887, he offered to allow the drain to be built if he was paid £100. The Council offered him £50 pounds. Mr Maidment stuck to his demand for £100.

The Mayor was sent to negotiate. An agreement was struck for £75. The Mayor blinked first!

The draining of **Ermington Lane** is another example of the Council using negotiation and a personal approach to resolve issues related to drainage and private streets. In January 1886, the Inspector of Nuisances found Ermington Lane covered with stagnant water because there was no drainage outlet. The Mayor suggested that the ratepayers be given a chance to fix the problem themselves. Cr Kellett informed the Council that all the ratepayers, with the exception of Mrs Ratten, were willing to contribute to the cost of the work.

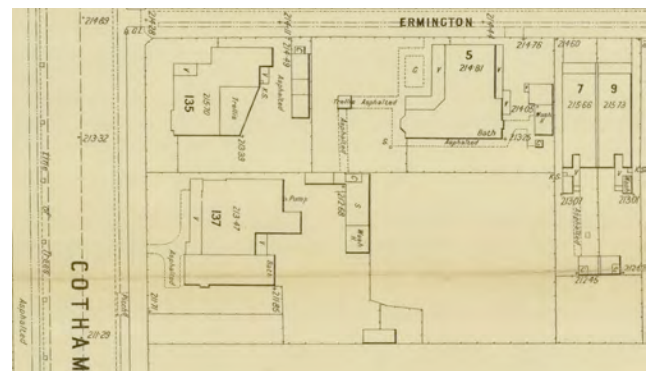
Councillor Lilley visited Mrs Ratten to discuss the width of the lane, and it was agreed that Mrs Ratten would provide the land on the condition that she did not have to pay for any other costs. Agreement was reached with the other ratepayers. But then Mrs Ratten withdrew her offer.

In July 1887, the Council ordered the ratepayers to form and drain the Lane in thirty days. Mrs Ratten still refused to pay. Costs were apportioned between the ratepayers and orders to pay were given out in November 1887, with the threat of legal action for recalcitrant ratepayers.

In the end, the ratepayers did not construct the drain, and the Council constructed the works itself. Clearly Mrs Ratten was not about to cooperate with the Council.

**In conclusion**, it can be seen that the Council was reluctant to act in a coercive manner in these three cases and preferred informal and personal negotiation and mediation wherever possible, but such approaches failed in two of the cases described here.

We sometimes like to think that authoritarian and coercive action by government was more acceptable to people in the nineteenth century than in today's more enlightened world. Not so. When it comes to paying out money, ratepayers play very tight indeed – then and now!



© Andrew Frost, 2013.



# KHS Focuses on the Future

One feature that distinguishes the Kew Historical Society Inc (KHS) from voluntary or unincorporated associations is that it is bestowed with a legal personality separate from that of its members.

As an incorporated association, an Act of Parliament regulates the KHS. When the KHS was incorporated in September 1986, it was regulated by the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*. At the time of incorporation, it adopted a set of rules that it called the 'Rules of Incorporation with Purposes'.

In April 2009, the Parliament of Victoria enacted the *Associations Incorporation Amendment Act 2009* which amended the former Act.

A consequence of this was that in September and October 2010 it was necessary for the KHS to amend its Rules of Incorporation with Purposes, to facilitate the introduction of grievance procedures as per the 'Model Rules' in the *Amendment Act of 2009*.

Further amendments also had to be made to the KHS Rules of Incorporation with Purposes in February, March, May and July 2012.

In April 2012, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and adopted new 'Model Rules' for incorporated associations.

The KHS Finance, Secretarial & Governance Activity Group was asked to amalgamate the KHS Rules of Incorporation with Purposes and those of the new 'Model Rules', so that the KHS operates in accordance with one set of rules that is compliant with the *Reform Act 2012*.

The amalgamation provided the opportunity for concepts to be introduced into the new rules that are relevant to the Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Management Committee believes that the move to the Kew Court House has created the opportunity for a new role to be defined - a Curator - who will be responsible for organising and participating in the presentation and display of the Society's historical and cultural collection.

At times the situation can arise where a Management Committee member cannot necessarily be physically present at a meeting, and yet they may wish to participate in the proceedings. The new rules allow for the use of technology that allows a Management Committee member and the Management Committee members present at the meeting to clearly and simultaneously communicate with each other.

The introduction into the new Rules of 'Rotary Resolutions' will also enable the Management Committee to vote when a one-off urgent issue arises without having to convene a physical meeting of all the Management Committee.

The new amalgamated rules provide the foundation for the efficient management of the Society. It will enable the Society to focus on its future role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Alex Wilson OAM  
President**

## VALE

**ROSEMARY VAUGHAN-SMITH**

**23-9-1930 – 22-4-2013**

Rosemary joined our society in 1978 and was actively involved in all our activities, dressing up and walking in the Kew Festival parade, organising and manning the plant stall for fairs, making delicious suppers and providing the cake for our Christmas Party, supporting her husband Raymond when President, and serving on the committee herself. She was a staunch supporter of saving the Kew Court House. Rosemary was always beautifully dressed, with matching hat and if weather decreed a matching umbrella. Her school years were spent at Fintona, MLC and Clyde. On leaving school she studied to be an occupational therapist. Rosemary was very aware of the need to keep people in institutional care active and occupied and was a regular visitor to Carnsworth Nursing Home helping with activity groups. After Raymond had his stroke, she transferred her activities to Broughtonlea in Surrey Hills and went there almost daily. To her daughter Myf and her family we send our sympathy.



### Relic from the Golden Years of Boating

In the 1920s and 30s, rowing on the Yarra was a very popular weekend pastime. Each of the early boats was individually named in gold letters on its varnished wooden backboard. This is all that remains of one of the Thames pulling boats from Burns Boatshed at Studley Park which was destroyed by a falling tree in a storm. Their entire fleet of rowing boats has now been replaced by fiberglass boats. (see *News*, p.2)

# Who was Charles Vickers?

When Dorothy Rogers came to research and write *Lovely Old Homes of Kew* (1961), she rightly selected Ivy Grange in Molesworth Street as one of the fourteen houses in Kew to write about. In the entry she makes no reference to the architect of the house or to its first owner, but writes almost exclusively about the Beath family who bought the house in 1873, nine years after it was built. This is the pattern repeated in her *History of Kew* (1973), where she focusses on the stories of the colonial settlers and their descendants, many of whom were alive well into the twentieth century.

Times change and with differing priorities, we now pay attention to things that earlier researchers valued less. That this information was often not valued has consequences now, as it is sometimes difficult to reassemble the historical record accurately. Luckily, in the case of Charles Vickers, enough remains of his legacy to recreate a fragmentary picture.

So, who is Charles Vickers and why does he matter? The City of Boroondara's *Thematic Environmental History* (2012) notes that a number of eminent architects from the 1850s to the 1940s worked but did not necessarily live in the 'study area'. Charles Vickers is listed but there is no complete record published anywhere of his life or works.

Prior to arriving in Port Phillip on the *Appleton* in 1853, Vickers had a successful architectural practice in Yorkshire where he had an established reputation as a architect of churches. In the year of his arrival in Melbourne, he was awarded a major design, that of Christ Church in Hawthorn. In the following two years, we know that he contributed to the design of St Peter's Eastern Hill, the Holy Trinity Church at Coburg and the Holy Trinity Church and parsonage at Barabool on the surf coast.



Ivy Grange

## Robert Baker

By 1856, his success had enabled him to buy the large block of land abutting Princess and Molesworth Streets on which he was to build Ivy Grange by 1864. While he was planning Ivy Grange, he continued other commissions. These included the first building at the Boroondara General Cemetery, a two-roomed cottage, which was later to be incorporated into a larger building.

During the period in which Vickers and his family lived in Ivy Grange (1864-1873), he undertook major architectural designs including the Richmond and St Arnaud Town Halls (1859), the Congregational Church in Walpole Street, Kew (1870) [now demolished], and the vicarage of Holy Trinity Church, Kew. The latter bears a striking resemblance to Ivy Grange.



Vicarage, Holy Trinity Church, Kew

After the sale of Ivy Grange to David Beath in 1873, Vickers went into partnership with George Wharton (1822-91). Together they won a major design award in 1875 offered by the Department of Education. Their design was for an architectural prototype for a school suitable for 1,000+ students. H. R. Bastow's designs for primary schools at Gravel Hill and Beechworth are two examples based on Wharton and Vickers' original design. Their other significant joint design was the Presbyterian Church at St Arnaud (1876/7).

1877 was to mark the end of Charles Vickers' career in Melbourne. He placed all of his remaining properties on the market and moved to Sydney. By 1879 he was declared insolvent. No record of his death has yet been discovered. By the time of his daughter's marriage in 1899, it is noted that he is no longer living. Typically, for architects of the period, no photograph is known to exist.



# Robert Gordon Menzies in Kew

Judith Vimpani



65 Wellington Street, Kew

*"I am, as you know, a reasonably bigoted Kew citizen, proud of the history of the City and delighted with its constant development. There are, no doubt, those who think that Kew is a quiet corner of Greater Melbourne, and that this takes it out of the main stream of events. There could be no greater error. A quiet corner we may be, but the quietness is one which has nourished thoughtful people, good citizens and great schools. There is a charm about Kew which nothing can take away from it."*

From R G Menzies' foreword to *Kew's Civic Century*, by Cr W D Vaughan, 1960.



Sir Robert Gordon Menzies was born in Jeparit into a family that valued education and that was politically active. As a young boy, Robert recognised that he wanted to be a barrister and through solid study succeeded in winning scholarships that would see him educated in Ballarat, at Wesley College, Melbourne, and then at Melbourne University. Of interest is a statement that has been uncovered that Robert Menzies formed an historical society at the University<sup>1</sup>.

His father, James Menzies, was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1910 and the family moved to live initially in East Melbourne, then Camberwell, South Yarra and finally Kew. In 1917, James and Kate, Robert's parents, settled in Wellington Street, Kew. Robert's father named the house 'Lowan', after the Legislative Assembly seat he represented.

The house has been renumbered several times as 99, 101, 83, and today as number 65. Whilst checking these numbers, it was interesting to find that the 1923 Sands & McDougall<sup>2</sup> entry for James Menzies noted his occupation as 'jam manufacturer'. Was the family making jam on the day the Sands & McDougall recorder called?

Originally built in 1880, for a period, the Wellington Street property housed the Clarence Ladies' College. In 1921, James and Kate Menzies converted the house into five flats to accommodate themselves and their adult children and renamed the property 'Lowan Flats'. 'Robert Gordon Menzies' was recorded at this residence in the *1919 Federal Electoral Roll*.

Following the death of James Menzies in 1945 and Kate Menzies in 1946, the property was sold, although their daughter Isabel Alice Green (nee Menzies) occupied her original flat until about 1974. Neighbours remember federal police at the gate when the then Prime Minister came to stay with his sister.

In 1920 Robert had married Pattie Maie Leckie at the **Kew Presbyterian Church**. Pattie was from Alexandra, the daughter of the local federal member, who was also a Minister in the Cabinet, and was therefore well prepared for the life she was to later lead. As newlyweds, they may have initially resided in Robert's flat at *Lowan*.

In February 1922, when their first son Kenneth Leckie was born, the birth notice published in *The Argus* made reference to the family residing in **Gellibrand Street**. The precise residential address remains unknown, although it is of interest that Leckie relatives by marriage lived in this street.

Continued Page 10

## R. G. Menzies in Kew (from Page 9)

In the same year, the Kew Rate Books indicate the family moved to **56 Charles Street, Kew**, a property owned by the noted printer and engraver, Charles B. Shugg. The Menzies' second son, Robert Ian, was born at Charles Street in October 1923. The Charles Street address was also recorded in the *1924 Electoral Roll*, however, due to street re-numbering, No. 56 is now known as 74 Charles Street.



**56 Charles Street, Kew**

The *Kew Rate Book 1922–1923* indicates that ‘R. G. Menzies’ acquired land at 3 Grange Road, East Kew. This vacant land was purchased from the builder Alfred Hutchinson. Construction of a new house began while the family was living in Charles Street. It was not until 1924 that the Menzies family moved into their new 8-roomed house in Grange Road and named it ‘Culdares’, a reference to the eponymous Scottish seat of the Menzies clan. Robert was very proud of his Scottish heritage, also indicated by the familiar sobriquet for the Menzies name, Mingus.

Dame Beryl Beaurepaire (nee Bedggood) recalled in an interview with Radio National’s Peter Thompson<sup>3</sup> that her mother and Dame Pattie “had pushed prams together” around the streets of Kew. The Bedggoods lived in the next street, Edward Street.

In November 1926, under instructions from ‘R. G. Menzies,’ the “Charming modern brick roughcast bungalow” at 3 Grange Street, East Kew was advertised for sale in *The Argus*. Robert is listed there from 1925–1926 according to the Sands & McDougall Directory.

The next house occupied by the Menzies was **10 Howard Street, Kew**, the best known of the Menzies’ residences in Kew. It appears that the motivation for the sale of *Culdares* was the opportunity to purchase the Howard Street property from Mrs Bessie Stokes (widow of T. W. Stokes). The *1925–1926 Kew Rate Book* records ‘R. G. Menzies’ having a proprietary interest in the property.

Indications that Mrs Stokes had vacated 10 Howard Street include a notice of her daughter’s wedding in September 1926. The notice suggested that Mrs Stokes was already residing in Mosman, Sydney.

An auction of the contents of 10 Howard Street by order of Mrs T. W. Spokes of ‘Blantyre’ was advertised in *The Argus* in November 1926.

In the following month, an advertisement for mother’s help for two children at 10 Howard Street appeared in *The Argus*, suggesting that the Menzies were in residence at the property. The family was to remain at the house for more than two decades. Daughter Heather was born in 1928 and was educated at Ruyton. She accompanied her parents to Canberra, while her brothers boarded at Geelong College.



**10 Howard Street, Kew**

By 1929, Robert Menzies had established himself as a King’s Counsel (KC) and was elected to the Victorian Legislative Council, later switching to the Legislative Assembly. In 1934, Robert Menzies became the Member for Kooyong. He became Prime Minister from 1939 until 1941, then again from 1949 to 1966.

On 17 August 1949, the Howard Street property was sold to Leonard Clinton Shaw, brother-in-law of Pattie Menzies. Robert and Patti Menzies moved to live in ‘The Lodge’, Canberra, although they had an interest in a house at 26 Reid Street, Deepdene until it was transferred to Frank Menzies, Robert’s brother, in 1950. Family was always important to Robert Menzies.

After his retirement, Sir Robert and Dame Patti Menzies famously lived at 2 Haverbrack Street, Malvern.

**Judith Vimpani, with thanks to Kerry Fairbank for sharing her research**

1. Trengove Alan, *Menzies: A Pictorial Biography*, 1978.
2. *Sands and McDougall Victorian Directories*.
3. *Big Ideas: The Wisdom Interviews*, 24 April 2005.

# Kings Bromley

Josiah Joseph Robinson, pianoforte maker, came to Australia in 1863, leaving the cold and smog of London, where he had been employed by the piano and organ-manufacturing firm, Stromongers, for a healthier climate in Australia.

His future wife, the fair-haired Alice Sarah Dixon was, like Josiah born in Kings Bromley, a small and beautiful village situated on the river Trent near Lichfield in Staffordshire, north of London. She sailed to Melbourne in 1869, and they were married in the following year, living in Richmond while seeking a permanent place to call home.

Josiah soon found and purchased a cottage on Lot 82, on land that had originally been purchased by Edward Dumaresq in the Land Sub-division of 1851. The cottage was located on Cotham Road, on the east corner of John Street, which was then just an unmade dirt track.

It was to this existing cottage that Josiah began the construction of their two-storey timber home carrying out most of the work himself.

Eighty years later, Betty Robinson wrote: "Grandma often told us how she used to hold the lantern on high for grandpa while he worked away on the building during the evening hours in order for him to complete the work in the hours at his disposal, which she found very tiring because by this time she was pregnant with their first

The resulting weatherboard building with bay windows to the north was surrounded by a graceful timber verandah, It was lined internally with timber. Large open paddocks surrounded the site, which consisted of an orchard, stables and outbuildings. Cows and horses used by the family grazed in the home paddocks.

The name given to the home was Kings Bromley, after their home village in Staffordshire.

Josiah and Alice had a large family of 11 children who lived there happily for many years. Their son Stanley was the last member of the family to leave the old house. He carried on the family tradition as piano repairer and tuner for the local community up until the end.

There was a charm and elegance about the old house, which would have been valued today had it survived, but unfortunately Kings Bromley was demolished in the 1950s to make way for an unremarkable brick residence.

## Dione McIntyre

Detail from [Blind man tuning a piano], State Library of Victoria (1912)



# SUPPORT KEW'S HISTORY

Kew Historical Society is the keeper of much information and many items pertaining to the history of Kew. To continue the work of the Society your support is needed. This work is ongoing and involves conserving, cataloguing and making the collection available to the public.

You can support the Society by becoming a member and/or making a donation. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We wish to  make a donation of \$.....

join the Kew Historical Society. I/We agree to be bound by the Rules of the Society, for the time being in force.

Signature of Applicant/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please post your cheque with this form to KHS PO Box 175, Kew Vic 3101

### Annual Membership Fees

Individual	\$20
Family	\$25
Student	\$ 5



## 2013 Calendar

The Kew Historical Society meets monthly in the Phyllis Hore Room of the Kew Library on the second Wednesday of each month except January unless otherwise announced. Visitors are welcome to attend.

12 June, 8pm	Emeritus Professor Peter McIntyre – 'The Architecture of Boroondara'.
10 July, 8pm	Daniel Vine, Director of the Richard & Eliza Tudor Centre of Contemporary Learning, Trinity Grammar – 'From Blackboard to Whiteboard'.
14 August, 8pm	Hospital Spokesperson – 'St George's Hospital turns 100'.
11 September, 8pm	Andrew Frost – 'The Railway comes to Kew'.

Printing: Courtesy of Andrew McIntosh MLA, Member for Kew [www.andrewmcintoshmp.com](http://www.andrewmcintoshmp.com)

### **Kew Historical Society Inc.**

Established 1958 Incorporated 1987

*'Preserving Kew's History for future generations'*

We invite you to join our Society and in collaboration with others to find out more about Kew's unique history and heritage

#### Annual Memberships

Individual \$20; Family \$25; Student \$5.

Inquiries: The Secretary, Kew Historical Society,

PO Box 175, Kew VIC 3101

or [info@kewhistory.com.au](mailto:info@kewhistory.com.au)

## **BIG QUARTERLY BOOK SALE**

1 PM – 4 PM

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2013

Phyllis Hore Room (Rear Kew  
Library)  
Civic Drive, Kew

Lots of Bargains

Please put this date in your  
diary

**Kew Historical Society Inc.**

**PO Box 175**

**Kew VIC 3101**