

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



## UNEXPECTED GIFTS

Building a collection appropriate to a small museum involves both challenges and opportunities. Each has influenced the collection priorities and policies of historical societies throughout the City of Boroondara. Most have decided to limit their collections to particular categories of content, such as focusing on works on paper, whereas the Kew Historical Society, for better or worse, is committed to developing and managing a heterogeneous collection.

Given our decision, one of the challenges the Society faces in 2015 includes appropriate conservation interventions. A 'Buy-a-Box' campaign to store a number of our fragile costumes and textiles was launched in December 2014 and has, to date, raised over \$450 towards a target of \$690. This will enable the purchase of a number of archival textile boxes for the more important items. The Society's Management Committee has also funded the purchase of polypropylene sleeves that will allow for most of the historic photos in the collection to be stored for posterity in archival quality enclosures.

While many of the decisions relating to storage involve decisions about how to pack specific items, or categories of items, sometimes the decision is more all encompassing. The Society is grateful that the City of Boroondara and its Library Service allocated it storage space at the south end of the Kew Library some years ago, in an area where the stage was once located. This space houses numerous framed photographs and paintings, a large historic map collection, wardrobes filled with clothing and textiles, items of printed ephemera, and domestic and technical equipment.

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Special price \$10 members/\$20 non-members. (See p.3&4)



Front-page  
Detail of curtains, from 'Tourmont'.  
Donated by Pamela Thompson, 2014.

Right  
'Tourmont' (Fintona), 1980  
John T. Collins, photographer. State Library of Victoria



## UNEXPECTED GIFTS (cont.)

Accepting new items into the collection is one of those challenges previously mentioned. An offer of two items to the collection by Pamela Thompson of Alexandra in February 2015 proved a test of our resolve. The items were two long, early 20th century curtains that once graced one of the front rooms of the David York Syme owned mansion of 'Tourmont' in Balwyn Road. The curtains had originally been offered to the Balwyn Historical Society, which had recommended to the donor that she contact the Kew Historical Society, given the range of our collection.

Normally, we try to collect items that have a clear provenance to Kew, but in this case, we made the decision that these early curtains were intrinsically important, and were culturally significant for Boroondara. Our decision was helped because of our close association with Villa Alba, whose mission is to be a museum and educational facility for the collection, study and display of interior decorations and decorative finishes.

This 'unexpected gift' triggered a number of activities. These included establishing the ownership and provenance of the curtains, identifying the textile designer, and the probable place of manufacture.

To date we know that Tourmont was designed by the Melbourne architect John Beswicke for the Melbourne Steamship Company co-founder and manager, David York Syme, who was the first owner-occupier in 1891. [David York Syme and his family are buried in the Boroondara General Cemetery.] Following Syme's death in 1932, Margaret Cunningham, a teacher at Fintona purchased the house in 1934. During the following year, the architect, R. W. Appleford, prepared the house in readiness for its commencement as a school in 1936. We know that the curtains were located in the General Office, which was once the main reception room of Tourmont. This room contained a large bay window and three metre high ceilings. Following the purchase from the school of the curtains during a period of redecoration, the curtains began their trip to Alexandra where they remained until being accessioned into our collection.

The curtains were initially described as being William Morris designs. Morris was an English textile designer, poet, novelist, translator, and socialist activist. His designs popularised the 'arts and crafts style'. After his death in 1896, the factory that he established continued to produce textiles until 1940.

Collaborative research with Mrs Jessie Serle of Villa Alba, and other design historians will test the attribution to the William Morris factory, and hopefully establish the period in which the design was created and used.

**ROBERT BAKER, ARCHIVIST**

## KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Dr Keith Kendall  
Vice President: Assoc. Prof. Don Garden  
Secretary: Vacant  
Treasurer: Margaret Robinson  
Archivist/Newsletter editor: Robert Baker  
Curator: Tony Michael  
Members: Andrew Frost | Mel Lawrence | Mary Kelleher |  
Debbie McColl-Davis | Suzanne McWha

### 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. Details of meetings and lectures in 2015 are listed on page 3.

### KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation and restoration of the historic Kew Court House complex. Volunteers staff the Kew History Centre on Level 1 three days a week: alternate Thursdays (11.00am-1.00pm), and every Friday and Saturday (11.00am-1.00pm). Look for our sign. At the Centre, you can ask questions about Kew's history and view displays from the Society's collection. Inquiries about houses and past residents can be made using the Sands and McDougall Directories.

### 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 Editor, [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au).

### WEBSITE

[www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](http://www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

### MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES

See page 10 of the newsletter or contact the President, Dr Keith Kendall.  
Phone 0402 117 971  
Email [president@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:president@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

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## EXHIBITIONS

The Kew Historical Society mounts regular exhibitions in the History Centre of the Kew Court House (Level 1, 188 High Street, Kew) and at the Kew Library (Civic Drive, Kew). In March, April, May and June, there will be three exhibitions at the Court House and one at the Kew Library.

### KEW COURT HOUSE

Beyond the Gate  
Ends 11 April

A photographic exploration of nine significant houses in Kew, each selected to represent a particular decade from the 1840s to the 1920s.

The Kew Festival 1974-2015  
6 March - 11 April

To coincide with the 2015 Kew Festival, the Society is mounting a display that explores the history of the Kew Festival using film, photographs, objects, costumes and ephemera. The display will be open from Tuesday to Saturday from 11am-1.00pm during the 2015 Kew Festival.

J. E. Barnes: Kew's 'Embarkation  
Photographer'  
17 April - 29 August

Josiah Earl Barnes, Kew's greatest photographer, worked locally as a photographer from ca. 1908 until his death in 1921. From an early interest in photographing yachts, Barnes progressed to become an official 'embarkation photographer', taking numerous photos of departing ships, soldiers and nurses at the Port of Melbourne. Drawing on photographs from the collections of the Australian War Memorial, the Kew Historical Society and from the descendants of Josiah Earl Barnes, this photographic exhibition is enhanced by objects relating to soldiers of Kew who sailed on the ships photographed by J. E. Barnes.

### KEW LIBRARY

Kew at War  
1 - 30 April

Two displays at the Kew Library are being mounted during April. A large display in the wall cabinet at the south end of the Kew Library will focus on the home front in Kew.

A large glass showcase on the Library floor will be used to display smaller items relating to World War I.

## MEETINGS & LECTURES

### MCINTYRE LECTURE

\* Ticketed event

The Hon. Chief Justice Marilyn Warren AC

Eureka! 160 years on  
Just Theatre, Kew Court House  
188 High Street, Kew  
Wednesday 18 March, 6.30 for 7:00pm  
March 2015 will mark the 160-year anniversary of the Eureka trials, arguably among the most famous trials in Victoria's history. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria reflects on one of Victoria's greatest legends, the trials that followed, and what it all meant for Victorians. Refreshments are included.  
Ticketed event. \$10 members; \$20.00 non-members Bookings: 9278 4770.

### APRIL MEETING

Carole Woods: Red Cross Women at War - Leadership on the Victorian Home Front 1914-1918, & Prof. Judith Smart: Women Waging War on the Home Front 1914-1919  
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library  
Wednesday 8 April, 8:00pm  
Two speakers, Carole Woods and Judith Smart, describe aspects of the 'home front' in Victoria during World War I. The talks will provide a lead-in to the Kew Historical Society's contribution to the 'Gallipoli & Beyond 2015' commemoration.

### MAY MEETING

Assoc. Professor Don Garden  
Rolling Countryside and Fresh Air: how the environment helped shape Kew  
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library  
Wednesday 13 May, 8:00pm  
There are many factors that shaped the geographic development and nature of our suburbs. The elevated rolling countryside, together with 19th century understandings of disease and health, led to suburbs such as Kew being the most preferred in Melbourne.

### JUNE MEETING

Suzanne McWha  
Under Wraps: the unveiling of the KHS wedding dress  
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library  
Wednesday 10 June, 8:00pm  
A 19th century white wedding dress entered the collection in the early years of the Society. Suzanne will examine its key features and style and what these tell us about the period of its construction and use.

## 2015 MEETING CALENDAR

### 11 February 2015

Dolores San Miguel: The Secret Love Letters - a family history.

### 18 March 2015

The 2015 McIntyre Lecture\*  
The Hon. Chief Justice Marilyn Warren AC: Eureka! 160 Years On.

### 8 April 2015

Professor Judith Smart: Women Waging War on the Home Front 1914-1919; & Carole Woods: Red Cross Women at War - Leadership on the Victorian Home Front 1914-1918.

### 13 May 2015

Assoc. Prof. Don Garden: Rolling Countryside and Fresh Air: How the environment helped shape Kew.

### 10 June 2015

Suzanne McWha: Under Wraps: the unveiling of the KHS wedding dress.

### 8 July 2015

Fr Michael Kalka: Sacred Heart Catholic Church & School 1872-2015.

### 12 August 2015

Louise Baker: Ruyton Girls' School: Archiving its history.

### 9 September 2015

Annual General Meeting.

### 14 October 2015

The 2015 Dickinson Lecture\*  
Prof. Miles Lewis AM: The Melbourne mansion of the 19th century.

### 11 November 2015

Ian Mathers B.E.M. & Michael Mathers: The Kew Band.

### December 2015

Annual Xmas Party.

\* Ticketed event

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members to the Kew Historical Society:

Doug & Rosemary Atcheson, Ian Lees, Rosemary Nairn, Merrilyn Shepherd, and Janet & David White.

# THE KEW FESTIVAL

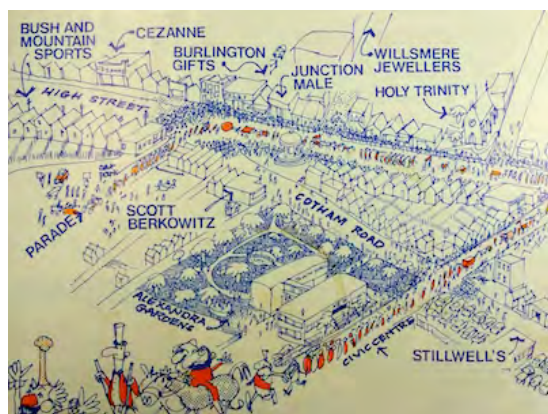
In October 1973, the Mayor of Kew, Cr. Gerard Petrie called a meeting to plan for the first Kew Festival. Those present agreed that a festival would be held in March 1974.

During this first festival, a wide array of groups participated, including about 1,000 preschool and school pupils. The main family weekend was held at Victoria Park using Wittislow Carnival props with Kew locals manning all the stalls. The Festival ran for 14 days, with various functions each day and night.

The 1970s was a seminal period in which the basic structures of the Festival were established. What is now an annual fixture of the Festival, the ecumenical gathering and afternoon-tea at Carmelite Convent in Stevenson Street, began during the period when Cr. Noel Whiting, (1977-1978) was mayor. In 1979, Cr. Jack Gervasoni invited iconic personalities to participate in the Festival. Events included: a Kew Wood-chopping Championship, led by Australian and World Champions Lawrence and Martin O'Toole; a Soap-box Derby; a Tennis Clinic, led by Frank Sedgman; Festival Bowls; a Colonial Ball with The Bushwackers Band; and Chess on Cotham Road played by Philip Brady and Johnny Young.

Parades were a feature of each festival. The first festival had featured a grand parade on the Saturday after the Monday Moomba parade. Successive parades took various routes, usually centring on the Kew Post Office, and typically finishing in the Alexandra Gardens. A tram sometimes led the Parade, resulting in the next tram being delayed for ten minutes. When the trams resumed their route, High Street needed to be cleared of participants. The location of the parade required paper work to be negotiated with Vic Roads, transport authorities, police etc.

In 1996, when the Formula 1 Grand Prix was shifted to Albert Park, new regulations prevented 'planned' interruptions to public transport. In the year when the traditional parade was held on the first Saturday after Labor Day, a clash with the transport regulations supporting the Grand Prix was inevitable. To avoid interruptions to the trams, an alternate tram free route was used. The route of the parade was to change again with the decision to move the location of the festival to Victoria Park, where Kewmunity Day (Family Fun Day) was held.



Festival Brochure, 1980. Route of the Festival Parade

From 2013, a dancing theme for the Festival included an on-site dance parade, which encouraged mass participation.

In 2015, the Kew Community Festival will be held from Friday 6 March to Sunday 22 March. Details of the Festival Program are published on [kewfestival.org](http://kewfestival.org). The Kew Historical Society, which has been involved in every Kew festival, will hold a number of walks and tours, and mount a special display in its room on level 1 of the Kew Court House.

## FEATURED KHS EVENTS

**Friday 6 March (opening 6.00pm)**

**EXHIBITION: 'KEW FESTIVAL 1974-2014'**

1st Floor, Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew

This exhibition, as well as the photographic exhibition 'Beyond the Gate: Nine Great Houses of Kew', will be open Tuesday to Saturday 11am-1.00pm, for the duration of the Festival.

Phone bookings for exhibition opening: 0438 370 967

Email bookings: [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

**Sunday 8 March at 10.30am**

**WALKING TOUR: WILLSMERE PARK**

80-minute walking tour around Willsmere Park. History of the Billabong, floods, the three golf courses, building of the Eastern Freeway, former boat houses, Willsmere Farm, nearby O'Toole Reserve and Kilby Road.

Limited to 25 participants. Meet at the Jack Gervasoni Pavilion (southern end of Willow Grove, Kew) at 10.20am.

Phone bookings: 0419 587 939;

Email bookings: [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

**Sunday 15 March at 1.00pm**

**TOUR: HISTORIC KEW COURT HOUSE & POLICE STATION**

Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew

1-hour tour of the historic Police Station and Court House. These heritage-listed buildings were opened in 1888. Find out about their colourful history, as well as their preservation and restoration for the people of Boroondara.

Limited to 20 participants. Meet at the front entrance before 1.00pm.

Phone bookings: 0438 370 967

Email bookings: [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

**Wednesday 18 March at 6.30pm**

**PUBLIC LECTURE: 2015 McINTYRE LECTURE**

'Just Theatre', Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew

The Hon Chief Justice Marilyn Warren: 'Eureka 160 years on.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria reflects on one of Victoria's greatest legends, the trials that followed, and what it meant for all Victorians. Refreshments are included.

Ticketed event. \$10 members; \$20.00 non-members

Phone bookings: 9278 4770

**Sunday 22 March at 10.30am**

**WALKING TOUR: SACKVILLE STREET PRECINCT**

1-hour walking tour around the Sackville Street heritage precinct.

Originally part of the Dumaresq Estate, the area contains many picturesque and grand houses. Hear the stories behind them. Meet at the corner of Cotham Road and Davis Street before 10.30am.

Limited to 20 participants.

Phone bookings: 0438 370 967

Email bookings: [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

## TRIBUTE

### Graeme Frank Lindsay (1933-2015)

Last year members attended the funeral of Millicent Lindsay, expressing our sadness and sympathy to Graeme and his family after her long battle with illness. On 11 February, we were shocked to hear of Graeme's death.

Graeme's funeral, on 19 February, was attended by a large group of members who had worked with Graeme in various community groups over a thirty-year period. A number of speakers at the funeral paid tribute to Graeme and his energetic and practical approach to getting

things done. Dorothy Benyei spoke of Graeme's contribution to: the Scouting Movement in Kew; the Kew East Primary School, of which he was Principal during the 1980s; and the Kew Historical Society. On the Management Committee of the latter, Graeme carried out at various stages the role of Vice President or Treasurer.

Many members and friends will remember the fantastic props that he developed for exhibitions and displays. These included a grand piano made of polystyrene and a replica of Barnard's Dispensary, which stood on the site of the former Kew Post Office.



## NEWS FROM THE PAST

### NOTES AND NEWS

The Kew Athenaeum has at length been converted into a town hall. The purchase of the property by the Borough Council was completed last week, for the sum of £615, and an additional £10 has been expended in the purchase of an allotment of land adjoining. A sum of nearly £700 having been expended by the local authorities in the purchase of public buildings, it is now incumbent upon the Government to provide funds for the erection of magistrates' rooms and other buildings required for a police court and court of petty sessions. The Borough Council have done as much as they can fairly be called upon to do, and it is but just that the Government should meet them in an equally liberal spirit.

Fix this

*South Bourke Standard*, 14 April 1865

### 150-YEARS AGO

#### KEW COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION

The following resolution was carried by Kew council on Tuesday:

That this council places on record its high appreciation and pride at the gallant bravery and endurance displayed by the Australian troops fighting with the Allies at the Dardanelles, which have earned for them world-wide admiration, and expresses its deep sympathy with the relatives of all Australians who have fallen or been wounded in the defence of the Empire, and particularly with those who are Kew residents. Sympathetic reference was also expressed at the death of the Kew soldiers, Lieutenant Leslie J. Waters, Lieutenant W. B. Kerr and Private Chas. Richardson, and letters of condolence were ordered to be sent to their respective parents; Mr. and Mrs. John Waters, Burke-road; ex-Cr and Mrs. W. W. Kerr, East Kew; and Mr and Mrs. W. H. Richardson, Gladstone-street.

*The Age*, 20 May 1915

### 100-YEARS AGO

#### KEW TRAMWAYS

The tramways route between Victoria street bridge and Boroondara cemetery will be opened for traffic on Sunday, the first car leaving the bridge at 2.03pm, and a 10 minute service will be maintained until 10.33pm. On weekdays the cars will run at 10-minute intervals from 7.03am till 11.33pm. In celebration of the opening of the second section of the High street service, the Kew traders have arranged for a shopping carnival on Friday next, and illuminations in the evening will be carried out on an elaborate scale.

*Camberwell and Hawthorn Advertiser*, 8 May 1915

#### KEW

Five hundred children, wearing red, white and blue rosettes, and waving miniature flags, with many parents and other adults, assembled outside the Kew Town Hall at a quarter past 9. The Mayor (Cr. F. R. Ratten) unfurled the Union Jack, the boys' band sounded the bugles, and the whole gathering came to the salute and gave ringing cheers. Mr. S. Mauger said that they were assembled to honour the British Empire, which stood for freedom, democracy and independence. The British Empire today was fighting militarism, aggression and oppression. They could all do something at home that would help the Empire to emerge triumphant from the great conflict. He said God save the King and God save the Empire! (Applause.)

*Hawthorn, Kew, Camberwell Citizen*, 28 May 1915

# GALLIPOLI & BEYOND 2015

On 25 April 2015, Australia and New Zealand will commemorate the centenary of the ANZAC landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Gallipoli landing and campaign still resonates with many Australians. For the descendants of the men and women who served at Gallipoli, and in the many other battles and campaigns of the World War I, the 2015 commemorations will be particularly poignant.

The Gallipoli & Beyond Committee is a volunteer-based committee with members drawn from: the historical societies of Balwyn, Kew, Canterbury, Hawthorn, Surrey Hills, and Camberwell; the Friends of Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery; and the Kew RSL. All of these groups work in partnership with, and are supported by the City of Boroondara. Until very recently, Alex Wilson OAM, our immediate past President, has ably represented the Kew Historical Society on the Committee.

The Committee has received funding for a number of commemorative events throughout the City of Boroondara. These events will occur in April 2015, beginning with an official launch of the program at the Hawthorn Arts Centre on 11 April.

During April, apart from one-off events, there will be displays of memorabilia relating to the campaign and the home front in each library in Boroondara.

One of the legacies to come out of the planning has been the funding by the Australian Government of *Boroondara Remembers: Stories from World War I*. This book provides an unprecedented insight into some of the stories of Boroondara's Anzacs, and the people who worked tirelessly for the war effort back home. The book will be available for sale at the Program Launch.

The Kew Historical Society's contribution to the Commemoration includes two lectures on the 'home front' by Carole Woods and Prof. Judith Smart at the April Monthly Meeting, and a major photographic exhibition at the Kew

Court House: 'J. E. Barnes: Kew's Embarkation Photographer', which will use photographs from the Kew Historical Society, the Australian War Memorial, and the descendants of the photographer. The photographic exhibition will be complemented by displays of medals, badges, certificates etc., relating to soldiers from Kew who embarked on the ships photographed by Josiah Barnes. The exhibition is being launched on 17 April.

The many programs and events being held across Boroondara are being published in the local press, in Council publications and on the Gallipoli & Beyond 2015 website. Events relating to World War I that are taking place in Kew are listed below.

A number of events have limited places available. Events marked with an asterisk will require booking through the City of Boroondara. We encourage all members and friends to become involved and to attend these events.



Departure of HMAT Nestor A71, 1915. J. E. Barnes, photographer. Private collection

Wednesday 8 April, 8:00pm

Kew Historical Society

Lectures: Carole Woods: 'Red Cross Women at War - Leadership on the Victorian Home Front 1914-1918', & Prof. Judith Smart: 'Women Waging War on the Home Front 1914-19'

Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library

**\*Saturday 11 April**

Gallipoli & Beyond Committee

Launch: Gallipoli & Beyond Program

Hawthorn Arts Centre, 360 Burwood Road, Hawthorn

**\*Sunday 12 April**

Walking tour: Kew's War Memorials

John Torpey from Kew RSL will lead a walking tour to various war memorials in Kew, sharing stories of the fallen along the way. The tour will finish with refreshments at the Kew RSL. This is a light walking tour, but comfortable footwear is recommended.

Meet: Kew War Memorial at 1.50pm

**\*Wednesday 15 April**

Q&A Panel session: 'Anzac Day: Past, Present and Future'  
Camberwell Library, Parkview Room, 340 Camberwell Road, Camberwell

**Friday 17 April, 6.00pm**

Kew Historical Society

Exhibition opening: J. E. Barnes: Kew's Embarkation Photographer  
Level 1, Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew

Phone bookings: 0438 370 967

Email bookings: [info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

**\*Saturday 18 April**

Friends of Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery

Walking tour: 'Investigating Boroondara's little known heroes'.

Join the Friends on a walking tour visiting the memorials of servicemen who were buried overseas and of those who did not return.

Meet: Main gate, Boroondara General Cemetery at 9.50am

**\*Thursday 23 April**

Talk: Albert Isaacs - 'Sir John Monash'

Local historian, Albert Isaacs takes a look at Sir John Monash's military career, civil engineering achievements, family background and controversies, influence on education, pioneering work in the electricity industry and his influence in solving Australia's only police strike.

Leo Baeck Centre, 31/37 Harp Road, Kew.

\* Booking advice will be published by the City of Boroondara

# HERITAGE ISSUES



## **FAIRYLAND, 57 MALMSBURY STREET**

The Kew Historical Society has a long-standing interest in the preservation of the house, once known as 'Fairyland' at 57 Malmsbury Street.

The house is significant for a number of reasons. It was the home of the grandparents of Dorothy Rogers (nee Richardson), a foundation member of the Kew Historical Society, who was to write *Lovely Old Homes of Kew* (1961), articles about local history for the Progress Press and finally *A History of Kew* (1973). Dorothy Rogers was also to publish a monograph on the history of 57 Malmsbury Street, a signed copy of which is held in our collection. Later owners included Jim and Grace Tabulo, who after their purchase of the house in 1944, set about establishing a local wonderland for children called 'Fairyland'.

Dorothy Rogers established that the house was built prior to 1863. She identified the first owner as a Mrs Warboys, who was to sell the house to her grandparents, William and Henrietta Lowe in 1866. From 1896-1904, William Spruzen owned the house. Subsequent owners included William Coucher, Carl Safstrom, and George Smith.

The Society has a number of 'guestbooks' from the period in which the Tabulos established and occupied Fairyland. In these, children and adults were to write about their visits to the house in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Many of the visitors came from interstate, but children who grew up in Kew still vividly remember and can talk about the house.

Jim Tabulo was to die in the 1950s and his wife in the following decade. They are buried in the Boroondara General Cemetery.

In addition to the Dorothy Rogers monograph and the guestbooks, the Kew Historical Society has an extensive collection of photographs, newspaper articles, and records relating to the house. These were provided to consultants who were commissioned by the City of Boroondara to provide a heritage assessment of the building.

The Society would like to thank past and present residents and researchers who were able to contribute to the heritage assessment.

## **THE 'ELECTRIC HOUSE', HARP ROAD**

In December 2014, the Society's researchers were requested to provide information to heritage consultants to Council about the brick 'Electricity substation' (sic) at the Harp Junction, which was believed to be threatened by a car park development.

While the Society had access to historic and contemporary photographs and maps showing the building, we had no research data in our files about the structure. The solution was an email thread, contributed to by members and non-members over the period of about a week. Emails covered the history, dating, purpose, news articles about the building, as well as comparable structures in other municipalities.

Early discussions related to whether the building served a role in the Outer Circle Railway or the electrified Kew tramline. The former was quickly ruled out because of the date of construction of the building between 1914-1918. The profile of the building was not shown a Board of Works Detail Plan of 1913, but did appear on a plan dated 1920. The latter defined the purpose of the building as an 'Electric House'.

One contributor to the discussion wrote that the building was subsequently decommissioned and repurposed as a briquette dispenser. She noted that at the ground level there is what appears to be a doorstep in the centre of the building, which appears to have been closed in when the briquette-dispensing machine was installed. Under a painted panel, you can just make out a picture of 'Bernie Briquette'. Bernie Briquette was a character created by the SEC in the 1950s to popularise coal briquettes for home heating and there was a mascot who used to make appearances at popular events. Another contributor had fond childhood memories of visiting the building with her father to collect briquettes from Dunning's Woodyard.

All contributors were convinced of the heritage value of the 'Electric House' and that it should be preserved.

Subsequent advice from the City of Boroondara's Planning Department finally established that the building was no longer under threat of demolition.



# KEW IN THE 1890s DEPRESSION

## PART 3: RELIEF EFFORTS

Churches, the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society and the Kew Borough Council all provided relief to people suffering distress during the 1890s depression in Kew.

### Churches and Poor Box

Churches were the key organisations for helping the poor. They helped their own parishioners in need. For instance, the Kew Dorcas Society was part of the Baptist Church. This group was financed by donations in kind and in cash, and by a monthly subscription of 1 shilling by 20 people. The Presbyterian Church held a quarterly collection and a weekly sewing circle to provide for the poor who belonged to the church. However, there was always the problem of people in need who did not belong to a church. Where would they get assistance?

There was a Poor Box at the Town Hall. From time to time the Kew Council asked the Mayor or Town Clerk to handle a matter, and one suspects that the Poor Box provided the necessary funds. The source of the Poor Box finances were Council donations in the annual "Charitable Vote" and donations from the public

There were a number of private attempts at relief for individual families in need. This usually took the form of concerts to raise funds. In February 1898, there was a concert for a man who was ill, and in March there was another concert for a family that had lost its breadwinner.

### The Kew Ladies Benevolent Society

The Kew Ladies Benevolent Society was first mooted in 1891, to provide relief for the destitute of Kew. The stimulus came from the Presbyterian Church Pastor, Rev Wilson, who was inspired by the efforts of his parish in helping the poor. He believed that a more broadly-based aid society should be set up to help the poor and needy.

In December 1891, a letter from a parishioner of Holy Trinity Anglican Church in the *Kew Mercury* stated that it was "somewhat of a disgrace to the Christian ladies of Kew" that there was no "undenominational society for the relief of the poor." The parishioners of Holy Trinity had been told that there was much distress in Kew, the letter writer claimed.

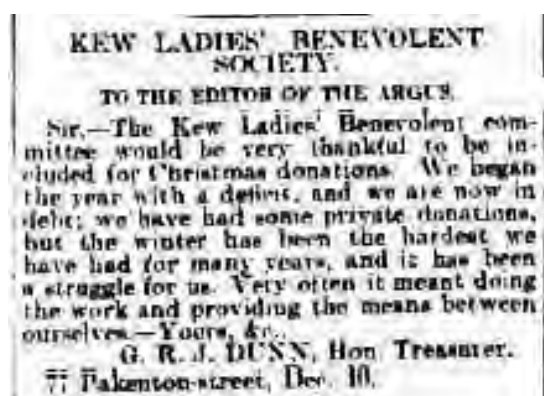
The letter challenged the ladies of Holy Trinity to "stand boldly" with their sisters of other denominations to start an "unsectarian" society for the relief of the poor. In doing so, the letter writer suggested this would show the inhabitants of Kew that the congregation of Holy Trinity was not the "cold, deadly, formal organisation that it is reported to be."

So the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society was formed at a meeting in June 1892. It was to be governed by a committee of 20 ladies, four from each of the five churches in Kew. There was a request for donations of money, produce and clothing. It is not clear whether Catholic ladies were involved at this point. At a Kew Council debate in 1894, it was claimed that there were about 40 ladies present at the meeting at which the Society was formed. It was stated that the Catholics were not represented initially, but that two Catholic ladies had since been added to the Committee. Organisations and individuals who donated to the Society were often acknowledged in contemporary newspapers. The ladies of the Society investigated all requests for assistance before anything was given. Assistance was provided in the form of vouchers, not money.

The Society relied upon donations for its work. The donations came in different forms. Money, clothes and other goods were received from local people and groups. The Kew Council supported the Society, sometimes by direct donation, or from the Poor Box at the Town Hall. Donations were received from the Wesleyan Church and the Band of Hope (Temperance Society). Clothes were received from the Congregational Church Sewing Group and the Presbyterian Sewing Society. Blankets were also collected. In October 1893, the St Hilary's Young Ladies Sewing Group provided more clothes. Doctors Walsh and Inglis were thanked for treating patients *gratis*. Mrs Rogers donated milk. The chemist in Glenferrie Road provided free medicines. Other local businesses also contributed. A grocer donated goods valued at 14 Shillings, and Jellis' Bakery provided 40 loaves of bread a week.

Concerts were held by various organisations to provide support for the Society. In 1893, the following organisations held concerts for the Society: the Kew Brass Band, the Kew United Band of Hope, the Congregational Church, and the Wesleyan Church. A substantial sum was received from concerts held by the United Friendly Societies of Kew in July 1895 and 1896. The Australian Natives Association contributed funds raised at a concert in 1895.

Donations were also received from outside Kew. In July 1892, the Victorian Racing Club held a charity race meeting, and £25 was subsequently distributed to the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society. The State Schools Relief Fund sent the Society £5 in 1894. The Helping Hands Society held entertainments around the city and donated funds to the Society in 1894.





## KEW IN THE 1890s DEPRESSION (CONT.)

Despite all this assistance, the Society was often short of funds. In November 1892, the Society had used up all its funds and needed more contributions because the “distress is still very great.” By February 1893, all assistance to the poor had to be cancelled as funds had been used up. In June 1893, the Society was still complaining of the lack of funds. In October 1896, the funds were again almost exhausted and supplies to the deserving poor were reduced to bread and tea, with others being turned away. It was pointed out that the alternative to local assistance was the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum; a place for the destitute. If a person was a vagrant, they might end up in gaol.

The Society came in for a certain amount of criticism. One issue related to its lack of transparency. This criticism came from within the Kew Council, which was a major and regular contributor to the funds of the Society in 1894.

Cr Cody was reported as not being satisfied with the way the Society conducted its business. He said that the Council was providing money, and that it should know who was being visited and how the money was being spent. Some recipients were unworthy, he claimed. He said that he knew of a “certain lady” who came to Kew and was assisted by the Society “to a very great extent.” Cr Day felt there was a lot of “sponging” on the Society. He had heard of one family that was being helped by the Society and at the same time they could afford to buy beer at the hotel. The Mayor chimed in that he had heard of similar cases. There was a suggestion that the men could be sent away for work and the Society could look after the women and children. Some councillors felt that the ladies of the Society were not really competent to deal with men. In the end, nothing came of this discussion.

Reports about the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society in the *Kew Mercury* fell away from 1897, indicating that the problems of distress were possibly in decline. The Society, however, continued, and was assisting the unemployed in the depression of the 1930s.

### Kew Borough Council

The Kew Council was the third main provider of relief for the needy. It focused on the unemployed, however did very little due to reduced rate revenues, concern over whether ratepayers funds should be spent in this manner, and because they felt the Churches and the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society were already supporting the needy in Kew.

The Council held a special meeting about unemployment in Kew in May 1894. The Mayor said that while there was not the sort of abject poverty seen in Collingwood and Richmond, there were many Kew residents wanting and willing to work who could not get work. The feeling of the meeting was that the council did not want to provide “indiscriminant” relief, as this “tends to create paupers.” However, there was also a feeling that the Council should assist those willing to help themselves.

There were five ways in which the Council provided relief.

First, it provided some work for the unemployed in stonebreaking for roadworks. Stonebreaking work was offered to local unemployed in April 1894 at 1/9d per yard. This was recognised as a very low rate of payment, however, one Councillor stated that “if they did not want to work at this they don’t want to work.” Councillor Kellett said that the price offered was “absurd,” but that the Council “cannot be liberal with other people’s money.”

Second, the Council created a register of unemployed who were willing to work. Residents who needed someone to do some job could come and look at the register, and thus the register would facilitate work for some people.

Third, the Council, as already indicated, supported the work of the Kew Ladies Benevolent Society, especially in the lean years between 1893 and 1896.

Fourth, the Council tried not to add to the unemployed by retaining its own workers wherever possible. In general, the Council preferred to cut wages and salaries rather than cut the number of employees. Suggestions to use machines to break stones for road works rather than hand breaking, was rejected because this would cause the lay off of some workers. Only one person was made redundant by the Council for financial reasons: the Surveyor was asked to resign in 1892.

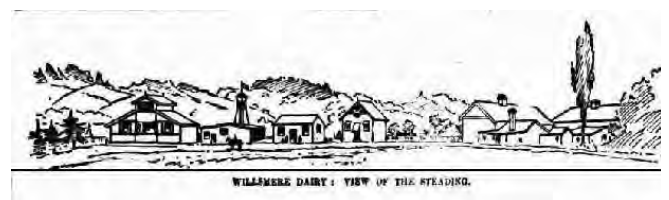
Fifth, it gave relief to ratepayers unable to pay, by not forcing payment of rates. Defaulting ratepayers were to be prosecuted, but those unable to pay would not be “pressed for payment.”

There were limits to the provision of relief by Council for the unemployed. It would not protect the wages of labourers employed by contractors who worked for the Council. It would not restrict its employment to residents of Kew. Nor would it restrict contractors to employing local men. It was felt that “localism” might disadvantage Kew residents in getting employment in other suburbs.

The Borough Council would not supply funds to assist a relief project that did not have a clear benefit to Kew. It refused to contribute £23 a year to Yarra River improvements, because all of the funds would be spent in Richmond, Prahran and Melbourne.

The Kew Ladies Benevolent Society and the local churches were the main sources of relief for the poor of Kew in the 1890s depression. The Kew Council relied on them to look after the poor, so that the ratepayers did not have to do so. In the 1890s, the poor relied on charity to survive – not on society as a whole, as a right.

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Willsmere Dairy: View of the steading.  
From ‘A Model Dairy’, *The Australasian*, 9 October 1897, p.10.

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8 April - Monthly Meeting  
11-25 April - Gallipoli & Beyond  
18-26 April - Heritage Week  
13 May - Monthly Meeting  
17 May - Quarterly Book Sale  
10 June - Monthly Meeting

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