

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



## EMBROIDERING A THEME

In February 2019, our immediate past vice-president, Assoc. Prof. Don Garden OAM, will describe the work of historical societies in Australia. The continuing strength of historical societies is perhaps self-perpetuating, but more importantly it results from the commitment of members, working to rediscover lost knowledge and identify the significance of information and items to local communities.

This commitment was recognised in the awarding of two grants to the Kew Historical Society in the City of Boroondara's *Strengthening Communities* program. The first grant enabled us to hire a professional photographer to photograph 108 framed and glazed photographs from the City of Kew Municipal Collection. The results have been revelatory. The history of the chairmen and mayors of Kew, compiled by members of our Research Group, will use most of these photographs in a published history to be launched in October.

The other grant enables members of our Collections Group to work more efficiently at identifying and describing works in our collection. The Indexing and Collections Groups have described over 2,300 items from our archives on the *Victorian Collections* website. The addition of lightweight, portable laptops will enable us to speed up this process. A related activity has been to re-photograph a number of our costumes, replacing the original online images. Many of the costumes have been visually enhanced and newly appreciated.

Photography and cataloguing has also enabled a re-evaluation of our collection of textiles, of which the most significant is the silk hexagon quilt, dating from the mid-19th Century, described by Suzanne McWha in *Newsletter No.116*. The quilt is a remarkable example of design and hand stitching, indicative of the skills, techniques and preoccupations of people in an earlier age.

Embroidery emerged as a preoccupation when Jan Walker announced at our final monthly meeting last year, our intention to complete the series of

*Continued page 2*

## CONTENTS

3

### SOCIETY NEWS

Information about events, book sales and acquisitions

4

### 2019 KEW FESTIVAL

The McIntyre Lecture and a new exhibition on the Outer Circle railway

6

### KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our history, starting with the early years from 1958 to 1973

8

### OUTER CIRCLE RAILWAY

Lots of huff and puff! Genesis to closure in 1897

10

### GOOD ROADS

The strange history of Thomas Hocart Flere

## EMBROIDERING A THEME *(from page 1)*

Bicentennial tapestries designed by Joy Stewart. Jan subsequently visited Dorothy Benyei, who managed the original project, and planning is underway to ensure the project will be a collaborative success.

The lead image of the newsletter (page 1) is a detail of an applique recently re-examined and photographed by volunteers in our Collections Group. A lengthy examination of the item led to much discussion about what it was, who made it, and when it might have been donated to the Society.

Research has resolved some of these questions. The embroidery is an example of *broderie perse* (Persian embroidery), a form of applique popularised in the 18th century. The creator of this textile used large and small designs, cut from cotton chintz fabrics, stitching these onto backing panels to create a 'picture'. Perhaps influenced by a Persian 'tree of life' carpet design, the creator of the applique selected whatever came to hand, including European chintzes featuring images of cherubs.

The unusual size of the applique (106x78cm) raised questions about its purpose. Old evidence of its use as a wall hanging might explain this. So, the applique served not just as a demonstration of the creator's design sensibility and skill in using cross stitching, but also as a means of decorating and brightening a dark late Victorian house. This enhances its historical value as an example of embroidery and applique skills, which allows us to explore the sensibilities and practices of a remote period and place.

Concurrently, we are recording every 'official' donation recorded in the minutes and newsletters of our Society to identify and confirm all previous donations. This is critical if we want to accurately document our collection.

We considered whether this applique was the item identified in the Minutes of June 1980, donated by Mrs Joy Ivory: "Sample of darning/needlework by mother, 1889". If it is the same, it will join previously identified objects and needlework created by her mother, Mrs Amy Watson (née Grigg).

Joy Ivory's donation of items from her family's collection included five awards by the [Kew] *Floral, Industrial and Art Society*, presented to Amy Grigg of Pakington Street in 1889 for achievement in baking, writing and sewing. It is interesting to contemplate whether this applique might be an award-winning exhibit by this talented young woman.

If this is the case, the applique will join other examples of historically significant, award-winning fine needlework in our collection, including those created by Emily Davies of Baldur Grammar School for the Plain Sewing competitions of the early 1900s.

**EDITOR**



**Souvenir of Palestine, 1939-45**

Silk embroidery on velvet

Kew Historical Society Textiles Collection

## Kew Historical Society Inc.

### PATRON

Sir Gustav Nossal AC, CBE

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**President:** Judith Voce

**Vice President:** Brad Miles

**Secretary:** Desley Reid

**Treasurer:** Robert Romanin

**Archivist/Newsletter editor:** Robert Baker

**Curator:** Judith Scurfield

**Members:** Richard Bowen | Mary Kelleher | Debbie McColl-Davis | Janet Walker | David White

### 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. Refreshments are provided.

### KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation of the historic Kew Court House. Volunteers staff the Kew History Centre on Level 1 every Friday & Saturday (11.00am–1.00pm). At the Centre, you can ask questions about Kew's history and view displays from the Society's collection.

### NEWSLETTER

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

### WEBSITES

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

[victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/kew-historical-society](http://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/kew-historical-society)

### Kew Historical Society Inc.

Inc. No. A0010789W | ABN 97 824 890 237

PO Box 175 Kew VIC 3101

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# SOCIETY NEWS

## EVENTS

A comprehensive program of events, including speakers at monthly meetings, lectures, exhibitions, and social events has been developed for 2019. These will be updated in later newsletters and e-Bulletins.

Our events program for the months of February to June 2019 includes:

6 February	Phyllis Hore Room Kew Library 8.00-9.30pm	Assoc. Prof. Don Garden	The Community History & Heritage Movement
*13 March	Just Theatre Kew Court House 7.30-9.30pm	Emeritus Prof. Charles Sowerwine	McIntyre Lecture: Heritage protection reconsidered for the 21st Century
*15 March	History Centre Kew Court House 6.00-9.00pm	Collections Group	Exhibition: The Outer Circle railway
10 April	Phyllis Hore Room Kew Library 8.00-9.30pm	Les Littlechild	Authentic restoration of houses in East Kew
8 May	Phyllis Hore Room Kew Library 8.00-9.30pm	Nicole Jenkins	Melbourne fashion in the 1950s
12 June	Phyllis Hore Room Kew Library 8.00-9.30pm	Jill Giese	The Maddest Place on Earth

\* Kew Festival Events (see page 4)

## FUND RAISING

Fund-raising to support events, collection management, publications and administration has a cost. While membership fees cover some of our budget, we are also financially dependent on donations and fund-raising activities such as our quarterly book sales.

The four book sales are booked ahead of time for Sundays on 17 February, 19 May, 18 August, and 24 November. The proceeds of these sales are shared equally between the Society and the Kew Library. You might like to contribute through donating books, setting up the books for sale, assisting on the front desk on the day, or packing up.

If you can assist, please contact David White, our book sale coordinator ([info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)).

On page 12, a form invites individuals and families to become members, or to make financial donations.

You might also promote the Society's work to neighbours and friends in order to build our membership base and finances, which in turn allows us to maintain our diverse range of programs and activities.

## GRANTS

City of Boroondara *Strengthening Communities Grants* 2018-19

- Photography, digitisation and subsequent publication of a history of the Chairmen and Mayors of Kew. (\$6,486)
- Laptop computers used for training and for cataloguing the collection. (\$1,772.73)

## THE COLLECTION

Since our December newsletter we are pleased to acknowledge the following donations to our collection.

**Frances Courtney** - Victorian-era skirt

- Black silk skirt belonging to Elizabeth Courtney, circa 1897, with supporting photographs.

**Rosemary Barnes** - Kew Mental Hospital items from the collection of Dr Fred Stamp, last medical superintendent:

- Photographs - 14 large exhibition portraits of previous superintendents of the Kew Asylum / Hospital;
- Manuscript - leather bound numerical register of staff and patients in the medical unit from 1969-83;
- Album - 43 photographs of locations within the hospital, staff and patients;
- Photographs - 83 photographs of the 1972 anniversary celebrations, plus numerous photos of locations, staff and patients;
- Document - Staff Handbook (Willsmere Hospital); and
- Documents - 2 folders of original newsletters of the Willsmere Unit, 1986-88.

The Society wishes to publicly express its thanks to Frances and Rosemary for their generous donations.



Rosemary Barnes and Margaret Robinson with the leather bound Numerical Register of staff and patients in the medical unit, Willsmere Hospital.



# KEW FESTIVAL 2019

Kew Historical Society has been an active supporter of the Kew Festival since Cr. Gerard Petrie, Mayor of Kew, initiated it in 1973.

This year the Society is holding two events as its contribution to the Festival. The first is the annual McIntyre Lecture, held in honour of life members of the Society, Dione and Peter McIntyre, who were instrumental in the campaign to preserve and restore the Kew Court House precinct.

Our first new exhibition for 2019 at the Court House also opens during the Festival. This exhibition explores the history of rail transport in Kew and Kew East in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Members and friends of the Society are encouraged to attend these events.

## 2019 McINTYRE LECTURE

by

**Charles Sowerwine, Emeritus Professor of History, University of Melbourne.**

**Lecture Title: From the Corkman to Fed Square: Heritage Protection Reconsidered for the 21st Century**

Date: Wednesday 13 March

Time: 7.30 for 8.00 pm

Venue: Just Theatre, Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew, 3101

**Tickets \$20**

The Kew Historical Society is pleased to announce that Emeritus Professor Charles Sowerwine, Chair of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's Heritage Committee, will present the McIntyre Lecture during the 2019 Kew Festival.

As the Chair of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's Heritage Committee, Charles Sowerwine is eminently qualified to describe the historic and current challenges to heritage and conservation in Melbourne.

In his lecture, he will outline the nature of these challenges and illustrate these with current significant heritage campaigns, from the Queen Victoria Market and Federation Square to local issues. He will focus particularly on the increasing tension between development and heritage overlays, typified by the Corkman Hotel affair.

This is a ticketed event, which covers the cost of Council support staff in attendance, refreshments and a gift for the speaker. Seating is limited in the Just Theatre, so the early purchase of tickets is advised.

Tickets for the Lecture cost \$20. There are a range of purchase options: by phone from the Hawthorn Arts Centre, by direct bank deposit to KHS account 063-142 10066376 with your family name as the subject, or at the door. For further information, contact: The Secretary, Kew Historical Society - [secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)



**Railway Viaduct across the Yarra, ca. 1919.**

Donated by Miss Foley, 1995  
Kew Historical Society Collection

## NEW EXHIBITION

### THE OUTER CIRCLE RAILWAY

Opening Night: Friday 15 March 6.00 - 9.00 pm

Venue: Kew History Centre, Level 1, Kew Court House,  
188 High Street, Kew, 3101

Admission free

The first new exhibition for 2019 will focus on railway history in Melbourne. While the primary focus will be on the 'Outer Circle' railway, pictures and objects relating to the Kew Branch Line will also be exhibited.

Photographs of construction, infrastructure including railway stock, and the line's destruction will be drawn from the Eric Sibby and Keith Smith donations to the Kew Historical Society.

Other items exhibited for the first time include a brass yearly railway ticket for 1951 issued to F.W Noble (donated by the former City of Kew in 1989); a collection of timetables and tickets dating from 1898 to the 1950s; and a section of railway track donated by Betty Huston.

Following the opening night, the exhibition will remain open from March to June, and can be viewed at the Kew Court House each Friday and Saturday between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm.



**Brass VR First Class Rail ticket.**

VR ticket issued to Frederick Noble. The token is dated 1.1.51. It names the owner as Mr F.H. Noble. Frederick Noble lived in Molesworth Street at this time and worked as a sports journalist for *The Age*.

# TRIBUTES

*The Kew Historical Society wishes to pay tribute to three individuals who died in September and October 2018. Each made contributions to 'community good' in ways suited to their skills and enthusiasms, and will be fondly remembered by our members.*

## MEL LAWRENCE

Melvyn 'Mel' Charles Lawrence died on 20 September 2018, aged 82. He made numerous contributions to our society, through his involvement in diverse areas such as planning and decision-making, research, community-based activities, and fund-raising. Mel was an active member of our Management Committee for three years. He was also a key member of the Indexing Group. An important contribution was his analysing and compiling a list of contents from our newsletters to June 1916, identifying and listing events and donations. The latter was invaluable for establishing the provenance of items in our collection. Mel's enthusiasm for researching aspects of Kew's history resulted in him leading our first heritage walk along Sackville Street. We extend to Val and her family our sympathy.

## MAX SARTORI

Maxwell Sartori, better known as Max, died on Friday, 19 October at the age of 82 years. Whilst not technically a member of the society, Max made a huge contribution to our society over many decades. He generously undertook the role of honorary auditor of our accounts from 1980. Max's support allowed his wife, Thea Sartori, to undertake a highly active and diverse role as a member and office-bearer of our society over many years. As well as having a highly successful business career as a founding partner in the accountancy firm Sartori, Freeman & Assoc., Max's past enthusiasm and interests extended into areas such as local government and sport. He was a councillor on the Kew Council for a number of years and last year donated to our archive political campaigning materials from this period. Also in the collection is a reminder of his tennis prowess, a monogrammed leather racquet case, which includes two of his racquets, and tennis gear. We extend to Thea and her family our high regard for Max's community contributions over many decades.

## ANNE GLASSON

Anne Glasson joined our society in 1978 and she and her husband Bill became life members in 1997. Anne died suddenly at home on 20 October 2018, aged 83 years. Like Max, Anne's community contributions included her commitment to residents as an elected member of Kew Council. She had a particular commitment to Holy Trinity Church and for many years volunteered to open the church on Wednesdays and show visitors its many highlights. During a number of Kew Festivals, Anne was a willing volunteer for our society, offering to look after and greet guests to our exhibitions at the Kew Court House. We extend to Bill and other members of Anne's family our regret that such a rich life was cut short so abruptly.

## MARGARET ROBINSON



# GRANTS

The Kew Historical Society is dependent on its cash reserves, annual membership fees, and donations to fund its ongoing activities. For larger projects, invariably relating to management of its valuable collection, it needs to apply and gain funding through a public grants process.

In December 2018, the Society applied for a *Local History Grant* to fund the conservation of our large collection of framed civic portraits of mayors of the former City of Kew, dating from 1863 to 1969.

Earlier in 2018, we successfully applied to the City of Boroondara for a *Strengthening Communities Grant* that enabled us to photograph these portraits in their current condition and to use the resulting images in a history of the chairmen and mayors of Kew, which we anticipate will be launched later this year. The book is being researched and written by members of our Research Group with input, where possible, from former mayors and/or their families.

Christian Capurro, a professional photographer, completed the photographing, and subsequent digitisation of the portraits in December 2018. During the photo session, Christian was able to photograph about 108 framed pictures from our collection. The session produced outstanding results. Some of the photographs, such as 'Kew Declared a City, 1921' (above) are very large, and had previously proved impossible for us to photograph adequately.

The resulting digitised images were loaded onto the *Victorian Collections* website and have been added to the history, which is currently at first draft stage.

During 2019, it is our intention to follow up the successful *Significance Assessment* of our collection by Emma Russell in 2018 (See *Newsletter 125, Dec 2018*), by applying for another grant from the National Library of Australia that will involve an external consultant providing a *Preservation Needs Assessment* of our collection. We hope that this application will be successful and lead on to additional grants for much needed conservation projects.

ROBERT BAKER

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# KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 1958-1973

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*The Kew Historical Society celebrated its 60th anniversary in September 2018. Noel Kelly photographed participants and activities at the event. Regrettably, no one thought to photograph the first meeting of The Kew Historical Society on 16 September 1958.*

*For a history of the Society in its first fifteen years, we are indebted to very accurate and revealing minute books, audio recordings of some meetings and events, and items that were donated to the collection during this period. Regular newsletters are of no assistance as the first was issued in 1977.*

*As the first of four articles covering the Society's history and achievements to be published in 2019, knowing where to start is a challenge. The themes may be arbitrary and viewed through a lens of how the Society currently functions. However, current priorities are not necessarily the same as those of our predecessors.*

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The first meeting of 'The Kew Historical Society' took place at *Lanreath*, 196 Cotham Road, the home of Cr. W.H.S. Dickinson. The venue for meetings, at least for the next eight years, was to be at *Lanreath*, or occasionally at other historic houses in Kew. At the meeting, called under the auspices of the Kew Civic Movement, seventeen members were present. They included Cr. Dickinson, Alma Figuerola, Dorothy Rogers, Mervyn Chinner and Hilda Daniell. Cr. W.D. Vaughan was a notable apology. A number of foundation members were to become mainstays of the Society during the next decade; others had a shorter influence due to health issues or mortality.

At the meeting of 16 September, there was a unanimous decision to establish a Society, agreement on its goals, the dates for monthly meetings, and the publication of an annual membership fee. A number of the decisions made then only disagree in particularities with what happens now. A significant difference was the cost of membership, set at five shillings per annum.

The new Society had a number of models from which to choose. The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) had been established in 1909, while the National Trust of Victoria and the Williamstown Historical Society had been formed two years earlier in 1956. The agreed goals had a practical purpose: to research the early history of Kew by collecting historical records and by interviewing old-timers, and the production of a centenary history of Kew for the commemoration in 1960.

The few remaining months of 1959 were predictably short on decisions and achievements, however Mr Chinner, ex-Chief of Hansard Reporting Staff in the Victorian Parliament was to be proactive in finding descendants of Kew's pioneering families, including the Bevans, whom he contacted and invited to speak at the first meeting in 1959.



**Artists of Kew exhibition at Southesk.**  
Alma Figuerola and W.H.S. Dickinson at centre

Mr & Mrs Whidycombe Bevan were descended from the Derricks and were happy to loan a key 'foundation' document to the new Society. This was the 'Testimonial' to Uriah Whidycombe, the boatswain of the *John Bunyan* who had taken command of the vessel due to the incapacity of the captain and first mate and had safely charted the boat to Port Phillip in 1852. The Derricks, passengers on the boat, agreed to donate an amount that with those given by other passengers realised £4/10/6. Only later did they agree to the boatswain marrying their daughter. [The problem with this donation is that the document that we have is not an original; the RHSV and the State Library of Victoria also hold 'copies'.]

At the same meeting as that attended by the descendants of the boatswain, the Society received unwelcome correspondence from the RHSV, inviting it to affiliate at a cost of £3/3/-; a blow to the common funds. Later in the year, the treasurer's report noted that of the total amount of £7/10/- raised through membership sales, the RHSV subscription wiped out almost half the funds.

Apart from identifying descendants, members busily identified and researched topics that they considered important including *Clutha*, the Kew Mental Hospital, *Morganville*, the *Harp of Erin* and the Dumaresq family. Sometimes the subject coincided with the researcher's interests, such as Margaret Dumaresq's research into her family's history. In other cases, a researcher such as Dorothy Rogers intrepidly researched buildings with which she would have been familiar, but which were ultimately to be new inquiries.

One might have imagined that a budding historian such as Dorothy Rogers might have figured more decisively in decision-making in these first years. She was requested to form part of the writing team for the centenary brochure, but was not among those overseeing the project. Perhaps her personality, and that of Cr. Vaughan, was too large to be accommodated with such oversight.

*Continued page 7*



## THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS (from page 6)

Ultimately, the 21-page booklet was produced on time and was distributed to 9,000 households in Kew.

With research notes, documents and artefacts entering the Society's collection, the need for a space to store these became self-evident. The choice turned out to be a small room at *D'Estaville*, the home of Alma Figuerola. It was into this confined space that the first large collection of items acquired by the Society was placed. This was a costume donation by Mabel Isola Grattan, a descendant of the pioneering Coombs family of Studley Park. This collection of 19th Century gowns would frequently be exhibited in the years that followed.

During the first fifteen years, there was no distinction between an organisational and a public meeting. Speakers on a range of topics were heard following the completion of committee business. Some of the early speakers included Cr. Vaughan describing his book *Kew's Civic History*, Dr Brothers speaking about the history of the Kew Mental Hospital, and talks about the Henty and Wills families. Sometimes, a detailed summary of a talk may be found in the minutes; often it is only a summary. Attendance at meetings varied, typically averaging half the Society's membership of thirty.

Public education and heritage emerged as two issues in the 1960s. Apart from speakers at meetings, members sought to memorialise the past. Dorothy Rogers held an exhibition at her house to raise funds for a marker on the grave of Ellen Quick in the Boroondara General Cemetery, while other members worked with the local branch of the Aborigines Advancement League to place a plaque on the location of the 'canoe tree' in Bowyer Avenue. While there is no mention in the minutes of the demolition of *Tara Hall* in Studley Park Road, members fought long and hard to preserve *Southesk*, negotiating endlessly with Council, the National Trust and with experts to attempt to save all or parts of the building. Such attempts were to remain fruitless as the building was demolished in 1970 to make way for future council offices.

*Southesk* was perhaps close to the hearts of members as its 'Auxiliary Room' was the meeting place of the Society between 1966 and its demolition four years later. After that, it was back to meetings at *Lanreath*.

Generally, the relations between Council and the Society were cordial, despite ongoing disagreements about heritage, and the need for a permanent home for the Society's collection. That Council valued the Society's opinions is evident in a request that the Society provide advice about a new name for the Kew Mental Hospital. Members debated varying alternatives, but ultimately three were recommended in December 1965: 'Cumberland', 'Wharton Lodge' and 'Willsmere'. Society members were finally advised in October 1969 that Willsmere had been accepted.

That relations with Council were not irreparably damaged by the demolition of *Southesk* in 1970 and in 1972 the Walpole Street Town Hall, is apparent in the assurance by the Town Clerk, that the Society would be allocated an archive room in the new council offices, to be opened in 1972 on the corner of Charles Street and Cotham Road.

As early as 1964, John Feely, the State Librarian, had advised of the need to more effectively manage our collection, seek archival space from Kew Council, and to tape-record speakers. That his first recommendation went unheeded was evident nine years later when Mr Clark moved a motion that the Society starts an Accessions Book in 1973.

This confirms that for the first 25 years of the collection, there was no central record of items in the Society's possession. Perhaps this was not unusual as acquisitions took precedence over the recording of provenance. That we know as much as we do about who gave what is perhaps fortuitous.

The late 1960s and the early 1970s, would witness an inevitable transition in the affairs of the Society as the first crop of members aged and withdrew from active involvement. The minute books record the deaths of key members such as Mervyn Chinner, Marie Dalley, Hilda Daniell, Wilfred Kent Hughes, Alma Figuerola, Doris Richardson, and while it was not recorded in the minute books of 1973, the death of Dorothy Rogers that December.

As organisations evolve, they invariably face crises. Reviewing the final years of the 1960s, there were fewer outside speakers and more frequent sessions when members would nostalgically recollect what they remembered about the past. While it had been the case at former monthly meetings that topics had strayed from Kew-related history to topics such as Mme de Stael et al, there was increasingly a tendency to listen to recollections of members' overseas trips.

The first seventeen years of the Society were to conclude with a significant donation by Mrs McArthur (née Paton) of the original clock from Barnard's Post Office and Pharmacy, which had been located on the corner of Cotham Road and High Street, where the QPO restaurant now stands. The clock needed to be repaired. Obviously it, like the Society, was restored, but whether it was to remain in working order is another story altogether.

**ROBERT BAKER**



Wall Clock & Key. Jas. Murray & Co., Melbourne, 1860s  
Gift of Mrs McArthur, 1973

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# MUCH HUFF AND PUFF

## THE OUTER CIRCLE RAILWAY

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A Heidelberg-based 'Upper Yarra Railway League' made a proposal in 1867 for a rail loop from eastern Victoria to Melbourne. The name for such a loop was coined six years later in 1873, when Thomas Higinbotham, the Victorian Railways Engineer-in-Chief, suggested that the Gippsland train should be brought to Melbourne via an 'outer circle route'.

The route proposed by Higinbotham ran from Oakleigh to North Melbourne, passing through the suburbs of Caulfield, Gardiner, Camberwell, Kew, Fairfield, North Fitzroy, North Carlton and Hotham [North Melbourne]. The section of the line named the 'Outer Circle' was ultimately to link Oakleigh and Fairfield.

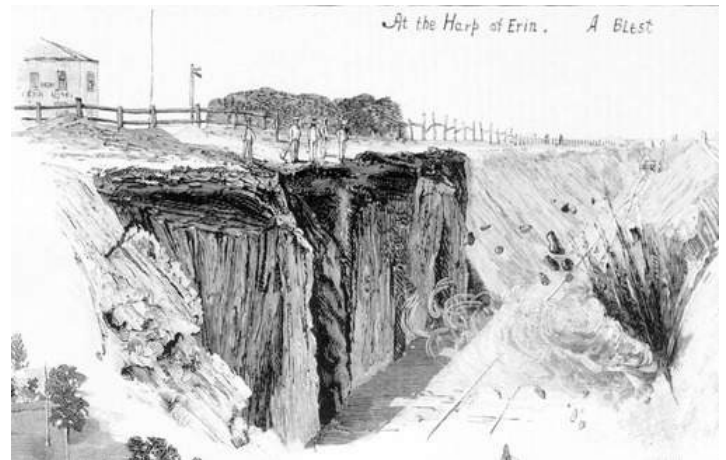
During the 1870's, the Victorian Government had already begun the construction of rail lines to country centres. In contrast, privately owned suburban railways, such as the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay United Railway Company (M&HBUR), catered for metropolitan passengers.

Following the Engineer-in-Chief's proposal that Oakleigh be chosen as the entry point for the Gippsland train, speculators bought cheap land along potential routes. Others, anticipating that the Government would purchase the M&HBUR, opposed the connection between Government and the private rail routes, believing that this would improperly increase the value of the latter.

In 1873, Higinbotham submitted a number of options to the Government for connecting the Gippsland freight trains to Melbourne. One option was to use the existing M&HBUR line while others options included a link to the city through South Yarra or Elsternwick. All would use Oakleigh as the entry point. Higinbotham publicly supported the Outer Circle option.

Pressure groups formed in response to his proposals. The Hon. Thomas Bent, MLA for Brighton, had purchased considerable land in the southern suburbs and wanted the line to run from Oakleigh through Elsternwick. The Hon. James Munro MLA and the Hon. F.E. Beaver MLC supported the Outer Circle option. Resident support in the eastern and northern suburbs enthusiastically supported Higinbotham's preferred route. An expanded railway system would mean that journeys by horse-drawn carriage, over poor roads to Melbourne, could be avoided. A trip from Camberwell to the city by road could take half a day. A petition circulating in Camberwell, Kew and Hawthorn in 1873 supported the option. Brunswick, Fitzroy, Coburg and Heidelberg residents directly lobbied their representatives in support of the Higinbotham proposal, as the northern suburbs had no railway, and the residents were keen for any proposal to succeed that provided public transport.

When a Bill to construct the Outer Circle was first introduced to Parliament it provoked strong opposition, and was consequently deferred.



**'At the Harp of Erin. A Blast' from Sketches on the Outer Circle Railway, *The Illustrated Australian news and musical times*, 1 June 1889.**

State Library of Victoria collection

Nor could successive governments agree on a route. In 1877, a parliamentary committee from both Houses considered the options, but failed to reach a unanimous decision.

Eventually, in 1878, an alternative route to the city from Oakleigh to South Yarra was approved by Parliament, the M&HBUR purchased, and its lines incorporated into the government system. Simultaneously a private railway was approved to run from Oakleigh to Elsternwick, thus achieving the ambitions of land speculators.

As the original rationale for the Outer Circle had been to bring Gippsland freight trains to Melbourne, and the direct route now achieved this, one might have expected the 'Outer Circle Railway League' to disband. This was not the case, as members continued to push for its construction. The League included two groups: one representing the interests of North Carlton, North Fitzroy and Brunswick, while the other was associated with Camberwell. After 1883, the Camberwell group became known as the 'Balwyn Outer Circle Railway League'.

In 1883, the Victorian Government finally appointed a Railway Board of Management. The Board proposed a massive railway-building program. The Government, under public pressure, resurrected the Outer Circle proposal and included the route in an 'Octopus Act'; so named as the rail lines it proposed spread out like the tentacles across the Colony.

While there was clear community support for the Outer Circle railway, no compelling reasons were proposed to support it. The route of the line was largely through rural areas with small populations. The projected building cost was £145,000 and the revenue from goods and passenger traffic could not cover operating expenses.

*Continued page 9*



The *Railway Construction Act 1884* was passed in December on the final day of the Parliamentary session. Following the passing of the Act, Munro and Beaver bought land on the route. In 1887, the Railway Department was obliged to purchase this land at boom-era prices. Construction of the Outer Circle railway created its own mini land boom. Being close to a railway station was an incentive for buyers of land. Subdivisions in Kew included the *Kew Park Estate*, the *Kew Vale Estate* and the *Kew Mount Estate*. A map of the route was often included in the advertising flyers distributed by developers.

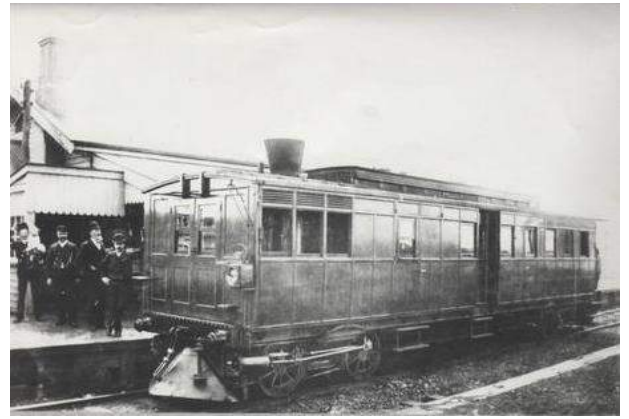
Tenders were called in 1887, and a contract signed with Messrs. Graham & Wadick in 1888. The contractors appointed a young engineer, John Monash, construction supervisor. The building of the bridges required on the line was sub-contracted to the engineering firm Robison Bros., Campbell & Sloss. Additional work was allocated to other companies.

Earthworks commenced near Ashburton in May 1888, and were largely completed along the entire line by late 1889. Track-laying commenced at Oakleigh and continued along the southern section of the line, while the Fairfield Park end was slowed by the unfinished railway viaduct. Construction of the section north of the river was deferred until mid 1890. By May 1890, trains were operating between Oakleigh and Camberwell and track laying commenced north of Camberwell. The tracks reached Deepdene in late June, East Kew in July, and the River Yarra in late October. The track north of the Yarra was completed by November. The last bridges, stations and gatehouses were finished and the final section opened in March 1891.

The contract had required the completion of works by October 1889, but delays meant that the line was not completed until 1891. The slow work on the bridges caused delays, especially in the northern sections. Monash listed eleven reasons in his final report for the slow progress of construction. He laid blame on changed specifications, interference, conflicting instructions, drawing errors, additional and costly processes ordered by Railway inspectors, and incorrect or poor-quality materials that had to be returned. When criticism of the slow progress became too strident to ignore, Monash wrote to *The Argus* to explain the circumstances.

The Builders claimed additional expenses due to Railways mismanagement. While the latter agreed to make a small extra payment, Graham & Wadick rejected the offer. In 1892, the company sued the Commissioners for fair recompense. The verdict was that as the contract was between the Engineer-in-Chief and the contractor, the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction. Costs were awarded against Graham & Wadick, who did not work for Victorian Railways again.

The Railways specified high-strength standards for bridges and tracks, as the line had been expected to carry heavy freight from and to Gippsland. When this failed to eventuate, it became clear that the line was over-engineered. Additionally, following the purchase of the M&HBUR, the Railways had built an elevated viaduct



linking Flinders and Spencer Street Stations, allowing the Gippsland trains to connect with the network directly.

Despite over-engineering, numerous steep inclines on the Outer Circle line meant that heavy loads could not be carried. So, apart from a light goods service, the trains mainly carried passengers. Timetabling of trains also varied between sections. Some services ran fourteen trains each way on weekdays, and six on Sundays. The section between Riversdale and Fairfield had eight trains each way daily, and none on Sundays. A traveller from East Kew could travel to Riversdale on the Outer Circle, change there, and again at Camberwell, and, depending on the connection, arrive in Melbourne up to 53 minutes later. Many commuters found the service inconvenient and left the service where a transfer to cable tram was possible. The more direct routes to the city provided by the development of tram services were a major factor in the failure of the line to attract and maintain passenger numbers.

Between 1890 and 1893 *The Age* published a series of articles blaming the Commissioners for extravagance, waste and mismanagement. Richard Speight, the Chairman of the Commissioners, sued David Syme for defamation. John Monash was called as a witness and outlined the excesses that went into the number of bridges, dual platforms when there was no population to justify them, stations located too close to each other, culverts dug to accommodate two lines of track when only a single track was laid, a private bridge built to service one house when the resident had his driveway cut by the line and the footbridge on the viaduct, as the bridge's width meant that a fence on the bridge would have allowed pedestrians to cross safely. Monash estimated that £37,000 had been wasted. Nor did Speight achieve legal satisfaction, as the Government sacked the Commissioners for incompetence in 1892.

Planned during the land boom of the 1880s, the opening of the Outer Circle coincided with an economic depression that caused a pause in home construction. The depression led to poor patronage and loss of revenue. By 1892, steam locomotives were withdrawn from the northern section and replaced by the smaller and slightly more economical *Rowan* steam cars, *pictured above*. As operating costs were still not recouped, the Commissioners decided to close the some sections of the Outer Circle railway in 1893.

**DESLEY REID**

[Editor: The subsequent use of the Outer Circle rail line will be continued in the June 2019 Newsletter].

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# GOOD ROADS

## THOMAS HOCART FLERE

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In November 2018, Kew Historical Society received an enquiry from Bernard Katthagen of Maddingley regarding an old letterhead and some newspaper cuttings, which he thought suggested that Captain T.H. Flere of Kew was the patentee for macadamised roads in Melbourne in the 1910s.

Research into T.H. Flere discovered that, although not the patentee for macadamised roads, he did in fact patent a method of road construction, which he believed was uniquely suited to the requirements of motor vehicles for smooth, dust free roads.

Thomas Hocart Flere was born on the Channel Island of Guernsey in 1855. At the age of 26, he was second officer of the iron clipper *Hereford*, which ran aground on a reef off Barwon Heads on 10 January 1881, while approaching the Port Phillip Heads in calm conditions. It remained stranded until towed off by the steam tug *Albatross* on 12 March, after being abandoned by its crew and sold by its owners to a Melbourne salvage operator.

Flere was without a ship in Melbourne at the beginning of the decade when it became 'Marvellous'. However, by 6 September 1881, Thomas Hocart Flere of Fitzroy, Colony of Victoria, gentleman, had lodged a patent application for 'An improved process of producing relief plates to print from, which plates I [he] term[ed] *Photo-electrotypes*.' Immediately following the notice of Flere's patent application in the *Leader*, on 17 September 1881, were four notices of patent applications by Thomas Alva Edison, Menlo Park, New Jersey, United States of America, electrician, for improvements in relation to electric light and generators. Exciting times to be in Melbourne.

There is no evidence that Flere profited from his patent application, but by 1883 an advertisement in *The Age* advised that "PASSENGERS or Persons forwarding Money can obtain Bank of England notes" from Flere & Co., 100 Collins-street west.

Two years later, Thomas Flere married Emily Fairthorne on 16 February 1885 at the residence of the bride's parents, *Highbury*, Launceston. Emily's father, Landon Fairthorne, a pharmacist, was active in Launceston affairs, having been an alderman for six years and Mayor in 1884.

By 1886, Flere & Co., auctioneers and estate agents operating from Burwood Road, Auburn, were riding the wave of a property boom. Emily and Thomas lived above the office, which adjoined the Auburn railway station until, in the 1890s, they moved to 5 Doona Avenue, Kew with their two sons. They named their house *St. Albans*, after the birthplace of Emily's father in England.

By this time Flere's activities included chairing the boards of speculative gold mining companies, including the 'Good Hope Proprietary' and the 'Nugget Consolidated G.M. Company'.



5 Doona Avenue, Kew, 2019

In the 1903 electoral roll for Kooyong, his occupation is listed as "independent means".

During the first decade of the 20th century the motor car was being transformed from a wealthy man's plaything into what would now be termed a disruptive technology; one which would not only transform the way people lived and worked but also the world in which they lived. Flere was an early adopter of the new transport technology. He is included in the first list of owners of the 2,044 registered motor cars published in the *Victoria Police Gazette*, 21 April 1910, along with twenty-nine other Kew residents, including three women, Mrs David Syme, Sarah Rand and Lady Charlotte Wrixon.

At a Kew Council meeting on 7 December 1909, Councillor Todd drew attention to the reckless manner in which motorcars were driven through the streets of Kew. Besides being a danger to the public, the track of dust left in their wake was a distinct nuisance to residents.

Three decades earlier, an article in *The Herald* had deplored "The Dust Fiend" rising from the roads of Melbourne and its suburbs in summer. In 1879, Edmund Finn, 'Garryowen', recalled a time when Elizabeth Street was "either a mad mountain torrent or a huge dust bed" and where "after a heavy rain, and when the floods subsided, the township was converted into one immense 'glue pot' so deep in places it was said that a team of bullocks, including the dray, was swallowed up near the corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth streets and never recovered."

*Continued page 11*

## GOOD ROADS (from page 10)

By the early 1900s, road construction in Melbourne and its suburbs generally followed the engineering principles for road construction developed in Scotland and England during the late 18th and early 19th centuries by John McAdam (1756-1836). McAdam's method had vastly simplified road construction, eliminating stone foundations that had been a feature of roads since Roman times, and relying on a 'road crust' consisting of a 5cm surface layer of 2cm broken stone over a 20cm base layer of 7.5cm broken stone laid directly onto the underlying soil. Widely adopted in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States, roads constructed according to these principles became known as macadamised roads. When carefully constructed and properly maintained, macadamised roads were an economical solution to the requirements of horse-drawn transport. However, being unsealed gravel, they became the source of clouds of dust in windy conditions, especially if not well maintained and subject to heavy traffic. Speeding automobiles, even in calm weather, exacerbated this problem.

In 1908, *The Age* promoted the advantage of 'tar painting' roads to mitigate the dust problem and supported the need for an immediate conference of municipal engineers to ensure that action was taken by all councils upon improved and uniform lines.

A conference of municipal representatives met at Melbourne Town Hall on 9 December 1908 to consider the most effective means of checking the dust nuisance, and a committee of seven was appointed to prepare a report. Their report one year later was received and discussed by Kew Council at their meeting on 21 December 1909. For most municipal roads, tar painting a properly constructed macadamised road surface was the recommended method for dust suppression. Tar was a by-product of the manufacture of coal gas, and the Committee had negotiated a supply of tar from the Melbourne Gas Company, at discounted rates to councils. By February 1910, Kew Council had ordered 30,000 gallons (136,380 litres) of tar, and, as an experiment, had tar painted 1,760 yards (1.6 km) of Cotham-road.

The report also suggested that for roads subject to heavy traffic, wood blocks or mineral asphalt paving laid on a concrete base, although expensive, represented the perfection of road construction.

*The Argus*, in December 1913 reported that a lecture at the Masonic Hall by T.H. Flere on a new method of constructing durable, dustless, resilient, and waterproof roadways had attracted a fair audience, including many motorists.

Flere's proposed new method was to form the surface of the road with granite cubes, laid on a bed of bituminous compound over a reinforced concrete base. He claimed that the bituminous compound would form a resilient bed for the blocks, making the road springy and dulling the sound of traffic. Maintenance was claimed to be minimal with wear practically non-existent. Cleaning would be by self-propelled vacuum machines and the removal of all the dust would make cities both healthy and clean.

Thomas Hocart Flere's United States Patent No: 1,118,756 for Roadway Construction, dated 24 November 1914, includes drawings which show that his granite cubes were to be laid in a pattern of curves similar to those in the stone-paved streets of Paris.

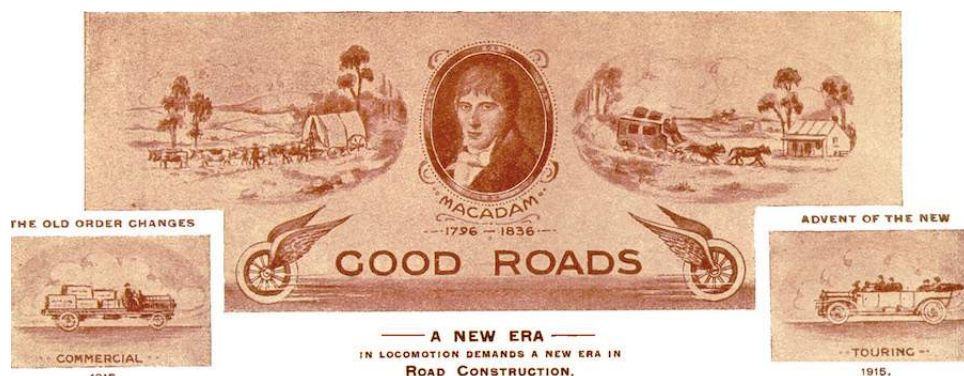
His letterhead includes a portrait of MACADAM (John McAdam) 1756-1836 between a bullock cart and stagecoach above the words "GOOD ROADS", flanked by winged pneumatic tyres and a motor truck and charabanc. Above the motor truck, the words "THE OLD ORDER CHANGES". Above the charabanc the words "ADVENT OF THE NEW". Below both, the date 1910. All above the words "- A NEW ERA - IN LOCOMOTION DEMANDS A NEW ERA IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION, A SUITABLE COMPLEMENT TO THE MODERN VEHICLE. PATENTS GRANTED AND OBTAINED FOR AMERICA - FRANCE - CANADA - COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA"

The Automobile Club of Victoria had formed the Good Roads Association on 20 November 1912. The objectives of the association were to demand an improvement of public roads and streets, to provide information regarding the knowledge of making and maintaining them to meet modern requirements, to secure a better result from the money expended on public roads, and to secure Federal and State aid for the construction of main highways.

Flere's promotion of his method of road construction and the presence of many motorists at his December 1913 lecture suggests he may have formed part of, or been inspired by, the Good Roads Association campaign. The lack of granite paving on our roads suggests that he was unsuccessful in convincing the municipal and later state road-building authorities of the merit of his patented method.

Thomas Hocart Flere continued to live at 5 Doona Avenue until his death in 1946. He is buried at Boroondara General Cemetery in an unmarked grave with his wife Emily, who predeceased him in 1922.

DAVID WHITE





Kew Historical Society Inc.  
PO Box 175  
Kew VIC 3101

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