

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



HISTORY & HERITAGE

In September 1958, fifteen men and women met at the home of Cr Dickinson at 156 Cotham Road. What turned out to be the first meeting of 'The Kew Historical Society' decided that this new community group should meet monthly, admit new members at a cost of 5/-, and work towards the publication of a booklet on Kew's history, to coincide with the centenary of Kew in 1960.

The new historical society had a distinguished membership. W.H.S. Dickinson was a Kew councillor, Alma Figuerola and Joy Stewart were artists, Mervyn Chinner had been the Chief of Hansard Reporting Staff in the Victorian Parliament, Dorothy Rogers aspired to be an historian, while Hilda Daniell was Principal of Ruyton Girls School.

In reconstructing a history of the Society, the detailed minutes of meetings have proved to be an invaluable resource. They reveal a great deal about the preoccupations of the membership, many of which continue to the present.

The first monthly meetings were used to conduct the Society's business, as well as focusing on a topic through talks and lectures. Cr Vaughan, who spoke about the history of Kew, gave the first such lecture at the second meeting. Researching the early history of Kew was an essential activity, if the Society was to produce a 16-page booklet in time for the Centenary. This research involved collecting documentary material from descendants of pioneer families. Members also agreed to conduct histories of houses and streets in Kew, using standardised forms.

Talks at monthly meetings frequently had a focus on Kew's history, either by readings from published works, new research or by talks provided by the descendants of pioneering families. Other talks addressed historical events more generally such as the occasion when Mr Fordyce spoke about his experiences as a prisoner-of-war and his escape from Stalag Luft III in Poland, an event later written about as 'The Great Escape'. Interestingly, Mr Fordyce replaced Whelan the Wrecker who had undertaken to speak at a number of meetings, but had never turned up!

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Afternoon Dress. Quilted wool and lace, ca. 1878.
Coombs Collection, Kew Historical Society

HISTORY & HERITAGE *(from p.1)*

Research into people and places perhaps meant that members were unable to commit to defending heritage, which was increasingly threatened in the 1960s. One searches for records relating to the demolition of *Tara Hall* in Studley Park Road in 1960, but only finds references to colour slides of the house being given to the Society. As the years progressed, members were able to take a more active role in seeking to preserve heritage sites, including *Mooralbeek*, *Ordsall* and *Fernhurst*, by actively lobbying like-minded institutions such as the National Trust of Victoria and the City of Kew. Unfortunately, its efforts to preserve these three mansions proved unsuccessful. Later the Society was to more successfully lobby the Kew Council to undertake the first conservation studies in Kew in the 1980s.

The fledgling Society continued, in the absence of meeting spaces in Kew, to meet in the homes of members. While most meetings were held at the home of Cr Dickenson, invitations to meet in large historic houses owned by members such as *D'Estaville* and *Roseneath*, enabled members to connect with living built heritage. One might assume that given the extent of the Society's collection that the Minutes would record numerous early donations of artefacts, whereas the first major donation of these did not occur until 1961, when Mervyn Chinner negotiated the donation of the Coombs Collection of historic 19th century gowns to the Society. As there was no central storage facility, items such as these were stored in a small room at Alma Figuerola's home, *D'Estaville*.

Currently, the Society holds three exhibitions per year at the Kew Court House. The early members were also interested in promoting Kew's history through displays. The first such event was an historic display in the Colonial Coffee Lounge in Denmark Street. The items displayed were not listed, although it is implied that they included some of the dresses from the Coombs Collection. Regrettably, the display did not include Miss Dumaresq's bedroom suite of furniture, which she recounted at the May 1963 meeting had been purchased by her family at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1888. Nor did the suite enter our collection.

The articles in this current newsletter have many connections with the past activities of the Society. The Society continues to recommend to local government built structures worthy of preservation, in this instance in response to the Kew East Heritage Gap Study. It also records how historically significant items relevant to Kew continue to enter the collection through the generosity of members such as Robin Kelly. They also record how a link back through 60 years to the foundation of the Society has been sundered though the death this year of Joy Stewart. Joy's legacy survives her in the memories of those who knew her, as well as in the generous donations of examples of her art to the Society.

EDITOR



Kew Historical Society Inc.

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Sir Gustav Nossal AC, CBE

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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

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

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SOCIETY NEWS

EVENTS

QUARTERLY BOOK SALE

As usual, this will be held in the Phyllis Hore Room at the back of the Kew Library. The book-sales are our biggest fundraiser, so please spread the word. Flyers with each year's book-sale dates are available at our monthly meeting and on our website. Donations of good books are always welcome; please drop them into the Phyllis Hore Room on the day before the book sale on Saturday, between 11.00AM and 1.00PM.

Sunday 19 August, Phyllis Hore Room, 1.00-4.00PM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As well as receiving reports of the year's activities, we need to elect a committee for 2018/19. Our current mayor, Cr Jim Parke has been invited to attend and speak. While most of the current committee are likely to re-nominate, some have indicated that they wish to retire. Please consider if you would like to nominate to be on the committee, the role is not arduous and many hands make light work. Nomination forms can be found on page 11.

60th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Not only an AGM, but a celebration of sixty years of the Kew Historical Society. Our Society is one of the earliest historical societies in Melbourne and 60 years is an important milestone. We plan to have some memorabilia from our archives on display. There will be a special supper, some bubbly and a birthday cake.

Wednesday 12 September, Phyllis Hore Room, 8.00PM

DICKINSON LECTURE

F.G.A. Barnard: naturalist, historian and committed Kewite

Dr Gary Presland

Dr Presland is an Honorary Fellow of the School of Geography at The University of Melbourne. F.G.A. Barnard was born, lived and worked in Kew and led a fascinating life – being a foundation member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and of the Historical Society of Victoria – and a Mayor of Kew in 1921/2. Barnard was also the author of the first major history of Kew. It promises to be a fascinating talk by a popular speaker.

Entry is \$20, which includes the lecture, pre-lecture drinks and nibbles, as well as supper.

Wednesday 10 October, Just Theatre, Kew Court House, 7.30 for 8.00PM.

Bookings are required - details at www.kewhistoricalsociety.org.au.

MONTHLY MEETING

History of Library Services in Boroondara

Myra Dowling

There has been more than 150 years of library service in Boroondara, with libraries commencing in Kew and Hawthorn in 1860. From initially offering modest book collections, our libraries now have DVDs, eBooks, audio books, access to online music, newspapers and training courses, rooms for hire and computers that can be booked for internet access. Myra will speak about the development of these services over time.

Wednesday 14 November, Phyllis Hore Room, 8.00PM

EXHIBITION

WATER = H₂O

The new exhibition at the Kew Court House and the Kew Library showcase historic images and objects depicting this precious resource, and its relationship to Kew: including natural waterways, water for domestic, recreational and industrial use, and its use in in our parks and gardens.

- Kew Court House, Level 1, 188 High Street, Kew 3101
Open Friday & Saturday 11.00AM-1.00PM
- Kew Library, Civic Drive, Kew, 3101 - Library hours.



Festival of Kew, 1978.

Recreation of the Charles Grimes expedition of 1803 involving Year 9 Trinity Grammar history students. Standard News photographer. Kew Historical Society collection.

THE COLLECTION

NEW ACQUISITIONS

The generous donation of numerous items recording the contributions of performing and visual artists to our collection by Robin Kelly is described on pages 9 & 10. Also donated to the Society in the last quarter are photographs of two significant houses, *Ermington* (now demolished) and *Merrilees* on the corner of Cotham and Glenferrie Road. Both photos, donated by Elizabeth Houston date from the 1890s.

KEW MUNICIPAL BATHS

An article in the May 2018 *Boroondara Bulletin* advised that under the 2017-27 Boroondara Community Plan, Kew Recreation Centre, currently Boroondara's oldest aquatic venue, will be rebuilt on its existing site at the corner of High and Disraeli Streets. This will continue the historic use of this site, which has been the location of a public swimming pool in Kew since the opening of the Kew Baths in 1925.

Prior to the opening of the Kew Baths, public bathing facilities had been under discussion in Kew since September 1864, when 53 residents petitioned the Borough of Kew Council, requesting a small bathing platform on the Yarra. The petition was referred to the Public Works Committee, which responded that they would take the matter into consideration but were of the opinion that the site proposed by the petitioners was unsafe.

In early Victorian Britain, concern with the low levels of public hygiene in the rapidly growing industrial centres led to the introduction of the *Public Baths and Wash Houses Act* in 1846. Long-time Kew resident, Dr Thomas Embling, was a champion of this cause in colonial Melbourne and in 1856 chaired a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly, which recommended that powers for provision of public baths be included in future municipal legislation. As a result, the *Municipal Corporations Act, 1863*, in addition to bestowing the status of a Borough on Kew and changing the title of its chairmen to Mayor, had empowered the Council to provide public baths and regulate bathing in rivers and streams.

In addition to matters of public health there was also concern that the presence of naked men bathing along the Yarra constituted a threat to public decency. Bathing in the Yarra continued in Kew until December 1884 when Kew Council adopted a by-law prohibiting bathing between the hours of 9.00AM and 5.00PM.

In January 1887 Cr Gray, a former Kew policeman who may well have had the experience of dragging the river following drownings, moved that swimming baths be erected in the Town Hall yard, suggesting that "had baths been established years ago many lives of young people would have been saved." and that "Many of the residents were in constant terror owing to their children running down to the Yarra to bathe." Council appointed a committee which, following inspection of existing public baths in Brunswick and Melbourne, recommended construction of a 75 foot by 25 foot swimming bath in the Town Hall yard at an estimated cost of £350. This proposal was rejected at a poll of ratepayers and a later request to the colonial government to use part of the State School Reserve as a site for public baths was refused.

Following the drowning in January 1890 of Walter Mott, the twenty-four year old proprietor and editor of the *Kew Mercury*, the matter of bathing facilities was again raised at Kew Council with Cr Atkyns moving "that a prize of £10 [be awarded] for the best scheme or design for a public swimming bath, to be erected in or near the Yarra River."



Kew Municipal Baths, 1930s
Kew Historical Society

Cr Gray responded by suggesting that baths on the Yarra would attract larrikins from Collingwood and Richmond and that no respectable people would frequent them. It was suggested that baths would be best placed near the centre of the Borough.

In February 1909, Kew Council passed a more lenient by-law allowing bathing in the Yarra at all times, provided the bather wore a neck to knee costume "which shall preserve public decency"

In August 1909, the local swimming club wrote to Kew Council suggesting that a local baths be established and requested a meeting with a view to selection of a suitable site. As a result, in April 1912, Kew Council appointed a committee to consider a suitable location.

The electrification of the horse tramway between the Victoria Street Bridge and Boroondara Cemetery provided an opportunity for Kew Council to obtain a centrally located site for a pool. In November 1914, the now redundant horse tram sheds at the corner of High and Disraeli Streets, were purchased from the Melbourne Tramway Company. A proposal for swimming baths, including attendant's quarters, was prepared by the Council Surveyor, and in May 1915, the Council Loan Schedule included £730 for municipal swimming baths and £200 for attendant's quarters and alterations to the old tram sheds, but in the following month, Council deferred construction of swimming baths for six months.

According to W.D. Vaughan, the matter lapsed until January 1923, when a deputation of local citizens requested the establishment of swimming baths where instruction could be obtained in swimming and lifesaving methods. The Council again appointed a committee to report on the proposal.

The drowning deaths of sisters, ten-year-old Eileen and sixteen-year-old Pearl McDougall in the Yarra near the end of Willsmere Road in January 1924 may have provided the final spur to action Kew Council required to proceed with construction of the baths.

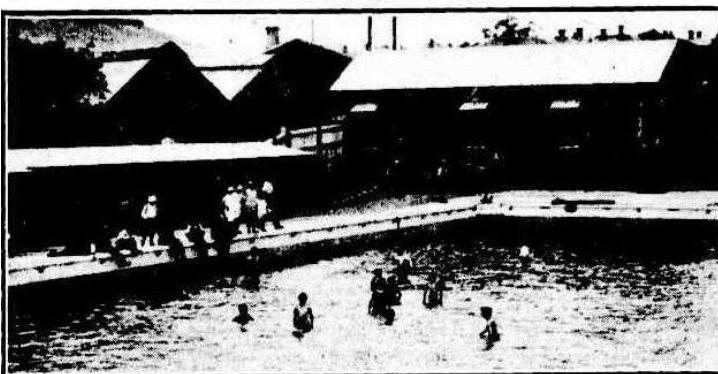
KEW MUNICIPAL BATHS (from page.4)

The incident was widely reported in the press and a deputation representing the North Kew Progress Association and ratepayers of all wards made a strong proposal to Council for the construction of swimming pools along the banks of the Yarra.

Tenders for the Baths to be erected in High Street were invited in January 1925 and Weavill & Keast's tender of £5,418/9/- was accepted on 10 February.

On 18 November 1925, *The Argus* published a photograph of children trying out the new Kew Baths prior to their being formally opened by the Mayor, Cr George Ramsay, on 26 November.

NEW SWIMMING BATHS FOR KEW.



After a fatal drowning accident in the Yarra last year the Kew Council determined to build municipal baths to provide safe swimming for the children of the district. The baths in Derby street are now nearly finished, and already youngsters are enjoying them to the full. The official opening takes place on Thursday, November 26.

The photograph of the opening ceremony (below) was published in *The Argus* on 27 November.

NEW SWIMMING BASIN FOR KEW.



The Mayor of Kew (Councillor Ramsay) performed the official opening ceremony at the new Kew swimming pool at Derby street yesterday. Swimming races for children of the district were held, and demonstrations of life-saving and swimming were given.

An article in *The Age* of the same day reported that the city engineer, Mr J. Maugham, had designed the Baths. The swimming pool was 158 feet long and 60 feet wide with a depth of 2 feet 6 inches at one end increasing to 7 feet at the deep end, where a diving platform was located. Dressing sheds, open air shelter and showers were provided.

It appears that when first opened, the Baths were not available for mixed bathing and *The Age* reported that one day a week was to be set aside for women and a further afternoon each a week allocated to girls and boys under fifteen.

The Baths were remodelled in 1928 to make them available for mixed bathing in the summer of 1928/29, and Kew was one of the earlier municipalities to issue a family ticket for this kind of amenity.

Further improvements were made to the Kew Baths in the mid 1930's, including a new three metre springboard diving platform and raked seating for spectators on top of the existing dressing sheds.

Over time, the Kew Baths continued to be upgraded. One major advance was the installation of a modern filtration and chlorination plant in 1941.

In *The History of the Kew Swimming Club*, Margaret Tope recalls conditions in the pool before this innovation: "....the pool became somewhat murky during the course of the weeks during summer: with no filtration the pool was merely emptied each Sunday, scrubbed down, then refilled with water."

Her account also casts an alternative light on the reports of the debate around closure of the pool on Sunday afternoons, which divided Kew Council in 1933. In the heated debate about the sanctity of the Sabbath and disturbance to the Sunday afternoon quiet of residents of Disraeli Street, was a necessary maintenance procedure overlooked?

Until their closure in 1988, and replacement by the Kew Recreation Centre, the Kew Baths were a popular recreational destination for Kew residents. Clubrooms were included for the Kew Swimming Club and the pool was the venue for annual competitions of local schools and the Scouts.

Several generations of Kew children learnt to swim there and later enjoyed one of the quintessential experiences of growing up in suburban Australia - hanging out at the local pool.

DAVID WHITE

Four Smiling Girls and a "Buoy"



THESE GIRLS WERE PLEASED when, by the casting vote of the mayor, the Kew (Melbourne) Council decided to keep the local baths open for swimming on Sunday mornings.

KEW EAST HERITAGE GAP STUDY

For 60 years the Society has been at the forefront of recording and preserving the history of Kew and Kew East. The houses and homes of our part of Victoria are a key element of our history. While over its 60 years of history the Society has accumulated a large collection of artefacts, it has found it rather difficult to collect houses! The next best thing of course is to ensure their protection in situ and that is why the Society made a submission to Council's 'Kew East Gap Study', a project assessing places that are currently unprotected by the local planning scheme with a view to identifying those worthy of protection.

As well as including 'zones', such as General Residential Zone, Commercial 1 Zone and so forth, all planning schemes in Victoria can also apply 'overlays' over land - to reflect special values or circumstances eg. the 'Environmental Significance Overlay' or, of interest to us, a 'Heritage Overlay'.

Places Currently Protected

In the mid 1980s, the then City of Kew commissioned a study of all of the building stock in the municipality, with the consultant's report, the *Kew Urban Conservation Study* of 1988, applying a set of criteria to classify buildings as being of 'A', 'B' or 'C' historical significance. From this work, the Council then applied protection for a number of individual properties or groups of properties (precincts) under the planning scheme through inclusion in a heritage overlay.

Currently there are only seven places and one precinct in Kew East protected in this manner, under what is now the City of Boroondara Planning Scheme. Four houses, as well as the former Belford Road Fire Station, the Strathalbyn Street Maternal and Child Health Centre and, most interestingly, a tree – one on the Yarra River at the end of Belford Road that was marked by Robert Hoddle over hundred years ago, have been included under the existing heritage overlay. The protected 'precinct' includes Irymple Avenue and Glass, Namur and Oswin Streets.

The Gap Study Proposals

The 'gap study', which is being prepared by the firm *Context Pty Ltd*, has assessed a further eight individual places and three precincts in Kew East as being of local significance and thus worthy of protection.

The individual places identified by the consultants are:

- four houses (in Elm Grove, Fairway Drive, Kilby Road and Normanby Road);
- three churches (East Kew Uniting Church, St Anne's Church and St Paul's Church); and
- Kew East Primary School.

The three precincts identified are the:

- 'Boulevard Estate and Environs Precinct' (mostly houses between Munro Street and Burke Road);
- 'Harp Village Commercial Precinct' (i.e. the Harp shopping centre); and
- 'Windella Avenue and Environs Precinct' (an odd-

- shaped area, including houses in Windella Avenue, Kilby Road, Birdwood Street, Minto Street, Belford Road and Hale Street).

The Society's Submission

Having carefully reviewed the proposals and, taking into account the local knowledge of a number of its members, the Society's submission to Council supported the proposed additional individual places and precincts, but also identified a number of other places it deemed worthy of protection.

In preparing its submission, it was found that while houses and retail shops were well represented, other sectors of community life were missing. Using the themes adopted in Council's *Thematic Environmental History* (2012), gaps were identified in transport, industry, community life and the cultural life categories. Additional houses and retail places worthy of protection were also identified.

Candidate properties were assessed against the 'HERCON Criteria', model heritage criteria used by Council's consultant, to identify whether a place meets the threshold for at least local significance. The Society's full submission can be found on our website: kewhistoricalsociety.org.au.

The Society's Recommendations for Heritage Protection

Transport

Garages, which were once common but now rare, are very poorly protected, with none protected in Kew East. We identified one existing and two former garages as meeting the criteria for local significance and thus worthy of protection. These being the Harp Junction Garage – which was established in 1928 and has been in continual use since then, and former garages in High Street (which now house, respectively, Canoes Plus and Beaurepaire's).

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E.J. Harvey, Motor Engineer, High Street, Kew East, ca. 1925
Gift of Edna Phillips, 2005.

Residential homes

An additional house was recommended - 'Cronin House' in Old Burke Road (the winner of a *Sun* newspaper architecture competition in 1945).

What is thought to be the earliest blocks of flats in Kew East, 'Alwill View Court' in Willsmere Road, was also recommended as worthy of protection. This unusually large block of flats is pretty much unmodified and retains its spacious landscaped grounds. It was built in the 1940s on land once earmarked by Kodak for a factory.



Alwill View Court, 2018

Another place, on the boundary of Kew East in Harp Road, was recommended as locally significant to 'cultural life' due to the purpose-designed film thetrette at the rear of a house built by former owner and amateur cinematographer, Dr. Tate.

Retail Industries

Protection was also recommended for the 'Belford Court' shopping arcade, on the corner of Belford Road and Kilby Road (the only remaining 'arcade style' shops in Kew / Kew East), and the Irymple Avenue shops at 765-777 High Street (an isolated group of retail shops of the 1930/40s indicative of an era when local shops were the focus of neighbourhoods).



Belford Court, 2018

Manufacturing Industry

Perhaps the most notable gap in places currently protected, or being proposed by the heritage consultants for protection, is the absence of any building associated with Kew East's manufacturing past. We recommended one stand-out property for protection: the D.J. Young Factory in High Street. This 'zig-zag' roofed factory has been in continuous use and ownership for many decades. Until it was sold last year, it manufactured all sorts of fastenings, including *muselets* (wire cages for champagne corks).



D. J. Young Factory, 2018

Community Life – spiritual

While Council's consultant identified the buildings of the three active churches in Kew East, it didn't recognise two other former churches that still survive, of which one, the former Baptist Church in Woodlands Avenue, built in the 1940s and of an unusual decorative design, has been recommended by the Society for protection.

We have also recommended that the little known but very special, and only convent, in Kew East be protected – the convent and chapel of the Holy Spirit Sisters in Strathalbyn Street.



Convent and Chapel of the Holy Spirit Sisters, 2018

Community Life – education

While it was good to see some of the original buildings of our local schools being proposed for protection, missing was any kindergarten and we have recommended that the Glass Street Kindergarten meets the criteria of local significance.

Next steps

Submissions on Council's recommended inclusions closed on 9 April 2018 and a report with final recommendations is likely to be considered by Council "late in 2018".

BRAD MILES

PRESERVING VISUAL EVIDENCE IN PAINTINGS

Joy Stewart died in Cairns in May this year. She was a foundation member of the Kew Historical Society and for many years one of its stalwarts and its Secretary from 1975-82.

Sidney Joy Dickins was born in Geelong on 14 March 1925, the second of six children and the first daughter of Sidney Edmund Dickins and Charlotte Spurgeon Dickins, nee Robertson. She did not enjoy being named after her father, 'Sidney's Joy', but he was the well-known S.E. Dickins, the founder of Australia's first self-service chain (later taken over and formed the basis of Coles New World) and she was very proud of him.

The family of six children moved to 281 Barkers Road, Kew in 1937 and Joy recorded some of their early escapades in her book *Mrs Dickins' Horrible Children*. From childhood she loved drawing and painting and these skills were subsequently developed when she studied at Swinburne Technical College and at the National Gallery Art School.

Joy continued to draw and paint whilst she was employed at the Museum of Applied Science (where she met her husband Bill Stewart), at Guy Boyd Potteries and at Myers Melbourne. After her marriage ended in 1958 she returned to live with her mother, at first in Barkers Road and from 1959 at 5 Bramley Court.

Joy took up full-time painting in 1968, when she was 43 years old, and was involved in several local organisations, including the Kew Historical Society. She was sadly missed when in 1981 she moved to Cairns to be nearer her sisters. She continued to paint and became very active in the Cairns Historical Society and the National Trust of Queensland as well as other local groups.

Joy Stewart's artwork is well-represented in the Kew Historical Society collection, both in pen-and-wash drawings of historic houses, which she was on occasion to describe as 'potboilers' in *Done By Me: The Art and Memoirs of Joy Stewart* (Muecke, M., 1999), and in her designs for eight Kew tapestries that were planned to represent one of the Society's contributions to the Australian Bicentennial of 1988. The thirty-three black and white and colour sketches of historic houses include 20 preparatory black and white drawings and 13 colour pen-and-wash drawings.



**'Farm House' -
St Paul's
School for the
Blind, Joy
Stewart,
c.1978.
Collection:
Kew Historical
Society**



Myer Store Display Team. Joy Stewart at right.

Courtesy: Lisa Worrell

A number of the drawings are historically significant, as they include buildings that were later demolished. An example of the latter is her drawing of the 'farmhouse' *Neama*, the home of Edward Augustus Atkyns, and later part of St Paul's School for the Blind in Studley Park Road. Typically, in her drawings, she made visual notations of architectural features of the building such as windows and doors. In others, she records the names of plants in gardens.

Her designs for the eight Bicentennial tapestries exist in a number of versions, ranging from the initial design, full-scale tracings, to a finished full-size colour copy, annotated on the top right with the colours of the wool. The people of Kew, including school students, undertook the completion of each of the six completed tapestries. Five of these are displayed on the south wall of the Kew Library, while the sixth framed tapestry is held by the Society and stored with the cartoons. Two of her designs, 'War Memorial - Unveiled 1925' and 'Churches' were not completed.

Joy also used her skills to illustrate a number of the Society's publications including *Strolling Around Kew* (Rolley, M. & Stewart, J., 1979), and *Boroondara, a place of shade* (Green, J. & Stewart, J., 1980). The former was a walking tour of Kew and the latter a guide to graves in the Boroondara General Cemetery.

To her family and close friends, Joy was renowned for her support for social justice, her talent as an artist, her irrepressible spirit, sense of humour and crazy laugh. With her death, the Society lost one of its remaining links to the foundation of the Society in 1958.

**WITH THANKS TO DON GARDEN &
LISA WORRALL**

PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS

THE VANDERSLUYS-KELLY COLLECTION

In July 2018, Robin Kelly contacted the Society with an offer to donate a number of items to our collection. The donation has a number of parts: 'floorshow' dresses worn in performance by Robin in the 1960s with professional studio photographs of her wearing these; memorabilia including photographs, documents, sound recordings and scores relating to Robin and the singer and television celebrity Geoff Brooke; and finally a handcut printing block by the artist Leslie Van der Sluys (1939-2010), Robin's brother.

The core of the donation are the six floorshow or 'singing' dresses that were made to order for Robin by dressmakers in Melbourne and Sydney in the 1960s. She recalls that: "the main dressmaker ... was a foreign lady in Manly, Sydney near the Manly Vale Hotel where we were working and near the Manly Pacific Hotel where our band stayed at first which extended to three years before coming back to Melbourne."

Typical of the dresses is a pink sequinned taffeta, halter neck, full-length sheath, with a low back featuring two pink chiffon drops from back to floor. Adding historical significance to the dress are accompanying publicity shots arranged by her Sydney agent, and photographs of her in performance at venues in Sydney and Melbourne.



Robin Vanser, Sydney, 1965.
Gift of Robin Kelly, 2018

She was to wear another of the dresses, a one-shoulder aqua brocade sheath featuring an aqua chiffon flyer singing on the Don Lane Show in 1966. The donation includes a photo of Robin wearing the dress with Johnny Ray, who was appearing on the same show.

Robin Kelly: Songs I love to sing,
Tijuana Productions.



Robin is still updating her performance history, however these biographical notes from her album *Robin Kelly: Songs I love to sing*, give some idea of the extent and importance of her performances.

Robin Kelly was born Robin Vandersluys in Mary Street, Kew. As a child, she sang in backyard concerts run with her brother, Leslie. They also sang duets at their father's Lodge Xmas Parties. The family moved to Deepdene in 1949 and Robin joined church and school choirs.

While working as a secretary, she studied classical singing with Stella Power, modern singing with Jack White, TV Presentation with Natalie Raine of Crawford Productions and acting/singing with the great English star Jessie Matthews.

Whilst secretary to the Art Director at GTV9 in 1961, she resigned to become a professional singer after winning a talent quest at the *Orama Ballroom*. She was invited to join the Orama Big Band with singers Harry Cox and Arlene Forrest. She also sang with the Kerm Jones Jazz Band at *Power House* and with Frank Johnson's Jazz Band at *Jazz Junction*. Robin became resident band vocalist at the historic Federal Hotel in Collins Street with the Rudi Laquer Trio, with guests like Frank Ifield. She also sang at their sister hotel, *The Savoy Plaza* with the George Cadman Trio. A year later she became resident vocalist at the *Ress Oriental Hotel* with the Lennie Holmes Trio, with guest artists like Helen Reddy.

In Sydney, at the Conservatorium, her new singing coach was Ramon Beatty who was amazed at her three and a half octave range. A new agent booked her to sing on the Don Lane Show. Robin married pianist Peter Jones and sang under the name Robin Vanser, singing in clubs in Sydney and all over New South Wales. She was booked for a Vietnam War tour and also sang in Tahiti. For three years she did club work supporting such artists as Barry Crocker and Johnny O'Keefe.

Continued p.10

Returning to Melbourne, her agent booked her to appear in shows throughout Tasmania including West Point Casino and Melbourne country venues. Another agent, John Bishop, booked her to do floor shows in Melbourne, including Christmas Seasons at the Hampton Hotel where she compered and starred in shows in two function rooms, entertaining audiences with her comedy and audience participation routines.

In 1971, Robin Kelly retired to run her Robin Hood Antiques business in Canterbury, during which time she was married to tenor Glenn Kelly. Later she joined Sing Australia Camberwell Choir, performing as a soloist at their Melbourne Town Hall Concert.

While running Robin Hood Antiques, Robin was to meet the popular entertainer Geoff Brooke, with whom she developed a close friendship. At one stage a resident of Wellington Street, Kew, he is represented in the donation by photographs, sheet music, sound recordings, articles and reviews. Born in Middle Park, he was to make his first paid performance at the age of 16, joining the ABC Showband as a singer one year later. A radio and television performer, he was also the owner of Melbourne's second licensed restaurant - Geoff Brooke's Steak Cave. This section of the Collection is extensive, and while the sound recordings and photographs have been inventoried, Brooke's extensive reviews will take longer to catalogue.

One final but important part of Robin's donation is an original hand-cut linoleum block of her brother Leslie's iconic handcoloured linocut - *Laughing Kookaburra and Waratah* (1982).



Above left, *Laughing kookaburra and Waratah*, Leslie van Der Sluys, 1982. Handcut linoleum printing block.



Above right, *Geoff Brook Sings* [All Time Favourites]. Sound Recording, Spotlight, 1953.

Considering the range and variety of material within Robin's donation, one can easily apprehend its current and future significance in documenting aspects of the performing and visual arts in Australia in the second half of the 20th century. It simultaneously illustrates the significant contribution of individuals born or resident in Kew and its surrounding suburbs.

ROBERT BAKER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 59th Annual General Meeting of the Kew Historical Society Inc., will be held on Wednesday 12 September 2018 at 8.00PM in the Phyllis Hore Room, rear Kew Library, Civic Drive, off Cotham Road, Kew.

The following business will be transacted at the meeting:

- (1) Apologies
- (2) Speaker: Cr Jim Parke, Mayor of Boroondara
- (3) Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
- (4) Report from the President for the year ending 30 June 2018
- (5) Report from the Treasurer for the year ending 30 June 2018
- (6) Report from the Archivist for the year ending 30 June 2018
- (7) Election of Management Committee members for the year 2018 – 2019
- (8) Appointment of an Auditor.

In accordance with the Constitution approved under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, all positions become vacant.

The elected Management Committee positions are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Archivist, Curator and six ordinary members.

Any member wishing to nominate a member for any position on the Management Committee should use the nomination form on p.11 of this newsletter. All nomination forms shall be delivered either personally, or by mail, or electronically to the Secretary of the Society, Brad Miles, by 5 September 2018.

Members of the Management Committee in 2017-2018 were:

President: Judith Voce

Vice President: Assoc. Professor Don Garden OAM

Secretary: Brad Miles

Treasurer: David Benwell

Archivist: Robert Baker

Curator: Judith Scurfield

Ordinary Members: Mary Kelleher, Debbie McColl-Davis, Desley Reid, Janet Walker, David White.

If you are unable to be present at the meeting you can fill out and send the proxy form on p.11.

BRAD MILES

Secretary

FORM OF APPOINTMENT OF PROXY

I,
of
being a member of the Kew Historical Society Inc. hereby appoint
of
being a member of that Incorporated Society, as my proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday the 12th day of September 2018.

Note:

1. This proxy must be completed and handed to the Chairperson before or at the start of the meeting.
2. Or it can be mailed to PO Box 175, Kew, 3101.
3. Or it can be scanned and emailed to secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au
4. If mailed or emailed, the completed proxy form must be received by the Society at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting.
5. Any queries phone Brad Miles (03) 9489 7815

Signed

Name

The day of 2017

✂

NOMINATION FORM

I, nominate

To the Position of within the Kew Historical Society Inc. for the year 2018–2019

Signed Date

I, second the nomination

Signed Date

I, accept the above nomination

To the Position of within the Kew Historical Society Inc. for the year 2018–2019

Signed Date

Nomination forms must be in the hands of the Secretary by 5.00pm Wednesday 5 September 2018.

Kew Historical Society Inc.
PO Box 175
Kew VIC 3101

MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY – KEEPING ALIVE KEW HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Society has operated continuously for almost 60 years holding monthly meetings, conserving historical records and items, undertaking historical research, arranging public exhibitions and lectures, and giving guided tours. You can become involved and support the Society's work by becoming a member or renewing your membership and/or making a donation.

[Tick relevant boxes]

- ☐ I/we wish to join the Society
- ☐ I/we wish to renew my/our membership *Note: Renewals were due 1 July 2018.*
- ☐ Individual membership (2018-19 annual fee \$20)
- ☐ Household membership (2018-19 annual fee \$30)
- ☐ Student membership (2018-19 annual fee \$10)
- ☐ I/we agree to be bound by the rules of the society.
- ☐ I/we prefer to receive the Society's quarterly newsletter by email.
- ☐ I/we would like to volunteer – on a committee, on the courthouse or supper rosters, or with research.
- ☐ I/we would like to make a donation of \$ _____ *Note: All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.*

NAME/S: _____ [PLEASE PRINT] TITLE/S: _____

POSTAL ADDRESS: _____ POST CODE: _____

PHONE PAYMENTS: MOBILE: _____ EMAIL: _____

Please mail form and cheque, made out to Kew Historical Society Inc., to KHS, PO Box 175, Kew, 3101.
OR Pay by direct bank deposit to KHS account 063-142 10066376 with your surname as the subject or reference and email payment details and/or scanned form to treasurer@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Privacy note: The KHS will not pass your details to a third party without obtaining your permission.

Kew Historical Society Incorporated Registration A001078W ABN 97 824 890 237 info@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au

Amount Paid:	Email data base:	M'ship Data Base:	Mailing label:	Name Tag:
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