

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



## PERFORMING ARTS

In 2012, the historians responsible for compiling the *Thematic Environmental History* of the City of Boroondara attempted to summarise and describe the history of 'live' performing arts from the earliest musical performances in the 1860s, by groups such as the fife and drum band of the Volunteer Rifle Corps in Hawthorn and the Boroondara Choral Society in Camberwell, to the present day.

Within the former City of Kew, musical and dramatic performances were largely dependent, not just on the availability of performers but also of suitable venues. From 1880 to 1960, the former Recreation Hall in Wellington Street hosted events such as exhibitions, plays, musical performances and dances. The earliest item of theatrical memorabilia in our collection is a ticket to a performance of *Arrah-Na-Pogue*, an Irish drama by Dion Boucicault, at the Kew Recreation Hall on Monday 2 September 1895. The yellow ticket (overleaf) includes details of the performance, including the name of the company performing the play - Mr. Lyons Talented Dramatic Company. Proceeds were advertised as being for a Bazaar Fund.

The Recreation Hall was commandeered by the armed forces during the Second World War, and the interior subsequently modernised. An early photograph in our collection of the interior is of a concert during the mayoral term of Cr. T.G. Jellis in 1906. It is the only known photograph of the original interior. While the Hall was noted for its outstanding dance floor, it also had a stage area on which performances were held.

During the second half of the 1940s and 1950s, the Recreation Hall was to become the venue for important cultural events, including annual Kew Arts Festivals. The Society's collection includes rare programmes of the Festivals of 1947, 1950 and 1951. These festivals typically comprised art shows, films, performances of ballets and plays, and musical recitals.

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Marion Smith, Maureen Lynch, Denise Lynch, & Marion Tilley in *A Country Girl* by Lionel Monckton, 1957

Right

Admission ticket to *Arrah-Na-Pogue*, Kew Recreation Hall, 2 September 1895.

Arthur Dear collection, Kew Historical Society



## PERFORMING ARTS (< page 1)

Theatrical groups included The Tin Alley Players and The Melbourne Little Theatre.

1952 saw the first production by a local theatre company - The Kew Light Opera Company's performance of Leslie Stuart's musical comedy *Florodora*. These performances coincided with what has been described as the proliferation of live theatre and music groups across Kew, Camberwell and Hawthorn. In Kew, in addition to the Kew Light Opera Company, and its successor The 'Q' Theatre Guild, the Kew Repertory Players and the Kew Philharmonic Society were also active.

These groups invariably held their performances in the Recreation Hall, unless they were invited to perform in state-wide events such as Moomba, when performances were held in the Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne. The repertoire of the Kew Light Opera Company was primarily musicals. In some cases, these included Australian premieres, such as *Goodnight Vienna!*, which had originally premiered in London in 1932. Its successor, The "Q" Theatre Guild was even able to mount and perform Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment* and Menotti's *The Telephone* in 1964.

From the early 1950s, the Kew Repertory Players performed more substantial, if less spectacular fare in the Recreation Hall, and later in the new Kew City Hall, after the former's demolition in 1960. Their repertoire ranged from plays by Noel Coward to J.B. Priestley. Many of their programmes, the earliest from 1953, and the last from 1965, form part of our collection.

The Kew Philharmonic Society, which had performed before the Second World War was re-formed by Dr A.P. Ehrenfeld, c.1946. Performances by the Philharmonic were to feature in successive Kew Arts Festivals. Their first concert in the Recreation Hall in 1946 featured Alexander Mackenzies' *The Singers*, Mendelssohn's *Ave Maria*, Edward German's *Orpheus With His Lute*, and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*. While Dr. Ehrenfeld was to die in 1954, [his baton is a treasured item in our collection], the Kew Philharmonic Society continues to perform to this day.

A new exhibition, *Performing Arts in Kew: 1945-1965*, will open in October and be on display until the end of February 2018. The exhibition will draw upon theatrical and music ephemera, photographs and objects in our collection.

## ROBERT BAKER

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

09 August - Monthly meeting  
20 August - Quarterly Book Sale  
13 September - Annual General Meeting  
15-22 October - History Week  
18 October - Dickinson Lecture  
08 November - Monthly meeting  
26 November - Quarterly Book Sale  
13 December - Annual Christmas Party

## KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

### PATRON

Sir Gustav Nossal AC, CBE

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**President:** Hon Andrew McIntosh

**Vice President:** Assoc. Prof. Don Garden OAM

**Secretary:** Brad Miles

**Treasurer:** David Benwell

**Archivist/Newsletter editor:** Robert Baker

**Curator:** Judith Scurfield

**Members:** Mary Kelleher | Debbie McColl-Davis | Desley Reid | 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, unless otherwise announced. Refreshments are provided. Meetings are open to members and visitors.

### KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation and restoration of the historic Kew Court House. Volunteers staff the Kew History Centre on Level 1 every Friday and 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 newsletter is published quarterly and is distributed to all members. Some additional copies are made available to the community. Past newsletters can be downloaded from our website.

### WEBSITE

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

### MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES

See page 12 of the newsletter or contact the Secretary, Brad Miles. Phone 9489 7815

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

### Kew Historical Society Inc.

Inc. No. A0010789W

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# IN THE NEWS

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## EXHIBITIONS & DISPLAYS

Our exhibition at the Kew Court House, *Scouts and Guides of Kew 1909-2009*, has been a great success. We have had local school classes, many past and present cubs, scouts and guides, over 200 people as part of Open House Melbourne, as well as a number of dignitaries, including the grand-daughter of the founder of Scouting and Guiding, the Honourable Wendy Baden-Powell, visit the exhibition. The Collection Manager of Scout Heritage Victoria, who visited in July, was particularly impressed with the photos and congratulated the Society on the exhibition.

The concurrent display of old Scouting memorabilia at the Kew Library (below) has also attracted many visitors and been well received.



L-R: Judith Scurfield, George Fernando (Camberwell HS), Wendy Baden-Powell, Brad Miles, Marg Currie (Scouts) and Marilyn Cunningham (Guides).

*The Scout and Guide exhibition has brought back many special memories for visitors, including a recipe for Lemonade Scones that Vicki and Rebekah (visitors from New Zealand) learned in the Brownies.*

### Lemonade Scones

1 cup of cream

1 cup of lemonade

3 cups of self-raising flour.

Mix the ingredients and roll out approximately to 1 inch thick and cut into shapes. Into oven at 220 degrees for 15 minutes.

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## EVENTS & THE COLLECTION

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### MEETINGS & LECTURES

**In August our guest speaker will be Allen Borella** who is the proprietor of the Harp Junction Garage in Kew East. This is a small family business that was established in 1928. Allen took over the business in 1977 and will share some of his many stories of cars and people, as well as outline some of the huge changes in the sector that Kew has experienced since the 1920s.

**Wednesday, 13 September is our AGM** and the current Mayor of the City of Boroondara, Studley Ward Councillor, Philip Healey, has accepted our invitation to speak.

Our annual **Dickinson Lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, 18 October**. This year's presenter will be Nigel Lewis, an eminent Kew-based architect, who will speak of some of the campaigns and other work he has been involved in along the Yarra River – including Willsmere, the Studley Park boat shed and the Abbotsford Convent.

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The Society wishes to formally acknowledge, and put on record, the following donations to the Collection:

- A late 19th-century day dress, once exhibited in the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston, donated by Coralie Coulston.
- Six articles of clothing, including a full-length black lace evening dress and shawl, two sequined capes/collars, and a Manton de Manila piano shawl, all dating from the 1930s, donated by Susan Barnett.
- A c.1891 copy of *Wheeldon's Practical Needlework* and a 19th-century cane and brown silk parasol, owned by Edith Weir (nee Betteridge) of Broken Hill and later Princess Street, Kew, donated by Jillian Rigby.

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# ONCE UPON A TEA TIME

## THE GRIFFITHS OF KEW

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A wife suffering consumption and an interest in colonial timber motivated James Griffiths (c.1856-1925) to immigrate to Victoria from the ancient English town, Wolverhampton, in 1875. Having been a grocer, on arrival he perceived a need for the importation and distribution of tea, a colonial dietary staple. He commenced trading. His younger brother, John Moore Griffiths (c.1856-1943) emigrated to join James in 1880. They formed a proprietary company and eventually traded from a flash building in Flinders Street. Today the site is the boutique Lindrum Hotel.

Due to innovative advertising and marketing, product diversification into coffee and chocolate and distribution outlets in Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide, as well as travelling salesmen to sell the product direct to the customer without a middleman, the brothers attained business and financial success.

Both brothers domiciled themselves in Kew. James and his wife, Emily (1844-1925), nee Moore, lived in rented premises in Cotham Road, and then built the mansion, *Monnington*, in Park Street, now Adeney Avenue, Kew. They had no children but adopted the five, orphaned English children of their brother, George Friend Griffiths, in 1890. They raised the children as if their own. After Robert (c.1877-1916) married Jessie Mary Hunt (c.1883-1960) at St Hilary's Church, Kew in 1905, he became the head of *Monnington*, his adoptive parents having repaired to their country property. His two sisters, Elizabeth Moore (c.1880-1928) and Louisa (1882-1925) also resided in the house. Robert died at *Monnington*, prematurely, from heart disease, aged 39, in 1916. After he was interred in the Boroondara General Cemetery, the mansion was sold to a distant relative, Edwin Lee Neil, the senior manager of Myer Melbourne. The sisters were relocated to *Strathmore*, Marshall Avenue, Kew.



**Monnington, Adeney Avenue, c.1965.**  
Rogers collection, Kew Historical Society Inc.

In 1891 John married Margaret Wightman Davidson (1867-1928) in the wondrous garden at *Monnington*. John installed his bride in an expansive and expensive property located on the corner of Argyle and Normandy Roads, Kew. It 'rubbed shoulders' with *Monnington*. Named *Goldthorns*, the house was a work in progress. Additions were made as the family increased in numbers. It was described as a palatial Victorian red brick residence of 'commanding and artistic appearance'. Externally there was a two storey decorative verandah to the north side, an imposing octagonal-columned entry portico, stucco window surrounds and decorative stucco festoons.

The house was to become state of the art. There were seventeen rooms with a 'modern electric lift', a hot water service and a separate wing accessed by 'servant stairs' to the kitchen, pantry and maid's quarters. The 1½ acres of grounds were 'charming', with a tennis court, croquet green and glasshouse filled with exotic rare plants.

The couple had seven children, six being sons. All were born at *Goldthorns*. The second son was a keen and good cyclist. On 5 October 1911, he was cycling in a pack along Normanby Road. Making for a sprint, the pack dissolved. Frank Moore Griffiths (1894-1911) rode straight into the side of a horse under poor command by a boy. On impact, the horse fell and Frank unseated. He died of head injuries at *Goldthorns*. 'Much-loved', 17 year-old Frank was buried at Boroondara General Cemetery the next day.

The eldest child, John [Jack] Parqueter Griffiths (1893-1916) attended Scotch College and then studied engineering, specialising in motor mechanics. He was 'a small boy, quite a nice little chap'. Given the extended family's strong ethos of Christian philanthropy to the needy, it is not surprising Jack felt an obligation to serve God, King and Country. He enlisted in the AIF on 20 July 1915. Initially a signaller, Jack became a first class Machine Gun instructor. In the push for the Somme, he was machine gunned to death. For the family at Kew, it was a harrowing time. His father received official notification that Jack was wounded in action, then, further intelligence altered the classification to 'missing in action'. Then there was silence. A Court of Enquiry, held in France in 1917, finally declared Jack died on 25 July 1916. His body was eventually located in 1929. Re-buried near Pozieres, Jack is remembered, locally, on the War Memorial, Kew, and on his parents' headstone at Boroondara General Cemetery.

For John, 1925 was to be a year of great heartache and celebration. His brother's body, a 'mangled' wreck, lay in *Goldthorns*, awaiting burial at the Cemetery, after a short service at the house. In retirement James had erected a country mansion, called *Ferndale*, in remote The Basin, near Bayswater. He had no telephone or motorised vehicles but many servants. On the night of Monday 6 April 1925, James set out with a party to greet a passenger on the Bayswater train.

## ONCE UPON A TEA TIME (cont. from p.4)

His wagonette collided with the outbound train at the Bayswater crossing. James' body went under the train wheels. His wife received 'frightful' injuries and died two days later. Her mortal remains were transported to *Goldthorns* to await burial. John inherited *Ferndale* and further financial assets. Probably in grief, John promptly sold *Ferndale* and his own country property, *Forest Park*, at Upwey. Despite this increase in wealth, the family remained modest and concerned with Christian missionary work.

On the 11 November 1925, John strutted the aisle of St Hilary's Church to give his only daughter, teacher Marjorie Helen (1896-1991), away to Albert Josiah Cock (c.1897-1964), an Armadale dentist. It was a society wedding. His daughter wore an expensive gown of white georgette and fashionable silver lace. Layfayette photographers captured a particularly happy 'charming' bride for the society journal *Table Talk*. One of her bridesmaids was Phyllis Neil, who was engaged to her brother, Leslie. The interior of *Goldthorns* was a veritable display of masses of white exotic azaleas for the wedding breakfast. Equally exotic carnations and lily of the valley dressed the feasting tables.

Almost a month later, on 1 December 1925, Phyllis Margaret Neil (1902-?) also glided down the aisle of St Hilary's Church, wearing her [Royal] Court presentation dress of deep cream satin, silver lace and tulle. The wedding breakfast was in a large, pink-lined marquee in the garden of *Monnington*. Two hundred guests sat down amongst snapdragons and delphiniums of complimentary colour to the marquee. Leslie George Griffiths (c.1899-1942), a missionary and engineer, moved into his uncle's previous home, *Monnington*, before moving to Evans Road, Kew. They had four children, the third, an only son, Ian (?- 1942). In 1938, Leslie, in his missionary capacity, was stationed at Ispahan, the capital of the Ispahan District of Iran, with his wife and the two youngest children. Leslie took his son on a holiday tour of Iran. Brigands killed both.

Norman James (c.1901-67) a missionary medical doctor was also working in Iran. He and his Kew born wife, Muriel Lizzie Nelson (1899-1985), had been farewelled by the St Hilary's (Kew) Missionary Service League on 8 March 1927, when they left for missionary work in Bolivia with the Inca descendants, before being relocated to Iran. They eventually settled in Balwyn, where Norman worked as a medical practitioner.

Kenneth Everard (1904- 1997), also a missionary, married Margaret Evelyn Rutherford Grant (?-?) on the 8 February 1934 at remote Onepusu, Malalta, British Solomon Islands. The couple relocated the family of three children from Camberwell to New South Wales and returned to missionary work. Kenneth died in Melbourne on 12 August 1997.

The youngest child of the family, Alan Frederick [Alec] (1907-94), became a medical practitioner, who initially had a practice in High Street, Kew, and subsequently worked from rooms at 1451 Burke Road, Kew.

It seems he married Ellen Amy Reeve (1909-95) in 1935, the daughter of a jeweller and dressmaker, who lived at *Orwell*, Davis Street, Kew. It is not known if they had children.

Two years after the death of his 'beloved' first wife, John married Annie Grace Blundell (c.1873-1962). They continued to live quietly at *Goldthorns*. Due to advancing age, John retired from the firm in 1936, a year of great business profit. He died at *Goldthorns* in 1943, and, with the usual family modesty, was privately interred with his first wife in the Boroondara General Cemetery.

The house in Normanby Road was sold in the late 1950s. The estate had been previously subdivided and the house became Wodonga Hospital and then Newhaven, a private psychiatric hospital in the late 1960s to 1970s. In 1992 it was a private nursing home.

Today *Goldthorns* is a private home with a high privacy fence and a tennis court close to the house, due to further subdivision. *Monnington* is under renovation.

The two deteriorating graves of John and James Griffiths are back-to-back in the Boroondara Cemetery. This symbolises the unity and deep abide within the embrace of a Christian God between the brothers and their families. They believed they were the trustees of whatever wealth came to them, and in the spirit of stewardship, donated substantial amounts of money for a variety of needy causes. They were 'sterling in their citizenship'.

### Further reading:

Volkhard Wehner, *Tea and Charity: the Life and Times of James Griffiths, Tea Merchant and Philanthropist*, 2006.

Darrell Paproth, 'Griffiths, James (1850 - 1925)', Electronic version, Southern Cross College, 2004.

[webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADEB/article/view/1194/1191](http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADEB/article/view/1194/1191).

References available: mmc32093@bigpond.net.au.

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Wedding of Mr A.J. Cock and Miss Marjorie H. Griffiths, St Hilary's Church, 1925

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# EAST KEW WOMEN'S CLUB

## 1945 - 1973

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East Kew Women's Club, sometimes called the East Kew Women's Community Club, was founded in July 1945 by nine women who met in the Harp Road home of the first President, Mrs Grace Thrake. The catalyst for the formation of the Club was a debate titled 'Should women take a more active part in public life?' between opposing female and male teams. It's not recorded who won the debate but the outcome was that the women formed the East Kew Women's Club.

By September 1945 the Club had a written constitution and a motto: "To help others, improve ourselves and foster the community spirit." Additional aims added later were:

- to encourage the cultural and educational advancement of members by lectures, craft demonstrations, excursions or other means approved by the Committee;
- to help or to cooperate with approved movements in the district with the above aims; and
- to unite the interests of the women of the district in a non-political, non-sectarian organisation.

Initially, the Club met weekly at Mrs Thrake's home, but as member numbers grew, it was necessary to find larger premises. The Harrier's Pavilion at Victoria Park, Kew became the Club's meeting place. The chairperson at each meeting alternated, while other members were responsible for child-minding and some acted as afternoon tea hostesses. A Committee was formed and meeting minutes taken. Music, book and film discussion groups were introduced. Speakers in 1945 covered topics such as Public Health, Child Welfare, the Children's Court, Home Economics, Meats - Buying and Cooking, Post War Reconstruction, Elocution, Travel, Pentridge Prison, Community Aid, the Housing Commission, Educational Reform, the Junior Red Cross, the Victorian Housewives Association and Speech Therapy.

Members were both married and single women and by April 1946, there were sometimes 40 members at the meetings. As the numbers grew, so did the number of children attending with their mothers. A local woman was employed at two shillings per hour to mind the children of members during meetings.

The members supported the Kew Mental Hospital and Kew Children's Cottages by donating knitted garments of all descriptions. These included singlets, socks, jumpers and rugs. They worked as occupational therapists until trained occupational therapists were employed. Club members visited patients who rarely had visitors and celebrated birthdays and Christmas with small gifts. This scheme grew into the Kew Mental Hospital Friends Group. In conjunction with the Kew Civic Movement, members of the Club took patients on country drives followed by afternoon tea.

The Kew Elder Citizen's Association was formed when the Club identified many elderly residents in need of support.



Framed enamel sign, East Kew Women's Club, c.1945.  
Kew Historical Society

Club members were to serve on the Elder Citizen's Association Committee. The Elder Citizen's Association was located at Southesk (since demolished and now part of Trinity Grammar School), and its kitchen provided a Meals on Wheels service for elderly and infirm residents of Kew.

The Club initiated a campaign to re-introduce meat deliveries to householders. This service had been suspended during the War years, and by 1946 had not resumed. The Club contacted the Victorian Housewives Association to enlist its support. Mrs Thrake proposed that the Federal Government allow butchers who re-introduced home meat deliveries an extra quota of meat to sell. Also in that year, the Club made a submission to the State Government-initiated Bread Inquiry. The Inquiry was formed to enquire into the manufacture and distribution of bread. Mrs Thrake proposed to the Inquiry that delivered-bread should be dated and wrapped at the bakery to ensure that the bread would not be handled by the carter. The Inquiry's report was handed down in 1949, and recommended improvements to delivered-bread handling.

The Club was concerned about living conditions at Kew Mental Hospital and Children's Cottages and in 1947 brought them to public notice when Mrs Dorothy Dods led a deputation to the Kew Council. The conditions were the subject of an editorial in *The Argus* in June 1947. Members of the Club formed another deputation to the Minister for Health, Mr Barry protesting at the deplorable conditions in which 1300 patients were living. The Club members reported that 'the boys are dressed in blue drill uniform as if cast off from the auxiliary fire services and similarly ill-fitting army clothing complete with badges. Food is prepared early in the day and left in a kitchen exposed to flies. There is no flywire on the windows'. In addition 'Nurses are working sixty hours a week and many are untrained'. Mr Barry responded by publicly accusing the Club members of seeking notoriety for themselves. He stated that the patients wore secondhand clothing because they would not appreciate 'normal civilian clothing', that they were not underfed and that he was trying to recruit suitable staff.

## EAST KEW WOMEN'S CLUB

(cont. from p.6)

The Club thought that the overcrowding, under staffing and insufficient beds which resulted in babies sleeping on the floor was reminiscent of 19th-century conditions. It suggested to the Minister that better training, working conditions and pay would attract staff. Mrs Dods on behalf of the Club, undertook a survey of world standards in mental hospitals and presented it to the Minister for Health. It was not until the *Mental Hygiene Act 1950* paved the way for an Authority to conduct and control all psychiatric services in the State.

As a result of urgings by the Club, the Kew Council opened a Children's Library in Normanby Road, East Kew in 1947. In 1948, the Club became a supporter of the 'Fat for Britain' campaign. Fat and dripping which would normally be discarded every day in kitchens across Australia was approved as a gift to Britain. It was packed in tins and labelled as inedible but could be used to make soap, thus freeing fresh British supplies for cooking. There were collection depots located in the East Kew homes of members.

The President in 1948 was Mrs Dods who described the activities of the Club as 'a cultural outlet for busy housewives'. In 1956 while Vice President of the Club, Mrs Dods was selected to 'star' in a 14-minute black and white film made for the Victoria Promotion Committee to publicise the forthcoming Melbourne Olympic Games. The film purported to present a cameo of typically Australian home life. Mrs Dods was to open her home in East Kew to billet American visitors during the Games.

In subsequent years, the Club actively supporting the Kew Civic Movement, Kew Citizen's Advice Bureau, National Council of Women, Good Neighbour Council, Kew Horticultural Society, Kew Archery Club, Glass Street Kindergarten, Kew Community Aid, Victorian Housewives Association, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, the Food for Britain Appeal, Victorian Children's Holiday Organisation, aborigines living in poor conditions at Mooroopna, Kew Red Cross, the Overseas Student's Association, Kew Mental Health Welfare Group, an Italian boy's schooling in Italy, and sponsorship of a Pakistani boy. Club members were delegates to many of these organisations.

During 1958, H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, visited Melbourne and the Club sent a large bouquet of flowers to her at Government House. A letter of thanks received by the Club from Her Majesty's Lady in Waiting is preserved in the archives of the Kew Historical Society.

In the 1960's, there were sometimes as many as seventy members attending meetings, although the Club boasted nearly two hundred members. A signpost was erected at the Parkhill Road entrance to Victoria Park to direct visitors to the Club meeting room. The planned Kew High School was supported by the Club, with a member on the Steering Committee. The Save the Children Fund, the Victorian Society for Crippled Children, the University Building Fund, the Helping Hand Centre, the Victorian Council of Social Services, Food for India, the Churchill Appeal, Freedom from Hunger Appeal, the Red Cross, the Adult Blind Institute, the Mitcham School for the Blind, and the Mission for Streets and Lanes all benefited from donations and other support from the Club at this time.

While the Club members were active in supporting their community and those abroad, they were also active in supporting each other. They ran a hospital and home visiting program, theatre parties and Home Nursing and First Aid Courses for members. Heaters and a piano were provided for the meeting room and a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II was hung. Members formed a choir, a drama group, book club, keep fit class and film discussion group. Musical appreciation was another focus. Husbands and brothers formed a Glee Club and entertained at community events.

In 1965, twenty years after its founding, the members were asked what the Club meant to them. Some responses related to mental and cultural stimulation, community benefit, friendships formed and loneliness averted, doing something for others, getting out of the house and sanity saving! Some members noted that they had been members for seventeen years.

In the 1970's, the foundation Club President, Mrs Grace Thrake and her husband, war artist, printmaker and photographer Eric Prentice Anchor Thrake, became beneficiaries of member visits to the sick.

In the final years, the meetings became more formal and businesslike, and by 1973, member numbers were falling. The Club advertised for members in the local newspaper but with no success. When the Club had neither President nor Secretary, it was decided to close the Club after the Annual General Meeting of July 1973. The last meeting was held on 27th July that year and the Club's property was donated to the Kew Harriers, their landlord and supporter for many years.

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# SPINSTER WHO DEFEATS PARLIAMENTS

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## “SPINSTER WHO DEFEATS PARLIAMENTS

### Woman’s Whim Blocks

### Street Widening

### QUAINT PROVISIONS IN WILL”

These were the headlines preceding an article published in *Smith’s Weekly* on Saturday 17 October 1925. The article was presented as an expose of the undue influence of Miss Jamieson, a Kew spinster, who was standing out against the widening of High Street and preventing the timely progress of the Kew Land Bill through the Victorian State Parliament.

The object of the Bill was, in the face of Miss Jamieson’s alleged refusal to sell, to give Kew City Council the power to compulsorily purchase land in order to widen High Street between Cotham Road and Denmark Street, which had become a dangerous bottleneck.

It was reported that Miss Jamieson’s father, Francis Jamieson, had owned property at the corner of Cotham Road and High Street and that following his death in 1915 his will had inexplicably left it in trust to his daughter, as well as providing her with an income of £300 a year for life on the condition that she remain single.

The article suggested that the minority Labor Government of the previous year, which had relied on the support of the Country Party to continue in power, was preparing to bring the Bill before Parliament but was defeated when Mr Carlisle, a Country Party member from Benalla who had been a personal friend of Miss Jamieson for over twenty years, withdrew his support. Dr Stanley Argyle, Chief Secretary of the new government and a former mayor of Kew, then advised a delegation from Kew that the Bill could not be brought forward for fear that lengthy debate by the Country Party would delay the passing of important legislation before the recess.

*Smith’s Weekly* suggested that Miss Jamieson personally knew every member of Parliament and used all the force of her persuasive powers upon them with the result that the Kew Land Bill was never brought before the Parliament and concluded with the statement, “It seems that we have come in earnest to petticoat government in Victoria”.

Intrigued by the story of this apparent Kew femme fatale and her generous father, I have carried out some research of the public records and the newspapers of the time on *Trove* to discover more about them.

Caroline Constance Jamieson was born at Chinnock Terrace, Cotham Road, Kew on 7 September 1867. Her parents were Francis and Annie Jamieson. Her mother, then Annie Hince aged eighteen, had arrived in Melbourne in 1860 with her thirty-two year old sister Caroline, on the *Merlin* from Liverpool as assisted immigrants. They were a nurse and housemaid respectively, and were travelling under the Victorian colonial government scheme intended

to bring female domestic servants to the Colony to relieve a shortage of servants and also to address the gender imbalance in the colony after the Gold Rush.

Annie Hince and Francis Jamieson were married in 1862. In the same year, Annie’s sister Caroline Constance was also married to Abraham Preist, but died in 1867, shortly after the birth of Caroline Constance Jamieson, who we can assume was named after her aunt.

Francis Jamieson, a baker, is listed in *The Kew Borough Rate Book, 1864* as occupying a bakehouse in Bulleen Road owned by Theophilous Wheeler. F.G.A. Barnard’s *Jubilee History of Kew* (p.66) makes a reference to F. Jamieson’s bakery as being on the other side of the Council Hotel to Mr Jas. H. Kays painter’s and plumbers business and includes an 1880 photograph (facing p.13) of the three buildings. (The Council Hotel is the two-storey building in the centre, Jas. H. Kay’s business to its left and Jamieson’s bakery to its right)



The *Kew Borough Rate Book, 1865* still lists Francis Jamieson as a baker, but also now as the owner and occupier of a house and shop in Bulleen Road (the name of High Street at the time), the owner of the Council Hotel occupied by Patrick Curry and another house and shop occupied by James Henry Kay, both in Cotham Road. Business was apparently going well for Francis and he was beginning to build up a property portfolio.

By 1870, Francis Jamieson’s occupation is listed in the *Borough Rate Book* as gentleman, and he is living in a house in Cotham Road owned by Thomas Embling.

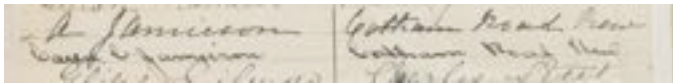
Francis Jamieson was an active member of the developing Kew community. In 1870, he was elected to the Borough of Kew Council and served as a councillor until 1874. He was also one of the leaders of the movement to establish a Presbyterian congregation in Kew, which led to the commencement of services in the Town Hall and the purchase of a site in Cotham Road for a church and school. He also became a trustee of the Boroondara General Cemetery.



## SPINSTER WHO DEFEATS PARLIAMENTS (from page 8)

There is little readily accessible information on Caroline Constance Jamieson's early life in Kew. She is mentioned in *The Argus* in 1884 as having passed the senior division of the Victorian Sunday School Union examinations. *The Age* in 1889 reports her statement to the District Coroner following the death of her 25-year-old brother, Mr Francis Finlay Jamieson, a solicitor who had died from injuries received when a pony reared and fell on him as he went to put a bridle on it. In 1891 she is listed in the *Weekly Times* as receiving a St. John's Ambulance Association gold medallion at a presentation ceremony for members of the Association.

In 1891, Caroline and her sister Amy signed The Women's Suffrage Petition. Judging by her backhanded signature Caroline was left-handed, had already adopted the name Carrie C. Jamieson, and was a Kew suffragette.



The Women's Suffrage Petition, signed by close to 30,000 women, was tabled in the Parliament of Victoria in September 1891 with the support of the then Premier James Munro and sought that "Women should Vote on Equal terms with Men". The petition was part of a drive by a handful of dedicated Victorian women to gain the right to vote and contributed to Australia becoming, on Federation in 1901, the first nation to give women both the right to vote and the right to stand for Parliament.

More conventionally, in 1904 *Punch* reported that Miss Carrie Jamieson was one of the bridesmaids for her younger sister, Miss Amy Jamieson, when her marriage to Mr Fred Schultz was celebrated at the Presbyterian Church, Kew. After the ceremony, a wedding breakfast was served in a marquee on the lawn, and in the evening a large theatre party was given. Wedding presents were reported as "numerous and costly".

Francis Jamieson's wife, Annie, died in 1908, and it appears that Carrie C. Jamieson took over the domestic management of *Nirvana* at 45 Cotham Road, Kew until her father's death in 1915.

Probate records reveal that Francis Jamieson's assets at the time of his death of £16,432/0/6 included real estate to the value of £8,335 consisting of a nine-roomed brick villa known as *Nirvana* at 45 Cotham Road, Kew, four brick shops known as Numbers 6, 8, 10, 12 and 16 Cotham Road Kew, a two-storey brick shop at 188 High Street, Kew rented to T.G. Jellis, vacant land in Walpole Street with a frontage of 194 feet 5 1/2 inches and depths of 101 and 152 feet 5 inches, brick and weatherboard houses at 24 and 26 Stirling Street, Kew, vacant land in Queen Street, Laverton with a frontage of 40 feet and a depth of 125 feet, and personal property including furniture, money in bank and building society deposits, debentures, mortgages, shares and debts leaving the estate valued at £8,097/0/6.

Among his share holdings were 1000 shares in *The Foster Brewing Company Ltd*, and 500 shares each in *The Shamrock Brewing and Malting Company Collingwood Limited* and *The Castlemaine Brewing Company Melbourne Limited*, so it would appear that Francis Jamieson was not the type of Presbyterian who advocated total abstention from alcohol.

In his will, Francis Jamieson appointed the Trustees Executors and Agency Company Limited as his executor and trustees. Two codicils, added to the will after the death of his wife Annie, directed his trustees to hold the house and land at 45 Cotham Road, known as *Nirvana*, for use by his daughter Caroline Constance, because she had given up her prospects in life to take over the management of his home following the death of her mother, and to make a payment of £300 a year to her while she remained a spinster. This arrangement was to continue until her death or marriage.

In addition to Carrie C. Jamieson, his younger daughter, Mrs Annie Amy Schultz of Adelaide, and two sons, Dr Stanley Connabee Jamieson of Yarrowonga, and Dr Douglas Dunbar Jamieson of Stawell survived Francis. Dr Douglas Jamieson died from injuries received in an aeroplane accident at Port Said in Egypt in 1918 while serving as a surgeon with the 8th Light Horse, leaving the three remaining siblings as Francis Jamieson's beneficiaries.

Following her father's death, Carrie C. Jamieson continued to live at *Nirvana* and took an active role in Kew community activities until her own death in 1954.

While the First World War continued, she was active in fundraising including, as reported in *Punch*, a very successful garden fete raising £250, in aid of the Kew Red Cross Funds, held in the grounds of Mr and Mrs H. J. Ralph's residence *Fernhurst* at Kew on Saturday 1 December 1917. Lady Rest performed the opening ceremony after being introduced by the Mayor of Kew, Cr E.P. Wynne, also welcoming Mrs Wishart, president of the Kew Red Cross branch. It was reported that Mr and Mrs Ralph were indefatigable in their efforts to make the fete a success, and were ably seconded by Miss C. Jamieson, co-honorary secretary with Mrs W. Wischer.



Jamieson family home - *Nirvana*,  
45 Cotham Road, Kew, cnr. Union Street.

## SPINSTER WHO DEFEATS PARLIAMENTS (from page 9)

In 1919, *Table Talk* reported on an American tea which was held at *South Esk* the home of Mr and Mrs D.G. Carnegie on Saturday afternoon 10 May 1919, which raised nearly £200 for the Burnley Free Kindergarten which was supported by a few ladies in Kew with Mr F.T. Derham as president. Among the stallholders Miss C. Jamieson was in charge of Nuts.

In later years Carrie C. Jamieson was a co-vice president of the Carnsworth branch of Red Cross, which met twice monthly in the ballroom at *Carnsworth* the home of Mrs J. Lewis Carnegie in Studley Avenue and treasurer of Kew Womens Hospital Auxiliary, which maintained an eight-bed ward at the hospital.

Research reveals a story of immigrant success and highlights the opportunities available to ambitious pioneer families in Kew. A baker could become a gentleman of independent means, while his children could become professionals or independent women with a name of their own.

*Smith's Weekly* was partly owned by Clyde Packer, first of the Packer media dynasty. It was a weekly tabloid newspaper published in Sydney but read all over Australia. Mainly directed to the male (especially ex-Servicemen) market, it mixed sensationalism, satire and controversial opinion with sporting and finance news, and in the case of the report which inspired this article, in its pejorative use of the word 'spinster' and suggestion of political manipulation through feminine influence, clearly pandered to the perceived prejudices of its readership against independent women and inherited privilege.

The assertion that a woman was obstructing the widening of High Street was also clearly incorrect, because the properties in question were the sole responsibility of Francis Jamieson's trustees and any decision regarding the sale of property to Kew Council was in their male hands, and while Carrie C Jamieson was more than likely to have personally known some Victorian politicians, her influence was vastly overstated by *Smith's Weekly*.

Interpreting the changes in numbering of Kew Streets over time is something of a black art but it appears to me that Francis Jamieson's trustees held out on Kew Council and the increased width of High Street when it finally happened was determined by the location of the northwest corner of his properties in Cotham Road.

© DAVID WHITE

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 58th Annual General Meeting of the Kew Historical Society Incorporated will be held on Wednesday 13 September 2017 at 8.00 pm 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 Philip Healey, Mayor of Boroondara
- (3) Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
- (4) Report from the President for the year ending 30 June 2017
- (5) Report from the Treasurer for the year ending 30 June 2017
- (6) Report from the Archivist for the year ending 30 June 2017
- (7) Election of Management Committee members for the year 2017-2018.

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 6 September 2017.

- (8) Appointment of an Auditor.

Elected members of the Management Committee for 2016-2017 were:

President: Hon. Andrew McIntosh  
Vice President: Assoc. Prof. Don Garden OAM  
Secretary: Brad Miles  
Treasurer: David Benwell  
Archivist: Robert Baker  
Curator: Judith Scurfield  
Members: Andrew Frost (resigned March 2017), Mary Kelleher, Debbie McColl-Davis, Mel Lawrence (resigned July 2017), Janet Walker, David White  
Co-opted members: Desley Reid (co-opted June 2015)

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 13th day of September 2017.

**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) 948 97815

Signed .....  
Name .....  
The ..... day of ..... 2017

✂ -----



## NOMINATION FORM

I, ..... nominate .....

To the Position of ..... within the Kew Historical Society Inc. for the year 2017–2018

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 2017–2018

Signed ..... Date .....

Nomination forms must be in the hands of the Secretary by 5.00pm Wednesday 6 September 2017.

**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 are due 1 July.*
- Individual membership (2017-18 annual fee \$20)
- Household membership (2017-18 annual fee \$30)
- Student membership (2017-18 annual fee \$10)
- I/we agree to be bound by the rules of the society.
- I/we prefer to receive the Society's notices by email.
- 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**

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