



**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY INC.**

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

# NEWSLETTER

No. 145

DECEMBER 2023



## THE HENTY COLLECTION

In 2023, Kew Historical Society applied for a Community Heritage Grant to fund a Significance Assessment of its newly acquired Henty Collection. At the core of the new collection are costumes owned by Mary Ann Henty and her daughter Alice Hindson (*nee* Henty) that were created and worn on important social occasions between the years 1842 and 1880. They include a very rare child's dress, made for Alice Henty when she was six years old. The costumes, pictured above, were created and worn by Alice Henty during 1875 and 1876.

We believe that the collection of costumes and costume accessories is a major acquisition for the nation. Preliminary quarantining and subsequent documentation of the costumes and costume accessories was completed following acquisition. The costumes were subsequently, with the agreement of the donors, exhibited during the 2023 Australian Heritage Festival at the Villa Alba Museum. Some items such as Mary Ann Henty's (*nee* Lawrence) 1842 wedding dress require conservation due to sections of degraded fabric resulting from perspiration. Other items need cleaning and small repairs by qualified conservators.

Given this, most of the costumes are in remarkably good condition. The collection is already housed in large and medium textile boxes. KHS applied for and won a Commonwealth Stronger Communities Grant to obtain steel archival shelving to hold these, and other textile boxes in our collection, which has allowed for improved ease of access and examination.

A Significance Assessment will evaluate the historical and aesthetic significance of these costumes and will enable us to take steps to ensure that funding is gained for their storage, management, conservation, and future exhibitions. Given our understanding of current insurance coverage, it will allow us to progress to valuations of items in the Henty Collection, which are a precondition for any pieces loaned to other cultural organisations for exhibitions.

The guidelines for a Significance Assessment include assessing the historical and or aesthetic significance of the costumes, while researching their provenance, rarity, condition, and interpretive capacity.

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**COSTUMES OF ALICE HINDSON (nee HENTY), 1875–6**  
Villa Alba Museum, 2023 Australian Heritage Festival  
KHS collection

## THE HENTY COLLECTION *(from page 1)*

The Significance Assessment will be conducted by Laura Jovic. Laura is an independent curator specialising in the history of fashion and textiles. She is currently completing a PhD at the University of Melbourne researching colonial Australian dress and society, focussing on nineteenth century dress in Australian collections.

Laura was employed at the National Gallery of Victoria from 2007–12 as a curator in the department of Australian Fashion & Textiles, where she curated an exhibition of Australian fashion from the 1850s to the 1950s titled: 'Australian Made: 100 Years of Fashion'. Published articles include: 'Anything for mere show would be worse than useless: emigration, dress and the Australian colonies, 1820–1860', in Riello & Lemire (eds.), *Dressing Global Bodies* (Routledge, New York, 2020).

This is the second grant for a Significance Assessment that KHS has received, having gained funding in 2017 for a general assessment of our pictures, map, and costume collections. We received support for our application from a number of historians as well as curators from Museum Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria. A Significance Assessment of these new acquisitions is a precondition for further grants for conservation on the costumes and costume accessories.

In receiving the grant, we are one of 59 community-led organisations to receive a grant in 2023. Since the Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program began in 1994, more than 1,650 projects have received grants totalling over \$8.9 million, to help preserve significant Australian community history and heritage for future generations. CHG is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; National Library of Australia; National Archives of Australia; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and National Museum of Australia.

**ROBERT BAKER**

## GRANTS & SPONSORS

KHS is supported by a *Triennial Operational Grant* from the City of Boroondara, a *Stronger Communities Grant* from the Australian Government, and a *Community Heritage Grant* from the National Library of Australia.

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## DISCLAIMER

The views expressed, and information provided, by the authors of articles in this newsletter do not necessarily mirror the views and values of the Kew Historical Society. We also rely on authors checking the accuracy of their data and apologise if errors of fact have been made.



[above] L-R DR LIZ RUSHEN, JENN BURGESS, LAURA JOCIC & DEB TOUT-SMITH VIEWING THE DRESSES OF MARY ANN HENTY  
Noel Kelly, photographer, 2023  
KHS collection

## KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

### PATRON

Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE FRS FAA FTSE

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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**Curator:** Judith Scurfield

**Members:** Mary Kelleher | Julie King | Debbie McColl-Davis | Margaret Robinson

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

Public meetings of the Kew Historical Society are held in the Phyllis Hore Room at the Kew Library on the second Wednesday of each month (excluding the months of January, March, October and December). There is usually a guest speaker. Visitors are welcome to attend.

### KEW COURT HOUSE

Members of the Society played a key role in the preservation of the Kew Court House. General enquiries can be made, and viewing of our current exhibition, on Fridays (excluding January 2024 and public holidays) between 11am and 1pm. Our room is on the first floor of the former Kew Police Station at 188 High Street, Kew.

### KEW HERITAGE CENTRE

The Kew Heritage Centre, at the rear of the ground floor of the Kew Library, is generally staffed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 10am and 4pm. Entry is by appointment.

### NEWSLETTER

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

### WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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

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

[www.facebook.com/kewhistoricalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/kewhistoricalsociety)

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# HISTORY NEWS

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## TRIBUTES

### ALISON VIRGINIA KEMP (1947–2023)

Virginia was born in South Australia and did her formal primary secondary school education there and also her training as an early childhood educator. She subsequently undertook horticultural studies at Burnley.

We belonged to the same babysitting group for many years after having met at the local infant welfare centre. Her three sons are roughly the same age as our four children, so we met frequently at Kew East Primary. Virginia volunteered to help support terminally ill patients at Fairfield Hospital; she taught at the Kew Neighbourhood House in their day care section; and she was an active member of Kew Garden Club, Ivanhoe Club, and Kew Historical Society.

With Rae Nichols, Virginia organised the catering roster for Kew Historical Society's monthly meetings. In 2022, she presented the Society with 'Snow Scene', a painting by Donald Cameron in memory of my twin Prue McColl. Virginia, we will miss your gardening skills, your beloved red 'bikie' boots, your scarves, your green eye shadow, your dragonfly jewellery but above all, your warmth, friendship and care for others.

### DEBBIE MCCOLL-DAVIS



VIRGINIA KEMP (RIGHT) WITH 'SNOW SCENE,' DONATED TO OUR COLLECTION IN 2022

### KAYE COLE JP (1930–2023)

In 2018, accompanied by Robert Baker, I met Kaye Cole at her Carlton home to conduct an extended interview. A warm, intelligent woman, Kaye welcomed us to her home where she recalled her service to the people of the City of Kew as a mayor and councillor.



CR KAYE COLE JP, MAYOR OF KEW 1979–80  
Gift of Kaye Cole, 2018  
KHS

Kaye Cruikshank was born in Hawthorn in February 1930 and attended Korowa Church of England Girls Grammar School between 1934 and 1946. She took a B.A. at the University of Melbourne and later worked there as a librarian in the Baillieu Library. After her marriage to Dr Barry Cole, she lived in North Melbourne before moving to Westbrook Street, Kew East in 1962. As a young mother of three, she became very active in local community affairs filling the role of President of the Windella Avenue Kindergarten Committee, Vice President of the Kew Pre-School Association and deputy chair of a committee advising Kew Council on human services.

In 1973, encouraged to stand for council in North Ward against a long serving sitting member, she won the seat by 10 votes. Her electoral platform included a rates rebate for needy pensioners and the provision of the lowest rates which would provide good services to residents. She wanted freeways to take heavy traffic off local streets, protection from the loss of parkland and constraints on the construction of high-rise buildings in Kew.

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## MEMBERSHIPS

These were due on 1 July 2023. For new membership applications and renewals, please use the printed form on page 12 of this newsletter, or the online form on our website, making your subscription payment to our bank account 633 000 171300288. Please send any queries to [secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@kewhistoricalsociety.org.au)

## NEW MEMBERS

Since June 2023, KHS has been pleased to welcome Alison French, Justine McDonough, Amelia Hamer, Bernard Fischer, Michelle Pyke, Declan Cassidy, George Demetrios, Noela Henderson, Gavan O'Keefe, and Suellen Downs as new members.

**KAYE COLE JP** (from page 3)

As a councillor she championed the controversial ‘shandy rates’ scheme and consequently lost her seat in 1976. In 1978, Cr. Cole returned to council, this time in Prospect Ward, serving until 1985.

Although not the first female mayor in Kew, when she was elected by secret ballot to the mayoralty in 1979, she was only the second female mayor, elected after a gap of 25 years. Because she found the mayoral robe cumbersome and heavy, a new robe was purchased. The colour was changed from black to red and the new robe was worn by subsequent mayors. Between 1980 and 1985, Cr. Cole was council’s representative on the Municipal Association of Victoria, and later one of only two female members of its executive. When she was elected mayor, there were only seven female mayors in the State among more than two hundred councils. Toward the end of her service as councillor, she initiated the move of the Municipal Library into the under-utilised Kew Civic Hall. There was spirited opposition, but statistics showed that per capita, Kew residents were more active users of their library service than those of any other Victorian municipality, so a larger library was necessary to properly serve residents and ratepayers.

In 1995, ten years after leaving council, she participated in a joint committee with representatives of the City of Hawthorn to consider the proposed amalgamation of the Councils of Kew, Hawthorn, and Camberwell into the mega City of Boroondara. Following the councils’ merger, many valuable properties owned by the City of Kew were sold. After retiring from council, she worked as a community educator for the Epilepsy Foundation, as a project officer and regional coordinator for Community Services Victoria and for the City of Heidelberg as the aged care coordinator. She also became chairperson of the Council on Handicapped Persons Employment Victoria, supporting meaningful employment for the disabled.

Keenly interested in history, she was a life member of the Kew Historical Society, researching her family tree in retirement. She died in Richmond in July 2023 aged 93 years.

**DESLEY REID**

**JANE MAYO CAROLAN (1949–2023)**

As this edition is going to press, we learned of the death of Dr Jane Mayo Carolan OAM, former Archivist of Trinity Grammar School. Jane was for a period a member of KHS, and deeply respected within the school and wider community.

Jane was the author of six books including: *Head, Heart & Soul: the making of St Leonard’s College* (Utber & Patullo Publishing, 2008); *For The Green and The Gold and the Mitre: a centenary history of Trinity Grammar School, Kew* (3 vols, Benchmark Publications, 2003); and *A Row of Goodly Pearls: One Hundred and Twenty-five Years of Loreto in Melbourne* (Allan & Unwin, 2014).

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# AS IT HAPPENED ...

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**100 YEARS AGO**

At the request of many Nationalists in the new Kew electorate, Mr W.S. Kent Hughes has decided to offer himself as a candidate at the forthcoming election.

*The Argus*, 7 December 1923, p.19

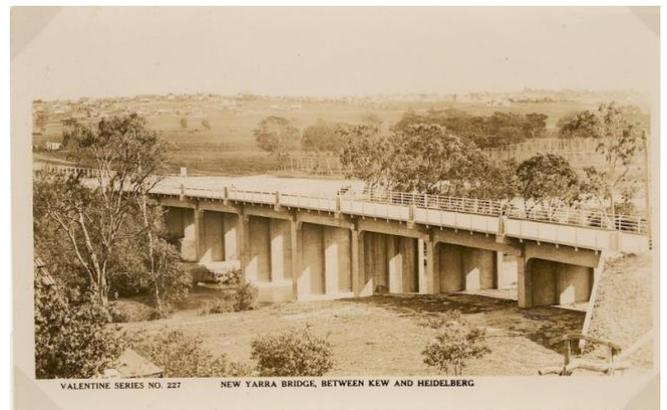
Where the river Yarra divides East Kew from Ivanhoe a bridge is about to be built and a tramway carried across it to connect the two suburbs and to pass on to Heidelberg. The spot is only six miles from the city, but it presents a scene of rural isolation, except for an embankment that was built up ten years ago, when an effort was made to begin the bridge.

*The Herald*, 19 December 1923, p.19

Five years' endeavour on the part of the Peel Street, Kew, school committee culminated on Wednesday in the laying of the foundation stone of an up to date structure on the site occupied by the old building. Built in 1871, the original school was found to be too small to accommodate the scholars offering several years ago, and the Government finally decided to erect a new brick building, at a cost of approximately £13,800. It will contain sixteen rooms and will be completed about July next.

*The Age*, 20 December 1923, p.10

**DAVID WHITE**



**NEW YARRA BRIDGE, BETWEEN KEW AND HEIDELBERG**

VALENTINE SERIES NO. 227

*KHS postcard collection*

**CITY OF BOROONDARA TRIENNIAL OPERATIONAL GRANT 2023-6**

Kew Historical Society has been awarded a second three year grant from the City of Boroondara to deliver its core, and important community activities. The Society acknowledges the importance of this grant which enables us to organise meetings and lectures, undertake community research, mount exhibitions and maintain our nationally significant collection.

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# BERMA SELLARS 'BIB' STILLWELL

## ENTREPRENEUR, BUSINESSMAN, RACING DRIVER

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Many long-time residents of Kew and nearby suburbs will remember the two Stillwell motor businesses located not far from one another on Cotham Road, Kew. One was on the old Model Dairy site on the corner of Kent Street and Cotham Road and the other on the corner of Charles Street and Cotham Road. These businesses operated for over forty years under the Stillwell name. Bib Stillwell was a passionate businessman who became a multi-millionaire, was well-connected, knowing important people who were able to assist him in the motor and aviation industries and motorsport. He opened his first car dealership at the age of 22 and went on to become Melbourne's best-known Holden, then Ford, and luxury car dealer. He also became famous as a Grand Prix driver in Australia and later managed Gates Learjet in America.

Berma Sellars Stillwell was the only child of Bertie Sellars (1885–1957) and his second wife, Marion Elizabeth Stillwell *nee* Fielden (1909–1994). He was born into a well-off family in Melbourne on 31 July 1927. Bermar was a contraction of both his parents' names. The unusual name 'Bib', he recounted, was the closest he could get to pronouncing his name as a toddler and it subsequently stuck with him. Stillwell had a good start in life. He was educated at Trinity Grammar School then Scotch College. A bike shop owner introduced him to hand-making racing bicycles, and then competing. There he learned the mechanical skills that enabled him to build his first car that arrived in many pieces; a 1927 Amilcar. He attended the Melbourne Technical College, now the RMIT campus of the Western University of Technology, where he started but did not complete a mechanical engineering course, having taken on a job in a car tuning workshop.

Bertie Sellars and first wife Clarice May Hall (1886–1966) were married in 1903. Their first child, a son, Aubrey McClintock Stillwell was born in 1905 at Carlton and then a daughter, Clarice Gwynneth Winifred Gurney Stillwell was born in 1909 at Armadale. There was thus a significant age gap between Bib and his much older half siblings. His formative years were spent in Caulfield and then in 1937, his parents moved to Avonsleigh, a small town near Emerald Lake in the Dandenong Ranges. His father appears to have been a successful manufacturer and was a councillor of Emerald Riding, Shire of Fern Tree Gully from 1937 to 1949. The area between Emerald Lake and Nobelius Heritage Park was called Stillwell Valley and there is a road named Stillwells Deviation in Avonsleigh. Cr Stillwell officially opened Emerald Lake Park in 1941.

By 1946, Bib's parents moved to 72 Normanby Road, Kew. That year his father bought him one of the first MG TCs to come to Australia.



**THE REPCO-BRABHAM BT11A (PICTURED IN 2012) WHICH STILLWELL DROVE TO WIN THE 1965 AUSTRALIAN DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP**

This picture is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

His father's contacts with the British company Tozer Kemsley & Millbourne (since 1989, the Australian importer for Subaru, Audi and Volkswagen) subsequently brought him a Jaguar franchise. His interest in MGs and Jaguars introduced him to motor racing. His mother Marion owned a property at 121 Cotham Road, Kew, near the Model Dairy, and it was here in 1949 that Bertie Sellars Stillwell, Bermar Sellars Stillwell and Dermott Derham George operated a partnership business that sold and tuned MGs and Jaguars that included a service station under the name of Stillwell George & Co. This business was mutually dissolved in 1951 and Stillwell senior and junior then continued to operate at the same address.

Bib's racing success was mirrored by his business's expansion. In 1953, Bib was approached by Holden's sales and marketing manager and offered a Holden dealership. Although his business focus was selling, tuning and racing cars, he accepted the offer. In 1954, Bib Stillwell set up his used car sale business at 88 Cotham Road, the site of Alice Anderson's business, 'The Kew Garage'. Stillwell removed the top sections of the facade and put cladding across it, without changing Anderson's workshop, which still exists behind. The new building extended into a long, glass-windowed showroom towards Cotham Road and became a local landmark. Interestingly, in her book *A Spanner in the Works – The extraordinary story of Alice Anderson and Australia's first all-girl garage*, Loretta Smith notes that when she interviewed Stillwell, he confessed that he had no knowledge of Alice Anderson's garage workshop!

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## **BIB STILLWELL** (continued from page 5)

In 1957 the site was subsequently acquired from the State Electricity Commission in joint proprietorship with Bib's mother, Marion. During the period 1966 to 1991, B.S. Stillwell & Co. P/L ultimately acquired 88–102 Cotham Road, the land between Charles Street and St John's Parade. The land at 102 Cotham Road, on the corner of Cotham Road and St John's Parade, was owned by the Baptist Union, site of the Baptist Church Hall (former Baptist church) and Sunday School. In 2000, Trinity Grammar School purchased the site, but Stillwell's dealership did not close until the end of 2002.

According to veteran motorsport journalist, Bill Tuckey, in the late 1950s and mid-1960s Stillwell used his increasing profits to buy better racing cars such as the one-year-old Formula One cars brought to Australia by his friend Jack Brabham to race in the annual Tasman Cup series in New Zealand and Australia. Famous racing car names - Brabham, Lola, Gulf Mirage, Ford GT 40, Maserati Birdcage and Cooper Climax were linked with Bib Stillwell's unparalleled formula racing career. His racing achievements from 1960 to 1965 were significant. He was Australia Formula 1 Gold Star Champion in 1962, '63, '64 and '65, Formula Two Champion in 1965 and Sports Car Champion in 1961 and '62. In 1964, he drove at *Le Mans* in an Aston Martin with friend Lex Davison. This was where he met his second wife, Gillian Harris (1935–2020), who was Race Secretary for Aston Martin. When Brabham introduced him to flying to get to race meetings, Stillwell took lessons, and then bought a new Beechcraft Debonair light aircraft. He also acquired the Australian Beechcraft and then Learjet aircraft distributions as well as the Civil Flying School at Moorabbin airport. Most fortunately for Stillwell, this coincided with the expansion in the corporate aircraft area.

Bib retired from full time racing at the end of 1965. In early 1966, he made the decision to switch his Kew dealership to Ford. Stillwell wanted a parts distribution business and there were fewer Ford dealers with which to compete. With the improving quality of the Falcon and the great success of the Fairlane, his business boomed.

Around 1971 or 1972, Bib Stillwell Motors purchased the site of the Model Dairy in Kent Street, Kew. The factory, built in 1959 to a design by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon, was ideal as a car servicing centre, spare parts sales and became the Stillwell Motor Group headquarters.

In 1979, Stillwell was presented with an opportunity to work for Gates Learjet Corporation in Tucson Arizona USA, eventually becoming its President. He left Gates Learjet in 1985 when the business was sold, but he already held directorships of the Arizona Bank and the Security Pacific Bank and was a part-owner of a Tucson BMW franchise.

Upon returning to Melbourne in 1989 he added more businesses to his stable of assets – a BMW franchise in South Yarra and Silverstone Jaguar in Doncaster, Toyota and Honda dealerships in Penrith NSW, Toyota and Ford trucks in Adelaide and Brisbane. Back in the United States, he was also a big shareholder in a \$12-million-a-year electronics manufacturing business and owned industrial real estate.



**ROSS HOUSE** [formerly Charleville] **292 COTHAM ROAD**  
J.E. Rogers, photographer, c.1960  
Rogers Collection, KHS

In 1964, Stillwell Investments P/L purchased the grand two-storey Italianate Victorian mansion, *Ross House*, formerly *Charleville*, 292 Cotham Road, Kew. Built in 1889, it is one of the suburb's finest estates. Bib and Gillian Stilewell resided there for 15 years before moving to Tucson, Arizona, with some of their family. After returning to Australia in 1989, Bib and Gillian built a secluded country property, *Stane Brae* in Wonga Park, just outside of Melbourne.

His life was rich, fortunate and extraordinary. However, he did have health issues. In 1990, he had triple bypass heart surgery at age 62, but he continued his multiple business interests and car racing. Bib Stillwell died suddenly of a heart attack at home on 12 June 1999 at age 74 years. He is buried at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery with his second wife, Gillian.

Always active in the community, he was a Hawthorn Rotarian for many years, spent five years as a Kew City Councillor and was a Past President of the Scotch College Foundation.

Upon reaching an age of retirement, Bib was quoted as saying '*I've been lucky that I've had fun creating business. I make a living out of my hobby – planes and cars. Every morning I get up to play with my toys.*'

The Stillwell Group is still a Melbourne-based family business. In January 2001, Berma Sellars Stillwell was posthumously awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to the motor and aviation industries, to motor sports, and to the community.

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# THE JELLIS AFFAIR

## MAKE OF IT WHAT YOU WILL

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Maria Jellis *née* Crabtree (1854–1902) was a young working-class woman who was born in Melbourne but, officially, a native of Tasmania. Of her marriage, little is known. It was solemnised in Victoria, in 1876. Boroondara born bread baker, Joseph Swales Jellis (1854–1921) was the eldest son of Kew residents, labourer Thomas and Maria Jellis [hereafter Mrs Jellis]. His parents were a well-respected, law-abiding couple. Charitable Mrs Jellis was trusted by the Kew burgess' wives, who represented the central government's child destitution programme. They used Mrs Jellis for emergency foster care. Her standing within the Kew community was beyond reproach.

On the second day of January 1885, Maria was busy, on all fours, scrubbing a vacant room in the Prospect Hill Hotel [currently the site of Dan Murphy's, Kew]. The hospitality 'house' was located on the outskirts of the Kew village service strip that fringed the major thoroughfare, Bulleen Road [High Street]. Licensee, John Kearney was ending his tenure and relocating to the Beehive Hotel, Hawthorn.

The day was seasonally warm and people in holiday mode. A cycling club peddled past the hotel. Labouring class men ambled to their nearest recreational venue, 'The Prospect', and downed a pint or two of ale. Whilst scrubbing, 'carter [delivery man]' Thomas Kirby entered the room, locked the door, and offered Maria a welcoming drink. Later, Marie was to testify in the Kew Court of Petty Sessions that she accepted the drink and drank it. Next, she was being 'violently and capitally assaulted'. Then five of his mates, all known to Maria, entered the room. They too, in turn, 'violated her'. Then she was forcibly dragged to another empty room and again 'taken advantage of'. Maria stated she was screaming. She was adamant the sequence of events from having finished the proffered pint, was not consensual. Mrs Mary Kearney, the publican's wife, and her 'girl [hired hand]', in response to the noise, interrupted the drunken fracas and 'sent' Maria home. What she said to the men was not reported in the newspapers. But the narrative of the action had not concluded. Maria was accosted by the same men outside the hotel and thrown bodily upon a farmer's dray. The jaded nag was whipped into action. At Studley Park Reserve, two of the men again 'had their way' and 'ravaged' her. She was abandoned. Maria crawled downhill and up dale, by-passed the hotel and finally arrived home at Derby Street, Kew.

'Rumour' started running like a bushfire through the village. Constable McGrath, of 20 years impeccable policing service in Kew, was concerned about the nature of the rumours.

He 'took the matter in hand' and issued a summons for Maria to attend the Kew Court of Petty Sessions. She had been charged with 'drunkenness'. Maria did not attend.

McGrath privately discussed the issue with Justice of the Peace, Mayor Barnard, who was presiding over the court.

Barnard ordered McGrath to issue a warrant for Maria to be taken into custody for non-attendance at the court on the stipulated date. Of the second hearing, press reportage was contradictory. One correspondent stated Maria was 'articulate and clear' in the sequence of events. Another stated the mayor appeared at wits end trying to decipher Maria's tale. He found her narrative to be confused, clouded and not consistent in her 'facts'. The reporter noted the mayor did not bother to bring 'the ruffians', the gang of five, to the bench. The rapists were free to go, as was Maria. This is interesting. The gang, had informally, admitted to the act, rape, but not the crime because they were drunk! And, thus, not responsible for their actions.

This is a complex issue. In 1842, the sentence for rape, in the Motherland, was death by hanging. It was considered too harsh a punishment. The death sentence was abolished and reduced to an appropriate goal term. This law reform was not followed in many colonies due to the 'adverse circumstances' of living away from 'Home'. The Port Phillip Colony was considered a godless, hostile land in need of civilization. The gallows for the rape of a woman, particularly racially 'White', was considered a civilising agent. But by 1885, Melbourne was on the international map. She was dubbed the 'Queen of the South'. Melbourne had become a civilised, God-blessed country. She was a jewel in the Empire's Crown'. The death sentence was very contentious; and there was an anti-gallows movement for the crime of rape.

The traditional *modus operandi* for rape was to whisk the female victim interstate, secretly and quickly. Marie's husband was in the process of sending her to Tasmania. Thus, she could not, legally, be summoned to give evidence in Victoria. Further, the gang of five could not be brought before the local Court of Petty Sessions and be sent to the Supreme Court for a trial before a jury because there was no aggrieved victim. So why did Constable McGrath intervene in the move of Maria to Tasmania?

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## THE JELLIS AFFAIR (from page 7)

Firstly, he had his policing reputation to maintain. After all, he had, notably, managed to hold prostitution at bay within the borough for twenty years. Secondly, it seems he was aligned with the anti-death rape penalty movement. To turn a blind eye to the disappearance of Maria was to be complicit in an act of the concealment of the victim to protect the alleged perpetrators from the death sentence. This was poor policing. To intercede in the legal due process of the alleged rape prosecution was to express his personal politics in the course of duty. However, to send five men to the gallows was to widow five Kew women and imperil the welfare of numerous Kew children. Consequently, there would be a high need for the services of the government welfare ladies and the agency of Mrs Jellis.

At the grass-root level of the colonial legal process to that date, it was necessary to prove Maria was not the victim but the perpetrator. In other words, to prove Maria 'asked for what she got'.

Publicly, Maria was her own advertisement. She was, reportedly 'short, fat and bloated'. This seemed to be a press euphemism to notate Maria was physically unattractive. Maria had not, seemingly, fulfilled her socially expected role of maternity during her six years of marriage. Maria was often publicly drunk. She was not 'womanly'. Maria did not 'obey' her husband. She blabbed to the Judge that Joseph had 'prevented her from making any report' about 'the affair'. Thus, Maria was disrespectful and feisty towards her husband. These were not the qualities of a demure, silent Victorian woman who was required to be protected from the ravages of the world outside the home. Furthermore, Maria was an 'epileptic' and thus a 'damaged' woman who could not be taken on face value, despite the fact she was able to 'read and write'. Maria had a dubious family history and was thus a woman of no consequence.

Maria did not have much going for her. The press reported: 'her character was far from first class'. The Judge was quoted as stating he found her evidence to be 'unsatisfactory and prevaricating'. There was 'no use going on', Barnard concluded. All were free to go home. The death sentence had been avoided through the legal process. The fact that Maria was a double victim did not seem to enter the equation. The whole affair had 'gone up in smoke', concluded one press reporter.

Interestingly no-one, such as 'Mrs Kearney and her girl', was summoned to the court in defence of Maria. No-one seemed to see a woman 'crawling' along a main road.

The mayor ordered the Kew Court to be cleared of public witnesses. Did this include the press? This would account for the different reportage on Maria's testimony to the court. Ultimately there were few witnesses to the due process of the law in action at the Kew Court of Petty Sessions.

What happened to Maria? She remained living in Kew with her husband who continued to be a baker. They regularly moved from house to house, living with family or others. Occasionally, she was brought before the Kew Court for public drunkenness. She always paid the fine in default of a gaol sentence such as 24 hours in the police lockup.

In December of 1892, aged 35, Maria was escorted to the Kew Asylum by the local police for assessment. Despite being well nourished her body was covered in bruises and she had a nasty cut to her head and right leg. She was 'very noisy and considerably excitable' as well as 'incoherent'. Her memory recall was poor and could not give a 'satisfactory' account of the events leading up to this point in her life. Being assessed as 'suicidal and dangerous' Maria was admitted to the asylum with a diagnosis of 'alcoholic dementia'.



**ENTRANCE TO THE KEW ASYLUM, PRINCES STREET**

H.B. Christian, photographer, 1920s

*KHS collection*

Two days later she was deemed 'stupid, demented and somewhat violent'. Seven months later, Joseph picked her up and took her home to Brougham Street where he was living with family members. There were no notes in her brief medical records to state she returned to an asylum. Ten years later, Maria died. Unlike her mother-in-law, Mrs Jellis, Maria Jellis' death was not placed in the newspapers. She was unceremoniously buried in the Boroondara General Cemetery on the 21 November 1902. Twenty-one years later Joseph joined her.

Capital punishment was finally abolished in Victoria in 1975, the peak number of deaths by hanging being between 1850–1890. For many people, the 'taking of a life' was seen as a 'barbaric act that brutalised a community'. (Australian Institute of Criminology). This seems to have been the underlying ideology of the 'Jellis Affair'. The concept of an 'eye for an eye' form of punishment was no longer acceptable in a civilised community. But one must wonder if Maria was the 'sacrificial lamb' in the process of saving the 'gang of five' to keep the peace in the Kew community.

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# ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE

## MONT VICTOR ROAD

Reverend John Thomas Lawton (1878–1944), previously Minister at the Presbyterian Church in South Yarra and a pacifist, had returned from duties in London as chaplain for the AIF. While in England he had been deeply influenced by the psychology and thoughts of Homer Lane and returned to Australia, trying to find an answer to post-war unrest and misery, like so many others world-wide. He had a definite object in view, a better future for humanity which could be achieved through a different form of education and a school in which 'it will be necessary to think, feel and act independently for the highest and best ideals...' He was now convinced that the Presbyterian Ministry was less valuable than education as a means to human betterment. The aim of the school was social reform, a school with a distinct Christian citizenship and social ideal. Lawton wrote, *'The aim of education is to foster growth towards a free, complete and harmonious personality.'* Another of Lawton's aims was the development of a sense of responsibility in students.

With these lofty goals he opened his new school, St Andrew's College, in Mont Victor Road, Kew in 1921. His school incorporated Woodbury Ladies College, formerly in Cotham Road, Kew and run by the Misses Macey. The young ladies from that school formed the nucleus of his upper school. Lawton basically bought the goodwill of the Maceys. Lawton was Principal, Miss Hetty Macey was Headmistress for a while and Margaret (Greta) Lyttle, autonomous directress of the Junior School from 1921–9. The latter had from 1908–14, begun to make a name for herself as a teacher who used 'modern methods'.

The location attracted a reasonably wealthy middle class interested in and with a definite concern for progressive educational methods for their children. The School motto was *Veritas Liberabit Vos* (The truth will set you free) *'...and rings through the very soul of our School life, and throws out a challenge to all to strive after the truth, for only so shall humanity obtain freedom.'*



The school badge was: *'... a blue shield, typifying faith, while on it is inscribed the white cross of St Andrew's, standing for pure service. Then there comes the golden shield, symbolising the golden age, for which we are all aiming. Knowledge – the open book – is therefore directed towards this goal.'*

At the beginning of 1921, there were 128 students: 16 boys and 112 girls. In September 1921, approval by the Education Department was received and in November 1922 all sections of the School were registered: secondary, primary and sub-primary.



**RANGE VIEW**

McAlpine Bros, photographer, 1898  
Courtesy Genazzano Archives

*Range View*, the site for the new school, stood in nearly five acres with lawns, gardens, orchards and stables. [Even today one can see original garden trees and fruit trees in the monastery and in gardens of homes built on subdivisions of the 1960s.] The wooden building at the back was transported whole and entire from Woodbury Ladies College, while the original stables were converted by Lawton into classrooms open on one side.

Modifications and additions to the existing buildings were made, including closing in the upstairs balconies and arranging lighting and ventilation approved by the Education Department. It was opened in June 1922. Rimington's *Parkhill Nurseries* [founded 1877] was opposite but there were few homes. The location consisted of open, undulating fields with native bush. St Andrew's students were expected to milk the cows.

Rev John Lawton had married Bertha Marie Davies in 1910. They had three sons and one daughter by the time they moved to *Range View*, while their last son was born in 1923. After schooling at St Andrew's, two Lawton sons continued their education at Ivanhoe Grammar School while one son went on to Scotch College. Their daughter finished her education and became a Presbyterian deaconess.

Reverend Lawton would often be seen in overalls doing odd jobs. He drove a blue Riley and enjoyed tennis parties and fly fishing. Boarders lived with the Lawton family. Mrs Lawton acted as house mother and school bursar.

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## ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE (from page 9)

How did St Andrew's differ from most schools in Australia? Montessori methods in the kindergarten and the Dalton System (a scheme of education based on free discipline) were early features of the school. The Education Department considered the 'Dalton System' experimental but raised no objections to its continuance.

The school trained a generation of students, mostly girls, with ideals of truth, individual freedom and self-government. Lawton envisaged a new social order which would challenge commercialism and exploitation. He promoted the pacifism of Kagawa, Schweitzer and Gandhi. His students were encouraged to participate in decision making. Classroom competition was banned. Prize giving was considered pernicious, as Lawton saw it as a threat to real education.

Lawton said in 1928, '*Knowledge is good, knowledge is necessary, but there is a deeper question still to be faced, namely, what kind of character is being developed in the person to whom the power of knowledge is given.*' Lawton's beliefs were apparent in School reports in which teachers reported on physical, intellectual and character development.

Miss Margaret (Greta) Lyttle was directress of the Junior School. She is remembered as having '*... an amazing presence and could still an unruly mob with a quiet mood. She was a born teacher of instructive genius.*'

Staff were united and enthusiastic, and the emphasis was on informality and anti-authoritarianism. St Andrew's incorporated those elements which attempted to make education meaningful to the child such as freedom of choice within a curriculum which did not stress subject divisions; a chance for children to show initiative, independence, inner resourcefulness and self-expression, and a physical and emotional environment deliberately aimed at fostering the child's creative instincts.

An astonishing variety of art and craft activities were to be found at St Andrew's. Students could do pottery, leatherwork, drawing, painting, costume design and be involved in the production of sets for plays and pageants. There was plenty of music and singing, choral hymn singing, instrumental and vocal tuition. Numerous excursions were made to concerts and musical performances in Melbourne. Musical interludes linked assemblies, speech nights and school concerts. Speech Night plays such as *The Pageant of Mankind*, 1925 and 1926 and *The Seer's Bowl* in 1928 were thought provoking and prepared with enthusiasm. They usually incorporated Lawton's ideas about society. Dancing and eurythmics were popular activities.

Senior girls respected and appreciated Rev John Lawton who had a highly developed social conscience. Girls later remember his riposte to critics, 'This is not a school where we do what we like but a school where we like what we do.'

Lawton's continuing idealism and deep longing for world peace may have been behind his decision to introduce Esperanto in 1927. Esperanto was taught from 1927 and sometimes used at school performances. [Esperanto was the 1887 brain child of Ludwig Zamenhof, a Russian Pole whose goal was to create an easy and flexible language that would serve as a universal second language fostering world peace and international understanding].

The year 1930 brought difficulties to St Andrew's. Enrolments diminished due to the financial impact of the Great Depression. Miss Lyttle, now aged 55, resigned from St Andrew's after discord and a final disagreement with Rev Lawton. When Lawton leased the School to Miss Dumaresq, there were only two teachers, no boarders and fewer than 30 day pupils. Rev Lawton went on to the Hartwell Presbyterian Church and Miss Dumaresq conducted the school until the end of 1933.

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## GOOD NEIGHBOUR "MICKEY" (from page 11)

Patronage continued to go southwards on the Kew - Hawthorn service with one driver, Jim (always immaculate in his green uniform) telling us that passenger numbers were unsustainable at one-point something people a mile while increasing traffic congestion hampered turning the bus at Kew Junction (I seem to recall it took three traffic light changes) making it difficult to keep services punctual. The last bus service ran in November 1956 ending rail passenger services to Kew. Goods services continued until 1957 when the line closed, ironically disappearing into the footprint of the Country Roads Board building. I could possibly have been one of the last people to leave Kew station on metal wheels. As a junior stagehand with the "Q" Theatre Guild, I helped clear equipment stored at the station before its demolition.

A mate and I spotted a rail trolley sitting on the line beside the platform, obviously part of the track lifting process. In the finest spirit of the adventure playground we had enjoyed all those years before, we began pushing each other along the track. The fun ended abruptly when the stage manager told us to stop messing around and get on with what we were there for.

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# GOOD NEIGHBOUR 'MICKEY'

## MEMORIES OF THE KEW RAILWAY

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The middle part of Denmark Steet, Kew, until 1957, had a railway on one side of the road and houses on the other. From early childhood, living in one of these houses, that railway and I became good neighbours. Our front verandah gave a sort of corporate box view of trains on the then still reasonably busy line. Sometimes, as a four or five-year-old, I would wake in the early morning darkness to be reassured that I was not the only person in the world by the 'clip-clop' of the milkie's horse and the clink of bottles soon to be followed by the sound of 'The Mickey', the then two carriage shuttle service to Hawthorn, making its first run of the day to Kew.

The big moment for a pre-schooler came around 8.30am when I would run to our front door to watch a seven carriage swing door train pulling into the Kew platform. Soon it would depart providing one of two 'through' services to Flinders Street. 'The Mickey' had ventured onto the main line to the city earlier to clear the Kew tracks for my 'long train' to run on the single line. As 'The Mickey' was part of my waking, so it was part of the end of the day with the departure of the last afternoon peak service just after 7.00pm for Hawthorn. By that time 'through' afternoon trains had been discontinued. One of my neighbours, Angus Wishart, recalled being the only passenger alighting from a seven-carriage train at Kew.

In the break between the morning and afternoon passenger services, there was still goods train watching to be had from across the road. Goods trains would appear a couple of times a week, usually hauled by black electric locomotives and sometimes by a steam locomotive. One spectacular day in the early 1950s, a gleaming blue and gold new 'L' class electric locomotive headed the train and the driver invited my friend, Gordon Wishart, and me to sit in the cab while shunting took place. We didn't have to be asked twice! The goods trains, among other freight, brought firewood to be transhipped to the trucks of fuel merchants like Dunnings.

The southern gate from the yard to Denmark Street was an impressive large white one like those used at level crossings; opened and shut by station staff morning and night. The northern gate, close by, was a metal one and gave access to the weighbridge (which, I think, was operated by the council). Beside the weighbridge stood a wooden hut for the operator. Occasionally, a parcels van would come up the line. I had to be quick to catch those!

The Kew railway line and a paddock beside Xavier College provided (though I am sure the Victorian Railways and school authorities would never have approved) a splendid adventure playground.

Who needed to travel to a beach when there were great piles of sand to mess about with and make into 'yonnies'. If mountaineering was your go, there were great piles of firewood that would have given Mount Everest a run for its money. Come winter, spillage from the large briquette dump beside one siding kept a few Denmark Street people warm.



**KEW RAILWAY STATION**

Eva Grant, photographer, 1959  
KHS collection

The first afternoon train from Kew was well patronised by students from Trinity Grammar and Kew post-primary school who reckoned that if they ran from one side of the compartment to the other as the train swung around the bends they could increase the sense of oscillation. Travelling the short line (four minutes from Kew to Hawthorn with a stop at Barker) with my family certainly had a swaying feel. This sense became more pronounced when declining patronage around 1950 saw the two carriage train morph into a one carriage 'Mickey', with driving controls at both ends. Then, as the Peter, Paul and Mary song goes 'One dark night it happened' and 'Mickey' came no more with faithful friends gathering on the Kew platform on a chilly August night in 1952 to wave farewell as the lights of the last scheduled passenger train rounded the bend to Barker.

Chartered passenger trains would sometimes appear organised by rail enthusiasts. The impressively named Victorian Railways Motor Service, that had provided off-peak and weekend services since the 1930s took over all rail connections between Kew and Hawthorn with green and cream Leyland, and then White buses. The bus journey, at five minutes, took one minute longer than 'Mickey's' scamper but the pay-off was that passengers could board the bus at Kew Junction without having to walk down and up the hill to the station. Several bus stops provided more access to the service than two stations. When I began work at age 14 in 1956, I would board the (by now peak period only) bus at the stop adjacent to the Kew station at the Baby Health Centre in Denmark Street at 8.24am and be walking up Flinders Street just after 8.45. The bus was stabled at a depot on the former Deepdene railway station site that also provided services from East Camberwell station along the route of the long gone Outer Circle railway to East Kew.

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