

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 175, Kew, 3101

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NEWLETTER No. 11

MARCH, 1980.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER.

Dear Members,

On February 8th Mrs. Stewart and I attended the first meeting for 1980 of the Committee of the Eastern Region of Historical Societies held at picturesque Schramm's Cottage at Doncaster.

To me the most interesting item on the Agenda was a matter brought forward by the President, Miss Christine Gray, concerning the revitalizing and possible reforming of a moribund committee representing the Historical Societies of Victoria.

A meeting has been arranged to be held at Mornington almost immediately, and one of the livliest delegates will undoubtedly be Christine Gray, who believes that a federation of Victorian Societies would be a mouthpiece for the individual groups and a proof that unity is strength.

I think the advantages should be obvious to all and the meetings could be a clearing house for interesting ideas contributed by both metropolitan and country groups.

Mrs. Stewart and I expressed our support to the President on a move that seems constructive and sensible, as we have become very interested in such an idea since becoming acquainted with members of other groups such as Williamstown and St. Kilda as well as societies in our own area.

During the next few months we are to have speakers from beyond our boundaries - Mrs. Trewarne, the Honorary Secretary of Heidelberg, Mr. Geoffrey Flack from St. Kilda, as well as Lt. Col. Lee-Archer, President of the Royal Historical Society.

It was a delightful surprise to have six new members walk in to our first meeting for the year. They assured me that they enjoyed the evening and like the friendly, entertaining and not too formal atmosphere. More than that they offered food donations to the street stall on Friday, 7th March, when we hope to meet the public in a big way and I mention again that consumable goods are particularly popular.

Let us hope that we may have a beautiful fine autumn afternoon for our drive over the river to visit the old Court House Museum at Heidelberg and "Banyule" on 20th April.

With best wishes,

WINIFRED HALL

NEW MEMBERS.

Miss Jean Ball
Mrs. Clancy Crowe
Mrs. Raie Brunette

Miss Joan Simms
Mrs. Brenda Boothroyd
Mr. Brendan Kelly

STREET STALL.

Mrs. Clarice Thompson.
Conveners: Mrs. Jean Gray

To make the work load as easy as possible, the convenors would like members to bring their contributions on the day of the "Market Fair", to the Lions Club caravan (in High Street between Walpole Street and Coles) from 8.45 a.m. onwards.

Cakes etc. should be covered with glad wrap, and it would be an advantage if scones, biscuits etc. were packed in half dozen lots. Suggested price to be attached to all goods.

Any member who has a delivery problem please contact Clarice or Jean, who will make the necessary arrangements for a pick-up.

N.B. No collections can be made on Friday, 7th.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOINS FORCES WITH THE COPY SHOP:

Members of the Society who do not already know will be pleased to hear that at last we have found a place where our records and reference material can be kept. Where members wanting information can have access to the files, as well as being able to help with the sorting etc. of our growing historical material. The place is The Copy Shop, 3 Walpole Street.

In return, we have undertaken to ^{help} run and man this valuable community service. For the present, we are committed to open The Copy Shop on the first and third Friday of each month from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

It is hoped that these hours will be extended as members become involved in the work of the Society. It is envisaged that we will open on a number of Sundays throughout the year where, amongst other activities, the Society's collection of tapes will be played.

Volunteers for a roster will be called for at the March General Meeting.

DONATIONS.

- Mr. Peter Ramsden. Typed sheet giving History of "Tara Hall" with two black and white photographs.
- Mrs. Joy Ivory. Newspaper artical and photograph of Field Motor Ambulance - purchased by Kew residents and used in the First World War.
- Tortoiseshell comb with glass inset.
- Mr. J. D. Peck. Five mounted photographs of "Southesk".
- Invironmental Section of C.R.G. Five slides of reproductions of Society's photographs of Outer Circle Railway.
- Mr. Stuart West. Twenty-one colour slides of early Melbourne Scenes.

"SUNNING HILL" by Eva Grant.

Sunning Hill was once the home of Bland Holt. Since it became a reception place it has been altered significantly, and only the facade of the old house remains. The staircase which let into the well known entrepreneur's study has been removed.

Sunning Hill was built prior to 1862, but its exact date is not known. Mark Cranwell was the first recorded owner, and Bland Holt purchased the property from the Henry Webster estate in 1918.

It is 19 years since Lucy Coppin, the last surviving daughter of George Coppin, the well known entrepreneur, died at Sunning Hill, and I have happy memories of my visit to Sunning Hill and talking with this charming elderly lady, who had spent a life-time with the theatre. The room we sat in had been Bland Holt's study. After her mother's death, Lucy Coppin went to live with the Bland Holts. She became secretary to Bland Holt, and went on a tour to New Zealand with Mr. and Mrs. Holt, and following her father's death, she accompanied them on a world tour.

When I saw Sunning Hill it was full of theatrical memories, as befitted a house so closely associated with the theatre. Among the theatrical treasures were two theatre posters over 200 years old of the Theatre Royal and Covent Garden, and a unique table, the top of which comprised hundreds of theatre tickets, being a collection of a year's theatre going in London with the Bland Holts.

Dorothy Brunton's father was scenic artist for both George Coppin and Bland Holt, and one of these realistic scenes was in the lounge at Sunning Hill. Dorothy Brunton started with Bland Holt's company as a young girl, and later became a leading actress.

According to Miss Coppin, Bland Holt produced far better plays than the theatre at Drury Lane, London. To make the scenes realistic he would bring the animals on to the stage, the horses would go up the ramp towards the audience and they would go down through the exit door into Little Bourke Street.

One of the many treasures I saw at Sunning Hill was a beautiful Shakespearian window which faced Cotham Road, and I am sure some of our members will recall seeing it as they passed this old home.

Behind this window lies a story of courage and faithfulness. George Coppin had opened a theatre in Adelaide, but this venture had failed, and with the advent of the gold rush he went to Victoria where he opened a small theatre in Geelong. This theatre was such a success that he was able to repay all his creditors in Adelaide. His method in doing so is surely unique.

He gave a dinner inviting all his creditors in Adelaide, placing the money under each guest's dining plate. The people of Adelaide were so grateful for this gesture of honesty that they sent to England for the Shakespearian window, and it was given pride of place in the Theatre Royal. When the Theatre Royal was burnt down the window was the only thing that was salvaged, and it was placed in an upstairs window at Sunning Hill.

The Theatre Royal was the best theatre in Melbourne, according to Miss Coppin, and it was a great pity it was destroyed.

George Coppin had a 99 years lease of the Theatre Royal and when he died Bland Holt bought the lease, who passed it on to Miss Coppin. This is now the Bourke Street store of G. J. Coles.

At Sunning Hill there were a number of articles from the 1888 exhibition, including a beautifully carved Persian suite and a French grandfather clock which was later presented to the National Gallery.

Relics from the Bourke and Wills exhibition were among the souvenirs in this interesting house. In a glass frame on a wall of the study were small bags of nardoo seeds, found beside the bodies of the explorers. This was the last food they had eaten. I also saw a bird net that was part of the equipment of the expedition.

It is interesting to note that the camels which George Coppin brought out for his Cremorne Gardens were later sold to Bourke and Wills, and accompanied them on their last fatal expedition to Central Australia.

FROM R.H.S.V.*NEWSLETTER.

Kew Historical Society produced a most interesting souvenir of their 21st Anniversary, the Society being founded on 16th September, 1958. In the Souvenir, the President makes a point of the fact that Bonwick in 1958 wrote - "Kew is unquestionably the prettiest place outside the dust of Melbourne." A comment very pertinent to the present efforts of the R.H.S.V. is made, viz. " it has long been the members' dearest wish to have a home of their own."

MAYOR'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

The Society has been asked by the Mayor, Cr. Kaye Cole, to co-operate with an "Oral History Project."

This project is a plan to enable history students at Form 1V/V level in Kew schools to collect oral history about Kew and its people. The tapes are to be evaluated and Mayoral Prizes will be presented for the best material.

In the words of the Mayor "We can bring young and old together, and also preserve some interesting memories and facts about Kew."

A Sub-Committee of members will be formed to evaluate, edit and transcribe the tapes. Volunteers for this interesting project please contact Hon. Secretary.

1980 WEEK-END TRIP.

The Committee of Eastern Historical Societies has planned a tour which will take in Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula. This will take place on either the first or third week-end in August. The approximate cost will be \$53.00. More details as they come to hand.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For those members whose subscriptions are still outstanding, a blue form will be enclosed in their Newsletter. This will be the final notice, so please forward your remittance as soon as possible to the Hon. Treasurer.

PROGRAMME.

- March 7th. Friday 8.45 a.m. to 12 noon approximately. Street Stall 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop.
- 12th. Wednesday 7.45 p.m. General Meeting. Mrs. E. Trewaine Hon. Secretary, Heidelberg Historical Society. Slides and talk on Heidelberg.
- 21st. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop. Start of Kew Community Festival.
- 29th. Saturday 4 p.m. Committee of Eastern Historical Societies. Conference 1980.
- April 9th. Wednesday 7.45 p.m. General Meeting. Lt. Col. Lee-Archer, F.R.H.S.V. President of R.H.S.V. Magic lantern slides of early Melbourne.
- 18th. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop.
- 20th. Sunday 1.30 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. (approximately). Visit to "Banyule" and Heidelberg Historical Museum.
- May 2nd. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop.
- 14th. Wednesday 7.45 p.m. General Meeting. Mr. Geoff Flack, Buyer/Manager of Buckley and Nunn's China Department. "The Collecting of Commemorative China."
- 16th. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop.
- June 6th. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop
- 11th. Wednesday 7.45 p.m. General Meeting. Mr. John Waugh, Town Planner, City of Kew. "History and Planning."
- 20th. Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Copy Shop.

All General Meetings will be held in the Auxiliary Room, Kew Civic Centre, Charles Street, on the second Wednesday of each month February to November inclusive.

VISIT TO BANYULE AND HEIDELBERG HISTORICAL MUSEUM.

Cost \$2.00 per person. Leaving Kew Civic Centre car park at 1.30 p.m. return approximately 5.15 p.m. Private cars being used. Names and money to be in hands of Hon. Secretary by the April General Meeting, where final arrangements will be discussed. Afternoon tea available at "Banyule" for 30 cents. Friends welcome to join us on this tour.

PRESIDENT	Miss Winifred Hall.
HON. SECRETARY	Mrs. Joy Stewart.
HON. TREASURER	Mrs. Kathleen Murphy.
ARCHIVIST	Mrs. Mavis Rolley.

NEWS OF MEMBERS.

Betty Robertson tells us that she is now well settled in Wauchope, and keeping up her historical interests with the Hastings District Historical Society. Marj McAlister is back on deck again. Judy Mills is as bright as ever and looking forward to once again attending the meetings.