

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 175, KEW 3101

President:
Mrs. Sue Leong

Hon. Secretary:
Miss Lex Allen

Newsletter No. 31

April/May, 1986

Dear Members,

I hope you are all well and will continue to participate in the Society's activities during the coming cooler months. The Manchester Unity Hall does get cold, but an extra jumper and rug can soon counteract this.

Since my last letter, you will be aware that our archives were shifted and are now housed in the auxiliary room at the City Hall until the move to the Library later this year. The move has been a great success and we can now plan a working bee, which will be held at the archives on Saturday, 7th June - enthusiastic members welcome!

A new event for the Society in the Kew Festival was the holding of walking tours around our city. Your intrepid guides were Lex Allen and myself. Our first efforts did not attract many people - literally two men and a dog - but we enjoyed ourselves and learnt as we went. We ran another tour on Sunday, 13th April, to coincide with Heritage Week. It was a huge success as twenty or so people attended. It is a marvellous way to meet people and share knowledge about Kew's history, as well as discuss modern issues. Lex and I plan to run another tour in November and hope that some of our members will come along.

The Society was also involved with the Heritage Committee's organisation of walking tours to "Villa Alba", "Raheen", "Burke Hall" and "Campion Hall" on Sunday, 13th April. This activity was a triumph as scores of people participated and a great deal of interest in Kew's history was generated. Thank you to Dorothy and Laszlo Benyei, Raie Brunette, Irene Stones and Peg Young, who gave their time on our behalf for the afternoon.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting on the 14th May at 8 p.m., when Councillor Ormando will speak to us about retail trading in Kew.

Regards,

Sue Leong
President

P.S. Did anyone take any photographs of Halley's comet from a vantage point in Kew? Please let us know.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Mary Macdowell recently had an argument with the pavement of our fair city and was lucky not to fracture her nose. We wish Mary a speedy and not too painful recovery!

Irene Stones is visiting Perth to be with her ailing sister. We hope that her sister will recover quickly and that Irene has an enjoyable stay.

Lex Allen has declared that she will have to buy a new pair of walking shoes, as her present ones don't give her enough mileage!

Alva and Frances Allen went to Macedon on the Hawthorn Historical Society bus trip and said they had a marvellous day.

OBITUARY:

It is with sadness that I have to inform you of the death of one of our members, Mr. J.E. Shepherd of 305 Barkers Road, Kew. I was told that Mr. Shepherd greatly enjoyed our meetings. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Mr. Shepherd's relatives and friends.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS:

Books: National Trust Register
Arthur Phillip, by Thea Stanley Hughes

ARCHIVE MATERIAL:

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Evolution of a Town.

From the time of the early settlers on the fertile flats along the Yarra, to the present day, there has been a gradual development. Some may be inclined to say too gradual; but better to advance slowly than not at all. Even in the exciting times of 1888-93 Kew was calm and collected; no extravagant prices were given for land, and consequently no serious regrets followed. No colossal hotels stand as monuments of the boom.

Some glimpses of early progress have been given in other chapters; perhaps a few contrasts will help the resident of the present day to realise the advantages he possesses over the pioneer of the fifties. Then there was no Yan Yean tap to fly to every time a drop of water was wanted. Water had to be carefully husbanded. If dry weather continued too long, the water cart had to visit Thompson's pump at the Yarra near Hawthorn Bridge, and the householder had to pay from 7/6 upwards for a barrel of water. Some residents can relate tales of how they carried water in buckets from the Yarra, a mile away, arriving home with only a small portion of what they started with. Later a Yan Yean stand pipe was erected on the Hawthorn side of the bridge, but it was not till about October, 1865, that the water mains reached Barnard's corner.

In June, 1866, the Borough Council decided to purchase three lamps to be lighted by kerosene for the main street. Gas did not reach the Borough until 1869. Now there are 225 public lamps. The first electric arc lamps were erected in 1895.

The date of the establishment of the post office cannot now be settled, but in all probability it took

place in 1856. However, in January, 1861, there was only one mail to and from Melbourne daily arriving in Kew at 10 a.m. and closing at 1 p.m. Until September, 1861, residents had to call for their letters, while the rate of postage was 4d. per half-ounce! To-day Kew has three mails from Melbourne daily, with three deliveries, and the postage is

Two events in the sixties are worth recording. On 18th May, 1863, a treat to the children of Kew was given at the Athenæum in honor of the marriage of the Prince of Wales (the late King Edward VII.) with Princess Alexandra of Denmark, when about

300 boys and girls were regaled with tea, cake, &c., after which a magic lantern exhibition was given, and the chairman of the municipality, Mr. George Lewis, addressed those present. On the following evening a bonfire was held on Barker's Hill, at the corner of Wellington and Charles Streets, then a prominent landmark of the district.

In 1867 the visit of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, to the Colony, aroused the loyal sympathies of the people. On 26th November the inhabitants were asked to decorate their shops, residences, &c., and it is recorded that among the business people Messrs. S. Kellett, Roebuck, Serpell, Kirwood, Curry, Wright, Barnard, Blackett, and Kirk, were the most prominent for their displays. On Saturday, 28th December, 1867, a committee of ratepayers entertained some four or five hundred children in the Asylum Reserve, when sports, merry-go-rounds, &c., were provided for their delectation.

Along the river in the asylum reserve are many delightful bits of scenery. A pleasant reach just above the old tramway bridge was chosen last February for a "Canoe Carnival," a sort of miniature Henley-on-the-Yarra, and afforded for the afternoon a gay scene of fun and frolic. It is expected that future years will see this develop into one of the events of the boating season.

At the western end of Molesworth Street are Macaulay's boat sheds and grounds, yearly becoming a favorite resort for picnics and boating parties, and a busy scene on public holidays. The proprietor deserves all credit for his efforts to stop the destruction of native animals and birds on his property, hence it is no uncommon sight on a moonlight evening to see opossums scrambling about the trees enjoying their protection, while on a summer evening a platypus or two may frequently be seen swimming about in some quiet corner. The fishing about here is not to be despised; perch, bream, Murray cod, blackfish, and eels may at times be tempted from their watery home.

Here also is the imposing entrance to the Metropolitan Hospital for Insane. The reserve of 396 acres was originally set aside as a site for a village, being so indicated on a plan of County of Bourke lands put up for auction in Sydney in 1838; but early in the history of the young colony became the favored position for a lunatic asylum. The first building was planned to occupy the high hill to the north, now part of the Asylum farm; and entrance lodges still standing, and occupied by Asylum officials, were built in the early fifties. A sketch plan of the proposed buildings may be seen in the parliamentary papers of 1856, but what caused a stoppage of operations has been lost in antiquity. However, in 1863, the land was again proposed to be used for the purpose of a lunatic asylum. Kew, which had meanwhile applied for portions as a common and as a recreation reserve, had become a more populous suburb. The question greatly exercised the minds of the inhabitants at the time, and public meetings were held, some advocating that the asylum would bring trade to the shopkeepers, while the wealthier class pointed out that it would be an undoubted detriment to the advancement of the suburb. The Borough Council entered a protest against the adoption of the asylum scheme, but it was of no avail. Plans were drawn, and in 1865 the tender of Mr. John Young was accepted as to the quality of the work executed soon led to a cancellation of the contract, and Mr. John Young, after a protracted inquiry and discussion in Parliament, was granted compensation. He afterwards removed to Sydney, and at his home in Annandale up to a few years ago was known as a great entertainer of Victorian and other bowlers. Fresh tenders were called, and Mr. Samuel Amess, afterwards Mayor of Melbourne, secured the contract. The reserve became a busy scene for many years. Dozens of families resided round about the works, and a hotel, the Princess, sprang up near the entrance gates. The adjacent streets were terribly cut up by the cartage of the building materials, though the stone for the foundations was quarried in the Yarra Bend grounds and brought across on the high bridge, part of which still stands and is used as a footbridge between the two asylums. The bricks were all made on the ground from clay obtained from an immense pit situated partly within the space enclosed by the boundary wall at the south-east corner of the building. The site, from a picturesque point of view, is unrivalled near Melbourne.

Early in its history the Council set itself to increase the advantages of the ratepayers. An endeavor was made to obtain part of the Village Reserve (Asylum paddock) as a town common, but without success, but on Richmond abandoning what is now the Victoria Reserve as unsuitable for a cemetery for that municipality, it was secured by Kew for recreation purposes. In December, 1862, application was made for the Yan Yean to be extended to Kew, but it was more than three years before the mains reached the junction of Cotham Road and High Street, the termination for some time after.

Public meetings on burning questions were not infrequent. On 3rd February, 1863, a spirited meeting was held to discuss the question as to whether opposition should be offered to the proposal to build a lunatic asylum in the municipality. Cr. Halfey, Dr. E. J. Wilson, and Mr. G. Wharton spoke strongly against the proposal on the grounds of its injury to the district, while Messrs. Toon, Padbury, and others advocated its establishment as it would bring business to the shopkeepers. However, the meeting decided against the asylum, and the Councillors presented a petition to the Government of the day protesting against the proposal, but without effect.

Rudder Grange, recently established as a riverside picnic spot, occupies the Fairfield bank just beyond. The disused bridge of the Outer Circle railway is the next prominent landmark, and has barely justified its existence, for the line had been used for only a short time when it was found unpayable. Agitation is again going on for the re-opening of the railway, and it is quite probable that soon after Kew becomes a town trains may once more be seen traversing this picturesque spot. Close at hand is the old clay pit from which the bricks for the first Asylum lodges were built, and on the side of the hill may be seen the butts of the Kew Rifle Club. From the highest part of the reserve close by, beautiful views, embracing both city and mountain, are obtainable.

Notwithstanding the strong arguments in favor of the sale of the reserve, provided the Asylum be removed, and the consequent addition of practically a new province to Kew, perhaps yielding sufficient revenue to advance it to the dignity of a city, it would be a lasting pity and a public loss to Melbourne and its surrounding cities were any considerable part of the reserve to pass into private hands. The ideal scheme would be to turn Studley Park, the Yarra Bend reserve, and the Kew Asylum reserve into a huge park, which would cover about 800 acres, intersected by the river, to be crossed here and there by bridges available for light traffic only. When that is accomplished Melbourne would possess a lung second to none in Australia, and all within four miles of the General Post Office.

At the Asylum gates we are at one extremity of the several sections purchased at the original land sales by J. W. Cowell and Catherine Cowell. In the forties Cowell was proprietor of the Royal Hotel, one of Melbourne's leading hostelrys. About 1880, the properties, amounting to nearly 400 acres, were purchased by a land company called the Hyde Park.

The above are extracts from "BOROUGH OF KEW.. 1803 - 1910.. JUBILEE HISTORY OF KEW..ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS" by F.G.A. BARNARD. This book is available in our Kew Municipal Library.

DIARY NOTES:

N.B. All meetings commence at 8 p.m. at the Manchester Unity Hall, Union Street, Kew, unless otherwise stated.

- 14th May Councillor Joe Ormando will speak about retail trading in Kew.
- 7th June (Sat.) Working bee at the archives from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Sue Leong () or Dorothy Benyei ()
- 11th June This meeting will be held at the East Kew Primary School. Guest Speaker: Mr. Lindsay, who is the School Principal.
- 9th July Mrs. Helen Fuller, art consultant and voluntary guide with the National Gallery of Victoria, will bring the Gallery to us with slides of works in the Gallery dating between 1850 and 1950, with reference to some artists who lived in Kew.
- 13th August Bill and Helen Reeve will talk to us about their lives in Kew.
- 10th September Mrs. Helen Hoyle (formerly a teacher at P.L.C.) will talk about setting up a school in Mooroolbark.
- 8th October Annual General Meeting.
Guest speaker: the Mayor of Kew.
- 14th October (Tues.) Port of Melbourne launch trip, 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm. Details of cost and bus departure time from the Library to be advised.
- 12th November Mrs. Margaret Thompson from the National Trust will talk about the National Trust properties and show slides.
- 12th December (Fri.) Christmas party.

NEW MEMBERS:

The Society extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Mrs. Judith Grice	Dr. J. Curtin
Mr. Andrew Fraszczak	Miss June McPhillamy
Mr. Chrys Spicer	Mrs. Barbara McDonald

SPECIAL PLEA:

Can anyone help on the Society's behalf at the Library on Mondays from 2.30 - 4 p.m.? Please contact Dorothy Benyei on .
