

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 175, KEW 3101

President:
Mrs. Sue Leong

Hon. Secretary:
Miss Lex Allen

September/October/November 1987

Newsletter No. 37

Dear Members,

I hope you are enjoying the warmer Spring weather and I will see you at our Annual General Meeting on October 14th at 8.00 p.m. Running this meeting will be my last duty as President because I am resigning from that position. I have found my two years of Presidency to be an interesting challenge and wish my successor well.

We are losing a long-time committee member in October. Mrs. Clancy Crowe is retiring after many years of service. We have all appreciated her contribution and hope she has a happy "retirement".

Cr. Philip Barnes is retiring as Vice-President and leaving the committee in order to meet his many obligations to family, work and Council. We thank him for his service and wish him a successful future.

On to other matters: the Cup Day trip to Briar's Cottage and McCrae Homestead will depart from outside the library at 9.30 a.m. on November 3rd. The bus will take everyone to Briar's Cottage, followed by a luncheon stop at Dromana, and then a visit to McCrae Homestead. It is estimated that the bus will return to Kew at 4.30 p.m. Participants will need to pay \$8.00 to cover the cost of the bus and are asked to bring their own lunch and hot drinks. The Historical Society will provide fruit juice and champagne to make the day a little merrier! Bus fares will be collected at the A.G.M.

Our final meeting for the year is on November 11th, Remembrance Day. We will probably see a film borrowed from the State Film Centre to take us along memory lane, followed by a sumptuous supper. Our very capable supper ladies are going to have a rest that night and the Society's social fund will pay for the evening. (Any monetary donations welcome, however!)

Farewell to you all,

Regards,

Suzanne Leong

Sue Leong

HISTORICAL NOTES

With the continuing comments about the Government's sale of Willsmere Hospital in Kew, we thought the following extracts from two early Historical Society meetings would be of interest:-

"Minutes of Kew Historical Society meeting held on Thursday, August, 20th, 1959.

DR. BROTHERS: The Society was addressed by Dr. Brothers from the Kew Mental Hospital, he spoke on the history of that establishment.

1848 officially opened at Yarra Bend. Dr. Barry first medical superintendant, in sole charge, responsible to the government. A Dr. McCrae wished to scrap Yarra Bend and build a new hospital. Growing number of patients, Yarra Bend unsuitable.

New site approx. 480 acres. McCrae intended to bring out from England a new superintendant to replace Bowey.

Two lodges built then work stopped, too expensive. New Board to inspect Yarra Bend to see how improvements could be made at least cost.

1858 new Committee, move to shift to Kew, protest by Kew citizens and Councillors.

1862-3 Royal Commission condemned Yarra Bend, said to go on with Kew, also Ararat and Beechworth.

Over 1000 patients, 1867, sixth largest lunatic asylum in the world. 1871 section open as a ward of Yarra Bend.

1872 Kew separated from Yarra Bend, officially opened, regular staff, however the building was still unfinished and unfurnished.

1876 enquiry into management of hospital. Great criticism of system of admittance, treatment, discharge, political intrigue and lack of power of superintendant.

Tremendous overcrowding until 1877. Sunbury opened, gave some relief to Kew.

1883 Dr. McQuery medical superintendant. Deterioration of buildings. 1884 land set aside for children's cottages.

1887 three built, schoolroom and store. First staff training. 1888 cottage for girls. 1891 two more built.

1889 psychological section visited Kew cottages, quite impressed.

As teachers died, cottages went into a decline.

After ZOY Commission, Government decided to abandon Kew and Yarra Bend and have parklands. Nothing done to improve buildings. Dr. Dick opposed removal - affect relatives of patients, no training ground for medical students.

1890 Depression, removal indefinitely postponed.

1899 nurse training resumed.

1902 female nurses for male patients.

All that is left now is 80 acres (main building) and 77 acres (Children's Cottages)."

HISTORICAL NOTES (cont.)

EXTRACT FROM ANNUAL MEETING, KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
THURSDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1963.

"The guest speaker for the evening was Mr. Wills Cooke of Ringwood, whose great grand parents were pioneer settlers in Kew. They settled in Kew as early as 1838, their property being the well known Willsmere Estate. The Wills family had a long line of distinction from the earliest days, and as early as the 1700's one branch of the family had settled in Sydney. In 1841 Wills built "Lucerne" at Alphington, where he died in 1872. He bought 53 acres in Kew for which he paid 28/- an acre. The Willsmere homestead built app. in 1852 still stands at the corner of Belford and Kilby Roads.

T.W. Wills became interested in the aboriginal welfare, and became coach for the aboriginal football club. Arthur Wills, Thomas's eldest son, was born at "Lucerne" and subsequently became Mayor of Kew.

Mrs. Wills, who lived in different homes in Kew, died in 1907 at the age of 91 years.

Mr. Wills Cooke divided his talk into three parts:

1. the early family history, including properties around the Ararat district;

2. the massacre of whites at Cullen La Ringo, North of Rockhampton, when 19 whites were massacred, this being the largest number of whites massacred by the aboriginals in any part of Australia.

Mr. Wills Cooke's great uncle was among those massacred;

3. modern family history.

Mr. Wills Cooke obtained his bibliography from the following sources: "Early Pioneer Families in Victoria and the Riverina", "Family diaries and letters", "The Story of Ararat", by Lorna Bamfiel Old newspaper cuttings dated from 1858.

Mr. Wills Cooke brought along a number of interesting and valuable historic items, including early letters and diaries, a telegram dated Nov. 1861, then called a wiregram, a letter written by Sarah Wills to her mother in 1858 in which she mentioned Thomas of "Lucerne", and the contempt the people felt for the despotism of Governor Bligh, who took their homes and crushed them as much as he could. The wording of this letter is still quite legible. A letter from Thomas Wentworth Wills dated 1880 spoke of the frozen meat being good for the squatters; aboriginal weapons which were picked up at Cullen La Ringo massacre over 100 years ago.

A few of the Wills homes are still extant. These include "Willsmere" homestead, home in Victoria Parade opposite the old Presbyterian Ladies College, and portion of Geelong Grammar School incorporates the old Wills home.

Mr. Frazer thanked Mr. Wills Cooke for a most interesting and well informed talk.

sgd. W.H.S. DICKINSON
19/11/64"

***** Please note that we would be delighted to have any family history notes for our archives. We also welcome history of houses and streets in Kew.

DONATIONS:

The following donations have been gratefully accepted by the Historical Society:

Photographs of the canoe tree in Bowyer Avenue,
kindly donated by Mrs. Elizabeth Guest.

Father Christmas outfit, kindly donated by
Mr. Bruce Robinson.

NOTICE:

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Kew Historical Society Inc. to be held on 14th October at 8.00 p.m. in the Kew City Hall No. 3.

The business agenda is as follows:

1. confirming the minutes of the last preceding A.G.M.;
2. to receive a report from the committee of the transactions of the Society during the last preceding year;
3. to elect members of the committee;
4. to receive and consider the financial statement submitted by the Society in accordance with Section 30(3) of the Act;
5. special business: the Society members present will be asked to ratify the raising of the annual membership fee from \$4.00 to \$5.00, family membership from \$7.00 to \$8.00, life membership from \$30.00 to \$50.00;
6. Guest speaker.

DIARY NOTES:

14th October	A.G.M.
Tues. 3rd November	Cup Day outing to Briar's Cottage and McCrae Homestead.
11th November	Remembrance Day - close and supper party.
10th February	First meeting for 1988.
