

KEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

P.O. BOX 175, KEW, VIC., 3101

President:

Gwen Steele

Hon. Secretary:

Lex Allen

June, 1990.

Newsletter No. 45

Dear Members,

1990 has crept upon us and is rapidly disappearing. As you know, for our first meeting we were guests of Sacred Heart Church, Kew, which is celebrating its centenary year, and after opening our meeting in the Church Hall, Father Rafter invited us to tour the Church and showed us their many treasures and the alterations which have been made over the years.

At the March meeting, we were fortunate to be able to welcome Janet Dore, the Town Planner with the Kew City Council, who led us through her early life to her present position and then answered our many and varied questions.

The Kew Festival was, of course, the local highlight and we were once again able to enjoy a bus trip with Mr Pollard, made available by the Kew City Council, with a wealth of information supplied by Dorothy Benyei. It was a delightful trip and it was a shame that the coach was not fully occupied - some folks missed a delightful trip, as we had a lovely sunny afternoon.

The April meeting had a different flavour. Members were invited to dredge up some of their early memories and it proved to be a very entertaining evening, while in May, as we were unable to use No. 3 Hall, we stepped back in time, holding our meeting in our previous venue in Union Street. Mrs Evelyn Harvey showed us many examples of her work as a graphic artist and told of her experiences during the "depression years". Our grateful thanks to her.

The June meeting saw us back in No. 3 Hall, where Mrs Gwen Ripper gave us an interesting talk on her memories of early Kew. We also welcomed back Chris Long, who told us that a further film of "Living Melbourne", which will include references to Kew, is now in preparation.

We look forward to welcoming Professor Shaw, President of the Royal Historical Society, who will speak about "The Foundation of Melbourne" at our next meeting.- Be sure to check up on arrangements to visit Kew High School in August!

We are all delighted that Irene Stone is once more able to attend meetings and hope that she will continue to be such a wonderful help on the Committee.

Our very good wishes to Bill Reeve. Helen has kept me up to date with his progress, and I hope that we will soon have both of them coming along to future meetings.

"The first man who built a house on the heights of what is now Kew borough, was Mr. J. V. Morgan, a well known and highly respected resident of Kew to this day, who, together with three others, Mr. Quick, another prominent local gentleman, and the two brothers Messrs Derrick, bought 33 acres amongst them of the Cotham Estate early in the year 1853, some 9 acres being Mr. Morgan's portion. In the same year his wife gave birth to the first child born in Kew. This little Eve is now a grandmother.

Mr. T. Judd settled in Park Street in the latter part of 1852, and is still living there. Mr. F. Barnard also has been in Kew since '57, and has been influential in the moulding of Kew, having been a councillor for twenty-five years, and three times mayor. Mr. Dannock, too, may be mentioned as another early settler. The before-mentioned Mr. Quick is still hale and hearty at the age of 83. His son has the drapery establishment in Cotham Road.

The name of Kew was first given by Mr. Fenwick, the Crown Land Commissioner, who had a board put up at the upper side of the Junction with "KEW" written on it. The name Cotham Road was given by Mr. Morgan, who had intended to name the district Cotham instead of Kew. At this time there were a few little farms here and there further out, the nearest to what is now Charles street (the nucleus of Kew) being Wade's Farm, a mile or two away. During the next two years (1853-54) settlement increased very considerably. Mr. French was, we believe, the first grocer in the district, and his shop stood near the site of the present English, Scottish and Australian Bank. The first bread delivered in Kew came from Richmond, although Mr. Jellis has been established since '72. Then there was the Woodman's Hotel, at the upper side of the Junction (which has been absorbed into Mr Grieve's new decorative establishment and Mr. Shapley's Stores) a rare resort of the teamsters in those early days, kept by a man named Bateman.

The whole of the undulating country up from the Yarra, south, east, and west, was, in the early spring time of the year then, a gaudy garden of golden wattle blossom; every wind heavy with fragrance, ere yet the rude hand of vandal boyhood had appeared to strip the woodland of its native loveliness. "O tempora &c". But I doubt not we have all been boys ourselves once, especially the men folks of us. Some fairly heavy timber was pretty liberally supplied with its firewood from this and surrounding districts. One could hear, on a fine morning at sunrise already the echoing ring of the bushman's axe felling the sturdy box tree, or see the rude pioneer draymen, in their lazy, free way, coming down the long road with their twelve bullock teams, hoarsely shouting to their drowsy beasts as they laid on their huge whip quite ungrudgingly across the shoulders of the beasts, or snipped a corner out of the ears of the lagging ones. Then, as they neared the Woodman's, they would draw up in their lumbering fashion, their tons of wood, three or four of these fellows' teams making a long procession as picturesque as one can imagine. Mutual recognitions follow among the drivers, and a call is made upon mine worthy host for quarts of the longest description for six. That, or rather, those, over, they adjourn outside to see a dog fight. But they must get onward, so after the exact number of sterling Australian swears, the bullocks understand, and away they go, leaving only a small cyclone of dust behind them. Surely an idyllic picture, this, and certainly of a contrast to Kew as we are acquainted with it, although the woodcarters' voices have not yet ceased, though they be few.

Those days were as the dawn of civilisation over the swamps and scrub of Kew-on-the-Yarra. These rough fellows were clearing the wilds for our trim streets and green lanes.

The Boroondara Cemetery had its beginning early too, as Mr. Quick suffered the bereavement of his wife's death in 1853, and the deceased lady was buried in the first grave on the spot reserved for the cemetery.

The first minister of religion who preached in Kew was the Rev. Joseph Townend, a United Methodist preacher, who used to come over from Collingwood. But as time sped on, the people of Kew could not do without more than this, and Mr. J. Day first moved in getting the land for the Congregational Church, which was duly erected.

Time sped on, and settlement succeeded settlement, land holders built houses and shops, and the place grew apace till, on 17th December, 1860, Kew was proclaimed a borough!. That was indeed a glorious leap into municipal greatness. The first mayor or chairman of the municipality was Mr. G. Lewis. Public affairs were conducted in a quiet sensible way, creditable to the prudence of the new born councillors as to the electors. The Athenaeum (now the Town Hall) was built, where the Crs. first met and the "Boroondara Standard" newspaper was started; whilst in 1889, the "Mercury" was established, which tended to focalise local thought.

Studley Park Road, Cotham Road and the other various parts, gradually became all built upon, and there sprang up several seminaries, chief among which may be mentioned St. Francis Xavier's Roman Catholic College, an immense structure, for the education of youth; and the Methodist Ladies' College, another superb institution, and one or two others. Nor are the churches behindhand, five of the leading denominations having constructed buildings to beautify and elevate the district withal. The Salvation Army., too, has its citadel near one of the very oldest buildings in Kew, namely the old wooden "Coffee Shop" near the cemetery. In the year 1885(**should be 1888) the new Post Office and Public Offices were built at a cost of £10,000, and they form a splendid architectural adornment to Kew. A public and circulating library has also been established since the early 60's, and is one of the most compact and best reading rooms around Melbourne, containing a choice little selection of 6000 odd volumes. Then again, there is the Recreation Hall, and reserve, dedicated to Terpsichore and Thespis, and to athletics. Studley Park Reserve forms the finest pleasure resort, as it is "the most picturesque public reserve in the Colony", and over and above the naturally romantic beauty of the spot, landscape gardening art is gradually enhancing its native comeliness.

In 1887, in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee, the Council erected a costly and elegant Drinking Fountain and Candelabrum combined, in front of the Post Office, which forms a beautiful as well as a useful monument.

Our brief history and guide would not be complete without at least a passing mention of one more great institution of Kew, namely the Metropolitan Lunatic Asylum. Great opposition was at first felt to the proposal to establish the institution on the Yarra; but that has all died away, and it is now seen that if the Asylum is an unhappily necessary institution, it has proved itself a benefit to Kew.

A few statistics of the Kew of today after its first 50 years may not be uninteresting:

AREA: 3558 acres
Dwellings & shops - 1480
Value for 1896-97 - £77,752
No. of Assessments - 2658

Population- 8100
Rate - 1s1½d in the £1.
Revenue for 1895-96 - £6959.
Ratepayers in rate book = 1179. On
voters' rolls = 1484."

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In a future issue of our Newsletter, we hope to give 1990 Members a resume of the quite fascinating advertisements contained in this booklet.

We have been very pleased to welcome some new members at recent meetings, and appreciate so many braving the onslaught of Winter - Spring must follow!

kindest regards to all,

Gwen Steele
President

DIARY NOTES

- Wed. 11th July Professor Shaw, President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, to speak about "The Foundation of Melbourne" - Library Complex Hall at 8 p.m.
- Wed. 8th August Kew High School. Meeting to be held in the school staff room, with two guest speakers, followed by a tour of the school. Transport problems can be worked out at July meeting.
- Fri. 7th September Annual street stall - Lions Club van in High Street, near Walpole Street.
- Wed. 12th September Guest speaker to be advised - check Kewriosity. (Library Complex Hall)
- Wed. 10th October Annual General Meeting.
Guest speaker - the Mayor of Kew.
- Wed. 14th November Guest speaker to be advised - check Kewriosity.
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RECENT GIFTS

- From the Denmark Street Health Centre - a large doll, two old-fashioned wooden puzzles, medical kidney dishes and a teddy bear.
- From Miss Rona Jenkins - a 1934 pamphlet about the Duke of Gloucester.
- From Mr Stewart West - a picture of the second Town Hall in Walpole Street.
- From Mr Ellis (Salvation Army Archivist) - an article from The Age about Kew, a report by Mark Birrell, and 20 Annual Reports from St. George's Hospital.
- (Further gifts will be listed in the next Newsletter)
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SPECIAL NOTICE

A yellow sticker on your Newsletter means there are subscription arrears.
If you no longer wish to retain your membership, please let us know.