



NEWSLETTER

No. 100

SEPTEMBER 2012

SERVING THE COMMUNITY, FAMILIES,
SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, HISTORIANS
AND OTHER RESEARCHERS

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A Letter from the President

Hello Everyone,

I wanted today to talk to you about the Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria Sustainable Cities and Clean Beaches Awards.

The Awards were announced on the 27th July 2012 at a dinner at the MCG which was hosted by Myf Warhurst.

There were twelve categories and the work of the City of Boroondara was recognised in nine of them, with the City of Boroondara winning two key awards on the night.

The first award was the Community Government Partnership Award for the Kew Court House and Police Station refurbishment project, which involved council working with the Kew Historical Society, Heritage Victoria and others. The Mayor, Cr Heinz Kreutz, kindly invited me to accompany him to receive this award. In his speech the Mayor was most fulsome in his praise of the Kew Historical Society and the role they played.

The second key award was the main award – Sustainable City of the Year 2012, which was won in competition with Brimbank, Casey, Frankston and Wyndham.

This part of the evening ended well with my wife, Janelle, winning a door prize.

While at the dinner I also talked with one of the City of Boroondara's heritage staff members who mentioned that the colour used for repainting the top of the War Memorial was selected as a result of an analysis done on the existing paint to determine the original colour. The story that this was as a result of the colour on an old postcard is just that - a story without foundation.

Members will find a copy of our latest version of our Rules of Incorporation included with this newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Annual General Meeting on the 10th October.

David Benwell
President

Funeral rites for Mr. Levien

The funeral procession had been advertised to set out from 'Madowla' in St Kilda Road at 2.15pm, but due to the 'wet and boisterous' late May weather, and to the large number of representative citizens who were present to pay him the last tribute of respect, the cortege did not set out for the Kew Cemetery until 2.30. It was to be a long procession of carriages, buggies, hansoms and wagonettes, numbering among their occupants the premier, The Hon. Thomas Bent, the Speaker the Hon. Frank Madden¹, State Ministers, Members of Parliament, prominent businessmen, family members and their friends. Only the Prime Minister, Mr. Deakin, was absent, sending his apologies due to illness. Deakin and the much-lamented J. Felix Levien had been the last survivors of the great Service-Berry coalition of 1883-86.



*J.F.A.G. Levien
(1840-1906)*

At the front of the long line of vehicles, the body of Mr. J. F. Levien lay in state in the horse-drawn hearse. Both the coffin and the hearse itself were covered in wreaths, and onlookers stopped and bowed their heads as the funeral procession slowly moved through the streets of Melbourne, past the Parliament, in which he had sat as a member and as a Minister of State, before unhurriedly moving towards the cemetery in distant Kew. Protocol was important for Mr. Levien's colleagues in life and in death. The Hon. Member had been actively engaged in the political life of the colony for over 35 years and Gentlemen had been instructed to advise their drivers to take advice about where their carriages should be positioned according to seniority and precedence. Others, without access to a private vehicle, were to rely on cable cars, and the horse drawn tram from Victoria Bridge to the Kew Cemetery gates.

That part of the Church of England section in which Mr Levien was to be interred, and in which Dr. Charles Strong was to conduct the service, was at the furthest point of the cemetery from the gates. The hearse and some of the carriages of the more important mourners were permitted to pass through the walls and the striking entrance gates, but the rest of the mourners shuffled along on foot.

Among the crowd that jostled for position around the gravesite were reporters for state and interstate newspapers. The reports of his illness had spread throughout the colonies since his cerebral haemorrhage the week before. For some reporters, what was foremost in their minds was who was in attendance. The funeral obsequies were given greater import through the Premier and the Speaker being pallbearers. The connection with the Prime Minister made his passing of national importance. For the *Argus* reporter, whose readers had longer memories, J. Felix Levien's longevity as a parliamentarian and his achievements as a politician were of greater relevance. The *Argus* reporter was to 'accurately' record that he had entered Parliament in 1871 as the Member for South Grange, defeating Peter Lalor. Following his re-election in 1877 there had been a challenge mounted, and with an accusation of bribery his opponent had replaced him. But, from 1880 to 1906, he noted, Mr. Levien had held the seat of Barwon, as South Grange had become, against all comers.

His death notice on the 25 May 1906 had simply given his name as Mr. J. Felix Levien. Most press reports described him more formerly as Mr. J. F. Levien. Historians now felicitously give him his full name: Jonas Felix Australia Goldsmid Levien. Apart from aficionados of Victorian economic or political history, his achievements as local councillor (1869-75), as a Member of Parliament (1871-76), as a Minister of Mines and Agriculture (1883-86), as the President of Royal Commissions into the Coal Industry (1889-91) and Vegetable products (1885-94) are largely forgotten. So is his involvement in the foundation of the Australian Natives Association, and his directorship of many financial institutions. Similarly, the mansion 'Madowla' where he lived, which was located near Commercial Road, and which was filled with his treasures, has utterly vanished. Its extensive contents were advertised for auction on 10 February 1909 and included tiger, leopard and bear skin rugs, a Bluthner concert grand piano, marble statuary, oil paintings, a massive dining suite purchased at the London Exhibition, ... and the 'complete furnishings of a modern home'.

No press reports refer to his Jewish heritage, yet it is this that perhaps interests historians now. He was, reputedly, the first Jewish child born in the Port Phillip District in 1840 in Williamstown. His father, Benjamin Goldsmid Levien (1806-90) had managed the punt at the Saltwater River before moving to Geelong and was instrumental in setting up the Geelong Synagogue in spite of opposition from the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation.

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1. Sir Frank Madden (1847-1921) was the MLA for Eastern Suburbs from 1894. After 1904 Eastern Suburbs became the electorate of Boroondara. He was Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1904-17. He lived in the Kew mansion Mooroolbeek in Carson Street. He is buried in the Boroondara Cemetery.



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Kew Historical Society Incorporated will be held on **Wednesday 10th October 2012** at 8pm in the Phyllis Hore Room, rear of Kew Library, Civic Drive, off Cotham Road, Kew.

The business to be transacted at the meeting will be:-

- (1) Apologies.
- (2) Minutes of last AGM.
- (3) **Reports** from President, Treasurer and Archivist for the year ending 30th June 2012.
- (4) **Election of Committee Members** for the year 2012/2013.

According to our Rules approved under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, **all positions become vacant.**

The elected Committee positions are a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, a Treasurer, an Archivist, and two Committee Members.

Any member wishing to nominate a member for any position on the Committee should use the enclosed nomination form.

All nomination forms should be in the hands of the secretary (Judith -) by **5pm Wednesday 3rd October 2012.**

- (5) Appointment of Auditor.
- (6) Appointment of Public Officer.
- (7) Any other business of which prior notice has been given.

The committee for 2011/2012 of elected members was:

President	David Benwell
Vice Presidents	Philip Slobom Dione McIntyre
Secretary	Judith Vimpani
Assistant Secretary	Margaret Robinson
Treasurer	Graeme Lindsay*
* in his absence Acting Treasurer	Alex Wilson OAM
Archivist	Dorothy Benyei
Committee Members	Rosemary Smart Joan Simms

Public Officer Thea Sartori Auditor Max Sartori

Subscriptions for the year 2012/2013 became due on 1st July 2012.

N.B. To participate in the election of the Committee, members must be financial.

Funeral rites for Mr. Levien *continued from page 2*

His brother Solomon was the secretary of the Geelong Shule in 1873 and we know that Jonas attended Jewish meetings in his electorate. Fredman, in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, contends that Jonas Levien's three sons and a daughter were brought up as Anglicans.

Today, his simple grave, with its distinctively concave marble slab simply reads:

Jonas Felix Levien
Born Williamstown
8th March 1840
Died Melbourne 24th May 1906
Aged 66 years.

Jewish visitors to his final resting place have followed traditional custom by placing a small stone on his grave using their left hand. In this way they have participated in the mitzvah of his burial and recognised him as one of their own.

References:

Fredman, L.E., 'Levien, Jonas Felix Australia (1840-1906)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; Levi, J.S. 2006, *These Are the Names: Jewish lives in Australia: 1788-1850*, p. 439; Parliament of Victoria website, 'Re-Member (Former Members)'; Warms, T., 'The Jews of Boroondara Cemetery'; *Argus*, 25 May 1906; *Argus*, 26 May 1906; *Examiner*, 28 May 1906; *North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, 28 May 1906; *Examiner*, 1 June 1906; *Argus* 10 February 1909.

The Buchans & Finhaven

Following on from the Bark Canoe article in June 2012 Newsletter.

John Buchan was born 1808 in Forfar, Scotland. Suffering poor health, he sailed for a warmer climate, arriving in Geelong in March 1853 on the Lucia Maria from Liverpool. He came with his wife Charlotte, nee Bell, and children Charlotte Elizabeth, John Innerarity, Alexander and Sophia. His son David Thomas later joined them.

Buchan established a real estate and auctioneering business in Little Collins Street, Melbourne in 1854. His sons John and David joined him.

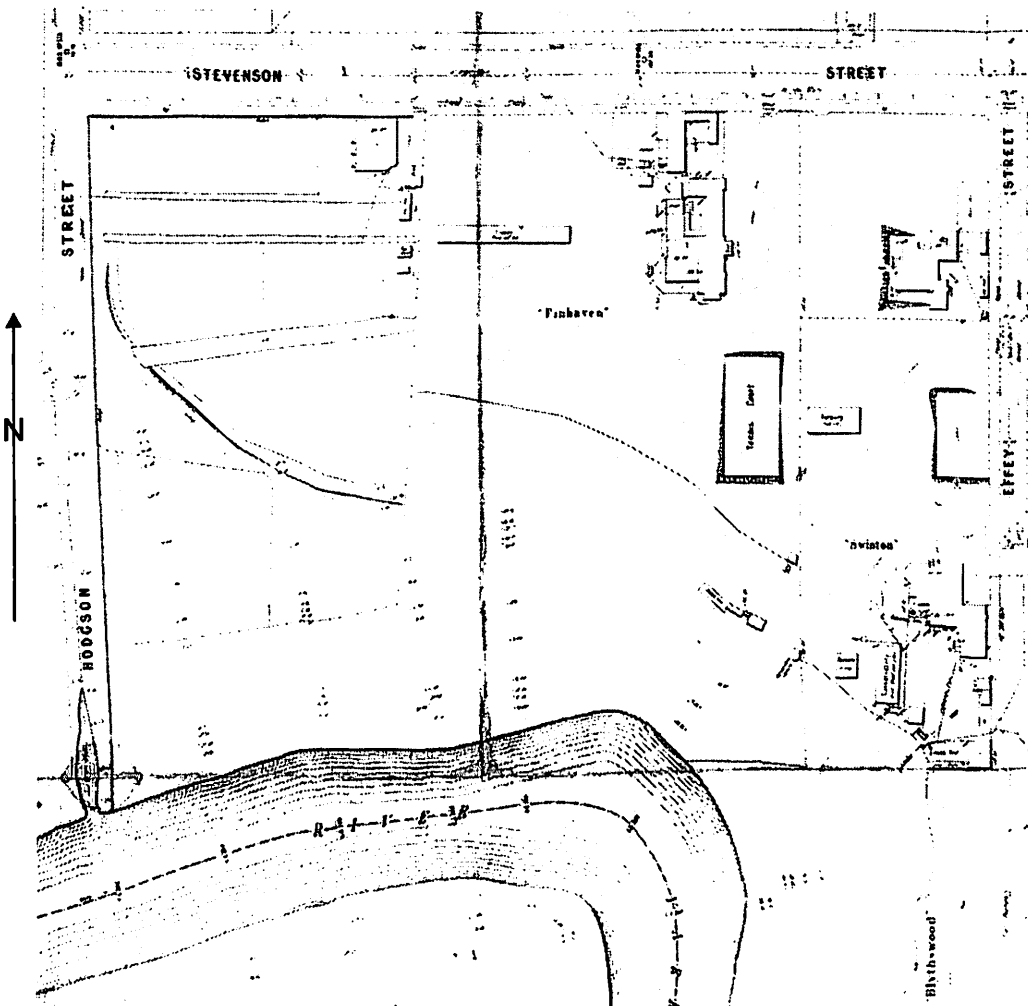
From 1858 the family lived at 19 Palmer Street, Fitzroy until in the early 1870s John purchased 7.5 acres in Studley Park, Kew. The property had over 500 feet of Yarra River frontage. Here he built the two storeyed Finhaven on the hill overlooking the river and the town in the distance. The house had over 15 rooms including a ballroom and billiard room.

Sadly he died there in 1874 aged 66 years. Charlotte, his widow and son John Innerarity Buchan lived on at Finhaven. Charlotte died in 1891. Charlotte and John are buried together in Boroondara Cemetery. Their sons, John Innerarity and David Thomas, are also buried in the Boroondara Cemetery.

John Innerarity Buchan was a Melbourne City councillor representing Albert Ward for seven years and then a Fitzroy councillor. He was involved in the formation of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. An active member of the old militia, he used his rank of Major in retirement. He was a leading land valuer in Melbourne and held the position of valuer for the AMP Society.

Marrying Blanche Ellen, nee Shaw, in 1885 in Melbourne, John Innerarity Buchan and his wife set sail for an extended stay in England where their first son, was born in Brighton. On their return they set up house at Finhaven, with his mother, Charlotte, where the rest of the children were born: Eric John (1886) who served in WWI, Roland (1887), Olive Charlotte (1889) who married Graham Richard Tucker, Kenneth Shaw (1890) killed in WWI, Viola Blanche (1897), and Sheila (1907) who married George C Phillips, a naval officer, in London in 1929.

John Innerarity Buchan died in 1922 aged 80. Blanche left Finhaven in 1941. Subsequently the house was demolished, the land subdivided and Finhaven Court created. Blanche died in 1946.



1904 MMBW Map
- part of section 1301
Finhaven, fronting
Stevenson Street,
extended from
Hodgson Street at the
west to Swinton at the
east In the bottom
right is Blythwood.
Note: Effey Street is
now Swinton Avenue

THE TWO SUSPICIOUS DEATHS AT KEW

Has the Kew Lunatic Asylum ever been used as a Court?

Well may you ask, as such was the occasion when an Inquest was held there in November 1875. The dignity of the Court was conferred on the Asylum for the occasion of the Inquest about one of two bodies that had been found in the Yarra river at Kew. Although later, some person in hindsight thought that it may be more dignified if the words "Lunatic Asylum" were crossed out in pencil, leaving only the one word "Kew" to be read on the cover sheet of the Inquest Court papers.

An Inquest is a judicial inquiry held by a Coroner as to the death of a person under suspicious circumstances. It was usual for an Inquest to be heard before a jury of not more than eleven jurymen, *super visum corporis* (after viewing the dead body). Prior to 1971 it was possible for an Inquest to be presided over by a Justice of the Peace.

The *Argus* newspaper dated 22nd November 1875 reported on a double drowning that had occurred about a week earlier in the Yarra at Studley Park. A boy employed at Burn's boatshed at Studley Park had seen the body of a man floating past. The corpse was brought ashore and found to be that of a stout male person, 5' 7" in height and between the age of 43 and 44 years, dressed in an old dark monkey jacket, tweed vest, moleskin trousers, blue striped Rob Roy scarf, grey woollen socks, one elastic side-boot and one lace-up boot. In the pockets were found an old clay pipe and a woman's old sun-bonnet.



Circa 1900 photograph showing Yarra Bend Asylum on the left with Kew Asylum on the horizon. Burn's boatshed is just out of sight on the lower right.

That same day in the afternoon about 3pm, some boys who had been fishing at Dight's Falls observed another body in the river. On being brought ashore the body was found to be that of a stout female person of short build and between the age of 53 and 54 years. It was dressed in an old brown dress and jacket of the same material, a knitted woollen under jacket, black straw hat without trimming, white stockings and prunella boots. In the pocket of the dress were found a little white comb and thimble, and a pair of white stockings. The body had been immersed for about the same time as the first body and had been carried by the current past Burn's boatshed unobserved. As it had not been found within the jurisdiction of Kew the woman's body was taken to Forrester's Early Bird Hotel near the Johnston Street bridge.

Since the man had been found within the limits of the Municipality of Kew, the Inquest into his death took place in Kew. The *Argus* newspaper of Tuesday 23rd November 1875 *continued page 6*

THE TWO SUSPICIOUS DEATHS AT KEW*continued from page 5*

reported that the Inquest had been held the previous day at Kew and had been presided over by Mr Samuel Curtis Candler. The body was identified as that of William Hogg a stone mason. The Court empanelled twelve jurymen and included in the jury were four Kew Councillors, Charles Campbell, William Hiscock, Henry Kellett and William Woollard. Also serving on the jury were John Breheny, the licensee of the Clifton Hotel, Joseph Duval a Kew landholder, William Morris a Kew landholder (lot 86 Rangeview), and Patrick Ryan the licensee of the Council Family Hotel, in High Street Kew. The police officer assisting with the Inquest was Senior Constable James McGrath (SC No 1893), who served in Kew for many years. An attendant at the Yarra Bend Asylum gave evidence that he had seen the couple sitting on the Yarra bank, opposite to the Lunatic Asylum, and after a while the man walked away slowly, looking downhearted. He did not stagger or appear drunk and the couple had not been quarrelling, the witness told the Inquiry. It was also noted by the jury that he did not swim.

A post mortem examination by Dr Thomas Ralph MRCS (the surgeon vaccination officer at Kew) revealed that there were no marks of violence, except an abrasion of the skin on the hands, which occurred after death. The cause of death was asphyxia from drowning. Presiding over the case Mr S. C. Candler told the jury that they could either decide at once in the matter, or if they wished adjourn their decision and inquire also into the cause of death of Mr Hogg's wife Euphemia, who had also drowned. The jury decided to deal with the case there and then and they returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased was found drowned, but that there was no evidence to show how he had drowned.

Alex Wilson OAM

References: *The Argus* 22nd November 1875 page six
The Argus 23rd November 1875 page nine
Trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article

*Reproduced with permission of the keeper of Public Records, Public Records Office Victoria
 Osborn's Concise Law Dictionary 6th Edition by John Burke*

KHS RESEARCH GROUP

Do you have any anecdotal information of an aspect of the History of Kew which you are able to add to the growing collection of the knowledge that we have about our past?

Or any old family letters or documents containing information which should form a part of our colourful history? Have you ever thought of writing about your life or that of your forbears?

It became evident at the VISION 2015 workshop held in March this year that there was a strong interest in historical research amongst those who took part.

We now have a KHS RESEARCH GROUP which meets monthly upstairs at the Kew Library, and all members of the Society who wish to take an active part may do so.

For further details please ring

Dione McIntyre - Convenor

GIFTS TO ARCHIVES

Since the last newsletter the following items have been donated

- Moustache cup and saucer from Rosemary Smart
- Real Estate Sale material from Trevor Fiander
- Coat hangers from Betty Huston This was in answer to a request for suitable coat hangers for use in the rehangng of the clothes collection.
- Kew carport photos showing a range of carports from Earle and Dee Mant
- A photo of East Kew from Earle and Dee Mant
- Aerial photos of Kew (dvd) from Kevin O'Reilly an aviation historian.
- Information about the Hodges family of *Kew Mercury* fame, also F.G.A .Barnard from Jim Lowden

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:-

- Rae Nicholls
- Robert Baker

both of whom have joined our Research Group.

LOCAL NEWS

**CONGRATULATIONS FROM
THE PRIME MINISTER**

The Prime Minister Julia Gillard sent her warmest congratulations to members Mary and Alex Wilson OAM on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary, which was celebrated on 30th May.

Personal congratulations were also received from Josh Frydenberg MP, Federal Member for Kooyong on this significant occasion.

Mary and Alex were married at St Paul's Church, Rose Bay, Sydney. On the happy occasion the bride wore a full-length delustrated satin gown that featured an embroidered front panel, and a white full-blown rose held her long tulle veil. She carried a bouquet of white camellias and hyacinths.

A reception was held at the Australia Hotel Sydney and after a two week honeymoon skiing the couple made their home at Edgecliffe, Sydney before moving to Melbourne

**NEWS FROM FAR NORTH
QUEENSLAND**

Members will be pleased to hear that Graeme and Millicent Lindsay are having a wonderful time chasing fish. Graeme reports there are "Lots of caravans on the road and large transports" and it has been unusually wet.

OFF TO UK AND KOREA

Our President David Benwell and his wife Janelle left on 25th August for a family wedding in the UK. We hope David enjoys catching up with his family. They will then holiday in Korea before returning home in late September.

**NEWS FROM BOROONDARA
LIBRARY SERVICES****Appointment of Hugh Rundle**

Hugh Rundle, acting librarian in charge since Louise Pitcher's departure, has been appointed to the position of Information Manager and Chief Librarian for Kew..

Retirement of Anne Holmes

Anne Holmes, Manager of Library Services and Volunteer Development, has announced her retirement after almost 30 years with both the City of Hawthorn and the City of Boroondara. We wish them both well.

**CAMBERWELL
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Thursday 13th September at 7:30 pm
Stella Barber will talk about
"Sydney Myer"
Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library.

Tuesday 27th November at 8pm
Prof. Conrad Hamann will talk about
"The Architecture of Boroondara"
Meeting Room, New Camberwell Library

**SURREY HILLS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Saturday 15th September 2 - 4pm
Box Hill Cemetery Tour
"A Last Touchstone to a Life"
Meet at Middleborough Road gates.
Bookings essential: ph. 9262 6555 Cost: \$12

Tuesday 18th September at 8pm
Iness Russell will talk on
"100 Years plus in a Tent, the IOR
in Surrey Hills"
In The Maitland Room of the cottage
Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre
1 Bedford Ave, Surrey Hills
Visitors welcome. Cost \$4.

**BALWYN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Thursday 11th October at 8pm AGM
Robin Droogleever will talk on
"Victorian Soldiers in the Boer War"

Thursday 8th November at 8pm
Chris Long
"1929 - Melbourne's First Talkies"

All meetings: Balwyn Evergreen Centre
45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn

**HAWTHORN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Saturday 1st December at 2pm AGM
Peter Yule will talk on
"William Baillieu -
Founder of Australia's greatest
business empire."
Hawthorn Community Precinct
584 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn

We meet monthly in the Phyllis Hore Room on the second Wednesday of each month unless otherwise announced.

September 12th	Leo Blake "Shopkeeping in Kew"
October 10th	AGM The Mayor of Boroondara Cr Heinz Kreutz
November 14th	Val Bourke "Kew High School's 50th".
December 12th	Christmas Party

OCTOBER AT THE KEW COURT HOUSE

Photographic Exhibition :- "Step back in Time" photos provided by the Boroondara Historical Societies Association members and the Friends of Boroondara Cemetery.

Senior's Week - 1st - 5th Oct. Special City of Boroondara activities in Just Theatre.

for details and bookings Phone 9278 4777 . Photographic Exhibition open Tuesday-Friday 10-4.

History Week - 21st -28th Oct. KHS in attendance Tuesday & Saturday 10-4, Sunday 2-4.

Tours of the building available Photographic Exhibition open Tuesday-Saturday 10-4, Sunday 2-4.

BIG QUARTERLY BOOK SALE

1 pm to 4 pm

SUNDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2012

Phyllis Hore Room (Rear Kew Library)
Civic Drive, Kew

Lots of Bargains

Please put this date in your diary

MEMBERSHIP FEES for 2012-2013

are due on 1st July 2012

- Individual \$15
- Family \$17
- Student \$5

We invite all interested people to join our society and enjoy our speakers and discussions on local history in an atmosphere of warm friendship.