



Annual Report 2020-2021

Prepared for

St Kilda Historical Society AGM 2021

5 September 2021

With our movements and activities restricted, the 2020-2021 financial year was not the one we had hoped for. Nonetheless, we continued to shape and deliver on our vision, complete projects and start new ones, and strengthen our resources.

An updated constitution in line with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, was ratified by members at our 2020 AGM and lodged with the ACNC. As part of that process, we expanded our purpose to include history “*from the indigenous owners to the present time,*” thereby paving the way for research into the First Nations’ experience.

We also reviewed and revised committee roles – executive and ordinary member - to reflect a more inclusive and cooperative structure. We are collectively developing the capacity of the committee to expand our skills and meet the needs of modern communication, improve accessibility, and expand our research capabilities, and making room for members to contribute as non-committee members.

In November 2020 we undertook a half-day workshop to explore and prepare a five-year plan. We set goals and developed objectives around three key areas – membership, collection, and research projects, steered by our vision.

SKHS Vision 2020-2025 : *To evolve into an organisation that is embedded in, and relevant to, the diverse communities of St Kilda, works collectively with an engaged membership base, and is recognised as an important custodian of the many facets of the area’s rich, unique and complex history.*

We set activity priorities and then focussed on 2021 delivery, much of which was once again hampered by lockdowns.

1. MEMBERS

Our members are the heart of our Society and our aim is to involve our members more in the work of the Society, either as committee members or an 'adjunct', working on specific projects or areas of interest. We welcome our members' increased contribution to/involvement with projects.

We also aim to create more opportunities for members to exchange ideas, gain knowledge of local history, interact socially and learn about historical research. In 2021, this translated into the desire to *"engage and deepen our relationship with members through bi-monthly gatherings at various St Kilda where people share their research projects or their experience of St Kilda."*

However, our focus on talks and walks as a way of cementing member relationships proved elusive due to the uncertainty created by Covid-19. The launch of our Mirka Mora project was via Zoom, following our 2020 AGM in September, and we only managed two face-to-face gatherings, with others postponed.

1.1 EVENTS

Marli Place

Our first talk for 2021, at the refurbished St Kilda Army and Navy club, was about the architecture of Marli Place on the Esplanade and the people who have lived there over the past 150 years. Architect and historian, David Brand, shared some fascinating facts and insights, not the least being that Sidney Nolan lived there for some time. It was good to be back at our favourite St Kilda venue, after a year's absence, to catch up with familiar faces, and to meet new ones.



L to R: Helen Halliday, David Brand, Constance de Silva, Carmel McKenzie, and Claire Barton catch up after the Marli Place talk.

Mirka @ Jewish Museum Australia, St Kilda

An exclusive evening at Jewish Museum Australia gave Society members the opportunity to view Mirka Mora's rich and diverse exhibition at their own pace. It was followed by art historian Dr Janine Burke's discussion of Mirka's St Kilda years and a Q&A with the audience.



Walk in Mirka's St Kilda

Dr Janine Burke' planned walking tour through Mirka's St Kilda, visiting her homes, artworks, restaurants, and bookstores, had to be rescheduled and then postponed with the arrival of Covid-19 in late May. It is in our calendar for late 2021, alongside new planned tours and talks, announced in the August issue of our newsletter.

St Kilda Murders – a winter tale

Similarly, Liz Kelly's murderous meander through St-KILL-da recalling tales of a scandalous 19th century attempted murder in Grey Street; the shooting of 'pretty' Dulcie Markham's in Fawkner Street; Chopper Read causing mayhem at the Sea Baths; and a 21st century gangland murder in Acland Street . . . and more, was slayed by another lockdown. It was not fatal, and the walk will return later in the year.

Despite the inability to engage personally, as we has hoped, our membership has held steady and we thank everyone for your continued interest in, and support for, the Society and its work.

2. COLLECTION

The collection is the centrepiece of our work and we continue to build on the extensive review undertaken in previous years that has resulted in improved storage, careful deaccession in line with our Collection Policy 2019, and the uploading of images to Victoria Collections website (where further work is needed to improve their accessibility).

Our objectives are to continue to review our current collection to ensure it is relevant, catalogued, valued and appropriately preserved. The aim is to have a collection database that identifies a clear St Kilda relevance/provenance of all items in line with current conservation and cataloguing practices, safe, dry and bug free storage according to best practice, including digitisation and online presence, where possible.

Our aim for 2021 was to prepare a collection review plan that outlines the stages and tasks (over the coming years) required to bring the SKHS collection in line with best practice conservation guidelines and the Society's purposes, and set guidelines for future donations. The immediate action was to identify priority for the year ahead, scope resources and funding, if any, required to help us organise, digitise and safely store our current collection.

Our work on the collection was interrupted by the lockdowns, preventing access to the physical items, thereby slowing down valuable cataloguing, sorting of items and scoping of work to be done.

Nonetheless, we were able to take delivery of two exciting donations – a book about the West St Kilda RSL building, and a series of professional photographs capturing St Kilda in the 1970s.

2.1 DONATIONS

West St Kilda RSL – 23 Lock Street

A beautifully bound and produced book, capturing the history and restoration of the building at 23 Loch Street, which once served as the West St Kilda RSL, was donated by *John Bennetts* and *Ann Ryan*.

Built at the turn of the 20th Century, the mansion was bequeathed to the RSL during the Second World War. Decades later, it developed in to a grungy late opening venue that welcomed all and was favoured by the local arts and music communities, with a reputation for the best cold beer in St Kilda! The property was sold in 2008 and reverted to a private residence.



1970s St Kilda Photographs

Photographer *Julie Millowick* lived in St Kilda for six years in the 1970s and studied photography at the Prahran College of Advanced Education. Her method was to wander the streets of St Kilda, talking to people, sometimes photographing them. And thus, a wonderful archive of St Kilda life in the 1970s was created. She has shared hundreds of her photos with the Society. We are exploring ways to share her images with our members.



2.2 ACCESSIBILITY

Our other aim is to make the collection easily accessible to members and the public. Our successful partnering with Victoria Collections website will see more images of our collection preserved alongside other historical items in Victoria.

Liz Kelly's wonderful research brings to life the many seemingly ordinary items in our collection, and makes them extraordinary by revealing the stories behind, for example, medals, awards, milk tins, soda bottles, school slates. We publish at least three collection stories in each of our newsletters.





One of the other ways we share our collection with, and connect to, the wider public is through regular historical displays in the cabinets at the entrance to St Kilda Library, in April, July and October. Collated by *Maureen Walker*, they bring to life various aspects of St Kilda's past, with photos, stories, and artifacts. During 2020, to mark its own 50th anniversary, the Society planned to revisit 1970 with displays of local, Melbourne, national and international events from that year.

Unfortunately, all displays were cancelled in 2020, and thus, in 2021, a year late, we highlighted events from 1970s – the year the Society. Library staff have reported that the displays, to date, have been well received, library visitors enjoying, in particular, the various 'props' that have added colour and stirred memories.

3. RESEARCH PROJECTS

In our five-year plan we express the objectives to build on our reputation as a research organisation and a 'go to' source for information about St Kilda's history and to ensure our historical research includes social history and first nations stories/experiences.

This year, as a first step, we established a research project scope and assessment process to help with resourcing, funding and prioritising the next five years' wish list.

Our first priority for the year, was to finish the projects in progress, which included merging our mansions database with google maps and publishing the Society's fifty-year history.

At the same time, we engaged with two new projects, both of which focus on the social, rather than the built, history of St Kilda. The first, *History of Music in St Kilda 1970s-1990s*, is being funded from City of Port Phillip *Cultural Development Fund - Recovery Grant*.

The second, *St Kilda 1841–1900: Movers and Shakers and Money-makers*, came to our notice early in the year, when we were approached by historian Carmel McKenzie, and we plan to auspice a grant application to publish the work.

Maps and Mansions project – phase 1

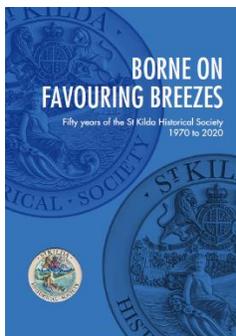
The first stage of our *Maps and Mansion project* locates the great mansions of the 19th century on google maps. This work to build a database of mansions was started by Peter Johnson and has been expanded by Helen Halliday and Sally Moore to encompass some 200 entries. We have previously reported on work done by committee members scanning the early photos of St Kilda's buildings, and with recent website upgrades, we were able, this year, to list all these properties both under our [Mansions and Terraces tab](#) and show them on a current google map. The google map shows the

location of the houses built during the second part of the 19C. Indexing pins identify those that still exist (orange) and those that have been demolished (red) and link to images and information on owners, architects, and the stories discovered during our research.

Also, during the year with the assistance of our web facilitator, Simon Piening, baseline maps have been provided as a separate 'Maps' section on the website. These maps provide a key to data on the Mansions project adding valuable information about the gradual expansion of St Kilda from the St Kilda Hill area to the other areas of the city along the main arteries such as Alma Road.

The next stage of this project is to work with PROV (Public Records Office Victoria) to add other key maps including the earliest and most detailed map available recording native vegetation on the St Kilda hill area, called the *Nutt Map*. Its significance was recorded by one of our members, Gail Hastings, in her work on Church Square, Acland Street. Other maps include the MMBW maps recording land development from the late 1980's to 1940 in some cases. Assistance in digitizing these maps has been agreed by PROV.

Borne on Favouring Breezes – fifty years of the St Kilda Historical Society 1970-2020



In 2020, the St Kilda Historical Society turned 50 with little fanfare due to the pandemic. However, it proved to be a good time to reflect on our history, the history of a volunteer organisation that has functioned within its local community for fifty years - and continues to do so. The reflections turned into a book about the people and events that shaped the Society, and, in the process, inevitably provides glimpses into the history of St Kilda itself.

The book is finished and printed, awaiting an opportune moment to launch, and to celebrate, in person.

History of Music in St Kilda 1970s-1990s

By Sally Moore

We received a grant of \$12,000 from the City of Port Phillip to document the history of music in St Kilda in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. The grant was given as part of the City's project to reinvigorate St Kilda as the live music hub it was before COVID-19. Although the main outcome of the project is to publish a book, the grant was given to us for online and/or live projects only, so we are hosting three live Q&A sessions with bands from the three decades, which will be recorded and turned into podcasts to host on our website. We will also be recording several other interviews privately to also host on our website.

I am the Project Liaison; Brendan Moore will produce the project; Anna Bongiorno will assist with the researching and writing and Adam Ferrier will be a project consultant. We will all assist with the interviews.



To date, I have secured members of a 90s band, *The Mavis's* for one of the live Q&A sessions, and contacted the following people to connect us with other bands to interview and/or provide insight that we can use in our book: *Genevieve McGuckin*, partner of musician *Rowland S. Howard* and *Dave Stevens* from the Barkly Street record store *Pure Pop*. They are both eager to meet up and assist with the project, but lockdowns have held us back a bit. I have also been in contact and had an interview with *Neil Wedd* who was the band booking agent for *The Prince of Wales Hotel* in the 90s. I spoke to him for about an hour and got good quotes and information. He also mentioned some good contacts he has and is willing to share these with me.

We came up with a rough timeline for the project, however this has needed to be edited due to the current lockdowns. Thus, between July 2021 - February 2022 we will finalise background research and informal interviews, conduct interviews with fans, roadies, booking agents, contacts and record and transcribe for content dump. From November 2021, we hope to be able to run live gigs and Q&As with major stars. Some interviews may be recorded during the St Kilda Festival if it goes ahead.

St Kilda 1841–1900: Movers and Shakers and Money-makers

By Carmel McKenzie

My research into the people who 'made' Marvellous Melbourne, uncovers and records aspects and incidents in St Kilda's nineteenth century history not documented by existing publications, such as the two volumes of J.B. Cooper's *History of St Kilda 1840–1930*, nor in the numerous heritage studies commissioned by the City of Port Phillip. I met with the Society earlier this year and found a mutual interest in exploring St Kilda's cultural and social history. Consequently, the Society has offered to help find funds to engage community interest in the project. It has offered to contribute \$5,000 and to auspice a grant application to the City of Port Phillip in the second half of this year.

When I started my research, I was intrigued by the manner in which its wealthy residents sought to frame and embed a dominant culture. This is evident in attitudes toward the indigenous, the Chinese, the poor and servants and in measures designed to foster or exclude participation in cultural and social forums. By the mid-1880s, the demographics in St Kilda bulged with distortions. One-third of its residents lived off investment income. Merchants and warehousemen reliant on the consumption of imported goods formed the largest single occupational category among those who worked. The labourers, gardeners and carpenters whom the wealthy employed comprised the second, third and fourth-largest occupational groups in St Kilda in 1885.

St Kilda's twentieth century metamorphosis could not have occurred without the massive economic and social dislocation that upended the status quo in St Kilda in the 1890s, affecting its fabric far more markedly than other upscale suburbs of the time. This shakedown cleared the decks to repurpose its mansions as lodging houses or to redevelop sites for apartment construction, making St Kilda accessible to new cohorts that transformed and revitalised the suburb in the 20th century. As such, the evolution of St Kilda's current character forms part of a continuum that began in the nineteenth century and it is fascinating to reflect on how events dating back nearly 150 years explain why St Kilda now differs so dramatically from locales such as Toorak or Malvern.

4. COMMUNITY

We continue to value Council's support, including ongoing office/storage space, and look forward to contributing to thoughtful libraries of the future and participating in, and engaging, our communities.

We continue our work with the community, maintaining strong working relationships with:

- Southern Metro History Network
- CoPP Cultural Heritage Reference Committee
- CoPP World War 2 Commemoration Committee

Southern Metro History Network

By Maureen Walker

The South Metro History Network normally meets three times a year to exchange information. Obviously 2020/2021 was a different year and the group only met face to face on one occasion, in March. Reports given tended to focus on how individual societies were managing during lockdown when previously planned activities could not proceed. As with the general community technology was more widely embraced with websites being utilised and Zoom mastered for meetings, including AGMs. Social media became more important in maintaining connections.

To provide a service to members some societies did as St Kilda had done and made a special effort with newsletters.

Some societies reported an unexpected increase in membership numbers although others experienced a decline with a consequent loss of revenue. This was exacerbated where usual fund-raising activities could not be held.

Maintenance of collections became a major issue when access to a collection was denied for an extended period. Moisture, dust and infestations are some of the enemies of collections. In a prescient move Box Cottage in Ormond took measures in March 2020 to conserve its items but the outcome of these initiatives remained unknown for months. Only now, in August 2021, are they able to plan to reopen to the public.

The experiences of the pandemic will likely have some impact on the future operations of historical societies. The efficient use of technology, fulfilling custodial responsibilities and planning for less certain times are but some of the challenges that will confront future committees of management.

City of Port Phillip Cultural Heritage Reference Committee

By Phillip Stewart

I have been the Society's representative on the CHRC for the past four years. This Committee is currently chaired by *Councillor Heather Cunsolo* and it meets four times a year. The Committee includes the City of Port Phillip Heritage Officer, representatives of the city's local Historical Societies, heritage architects, and local historians.

The Committee discusses and makes recommendations on the City's heritage issues.

There are several ongoing issues being advocated in this Committee by the Society.

One is the continued advocacy for the restoration of the O'Donnell fountain near Luna Park. We have made considerable progress here, with a major cleaning, and some water flow in the fountain being initiated last year, but this flow is only as a temporary measure. We will continue to advocate for further improvements to be made by the Council. We have found that these measures move at an excruciatingly slow pace, requiring many urgings and reminders from the Society.

Another ongoing recommendation is that building plans in the City's archives be made accessible to the general public, as is the case in many other municipalities. Again, progress on this has been very slow.

A further issue discussed is the ways in which the COPP can lift the profile and recognition of the important indigenous history of the area, and of the involvement of the indigenous community and elders. Happily, progress is being made here.

The Society has continued its work on advancing the City's heritage surveys. The survey of the Balaclava precinct has been completed recently. The St Kilda precinct survey will commence soon, which is most welcome as the last survey was done in 1982, and it was somewhat inconclusive and at times inaccurate. These surveys play an essential part in understanding, respecting and preserving our heritage buildings and precincts.

City Of Port Phillip World War Two Commemoration Committee

Prior to the pandemic the City initiated a project to determine its response to commemorating the eighty years since the outbreak of the war in 1939. Two members of the Society took part in the meetings where it was generally agreed to focus on 2022, as 1942 had been very significant in Australia's story – not just its war story. The Committee's operation was put on hold but is expected to be re-activated with 2022 looming.

Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation

In 2020 the St Kilda Historical Society revised its constitution to include St Kilda's pre-colonial history. One of the measures taken to advance this important and long overdue initiative has been to link with the Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation group. This group has regular contact with the City's Indigenous Policy Officer, Todd Conde. Committee members also met with Todd Conde during the year.

Relationship with other organizations

St Kilda Army and Navy Club: Following the assistance SKHS committee members provided in 2020 to the Army and Navy Club with their history the Society has developed a cordial relationship with this organization. Where possible events are held there and the upgraded facilities have proved very welcoming. We encourage our members to join and take advantage of their wonderful facilities.

Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron: Earlier this year we received a request from the RMYS to assist with their consideration and disposal of memorabilia. This proved of great assistance and has led to a warm co-operative arrangement which is due to be formalized to make us associate members of the YMYS.

Pride Centre: With the launch of the Pride Centre in Fitzroy Street, another important social organization and facility has been added to the St Kilda area. We are keen to take advantage of this new facility to celebrate the diverse strands of the city's development.

5. COMMITTEE

Despite lock down and often lock out, the work of the Society has continued. All Committee Members have taken on responsibilities and continued with projects. It is very gratifying to have a committee made up of such knowledgeable and resourceful people, especially when it comes to helping the Society make the transition from physical to digital recording of our past. This appears to be inevitable and even welcomed and was identified as one of our major issues in the soon to be launched book of the Society, *Borne on a Favouring Breeze*. It is definitely the way of the future.

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2021

Statement of Income and Expenditure

		2020-2021	2019-2020
Income	Membership	1,400.00	1,620.00
	Events	0.00	774.82
	City of Port Philip Grant	5,400.00	5,400.00
	Donation	0.00	5,050.00
	Misc	0.00	350.00
	Interest ING	0.00	129.35
	Interest Westpac	13.54	21.79
	Short Stories Credit (overpayment)	625.00	0.00
Total Income		7,438.54	13,345.96
Expenses	Web Services		
	Westnet	479.40	479.40
	Website host	253.50	238.00
	Website development	1,494.38	3,067.43
	Zoom subscription	230.89	0.00
	Administration		
	Insurance	373.89	406.41
	Planning	900.00	870.00
	Administration	1,139.50	925.46
	Mapping	596.30	495.00
	Collection	0.00	268.40
	Constitution and handbook updates	3,200.00	0.00
	Logo Dev /graphics	66.00	737.00
	Auditor (nominal payment)	56.80	0.00
	AGM Preparation other costs	1,600.00	1,120.20
	Acquisitions	0.00	0.00
	Furniture	0.00	2,055.00
	Projects		
	Mirka Mora project	2,402.00	5,487.35
	Short Story Competition	3,925.00	0.00
	History SKHS Project	2,577.47	0.00
Total Expenses		19,295.13	16,149.65
Net surplus/deficit		-11,856.59	-2,803.69

Balance Sheet

Member funds	2020-2021	2019- 2029
Accumulated Surplus	39,138.19	41,941.88
Current Surplus (Deficit)	-11,856.59	-2,803.69
Total Member funds	<u>27,281.60</u>	<u>39,138.19</u>
<i>This is represented by:</i>		
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank - Westpac	27,281.60	39,138.19
Current Liabilities	0.00	0.00
NET ASSETS	27,281.60	39,138.19

Notes:

- The balance sheet shows an \$11,856.59 deficit for the year reflecting the Society's decision to use some of our accumulated savings on projects for the 2020 year.
- We also used some of this money to update our Constitution and all handbooks and other associated information and guidance to committee members and the community.
- Certificate re financial information is attached as a separate document.