



Annual Report 2022-2023

Prepared for

St Kilda Historical Society AGM 2023

27 August 2023

With the end of the Covid-19 restrictions, we have been back on track with both projects and events. We have also been able to resume activities in the office and continue with the effort underway to both reduce our physical collection and expand our digital collection on the website and also on Victorian Collections website, with the able assistance of committee member Lindy Smith.

Even more significantly we have been able to achieve funding and fruition of some of our most important projects including the publication and launch of the impressive book, *Mover Shakers and Money Makers* written by Society member, and committee member until recently, Carmel McKenzie. Earlier in the year another committee member, Sally Moore, successfully launched her iPod series *Unplugged*. These projects have taken us into new territory, which is reflected in some of the new projects underway and under consideration.

We have continued to have a strong committee despite a few changes along the way. Philip Bird is our latest committee member and, with his experience in arts and as an accountant, has taken up the role of treasurer and is in his element producing spreadsheets at the drop of a hat. Phillip Stewart has managed a considerable portfolio of events ranging from walks to talks keeping us all informed about the history of the area and engaged in some very enjoyable activities. Liz Kelly has maintained an unsurpassable standard in both replying to an incredible variety of inquiries and writing prolifically for the Newsletter.

Many of the ex-committee members take an active role in the work of the Society including Janine Burke working with the CoPP Cultural Development Fund staff responsible for acquisitions with the aim of revitalizing the operation of the St Kilda Library as a centre for information, activity and artistic celebration.

1. MEMBERS

Membership has grown slightly to 155 members (which includes 27 life members). We welcome our members' increased contribution to, and involvement with, projects.

1.1 EVENTS

Our member walks and talks this financial year explored our physical heritage and presented interesting stories by history aficionados.

Reflections of St Kilda December 2022

Professor Boris Frankel, shared some of his reflections and delightful recollections of St Kilda. As somebody whose family have lived in the area and his own work history at almost every notable venue in St Kilda, Boris was able to entertain and delight with his encyclopaedic memory of his early childhood



and youth. That combined with his grasp of the political environment led to a very lively discussion at the Army and Navy Club with about 50 people sharing drinks and stories. A great event needing to be repeated complemented by the wonderful social realism of images from Julie Millowick's considerable photo portfolio.

Photo of people waiting outside Lunda Park circa 1970. SKHS Collection donated by Julie Millowick photographer

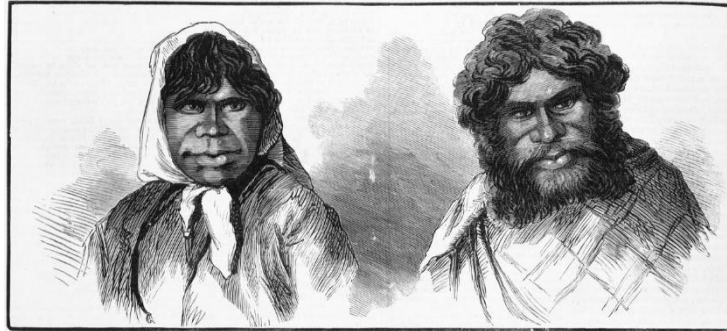
Presbyterian Church Organ: talk and recital February 2023

Paul Smith, from the Presbyterian Church in Barkly Street, organized for Society members to be introduced to the wonderful Fincham organ which is a long-standing feature of this church. For many it was out first visit to this beautiful church.

John Maidment, from the Organ Historical Trust of Australia, gave a very entertaining and detailed talk on the Fincham organ in the church and the history of organs and organ making ending with a brief recital.



Indigenous History Talk March 2023



*Jimmy and Nancy Dunbar, two well know members of the Boon wurrung.
La Trobe Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria*

Professor Ian Clark addressed a meeting at the Army and Navy Club by Zoom with members of the Glen Eira Historical Society joining our members for this address. Ian is a historian whose focus for his research is on the indigenous history of Victoria. Ian spoke of significant sites in the area, such as local swamps and wetlands where Boonwurrung people camped and sourced food, highlighting the names of many streets and mansions which reference the region's indigenous history.

St Kilda Hill Walk April 2023



Carmel McKenzie conducted a 90-minute walk around the former mansions and grand homes on St Kilda Hill. The historical walk included new information about the history of landmarks such as, Eildon, Stradbroke, Ripplemere, Wilgah Terrace and Oberwyl, uncovered by Carmel while researching her book *St Kilda 1841-1900: Movers and Shakers and Money-makers*.

Marion Terrace, St Kilda Hill. Photo: Dallas Graham 2022

Book Launch @ Linden June 2023

Carmel McKenzie Appropriately this much anticipated book - *St Kilda 1841-1900: Movers and Shakers and Money-makers* - was launched at Linden with over 50 people in attendance. Members and others were treated to wine and elegantly presented canapes followed by a presentation from Carmel on what lead her to write this enthralling history of early St Kilda. This was followed by an enthusiastic presentation of some of the highlights of the book by the deputy Mayor at the time, Marcus Pearl.



1.2 NEWSLETTER 2022-2023

By Krystyna Kynst, Editor

We published three member newsletters during the 2022-2023 financial year - in August, December and April.

Our stories came from volunteer contributors, many of whom have devoted hours to meticulously researching a favourite place or person from St Kilda's rich history. It is from this dedication that we learn new facts, such as Ken Norling's, clarification of the early history of Etloe Hall (Oberwyl), published in our August issue.

We dedicated the August issue to remembering the impact WW2 had on Australians, given 2022 was the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. On a lighter note, our December issue featured one of the more 'colourful' characters of 19th century St Kilda, and the accidental granting of the vote to women – quickly withdrawn. Then, to the 20th century, for a photo essay about the 1990s Acland Courtyard development. In April, we introduced two creative 19th century families (and their grand homes), who but for a gap of 20 years, would have been neighbours.

Our regular sections include answers to a selection of the many enquiries the Society receives each year. Most are about the lovely 19th century homes that either remain or have been demolished; but this year they included retail and public buildings, such as cafes, halls and the police station, and the theatrical family from Elwood – the Dickinsons.

Events are a big part of the Society's calendar and, apart from sharing interesting information, they provide lovely photos of members enjoying the heritage walks and historical talks. In our regular section, *Greetings from St Kilda*, we feature an old photo and encourage members to submit one from their family album.

Thank you to our regular contributors: *Maureen Walker* and *Liz Kelly*, as well as to *Bill Garner*, *Ken Norling*, and *Roger Neill*. And a big thank you to our graphic designer, *Jocelyn Harvey*, who has once again excelled in providing engaging designs.

If you missed your copy, you can find all our previous editions on our website [here](https://www.stkildasociety.org.au).



1.3 INQUIRIES

By Liz Kelly

This year the Society has received well over 100 email enquiries - the majority were people seeking information about the house where they live, or where their ancestors may have lived.

The queries covered a 180-year time span from St Kilda's indigenous history, through to questions about the St Kilda Esplanade Market and everything in between.

This year is the 150th anniversary of the St Kilda Football Club, which prompted a couple of emails and led to connection with the high-achieving Bage family of Fulton Street. Edward Bage was one of the founders of the club. Often queries generate interesting stories, like Madame Taillier who foraged in St Kilda's Botanic Gardens each morning looking for snails to serve in her French restaurant, or the history of the quaint little ANA building in Blanche Street.

Our correspondents come from all over Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. One gentleman asked for the history of the Elwood Glassworks, and we obliged with a couple of relevant websites - once I figured out where they were! In Elwood Indiana, in the heart of Hoosierland, where they have manufactured beautiful art glass for 100 years.

Sometimes emails uncover sad backstories. We have been approached a couple of times by the producers of the SBS program "Every Family has a Secret" which seeks to uncover long-suppressed, often dark family tragedies.

2. COLLECTION

By Lindy Smith

We have continued to do a lot of work behind the scenes on reviewing our collection of books and ephemera. More than 300 books and 600 documents have been assessed to determine which should be retained because they have a clear relevance to St Kilda, and which should be deaccessioned.

Christine Adin-James, a Society member who was formerly a librarian, has guided the review of our book collection. While the books that we are retaining have now been recorded in the St Kilda Historical Society section of the *Victorian Collections* database, the records are not accessible to the public as we do not operate a lending service. Almost all of the books are available in a Port Phillip council library or the State Library of Victoria and our collection is used for private research.

Of the books that we are not retaining, a bookseller who specialises in antiquarian books assessed 35 of the oldest items and told us that none are of financial value, mainly because of their poor condition. We offered to donate them to the State Library of Victoria, and some also to the Australian War Memorial but they both declined because they already hold better quality editions. The remainder of the books that we no longer intend to keep have been offered to libraries, other historical societies and community groups. Most of the offers were declined because these books are already in wide circulation.

The books that have not been accepted as donations will now be offered to members who attend the Annual General Meeting.

Having also completed our review of our collection of historical documents and other ephemera, many from the world war years, we are about to catalogue and upload images of the items that we are retaining to the *Victorian Collections* website. This website is a digital archive of items held by galleries, museums, libraries, archives, historical societies and cultural collections across Victoria. The records will be accessible to the public, adding to the hundreds of images that we have previously uploaded. The website address is <https://victoriancollections.net.au>. The items that we no longer intend to retain because they are not relevant to St Kilda will be donated to organisations that are likely to be interested in holding and preserving them and making them accessible to their members or the general public.

2.1 DONATIONS

This past year we took possession of the comprehensive record of the Bring Back Brooks Jetty campaign, including digital and hard copy materials that cover the five-year campaign, drawn from the records kept by Bill Garner, who was secretary of the group from its inception until late 2020 and was donated by him. Our August 2022 newsletter, [Issue 238](#), summarised the community fight to replace the demolished wooden jetty, which had extended from the Shakespeare Grove drain for many decades, with another structure.

Also, three interesting photo portraits entered our collection, generously donated by Clare and her husband Rod. The photos depict Clare's ancestors – Edmund Samuel Parkes, his wife Nancy Parkes nee Lawry and their daughter Agnes Sargood nee Parkes. Their story can be found in the Society's December 2022 newsletter, [Issue 239](#).

And committee member, Philip Bird, secured the private collection of Council produced memorabilia from the family of William Henry Greaves, who served as the Assistant Town Clerk from 1922 to 1934 and Town Clerk from 1934 to 1964 for the City of St Kilda, and upon retirement became its archivist.

2.2 ACCESSIBILITY

We continue to make the collection easily accessible to members and the public, by constantly adding information to our website and by incorporating innovative online mapping tools, to bring that information to life. Our successful partnering with *Victorian Collections* website will see more images of our collection preserved alongside other historical items in Victoria. And as we streamline and catalogue our physical collection, we make it easier for researchers, and others interested in local history, to view original sources.

3. RESEARCH PROJECTS

Unplugged in St Kilda - History of Music in St Kilda 1970s-1990s

By Sally Moore

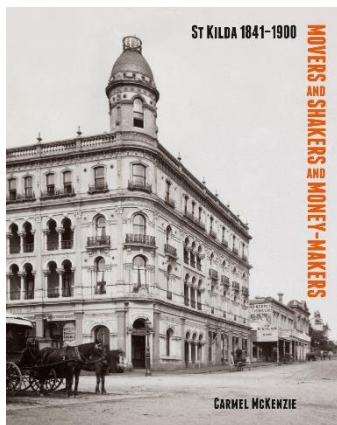
Our *Unplugged in St Kilda* project is finished, with the first of the 12 podcast episodes released on 29 June 2022 and the last episode uploaded in August 2022.



This year, I continued to promote the *Unplugged in St Kilda* podcast, our music project which was launched in July 2022 and funded through the City of Port Phillip's *Cultural Development Fund*. The series is still travelling through the Australian podcast charts, and has peaked at Number 1 in the Australian music history charts and Number 4 in the Australian music charts for Apple Podcasts. It has also had enough listeners overseas to make it into the podcast charts for Berlin, Switzerland and Spain, and regularly attracts listeners in New York. The podcast has had more than 7,500 listens so far and has regularly featured on Apple Music for events such as Australian Music Month. *Unplugged* was shortlisted in the Australian Podcast Awards.

The success of the series has led me to my next big project for the Society. Paulie Stewart, born-and-bred St Kilda resident from the Painters and Dockers, who I interviewed for *Unplugged*, asked me to co-host another music history podcast where we are going back to the 1940s and onwards to focus on the era of swing, jazz and big band in St Kilda, particularly featuring the late local legend, performer and music manager Denis Farrington. We have secured a range of great interviewees for the project, including Denis' partner Patti Lewis, some music enthusiasts and current musicians, who were influenced by Denis. We look forward to recording this short series and sharing it with you.

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



We have reported on this project in previous years and are thrilled to see the book finally finished and launched.

The Society has successfully overseen the \$8,500 City of Port Phillip *Cultural Development Fund* grant alongside its own contribution of \$5,000 and a donation to match of \$5,000 from one of our life members and local resident, John Bennetts and his Ann Ryan.

Carmel Mc Kenzie managed the process of research to completion with professionalism and tenacity; so, it has been great to see the book in its final beautiful form, and take part in its launch in June this year.

The Toffs and the Riff Raff

The paint was hardly dry on the book of St Kilda when we were approached by an experience documentary maker who lives locally, Marianne Latham. She was proposing to take the story of St Kilda to the 20th century to look at what happened to the area following the 1890's crash and the various devastating wars, which transformed the city as being a city for the wealthy, to one with some of the poorest people in Melbourne.

In the September 2022 *Cultural Development Fund* round, Marianne was successful in getting a grant of \$10,000 for this documentary, which is now in the development stage. The grant was is being administered by the Society. To get an idea of the lively and interesting approach Marianne is taking on this project see this St Kilda [Sizzle](#).

Maps and Mansions project – phase 3

By Helen Halliday

Our last AGM reported our efforts to gradually increase the number of entries for individual properties under the 19th century Mansions and Terraces section of our website, based on available historical information from Rate books and Maps, including our Vardy Maps, and images from a range of sources.

Similarly, we are gradually improving our Maps resources, which will give us an amazing and innovative overview of the growth of the City from 1840 to the middle of the 20th Century. Last year we liaised with the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) to assist us with providing digitised images of a number of early maps of St Kilda. This task was completed during the 2022-23 year. Since then, PROV has added a digital composite map of the MMBW plans onto the open source [Map Warper](#) online georeferencer tool, enabling accurate location of information about development over time from the St Kilda Hill area.



We are currently investigating making use of other web facilities to relocate this information onto our website thus ensuring that all information is accessible from one source.

We have yet to determine the final destination for the large composite physical map of the St Kilda area made up of MMBW maps and annotation for the City of St Kilda. This map is currently in storage.

Ailsa O'Connor Courtyard

By Helen Halliday

This is an ongoing project which is being done with the assistance of Janine Burke and with the aim of promoting our artists in St Kilda. Following the work Janine did on Mirka Mora, she has spent the last couple of years ensuring the resurrection of the works of Ailsa O'Connor held by the City of Port Phillip in its collection.

This collection includes the bronze sculpture *Adrift* which is displayed in a very inauspicious location in the entry foyer of the St Kilda Library. It was discovered to still be on loan from the O'Connor family and has now been formally given to the CoPP Art Collection.

Janine has diligently overseen the negotiation between the Council and the family to finalize a formal ownership agreement and a commitment from the City to provide a worthy home for the statue in a redesigned courtyard at the St Kilda Library. As mentioned previously, the status of the Library is still 'up in the air' as far as its long-term plans are concerned. We are currently 'fingers crossed'. In the meantime, Janine will be providing research material and any other documentation associated with the items held by the city and other information on the significant role played by Ailsa as an activist in her community. ([Issue 236](#) of the Society's newsletter (December 2021) features Ailsa's story as an ardent communist and keen activist as well as a local artist.)



4. COMMUNITY

Since Covid-19 we have struggled to maintain relationships with some of our local friends including the Southern Metro History Network, the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron, the Army and Navy Club. Regularly scheduled meetings, interrupted by Covid-19, have not as yet been re-established, partly due to the resignation of the committee member in charge of the relationships. We are hoping to rectify this with new nominations at the AGM 2023.

At the instigation of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery there is a sharing of our facilities at the Library and we hope that this relationship can be fostered. We also plan to develop a greater link with overarching organizations such as the The Prahran Mechanics Institute and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. The impact of Covid has alas made efforts in these areas difficult. We anticipate a renewal of contact with such organizations as a priority in the forthcoming year.

Communication with the City of Port Phillip

By Helen Halliday

Council has assisted us in a variety of ways including their annual financial support for the running of the Society, the office/storage space and the meeting space in the St Kilda Library. We also appreciate the efforts underway to provide better on-line services for the Council heritage collection.

In the previous year we provided input into a review of the operation of the St Kilda Library. We presented the Council with what we believed was a compelling argument to see ways in which Libraries in general, and the St Kilda Library in particular, could be enhanced to provide a real hub of engagement and activity. Unfortunately, the \$10M dollars that was to be spent on the St Kilda Library has been deferred and is proposed to be redeployed to all the libraries in the city.

Another cause for concern is the Council decision to halve the amount of funding going to the *Cultural Development Fund*. Whilst we understand the need for efficient management - the cause for the Council to reconsider its budget allocations - it seems unlikely that halving the funding of one very small component of the city's operations will have any impact on the budget in general but will have an impact on the operations of the Society and others like it.

City of Port Phillip Cultural Heritage Reference Committee

By Phillip Stewart

I have been the Society's representative on the CHRC for the past five years. This Committee is currently chaired by *Councillor Robbie Nyaguy* meeting around 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.

The work of the Committee has been interrupted by changes in staff and perhaps a redirection of effort with the Council's recent announcement of its commitment to music development in the St Kilda area.

I have continued to advocate for projects including the restoration of the O'Donnell Fountain and public access to the City's building plans archives, however overall, there has been little progress in these fronts despite their heritage value.

5. COMMITTEE

Lastly, but most importantly, is the fabulous work of the committee. 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, deliver exciting research projects, organise and lead fantastic events, and diligently oversee our valued collection.

Thanks to all including our members who continue to support the work of the organization by either becoming members or by continuing as members! We especially benefit from the many inquiries that we receive and the interest of members in drawing our attention to their own research work and pet projects. We value all of this information and energy.

Helen Halliday
President St Kilda Historical Society.