



# KENTIAN SOCIETY

SUPPORTING KENT STREET SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

# Newsletter

November 2025

## Two Blocks Of Land And A Sewing Machine (Growing up at 107 Westminster Street, East Victoria Park)

*[Editor: as noted in our last newsletter, one of the goals of the Kentian Society Museum is to fill in many of the gaps in the jigsaw that is the history of Perth. The story below by **Kaye Hill (Stewart), student 1969-73** is a great example of what former Kent Street SHS students can do to help meet that goal. Kaye was awarded first prize in the personal memoir section of the Town of Victoria Park Local History Awards in 2023 [see photo on page 20], and kindly gave permission for us to print this extract. Her complete memoir can be found on the Victoria Park Library website.]*

Two blocks of land and a sewing machine. These were the purchases my father made in 1947 when his accrued back pay of £120 finally came through from the Army after his demobilisation. The adjoining blocks of land were £40 each and the sewing machine, a Singer, was £42! 107 Westminster Street was part of Canning Location 2, Lots 60 and 61, on Plan 2570 in East Victoria Park.<sup>1</sup> The sandy double block, measuring a third of an acre, was towards the top of the hill near Devenish Street. It was to become the site of my family's home and the bedrock of my childhood memories.

My father, Kenneth Reginald Stewart,<sup>2</sup> was born in Manly, NSW in 1916. In 1937 he joined the 15th Light Horse regiment based in northern NSW. Six years later, in 1943, his Army career led him to Western Australia when his now mobilised regiment travelled by train to the State. He attended dances in Perth during his periods of leave and at one such event Irene Dorothy Palmer<sup>3</sup> caught his eye.

Irene was a shorthand-typist who worked at the Perth Building Society and lived in Carlisle. Ken and Irene announced their engagement on the 4 November 1944<sup>4</sup> and in the following January, Ken headed to Northern Queensland to take part as a volunteer in the Army's malaria experiments on the Atherton Tablelands.

With the ending of the war in September 1945 he was granted leave and returned to Western Australia in time for his wedding. My parents were married on 27 October at St Peter's Anglican Church in Leonard Street, Victoria Park.<sup>5</sup> They then resided with Irene's family at 85 Bishopsgate Street, Carlisle for the first six years of their married life.

**WELCOME** to your **Kentian Society e-Newsletter**, offering two-way communication with all interested members, families and friends.

We hope you find it both interesting and informative.

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After finishing her high school years at Perth Girl's School, Mum had attended Hartill's Business College in Hay Street, Perth. In 1937, after her secretarial course was complete, she immediately gained a position at the Perth Building Society in Barrack Street.

She loved her work at PBS where she made life-long friendships and enjoyed getting to know many of the Society's regular customers. In all she worked there for sixteen years.

When Dad was discharged from the Army in December 1945 jobs were scarce, so he made wooden toys for sale to Perth shops while looking for work. After successfully answering an advertisement in the paper for a carpenter, he 'went bush' building houses while also dealing with recurring malaria - a legacy of the Army's experiments.<sup>6</sup>

In 1946 he was hospitalised with the disease and, after a two-week stay, was deemed 'cured'. All through this time he and Mum saved as much money as possible with the dream of building a house of their own. Dad's accrued Army pay was the kick-start they needed toward achieving home ownership. With the land secured, planning began and by November 1948 a modest home on their elevated site had been approved. Building commenced the following year.<sup>7</sup>

### **House Construction**

I wasn't born until July 1956, but I grew up hearing stories of how Dad had built our house on weekends and before and after long days at work. The house was about one and a half miles from the Palmer's Carlisle home and Mum and Dad would ride their bikes between the two properties. What would only take 10 to 15 minutes now probably took longer then, as the roads were unsealed.



Irene and Ken Stewart, Oct 1949.  
The house is under construction, and Ken is wearing his carpenter's apron.

The design of the one-bedroom house was simple as war-time restrictions on the size of homes was still in place. It was, however, set apart from many other houses in the street by its three, rather than two-room frontage. This was made possible as the house was able to straddle the 80-foot frontage afforded by having two side-by-side blocks.

Having lived in the old weatherboard house in Carlisle all her life, Mum had dreamed of a brick home, but bricks were scarce after the war,<sup>8</sup> so the decision was made to build with asbestos.

The house was supported on concrete stumps all created using a timber mould Dad had crafted. Each morning, before work, he would cycle up to the block to pour another stump. There were 40 of them, so it took a while!

By 1951, after nearly three years of Dad's hard labour, the house was habitable, and they moved from Carlisle into 107 Westminster Street, East Victoria Park. Dad had been working for home builder, Plunketts for a couple of years by then, but he and Mum needed more funds to finish off the house, so he left his employment and partnered up with two others to head 'bush' again. As a team they travelled around building houses in places such as Morawa, Bruce Rock, Wagin, Bridgetown, Denmark, and Boyup Brook.<sup>9</sup> It was good money, and they were happy to sleep rough in shearers' quarters.

In 1952 with more funds in hand and an easing of restrictions on the size of homes, Dad set about the first of four extensions that the house would see in its lifetime. While our house continued to grow so did the number of neighbours in our section of Westminster Street.

When Dad started building in 1949 our house was one of only a few in the surrounding area. By 1955 our street was well-populated with both houses and cars. We had some wonderful neighbours over the years and formed lifelong friendships with many – the Roberts' family, the Osbornes, the Goulds, and the Goodrems, to name a few.



View from our side verandah looking down Westminster Street Hill, 1955

Part of Dad's transformation of the front yard included a series of deep steps that led up to the new front veranda from the verge. To the left of the bottom step was a limestone structure housing a letterbox, a milk box, and a bread box. Each had their own top-hinged small timber door, painted in different colours. The letterbox door had a glass insert so you could see if there was any mail before opening it.

Dad was ingenious in devising useful contraptions like these to make life easier. When the back porch was built between the kitchen and the laundry, he set a shoe cleaning box into the wall. The front cover was hinged at the base and when lowered legs dropped down to support a platform. All cleaning supplies were in the wall-box and you could rest your foot on the platform while you cleaned and polished your shoes.

In the adjacent laundry Mum was well ahead of her time with a fold-out ironing board built into the laundry cabinets; all of which Dad had crafted. I remember Mum teaching me how to dampen the clothes, roll them and wait awhile before ironing. I was allowed to iron the handkerchiefs. Originally, the laundry had a copper in the corner, but I was too young to remember this. I do recall the round Hoover washing machine with the wringer on top that superseded it. I would help Mum feed the sheets through the rollers on wash day.



Ken and Irene in their kitchen, May 1953

It was around early 1953 that Dad gave up the country work all together and started working for builders, Greenhalgh & Hewitt in Victoria Park. Shortly after, an offer of work came his way as foreman for the construction of the formwork at the BP Oil Refinery in Kwinana. He returned to Greenhalgh & Hewitt after Easter 1954, having obtained his Builder's Ticket and with the intention of striking out in business on his own.

Instead, the Company offered him a partnership which he accepted. In 1965 he took over the business, changing its name to K.R. Stewart Pty Ltd, and running the company until he retired in 1990 at 74 years of age.

## The Backyard

As I grew, I took great delight in exploring and uncovering the secrets of the house and block. There was crawling space under the rear of the house between those stumps that Dad had made, but concern about spiders and what lurked in the darkened corners generally kept me from venturing too far. I was always a little bit envious of my friends across the road at 110 (the Goodrems) who had lots of stand-up space for cubbies under their house due to the fall of the land.

One thing we did have though, was a cellar under the side veranda. It was reached from a sunken entry and low white timber door at the back end of the veranda. All surfaces were white-washed inside and there was a walk space down the middle with a deep bricked-up ledge, about hip-height, on either side where all sorts of gardening supplies and household detritus was stored. I was always fascinated with the content, especially my dad's old Army swag. My doll's pram eventually found its home there too, after I outgrew it.

My favourite place was the 'shed'. Built on red brick foundations with a cement paver floor, the shed was made from asbestos sheeting on timber frames with a pitched tin roof. There was a 'front door', but no steps leading up to it. To gain entrance I would have to clamber up into the doorway from the black sand in which the shed stood. Depending on the day, the mood, or the game at hand, the interior of the shed could be menacing and scary, or mysterious and strangely welcoming. The timber door would creak open at a touch to reveal the dimly lit interior. Tools, piles of stacked timber, machinery and all manner of builder's and household cast-offs would be visible.

In a corner at the back of the shed was an old hat tin, coloured in a mix of rust and plum. Near this was an oblong cane basket with tan leather patches at each corner and a lid that resembled the base but fitted neatly over the top to seal the container. These receptacles were home to old fabrics. I could climb into the darkened interiors, settling comfortably on their soft linings, secure in the knowledge I'd be hard to locate when a game of hide and seek was in progress. I later learned that the hat tin and travel case belonged to my grandmother. These items are now in my care.

## Shopping

In my younger years the concept of 'shopping' was based on what was delivered to our house or available locally. Mum and I did occasionally catch the bus into the city. These were special outings requiring my best dress and accompanied by my favourite doll, Rosemary.

As a special treat we would lunch in a small café in Bon Marche Arcade. I was allowed a Fanta with my lunch, even though both Mum and I knew it would give me a tummy-ache!



Irene Stewart & daughter Kaye,  
with her doll, Rosemary, in Perth about 1963.

From a young age I took great delight in checking the front boxes for the mail and milk and carrying the bread in after delivery by the baker's van.

At some point, in the early 1960s, two shops were built up on the Devenish and Westminster Street corner.<sup>10</sup> Once the bread van ceased delivering Mum would buy her bread from the corner store. I was often sent up there to buy occasional grocery items, and even cigarettes for Dad!

A very fond memory of life in the '60s was the weekly arrival of Ted the Grocer (Ted Brandli) on a Saturday afternoon. He'd pull up out the front in his truck and I'd yell to Mum, 'Ted is here!' I always accompanied her as she selected the purchases for the week from the open bags of produce in the back tray of the truck. Ted had a set of scales with the various sized weights necessary to weigh each item. When I was very little, he would pick me up and sit me next to the scales so I could see what he was doing. It was a sad day when Ted gave up his 'round'.

Our meat was purchased from Hendley's Butchers at 868 Albany Highway.<sup>11</sup> I recall the sawdust on the floor and the blue and white striped aprons the men wore. By the mid-'60s Mum was telephoning through her meat order on a Friday morning and Dad would collect it on his way home from work.

I think it was also on Friday afternoons that we went grocery shopping at Tom the Cheap grocers on the corner of Alday Street and Albany Highway.

Dad would bring along the cardboard box that was kept for carrying the shopping. Before that, I also recall going to Aikins, the grocer in Albany Highway not far from the corner of Basinghall Street.

As time moved on and I grew older, Mum and I would walk down to the Albany Highway shopping strip and often all the way down to the Victoria Park end of the highway. Mum shopped for frocks at Irene Whyte's (848 Albany Highway)<sup>12</sup> and I recall being bought a mauve maxi-skirt from Clarkes when I was in early high school.

JWs Cake Shop (previously Fritz) on the corner of Canterbury Terrace was an institution and I was always just a little bit intimidated by the lady who ran it. Photo Hendriks (at 871 Albany Highway)<sup>13</sup> also had a long history in the 'Park' and took our school class photos when I was at East Victoria Park Primary.

Next door was McGhee's Newsagency (at 869)<sup>14</sup> where we shopped for cards, newspapers, schoolbooks, stationery, and many other necessities. At some stage, probably in the early '60s, Dad's building skills were engaged to extend the living space behind the shop where the McGhee family resided.

Rod McGhee had a car with a 'hole' in the roof – I suppose it was a sunroof, but to me it was a peculiar opening for dispensing newspapers. As he drove by the house early each morning, he would toss the paper out of the roof of the car.

Lying in bed I would often hear the thwack of the rolled newspaper as it hit the red cement steps or occasionally, if his aim was off, the softer sound of it landing on the dewy grass.

Our pharmacy items and prescription medicines were purchased at Barry's Chemist. It was on the highway, but I can't recall where exactly.

## The floor of the shop used to 'move' and creak

I do know that the floor of the shop used to 'move' and creak when you walked on it. It was very uneven.

Mum and Dad were keen readers of paperback cowboy and western books and were regular customers at Ron Alans Bookshop, a book exchange, near the Town Hall in Victoria Park.<sup>15</sup> They would buy a selection of second-hand books, then be credited with half their value on the next purchase when they returned them for exchange.

Dad would buy his fuel from the Ampol station on the corner of Dane Street and Albany Highway. This was run by Dallas Osborne. The Osbornes were our neighbours at 103 Westminster Street from 1963 for some years and were such lovely people. I adored their children who were all a few years younger than me. Mrs Osborne was very welcoming, and I spent many an afternoon after school chatting away to her, or playing with their eldest daughter, Deidre.

### Schooling

In 1962 I commenced grade 1 at East Victoria Park Infants School. I enjoyed school and remember with fondness the Dick and Dora storybooks, starring Nip and Fluff, that got us started in the basics of reading.



*Miss Wilson's 1962 grade 1 class at East Victoria Park Infants School  
(Kaye Stewart - row 3, far right)*

I was apprehensive about starting school, but Miss (Elizabeth) Wilson, my grade 1 teacher, was very obliging when Mum requested I be seated next to my friend Dawn.

My wavy locks were cut short for the start of school and my grandfather bought me my first school case; a blue one, which I still have.

In 1965 I left the Infants School to enter the 'big' school. This was a series of buildings in front of the Infants section, closer to Albany Highway. There was a white line painted on the bitumen playground that marked the division of the two parts of the school and we were not allowed to cross that line.

A couple of my friends from houses nearby were a bit younger than me so still in Infants. At recess we would stand on either side of the line chatting away and occasionally daring each other to risk stepping across to the other side if no teachers were looking.

In the 'big' school we had a canteen that stood alone as a separate building in the playground. It was the assortment of lollies that attracted me with my lunch money ready to hand in my pocket. I would walk up the ramp and lean on the edge of the serving window, eyes wide, as I chose from each jar – three milk bottles, two strawberries, a banana, a snake, and occasionally a choo-choo bar!

That one was a dead give-away. The sticky, black toffee would coat my teeth, so sweet tasting, and ... long lasting. My black tongue always announced my misdemeanour when I arrived home from school.

1966 (grade 5) was especially memorable for me as our suburb gained a new Public Library.<sup>16</sup> I have always been a voracious reader, and I recall the 'library' in the Primary School as being a room toward the back of the main (south-east) wing of the school; quite near the staff room.

I was a frequent borrower, but always welcomed more opportunities to read, so it was a very exciting day when our teacher, Mr (Bevan) Hadlow, had us assemble in line to walk across the highway to the new library at 2 Mint Street. We were all registered as borrowers by the library staff and given our membership tickets. This was the beginning of my fascination with libraries, and I went on to eventually choose librarianship as my career.

Grade 6 saw me placed in Miss (Constance) Phillips' class. This caused unnecessary concern for my mother who was worried about her reputation as a strict teacher. She had no need to worry as Miss Phillips was a wonderful teacher and we got along very well.

She told our class that her fiancé, with whom she had hoped to have five sons when they married, was killed in the war. She remained a spinster and as far as she was concerned, her pupils were 'her children'. I was so privileged to be in her class where we studied many subjects that I'm sure were outside the curriculum of the day.

We learned an appreciation of the old English painters, such as Constable and Turner; we sang works by Schubert; tested ourselves on tongue twisters from Gilbert & Sullivan; and cast our minds across classic poetry, both English and Australian. My class was the last that Miss Phillips taught as she retired that year, 1967. We stayed in touch, and I was able to see her a final time in 1991 just before she passed away.

My years at East Victoria Park Primary School came to an end in 1968, with my move the following year to Kent Street Senior High School. It seems to me that the age of innocence and living each day as it came ended once high school began.

The pressures of adolescence, homework, exams, and knowing what you wanted to be or do once your school years were over made my teenage years more complicated than those lovely East Victoria Park Primary days.

Nevertheless, I have many fond memories of high school experiences, friendships and the more influential of my teachers. I sat my leaving and matriculation in 1973, going on to work in the Central Music Library at the State Reference Library for two years before heading to university to qualify as a librarian.

My subsequent career included many years working in music-related libraries and archives. To this day I credit my activities as an amateur musician, fostered through primary school, as a key influence that shaped the most important aspects of my life.

## **Back to the House**

In 1965, my mother's brother, George Palmer, came to live with us. He had been living in the Palmer family home in Bishopsgate Street, Carlisle caring for his parents until they passed. We were still only a two-bedroom house at that stage, so Dad enclosed the side veranda to create a room for George.

I doubt it was ever intended to be a permanent arrangement, as within about two years Dad embarked on an extension. A bedroom and bathroom were built to the rear of the house and accessed via a wide interior walkway from the kitchen.<sup>17</sup> This time there was no shortage of bricks for the construction.

I was, selfishly, very happy when Uncle George moved into his new room because this freed up the enclosed veranda to become our TV room! We already had a television; it was in the lounge room and had been purchased around the time that I started school in 1962.

My best friend of the time, Dawn Fairclough (from 90 Westminster Street) and I were taken into the Channel Seven studios by her mother to be in the audience of Children's Channel 7 with Carolyn Noble. While Miss Noble was interviewing individual children I remember leaning across as far as I could to get my head into shot. As a result, I tipped my chair over and fell off the raised seating dais!

With the advent of a dedicated room, television seemed to become far more important in our lives. I have no memories of watching TV in the lounge room with Mum and Dad, but once it was moved it became a gathering point every evening. I was very enamoured with all the after school shows when I was in primary school.

I can clearly recall visiting our lovely neighbours, the Osbornes at 103, and regaling Mrs Osborne with a run-down of all the shows on TV from 3.30 until 7.30pm Monday to Friday! In 1976, just a year after its introduction in the State, we retired the old black and white and welcomed our first colour television; a large Kriesler in a timber cabinet on wooden legs.

It was late in 1975 when Dad undertook our third home extension.<sup>18</sup> I was just finishing my first year at university (known as WAIT back then) and had taken over the lounge room to study. I worked off a card table and there were always books and papers spread over the floor.

Towards the end of that year, Dad started to draw up plans for a 'guest suite' out the back opposite Uncle George's room. It was a large room with an ensuite and a wall of floor-to-ceiling cupboards for storage.

It also incorporated a sewing cupboard for Mum so her Bernina (the £42 Singer was retired some years earlier) could remain set up for easy use.

With a desk in the corner and the old Remington typewriter at hand, I took over this space for the next two years and Mum was able to reclaim the lounge room.

The one downside to this extension was that it took over the outside fernery – a lovely garden space I had grown up with and something that Dad took great pride in. I well recall climbing under the tree fern from time to time looking for lost tennis balls and having to have a shower to rid myself of the itch-inducing spores.



Kaye Stewart and Peter the cat, about 1959.

This fernery was the location for many family photos including the obligatory early birthday photos of myself with our cat, Peter. He had been around for a few years before I arrived. He kept Mum company during the time that Dad was away working in the bush. Mum fondly recalled how he would chew the end of her pen while she was trying to write a letter to Dad.

I left home when I married [Trevor Hill] in 1979. Uncle George passed away in 1987 and 107 Westminster Street continued to be the Stewart family home until the 2000s. Dad passed way in October 2000 after a five-year battle with Alzheimer's.

It became obvious that the house needed ongoing maintenance and the large garden was too much for Mum, even with the help Trevor and I were able to give. In 2002 Mum decided it was time to move into a retirement village and the house went on the market.

It was sold to a lovely young fellow as a medium-term investment property which went on to become a share-house for Curtin University students until its sale and demolition in 2008. The block is now home to three houses all with a 105 (A, B & C) designation.

The 107 Westminster Street address has been re-assigned by Landgate to the 1970s-built office next door on the other side of the ROW, previously 107A.

So, sadly, both the house and the address of my family home have disappeared, but through hard work and vision my dad's 1947 purchase of those 'two blocks of land and a sewing machine' gave our family a secure and comfortable life. The house may be gone, but my memories live on, as does my gratitude for a happy childhood in a lovely house and suburb.

[**Editor:** All photographs used to illustrate this memoir are from the Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.]

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Certificate of Title, Vol. 1102 Fol. 475. 16 June 1947. Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Reginald Stewart, 2 October 1916 – 20 October 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Irene Dorothy Stewart (née Palmer), 10 March 1920 – 20 December 2018.

<sup>4</sup> 'Engagements'. [Notice for Irene Palmer and Ken Stewart], *The West Australian*, 4 November 1944, p.8; (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article44984465> : accessed 27 March 2020). Trove newspapers.

<sup>5</sup> 'Marriages. Stewart-Palmer', *The West Australian*, 14 November 1945, p.1; (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article44829810> : accessed 27 March 2020). Trove newspapers.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Hidden war experiments', *The Age*, 19 April 1999. Reprinted as 'Australian army uses soldiers [&] Jews in experiments', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 April 2019; (<https://www.smh.com.au/national/from-the-archives-australian-army-uses-soldiers-jews-in-experiments-20190404-p51ars.html> : accessed 29 December 2022).

<sup>7</sup> 'Proposed dwelling to be erected on Lots 60, 61 Westminster St, Vic Park for K.R. Stewart'. House plan approved by City of Perth, 16 November 1948. Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.

<sup>8</sup> 'Building industry. Shortage of materials. Bricks in demand', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 3 April 1947, p.4; (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article95599599> : accessed 14 January 2023). Trove newspapers.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart, Kenneth. *Autobiographical notes*, [199-]. Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.

<sup>10</sup> The land at the corner of Devenish and Westminster Streets was advertised to be auctioned as a shopping site on 14 September 1954. 'Shopping site', *The West Australian*, 8 September 1954, p.32; (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/49879056> : accessed 28 February 2023). Trove newspapers.

<sup>11</sup> *Western Australian Telephone Directory*, Classifieds, 1964, p.30. SLWA Q384.6 WES.

<sup>12</sup> *Western Australian Telephone Directory*, Classifieds, 1962, p.66. SLWA Q384.6 WES.

<sup>13</sup> *Western Australian Telephone Directory*, White Pages, 1964, p.134. SLWA Q384.6 WES.

<sup>14</sup> *Western Australian Telephone Directory*, Classifieds, 1964, p.129. SLWA Q384.6 WES.

<sup>15</sup> [Advertisement], *Park Post*, 11 April 1963, p.2. SLWA. Microfilm 994.11/EAS.

<sup>16</sup> 'New branch library opens on Tuesday', *The Park Post*, 9 June 1966, p.1. SLWA. Microfilm 994.11 EAS.

<sup>17</sup> 'Plan showing proposed additions to residence at 107 Westminster St, East Victoria Park for K.R. Stewart'. House plan, [c1967]. Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.

<sup>18</sup> 'Addition proposed at 107 Westminster Street, Victoria Park for Mr K.R. Stewart – Stage 1', House plan, December 1975. Personal papers of Ken Stewart, held by Kaye Hill, March 2023.

## Collecting Our Thoughts

People have been asking why our *Museum Collections Policy* mentions so many collections held by the museum, and also why it seems interested in historical periods before Kent Street SHS was even established.

Some of this apparent confusion might be due to misunderstanding the way the museum is intended to operate in future, compared with Society activities in the past since archiving began in 1994.

Many volunteers have collected a wide range of material over the last thirty years related to the history of Kent Street SHS. This has been preserved in what became known as the "Kentian Society Archives".

Over time, this collection of historical material has become a valuable resource for preparing wall displays, answering queries from Society members and the general public, and also providing interactive exhibitions for students for many years.

The Kentian Society has now moved to formally acknowledge that it is an organisation running a small community museum whose primary focus is on collecting materials for exhibitions and educational purposes, as well as archiving and research.

Why call it a  
museum,  
rather than  
the archives?

So, what will this mean in terms of how it operates in future? Why call it a museum, rather than the archives?

It's often said the main difference is that museums primarily exhibit objects for public viewing, often interpreting them through displays, whereas archives generally preserve and provide controlled access to unique historical documents and records.

While that's generally true, it isn't the whole story.

Few visitors realise that museums, despite appearances, serve purposes beyond mere exhibition. In fact, the vast majority of any institution's treasures often remain tucked away in climate-controlled storage, unseen by the public eye.

Perhaps the best way of thinking about the real purpose of a museum is that it's a special kind of research library - where artefacts often replace books.

But even that isn't the whole story either, because some specialised libraries also collect significant physical artefacts as well as books.

In the National Library of Australia (NLA), for instance, you can see the original manuscript of Banjo Paterson's "Waltzing Matilda," Captain James Cook's Endeavour journal, and William Bligh's list of mutineers.

Other treasures in the NLA are Azaria Chamberlain's birth records, Caroline Chisholm's letters and CSIRAC, the first fully automatic electronic digital computer built in Australia. These nationally significant items are often displayed in special exhibitions.

However, blockbuster exhibitions (no matter how interesting they might be) aren't the central focus of the NLA. Instead, its staff concern themselves mainly with public enquiries, supporting academics and researchers, and, most importantly, ensuring the preservation of Australia's national cultural heritage.

Libraries like the NLA make their collections accessible without displaying each item in a case with a label. Why should museums be any different? Besides, many museums also have a library anyway.

## It's a vital research tool for the museum staff

Very few people are aware that the WA Museum has an extensive library (and it's not the State Library next door). The Museum Library, located at its Welshpool site, is one of the oldest government libraries in the State, with book acquisitions dating back to the late nineteenth century. These include several rare titles on early voyages to Australia, and on the botany of Australia. It's a vital research tool for the museum staff and is also a valuable source of specialised publications for other Australian researchers.

The Kentian Society Museum is interested in material that has both display and research potential and is seeking to develop holdings that contain levels of information relevant to the scholarly researcher and casual museum visitor alike.

Like nearly every museum, our museum has physical artefacts as well as historical documents that are potentially useful to researchers of a certain topic or a person looking for example into where they (or their family) may have come from.

It's nice that some of the material held by the museum is captivating and educational, and will be used for displays and exhibitions, but that's not the main reason why it's there.

So, within the Kentian Society Museum as a whole, we propose to organise our resources into several "collections" based on their main purpose.

### **Museum Collection (currently about 9% of total holdings)**

When we design a display or exhibition, the objects in this collection may not necessarily be the initial focus and might simply be added to create further interest and/or context into the exhibition. The starting point will most often be a significant story from our local history.

Generally, the artefacts/objects won't even be considered until after the initial research for the display has been done. Original objects may not always be obtainable for a particular exhibition, and replicas, models, photographs or other graphic components may also need to be considered as acceptable alternatives (often using information from our Library and Research Collection).

Alternatively, and particularly while we build our collections, short-term loans from other collecting organisations may be needed from time to time. This is another reason why our museum will be looking actively at on-line digital displays as a technology-based alternative (or supplement) to our physical exhibitions.

## **Library and Research Collection (currently about 87% of total holdings)**

This is really the “engine room” of the museum. It’s where the stories we’ll tell, through our exhibitions and publications, will often be generated.

The purpose of the Research Collection is to accept and store books, manuscripts and other documents, photos and ephemera (such as menus, newspapers, posters, and digital artefacts) relating in particular to the history of education in Victoria Park and surrounding suburbs and to provide access to this collection as an information resource and service.

The main focus of the museum is the history of Kent Street SHS from 1940 onwards. Nevertheless, material from earlier historical periods (or related for instance to other schools across the southern suburbs of Perth) may also be needed from time to time to provide better contextual information for key stories or themes.

**This is really the  
“engine room” of  
the museum**

For instance, a story about some of our First Nations alumni students, whose families in several instances may have connections going back many generations within the broad geographic area where Kent Street SHS is now located, can’t really be limited to the period from 1940 onwards.

Or, to give another example, the history of Kent Street SHS is inextricably linked to the many primary and secondary schools (all across the southern suburbs of Perth, and even wider afield) that have contributed students to it throughout its existence.

Clearly, our museum can’t be expected to record the detailed history of all these schools, but there’ll be times when part of their story is relevant and also needs to be told to provide better context.

## **Education Collection (currently about 3% of total holdings)**

Items which have no place in the permanent museum collection may be accepted as an education resource instead. Such material will generally be acquired for display and ‘hands-on’ use in the museum’s public programs (especially with school-aged children).

## **Archives Collection (currently about 1% of total holdings)**

Almost all the historical material previously known as the “Kentian Society Archives” will increasingly be held in the various museum collections outlined above, leaving only a ‘general’ collection comprising inactive Society and Scholarship Foundation records and historical documentation about both organisations’ activities since their inception.

The current small group of Archives volunteers possess valuable institutional knowledge despite their dwindling numbers and energy levels. While they don’t feel able to manage the expanded museum’s workload, the Management Committee recognises their unique perspective remains essential. Going forward, these volunteers will focus primarily on maintaining the ‘general’ collection stored in the Archives.

Meanwhile, every effort will be made to recruit and train a larger group of new volunteers to start working, in accordance with the *Museum Collections Policy*, in a range of roles associated with the expanded operations of the museum.

Our first job as a museum is to house and protect the material we have in our collections and make sure that, with the correct packaging and storage, these artefacts and documents are available to future generations.

A museum also has to collect. We love to receive new objects, photographs or that old letter that has been found at the back of a cupboard.

But an object is only an object if we know its “provenance” (the detailed history of an item's ownership, custody, and location since its creation). We also need to determine if the object fits within the conditions of our collections policy. With this information, an object can become our research “gold dust” and that gets us very excited.

If you do happen to find something that you think could be our “gold dust,” please contact us, we would love to take a look – and it doesn’t have to be from the 1940s to get us excited, the 1990s is now classed as “vintage!”

*[Editor: the full Museum Collections Policy document is available on the Collections page of our website at [www.kentians.org.au](http://www.kentians.org.au)]*

## Doesn't Make Cents But Volunteering Is Rewarding

Ever wanted to contribute your skills, life experience, diverse background, and interests to a wider purpose, working in a friendly and stimulating environment?

Our museum is growing, and many of our dedicated senior volunteers are stepping back after years of service, so we need fresh faces. We're seeking curious minds from all walks of life—people eager to learn while making a real difference in our community.

In particular, we'd like to hear from people interested in working in a range of roles associated with the:

- **[Museum collection](#)** (people with an interest in or experience as curatorial staff responsible for the care, interpretation, and display of collections, as well as the development of exhibitions and educational programs);
- **[Library and Research collection](#)** (people with library, archival and history research interests or experience); and
- **[Education collection](#)** (people with teaching and practical skills).

Why not email us ([society@kentians.org.au](mailto:society@kentians.org.au)) if you're interested in any of the roles outlined above or want to know more?

## The Best Stories Start With Giving

As noted in our special September newsletter, our Museum has now been endorsed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as a public museum. As a result, we are now an approved Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) and many donations to the Kentian Society (Inc) organisation can now be claimed as tax deductions under certain conditions.

Becoming a financial member of the Kentian Society or donating to our organisation will support our vision and mission, bring our local stories to life and make them accessible for all. Financial donations are always very welcome, as they help fund major museum projects to ensure the history of Kent Street SHS is protected and accessible for current and future generations.

If someone donates any of the following to a DGR like ours, they may be able to claim a tax deduction:

- **Money:** Gifts of \$2 or more in any one financial year;
- **Property:** As well as physical things (such as land and objects), property includes rights and interests that can be owned and have a value (such as shares and ownership rights); and
- **Cultural items:** If an organisation is a public museum (like ours is), the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program also allows it to receive gifts of cultural items.

These donations are exempt from capital gains tax (CGT) and the donor may also be able to claim a tax deduction.

*[Editor: please see story on page 17 for more details]*



### Special Note: Bequests

A bequest is a gift left to the Museum in an individual's will. Naming the Museum in their will gives someone the opportunity to make a lasting contribution and every bequest, large or small, can help. People can leave:

- A residuary of an estate;
- A percentage of an estate;
- All of an estate;
- A specific sum of money; or
- A particular asset.

General bequests are preferred as they enable the Museum to allocate the gift to where it can be best utilised.

However, unlike donations made during a person's lifetime, bequests in wills offer no tax benefits to donors—a key distinction when considering DGR status implications.

## Cultural Gifts Program

Donors to the Kentian Society (Inc) may also be interested to know that we are now an approved Deductible Gift Recipient for the Australian Cultural Gifts Program as well.

Subject to specific criteria the Australian Tax Office (ATO) offers incentives (tax deductions and capital gains tax exemptions) to individuals 'who donate cultural items to Australia's public collections', with the exception of bequests arising from deceased estates.

The Museum's overall collections currently include objects like school uniforms as well as printed material such as books, journals, pamphlets, posters, and ephemera such as banners, badges and photographs. Gifts might also range from paintings, sculptures, manuscripts and personal papers to other valuable items like jewellery, ceramics, or technological, mechanical, scientific or social history collections.

While the Museum is pleased to consider these and other material donations, not all gifts will be eligible for tax exemption. In addition, not all potential donations will conform to our *Museum Collections Policy*. However we'll be happy to discuss these matters with potential donors.



The Museum will undertake to meet its responsibilities as a DGR, outlined in the Accepting Institutions Guidelines, however it will be the responsibility of potential donors to consult, consider and meet the specific requirements and conditions, including costs of approved valuers.

All requirements are outlined in the booklet *Cultural Gifts Program Guide* available on the website of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (see [www.arts.gov.au](http://www.arts.gov.au)). Further information is also available on the ATO website.

If you're considering donating material to the Museum under the ATO Cultural Gifts Program, please contact the Kentian Society Chair (via email: [society@kentians.org.au](mailto:society@kentians.org.au)) who can help guide you through the process of determining whether your donation qualifies for tax exemption.

**The Museum is of course always pleased to consider all material donations that meet the criteria of its mission and aims, regardless of their monetary value.**

## Your Say

*Readers appreciate the news brought to us by members, and often they're important for inclusion in our museum collections and displays, allowing us to honour the history and share the heritage of Kent Street Senior High School.*

Your contributions should be sent directly to [society@kentians.org.au](mailto:society@kentians.org.au)

**Subject: John Rozentals (Rozy)** [see September 2025 e-Newsletter]  
**From: Marg Fox (Jarvis), student 1956-57**

Many thanks for your newsletters and the happy memories that come with it. I was at school and university with Rozy, some of his best cartoons were done for the Engineering Faculty. He decorated the Engineers' Ball every year, but unfortunately I don't have any copies of "Croak".

*[Editor: All attempts to track down surviving copies of Rozy's school publication "Croak" have been unsuccessful so far. If you have any, please let us know.]*

**Subject: Let your hair down!**  
**From: Kim Hazelgrove, student 1968-72**

To all my fellow Class of '72, Happy 70th Birthdays this year. I'm sure none of us ever thought about this milestone 50+ years ago!



16-year-old Kim Hazelgrove - when he had black hair!

**Subject: First Day At School**  
**From: Chris Tedbury, student 1968-72**

On my first day of high school in 1968 my form teacher Mr Crowe turned on the PA system. We were then welcomed to Kent Street by the headmaster who told us "we should all be very proud of attending Kent Street Senior High School" because it was the only high school in Western Australia named after a street!!! And still is today!!!!

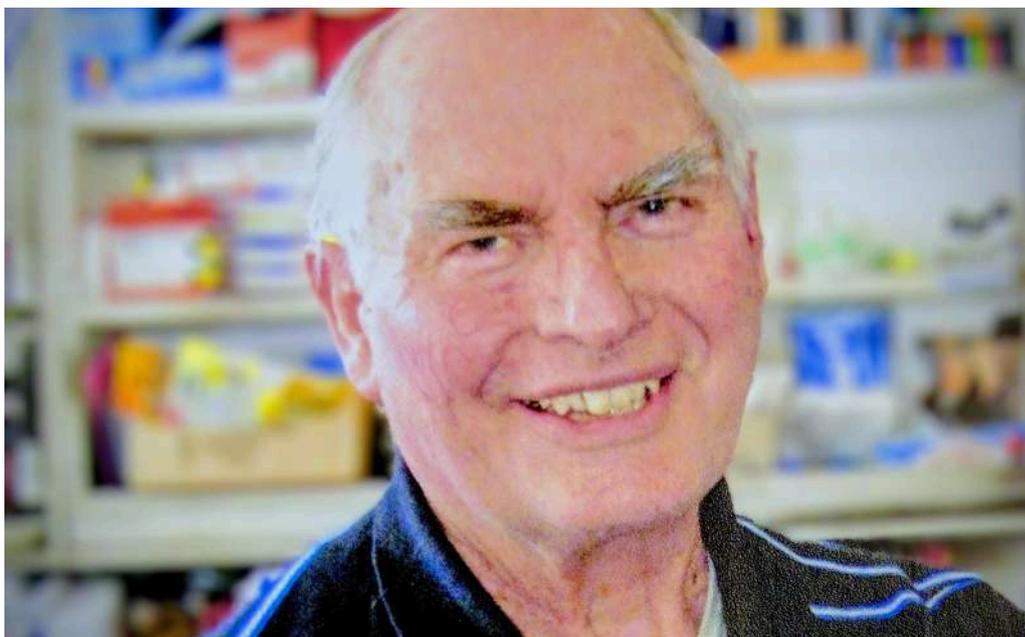
I think we were expecting something more important !!! Who else has a interesting story of their first day at Kent Street?

**Subject: Vale Rod McGhee, Legendary Newsagent**

**From: Gary McGhee, student 1968-72**

Dad passed peacefully [*in August this year*] after a long illness. He lived a busy public life, 64 years of it among the people of East Victoria Park in the newsagency that became his.

He is remembered by many for going the extra mile to help them find what they were looking for, his encyclopaedic knowledge of the history and people of the area, and chatting with all kinds of local characters when the shop wasn't too busy.



Rod McGhee 1941-2025

*[Editor: Gary kindly gave permission for us to reprint this message posted on our Facebook page, for those of you who may not have been aware of Rod's passing. Please share your memories of Rod by emailing us at [society@kentians.org.au](mailto:society@kentians.org.au)*

**Subject: First Day At School**

**From: Dave Tomlin, teacher 1984-2010**

First day as the Music teacher at Kent Street SHS, I was told my room was at the rear of the gymnasium.

Better than a dungeon, I supposed, and I did have a strong interest in sport.

Shared an office with Don Knapp (Aussie & Heat catcher), Ian Frame (Wildcats), Susie Wood (Captain WA Hockey), and Sue Malaxos (Olympian). Well, this is going to be fun....and it was, for the next 27 years!!

*[Editor: Dave certainly did have a strong interest in sport. A former Sheffield Shield cricketer, he was Kent Street's Music teacher 1984-87, before going on to coordinate the school's Specialist Cricket Program from its inception in 1988-2010.*

## Society Membership

*New Society Members and renewals since **June 2024**:*

Peter Burns, student 1957-61  
Geoff Cooper. student 1985-89  
Steve Dobson, student 1994-98  
Alun Dufty, student 1954-59  
Warren Grellier, teacher 1973-76  
Jennifer Hughes (Morris), student 1971-73  
Bob Jarvis, student 1959-60  
Pip Jarvis (Burbridge), student 1957-60  
Saikhanbileg Munkhbaatar, student 2023-25

Have **YOU** completed your **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / UPDATE?**

**Forms** are available on our website [www.kentians.org.au](http://www.kentians.org.au)

Your membership contributions help us to keep you connected, build new connections, promote reunions, and preserve your memories in our museum.

**Don't risk YOUR membership falling into arrears.** We are always reviewing our membership records, so if you want to remain a financial Society Member please make sure to update your details (including your email address) on our new Update Form. Also, remember to pay your membership fee into the bank account specified on the form.

**Don't delay - do it today.**



Mayor Karen Vernon and Kaye Hill with photographs from her First Prize-winning Personal Memoir at the 2023 Local History Awards Presentation Night