

Meetings of the Surrey Hills Historical Society are held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month (February to November) at 8pm.

Venue: Chandler Room of the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre at 157 Union Road, Surrey Hills.

Note that parking is no longer available in the railway car park, due to LXRA works.

Supper follows the presentation.

Visitors welcome - \$5.00 donation.

Members of the Society and others are committed to documenting the history of the area of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills through the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre Heritage Collection. In mid-2023 this collection will be formally handed over to the Surrey Hills Historical Society when we take up residence in the new Heritage Centre in the Canterbury Gardens. Volunteers working on the collection meet most Mondays, 10am-3pm. The collection is open to the public at this time. For further details email: heritage@surreyhillsnc.org.au

Items and stories from the collection appear on the Surrey Hills History Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Surrey-Hills-History-887879524593056/> and on Victorian Collections at <https://victoriancollections.net.au>

Surrey Hills Historical Society committee:

President / newsletter: Sue Barnett

Vice-President: Euan Walmsley

Secretary: Max Beaton

Treasurer: Alison Dews

General committee: Yvonne Bowyer

Newsletter editor: Sue Barnett

Address for postage: C/o Surrey Hills

Neighbourhood Centre

157 Union Road, Surrey Hills, 3127

Forthcoming meetings

NB/ Meetings are now to be held in the Chandler Room at 157 Union Road.

Tuesday 20 June: Emeritus Sir John Monash Distinguished Professor Graeme Davison, AO

'The Long Commute: How Melburnians Got to Work'

We welcome back Graeme to speak at another meeting. Long before the arrival of the car, Melburnians were among the world's most confirmed commuters. From the walking city to the horse-drawn city, through the steam city to the electric city to the automobile city, changes in urban transportation have left an indelible mark on Melbourne's landscape and society. In this talk Graeme will trace these shifts, plotting their causes and effects, and ask where to now?

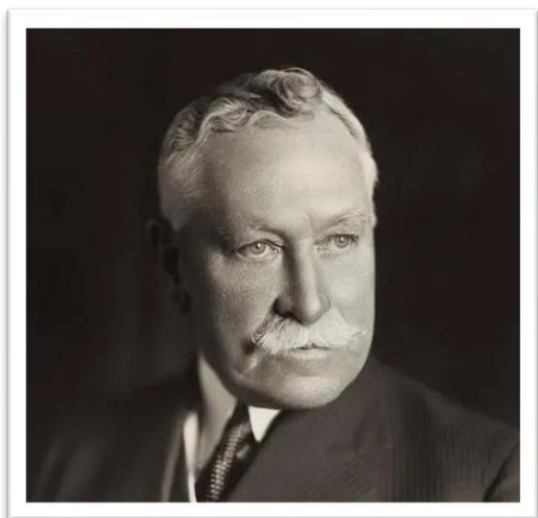


SHP1994- Frank Etheridge with his pride and joy outside his general store in Mont Albert Road, Surrey Hills

Tuesday 18 July: Graham O'Rourke –'Cherry Ripe, Freddo Frog, Old Gold!'

We remember them all! Before they were Cadbury's, they were MacRobertson's. Once Australia's largest confectionery company, MacRobertson's was begun, in 1880, by 20-year-old Macpherson 'Mac' Robertson in the bathroom of his family's Fitzroy home.

By the time he died, Sir Macpherson Robertson's philanthropy had resulted in parts of Antarctica, a girls' school in Melbourne, and an international croquet event, each named MacRobertson in his honour. Graeme will trace the MacRobertson story.



Macpherson Robertson (Credit: npg.org.uk)



People of 3127 : Dr William Alfred (Alf) Kemp OBE – 1881-1970



Known as Alf, Dr William Alfred Kemp started practice at 380 Mont Albert Road on 7th September 1928.¹ He was 47 years old. His path to medicine had not been a straightforward one.

Alf was born above his father's grocery store at 94 Spencer Street and he was baptized in 1895 by A B Maston at the Swanston Street Church of Christ². He would become a committed churchman throughout his life and, even as a young man, he studied at the Australian Bible College.

Alf's father, Benjamin James Kemp, had come to Victoria with his parents, aged five, and as a young man worked on the diggings at Chiltern and Rutherglen before the family settled in Melbourne. He met and married Agnes McGregor in 1872 and they had 3 daughters – Agnes Martha (Patty), Jane Alice (Jeannie) and Annie Grace before Alf was born in 1881. Patty had died from diphtheria in 1877, aged only 4 years, before Alf's birth.³ His other sisters grew to be adults but sadly, Alf probably had

few memories of his mother. Agnes died in 1884, aged 33 years, at 94 Spencer Street when he was only three.

¹ Ref: Box Hill Reporter

² In 1881, the Melbourne congregation of the Church of Christ settled in the former John Knox Presbyterian Church on the corner of Little Lonsdale and Swanston streets, purchasing the building two years later.

³ Diphtheria, typically a disease of childhood, was a major cause of childhood mortality. It was one of the first diseases to be identified as an infectious microbe, readily identifiable under a microscope but this did not occur until 1883.

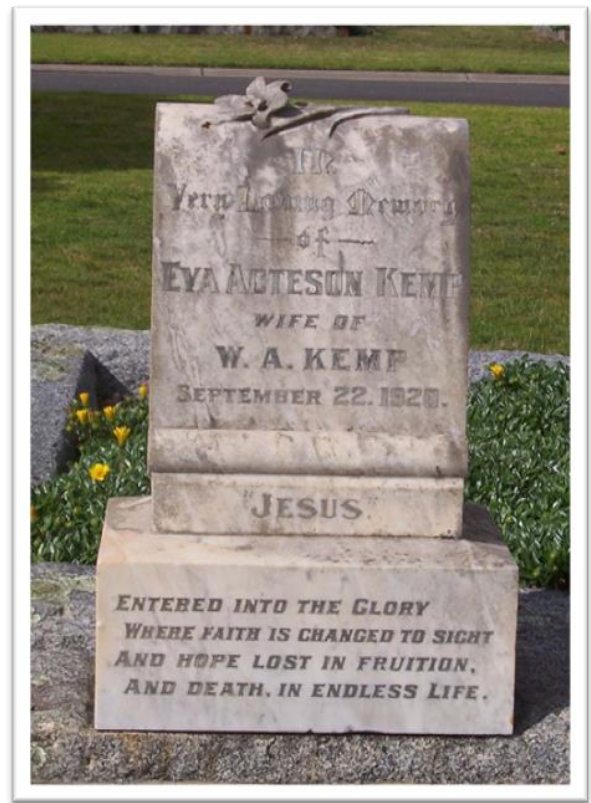
In 1886 Benjamin Kemp married for a second time. He and Alice Maud Galbraith had 3 sons - Arthur Benjamin, Bertram John (Bert) and Edwin Harry, all born in Essendon. As the eldest son, Alf was expected to go into his father's business and he left school, aged twelve, to do so.

In 1907, Alf married for the first time. The Christian Chapel in St Leonard's Road, Ascot Vale had been dedicated in 1893 and it was here that Alf married Eva Constance Acteson Burdeu. They did not have any children and she died in 1920.

Right: Eva Kemp's grave at Fawkner Cemetery: Church of Christ, Compartment B Grave 184

Alf remained in the B J Kemp grocery business until he was 36 when he left to concentrate on achieving his matriculation with the goal of entering the University of Melbourne to study medicine. It was 1917 and coincidentally his stepmother Alice died in June the same year.

Alf completed his medical studies in Edinburgh and Glasgow, qualifying LRCP (Edinburgh) 1925, LRCS (Edinburgh) 1925 and LRFPS (Glasgow) 1925. He did not return to Australia immediately but worked for the Scottish Board of Health – first in the 'Highlands and Islands Scheme'⁴ and later in the slums of Edinburgh.⁵



Alf met his second wife Margaret (Margie) Craig Abercrombie Nimmo in Edinburgh. Correspondence from a Kemp cousin from the USA states that the couple spent their honeymoon at the Kemp ancestral home, Lolham Hall, located near Peterborough, where Alf was superintendent of a large hospital for a time. He returned to Melbourne as the ship's doctor on the 'Port Wellington'.

It isn't known just why Alf chose Mont Albert as the place to set up his general practice. He purchased 380 Mont Albert Road on the corner of St John's Avenue from Mrs Sara Sanderson in c1928⁶ It became both his home and practice and had a tennis court at the rear. Patients entered at the side entrance and sat in the side hall and were then shown into the consulting room. The arched veranda at the rear was originally glassed in as a laboratory and there was a tennis court behind the house.

When Alf Kemp retired, his practice was taken over by Dr George Herbert Oldfield, who is listed at 380 Mont Albert Road with his wife Jessie in the 1949 electoral roll. A number of decades later, Graeme and Barbara Davison bought the home and Graeme recalls: "Among the curiosities of the house were the remnants of his old washroom and 'laboratory' on the previously glassed-in side verandah which adjoined his consulting room - our family room— and the pit in the garage for maintenance of his car, with pencilled notes of dates, mileage and quantity of oil on the wall."⁷

⁴ In 1912 the report of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service Committee or Dewar Report as it came to be known, exposed inadequate medical and nursing services across large parts of the crofting counties. Doctors were to be guaranteed a minimum salary and cost of travel would be reimbursed by the state. In return they would be expected to visit all those requesting help, be involved in public health and school work, attend midwifery cases and provide themselves with adequate transport.

⁵ He may also have spent time as a missionary in India.

⁶ 380 Mont Albert Road may have been previously used as a general practice as Dr Percy Liddle is listed in electoral rolls as being there in 1921-1923.

⁷ Prof Graeme Davison - Personal correspondence via email, 12 May 2023.

In retirement, Alf and Maggie moved a short distance away to 8 Theodore Street. Maggie died in 1959 and, at the age of 80, Alf married a third time. His third wife Enid outlived him; her extended family surrounded him with a family he never had of his own.⁸



SHP1948 – 380 Mont Albert Road, early 1980s

Dr Alf Kemp was a contributor. Outside his general practice, within the wider medical field, he served on the Board of Management of Fairfield Hospital, as a member of the Hygiene Council of Victoria and as an honorary clinical assistant at the Alfred and the Royal Women's Hospitals. Locally, he was on the planning committee for the Box Hill Hospital. He also encouraged his nephew-by-marriage, Dr Arthur Linley Gordon Hare and his wife Dr Alice Josephine Hare (nee Monk) to succeed Dr Tom Hogarth, when he died suddenly in 1945, to take over his practice which continues today as the Mont Albert Medical Centre.⁹

One of his significant civic contributions to the local community was as a Box Hill Councillor for 17 years. According to Jim Hare,¹⁰ Alf was a teetotaler and during one of his terms as Mayor he was a key figure in pushing through the referendum to make Box Hill a dry area. He was also Special Magistrate of the Children's Court, a member of the Children's Welfare Council of Victoria, a member of the Marriage Guidance Council of Victoria, a member of the Advisory Council of Box Hill High School, a Justice of the Peace and a Vice-President of the Burwood Boys Home for almost 30 years. He was awarded his OBE in 1963.

On a more personal level, Alf was a committed member of the Masonic Order. He was a Past Master of Lodge Antioch, held Grand Lodge honors as a Past Senior Grand Deacon and as early as 1917 was appointed the first Australian Chaplain by the Grand Chaplain in America.

All Alf's achievements and contributions were based upon his faith and his commitment to his church. His leadership roles began while he was still living in Ascot Vale; the Essendon church started in his home. He was a member of the Church of Christ in Box Hill, assisted with the church when it formed at Wattle Park and in the later years of his life was a member of the Surrey Hills Church. He devoted countless hours to church committees – the Church Conference Executive, the Church Advisory Board, the Home Mission

⁸ Death notice, *The Age*, 17 August 1970.

⁹ Personal communication by email, Dr Jim Hare, 5 June 2023.

¹⁰SHHS member and local GP, Dr Jim Hare's grandmother Irene Lilian Lister Burdeu (1887-1959) was a sister of Eva Constance Acteson Burdeu, Alf's first wife.

Committee, the College of the Bible, the Sunday School Union and from 1940 as a director of the Austral Printing & Publishing Co.

Obituaries and published sources, such as electoral rolls, dates from births, deaths and marriages, and official portraits such as the one of Alf as Mayor of Box Hill, perhaps paint a rather serious profile of the life of Dr William Alfred Kemp. However, he was said to have been a gregarious man and a few anecdotes give light to a few more idiosyncratic aspects of his character. His niece from Essendon¹¹ recalled that his driving was notorious in Surrey Hills. Apparently not a good driver, he was also frequently distracted, taking his eyes off the road as he waved to people he knew.

Jim Hare met Alf Kemp a few times. On one occasion in c1966 he recalled him at a meeting at St. John's Camberwell where E. Stanley Jones¹² was speaking. Dr. Kemp showed Stanley Jones the original notes he had made when he had heard him speak, in Jerusalem, in 1927! Stanley Jones was impressed that he had kept them so long. On leaving the meeting, on what was a cold wet night, Jim witnessed Dr. Kemp pull out his white handkerchief, hold it up, and walk straight across Camberwell Road, with all the cars screeching to a halt. He believed the pedestrian always had right of way.

Another anecdote told by Jim, and others, is that Alf often used to walk to Box Hill station in his gumboots through the mud and when the city bound train passed Churchill Street, he would throw his gumboots from the train, recovering them on return.¹³

Thanks to Helen Harris of Box Hill Historical Society for the copy of Dr Kemp in Mayoral robes and an obituary written for the Church of Christ magazine; to Professor Graeme Davison and Dr Jim Hare for their assistance in providing information for this article.

In search of 19 Langford Street

A timber home, stained dark brown on the outside with an angled chimney in clinker brick and an entrance porch to the side, this house was built in c1934 for Arthur Oliver Gyles (b. 1905) and his new wife, Marjorie (nee Brown). Inside there were exposed wooden beams and timber paneling and the windows featured diamond lead light. Outside in the front garden they planted what grew to become a huge lemon-scented gum.

Arthur worked for the Defence Department at Maribyrnong and at the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory in Royal Park during WW2. Four children – Andrew, Jeffery, Oliver and Felicity grew up in the house and attended Chatham Primary School. After 30 years, in 1966, Arthur and Marjorie retired to Ferntree Gully.

Recently Felicity returned to Surrey Hills after a long time with her daughter, to find that her childhood home was no longer, replaced by a large more substantial home of the type that is currently fashionable.

Sadly, the Gyles family didn't take many photos and all we could offer to stimulate memory were these newspaper real estate clippings from 1979 and 1983. They are part of the Alan Holt collection of index cards, covering all manner of aspects of the history of 3127.

¹¹ Identified in Jocelyn Hall's notes as Mrs Doreen Strach; relationship not established. These notes were compiled in November 1998 from informal interviews.

¹² Eli Stanley Jones (1884–1973) was an American Methodist missionary, theologian, and author. He is remembered for his interreligious lectures to the educated classes in India. His seminal work, *The Christ of the Indian Road* sold more than a million copies worldwide after its publication in 1925.

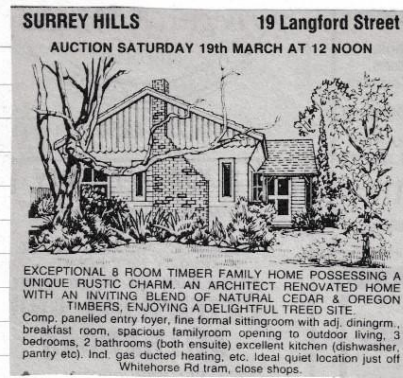
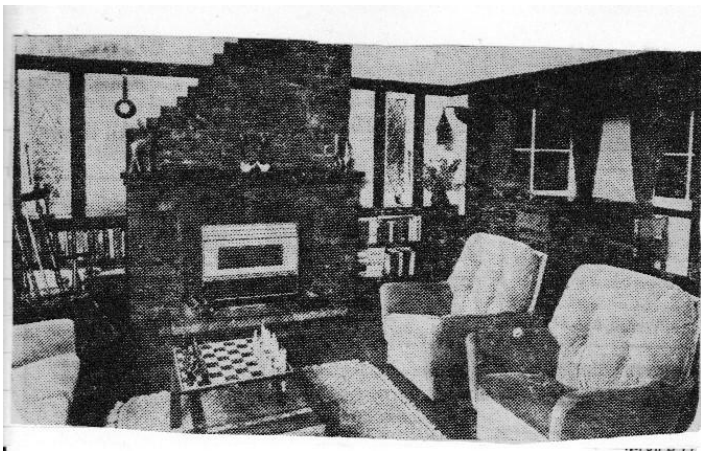
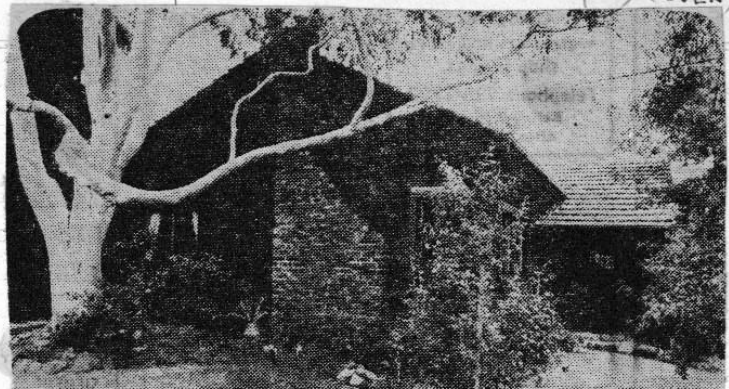
¹³ Personal communication by email, Dr Jim Hare, 5 June 2023.



Age 28/4/79

"The Sun Easterly"
3.5.79 p.13

19 LANGFORD ST
(OVER)



Progress Press
7/3/83 p.7

The last time that 19 Langford Street was offered for sale as an original piece of local heritage was in 2011 when it was sold by Fletchers for c\$1,000,000.

Their advertising blurb described the property as follows: "Land of opportunity... Set deeply into an enchanted garden setting, this whimsical 3 bedroom timber late 1920s home is laden with country house character and quaint original detailing and is further enhanced by a home office with a separate entry and lagoon-style unground pool at the rear. Featuring a panelled entry hall with ebonised timbers leading to a cosy formal living room with colonial style glazing, stained glass highlight windows, an atmospheric open fireplace, dark timber ceiling beams and picture rails and an adjoining formal dining alcove, 2 front bedrooms, one with walk in robes, a shower ensuite and side garden access, the other with a discreet vanity, a hallway linen press and tiled walk-through main bathroom complete the original floorplan. A modern timber kitchen and bright adjoining casual dining area with air conditioning overlook a very large casual family room with sliding doors opening to the fenced pool area and paved rear garden bathed in northern light. The main bedroom is vast and features walk-in robes, ceiling beams and rear garden aspects, while the oversized laundry has great bench space, additional storage and external access. ..."

Photos of both the interior and exterior can still be seen at <https://fletchers.net.au/3554/19-langford-street-surrey-hills>

We're including this article on the slim chance that somewhere out there, there just might be a street photo that captures the house nestled behind its beautiful gum or that someone has retained one of Fletchers' advertising brochures.

Heritage awareness



The Heritage Council of Victoria has launched a new Heritage Information Pack for local councils and the public to address the gaps around public knowledge and appreciation for heritage, and to try to help demystify the heritage system for the public.

The pack is designed to be digital and downloadable, with the option of printing hard copies to display and handout, for ease of distribution to the widest public audience. The information is not specialised to local councils or other organisations; it is a broad summary of themes to support the public's fundamental heritage knowledge.

What is your role in heritage protection? Quoting the website – “Not everything we value can be protected by government legislation, but this does not mean it is not significant to use. Protection of our heritage can be enabled by individual and community involvement. It all starts with you!”

The Heritage Information Pack is well presented and covers a wide range of issues. Take a look!
https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/heritage-protection/heritage_info_pack/