

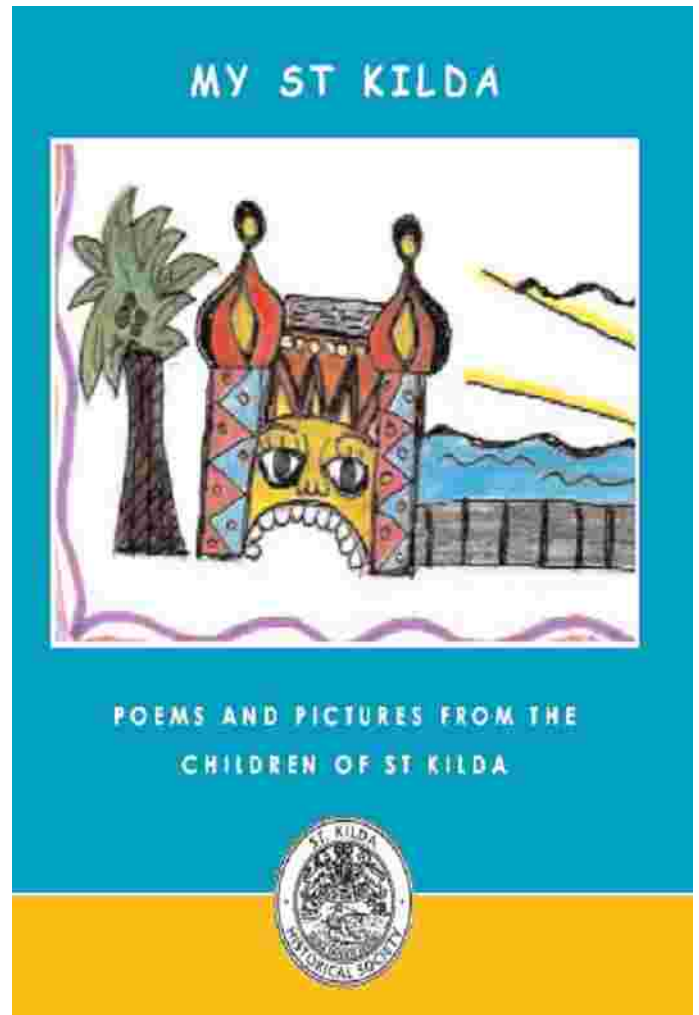
‘My St Kilda’ DON TAGGART MEMORIAL AWARDS

On Wednesday 25 July, the St Kilda Library in conjunction with the St Kilda Historical Society launched the book ‘My St Kilda: Poems and Pictures from the Children of St Kilda’.

Grades 3–6 children attending St Kilda Primary School (Brighton Rd) created and illustrated the poems for the inaugural Don Taggart Memorial Awards which were presented to six children during SKHS Heritage Day in December 2006. SKHS put all the poems together as a book in 2007 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Proclamation of St Kilda as a municipality. St Kilda Library are currently displaying the poems in a wonderful exhibition in the children’s section of the library.

The City of Port Phillip along with Biggin and Scott Real Estate were the main sponsors of the publication, and two other sponsors, Elwood Community Bank and Chisholm and Gamon also attended the event.

Our President, Meyer Eidelson opened the proceedings and gave those present a brief history of the award and the past president after whom it was named. He also introduced Claudio Peruzza of Biggin and Scott who said that he was very pleased to be associated with SKHS. Meyer then presented the six winners with a copy of ‘My St Kilda’ which contains all the poems entered for the Poetry Awards.



A copy of our ‘Granny’ book was also given to each pupil of St Kilda Park Primary School who attended. They are to do paintings for this year’s awards.

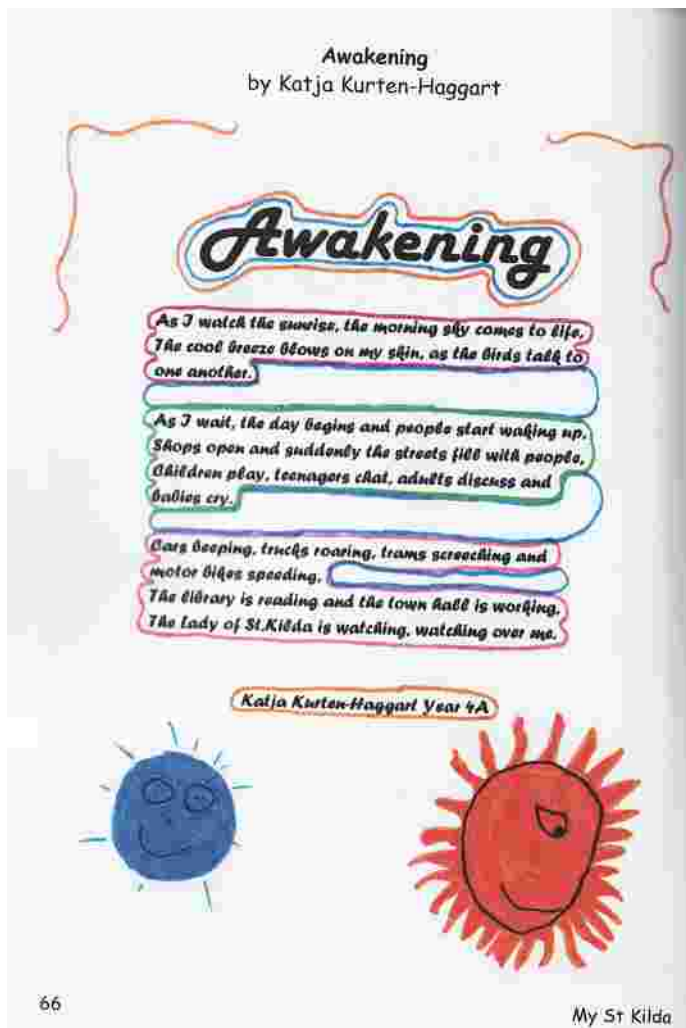
COPP Mayor Janet Bolitho spoke of the importance of being aware of our local history and the 150 years of the City of St Kilda. Councillor Janet Cribbes was present as well.

After all the speeches and presentations, Meyer Eidelson and Carol Stals conducted a Quiz about St Kilda and St Kilda Park Primary School with the children. This was a rather noisy and excitable time.

We must thank Carols Stals for all her hard work to ensure that the book was such a success. Thanks also to John Hulskamp for the work he has done laying out the book for printing and Linda Todd, the children’s librarian, who arranged the poetry exhibition and also made badges to mark the occasion.

Primary schools in the municipality will receive a copy for their libraries and ‘My St Kilda’ will soon be available to borrow from the St Kilda library.

(Dorothy Lobert)



St Kilda Library
Children's Book Week
August 18–24

Palace Burns

Images courtesy of Peter Johnson, 11 July 2007

Iconic Aussie Night Club Burns

(The Australian)

Palace Nightclub Blaze

(Herald Sun)

Nightclub Fire under Control

(The Age)

Fire Seals Buildings Fate

(The Age)

Demolition likely after Palace Burns Down

(www.port Phillip.vic.gov.au)



View in c.1923



View in c.1930

In c1920, a new Palais Pictures was constructed on the corner site where the old **Palais de Danse** had stood since the Phillip Brothers constructed it in 1913. The old building was then re-erected on public land adjoining the original site behind a new front.

Following extensive renovations in 1926, the new Palais Pictures was destroyed by fire (picture below). It was replaced by the current Palais Theatre. The Stardust Lounge was added to the **Palais de Danse** in 1962. Both burned down in 1968 and the 1800–2000-person capacity Palace Entertainment Complex replaced them from 1972 to 2007.



After the 1926 fire (photographed by Les Mecoles).

L'Alliance Française sur St Kilda Hill

Eildon, 51 Grey Street, St Kilda



Photography: Marie-Jeanne Hoffner

Image: courtesy of Francoise, *Alliance Française*: www.afmelbourne.asn.au

Alliance Française purchased 'Eildon' at auction in August 2006 by reportedly outbidding a brothel and a religious organization. After extensively renovating the Victorian mansion as their new premises and to mark Bastille Day, 14 July 2007, they opened it up to the public and conducted guided tours of the building. Originally named Barham Hall and rebuilt as Eildon¹ by pastoralist John Lang Currie, it now houses several classrooms, separate adult and children's libraries, an art gallery and studio, a theatrette and a wine cellar, plus a central room which may be turned into a café in the future.

Berthe Mouchette, her sister, Marie Lion (both women ran Oberwyl Ladies College, formerly called Etloe Hall, in nearby Burnett St) and others founded the Melbourne Alliance in 1890. Since then, it has led the way in promoting French language and culture in Victoria. As part of a worldwide network of 1081 Alliances, it is also one of the oldest and largest of the 33 Australian Alliances in the Federation – with a membership of some 450 people and a roll-call of 3500 students each year.

The following article about 'Eildon' is extracted from the SKHS publication, *A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and their People* (pp131–3) written by Richard Peterson, and published in 2004. Hard copies are available for purchase at the front desk, St Kilda library (members \$20; non-members \$25+ \$5 postage/handling) or as an e-book from: <http://www.skhs.org.au>

John Lang Currie (1818-98) was born at the village of Yarrow, south-east of Galasheils in the Scottish Borders, about 30 km south of Edinburgh. After a local grammar school education, at 21 he sailed to join his cousins, near Bulla. He saved and borrowed and in 1844 with school friend Tom Anderson, bought the 13,000 hectare pastoral property Larra in the shadow of Mt Elephant with 1,500 sheep, for £750. He began his stud with Saxon merinos from Van Diemens Land (Tasmania) and in 1849 added merino rams from Camden in New South Wales and was seeking the advice of its owner, Sir W. Macarthur. In the 1860s he established the 'Larra lustre merino' with fine glossy long wool. Currie's success in developing the Australian merino wool was widely acknowledged and by 1870 its quality was unrivalled in Victoria. In London one bale was declared 'perfect'.

He sold rams all over Australia, South Africa and the USA. By the mid 1890s, he owned 32,375 hectares and 100,000 sheep, described as the finest sheepwalk in the world. He extended his interests to pastoral properties in New South Wales and Queensland. He was active in local Western District politics, but never sought election to the state Legislative Council. He gave substantial donations to Ormond College at the University of Melbourne, the Presbyterian Church of which he was an elder and other charities in Victoria.

He was chairman of the Victorian Woollen and Cloth Manufacturing Co. which was founded in 1865 as the first woollen mill in Victoria. In 1879 he became director of Australian Frozen Export Co, which first exported meat to the United Kingdom. He was a pillar of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria. He also owned an extensive collection of Australiana ...

By 1871, Currie had effectively retired to St Kilda. In 1871, Currie commissioned the most prolific Melbourne architects, Reed and Barnes to design his house ... Still flourishing today as Bates Smart, in their 150th year of practice, the firm founded by Joseph Reed in 1852 is probably Australia's oldest architectural practice ...

Eildon remains one of the largest houses in St Kilda and one of the larger surviving nineteenth century houses in Melbourne. It is double-storied and its seven bay façade faces the sea, yet the rear elevation in Grey Street is also grandly architectural yet carefully detailed in the Baroque manner with a continuous balustrade parapet. It has a double-storied arcuated and pilastered loggia derived from the designs of Bramante and Vignola of the Italian High Renaissance. It is flanked by pavilions with Palladian windows over canted bay windows ...

It is clear from the 1871 tender notice that Currie's Eildon formed major additions to the earlier Barham House, now consumed within it, designed for Edward Bernard Green (1809-1861) by John Gill (c1797-1866), and out for tender in August 1850. After Wattle House, Barham House is the second earliest substantial building in St Kilda. Barham is a village in Kent, midway between Canterbury and Dover ...

Green was a prominent Melbourne city land owner and Honorary Secretary to the Melbourne Hospital. When he died in 1861, his executor was his neighbour, William Nicholson (1816-65), the Melbourne grocer who became alderman and then Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne; then entered parliament in 1859 and immediately became Premier of Victoria (1859-1860) ... Nicholson himself moved into Barham House ...

When he died, his widow Sarah married Richard Twentyman and remained at Barham House until June 1870. A year earlier (August 1869), the Green Estate had sold Barham to Currie, subject to their tenancy ... Within two years, Reed and Barnes had completed remodeling Barham for John Currie and he had renamed it Eildon ... Currie died at Eildon, eighteen years later, widely mourned ... Mrs L. Currie continued to live at Eildon into the twentieth century. In the 1920s, Eildon was subdivided ... and from about 1930 it became a guesthouse ...

¹ Not far from Currie's birthplace in Galasheils, Scotland, the three Eildon Hills are the subject of several legends and tall stories. The name derives from Insular-Celtic, 'aill' a cliff or hill, and 'dun' an enclosure or protective fortress – which Iron-Agers built on top of the north hill, the remains of which can still be seen today. (FB)

Gatwick Hotel, Fitzroy Street St Kilda

Rose Banks, co-owner of the historic Art Deco Gatwick Hotel talked informally to SKHS members on Sunday 8 July. The Gatwick, originally built as a Gentleman's Guesthouse in the 1920s, is one of the few family-owned hotels in Port Phillip City. Rose runs it with her twin sister, Yvette, and until she passed away in 1988, it was run by their mother, Vittoria Carbone. Vittoria was born in Malta and relocated with her Merchant Navy husband to Melbourne in 1951. When asked about her mother's philosophy in life, Rose replied that Vittoria, who came to be known as 'Queen Vicky', held the view that 'everyone deserves to be treated with respect' and that she ran the Gatwick 'more like a home than a hotel'.

Rose and Yvette helped out at the Gatwick from an early age and absorbed their mother's philosophy. With no questions asked, they continue to provide low-cost accommodation for some 80 people who occupy 65 single and a few double rooms. The hotel supplies electricity and water, furniture and linen. There are fridges in most rooms and residents share a common kitchen and a large dining room.

On being queried about overheads connected with the operation of the Gatwick, she said that their major expenses are: fire prevention; safety maintenance; security services; and insurance premiums that quadrupled in the last five years, as well as State Government Land Taxes, up from \$2,000 five years ago to \$54,000.00. Rose and Yvette do most of the administrative and operational work and try to cut costs by doing much of the cleaning, painting and minor repairs themselves.

Rose, who conceded that although the Gatwick is often labelled 'a haven for junkies' said: "Everyone has a right to a roof over their head, even junkies! They are all somebody's sons and daughters". Rose commented that the huge increase in late night venues selling alcohol and recreational drugs have not only created wider social problems, they have created problems for the Gatwick, whose residents get blamed for anti-social activities by outsiders behaving badly in Fitzroy St: "Our doors close at 9.pm", she said.

Although around 85% of people have lived there for more than five years and the longest-staying resident moved in, in the mid 1960s, apparently some authorities cannot consider the Gatwick Hotel 'a fixed address'. Rose told us the poignant story of one long-time resident about to be discharged from hospital. When his case-worker arranged a ticket to his hometown of Perth, he insisted: "The Gatwick in St Kilda is my home, not Perth".

Up till about three decades ago, Rose thinks there were around 600 or so rooming houses in St Kilda, a legacy from the Great Depression of the 1930s. As the seaside resort began to crumble under the weight of the downturn in the economy, proprietors and people fell into financial black holes. A number of grand hotels, mansions, guest houses and terraces were converted into private hotels and inexpensive rooming houses, e.g., 'Eildon'. However, soaring inner suburban real estate values have now reduced the number to around 60, and the Gatwick is one of the few still remaining.

Like the suburb of St Kilda – which plays a major role in providing 'a place of sensuous resort' for people from other Melbourne suburbs and from interstate and overseas – the Gatwick is 'a place of last resort'¹ for others cast adrift in, or by our society. It is one of the few places where people experiencing personal hardship or family alienation – including those suffering from physical disability or mental illness; gambling addiction, alcohol or substance abuse – can receive low-cost shelter, as well as direct and indirect support.

(F.Bader)

Blame it on the Gatwick

by

Wendy Butler

(a former resident)

Homeless camp in Fitzroy Street,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Rubbish thrown in Jackson Street,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Keith Richards falls from a tree,
Football fans doing a spree,
St Kilda player hurts his knee,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

Hoons in heat drive round
the streets,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Local girls work their beat,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Public transport running late,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Mary Kehoe waits her fate,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

Parking attendant beaten up,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Beggar holding out his cup,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Woman dies on P & O cruise,
Italians beat the Socceros,
Local drunks are on the booze,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

Nightclub revellers urinate,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Drunken hoons regurgitate,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Hewie's restaurant closing down,
Burrito's café leaving town,
St Kilda's score is going down,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

Local milk bar losing trade,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Tourist chased by man with blade,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Police assaulted on the beat,
An incident in Arthur's Seat,
St Kilda suffers new defeat,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

Frasier's dog has passed away,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Computer viruses hold sway,
Blame it on the Gatwick.
Superman takes off again,
Naoami Campbell chucks her
phone,
Hungry lions on the prowl,
Blame it on the Gatwick.

¹ A term used 15.3.2007 by David Brand, former St Kilda Ward councillor, while opening 'St Kilda by the Sea' Exhibition marking the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Municipality of St Kilda in 1857.