



THE CLUB HOUSE PAINTINGS



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We thank the History Interest Group (esp Colonel Rick Olive) and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

PAINTINGS OF THE CLUB HOUSE

Introduction

Hanging in the Glasgow Room, our main dining and function room, is a pair of paintings by Kenneth Wenzel.

They depict the two buildings bought by the Club in 1946 and occupied as our Club House since 1947. Many members and visitors nominate these as their favorite paintings in the Club's collection of artworks, so a brief story of their background is appropriate.¹

The paintings are views of the club from different angles. One features the Jacaranda trees at the rear of the buildings and is titled, not surprisingly, "Jacarandas". It was commissioned by the Club for the Club's Centenary in 1992. The other is a view focused on the front of the Green House that was commissioned about 10 years after the first painting. It is not officially titled, but is referred to commonly as "The Green House".

Both these paintings have been hung in the main dining room since their acquisition, attracted considerable attention and much affection, and have been used as images on the Club's Christmas cards.

The Artist

Kenneth Wenzel is a well-established Sunshine Coast based artist. Ken was born in Brisbane in 1930 and commenced painting at the age of fourteen years, using paints left to him by his mother who had painted as a hobby. At the age of fifteen he won the Sunday Mail's children's art competition as well as a 'Highly Commended'.

The same year, Ken began his first job, painting costume jewellery. This remained his principal source of income for several years. During this period, he won first prize in the RNA show for four consecutive years.

Ken began life as a full-time professional artist in 1974, and retired at the end of 1993 following a very successful last exhibition at Montville Gallery. Ken lives on the crest of the Conondale Range near Maleny.

Wenzel's oil paintings, particularly his landscapes are highly regarded. He is reported to have forayed into the world of art by default. As a youngster he had his heart set on being a musician. However at the age of 11 years he suffered trauma to the head leading to a heart attack and a stroke which irrevocably damaged his coordination. He says he could never dance or walk properly thereafter and missed the last 15 months of primary school. He commandeered his mother's oil paints and brushes and the rest is history.



Always motivated to improving his artistic skill, he used his spare hours painting to satisfy his ambition to create beauty with his brushes and paints. He is a nature lover with a deep affection for the Australian landscape and coastline, which he captures on canvas in minute details. His particular ability is to render the interplay of light and shade in his work.

¹ This Note is largely based on information provided by Colonel Rick Olive who was President in 2000-2001 and has first-hand knowledge and recollections of the decisions made at the time these paintings were acquired.

“Jacarandas”

The Club Committee spent many months planning the Club’s Centenary celebrations held in 1992. The notable events included a Royal visit to the Club by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, and the commissioning of the “Jacarandas” by Mr Kenneth Wenzel.



Although it is not immediately obvious, the Club House is slightly different compared to today’s appearance. A close study will reveal the changes that have occurred since the painting was completed (based on a photograph taken in 1990) perhaps most notably in the renovations and additions of the mid-1990s. The major changes are summarised below:

- In the foreground there are four jacaranda trees shown, and now there are three. The second one from the left does not look healthy and died not very long after this painting was done. The tree on the left has now become quite large.
- There have been several modifications of the buildings as well.
 - In 1993-94 there were extensions done to expand the kitchen and main dining room. This changed the connection between the two buildings and included the blocking-up of at least one window.
 - The louvres on the ground floor of the green House have gone, and the verandas on both its upper floors have been changed significantly.
 - In the late 1990’s the outbuilding on the far right of the Club was demolished.
 - A new rear entry and new lift were built at the back of Montpelier around 2008.
 - There are also now high-rise buildings across Wickham Terrace and to the right-hand side of the Club in this image.



The painting is from a viewpoint in the lower carpark to the north of the jacaranda trees.

There is now a covered carport/shed covering that spot and an identical photograph cannot now be taken because of that and because the jacarandas obscure a clear view,.

A comparison with a broadly similar view is shown overleaf, and the differences and changes in the buildings become more obvious.



The painting depicts a view from the early 1990s. A close comparison with the 2017 photo reveals the major changes to the buildings. Note the changes to the verandas and rear of the Green House, the extensions for the new kitchen and connections between the buildings, the new rear entry and lift, the removal of the old outbuilding on our boundary to the right of the rear entrance, and the changes to the background due to the new high-rise buildings.

“The Green House”

The high-rise buildings on the south-eastern side of Wickham Terrace are also part of the story of the ‘other Wenzel’, the painting of the Green House.

By the early years of the new millenium the Club had accumulated a considerable number of 50 Year Members, whose long membership is recognised by a complimentary lunch each year. At one of these rather boisterous lunches, attended by more than 100 older members, the diners decided it was appropriate to pass the hat around and make a donation to the Club. Several thousand dollars was collected and the Club President was asked to accept the donation and make arrangements for it to be suitably applied.

The Club President suggested to the General Manager that a photograph be taken of the front of the Club from the top of the Citec Building (downhill and on the other side of Edward Street), sought and received approval from the Club Committee, and Ken Wenzel was asked if he was interested in a commission to do a painting of the front of the Club to go with the one of the Jacarandas.

It was fortuitous that Wenzel was interested and also that the jacarandas were in their full glory again when all this happened and a peek of them in bloom can be seen down the exit driveway on the right.



The facade of the Greenhouse was not always as attractive as portrayed in this painting. For many years the lower verandas were closed in with fibro sheeting. This had created enclosed spaces that were useful for storing the tables and chairs that were needed in the various formal dining areas of the Club.

All this equipment is now able to be stored in other storage spaces created between the main Club building and the Greenhouse during the 1994 extensions.

The re-opening of these verandas restored the wonderful appearance of the largest remaining wooden house and also the one closest to the centre of Brisbane.

A series of photographs overleaf show the transformation from those ugly days back to the grand and gracious colonial appearance that befits a building in this location.



c1985: Note the enclosed verandas of the Green House, the gap between the front of the buildings where the Military Bar was built in the mid 1990s and that, the veranda has not been extended (that was part of those works), the positioning of the flagpoles, the 'top bar in Montpelier' and the first entry awning.



c2016: Shortly after the Green House had been repainted for the first time in about 20 years. The re-opened verandas of the Green House and the Montpelier veranda extension outside the Military Bar are clearly visible.



Nov 2017. The extension and connection works of mid 1990s are clearly visible.

