



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Mt Victoria Historical Society Annual General Meeting

followed by a talk by

**John Sullivan, Photographic Curator at the Alexander Turnbull Library
on Wellington Photographers**

Sunday, October 10 at 4.30 pm
(note the meeting time, which is not usual for us!)

New Crossways, 6 Roxburgh St

Membership renewals

Our new membership year starts in July, so subscription renewals are now (over) due. A renewal form accompanies this newsletter. This year we would like to encourage members to consider receiving the newsletter by email. This will help reduce our delivery time and costs. If you are happy to do so, please include your email address in the appropriate place on the form. We appreciate that some members do not have email, however, so will continue to deliver hardcopy.

AGM

Nominations are being accepted for the committee, to be elected at the AGM, so a form is attached for you to nominate yourself or someone else. We are always keen to have new members join us!

This month - July - in history

This newsletter was originally drafted in July, but although this is now out of date, it seemed interesting enough to leave in and share. A search of New Zealand History Online (www.NZHistory.net.nz) revealed two events for July with Mt Victoria links.

On 7 July 1924, Arthur Porritt won a bronze medal in the 100m at the Olympics, one of only four New Zealanders to participate at those Games. In the film, *Chariots of Fire*, his character was named Tom Watson, apparently out of modesty on Porritt's part. He later became Governor General of New Zealand and Porritt Avenue is named after him.

On 11 July 1877, Kate Edger became the first woman in New Zealand to gain a university degree and the first woman in the British Empire to earn a BA. (See our newsletter No. 46 for more information about Kate Edger).

Farewell to Edna Ashenden

In July, MVHS bade farewell to Edna Ashenden, who leaves her Austin St home (the Ashenden home since 1929) after 46 years. Edna has been a member of the Society since the beginning and a great supporter, along with her late husband. She was also one of the participants in the Historical Society's 2006 oral history project, so many of her memories of life in Mt Victoria (along with beautiful photographs, have been captured for perpetuity. We wish her all the best for life on the Kapiti Coast and know we will keep in touch.

HISTORICAL NOTE

As the granddaughters of one of the Congregational Church folk referred to in the October 2009 article entitled 'Rahiri', we were encouraged to write about our grandfather, James Harper Mouat, who arrived in Mt Victoria about 1900 from the West Coast, after making some money gold mining near Charleston.

James Harper Mouat and seven brothers made up their minds to leave Unst in the Shetland Islands in 1868, as fishing was diminishing. They made their way to Australia, working in Queensland and Victoria, mostly gold sluicing. In 1879 they sailed from Melbourne to Westport where they purchased claims on The Nine Mile beach, near Charleston.

James married Charlotte Harper in Charleston and they decided to bring their children to Wellington for a better education, with their earnings from gold mining. He purchased 11 properties altogether, including four on Kent Terrace, and chose to make 28 Majoribanks St the family home. He lived there, repairing the other properties for rental, till he died in 1928, aged 78. James Mouat had three sons (one of whom died in the flu epidemic of 1917) and four daughters. The two surviving sons, James and Bob, eventually moved to the Hutt Valley where we, their daughters, still live. James' four daughters married and moved elsewhere.

Other Shetland relatives to come to Mt Victoria were the Grays (who finally settled in Grafton Rd in Roseneath) and the Harpers, cousins of James Harper Mouat. William Harper, brother of James Harper Mouat's wife Charlotte, arrived with his family from Nine Mile beach in 1916 and bought 103 Majoribanks St, which stands to this day. William's brother Anthony had a boot shop in Courtenay Place and the Harper Building still stands on the corner of Courtenay Place and Cambridge Terrace, today housing the Craftsman Restaurant. William Harper died in 1939 aged 80.

By Muriel and Marjorie Mouat (*1st cousins and daughters of James and Bob respectively*)



William Harper and his wife, Joanna, with their children, probably taken at their home at 103 Majoribanks St. Children are (l-r) Joanne, Jim, Annie (Marjorie Mouat's mother) and Bill.

Postscript:

One of the properties owned by James and Charlotte was at 36 McDonald Crescent. Being a landlord was clearly not without its trials. In 1914, James and Charlotte had to appear in court at the hearing of an insurance company manager accused of exposing himself. It was alleged that he "did wilfully do an indecent act, namely expose himself, in a house, No. 36, McDonald-crescent, intending thereby to offend certain females." His defence was that he went there to inspect the house and get the insurance. "I was very hot when I went in the house. I took off my coat in a downstairs room, and swung it backward and forward to cool myself." Charlotte appeared as a witness because she had given a key to the property to the insurance manager; James, as the owner, corroborated her evidence. (The alleged offender was released on bail pending trial.)

[*Evening Post*, 28 October, 1914]



James and Charlotte Mouat