



# MT VICTORIA

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## Historical Society News

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## No. 56, June 2011

Apologies for a six-month silence on the newsletter front. We are pleased, at last, to bring you edition No. 56.

(Note: if you have recently joined and wish to see some of our earlier editions, you can find them on our website. We don't publish the last two years there, however, so that members have an 'exclusive'.)

### News

Key items of news from the committee this month are that we have started planning for Heritage Month in September. The theme selected by the Wellington Region Heritage Promotion Council this year is Sport & Recreation (for more information, go to <http://www.wellingtonheritagepromotions.org.nz/> ). We have a number of ideas we are exploring and will let you know as soon as we have finalised details.

We are also working on a display panel to fill one of the large display cases on the wall of the Embassy Theatre as one enters Majoribanks Street. This is a very exciting opportunity for us to share some of the heritage of Mt Victoria with more residents and with the tourists who often want to explore 'old Wellington', or who tramp their way up to the town belt and Mt Victoria. We are grateful to Wellington City Council for this opportunity and for their offer of assistance. That assistance is not going to be financial, however, so the committee proposes to use the majority of its small savings for this important project. This is exactly the type of project for which such funds are accumulated. We also want to do it well, so we may seek additional funding through sponsorships or grants.

### State Highway 1 and Mt Victoria/Basin Reserve heritage

It's now official: the New Zealand Transport Agency will release proposals to "improve transport connections between the inner-city and eastern and southern suburbs . . . for public engagement" on 2 July. As many will know, MVHS has great concern about the Wellington heritage that may be lost as a result of the roading round the Basin Reserve and the proposal for a second Mt Victoria tunnel. We also have great concerns about the modus operandi of NZTA, having been promised consultation on the development of proposals 18 months ago and heard nothing since. The consultation period is now going to be for only eight weeks. MVHS will be vigorously campaigning on behalf of the unique heritage which could be lost in the Basin Reserve precinct and Paterson Street. If you would like to know more, please feel free to get in touch with Joanna Newman. In the meantime, you can check out our website to see more about the heritage we are particularly concerned about: <http://mvhs.wellington.net.nz/>. Also, do share it with friends and acquaintances if the subject comes up (or more proactively!).

### These days in history

NZHistory.net.nz tells us a couple of significant anniversaries are coming up and both have Mt Victoria connections. June 24th is the anniversary of the first publication of *Truth* and July 11 is the anniversary of Kate Edgar's becoming the first woman in New Zealand to graduate with a degree from university. We featured Kate Edgar in Newsletter 46 and Pat Lawlor, who became chief subeditor of *New Zealand Truth* in 1920, in Newsletter 40. If you've joined the Society since they were printed, you might like to check them out on our website.

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We've featured history on some of the large houses on Pirie Street in previous newsletters (No. 39 and 50). The houses on this stretch of the street are such a feature of the landscape that we now share the background to another - the semi-detached pair at 65 and 67 built by Percy Bydder, a young builder just starting out in his career. There is a connection, too, with No. 96 Brougham Street. Turn over to read more about Charles Whittingham Wycherley and Mt Victoria.

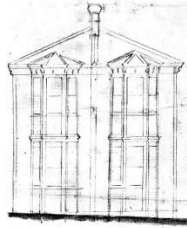
## HISTORICAL NOTE



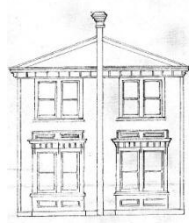
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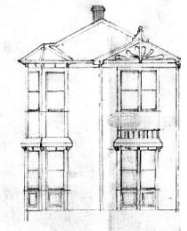
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### *Charles Wycherley*

Standing tall along Pirie St is what must once have been an impressive row of Edwardian houses - there's only one out of place in this line of large two-storey buildings. Their natural relationship to the rises and hollows of the hillside has been lost over time to the cut and fill of road construction but they still display their original lines and heritage. Built in 1902 and 1903, they now range from the beautifully restored, to the tragically dilapidated and the well-maintained-but-functionally-modified. Numbers 65 and 67 were built in 1902 for Charles Whittingham Wycherley.

Charles Wycherley arrived in Wellington, from Weymouth in England, in 1886, with his wife and 10 children. The same year, he established a saddle and harness manufactory in Willis Street. Horses were a very important part of life in Wellington at the time, used for work, transport, pleasure and sport. In 1881, just before Charles Wycherley arrived, there were 21,149 horses in Wellington for the population of 61,371 residents. As Carolyn Mincham says in her book *The Horse in New Zealand*, "Horses provided the means as well as the proof of colonial success."

An advertisement in the Evening Post of July 1886 read: "*C.W. Wycherley begs to announce that he has opened as above and respectfully solicits public support. Having had upwards of 20 years' experience he is prepared to execute all orders entrusted to him efficiently, and will study to combine excellency with economy in all the details of his business. Especial attention to repairs.*" By the next year, he was announcing imports and, by the end of the century was gaining major Defence Department contracts. In 1900, for instance, the newspaper reported that "*Messrs. Wycherley & Son have just completed, in five weeks, 500 sets of accoutrements for the Defence Department, consisting of 1000 cartridge pouches and 500 each of belts, rifle slings, and bayonet frogs.*" He was clearly skilled at his trade and successful in his business. He took a stand at the 1896 Industrial Exhibition: "*a large glass show-case, very artistically arranged and presenting an attractive appearance. . . The excellence of the work in the whole exhibit is manifest, but as testimony goes a long way, Mr. Wycherley shows a number of first prize certificates, which he has received at different Agricultural and Pastoral Shows.*" For this show, he won a certificate for excellence and variety of exhibit.



The interior of Wycherley's saddle manufactory in Willis Street may well have looked like this one in Auckland in 1906.

[Alexander Turnbull Library FL325203]

One of his sons (C.J.) later set up a saddlery business on his own account in Ashurst in the Manawatu. Another, Henry, set up C.W. Wycherley & Son in Palmerston North and, in 1903, Charles and Henry applied for letters patent for "an improvement in fastening of leggings".

Charles Wycherley was also a Brethren. The Brethren Bible Book and Tract Society had opened in temporary premises in Wellington in 1885 but in 1897 it was at 16 Cuba Street and Wycherley was its proprietor. Wycherley is more significant to the Brethren faith than this suggests, however. He is still considered an important contributor to the thinking of the religion, having written a series of 12 letters on household baptism between 1910 and 1913.

The Wycherley family lived at the top end of Willis Street alongside the business for many years. They moved briefly to 9 Levy Street before building the Pirie Street home, where they lived for about four years. Then in 1907, Wycherley bought the property at 96 Brougham Street and built a new home, where he lived until he died in 1915. It still stands, a large house overlooking the Te Aro valley to the Brooklyn Hills and the setting sun. In addition to the houses on Pirie Street, Wycherley also built another two semi-detached, two-storey houses in Levy Street in 1906.