



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Sunday, September 21 at 2.00 pm
Crossways, 6 Roxburgh Street

Annual General Meeting

Followed by a talk by Simon Nathan on Sir James Hector

Mt Victoria Historical Society member, Simon Nathan, is co-editor of *The Amazing World of James Hector*, explorer, doctor, geologist, botanist, natural historian, and one of New Zealand's most remarkable figures.

Followed by afternoon tea

Annual General Meeting

We are keen to have new members join our committee, so don't hesitate to tell us if you're interested or talk to us to find out more about it. You can let us know before the AGM or on the day, if you'd like to be nominated for the committee.

Basin Bridge Board of Inquiry Draft Decision

The Board of Inquiry looking into the application to build a flyover at the Basin Reserve has delivered its draft decision declining the application. (The decision will not change before the final report; only facts and typos can be corrected at this point.) It is very clear reading the report that Mt Victoria Historical Society has been vindicated in its opposition to the project because of its major adverse impact on heritage and the historic landscape of this area. The extent of the Board's deliberations and the decision also make it clear that the issue is not simply one of 'nimbyism'. It's about Wellington's unique character, and that of the Basin Reserve precinct in particular.

Wellington East Girls' College

A few newsletters ago we featured Wellington East Girls' College in the Historical Note. There are now plans to demolish all but the facade and vestibule of the historic main building because of earthquake risk. We will let you know details when we have more information.

Behind the Facades: a fascinating look at Victorian buildings in Wellington. For more information go to:

<http://cce.victoria.ac.nz/courses/200-behind-the-facades-victorian-wellington>

72 Pirie Street

At last, the former shop on the corner of Pirie Street has been demolished and a new two-storied dwelling is to be erected. It's been an eyesore for over 25 years so in many ways it's good news to see something happening. At the same time, we can regret the loss of another original Mt Victoria building, which a number of people have tried to save over the years, in various ways. (And some might even miss the posters keeping us up to date with events – and no doubt keeping the building up!)

The building was owned and constructed between 1892 and 1900 by James Barry who was a partner in the firm which built the still-extant High Court building. From the 1930's to 1953 it was a fruit and vegetable shop, at which time the building was owned by Mrs Campion (Jane Campion's grandmother). It then became a grocer's shop.



Sophia Anthopoulos (left) outside the grocer's on Pirie St in the 1970's
[Collection of S. Anthopoulos]

Heritage Panel Map Reference 20 – 21 Hania Street *Rehabilitation League Building*

No. 21 Hania Street is now the site of The Church, but many still refer to the building as the Rehabilitation League. Its distinctive shape and facade have been preserved in renovation by the new owners and even the extensive car-park in the front could be considered reminiscent of the bowling green which once spread in front of the building.

The building was designed by one of Wellington's foremost Art Deco/Moderne architects, Edmund Anscombe and opened in 1943. The Rehabilitation Board purchased 102 Brougham Street and the Brougham Hill tennis courts, which fronted onto Lloyd (now Hania) Street, for its site. The year the building opened, the area in front of it was leased for free to the RSA for 25 years to provide a bowling green for the training centre.

The building's long, horizontal lines are typical of the Moderne style. Unlike Anscombe's other buildings in Mt Victoria (flats at 9 Hawker Street or 82 Majoribanks St) there is no exterior decorative detail. This could be for a number of reasons: the fading of the Art Deco period, the purpose and government nature of the building or even its construction during World War II, when labour was scarce.

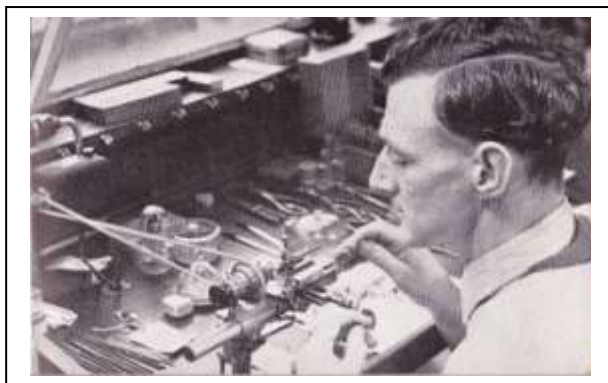
Bowlers at the Disabled Servicemen's rink at close of season, 6 April 1960. [Alexander Turnbull Library EP/1960/1246-F]



The Disabled Servicemen's Re-establishment League (to become the Rehabilitation League in 1974) established the first of its training centres around the country in Wellington. This building was used for two purposes: a place for post-hospital medical treatment of disabled servicemen where they could learn how to use their artificial limbs, and a training centre for disabled servicemen to learn a new trade that would help them find occupations in the community. Three-year courses in artificial limb manufacture, basketware, cabinetmaking, watchmaking and printing were offered; 2 ½-year courses in French polishing, leatherwork and paua-shell jewellery making; two-year courses in book-binding and one-year courses in shop salesmanship.

The Wellington centre proudly presented a set of jewellery manufactured in the paua-shell department to H.R.H. the Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her marriage, on behalf of the League. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh also visited in 1954, complimenting the foreman on the well-kept grounds, which included a swimming pool and glass house as well as the bowling green.

When the printing department was set up, modern machinery was difficult to obtain. A four-year plan was established, however, and by 1950 the most modern and up-to-date equipment allowed trainees the opportunity to get into a key industry. J McAndrew (Mac) was the first trainee to go into private industry. He had been a driver before the war but lost a finger and thumb of his left hand as a result of a gunshot wound at Sidi Rezegh. Shortly after his return was also struck by pneumonia and pleurisy so couldn't return to work as a driver. The foreman in his first printing job said "Mac' has made the grade . . . he is a good tradesman." The department also undertook printing jobs for the League and government.



Tom Cameron was another who benefitted from the League in its first years. He was part of the home service during the war but suffered an injury to his spine as a result of an accident in camp and couldn't return to his pre-war employment on the Engineer's staff at Wellington Public Hospital. After completing training with the League as a watchmaker, he started a business in Newtown. It was patronised so well that he was able to engage a watch repairer, Ron Dixon, who had also completed training at the centre. "The League gave me a good training," said Tom "and the people of Newtown are keeping me busy in fine style. I'm glad to be able to give employment to another disabled ex-serviceman trained by the League."

The Artificial Limb Department made limbs for ex-servicemen and civilians - it was estimated that there were 1250 military and a similar number of civilian amputees in New Zealand. In 1976, after unsuccessful attempts to enlarge the limb centre, it was moved to a new location in Newtown.

Concentration and good eyesight are essential for watch repairing. Wellington Training Centre. [Leadley WE. *Training the Disabled; the work of the Disabled Servicemen's Re-establishment League Inc. in New Zealand, 1945*]

In 1990 the Rehabilitation League went through a major restructure and changed its name to Workbridge Inc. The building remained in Crown ownership until 1993. It was then leased to Capital Coast Health (Child, Adolescent and Family Service), and the first level converted into six apartments.

By Joanna Newman