



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Sunday, November 30 at 2.30 pm
Triptych Conservation, 8a Horner Street, Newtown

Visit a paper conservation lab

This is a unique opportunity to visit the laboratory of Triptych Conservation and hear about how precious documents, books or artworks on paper are restored. Find out from Steve and Joy about their work and ask anything about conservation that you ever wanted to know.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM on September 30, the following officers were elected: Jo Newman (convenor), Sue Watt (treasurer), David McCrone (secretary), Jane O'Loughlin, David Lee and Alan Olliver (committee members). Unfortunately, Alan Olliver has since had to resign because he has unexpectedly been offered a new contract in the Cook Islands and won't be returning home in December.

Basin Bridge Decision Appeal

NZTA has decided to appeal the decision made by the Board of Inquiry into the Basin Reserve flyover project. This is very disappointing, given the robust nature of the deliberations and decision, but MVHS has filed a Notice of Intention to Appear in the High Court. A number of other community organisations have also filed. We are doing so to ensure that heritage matters continue to be well represented and to support other parties. We will be working very closely with other respondents who oppose the proposal (as we did in the Board of Inquiry) to ensure costs are minimised and fundraising opportunities maximised.

James Hector: extraordinary Wellingtonian – a report on Simon Nathan's presentation

A biography is set to be released next year of an extraordinary Wellingtonian who founded and influenced almost all of New Zealand's major scientific and research institutions. Mt Victoria Historical Society members were lucky enough to get a sneak preview of the book when biographer (and Historical Society member), Simon Nathan, gave a presentation on James Hector at the MVHS AGM last month.

James Hector started his time in New Zealand as a geologist recording the location of coal and other minerals around the country. In 1865 he moved to Wellington and founded the Geological Survey of New Zealand, and built the Colonial Museum which eventually became Te Papa. As the government's only scientist, he provided advice on a range of issues. He started weather forecasting and established official New Zealand time. He was the father of seismology in New Zealand, using the telegraph to record earthquakes around the country.

A number of things have been named after Hector, including the Hector's Dolphin, which was first described by him. Hector was born in Scotland, and educated as a doctor. Prior to his arrival in New Zealand, he spent time exploring the unmapped Canadian Rockies, acquiring a reputation in that country as a romantic early pioneering explorer. His Canadian experience prompted him to import the first radiata pine and macrocarpa, in a quest to find fast growing wood that would thrive in New Zealand. Here we come to a Mt Victoria connection – we can see many of these old pine and macrocarpa trees still standing on Mt Victoria today!

Hector managed the New Zealand Institute for 35 years, effectively dominating all of science in New Zealand during that time. The 150th anniversary of Hector's founding of Geological Survey of New Zealand occurs next year – the perfect excuse for a biography of a man who contributed so much to science. If Simon Nathan's excellent talk is anything to go by, the biography is sure to be fascinating.

Heritage Panel Map Reference 08 – 3 Hania Street

Greek Cathedral of the Annunciation

The distinctive Greek Orthodox Church in Hania Street, correctly called the Cathedral of the Annunciation, was built in 1970. It was not the first church on the site, and represents a long and special association of the Greek community with the suburb of Mt Victoria.

A Greek Orthodox Church was first erected here in 1947. It was a prefabricated U.S. Army medical barracks purchased from the New Zealand government and transported from Trentham to Hania Street (then called Lloyd Street).

Even before that, the Greek community had been gathering to worship in the Greek Orthodox tradition. From 1924, New Zealand was part of the Greek Orthodox archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand. Until the 1940s, however, when the church was built in Wellington, the important sacraments of marriage and baptism could only be performed when a priest visited from Australia.

The first permanent Greek migrants arrived in the 1920s in search of better opportunities. Most came to Wellington – 76% of all Greeks in NZ lived here in 1966, mainly as a result of chain migration (relatives and people from the same towns following those who had already emigrated). Chain migration also meant that Greek people tended to live in the same areas, close to their relatives. This was most



A service in the Church on 14 May 1959
[Alexander Turnbull Library EP/1959/1671-F]

notable in Mt Victoria – 60% of the Mt Victoria Greek households in 1966 were contiguous (next to each other).^{*} For a long time, ours remained the preferred suburb.

So, the fact that the first Greek Orthodox church in New Zealand was founded in Lloyd St was wholly appropriate, because the majority of Greeks lived in Mt Victoria. The church was the community focus and an important factor in continuity of language and culture.

Stathy Yiavasis described how the church came about: “One of my uncles, John Kathistides, donated some land in Lloyd Street to the Greek People of Wellington. In order to avoid paying rates on the land, we decided to build a small church on that site. We didn’t have a Greek priest then, but we had Mr Bates, an Anglican priest. He could read Greek quite well, and he would conduct services for our congregation.”^{*} Some years ago we invited Mt Victoria resident, Stathy Booleris, to talk to us and subsequently printed some of his story in Newsletter No. 14. He adds to this picture, describing how, “if a Greek died, they had an Anglican priest who used to conduct the funerals in English but he knew a little bit of Greek which he put in his Anglican service.”

Sophie Anthopoulos told MVHS in 2006 how, “When the church was built, I thought Greece had come here. And I’m glad I came to New Zealand. Not because they are good people, they support us, they are nice people; but because that church is there. It’s a building that looks nice to the city, it’s something special to be there”. Costa Christie shared his memories of the church, too: “Sunday, for argument’s sake, was church – home for a roast dinner. And then in the afternoon we would visit other Greek people, or other Greek people would come and visit us. It would be someone’s name day, someone’s birthday; it might have happened during the week but you’d go and pay your respects on the Sunday because that’s the day everyone has off.”

While priests have generally come from overseas, they have often not been ‘strangers’ The priest between 1980 and 1991, Reverend Polikarpos Neonakis, for instance, was a boy in World War II when his home village heroically sheltered New Zealand soldiers from German troops occupying Crete. The memories of the Kiwis and the stories he heard about New Zealand stayed with him and he always wanted to come to this green and peaceful country. When a position arose in Wellington he applied for it. Along with Elias Economou (1949-1960), he was also the longest-serving priest.

In 1970 the first barracks church was demolished to make way for the current one. A community centre was eventually built next door. That same year, New Zealand became a separate diocese in the Greek Orthodox Church, with its own archbishop. Now the church has, amongst its objectives, upholding Hellenic ideals by co-ordinating community activities and supporting Greek schools to teach children the language.

By Joanna Newman

^{*} Verivaki, Maria, Petris, John. **Stories of Greek Journeys**, Petone Settlers Museum, Lower Hutt City Council, Greek National Tourist Organisation, c1991.