

# **Mt Victoria Historical Society Inc**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2012-13**

The past year has been another busy one for the Society. Despite its small size, the committee has managed to provide a full programme, work on the Embassy panels project, maintain the website and keep abreast of advocacy issues relating to the heritage of Mt Victoria. A summary of our key activities and achievements is set out below.

### **Newsletters**

Last year, for the second year in a row, we produced five newsletters for members. While we aim for four, sometimes members receive a bonus one because we have news we need to get out. In addition to the news and information snippets, we had historical notes on 105 Brougham Street; its next door neighbour, Ace House; 46 Roxburgh Street; Charles Lawrence, the architect of Wellington East Girls' College and buildings at Wellington College; and the Pirie Street tram crash. Since the installation of our heritage panel on Majoribanks Street, we have been working on compiling historical notes on all the places highlighted on the panel so that more information about these will be available to you and the public. Members have exclusive access to the contents of our newsletter for a year, but after that we publish them to our website so that they are more widely accessible.

### **Events**

We organised a variety of events over the year, starting with a presentation for Wellington Region Heritage Month on a selection of nautical-themed stories relating to Mt Victoria. The most significant event of the year, however, came in November with the unveiling of our heritage panel on the side of the Embassy Theatre. Gaylene Preston gave a wonderful speech and unveiled it with great flair, and members, representatives of the design company who worked with us, and councillors joined in the celebration at Blondini's in the Embassy. Since then, many favourable comments have been heard about it as members loiter in passing to hear the comments of readers. It was the culmination of years of lobbying and hours of research and design input, and another great project for Mt Victoria Historical Society. We also had two tours of historic places, including the Basin Reserve and the Fever Hospital, which is soon to be occupied by the SPCA, and an illustrated talk on New Zealand's gardening history by Bee Dawson.

### **Heritage advocacy**

One of the objectives of Mt Victoria Historical Society is "to encourage the protection of the natural and built heritage of the Mt Victoria area". To that end, we feel we have a responsibility to advocate for its heritage when it is threatened. This year the Basin Reserve has been a focus for our attention. We appreciate that members have different views on the roading proposals and for that reason we have been very careful to ensure that we speak only to the impacts on heritage. We made a submission to the government on the National War Memorial Park (Pukeahu) Empowering Bill, expressing concern about the future of the Home of Compassion Crèche. We generally focus on the Mt Victoria area, but when invited to comment on a proposal to register New Zealand Historic Places Trust registration of Wellington Harbour Board historic sites, we wrote in support of the proposed registrations. We also sent a submission to Wellington City

Council on the Town Belt legislative and policy review in December 2012. We joined with Mt Victoria Residents' Association in writing to the Mayor, and meeting with the Mayor, Councillor Pannet and planning officials to discuss protection for heritage in Mt Victoria. Little of a concrete nature has come out of this, but we will continue the dialogue.

### **Website**

We continued to add content to our website throughout the year, and receive a growing number of enquiries through it, ranging from people seeking information about ancestors to people wanting to share information or just comment on what they've found there. Unfortunately, the website went through a bad patch as problems with the Wellington Community Net hosting arrangements impacted on accessibility. By the end of the financial year we were forced to conclude it was time to investigate new hosting arrangements. Again, we must thank Stanley Wing, who has given us invaluable advice and assistance, and Historical Society member Owen Watson, who updates content for us.

### **Other**

In June, Joanna gave a presentation to Lower Hutt Historical Society about our Society and a potted history of Mt Victoria highlights. Walk Wellington also requested a guided tour of the suburb, so Joanna conducted a tour of notable Victorian buildings and history.

### **Conclusion**

Once again, I would like to thank the committee of the past year – Judy Southworth, Natasha Naus, David McCrone, David Lee and Sue Watt - for all their work. They have contributed to making it another great year for the Society in so many ways - researching, writing articles or submissions, overseeing our website, organising events, making gluwein, coffee or scones for members to enjoy, to mention just a few activities. Thank you also to members for your support and we look forward to your continued involvement.

Joanna M.A. Newman  
Convenor  
September 2013