

# **Mt Victoria Historical Society Inc**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2013-14**

As usual, Mt Victoria Historical Society has had another busy year, though there's always more we want to do. Our key activities and achievements for the July 2013 to June 2014 year are set out below.

### **Newsletters**

We produced our standard number of newsletters for the year, with the usual article based on research of some aspect of Mt Victoria history. In addition to the news and information snippets, we had historical notes on James Elliott and his residence on Kent Terrace; the former 2YA radio station on the top of Mt Victoria; Owd Trafford and other Art Deco highlights in the suburb and scientist Elizabeth Alexander. We continue to work on writing up research on all the places highlighted on the Embassy panel so that more information about these will be available to you and the public.

### **Events**

We were not so successful in scheduling our intended four events over the year, largely because of the work required around the Basin Bridge flyover Board of Inquiry. The events we did have were well-attended, however. We started with an illustrated talk on New Zealand's gardening history by Bee Dawson (incorrectly included in last year's annual report as being in the 2012-13 year), had a talk about preserving digital photographs by archivist, Joanna Newman, at our AGM and a fascinating talk by Tony Simpson on the history of food in New Zealand.

### **Heritage advocacy**

The most significant advocacy activity in 2013-14 was involvement in the case to stop a flyover being built alongside the Basin Reserve and the significant changes proposed as a result of this, such as removing the Dempster Gate to build a three-storey building to accommodate players and officials. Mt Victoria Historical Society was the key player opposing the project from a heritage perspective so essentially led opposition on heritage grounds. The Society successfully made an application to the Environmental Legal Assistance Fund to cover the costs of a heritage and a heritage/landscape expert witness, who contributed significantly to the final outcome of declining the resource consent. We did, however, work closely with many other groups, such as Save the Basin Campaign and the Architectural Centre who shared our concerns.

Involvement included writing Official Information Act requests to NZTA and Heritage New Zealand to obtain information, preparing and presenting a submission to the Board of Inquiry, presenting the submission of an Historical Society member who was out of the country and a huge amount of research and analysis.

It is very pleasing to have been a party to preserving this unique heritage on the border of Mt Victoria. We now hope that final resolution of the future of this area will soon lead to a tidy-up and improvement in the environment of lower Ellice Street in particular.

The Society also made a submission to Wellington City Council on the proposed legislation for the Town Belt.

### **Website**

During the year we had to change our internet service provider as the Wellington Community Network (which provided free services to community groups) suffered outages and eventually folded, and successfully transferred to VPS City. This required a lot of work, however, on the part of members, David McCrone and Owen Watson, and our volunteer support Stanley Wing. It also meant we had to change our website address. Towards the end of the financial year, we also initiated a review of our website, with the aim of making it more user-friendly and more easily updated by non-experts. This is still underway but we hope to share the results with you soon.

### **Other**

Membership has dropped a little over the past year and we are keen to lift it again, planning more promotion in the coming year.

Because of its location, the Embassy panel has required cleaning every so often and the committee is extremely grateful to Judy Southworth and David Lee who have taken the initiative to get this done and covered the costs (albeit minimal). We are still endeavouring to come to a more permanent solution to this, working with the Council.

A number of great new project ideas have been tossed around by the committee over the year, but unfortunately resourcing means that some haven't moved along much. We have been talking with WCC about a project relating to WWI, as they are keen to support community projects in this area between 2014 and 2019. We have attended a number of meetings organised by WCC in relation to this but the exact form and scope of our project has yet to be finalised

Other strong contenders for action are a heritage inventory for Mt Victoria, heritage plaques for buildings, awards for restoration of buildings, a heritage fair in 2015.

### **Conclusion**

Once again, huge thanks to the committee of the past year – Judy Southworth, Natasha Naus, David McCrone, David Lee, Jane O'Loughlin and Sue Watt - for all their work. Judy left us during the year, to move permanently to the South Island, and Natasha is not standing again as her life moves into a different phase. Natasha's strong professional historical background and input to the Society will be greatly missed. Thank you also to members for your support and we look forward to your continued involvement.

Joanna M.A. Newman  
Convenor  
September 2014