



# MT VICTORIA

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## Historical Society News

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## *Centenary of the Opening of Our Tram Tunnel*

**Sunday, November 25 at 2.30 pm**  
**Crossways**

100 years ago, in 1907, the Hataitai tram tunnel opened.

To commemorate this important event,  
Joanna Newman will give a talk full of facts and stories you've never heard before, accompanied by slides.

### **Send us your tram/bus tunnel stories**

Since the tram tunnel opened at the beginning of last century, many have ridden through it on trams or buses. Some may have even illegally run or driven through it (we couldn't possibly say!) – its black oval sits so seductively at the top of Pirie Street, tempting visitors towards the spot of light at the far end.

Our Historical Note this month is a story by Jennifer Robinson about the tram tunnel. If you have stories or special memories of the tram/bus tunnel, we'd love to hear them. You can send them to Joanna Newman at [jnewman@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jnewman@xtra.co.nz), or in writing to 20 Porritt Avenue, Mt Victoria.

### **Contributions welcome**

Contributions from members are always welcome for the newsletter. Don't hesitate to send us your stories, or results of your research, to share with others.

### **Clyde Quay School pupils**

We've been contacted by Trev Valler in Auckland who says:

*"I'd like to hear from any ex-pupil who was at the school in the years 1936 to 1943. Even if they don't recall me personally they may be happy to pass on information about others; where they live now etc. and I would be only too pleased to do the same.*

*I have photos of my class in 1938, 1939 and 1942 (Std 1&2, Std 2 and Std 5) and would be happy to share them and if anyone has photos that they think may be of interest I would like to hear from them.*

*My address is Trev.Valler, 1002 Sandspit Rd.R.D.2 Warkworth and email:trevaller@xtra.co.nz."*

### **Sites/structures for registration**

Over the next year, the Society would like to investigate buildings or structures which should be considered for inclusion in the Council's Heritage Inventory. Very few buildings in Mt Victoria are currently registered as heritage buildings under the District Plan and this would give them a measure of protection they don't have otherwise. If you have a particular concern or interest in certain buildings, please let us know. It will be particularly valuable if you can provide details of who has lived there, or used it, in the past or events which have taken place there.

## Schoolgirl drives tram!

By Jennifer Robinson

As a teenager, I was a keen supporter of Wellington's Save the Trams campaign. I became interested in anything connected with trams and one of my ambitions was to be able to drive a tram.

In 1961 I was in the sixth form at Wellington East Girls' College. One of the privileges of being in the sixth form was that we were able to apply for a lunch pass; this allowed us to go home for lunch or to leave the school grounds and buy lunch. One of our favourite destinations was a bakery in Hataitai (I remember in particular that I was very fond of their Eccles cakes). Going there involved catching a tram in Pirie Street, travelling through the tunnel to Hataitai, buying lunch and then getting the same tram on its return trip back through the tunnel.

One week the driver of this particular tram was someone that my friend Margaret and I knew very slightly and we decided that here was a way that we might be able to drive a tram – in the darkness of the tunnel maybe we could be at the controls. We asked the driver (we didn't even know his name) if we could do this the next day, and he agreed. At lunchtime next day we raced along to Pirie Street, got on the tram and remained on the platform with the driver.



Jennifer rides the last tram through the Hataitai tunnel – you can see her directly under the 'Save the tram' sign in the right-hand window. *Dominion*, 1962

When we got into the tunnel Margaret held down the control lever while the tram went through the tunnel, the driver took over again just before we got to the tunnel entrance and the tram continued on to the Hataitai terminus, further down Waitoa Road.

Having bought our lunch and returned to the tram, we set off on the return journey and it was my turn to drive back through the tunnel. When we were nearly back at the Pirie Street entrance I went to step aside so that the driver could take over but he indicated that I should stay where I was and the tram emerged into the full light of day with a sixteen year old schoolgirl in Wellington East uniform at the controls. I have no idea whether any passengers or the conductor noticed anything; I can only assume that they did not. Fortunately there was no-one waiting for the tram at the stop immediately outside the tunnel and it was only a short distance down Pirie Street to our stop near the Austin Street corner.

The enormity of what we had done, and the possible repercussions, especially for the driver, did not sink in until some time later. However, the following year, in late 1962, I was a passenger on the last tram to go through the Hataitai tunnel. Travelling on a tram through the Hataitai tunnel had now become just a little part of Wellington's history.