



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Annual General Meeting

Sunday, September 26 at 2.30 pm
Tararua Tramping Club Hall, Moncrieff St

We will also have a celebration of our 25th anniversary as a Society, with presentations to founding members who have been with us from the beginning.

Followed by a talk, then afternoon tea.

The Value of Heritage (or, how to convince your friends it's important to keep it!) **Ben Schrader**

Dr Ben Schrader is an independent Wellington historian with expertise in Aotearoa New Zealand's urban social, cultural, housing and environmental history. His book publications include: We Call it Home: A History of State Housing In New Zealand and the award-winning The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920. He is presently researching a history of historic preservation in New Zealand.

AGM

The AGM is an opportunity to welcome new people onto our Committee. If you'd like to find out more about what it might involve, we'd love to hear from you. (We'd particularly like to hear from potential membership/treasurers!) Feel free to contact us on 027 7577 984 or jnewman@xtra.co.nz.

And thank you to everyone who has already renewed their memberships for the current year. A gentle reminder to those for whom it is still on the 'To Do' list.

Wellington Heritage Week guided walk: Working Class Early Mt Victoria

As part of Heritage Week in October, we are offering a tour of some of the 19th and early 20th century homes of the working classes who helped build our city and keep its cogs turning. Many of the houses they once lived in in Mt Victoria look almost the same today, and you will be able to imagine their lives behind those walls and beyond.

Sunday October 31, 2.30 pm

Starting at the end of Moir Street near the old Rehabilitation League Building.

This walk is already fully booked, however! We will be offering a second one – date to be advised - but that's already half full so do register your interest if you want to join, by emailing jnewman@xtra.co.nz.

If you're interested in other Heritage Week events, you can find a link to the programme here: <https://wellingtonheritageweek.co.nz/>, and sign up to their newsletter by clicking this link: [Join Our Mailing List](#).

District Plan

We are about to start work on what we think should be in the proposed new District Plan so we are prepared for its release. For this, we are teaming up with key heritage suburbs in Lambton Ward, namely Thorndon, Mt Cook and Oriental Bay. We are fortunate to have tremendous expertise in the group, with two very experienced former Wellington city planners, one of whom has also worked in Australia. We will no doubt expand our network as things progress (for instance, legal expertise may be required down the track), but we will start by scoping the areas to be looked at and what rules might be needed to protect Mt Vic's character. We'll keep you posted on our work and any opportunities for feedback or input.

25th Anniversary Event

Sadly, we had to cancel our anniversary event due to lack of numbers. At our AGM we will have a smaller celebration of the occasion, but still with a special cake and presentations to founding members who are still members.

Sale of the Monastery

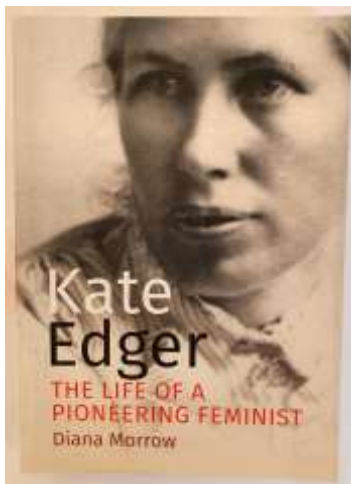
As most of you will know, the future of Wellington's iconic monastery hangs in the balance, after the owners, International Catholic Programme of Evangelisation decided to sell a few months ago. After 113 years, the last mass was held in St Gerard's church, adjacent to the monastery. The buildings are essential to the identity of Wellington, as much as to Mt Victoria, and must be protected. It will no doubt be a challenging proposition for a future owner and we have to hope that a sympathetic new owner and use eventuate. We will certainly be watching closely and will lobby hard if necessary to ensure it is protected. For many years, we have been active in trying to preserve the buildings near it, for their heritage value but also because the scale of its neighbours are important to the impact of the monastery.



Two unidentified monks walking along a garden path at St Gerard's Monastery, 1959 [Alexander Turnbull Library EP/1959/0357-2-F]



Mt Victoria plumber, John Horgan, repairs the church bell tower, circa 1970. As a Catholic, John was expected to (and did) carry out the repairs for free!



Some readers might be interested in a biography of Kate Edger published earlier this year.

Kate Edger's house on the corner of Porritt Avenue and Ellice Street is one of the proposed additions to the Heritage List in the new District Plan – which, of course, we endorse.

The book is an interesting read and covers the politics and society of the time as well as Kate's own life. She came from a strong Christian non-conformist background, and this is also described. I (Jo) found this interesting as one of the notable characteristics of early Mt Vic residents is the number of non-conformists among them – many were Congregationalists. Even the most high-profile Presbyterian, the Reverend Moir (after whom Moir Street is named and the first minister at St Johns) was from The Free Church of Scotland, essentially a non-conformist breakaway from the mainstream Presbyterian church of the time.

The local grocer/dairy

With the advent of supermarkets, there are far fewer dairies, grocers or other local food suppliers in Mt Victoria than there once were. One can still identify many of their former premises converted to (or back to) wholly residential properties because they retain some of original shop-front features. One that has endured for well over a century without interruption, however, is now Navrang Dairy on the corner of Majoribanks and Brougham Streets. The story of its origins is told in this newsletter.

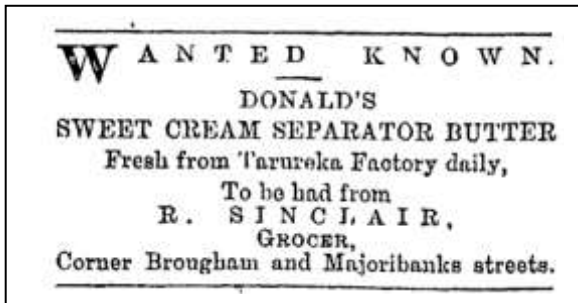
Sinclair, The Grocer

Robert Sinclair started his business as Grocer, Tea-dealer and Provision Merchant on the corner of Brougham and Majoribanks Street in 1888.

The Cyclopedia of New Zealand in 1897 wrote:

“His shop is very conveniently situated for a good local trade, being at the corner of Brougham and Majoribanks Streets. This is a good district, and a growing one, and Mr. Sinclair is well prepared to extend as increase of business may demand. Already he has more than doubled the size of his premises, which have a good business-like appearance, being roomy and well-stocked. For a while Mr. Sinclair's trade was purely local, but through the moving about of his customers, and by means of recommendation, he has a really good general trade. Careful attention to business on the part of Mr. and Mrs.

Sinclair has popularised both their establishment and themselves, and an increasing trade is the natural consequence. To give an idea of the business done, it may be mentioned that the turnover of one article alone—that of butter—is upwards of five hundred pounds weight per week. For a shop comparatively on the outskirts of the city, this is a very large turnover indeed, and shows the importance of supplying a first-class article. In this particular line of butter, Mr. Sinclair defies the world. It is from the creamery of Mr. James Donald, and the brand is “Tarureka”.”



The farm of James Donald in the Wairarapa must have been well known, because it was painted by Christopher Aubrey in 1890. According to Alexander Turnbull Library, the building on the far left may be the butter factory opened in 1881.



Tarureka homestead,
Featherston, 1890.
Christopher Aubrey
[Alexander Turnbull
Library]

Robert Sinclair was a native of the Shetland Islands and had arrived in New Zealand per ship “Rodney from London in 1876. The Donalds were also from the Shetlands. James Donald’s son Allan used to deliver the butter to the store in Wellington and take supplies back to the Wairarapa from Sinclair’s store. In due course, he married Sinclair’s daughter, Mary Ursula.

Sinclair died in 1917 aged 62, but had retired some years earlier and handed the business over to his sons. It seems that the shop might have been sold not long after, because by the end of the following year it was in the hands of Mr Johnson, whose advertisement from the Evening Post in December 1918 you can see alongside.

Some years later, one of Sinclair’s granddaughters married Callum MacLean, whose parents owned the general store on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Brougham Street.

The rest of the grocery lineage between Johnson and Navrang has yet to be mapped out!

