



# MT VICTORIA

## *Historical Society News*

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### Merry Christmas to all our members from the MVHS Committee

“Christmas Picnic,  
Wellington”, 1908  
[ATL PAColl-3060]

I like to think the scene in this photo might be somewhere like Waring Taylor's house at 7 Paterson St – I'm sure it could be Mt Victoria we can see through the window at the end of the verandah.

#### What do you think?

(In 1908, Harry Crump, who built Paterson Street and most of the houses along it, was living in No.7.)

### Heritage Week

This year we ran another highly successful walk for Wellington's Heritage Week. This time, it was ***Murder & Mayhem in Mt Victoria***, led by Alan Olliver. The walk was so successful, it had to be run twice to cater for all those interested.

### AGM and new committee

At our AGM this year, the following were elected to the committee: Joanna Newman, Rosemary Bromley, Jane O'Loughlin and Margaret Earle. We are delighted to welcome Margaret on board. In its first committee meeting since then, Joanna has been appointed Convenor, Jane Secretary and Margaret Treasurer.

### Heritage plaque on the Town Belt

For a number of years (since 2019, believe it or not), we have been working with Wellington City Council to install some heritage interpretation signage on the Mt Victoria Town Belt. At last, the first panel we worked on, about early radar research, was installed in the top carpark by the bus stop at the end of September. (Newsletter 69 told some of the story: <http://mtvictoria.history.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Newsletter-69-E-Alexander.pdf>). We have always intended this to be the first of several, but 'Council heritage policy is being reviewed', so the future is uncertain. Early next year, though, we will have a small celebration to 'launch' it, so look out for an invitation.

### Membership

In our last newsletter, we announced that we were going to make an offer of free membership for one year to Mt Vic residents if they joined by November 30 and, so as not to discriminate against our faithful members, free membership for 2023-24 if you renewed your sub (or have newly joined recently) by November 30.

Unfortunately, the Mt Vic Newsletter was not published for two months and the notice didn't appear in time, so we have decided to postpone this offer indefinitely.

## Historical Note

### Sara Dimant: An Early Career Woman

Nineteenth century Mt Victoria resident, Sara Dimant, was unusual for her times in being a career public servant.

She was born in 1861 in Australia and came to Hokitika with her parents and five siblings in 1869, then later to Wellington. After teaching at Thorndon School, in 1893 she became one of the few women to move into the public service, becoming short-hand writer and typist to the Private Secretary to the Postmaster-General.



She later moved to the Public Trustee Office and in 1897 was sent to assist the Auckland office for several months.

In 1901, Sara became the chief typist of the newly-formed Department of Tourist and Health Resorts. Her job could be quite varied; for example, in 1903 she organised for a tuatara to be sent to the Glasgow Zoo.

Then, in 1908, she was appointed shorthand writer to the Minister for Agriculture.

Sara was independent in income and lived at 75 Majoribanks Street from at least 1893 to 1902, sometimes with relatives. She was living there when she signed the women's suffrage petition (along with her niece, Lena, who was living with her at the time).

She then moved to 125 Elizabeth Street. While her former home at 75 Majoribanks Street can still be seen, unfortunately this house has been demolished.

From March to September 1905, Sara went on an extended holiday 'Home' to Britain. She was granted half pay for the trip, indicating her value to the Minister for Tourist and Health Resorts.

There are two newspaper snippets recording this trip. The first reads:

*Miss Dimant, the charming brunette typiste and shorthand writer of the Tourist Department, who has been on a trip to England, is now within a week or two of Wellington, on the return voyage. Her letters from Home have been most interesting and would read excellently well in print.*

The second is quite tantalising and, in the process of reporting on the 'Hon WR Best, the urbane Melbourne solicitor', comments:

*He returned to the colonies by the Grayton Grange, on which steamer Miss Sarah Dimant, head typist of the Tourist Department, also returned from a trip to the Old Country. The Hon. Best and Miss Dimant found many subjects of mutual interest to discuss on the long ocean voyage and the two are now very good friends.*

In February 1910, at the age of nearly 50, Sara became engaged to a manager of the Union Steam Ship Company at Picton and resigned from the public service.