



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Annual General Meeting

Sunday 24 September at 2.00 pm, Society of Friends Hall, Moncrieff Street

Our Annual General Meeting will be followed by a talk.

Annette Dunnage-Roy will tell us about her father, Alan Dunnage, a Wellington pioneer in the recording industry. Annette's family moved to Mt Victoria around 1956, and her father set up a recording studio in Elizabeth St. In conversation with Rosemary Bromley, she will describe what it was like living above his business and encountering the many notable people who sought her father's expertise.

Visitors welcome

Wellington Heritage Festival

This year the Heritage Festival looks again to be chock full of interesting events between October 23rd and November 5th. We are offering a tour of **Hidden corners of Mount Victoria**. A special preview for MVHS members only will be offered on Sunday October 15 at 2pm, ending with afternoon tea at a 'hidden' location. To book a place, please email jonewman@xtra.co.nz

If you would like to know more about the Festival, including signing up to the newsletter, check out their website <https://wellingtonheritageweek.co.nz/>. (Events 'go live' has been delayed but is expected to be online soon, so keep looking – or sign up to the newsletter for updates.)

Rules of the Society

Over the next 12 months we will be reviewing and amending our Rules. The only requirement to comply with the new Incorporated Societies Act 2022 is to include an appropriate dispute resolution process, but we also see this as an opportunity to undertake a general review. There are a few things that are no longer required under the new legislation (such as having a 'company' seal) and some things which are no longer relevant or could be improved on. The legal requirement to update the Rules provides the ideal opportunity to do this.

We will be advising you of our recommended changes, and plenty of notice before the formalities of their approval at an AGM or Special General Meeting, but if you would like to see a copy of our current Rules in the meantime, don't hesitate to ask.

Mt Victoria Town Belt heritage

In March we unveiled what we originally expected to be the first of a number of panels sharing interesting facts about the history of the Town Belt adjacent to our suburb, developed in conjunction with Wellington City Council. We're very pleased to have seen the installation of that one, about the radar station at the summit, but unfortunately the Council has now decided to pause development of any more.

Our second panel was intended to be about the old Kilbirnie Road, and we shared some of its history in the Mt Victoria newsletter recently. The third was going to be about the quarry and, rather than wait for a more permanent and public 'short story' on that, we're sharing it here.

Historical Note

The Ellice Street Quarry

From the mid-1870s, for approximately 10 years, part of the Town Belt at the top of Ellice Street was used as a quarry. It was opened to provide rock for the Te Aro harbour reclamation, one end of which was close to Mount Victoria.



Te Aro reclamation c.1883 [Alexander Turnbull Library 1/1-025883-G]

The quarry site is circled in yellow, and the railway trestle for constructing the reclamation goes across the harbour from Clyde Quay to Taranaki Street. (You can also see the old Kilbirnie road going over Mount Victoria, from the top of Pirie Street.)

In 1880 one citizen wrote protesting at the immense excavations destroying the contour of Mount Victoria and pressure started mounting to close the quarries. In 1880 the Council's Public Works Committee recommended for the first time that the quarries on the Town Belt be closed and planted with trees, and in July recommended that the Government be requested to refuse the right to open quarries on the Mount Victoria Reserve. In September it was again recommended that the quarries be closed and the Reserves let for grazing purposes. It was still being used by the Council for roading purposes in 1889, however.

The quarry was finally closed around 1904.

Since then, it has had some interesting uses.

From 1928 until 1950 it was leased by the Defence Department as a rifle range for "musketry practice", in 1946 explained as being required particularly for High School Cadets. (And, if you've ever wondered why Mt Victoria is so weedy, this 1946 note by the Town Clerk recommending approval may be part of the explanation: "At present it is more or less a rubbish dump for garden refuse for people in the vicinity.")

We know from a Mt Victoria resident of many years (now deceased) that local children used to gather to play here and the boys hunted in the cliffs for ‘butcher-boys’ (the larval form of the tiger beetle). No doubt the ‘butcher-boys’ still lurk in the cliffs, but undisturbed in these days of more sophisticated childhood pastimes.

From 1960 until 1983, the Northern Soccer Club (later the Brooklyn Northern United Association Football Club) had a gymnasium/club rooms and training ground there. Despite breaching conditions of the lease within one year, the club’s occupation only came to an end when their building burnt down.

The banks, including The Reserve Bank, used it for revolver practice from 1955 until 1962. Firearms (pistols or revolvers) had been used by bank officers for security since the earliest days of banking – from the days of buying gold from miners in remote and rough goldfields through to moving and protecting cash in towns and cities. Bank officers slept with revolvers by their beds above or behind bank branches; a firearm might be stored behind the teller’s counter; an armed officer would carry a gun when accompanying the transfer of cash to an agency or branch; and a revolver would be nearby if a staff member was operating a small agency on their own.

All the banks in Wellington used the Ellice Street quarry for staff training in the 1950s and early 1960s. Permits were issued by the Council on the understanding that practice was carried out under police supervision and evidence of public indemnity insurance was provided.



ANZ bank officers at firearms training in the Ellice Street quarry, 18 September 1957.
[EP/1957/3729-3-F and EP/1957/3729-1-F, Evening Post negative collection, Alexander Turnbull Library]

For ANZ, staff from branches throughout the country would come to Wellington for training, which sometimes included firearms practice. The National Bank and the ANZ surrendered their firearms licences and weapons to the Police in 1962.

And, just over 20 years ago, it was a film location for Lord of the Rings and stood in for Dunharrow Rohirrim encampment, Helms Deep in Rohan and Minas Tirith in Gondor. Recognise the rocks and trees?



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