



NEXT EVENT

Visit to Crofton

Sunday 3 December from 2 to 4pm, at 21/23 Kenya Street, Ngaio

Crofton was built in 1857 for Sir William and Lady Sarah Fox as a country residence. Sir William Fox was the second Premier of New Zealand, appointed in 1856. This early colonial country house, one of the oldest surviving homes in Wellington, is now the Domett family home.

Our hostess, Mary Domett, will give us a talk and a guided tour of the house, finishing with an afternoon tea. Cost per person: \$20. Please bring cash to give to Mary. No heels please as the floors are very soft.

The house is a five to ten minute walk from Ngaio station. The number 45 Ngaio bus does not run on weekends.

RSVP to Sue Watt at 384 8208 or email whathouse@xtra.co.nz

Pat Howard

A humble-looking house in Queen Street finds itself this month with an entire glossy brochure advertising its virtues to the real estate market. It is intended to shout 'potential', but if you look closely at one photograph you can see a coal range still in place. This house was the home of Pat Howard, who died in August this year at the age of 92. Well-known to many Mt Vic residents for her kindness and unique sense of humour, Pat was a long-time member and supporter of MVHS. The article by Jo Newman published with this newsletter is a small celebration of her life.

The Paramount closes after 100 years

"A fine theatre, ranking equal to the best in New Zealand" – Evening Post, 21 July 1917.

A few weeks after the 100th anniversary of its opening on 4 August 1917, the Paramount held its last screening and closed its doors when the lease expired in September. The owner of the building and the lessee, Cinema Paramount Ltd, had been unable to reach agreement for a renewal of the lease on terms that were acceptable to both parties.

On 8 March 1929, the Paramount became the first cinema in New Zealand to screen a talkie, *The Street Angel*.

Although the curtains have come down for the last time, some of the Paramount's history will be preserved. The cinema's three projectors, screens, sound system and seats are being installed in the new Tivoli Cinema in Papamoa in the Bay of Plenty, and the Wellington Film Society has taken 220 film reels and a number of projectors.



The Paramount Theatre in Courtenay Place was built in 1917.

The first feature film shown was *Less than the Dust*, starring Mary Pickford.

Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library

Wellington transport developments

Let's Get Wellington Moving, a joint project of the New Zealand Transport Agency and Wellington Regional and City Councils, has unveiled four possible scenarios to improve transport from Ngauranga to the airport and hospital. You can view the consultation document and other information here: <http://getwellymoving.co.nz/have-your-say/>

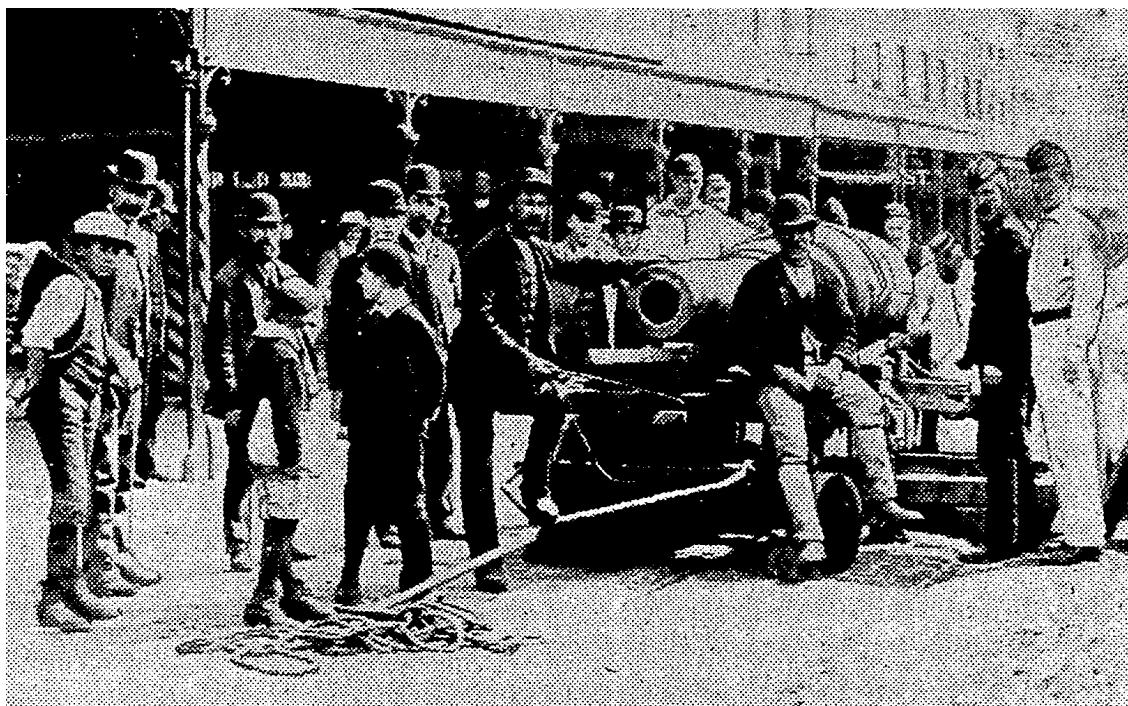
The MVHS Committee will be making a submission because Scenarios B, C and D could all have a negative impact on the historically significant Basin Reserve and Paterson Street area. Despite the Board of Inquiry and the High Court rejecting the New Zealand Transport Agency's proposal for a flyover three years ago, Scenarios B, C and D all include possible bridges at the Basin Reserve and a second Mt Victoria tunnel.

Submissions close on 15 December 2017 and the Committee urges you to have your say.

Anniversary: The cannon on Mt Victoria

This year is the 140th anniversary of the installation of the cannon near the top of Mt Victoria. This oddity is now so familiar to locals that we hardly notice it or remember why it is there.

In 1877, Archdeacon Stock from St Peter's in Willis Street had raised with the Council the need for a time gun in Wellington and suggested Mt Vic as the best spot. The government offered a cannon but the Council decided the costs of installation were too high. Instead, it offered £25 to the Wellington Artillery Volunteers Corps to do the job. The 18-man Corps got the cannon to the top of Majoribanks Street on 20 October, then to the top of the hill at the end of November, and fired three rounds in triumph. This was not where the Council wanted the cannon to be located however, and on 1 December 1877 it was moved on to its final resting place below the summit. When several rounds were fired to mark the occasion, the cannon's booms were heard all over the city and suburbs, a cask of beer was tapped, and the *Evening Post* called for three cheers for the archdeacon.



The cannon being hauled along Courtenay Place on its way to its resting place on Mount Victoria.

Photo: Evening Post 17 March 1933; National Library Papers Past

Memories of Pat Howard (1925-2017)

In 2007 I interviewed Pat Howard in her home for Mt Victoria Historical Society's oral history project. Pat took some persuading to agree to it, convinced that she couldn't have anything interesting to tell us.

One evening, I joined Pat and her husband, Jack, for a homely dinner at the little table near the coal range, beside the kitchen at the back of the house. We continued to sit around the table for the interview after we'd finished our meal. I soon realised it was going to be impossible to follow one of the 'rules' of oral history interviewing, that is, to talk to the interview subject alone. There was simply no question that Jack would not be involved; Pat and Jack came together.

Pat had lived in this very same house in Queen Street since she was born and at the time she was 82. Her parents bought the property in 1921 but not long before she was born it was nearly destroyed in the disastrous Queen Street fire which razed a number of adjacent wooden houses.



Although Pat wasn't there, tales of the fire formed part of her early world: "An old lady had a room upstairs next door. They said that she broke in upstairs and made her own fireplace, but that sounds out of this world, doesn't it? But she was the one that started the fire. . . We were left with two rooms and nothing much else at all." The insurance didn't cover replacing the second storey on the house, so it remains single-storied to this day.

Some of Pat's childhood memories paint a picture of a Mt Victoria that has long since disappeared. "You mainly played on the street because there were very few cars coming by." On Guy Fawkes night, the local children would stuff Guys into old prams and hang round the corners calling '*Guy Fawkes! Guy!*' "So we trailed along behind because we were not supposed to have anything to do with Guy Fawkes – two-faced Catholics! – but, anyway, we flowed along behind everybody else. I suppose the Guy Fawkes were what were on the bonfires. They had at least one bonfire up there near the tunnel, which was wonderful . . . You didn't seem to have adults organising it, or anything like that, as far as I know. Anyway, the children were certainly up there in their droves."

"After primary school I went to Tech. That was for one year. I thought maybe I might like to follow Mum and be a dressmaker, so I finished up going to what was a sort of domestic class . . . It was horrible. So when they asked me if I'd stay home, because Mum was getting ill at that time, well I suppose I jumped at the chance, you know."

"I got afternoons off when I used to go to a matinee, you know. Mum would be alright for the afternoon and I'd go off and see *Naughty Marietta*. And I'd come home as cross as hell – I'd be in such a bad mood – coming back to this life. But, of course, I had to cook a hot midday dinner . . . Dad and Mick, especially, they always came home for a hot midday dinner."

After her mother died, she went to work at Amos Soft Goods in Kent Terrace, near the Embassy Theatre. "They taught me how to sew, which I mucked up for a while in the first place, but never got told off. It was really lovely. And they made beautiful lingerie – beautiful – beautiful lingerie that you don't see these days." The girls from the factory came to Pat and Jack's wedding and were entertained at Queen Street afterwards. "All the girls had a ball and got a bit tiddly at the same time."

The young couple then stayed living in the house. "We finished up in the front room here . . . [the only room completely untouched by the fire in 1923]. Nobody really said we could stay here, but we stayed on and on because I'd always, as a young girl, I'd looked after Mum. I'd sort of been the housekeeper since I was fifteen, and I'd never been anywhere else in my whole life. I'd been the one that'd sort of done all the chores and kept the house as a home."

Later, Pat went to work in the office at the Prestige hosiery factory in Pirie Street. I can still hear her voice, and see the cheeky look on her face, as she told me, "I had my great big chitty-chitty-bang-bang

calculator. It was a beauty – a monster of a thing with a big carriage that chitty-chitty-bang-banged right and then it would come back and chitty-chitty-bang-bang. Ooh, it was lovely. It had a lovely rhythm to it. Then one day I gave it a bit of a push and that was the end of it. But I stayed there until the Prestige folded up altogether.”

One of the changes she noticed after so many years in the street was in the trees. “In those days we had no trees anywhere round . . . people didn’t need all their privacy everywhere, and they wanted the sunlight. You know. And there’d be lots of sunlight everywhere so people could grow all the veges and we got to know each other well because of that.”

Apart from the delight of being in Pat’s company and enjoying her stories, often conveyed with a smile and chuckle that seemed just a little bit naughty, I certainly felt I received more than I gave, as I set off for home with a jar of Pat’s home-made jam in my bag alongside the notebook, pen and recorder.

Joanna Newman