MOUNT VICTORIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS
No. 6, JUNE 1997

❖ JUNE EVENT

MOUNT VICTORIA'S MARITIME CONNECTIONS
An illustrated talk by Roger Carter (Wellington Maritime Museum)

Sunday June 22nd at 3-00pm.
Crossways Community House, Brougham St.
Refreshments to follow.

Roger Carter is ex Royal Navy and an ex Wellington Harbour Board Berthing Master, who nowadays does occasional work for the Maritime Museum. This will be an entertaining talk about the old maritime signal station on top of Mt Victoria and the development of the Clyde Quay Boat Harbour area, including the Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

❖ AUGUST EVENT

We are currently organising a trip to the Film Archive, Cable Street, in late August. The staff will be showing us around the archive facilities and screening some specially selected film clips that relate to our area of interest, eg early military parades at the Basin Reserve. There will be a small charge for this trip. For further details see our next newsletter and the Mt Victoria Newsletter.

❖ RECENT ACTIVITIES

St Gerard's Monastery

On the Saturday 26th April about 45 people visited St Gerard's Monastery. We were given an extensive tour of the building, inner chapel, main church and grounds by Charles Hannaford, Director of the International Catholic Programme of Evangelisation, ending with a talk about the ICPE mission work by Ruth Bond.

The ICPE has just commissioned local Conservation Architect Chris Cochran to do a Conservation Plan for the monastery. Happily the ICPE are committed to maintaining and repairing the buildings whilst making internal changes to adapt the buildings to its new purpose – ie that of a residential training mission. The building has a Category 1 classification under the 1993 Historic Places Act, meaning that it is a "place of special or outstanding historical or cultural significance or value". It is also listed in the Wellington City Council's District Plan.

Some conservation work has already been done on this building. In the mid 1980's strengthening was done on the roof and floor of the church and the whole building exterior was given a waterproof coating. Unfortunately this coating is now causing condensation problems for the building interior.

Current restoration problems that need addressing include - the buckling and colour deterioration of the beautiful stained glass church windows, aging plumbing and electric wiring, and deteriorating exterior brick and wood work. Installing a fire protection system is also a priority.

The ICPE has recently received funds for conservation work from the Wellington City Council and Lottery Grants Board, and is currently exploring others avenues of funding.

It is interesting to see a photo in the conservation plan booklet of the old Hawker Street entrance before the car parking platform was installed in 1970/71. It shows an outer low wrought iron fence and an imposing interior brick fence with a grand double door entrance to the main building.

The only other major alteration to the monastery since it was built, was the filling in of the second and third storey cloisters on the west side. It has been suggested that the original building plan was based on a recently completed monastery in Brisbane, and it does indeed resemble the said building. However the differences in the climate between Brisbane and Wellington were not taken into account, resulting in the open verandahs being quickly glazed in.

The monastery was built with the new technique of cast in situ reinforced concrete, with a brick exterior cladding and plastered interior finish. The City Council of the day, presumably thinking of earthquakes, insisted the building be of reinforced concrete rather than the proposed load bearing brick.

It is interesting to note that the name *monastery* is a misnomer because the Redemptorists were not monks engaged in prayer and contemplation, but concentrated on missionary work and visited parishes throughout the country.

Despite the amazing views from building site most of the bottom panes of glass in the windows were opaque and you can't see anything at all through them. The amazing views were not allowed to distract the monastery inhabitants from their work and prayers.

Sermons from St Gerard's were broadcast on the national radio from the 1920's until mid 1960's. It was also a civil defence centre during World War 2. With changes in the Catholic Church, the monastery became a parish in 1965. By 1988 there were only 4 priests and 3 brothers left in the building that was meant to house more than twenty people. With increasing costs of heating, maintenance and rates, the Redemptorists decided to sell the building. The ICPE conditionally purchased the monastery in September 1990, whilst the WCC later purchased the surrounding land for $1 million.

The ICPE recently opened the monastery to the public for the day. They intend holding more open days in the future

so that Wellingtonians can visit and appreciate this impressive building. The ICPE also hold a church service on Sunday mornings, which is open for locals to attend.

❖ HERITAGE MONTH

June is Heritage month and the Heritage Promotion Council has organised various activities on the theme of *Work and Play from Yesterday.*

Activities have been organised throughout the region. Wellington activities include a lecture series at the National Library and another series put on by the Onslow Historical Society at their Kandallah premises, as well as film screenings at the Film Centre. For more details see the brochure available around town and advertisements in the local newspapers.

❖ .PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF MT VICTORIA

Those of you who belong to the Historic Places Trust will have read about this project in their latest newsletter.

Con Flinkenberg has been discussing this project with our group's convenor and we have given our support to the project. As a result of these discussions Alan wrote the following item for the June Mount Victoria Newsletter.

Historic Places Trust photographs Mt Victoria Houses

Con Flinkenberg, Chairman of the Wellington Branch Committee of the NZHPT, has long been worried by the changing face of Mt Victoria and the subsequent loss of many Victorian and Edwardian houses.

As a result, the Committee has begun a project to photograph the suburb, both individual houses and street profiles, as well as interesting details of selected buildings. The negatives and prints will be kept at the Trust's Archives and it is hoped the project will be repeated in 30 years time.

A small area in Majoribanks St is currently being trialed to work out the best approach for the whole project. Once sponsorship has been found, the full project can begin.

The Mt Victoria Historical Society is very pleased that this project is being undertaken and is giving it its full support.

Several more willing and capable photographers are still needed. If you are interested in helping or want more information about the project, please contact Geoff Mew, Project Co-ordinator – 56336728 or Con Flinkenberg – 3843364.

❖ ART DECO

Victoria University's Centre for Continuing Education and the Friends of the Museum have organised a winter lecture series entitled "Substance and Essence – Art Deco". The series begins with Tony Bellette on 29 July talking on "The origins and spirit of Art Deco". Other lectures deal with graphic design, ceramics, interior design, architecture and fashion. Details of the cost, venue and dates etc are available in a brochure which is available around town. There are also other activities planned including a tea dance at Government House and a weekend trip to Napier. The Art Deco walk viewing local buildings, will be repeated on Sunday 24th August.

See you at our forthcoming events.
Julie Middleton

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THE MOUNT VICTORIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Invites you to a talk

MOUNT VICTORIA'S MARITIME LINKS

Speaker - Roger Carter (Wellington Maritime Museum)

Hear about the old maritime signal station at the top of Mt Victoria and the history of the Clyde Quay Boat Harbour area and the Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

SUNDAY 22nd JUNE at 3.00 PM, Crossways Community House,
cnr Brougham & Elizabeth Streets, Mt Victoria.

Afternoon tea to follow. For more information ring Alan Olliver on 3851022.

Mount Victoria Historical Society, 37 Ellice St, Mt Victoria