

Mt Victoria Historical Society Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The past financial year, like the previous one, was rather consumed with city planning matters. We have still managed to deliver what we hope are interesting offerings to members throughout the year.

Newsletters

In the year July 1 2022 to June 30 2023, we achieved our standard of issuing four newsletters. In addition to information about our activities, events and heritage news, they included stories on Mt Victoria, home to Wellington harbour pilots; Sara Dimant, an early career woman; the YWCA in Brougham Street; and The Rise and Fall of William Walter James Spreat (1840-1893). We always love to be able to share articles written by other members, so welcomed the one about the YWCA once based in Brougham Street from Emeritus Professor Barbara Brookes. Articles such as this and the one on Spreat share aspects of our history with members who haven't been able to join a walk or hear a talk, as well as making our history available to a wider public.

Outcome:

New research was conducted into the history of Mt Victoria to expand our knowledge base, and shared with members. Members were kept informed of news, events and committee activities.

Events

As usual, we have been privileged to host some incredibly knowledgeable and highly regarded speakers. This year our AGM was followed by Barabara Brookes' fascinating talk on the YWCA. In May, Mary O'Keefe gave us an entertaining and informative talk us about her work as an archaeologist.

For Wellington's Heritage Week Alan Olliver offered a guided walk billed as 'Murder & Mayhem in Mt Victoria'. The walk was so successful, it had to be run twice to cater for all those interested.

A special event in March was the 'unveiling' of the heritage plaque about the radar research station once located on the top of Mt Victoria. This project was initiated and driven by Mt Victoria Historical Society and the sign produced in collaboration with Wellington City Council. After the outdoor event, for which a large number of people gathered on top of the hill (including some visitors) we were treated to two very interesting talks over afternoon tea. One was given by science historian and member, Simon Nathan, who also helped in developing the plaque, and the other by military historian, Peter Cook. This event represented the culmination of a 10-year journey, starting with meeting Mary Harris, who was in New Zealand from the UK carrying out research on her mother's work in Wellington.

Outcome:

Our research, and that of other experts, was shared with members through talks and walks. Our walking tours continue to prove very popular and we shared the visible history of the suburb with wider Wellington through Heritage Week.

Heritage advocacy

The all-consuming activity on the advocacy front centred around the Proposed District Plan (PDP). We made submissions to three of the PDP Hearings and appeared in person to present them. Commissioners appeared to listen attentively, but who knows whether our submissions will make

any difference. Despite a number of experts providing evidence that designating large parts of Mount Victoria for development of six storeys or more is not necessary to achieve the quantity of housing required, our greatest hope may be that the expanded Character Areas proposed by officers in the PDP will make it through to the Approved Plan. (These were bigger than councillors voted for, so could be contested by them even if the Commissioners support them, in which case it may go to the Minister for the Environment for a decision.)

Again, we would like to those members who continued to engage with the planning process and give so much of their own expertise and time to the issue.

Outcome:

We have used our research and knowledge to advocate for the heritage values of Mount Victoria in key stages of the Wellington city planning process, which will have long-term implications for the character of the suburb. We have also advocated for heritage in other forums.

Other activities

With the assistance of our volunteer web expert, we now have most of the equivalent of the exhibition output from our 2006 oral history project online.

We developed a brief for our logo redesign and are in initial discussions with a design company.

In November 2022 the Convenor participated in a heritage workshop run by the City Council, as part of developing a new heritage strategy. The value of this exercise was not clear and no material relating to it has been distributed since.

We are not losing sight of what we think are important projects, despite the time devoted to city planning issues, and some major projects are well under way.

Outcome:

More of our research has been shared with the public via the website. We are also underway with designing a new logo to better suit the times and connect with the wider public.

Membership

Membership numbers at June 30, 2023 stood at 73, exactly the same as last year (but with a small number of losses and gains).

Outcome:

The raised awareness of the Society that comes through guided walks and even engagement over planning issues, has kept membership numbers steady.

Conclusion

Once again, I'd like to thank the committee for the past year: Jane O'Loughlin, Alan Olliver, Margaret Earle and Rosemary Bromley for their hard work on so many different fronts. It has been wonderful to have a Treasurer again, in Margaret Earle, so thanks to her for taking up that task so efficiently. As always, we are very happy for members to assist with projects, without joining the committee, so please don't hesitate to let us know if you'd like to get involved e.g. heritage plaques.

Finally, thank you, members, for your support over the past year.

Joanna M.A. Newman
Convenor