



# STAYING IN CHARACTER?

**A** quarter of Mount Victoria's distinct character area will lose its protection and be open to six-storey development, if recommendations by independent commissioners considering the District Plan are accepted. It's a far cry from an earlier version put forward by a slim majority of

councillors, which would have seen nearly two-thirds of character protection lost. But the story is not over yet, as councillors have the power to reject the recommendations and come up with alternatives. Find out more about how the District Plan could affect Mt Victoria on page 3. ➔

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# Staying in character

## What would the Commissioners' district plan recommendations mean for Mt Victoria?

Most of Mt Victoria will be zoned for medium-density development under the city's new district plan, if recommendations by independent commissioners are accepted. *Jane O'Loughlin investigates.*

**M**edium density zoning allows for detached, semi-detached and terraced housing, low-rise apartments, and adopts the medium density residential standards which permit three residential units of up to three storeys on a site.

Some areas – for example lower Elizabeth Street, Home and Hania Streets, Roxburgh Street and part of Hawker Street (see map for details) – have been designated a 'high density residential zone.'

These are areas that are expected to change over time to a more intensive urban built form. As well as allowing 3x3 development these areas also 'enable' multi-units of up to six storeys through a resource consent process, subject to standards and design guidance.

More of Mt Victoria would have been zoned as high density if it were not for character exemptions.

As the suburb falls within a 'walkable catchment' of the central city, councils are required under the National Policy Statement on Urban Development to enable six-storey development.

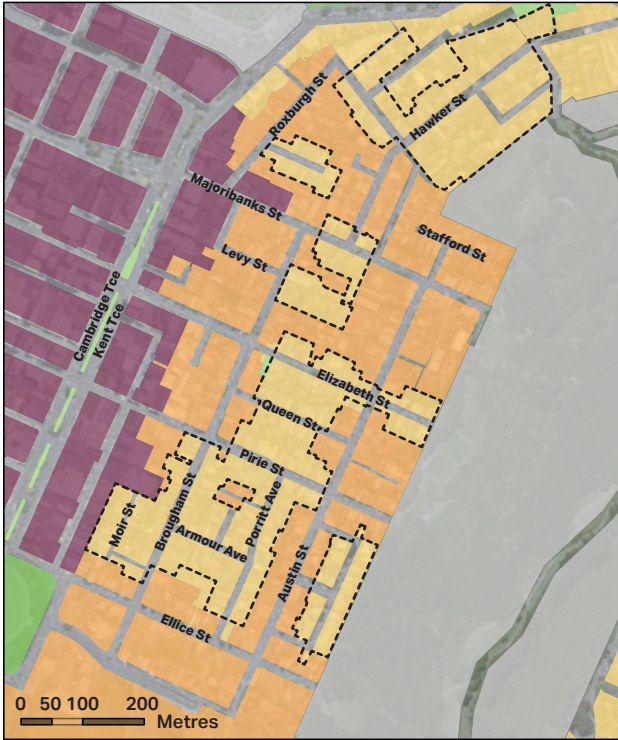
Exemptions are permitted for 'qualifying matters', such as heritage. The Wellington City Council proposed that 'character' should also be a qualifying matter, which commissioners agreed with.

The extent of character precincts has been heavily debated throughout iterations of the plan, and at one stage 63% of existing protections were proposed to be removed in Mt Victoria, as a result of a council vote.

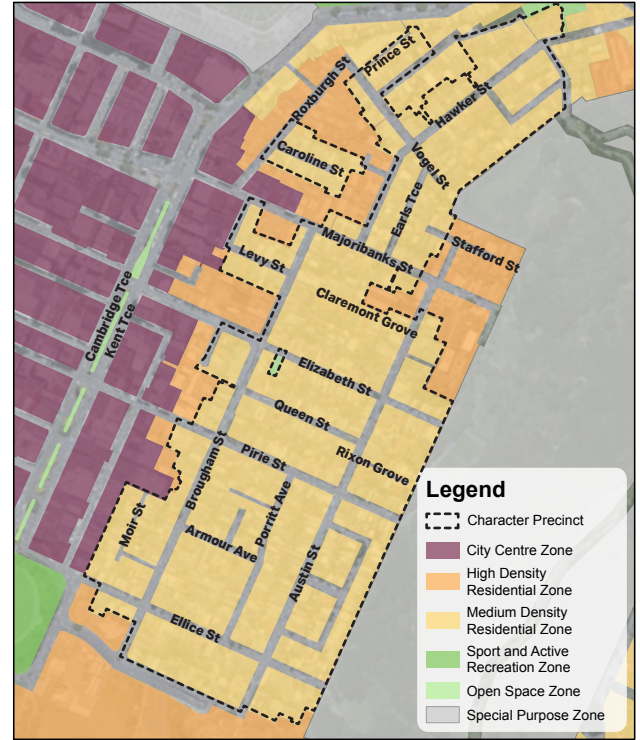
However, this was strongly opposed by residents, and even the council's own planning staff disagreed, recommending a different version in their report to the commissioners.

Now the pendulum has swung back the other way with a proposed 73% of protection to be retained in Mt Victoria, rather than just 37% in the proposed District Plan. Overall in Wellington, commissioners recommend that 67% of character protection should remain, compared to 28% in the proposed District Plan. **TL**

## WCC Notified Proposed District Plan



## IHP Recommended Change



Map based on IHP Report 2A Appendix 1.4 – Mount Victoria Zone Changes, and IHP Report 2B Appendix 1.7 - Mount Victoria, available on <https://wellington.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/district-plan/proposed-district-plan/decision-making-process>

### How did we get to this point? And what happens next?

The tortuous process of setting the city's planning rules has been going on for several years, involving a spatial plan, a draft District Plan, a proposed District Plan, and many hundreds of submissions from residents.

The most recent chapter has seen the hearings take place before a panel of independent commissioners. This important stage saw the big guns wheeled out: lawyers, planners, architects, developers and other experts speaking on behalf of themselves or clients such as Kainga Ora, NZTA and Housing and Urban Development.

Alongside were individuals, residents' associations and other smaller lobby groups, doing their best to make sense of the arcane world of urban planning. After months of hearings and deliberations taking up most of 2023, Commissioners presented their conclusions to council for acceptance last month.

These related to provisions that must be 'fast tracked' for resolution, following a new process set by the previous Labour government.

Fast-tracked provisions cannot be appealed to the Environment Court. Nor can councillors change the recommendations but they can propose alternatives, and the Minister for the Environment makes the final decision on which will be accepted.

When the process for fast-tracking was put in place, no doubt the then-Environment Minister David Parker imagined himself making those calls, however timelines have slipped and the government has changed; now it is National's Penny Simmonds who would make that call if required.

**The Council will meet on Thursday 14 March 2024 to decide whether to accept the IHP's recommendations or propose alternatives.**

# Could we car(e) less?

A prime piece of flat land is being cleared in Mt Victoria. You'd be forgiven for expecting this to result in an apartment block, or at least a set of townhouses.

**B**ut instead, it's going to be an overflow carpark for a nearby business.

Local writer Anne Molineux did the leg work to find out what's happening on Elizabeth Street, where we've recently watched with grim fascination a collection of hundred-year old houses being turned into firewood.

But this exercise has just been about clearing away derelict houses that have become a risk. There is no ambitious development to come; the owners say it's too expensive to build anything on the sites for the time being.

Ironically, this occurs just as the city's new District Plan reaches its final stages, which is supposed to encourage more high rise development close to the city.

And indeed, many local residents have expressed their dismay to me, that such a prime site close to the

city and on flat land is not going to be used to house more people.

But it's a free country and people can do what they like with the land they own, as long as they stay within the rules. You can certainly zone for density but you can't force the landowners to do it.

It also reinforces the fact that solving the housing problem is fiendishly tricky.

If construction costs are the real barrier, what can the council or government do to incentivise this investment? How can we gently encourage those occupying good land parcels to pass them onto those with greater wherewithal to develop them?

On a cheerier note, it's been fantastic to receive a hugely positive response to the launch of *The Local*. Turns out people value local news, and want more of it. Thanks to all those helping with delivery and contributing articles. *The Local* will continue to evolve, and we welcome your feedback on what you enjoy – and don't.



**Jane O'Loughlin**  
Editor

I was also pleased to see that that kahukura (Red Admiral butterfly) which features on our newspaper masthead was voted bug of the year for 2024.

It's always good to know you've backed a winner. 

## THE LOCAL Mt Victoria

*The Local* is published monthly by The Local News Limited. Find out more at [the-local.co.nz](http://the-local.co.nz)

Design: [homestudio.nz](http://homestudio.nz)

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### Deliveries and Distribution

*The Local* is distributed to Mt Victoria letterboxes and local cafes on the first weekend of every month (except January).

If you missed out on your copy, want extras or would prefer not to have a paper copy delivered, contact us at [editor@the-local.co.nz](mailto:editor@the-local.co.nz)

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## New ward councillor

The Green Party's Geordie Rogers is the new councillor in the Lambton-Pukehinau ward, after winning the February by-election by just 45 votes, with a total of 4147 votes.

Rogers was behind on election day by 621 but managed to win after special votes were counted. Independent candidate Karl Tiefenbacher received 4102 votes in the final tally, while Mt Victoria local Ellen Blake was third on 653.

Rogers joins councillors Iona Pannett and Nicola Young representing the central city ward on the Wellington City Council at a crucial time, as the council considers some thorny issues, including its attempts to rein in costs in the long-term plan. **TL**



## Capital mag closing

Capital magazine has told subscribers that the December 2023 issue was its last.

The magazine, in existence since 2013, has had its base in Pirie Street, Mt Victoria. Passersby may have noticed a notice on the street advertising a closing down sale of office equipment and other bits and pieces from the office in the Prestige building. The team will continue to produce Artzone. **TL**



## Elizabeth street upgrade update

The project to replace trees and re-surface pavements along Elizabeth Street has required more underground pipework, which meant council workers had to dig up the asphalt they had just laid about two months before.

The Elizabeth Street project team encountered a high level of ground water when excavating to construct the tree pits in which the trees are going to be planted, the Wellington City Council said. This required more underground piping to be installed to divert the water to the stormwater system. "Any issues found during construction would always need to be addressed," a spokesperson said. **TL**

## Fast lane for new tunnel?

We find out soon whether a new tunnel through Mt Victoria will be 'fast-tracked' by the government.

RMA Reform Minister Chris Bishop has promised that a new bill will be introduced to Parliament before 8 March setting out a new fast track consenting regime, as a way of by-passing 'the overly-restrictive RMA'.

This will include a list of projects that will be first to have their consents approved and conditions set by an Expert Panel. **TL**



# What's going on in lower Elizabeth Street?

There's nothing like a fence going up and diggers moving in to get the community gossip mill running. With the derelict houses at 10-12 Elizabeth and 11-15 Home Streets coming down, speculation has been rife as to what might replace them. Another apartment block? An extension to the Brendan Foot service centre? *Anne Molineux investigates.*

**P**rincipal Dealer for Brendan Foot, Matthew Foot, told The Local that the main reason for taking the houses down was health and safety.

"We've owned that piece of land for around six years now, and some of the houses were pretty far gone even then. We've been having issues with squatters and people breaking into them to steal copper and iron fittings. We were worried about the safety of the neighbours, so made the call to take them down."

The two habitable houses on the site will remain, and have tenants living in them.

Foot said they do not have any plans at this stage for the future of the site. "We've been approached by developers over the years – including someone who wanted to build a private hospital on the site, but the cost of construction right now is too high for us to be able to do anything with it."

As to the longer term prospects for Brendan Foot in Mt Victoria, Matthew was less sure. "We love being in Mt Victoria – it's a great community. My sister lives around the corner, and my nephew goes to the school there. Our customers love that they can drop their car off and then walk into town.

**"At the same time, we are facing significant rates increases as the Council seeks to push car yards like ours out of the city."**

For the time being the site will act as overflow parking for the service centre, and for the new Jaecoo/Omeda showroom that will open in March on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Kent Terrace.

"We are excited to welcome these two Chinese brands to our line up," Matthew told us. "The opportunity came up to take a short-term lease on the site, so we have taken advantage of that."

The site will be part of a national introduction of the two brands to New Zealand, rolling out across the country this year. **TL**

# The History of Lower Elizabeth & Home Street

As some of the last remnants of colonial Wellington are being removed in lower Elizabeth Street it's a chance to reflect on the history of this collection of houses.

*Alan Olliver and Julie Middleton look at the history of this collection of houses.*

This whole area was part of Town Acre 303. Elizabeth Street was not part of the original street plan for the suburb. In 1902, the extension of Elizabeth St from Kent Terrace to Brougham St was formed and three years later, it was widened for the trams. The road formation replaced a small 'right of way' locally known as Waipa Avenue, where Hawthorn and Crump had their building yard. The business was part owned by Colin Crump, the brother of Harry Crump, who was developing Paterson St about the same time.

Home St was the main street in this area prior to this. The houses that were built in what was to become Elizabeth St were developed as part of the Home Street subdivision of 1898/99, with the building being done by Hawthorn and Crump.

No.12 Elizabeth St was built in 1900. Further building work was carried out in 1919, probably adding the shingles in 1930. The house eventually became a boarding house. Council records show that by 1965 the building had become very rundown with rotting foundations and insanitary conditions. By 1973, it has become an unlicensed boarding house, home to 10 occupants. The area had been designated "Industrial A" and it was purchased by Christopher McCallum in 1975. He used it as a workshop and office for his business, C. F. McCallum Ltd, cabinet maker and fabricator of in-built furniture. It was his workshop that was cleared out just before the demolition began.

Alongside no 12 was the little concrete block building, built in the backyard of 11 Home St in 1968. The building started life as the Mayfair Bookshop, and had various incarnations including more recently a coffee roasting business, the 'Immigrant's Son', a 'pop-up' dress shop and a food outlet.

No. 11 Home St was built in 1899 and no.13 and no.15 Home St in 1900, all being built by Hawthorn and Crump. Council Archives plans for no.13 and 15 show a simple two storied two-bedroom dwelling, with a bathroom upstairs and a 'water closet' in the downstairs back porch. The plans show fireplaces in the front lounge and dining room. The bay windows are a 1924 addition. TL



Detail – "Mt Victoria, Wellington" 1928 Natlib 1/2-059957-F

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Tue 20th Aug 2024, depart Chathams 8:30am - arrive Wellington 9:45am

## Tour #54 (Incorporating the 2024 Festival of Science)

Wed 14th Aug 2024, depart Christchurch 1:00pm - arrive 3:45pm (CI time)  
Wed 21st Aug 2024, depart Chathams 8:30am - arrive Christchurch 10:00am

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# Cycle ways

**A massive jump in cyclists has been recorded on Kent and Cambridge Terraces since cycleways were installed but a long list of teething issues means the Wellington City Council will continue to 'tweak' the layout.**

**T**he number of cyclists travelling along the route was 84% higher this summer compared to last summer, as measured by the electronic counter at the Basin Reserve gates.

In numbers, that's a jump from an average weekly total of 1549 cyclists counted along the terraces last summer, to an average weekly total of 2845 this summer.

The highest daily cycle count of the summer (at time of going to print) was recorded on 13 February 2024 with 835 total people on bikes. Within the same period in 2022, the highest cycle count was reached on 7 February at a much lower total of 489.

However it hasn't been plain sailing with the so-called 'transitional' cycleway.

The council has received 'a long list' of feedback since the lanes were put in place last July, according to Claire Pascoe, the council's transitional programme manager.

The council is continuing to work through improvements. One example was the 'too short' turning lane into Elizabeth Street, where the width of the cycleway needed to be adjusted to prevent long queues of traffic forming.

This is the benefit of the 'transitional' approach to building a cycleway, where it can be installed quickly and then adjusted to make improvements, says Pascoe.

"We've been adapting since the day we started."

Pascoe says the significant increase in usage is 'un-surprising' as the Cambridge Terrace was 'horrendous' for cyclists previously. Anecdotally new cyclists, young people and parents with kids on the back of the bike are now using it, as well as people who have changed their usual cycling route.

Feedback from the community to The Local is positive about the safety benefits for cyclists using the new lanes, in particular for children.

However users also have concerns, for example around the fact cars are running orange and red lights more, putting cyclists in danger.

While the council will continue to make improvements to the cycleway in its 'transitional' form, with long term funding arrangement still being debated it is unclear if and when the cycleway will transition to a more permanent state. **TL**

## What Mt Victoria locals had to say:

We often walk from our home off Roxburgh Street to the waterfront and absolutely love seeing the cycleway being so well used. It's a win for everyone. **Barry and Elizabeth**

The new cycleway is much safer for us rather than to run the gauntlet of using Hania and Home Streets with cars backing out of repair places and passing huge parked car transport trucks. **Julie**

# The welcoming gym on your doorstep

It's the fitness club on your doorstep and it's open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**H**ighly-rated gym Anytime Fitness Kent Terrace is already a favourite of locals, with Mt Victoria residents making up 80% of its clientele.

If you haven't ventured through the sliding doors before, it's a surprise to see how large the facility is. At 820 square metres, the gym is extensive and well-decked out with Hammer Strength and Life Fitness equipment throughout.

Although the premium fitness club boasts the best equipment available, what really sets it apart according to the owner Craig Cawkwell, is the welcoming atmosphere.

"At some facilities, you won't even receive a hello. And the gym environment can be pretty intimidating. Here, everything we do is focused on making people feel valued and comfortable. The staff will know your name and always greet you with a smile."

Members agree: Anytime Fitness Kent Terrace rated in the top 5 out of 60 clubs across the country the franchise's customer satisfaction survey.

The club was also judged third-best Anytime Fitness NZ gym last year and this year they are gunning for the top prize.

How do they do it?

Being a locally-owned, family-run venture is part of it.

"As the owner-operator, I'm on-site each day and immersed in trying to run a great business. And we've put together a wonderful team of employees and contracted Personal Trainers, who're highly invested in what they do."

Getting started is easy. A complimentary Fitness Consultation includes an Evolt body composition scan to provide a benchmark to track your progress. The qualified trainers will then provide some guidance on appropriate exercise for your goals, experience, and current fitness level, and point you in

the right direction of a suitable plan from the Anytime Fitness App.

For those wanting to get their heart rate up, the gym has a full range of treadmills, ellipticals, stair climbers, rowing machines, bikes, and assault bikes.

Resistance training options include power racks, pin/plate-loaded machines, dumbbells, and a lifting platform.

Functional training aficionados are fully catered to with a 110sqm functional training area featuring specially designed PaviGym flooring, TRX suspension trainers, and accessories such as kettlebells, battle ropes, and power bags.

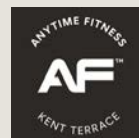
**Is Anytime Fitness the right choice for you? Check out our special reader offer below:**

## Offer for Readers

- **A complimentary 7-day pass** is available to all prospective members via the Anytime Fitness Kent Terrace club website – [anytimefitness.co.nz/gyms/nz-1060](https://anytimefitness.co.nz/gyms/nz-1060)
- As a special offer for *The Local* readers, Craig and the team will waive the \$29 joining fee for new members who join before the end of March 2024 (simply mention this article!).



Clayton Amer (Membership Experience Manager), Madeleine Gear (Membership Consultant), and Craig Cawkwell (Owner-Operator).



# Mountain biking event on Matairangi

If you're a walker, it might be a good day to avoid the northern bit of the Mt Victoria townbelt, but if you like to watch mountain-biking it's the place to go.

**T**he annual Mt Vic Enduro mountain bike race is happening on Saturday 9 March, organised by Get Lost Cycling in Mt Victoria.

Organisers says it's a great spectator event. There will be signage up and marshals at every track intersection to help walkers cross.

All proceeds are donated to the Matairangi trail builders who are responsible for all of the upkeep of the tracks on Mt Victoria.

In the last couple of years, Get Lost Cycling has donated around \$25,000 to them from the proceeds from the race and a bike raffle they run each year.

More information from Get Lost Cycling – [getlostcycling.co.nz](http://getlostcycling.co.nz) 

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**THE LOCAL**   
*Mt Victoria*

## ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in the Mount Victoria area – to win a \$20 voucher for Good Books.

Email your answers to us at [editor@the-local.co.nz](mailto:editor@the-local.co.nz). If there's more than one correct answer the will be selected at random. Congratulations to Olivia Wu, who correctly identified February's ULO as the lights on the Basin Reserve. 



**Do you offer guitar lessons? Are you a dog-walker looking for customers? The Listings section is an affordable way to let people know about your service. Advertise in *The Local* for as little as \$40.**

### **Jan Preston piano boogie trio**

4pm, Saturday 2 March 4pm, St Peter's Church  
211 Willis St, Wellington

A Jan Preston concert will take you on a journey. From her first explosive virtuoso boogie piano instrumental, through heart-felt blues and ballads, with a smattering of her original film music, Jan (see below) is unique and magnetic. She will be joined by special guests Mike Pullman on percussion and Radio NZ's Nick Tipping on acoustic bass, producing a trio of dynamic boogie and blues grooves. Originally from Greymouth, founding member of Red Mole (musical director) and now Sydney-based Kiwi expat Jan Preston will rattle the cobwebs with her infectious brand of virtuoso piano boogie woogie. Bookings through Eventfinda or from the church. Cash door sales at venue on the day.

### **Feldenkrais classes**

Awareness through Movement classes are held Tuesdays 6-7pm at the Quaker room in Moncrieff St. Relieve pain and stress, improve posture, balance and breathing, in a friendly, relaxing environment. Sue 0274667123, [massagewellington.nz](mailto:massagewellington.nz)

### **Newtown Open Studios 2024**

Meet artists living and working in Newtown with the opportunity of buying work directly from them. Open noon – 5pm, 9 and 10 March. **FREE ENTRY**  
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Community notices are free for local groups and not-for-profits.  
Get in touch if you would like to include your listing in *The Local*.

### Waring Taylor's Ponzi Scheme

Early Wellington businessman and politician Waring Taylor comes under scrutiny in an upcoming talk by historian Jane Tolerton, who has just completed an MA thesis on his sister Mary Taylor, best known as a friend of Charlotte Bronte. Was Waring Taylor a 'kindly well-meaning muddler' who did not mean to defraud anyone, as some historians have argued, or was he a conman who preyed on friends and family members under cover of a benign, Bible-quoting exterior? Jane Tolerton argues that he was the latter and that the frauds for which he was sentenced to five years in jail were just the tip of a psychopathic iceberg. Find out more at the talk hosted by the Mt Victoria Historical Society on Sunday March 17 at 2.00 pm Society of Friends Hall, Moncrieff Street. Visitors welcome.

### Walk2Work Day 13 March

Celebrate walking on Walk2Work Day Wednesday 13 March. Join Living Streets Aotearoa near Frank Kitts park on the waterfront from 7-9am in the morning or at Midland Park from midday. Send a photo of your walk on the day to be in to win a prize, use #Walk2Work, and tell us where you are. Wellington inner suburb and city residents have the highest rates of walking; around 50% of adults walk to work. Let's celebrate. More information at [livingstreets.org.nz/walk2work](http://livingstreets.org.nz/walk2work)

**walk2work**  
move your mood

Wednesday 13 March 2024  
[walk2work.org.nz](http://walk2work.org.nz)

### The Quakers

Each Sunday at 10:30am Wellington Quakers gather for Worship as part of unprogrammed Friends Meetings. Our address is 7 Moncrieff St. We welcome all. For more information email [wgtnquakers@gmail.com](mailto:wgtnquakers@gmail.com)

### Quaker meeting rooms

7 Moncrieff Street has meeting rooms for regular or one-off meetings for non-profit and government agencies. Wifi and projector available. Call: 04-385-4897 or email [wgtnquakers@gmail.com](mailto:wgtnquakers@gmail.com)



### Innermost Gardens

Gardening Sundays: 10am-12pm on the first and third Sunday of the month. Also Tuesday morning gardening every week during school term 10am – 12 pm. Everyone is welcome. Contact [innermostgardens@gmail.com](mailto:innermostgardens@gmail.com) or check out our website [innermostgardens.org.nz](http://innermostgardens.org.nz) to find out more about how the gardens are run and allotment and composting opportunities.

### Hall for hire: Tararua Tramping Club

The Tararua Tramping Club offers a hall and a room for hire for meeting, theatre productions and more. Located at 4 Moncrieff Street, Mt Victoria. For details please contact: [ttc.clubrooms@ttc.org.nz](mailto:ttc.clubrooms@ttc.org.nz)

### Crossways Community Creche

61 Majoribanks Street, is a parent-run early learning centre for children aged 1 to 5. It is open Monday to Friday and offers 20 hours of state-funded ECE for over 3s. Contact us at 04 3848201 or email [info@crosswayscreche.org.nz](mailto:info@crosswayscreche.org.nz)

### Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten

Spaces available: Pikopiko sessions are open for 2-5 year olds, Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm during school terms. 20 Hours Free. Phone 04 385 0441 or email: [pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz](mailto:pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz). Please see [wmkindergartens.org.nz](http://wmkindergartens.org.nz) for more information.

# Don't take a fence

The other week a plate came sailing over our back fence. *Jane O'Loughlin explains.*

It was a cardboard plate, and it didn't hit anyone, so no harm done.

I was happy to pass it back through the fence to the politely apologising neighbours enjoying their exuberant barbeque next door.

Living close by each other, as we do in Mt Vic, requires a bit of give and take. Kudos, for example, to the young people in the flat down the road who not only gave us advance warning of the party they were planning, but also invited us to it.

We're lucky that all our current neighbours are a genial and respectful bunch, but it has not always been thus.



Once we had a group of young folk living next to us who were of the view that 4am was a perfect time to crank up the stereo and have loud drunken conversations on the front deck, which was approximately one metre from our bedroom window.

Unfortunately this coincided with the time our daughter was a baby and sleep was in short supply.

On one such occasion, I spent about an hour grinding and gnashing my teeth before getting out of bed and heading next door to let our neighbours know that people were actually trying to sleep.

Perhaps it said something about the state of the party but nobody acknowledged my arrival, despite me being noticeably older than them and wearing pyjamas.

I stood in their midst for some minutes wondering what to do, before – and it makes me cringe to think of it – clapping my hands like a school teacher.

Confused young people watched me attempt to deliver with some authority a speech about my need for sleep, possibly let down by the fact I was wearing a fluffy pink dressing gown.

The noise levels went down marginally, but a few short hours later, when the partygoers had gone to bed at last, our baby inevitably awoke. At that point I opened all the windows and made sure the bassinet and her loud hungry cries were strategically positioned near the open window.

Fortunately the days of formulating and executing acts of revenge on my neighbours are largely over.

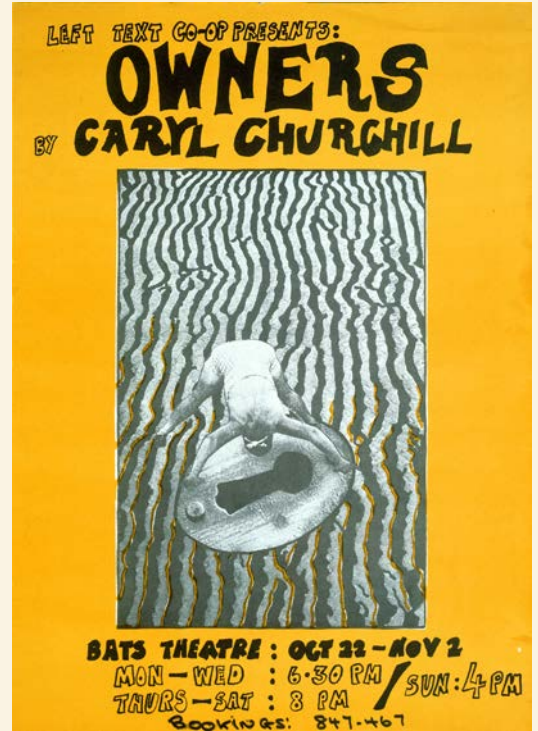
Instead, I am happy to be part of a wider Mt Vic neighborhood WhatsApp group where people lend books, look after cats, water plants when people are on holiday, and chase down escaped dogs.

We should celebrate the fact that Mt Vic is a friendly place, with a healthy community of people who look out for each other. **TL**

**As it happens, March is the month that Neighbours Aotearoa encourages people to get to know their neighbours. Great idea – I hope we remain the kind of community where you can accidentally biff a plate across the fence and know the neighbour will return it in good humour.**



The stained glass dome in 1 Kent Terrace, 2009



BATS theatre poster, 1985 (play directed by Annie Newman) [ATL Eph-C-BATS-1985-01]

# BATS building marks 100 years

A number of Mount Victoria landmarks celebrate their centenaries this year. First off the blocks is the BATS building, the home of theatre at number 1 Kent Terrace, which opened in March 1924. *Joanna Newman explains.*

It was built for the Manchester Unity Oddfellows Society, a ‘benevolent fraternal organisation’ that spread from its origins in the UK and became a world-wide institution – particularly in the 19th century. In 1923 Frederick de Jersey Clere and his son Herbert were commissioned to design a building with a purpose-built lodge meeting room on the first floor, and two shops and a dance hall/theatre venue on the ground floor. The elegant three-storey building has a beautiful stained-glass dome in the top floor.

In the 1930s, part of the building was used as a dance hall (one of two popular and well-known dance halls in Mt Victoria). Wellington City Council had problems

with the surreptitious “consumption of intoxicating liquor” in or around some dance halls in that decade but the Oddfellows was consistently “quite orderly” or “quiet” within the hall.

It’s been a theatrical venue ever since it was built and theatre groups who have used it include the Wellington Savage Club (a men’s social and artistic club) from the 1930s, Unity Theatre from the 1940s until 1978, and BATS (which stood for Bane and Austin Touring Society) theatre from 1979 till 1988. Still BATS, but under a different guise, it’s now home to diverse independent theatre productions.

In 2011 the Royal Antediluvian Order of the Buffaloes sold the building to Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh and they issued a long-term lease to BATS.

On the edge of Mount Victoria, the building is also part of a theatre precinct (with Downstage and The Embassy) and sits alongside other 1920s and ‘30s buildings such as the Taj Mahal and the fire station, though it’s a very different style and harks back to the classical. **TL**



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