



KENT TERRACE CHANGES COMING



**Win tickets
and flights to the
Taylor Swift Eras
tour in Vancouver!**
Find out more
inside.

Courtenay Place will be re-aligned to face the Embassy instead of Marjoribanks Street as part of Golden Mile changes starting in January.

It will be the first stage of a two-year project to refresh Courtenay Place, Manners Street, Willis Street and Lambton Quay.

The changes to Courtenay Place include removing private vehicles from the area during the day, widening the pedestrian areas, installing new paving stones, putting in a bike path, consolidating bus stops, and building bigger bus shelters.

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Kent Terrace changes coming

Work to change the shape of the Mt Victoria end of Courtenay Place will kick off in January, the first project as part of the Golden Mile changes.

The intersection of Courtenay Place with Kent and Cambridge Terraces is to be re-aligned to face the Embassy, instead of Marjoribanks Street.

It's the first stage of a three stage Golden Mile upgrade process that's expected to take around two years to complete. Stage two is the Courtenay Place changes, and stage three is the Willis Street and Lambton Quay changes.

While the designs are yet to be finalised and released to the public, a workshop for councillors in September gave some indications of what's in store.

The intersection work includes changing bus lanes and pedestrian crossings to align with the future street design on Courtenay Place, installing new signalised crossings, and new wind and rain shelters and pavement upgrades.

Information provided to councillors said the work would take approximately eight months "because we must manage possible traffic congestions while Wellington Water also complete the rising main on Wakefield Street."

The council has been talking to businesses in the area about Golden Mile changes in the pipeline. Although work could have started sooner, timing was moved out into the New Year at the request of businesses who wanted the disruptive construction work to occur after the busy Christmas period.

One new change developed since the council took over the project is the proposed removal of the existing vehicle sliplane at the Kent Terrace end of Courtenay Place.

According to advice provided to councillors, this change will create greater pedestrian space, keeps the existing public toilets in place and reduces the construction complexity.

Now that Let's Get Wellington Moving has been dissolved, component parts of the project have been split up and distributed to the agencies involved. The Wellington City Council is leading the project to make changes to the street layout along the Golden Mile.



It's the Courtenay Place upgrades that have proven to be most controversial, with significant changes to the way the area will be used.

Only buses will be able to use the roadway during the daytime hours of 7am to 7pm, while a new cycle path will permit bikes and scooters to access Courtenay Place.

Widened footpaths will allow more outdoor dining, and new planting, tiles and outdoor lighting will improve the amenity of the area. The overall design will acknowledge mana whenua stories about the creation of te Whanganui a Tara.

It is also proposed to remove the bus stops outside the St James, and across the road at the old Reading Cinema site, to enable bus travel times to improve.

Businesses have raised a number of concerns, including loading zone access, and ensuring Uber eats driver can gain access to businesses.

Others were concerns at bikes or scooters speeding through, close to outdoor dining areas and pedestrian spaces.

Final design plans and renders will be released to the public in October. **TL**

One new change developed since the council took over the project is the proposed removal of the existing vehicle sliplane at the Kent Terrace end of Courtenay Place.

Council encourages six storeys

The controversial proposal for an apartment block at the end of Westbourne Grove in Mt Victoria appears to have been influenced by discussions between the developer and the Wellington City Council.

Neighbours concerned about the impact of a new 30-block apartment building in their area believe the council encouraged the developer, Forma Group, to switch from initial plans for townhouses to a larger tower style block with more units.

Both the council and developer are coy on the matter but indicate that those discussions did play a part.

The council confirmed that it ‘articulated’ to the developer the fact that the new District Plan has resulted in the Austin Street area is a high-density zone that allows for buildings of six stories, or 22 metres.

“Ultimately decisions regarding the size of the development are up to the developer, but given Wellington’s housing crisis, developers of multi-unit applications are encouraged to maximise the potential of the site,” a council spokesperson said.

The council said this is in line with the Government’s policy of wanting more housing in the urban areas of New Zealand.

“The purpose of the National Policy Statement – Urban Development is to enable development by maximising the benefits of intensification. Therefore, six stories will support this Government policy statement.”

Mark Quinn of Forma Group said that ‘a number of options’ are evaluated for a given site, and they engaged early with the council regarding those options, as encouraged by the council.

“We don’t see it that Council has an agenda for this property, or any other property that we have developed. Instead, our experience with Council is that initial feedback is generally sought and given regarding the potential options that we identify for a particular site, and what parts of the District Plan might need consideration in respect of those.”

Forma Group’s proposal for the apartment block has been controversial due to the height of the building located on an elevated part of Mt Victoria, the shading it will cause on neighbouring houses, the

narrow private road access to the site itself, and its location against the green belt.

Neighbours have engaged lawyers to explore options to prevent it going ahead.

The council says it has yet to evaluate the proposal.

“An application is yet to be received. When it is, the effects of the proposal will be assessed in relation to neighbouring properties, in line with the discretion of the District Plan.”

The council said that buildings less than six stories are still permitted in the high density zone. **TL**



Future thinking in Mt Vic

When I saw the SALE sign go up on the Big Barrell site at the bottom of Elizabeth Street I lost no time in phoning up the real estate agents to find out who the new owner was.

Such a large, prominent site had so many possibilities! Would we get a new apartment block? Big box retail? Fast food?

Not gonna lie, finding out the new owner was essentially Big Barrell itself and nothing was going to change, was a bit of a disappointment.

In these somewhat depressed times, we are looking for signs of hope on the horizon – new investments, inventions, creations that will bring industry, jobs and people to our city.

The city-wide malaise has encouraged some visionaries to come forward with ideas for rejuvenating Wellington. It made me wonder what we would come up with for Mt Victoria, to make it even better than it is.

For example, our suburb does lack facilities. Other suburbs have community centres where locals can run classes, hold events and meetings. Since the closure of Crossways Community Centre more than

ten years ago, Mt Victoria has largely been without a suitable centre. We only have the Hub, and it is used by a number of groups to get together, but the space is tiny.

The traffic work around the Basin Reserve, as part of a possible new tunnel, could throw up some opportunities for new landscaping and beautification, if NZTA/Waka Kotahi is willing to work with locals. Could it also result in opportunities for new facilities, if the corner of the suburb by the Basin gets a makeover? Another thought is adding more amenity around the town belt.

In my view, the Pirie Street Playground is crying out for a café. It would be amazing to be able to collect a coffee after your walk or bike ride on Mt Vic, and great for parents to be able to sit with a drink and while watching their kids play at the playground.

The Mt Victoria Residents' Association has already been advocating for toilets at the park but perhaps we should be more ambitious?



Those are my ideas – do you have ideas about how our suburb could be improved? We always welcome letters to the editor. Feel free to write in! **TL**

Jane O'Loughlin
Editor

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Residents' Association recognises prominent locals

The contributions of three prominent Mt Victorians were recognised at the Annual General Meeting of the Mt Victoria Residents' Association in September.

Retiring Clyde Quay School principal Liz Patara, former Residents' Association President Craig Palmer, and Officer of New Zealand Mary-Jane Rivers (pictured left, with MVRA President Ellen Blake) were awarded certificates at the meeting.

You can read more about Craig Palmer in the feature on page 9. **TL**



New Year's street festival for Courtenay Place

Courtenay Place bar and restaurant owners have gained approval to hold a street festival for New Year.

After a long process, they managed to get approval from the Wellington City Council to close off the streets for New Year.

Courtenay Place will be closed to vehicles between Tory St and Cambridge Terrace, including Blair and Allan Streets, from 6am on December 31 to 6am on January 1. **TL**

No change for Big Barrell site

The Big Barrell will stay as a Big Barrell despite the site on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Kent Terrace being sold.

Real estate agent Mark Sherlock of Bayleys said it has been purchased by the owner of the Big Barrell chain of bottle stores, and it was expected to continue as a bottle store.

Nine offers were received for the large corner property site.

"It just goes to show how good the site is," Sherlock said.

It was previously held as an investment by Manchester Unity for 30 years, and was a bottle store for all that time. **TL**

Tip shop in Forrester's Lane

A new local option for those wanting to drop off pre-loved goods has opened up at Forrester's Lane, off Tory Street.

Te Aro Zero Waste is a central place where people can drop-off and buy secondhand goods, get help fixing things instead of throwing them out, and drop-off hard to recycle items like electronic gear, plastic and metal lids and batteries.

Te Aro Zero Waste is a partnership between Wellington City Council and the Sustainability Trust. It's based in the Sustainability Trust's Forrester's Lane home.

The new site is an option for those who can't make it to the Southern Landfill. **TL**

Crime stats

Latest Police crime statistics show just 3 victimisations recorded in Mt Victoria for the month of June, down from the 17 recorded in June.

One of them was for unlawful entry and the other two were for theft. All three were related to an area between Roxburgh Street and Kent Terrace. **TL**

Another raffle to fulfil school's wildest dreams

Get in quick! Clyde Quay School is running another Taylor Swift concert raffle, to raise money for their school hall and playground upgrades.

The previous raffle, in July, was hugely successful with tickets selling out in six days. The lucky winner went to the Eras concert at Wembley Stadium in London.

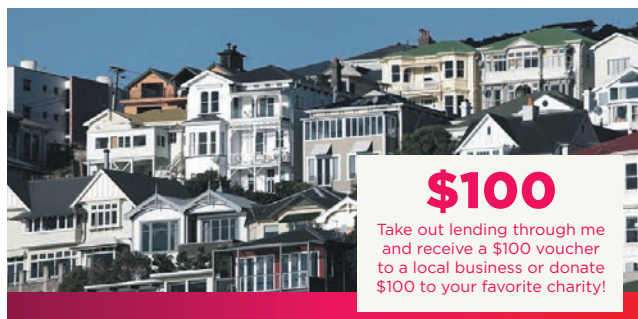
The second raffle gives entrants two chances to win VIP Club tickets to see Taylor Swift perform live in Vancouver on December 6, and includes return flights, accommodation, and spending money. Altogether the prizes are worth \$60,000.

It's one of the last chances to experience the Eras tour, and the school is hoping the drawcard

will net them a significant sum to support the school upgrades.

"We hope that once again Swifties will come out in droves to support this effort. As a small school, a fundraiser like this makes a huge difference. The proceeds will go towards our school hall refurbishment, which is an asset that both the school and the community will use," says Phernne Tancock, chair of the school fundraising committee Whanau and Friends.

Tickets are available at galabid.com/clydequay 



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Working together in an emergency

An emergency planning workshop brought people in the community together to figure out how they would manage if they worst happened. Jane O'Loughlin took part.

An 8.2 magnitude earthquake has hit Wellington – the roads out of town are cut off, phone and internet are down, and the key utilities of water, electricity, and gas are all not working.

In the midst of this, people from the community of Mt Victoria, Oriental Bay and the inner city converge on Clyde Quay School, a community emergency hub, to find out what's going on, to offer and seek help.

This is the made-up scenario that locals faced, as part of a workshop run by the Wellington Region Emergency Office (WREMO) in Mt Victoria in September.

The interactive workshop saw the 18 locals, from Mt Victoria, Mt Cook and the CBD take on roles to experience what it is like to run a community emergency hub.

WREMO staff explained that the model was about supporting the community to problem solve. It was a different approach to the old civil defence model where, they said, expectations of what a centre should and could deliver far exceeded the reality.

The new approach is more flexible, providing merely a place for willing volunteers to come together to organise themselves, along with role descriptions, stationery and a radio to connect to the central emergency management location.

The make-believe scenario saw some participants take on roles such as hub supervisor, information coordination, public information, reception, facility maintenance and communications, while others were 'actors', injecting information, requests for help, and offers of assistance into the scenario.

It was amazing to see how quickly and smoothly the hub got underway.

The 'public' came in with issues such as houses on fire, people needing medical help, and lost dogs. Official information coming in via the radio was relayed through and displayed on public notice boards. A nurse advised locals not to go to the hospital with minor injuries as they were inundated. Another said that a local café had managed to open and was providing food – cash only.

Workshop participants found the experience valuable and worthwhile.

While we hope we don't need to use this knowledge, it's good to know more of our community are prepared, and willing to pitch in and help.

Those who couldn't make the workshop may want to read more on the website – a plan with information specific to Mt Vic is available.

wremo.nz/assets/Hub-Guides/Wellington-City/Mount-Victoria-Oriental-Bay.pdf 

New bike ramps in the hood

Cyclists have an easier time getting up and down the Hood Street steps thanks to the installation of new ramps.

The channels alongside the steps are designed to allow people to wheel their bikes or scooters rather than having to carry them.

The Wellington City Council said that the channels, installed in July, were in response to requests from the public.

The Mt Victoria ramps aren't a new thing: there's now cycle ramps installed at 12 public steps around Wellington.

The cost of the Hood Street ramps was \$2,969. 



Calling all house sellers

We all know what the difference between supply and demand can have on the property market, and it's this equation that is posing an interesting set of circumstances currently.

We are now officially in Spring, one of the busiest seasons on the real estate calendar, however listings for Wellington city on Trade Me are 725, 11% lower than we had in the middle of winter! So where is the Spring rush?

I have been calling many home owners in our suburb in recent weeks to try and uncover opportunities for several groups of enthusiastic buyers we are working with who are searching for a property in Mount Victoria. Almost without fail what I am hearing from the home owners I am connecting with is “We know the market is pretty ****t right now so we are just going to sit tight”. So, what happens when this is the common theme across home owners in the market? Unless there is a need to sell i.e. death, divorce, financial pressure or shifting away, most home owners are sitting tight.

What this is currently resulting in is an imbalance in the supply and demand equation in favour of home sellers. Buyers are increasingly coming out of the shadows with interest rate relief finally upon us, but there is less choice for these buyers to be looking at. This is resulting in higher open home numbers for properties on the market and more homes receiving multiple offers during their marketing campaign.

Generally what these indicators would then lead to is prices being pushed up. These statistics don't usually surface for a few months down the track when sales settle, and when those statistics are made public, home owners on mass then believe maybe the timing is right to sell, and all come to the market in a big wave. Swinging the supply and demand balance in the other direction once more.

So, what does this current supply and demand picture mean for Mount Victoria?

In August, median prices in our area lifted by 3% on the previous month. Added to this positive statistic is that the average days to sell in Mount Victoria in August was 33. Compare this to one year ago when the average days to sell was 64 and it's clear that many homes in our area are selling well. Compared to our neighbours, Mount Victoria is proving to be one of the best performing. TL

Suburb	Median Sale Price	Average Days to sell August 2024
Mount Victoria	\$1,150,000	33
Hataitai	\$1,010,000	33
Mount Cook	\$680,000	44
Roseneath	\$1,100,000	44
Oriental Bay	\$1,200,000	58

The properties that are moving slower in our suburb tend to be the circa \$2m homes (although not all), while homes in the \$1-\$2m band are getting good attention and generally are selling well. This is commonly seen in a market coming out of a cool period such as what we have been experiencing. As people in the lower price brackets start realising gains on their homes, if they are shifting up a price bracket they now have more to spend than they had thought, and in turn start pushing the \$2m+ price bracket with their looser purse strings.

Next month will be the first true snap shot of Spring with September data and it's will be fascinating to see if our local market continues to bloom. TL



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City stalwart Craig Palmer

Moir Street resident Craig Palmer was recently recognised by the Mt Victoria Residents' Association for his contribution to the community. Sharon Greally caught up with Palmer at his Moir Street home.

Mt Victoria champion Craig Palmer, along with his partner, have lived in Moir St since 1982. They started out at number 25, before purchasing and renovating number 29 to save it from demolition by developers.

"It was quite derelict. It had no piles – it was just resting on its totara floor joists. The house next door was in a similar state. It took us 3 years to renovate. It was a bigger job than we ever imagined. It was quite a stressful time! We moved in with it only half finished, and made incremental changes when there was money in the treasury. We both come from families that never borrowed – except for the mortgage."

The house looks like a small cottage from the street but is actually on two levels. Like many Moir Street cottages, there's very little space in front.

"One thing we like about living here is that physical space determines relationships, and with the close proximity of the houses, having being built right up to the street frontage, people get to know each other very well – a natural evolution of relationships. We have a street party every February, and all the generations take part."

The proximity to the city means walking is the travel mode of choice.

"We haven't had a car for 35 years – we walk everywhere. Having a car in Moir St., which was initially a single lane horse carriageway, is a curse! We walk everywhere. We buy food on the day for the day. There's nothing in the fridge to snack on!"


Palmer's connection to Wellington goes back a long time.

"I come from a working class family, growing up in a state house in Naenae. I was born on the corner of Ghuznee and Buller streets, and my father was actually born on the bottom of the Church Street steps of St. Mary of the Angels. My grandfather was born in Hall St., Newtown, and all of us were baptised at St. Peter's church, on the corner of Ghuznee and Willis Streets. My Great grandfather came out here as labourer for McCarthy Trust Brewery, from Leamington Spa in England. So we have a long Wellington history. I still volunteer at St. Peter's, cleaning weekly around the font of the church!"

Palmer's contribution to Mt Victoria is significant. He initiated the establishment of the Mt Victoria Historical Society, was part of the group that successfully opposed the Basin Reserve Flyover, is a member of the Wellington Civic trust committee, and a founding member of the 'Friends Of The Town Belt' committee. As such, he participated in the drafting of the Wellington Town Belt Act 2016, as well as the Town Belt Management Plan 2018.

He is also proud of his role in the installation of pedestrian shelters opposite the Embassy Theatre in the 1990s. It took him 10 years of lobbying and numerous council committee meetings to see them through to fruition.

"Their amenity value is considerable. They enhance the experience of all those walking to and from the central city."

"One of my favourite vistas is coming home from the central city in the early evening, and the setting sun illuminates the understory of the Town Belt, and creates this golden light between the flora of the town belt and the trees. Just for about 5 minutes, there's this golden light that vibrates – its absolute magic!" 

Beliefs and buildings feature in heritage walks

Mt Victoria's diversity of religious belief features in one of the walks included in the upcoming Wellington Heritage Festival, running from 26 October to 17 November.

The three 'Sacred Spaces' walks are organised by Dr Richard Norman, a Mt Victoria resident, former academic, and member of Historic Places Wellington and St Peter's Anglican church.

He is joined by Sir David Moxon, former Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia and former director of the Anglican Centre in Rome.

The walks are a chance to learn about architecture, art, beliefs and rituals distinctive to each tradition.

The distinctive Greek Orthodox Cathedral (pictured) features in the Mt Victoria walk.

"The Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Hania street was a symbol of the strength of the Greek community in Mt Victoria," Norman says.

"It remains a very important part of the community, providing a central place for the community to gather and to showcase Greek culture in the annual fair."

But Mt Victoria has always had a healthy mix of cultures, which is also reflected in its religious buildings, Norman says.

"St Joseph's Catholic Church is a modern building but its story has links to the former St Pat's school in the area, and the Home of Compassion."

A less well-known group, which dates from the 17th Century, is the Quakers, whose base is also in Mt Victoria.

"The Quakers have their base at the Friends' House on Moncrieff Street, which was built in 1929."

The Wellington Heritage Festival includes other events connected to Mt Victoria, including tours of the Embassy Theatre run by the Mt Victoria Historical Society.

Check out the website for more events, and how to book – wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz 



Kia ora Mt. Vic!

Let's talk about our community.

Get in touch about any local issues or if you need support. I'm here to help and would love to hear from you!

Tamatha Paul MP for Wellington Central
wellington.central@parliament.govt.nz
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ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in the Mount Victoria area – to win a \$20 voucher for your favourite local cafe.

Email your answers to editor@the-local.co.nz. If there's more than one correct answer the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Emma Young, who correctly identified September's ULO as the weather vane at the Mt Victoria Bowling Club. 



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.

Exciting Gymnastics Opportunities at Capital Gymnastics Club!

Capital Gymnastics Club offers diverse opportunities for children in gymnastics! Programmes range from beginners to elite athletes, including gymnastics, trampolining, and tumbling. Led by experienced coaches, safety is paramount. Our structured approach fosters skill development and confidence in a fun environment. Book online for classes, parties, or school groups at capitalgymnsport.org.nz or contact us at 027 239 9139 or office@capitalgymnastics.nz.



Good Vibrations sound therapy



Sounds like you need some Good Vibes to bring you back into harmony. Sound healing is an ancient practice that harnesses the power of sound vibrations that affect us on a neurological, physiological, and biochemical level to promote healing and relaxation. Harness the healing power of sound to benefit your life. Contact Sharon Greally at Good Vibrations Sound Therapy, The Paddington, 140b 11 Jessie Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011, phone 0212 648 544 or email info@goodvibrationssoundtherapy.co.nz

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

U3A October topics

Geothermal energy and Gen Z's view of Te Tiriti start our October lectures, followed by Digital Safety and how traditional knowledge and modern science coexist in Japan. There are untold stories of ordinary people from World War 2, and a review of Open Government. Our lectures are Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 am at the Embassy Theatre. \$5 for visitors; \$40 membership for 59 lectures, interest groups and special events. Visit u3awellingtoncity.org.nz to find out more.



Foraging workshop – Homegrown Botanica



Join Felicity Joy of Homegrown Botanica for an immersive foraging workshop in the Innermost Community Gardens in Mount Victoria, Wellington, on Saturday, 26 October, or Sunday, 17 November. Discover the

world of wild edible plants growing in your own backyard! Learn sustainable foraging practices, confidently identify nutritious and medicinal plants, and uncover the folklore and history behind them. You'll leave empowered with the skills to create wild meals and herbal remedies. Take steps toward sustainable, local food resilience! Spaces are limited, so book your spot now at homegrownbotanica.co.nz Follow on social media @homegrownbotanica

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*.

Mt Victoria Residents Association

MVRA holds regular monthly meetings at the Mt Vic Hub on the first Thursday of the month at 5.30pm. All members welcome.

Table tennis for over 60s

Table tennis is a fantastic sport for older people as it helps with movement, brain stimulation, and muscle/bone strength. We have 8 tables and play 3 times a week at the stadium on Alexandra Road. We want to encourage new people to join our fun social event. Only \$4 each time – no subscription. For more information contact Diana Winn, email winnich@xtra.co.nz or phone 04 801 9556.

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

Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten

Spaces Available! Pikopiko is open for 2-5 year olds, Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm during school terms. 20 HOURS FREE FROM 2 YEARS OLD. Phone 04 385 0441 or email pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz Please see wmkindergartens.org.nz for more information.

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 or check out our website innermostgardens.org.nz to find out more about how the gardens are run and allotment and composting opportunities.

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 wgtquakers@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 wgtquakers@gmail.com

Join the Mt Victoria Historical Society

Ever wondered who lived in that little cottage or grand villa you walk past, or famous people who have lived in Mt Victoria? If you're curious about why our suburb looks and feels the way it does, or want to learn more about its heritage, join Mt Victoria Historical Society. We've been researching its stories since 1996 and offer a range of events, guided walks and a newsletter packed full of interest. See our website for details mtvictoria.history.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 04 384 8201 or email info@crosswayscreche.org.nz

My friend the wind

Have you heard about the experiment where they play German songs in a wine shop and people buy more German wine? How else to explain some of the musical choices on offer at one of our major local supermarkets?

For example the song ‘My friend the wind’ by Greek singer Demis Roussos. This song is on practically every time I enter the supermarket. It is a 70s folk song, which features Mr Roussos (famous for his kaftans) standing windswept in front of the Acropolis in Athens.

Whilst a lovely song, I am frankly puzzled by the fact it is on high rotate. Demis Roussos is not Greece’s most famous singer (Nana Mouskouri is) and this isn’t even his most successful song (although according to Wikipedia it did reach number 1 in the Netherlands and Belgium – this is not a strong endorsement).

So what is going on here? Is this a subtle exercise by some supplier of Greek food to influence our purchases?

We of Mt Victoria are lucky enough to live in proximity to one of New Zealand’s most expensive supermarkets.

I mention this, because I assume it means they know what they are doing in the marketing department. Surely the songs and videos on high rotate are not just some old playlist that has been set and forgotten, but rather a sophisticated exercise to drive our consumer choices?

I therefore paid attention to the rest of the musical line up, when I was next in the store for my weekly shop.

Here was raunchy young Bruce Springsteen, singing Dancing in the Dark alongside ads for specials on navel oranges and prawns. He needed a live reaction. Me on the other hand, needed about 500g of mince. Was there a correlation?

Then it was Simply Red, with mainstream hit Fairground: ‘Even if I know we can’t make it’ – was



“On this basis I developed a theory. This banal music was simply there to distract your brain.”

this a hidden exhortation to be more ambitious in the kitchen? To buy the quinoa, despite never having cooked it?

A common thread running through the music was its annoying catchiness. I apologise already to those who encounter me in the supermarket singing, and occasionally dancing.

On this basis I developed a theory. This banal music was simply there to distract your brain. Left to your own thoughts, you might start pondering some real problems. You might wonder how on earth 500g of butter costs \$7 despite New Zealand being a major producer of dairy products. You might observe that olive oil has doubled in price, and on that basis worry about the impacts of climate change. You might look at lab grown meat and wonder if it’s a bit creepy. You might actually read the fineprint on the packet of biscuits and become alarmed at all the funny ingredients in them.

Better to chuck it all mindlessly in to the trolley, and dance down the aisle!

That’s what I did.

Then I got home and discovered I’d bought three packets of feta cheese and some dolmades and it did make me wonder. **TL**

Embassy Theatre's 100th

On October 31st, the Embassy Theatre marks its 100th birthday since it opened as the De Luxe Theatre.

This landmark building, defining the end of Courtenay Place and, of course, the edge of Mount Victoria has a Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Category 1 registration.

It was designed by Llewellyn Williams for William Kemball, who designed or remodelled a number of theatres around New Zealand.

Kemball had already built up a successful company by the time he began to acquire the Mount Victoria sections for the site of the De Luxe. He planned one of the biggest and grandest theatres yet erected in New Zealand and initially envisaged a four-storey theatre (reduced to three before construction).

The theatre was officially opened by the Mayor on the 31 October 1924. His address was reported in the Evening Post, with the comment: "The proprietors in their enterprise had shown their faith in the future of the city of Wellington; and he believed their faith would not be misplaced." Many people have expressed their faith in the Embassy since, fighting for its restoration and bring it back to life.



Advertisement celebrating opening night at the De Luxe Theatre. Dominion, 1 November 1924 [Papers Past]

The Theatre opened showing Cecile B De Mille's Ten Commandments at a gala New Zealand premiere. It was looked forward to "as one of the biggest events in theatre entertainment in the history of New Zealand".

That level of movie excitement in Wellington was only matched 80 years later by the New Zealand premieres at the Embassy of Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings movies in



The De Luxe Theatre, c. 1930 [ATL 1/2-125036-F]

2001 and 2002 – and then totally eclipsed by the world premiere of the third in the trilogy in 2003.

The first movies were, of course, silent but they were accompanied by the twelve-piece De Luxe Orchestra. The orchestra was replaced in 1927 a Wurlitzer organ which, in addition to more orthodox music, was capable of producing a range of sound effects including explosions, bird songs and breaking waves. When 'the talkies' arrived in 1929, the theatre was wired for the Western Electric Sound System. Although the Wurlitzer was no longer needed for film screenings, it provided musical entertainment before, during intervals and at film's end. Organ concerts were held right up to the 1950s.

Now, with the demise of the Paramount down the road, the Embassy is believed to be the oldest movie theatre in the country still operating as a cinema.

There's so much more to tell of the Embassy Theatre's history but there are several opportunities coming up. Mount Victoria Historical Society is offering historical tours of the theatre during the Wellington Heritage Festival (wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz to find out more) and creating a history panel to be permanently mounted on the Majoribanks Street wall of the Theatre. The Council is also working on a programme of events to mark the centennial, so look out for more information. **TL**



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