



TUNNEL REPRIEVE FOR MT VICTORIA?



Mt Victoria residents are still waiting to hear whether the bulldozers and boring equipment will be rolling in to build a new tunnel through the maunga – or the machinery will head elsewhere.

The prospect of a second Mt Victoria tunnel removing part of the suburb appears to be receding as the idea of a ‘long tunnel’ gains traction instead.

Part of Paterson Street in Mt Victoria would likely disappear if the original idea of a parallel tunnel goes ahead.

But the Government seems to be indicating that an alternative will be favoured instead, which would go underground from the Terrace Tunnel and then under Mt Cook through to Kilbirnie.

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Tunnel reprieve for Mt Victoria?

For years, Wellington has been expecting another tunnel to be built through Mt Victoria, next to the existing tunnel, to ease a bottleneck of traffic around the Basin Reserve.

A pilot tunnel was drilled in 1972 from Paterson Street to Taurima Street in Hataitai, to investigate the technical feasibility of a second tunnel, but the proposal was eventually shelved in 1981 due to costs.

A parallel or diagonal tunnel was consulted on as part of the Let's Get Wellington Moving project, but this was shut down by the National Government at the end of 2023.

However, the long-awaited tunnel appeared to be getting closer to becoming a reality when the incoming National-led Government promised to get it underway within their first term of government.

The project made it onto the Government's list of 149 projects included in the one-stop-shop Fast Track Approvals Bill. However the listing, aimed at improving SH1 between the Terrace Tunnel and Kilbirnie, allowed for either 'a second Mt Victoria Tunnel and Basin Reserve improvements', or 'a long tunnel that bypasses the central city'.

A long tunnel was one of the options considered by Let's Get Wellington Moving early on in its process and at the time was estimated to cost around \$3 billion.

Ministers now seem to favour the long tunnel, which would bypass the inner city, and run 4 kilometres underground from The Terrace through to Wellington Road.

Infrastructure Minister Chris Bishop has talked up the benefits of removing State Highway 1 from the centre of Wellington.

"We campaigned as you know on building a parallel tunnel, right next door to the current Mt Victoria tunnel, but a lot of people have said to us, you know what, you should do it all in one fell swoop.

"Because if you do Mt Vic you've got to do the Basin [Reserve], you've got to do undergrounding of some form around Aro, and you've got to do the Terrace."

A long tunnel would shave 15 minutes off a trip to the airport, according to estimates, Bishop said. But it would also have urban development advantages.

"The other point I'd make to you is that it allows Wellington central to be the liveable city that we all want it to be. It's really hard to have walking and cycling and parks and urban development through that part of Wellington, when SH1 runs down the middle of it.

"So I reckon you'll see significant value uplift in that part of Wellington as a result of taking traffic away from the central city and it also means that you take traffic off the quays, freeing up the quays for better bus priority."

In September NZTA officials provided advice to Transport Minister Simeon Brown on three options - a parallel or diagonal second Mt Victoria tunnel and a long tunnel.

Although Brown had earlier indicated a decision would be made in the middle of the year, at the time of writing he has yet to announce which tunnel would go ahead. **TL**

Mt Victoria's population decreases

According to the 2023 Census figures now released, Mt Victoria's population has decreased by 153 people, or 3.4%.

In the 2023 count, 4,374 people were 'usually resident' in the suburb, compared to 4,527 in 2018. Around a third of Mt Victoria's population were not here a year ago, speaking to the high proportion of renters and students in the area. 1,311 lived elsewhere in New Zealand, and 207 were overseas.

There are more renters in the suburb, with 70% of residents (2913) over 15 years of age saying they don't own a home, compared with 63.4% in 2018 (2649).

This is at odds with the trend nationwide: 66% of households in Aotearoa New Zealand own their home or hold it in a family trust, compared with 64.5% in 2018.

The 2023 Census saw an upsurge in those saying they worked from home in Mt Victoria: 522 people were recorded as working from home, compared to 267 five years before. More people said they took the bus to work (489 v 444) than the previous Census, but fewer went by bike (138 v 195). The 'other' category increased from 69 to 99, perhaps indicating the popularity of scooters. **TL**

Residents want cycleway changes

Traffic snarl ups around the Kent Terrace and Wakefield Street intersection have prompted the Oriental Bay Residents' Association to propose an alternative cycleway layout they believe will be better for everyone. Jane O'Loughlin reports.

Rex Nicolls, a former councillor and current committee member of the Residents' Association, says the current cycle lane in front of the Fire Station has reduced the three lane road to two, causing problems.

"Cars travelling south towards Kent Terrace are using the right lane out of Oriental Bay, blocking the turn into Wakefield St. Cars are backed up past Freyberg Pool in peak morning traffic."

The solution proposed by the Association is putting cyclists on the footpath behind New World supermarket, freeing up the lane in front of the fire station for cars again.

A light-controlled crossing on the Oriental Parade turn into Wakefield St would allow cyclists to cross that road.

Keeping the cycleway on the Cambridge Terrace side of the Welsh Dragon would mean doing away with the 'dangerous' diagonal cycle lane across the Marjoribanks Street corner.

Between Courtenay Place and the Basin Reserve the Association is proposing that cyclists could use the footpaths each side of the median strip.

"This would allow the many carparks along Cambridge Terrace to be reinstated, and the current cycle lane to be reused by cars."

In response, the Wellington City Council said the idea of using the median strip "had several critical safety issues which made it unsuitable."

A spokesperson said a cycleway route alongside the Welsh Dragon had also been looked at, "however this was changed in later iterations as safety audits

raised that it had significant safety issues where it crossed the Wakefield Slip lane."

Nicholls is seeking support from other Residents' Associations for the changes, as well as businesses along Kent and Cambridge Terrace. He wants the council to carry out a cost benefit analysis of the proposal compared to the existing roading set up.

"The changes we propose are very cheap, mainly requiring the removal of plastic barriers, altering a few signs, and replacing painted lane markers. More major work is required in the area behind New World and across Wakefield St.

"We are sure that the residents of southern and eastern Wellington who use this busy route will also appreciate gaining back one arterial car lane for their morning commute."

The council indicated that change was not off the agenda.

"The Newtown to City project has closed its adaptations and changes. Subsequent projects, including the Golden Mile, are looking at changes in the area and could make alterations to the layout."

The council has monitored and made tweaks to the traffic phasing at the Majoribanks/Kent intersection to improve the vehicle queue time at this location and would continue to do so as the Golden Mile changes progress. **TL**



Light at the end of the tunnel

One of the hazards of a monthly publication is trying to cover an evolving news story.

There is a high risk that timing means you'll get it wrong. Your story is accurate when you go to print but by the time your paper gets distributed, it's old news or the facts have changed.

For the past five months I've been waiting for an announcement about the 'second'* Mt Victoria tunnel, and wondering if this month is the time to write a story about how late that announcement is.

(*Pedants will tell you that there are already two tunnels through Mt Victoria, if you count the bus tunnel, so another tunnel will be the third.)

Another Mt Victoria tunnel has been on the cards since the 70s, and the current National-led Government came to power promising spades in the ground to build it before the end of their first term.

But meanwhile the idea of a 'long tunnel' arose, going all the way from the Terrace, under the mountain and through to Kilbirnie, burrowing through four kilometres of Mt Cook.

The Transport Minister Simeon Brown promised that a decision would be made around 'the middle of the year'. But the 'middle' of the year has come and gone, and I think that most people would accept

we are now closer to the 'end' of the year, and still we wait.

(Of course I will have jinxed it by writing all this, and no doubt you are reading this having heard the outcome of that decision-making.)

Mt Victorians have been waiting decades to find out what will happen to Paterson Street.

There is some kind of irony in the fact that just as the most determined of road-building governments approaches with its shovels, the idea of the tunnel changes so that once again Mt Victoria is off the hook.

At time of writing, we don't know what choice the government has made, but my money is on the long tunnel – too much has been made of the benefits of this project for the Minister to backtrack on it now.

What will it mean for Mt Victoria NOT to get a tunnel – or rather, NOT to have the side of the suburb bulldozed away?

This is the really interesting question, and one I'm keen to dig into in future editions of *The Local*, along with many more tunnel puns. It won't be boring, so stay tuned! TL



Jane O'Loughlin
Editor

THE LOCAL

Mt Victoria

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Mt Vic gets cleaned up

A collaboration between CleanStreetsNZ and the Mt Vic Hub saw Mt Vic get a spring clean in October.

Organiser Alison Pharaoh said there was a good turn out of people to help clean up the streets.

“The previous night’s rain had swept a lot of rubbish into sumps so these were filled with floating litter.

“However, there was still plenty lying round and we had about 10 bags of rubbish and the same amount of recycling.

The hard work was celebrated with pizza afterwards. “Thanks to Joel and the team at Mt Vic Hub, Jill at Inner City Wellington, and all the locals who turned up.” **TL**



New Embassy history panel unveiled

A new explanatory panel has been unveiled that shares stories from the history of the Embassy theatre.

The panel, created by the Mount Victoria Historical Society, and funded by the Society plus a number of donors, was unveiled as part of the Wellington Heritage Festival events to coincide with the centenary of Wellington’s famous theatre.

The panel is located on the Majoribanks Street side of the Embassy Theatre, alongside the existing panel about Mt Victoria’s history.

To help celebrate the centenary, the Wellington City Council collaborated with the Embassy and the Wellington Film Society to offer a free showing of the epic Cecil B. DeMille movie *The Ten Commandments*, which was the film that opened the cinema in 1924. **TL**

Swiftie success

A second Clyde Quay School fundraiser selling tickets to a Taylor Swift concert has netted the school \$140,000.

Although not all tickets were sold the second time around, the school organisers were happy with the result.

The funds raised will contribute to our school hall and playground upgrade,” said Board of Trustees Chair Michelle Little.

The first raffle, run earlier in the year, had one main prize and half the number of tickets, which sold out quickly, raising \$85,000. **TL**

Cancer fundraiser

A fundraising event run by Mt Victoria fitness club Anytime Fitness has raised more than \$5,000 for Breast Cancer Foundation NZ.

“This final figure of \$5,103 beat our original target of \$3,500, which is one dollar for every kiwi diagnosed annually, by some margin,” said Club owner Craig Cawkwell.

The event saw participants and supporters keep the spin bike going for 12 hours.

The cause was a highly personal one for several members of the team, as two of the Personal Trainers, Sandi and Hannah, have immediate family who have battled breast cancer.

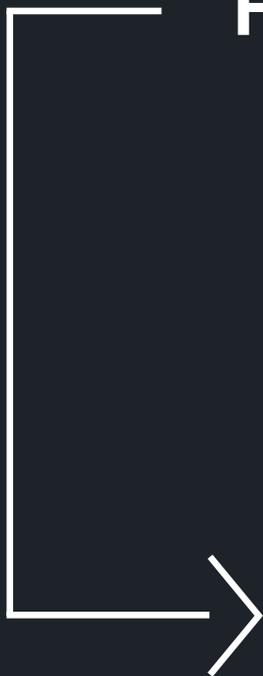
“Sandi’s mum, Becky, has stage 4 and actually participated in the event, tackling the final 30 minutes of the day with Sandi riding alongside her. This was a considerable achievement, given Becky continues to receive treatment every three weeks and physically isn’t as capable as she once was.

“Members of Becky’s family were there to cheer her over the finish line.” **TL**



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Homes for traps wanted

Do you want to help make Mt Victoria safe for native birds? *Report by Jane O'Loughlin.*

Predator Free Wellington is looking for households in Mt Victoria to host a trap or bait station, to catch rats and weasels.

"We already have hundreds of other homes, businesses, Clyde Quay school and St Gerard's Monastery on board, but we are looking for more," says David Klein, PFW Communications Programme Lead.

The traps and bait stations are safe to use around children and pets.

"This is a free service and the Predator Free Team team will check the trap for you."

The organisation is also working in the Mt Victoria town belt, Oriental Bay, Roseneath and Hataitai, after a successful phase 1 removing predators in the Miramar area.

The group has been improving their technique as they go.

"In the town belt we are trialling an automatic bait release system, which will mean the team needs to check the area less often -reducing labour and costs."

So far phase 2 is going well, with Hataitai now down to its last few rats.

Unsurprisingly, the town belt is home to many rodents.

"The area of bush north of Palliser Rd has been very good rat habitat," Klein says.

After working in Mt Victoria, PFW will push south towards Island Bay for the remaining suburbs of Phase 2.

If you'd like to learn more and sign up, please visit pfw.org.nz/phase-2 



Field Operator Blake Acklin installing an automatic bait station in Mt Victoria (near the top of Majoribanks).



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MORTGAGES

Property buyers start to emerge

Anji Foster from Lowe&Co reports on the impact of interest rate reductions.

You don't need to be an economist (and I'm certainly not) to recognize that interest rates are closely linked to the property market. So, it comes as no surprise that the recent OCR decrease has had immediate impact on what we are seeing at the real estate coal face.

Greater numbers of people to open homes and often multiple offers coming in for properties come deadline day are positive early signs. I can't say that this is flowing onto noticeable price increases at this early stage, but this growing confidence and momentum is likely to lead in that direction. A further decrease (or two) in interest rates before the end of the year would be a continued move in the right direction for home sellers and buyers looking to maximise their borrowing power.

By the end of September the median sale price in Mt Vic was sitting at \$1,116,000. This is a 4.6% decrease on twelve months ago, and 11.6% decrease on three years ago. You can see why it is a challenging time to sell for people who purchased at the height of the market, unless they are looking to buy and sell in this current market, which essentially insulates them from realising this loss.

So, what are the properties getting the most attention in our local market currently, and where is supply not keeping up with demand? There have been a number of recent sales of the \$2M+ category in Mt Vic in the past six months:

Address	Floor area	Land area	Sale price
Austin Street	173sqm	214sqm	\$2,200,000
Hawker Street	170sqm	306sqm	\$2,205,000
Roxburgh Street	240sqm	276sqm	\$2,450,000
Hawker Street	295sqm	316sqm	\$2,425,000

Demand for large, renovated family homes in the area remains relatively strong and we are certainly working with a number of buyers in this price range who are waiting for the right opportunity.

The most active pool of buyers, however, is in the \$1.5m and below category who are searching for freehold homes with 3+ bedrooms. This is the category that we have been lacking a steady supply of over the past six months and where there is opportunity to capitalise on the imbalance between supply and demand for homeowners. This supply/demand imbalance has resulted in the average days to sell in Mt Vic of 31 days in September, compared to 63 days twelve months ago.

Conversations with local owners continues to be along the theme of survive until 2025 and then perhaps look to sell, at which point the supply equation might move to benefit buyers once again, but for the remainder of 2024 pickings are likely to remain slim for buyers looking in this range.

Mount Victoria continues to be a highly sought after neighbourhood to buy in, with buyers across all price ranges and property types frequently specifying our area as their number one choice. For those of us living here, it's not hard to see why.

If you wish to discuss real estate matters more specific to your property, I'd love to chat. 

Source: REINZ Suburb Report September 2024

The most active pool of buyers, however, is in the \$1.5m and below category who are searching for freehold homes with 3+ bedrooms.



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Haera ra Whaea Liz



Clyde Quay School principal Liz Patara is retiring after 26 years in the job. She spoke to Jane O'Loughlin.

Liz Patara was desperate to get the job of principal at Clyde Quay School, when she applied 26 years ago.

The inner-city school was known for its diversity, and for being a bit activist.

She also loved its attitude to te ao Māori.

“It was probably one of the few schools I’ve been in where there weren’t any institutional barriers in terms of te reo and tikanga, where every teacher, irrespective of their proficiency of the language or whatever, really embraced it and practiced it. They weren’t put off by it.”

But it was a big change. She had been principal of a school in Huntly where children played on big grassy fields. At Clyde Quay School, the playgrounds were all asphalt.

In terms of roll size, however, it was perfect – large enough for kids to find friends, but small enough that you can get to know all the students – and she did. Whaea Liz, as she is affectionately known in the school, knows the name of every single student in the school, although she is modest about that fact.

“To me, it’s important we can do it, and so we should, and no child can be invisible.”



Liz Patara in 1998.

She noticed when she arrived that many of the children liked to assert their ‘rights’ – often at the expense of others. She set to work putting in place a set of values that meant “everyone understands about tolerance, respect, responsibility and accountability.”

The fact the school ‘lives and breathes’ its values has made it is an attractive place for both students and staff.

She has retained was the school’s strong commitment to Māori language, striving to create a place “where te reo and tikanga are very much part and parcel of the ethos of the school.”

She has also celebrated the wider diversity of the school community. School newsletters opening with greetings in 33 languages are one sign of that respect, and have been a hallmark of Patara’s time at Clyde Quay school.

But overall, her goal has been to make sure all students can do well.

“I’m really, really clear about what the purpose of our staff here is at our school, and that is to provide the best education we can to our children, irrespective of their backgrounds, the socio-economic group, or their political, religious beliefs.”

One thing that fires up the mild-mannered principal is the lack of funding for neuro diverse children. She is indignant on behalf of those families and also sees that providing extra assistance for those ‘exceptional’ children can mean that others miss out.

“So I get really cross, really angry at the government.”

Now at 67 she is looking forward to travelling in her retirement but knows what she will miss about the school.

“I’ll miss the kids, to see the kids every day. No day is boring in school, you know, and there’s always something to see and to appreciate. I will miss our tamariki, and also just the dynamics between the staff and the children. I think the way our staff treat our children is great.”

Her final day will be at the end of the term, in mid December. **TL**

Get it repaired!

Have you considered getting that toaster fixed instead of throwing it out?

Jane O'Loughlin investigates a new repair service.

In this consumer age it's become more common to simply chuck something out and get a new one when it breaks – the idea of repairing it has almost become foreign.

But Te Aro Zero Waste wants to turn that around and encourage more people to consider repairing their broken item – whether it's a toaster, ripped shirt or broken chair.

And to make this accessible, the team in Forrester Lane offers the tools and the advice to help newbies and pros alike to do the job for free.

Vikram Govindasamy, a Te Aro Zero Waste Coordinator, says there are two options for those looking to repair an item.

One option is to come in and DIY your repair, using the sewing machines, electronic and electrical repair equipment on hand.

Another option is to attend a repair café, which is run every other month, or a Just Sew repair café, just for textiles, that runs every month. During those times volunteers are on hand to help fix items, and pass on skills. A range of things have been successfully repaired, Govindasamy says.

“One person brought in a cushion off their hallway seat that needed to be repadded. They used some of our offcut polystyrene insulation from our Well Homes

team, bought some fabric from the Curtin Bank Fabric Corner, used our repair station and they made a brand new piece of furniture out of something that otherwise would have been thrown out.

“We've had a few people come in with broken laptop screens and they just didn't have the tools or the space to sit down and work on them. We gave them both and they were able to fix their laptops. We've had people come in with other small computer peripherals where they just needed a small part and we were able to get that from our scrap bins.

So yeah, kettles, keyboards, mice, Roombas, it could be really anything that people bring in.”

The service is a partnership between the Sustainability Trust and the Wellington City Council, and aims to reduce the amount of material going to landfill.

People are encouraged to drop in to see what's on offer in the shop, or to sit in the library and read a book. The office is open Wednesday to Saturday, 10 a.m to 4 p.m. The final Repair Café for the year is on 16 November, 1 pm to 4 pm. More information at sustaintrust.org.nz/tearozerozero 



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

(04) 3891290

Auth Tamatha Paul, MP for Wlg Cntrl. 72 Adelaide Road, Wellington. Funded by Parliamentary Services.



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WHAT'S ON

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 Brigitte Diessl, who correctly identified October's ULO as the Royal Thai Restaurant on Majoribanks Street. 



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.

Fun Holiday Programme at Capital Gymnastics Club!



The Capital Gymnastics Holiday Programme is back for the festive season, starting on Tuesday

17th December! Jump, tumble and spring into 2025 with our exciting programme that includes fun games, developing movement skills, and using our exciting gymnastics apparatus! Prices start at \$35 for a half day, and \$55 for a full day, with bookings opening on Monday 4th November. Don't miss out! Book your child's place online at capitalgymnsport.org.nz.

U3A November topics

November is the last month for U3A Wellington City lectures, with the last one on Tuesday 19 November. Topics range from the role of the church to the electricity market. Full details at www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz. On the tab Lectures & Events you can find upcoming lectures and revisit slides from past talks – and, over Christmas, check the events that have been organised. 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.



Victoria Bowling Club - Bowling for beginners

The club/bar is open every Wednesday from 4pm to 8pm for social members, with a roll up on the greens from 5.30pm for beginners with coaching and bowls etc. all provided. All you need to bring is flat soled shoes or barefeet. Come along and give it a go!

Good Vibrations sound therapy



Feel like you're out of tune, mind, body or spirit? 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@goodvibrationsoundtherapy.co.nz

Te Aro Zero Waste
Zero Wasters Xmas Market
 A market for everyone to shop sustainably!

Secondhand, preloved and upcycled treasures
 Zero waste food & coffee

11am - 3pm November 30th Forresters Lane, Wellington

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 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

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

Leave it out

The other day I was walking home past a fancy sports car I hadn't seen in the neighbourhood before.

On the front seat sat a large designer handbag. "Crikey," I thought to myself. "That won't last long."

It's not that we live in a bad neighbourhood, it's just that there are certain folk about who will remove your bike, your wallet, your power tools, etc, if you happen to leave them out, or indeed even if you happen to leave them in your garage, front garden or your house.

It's best not to advertise your valuables if you can help it.

A few hours later I was walking down the street again and the car was still there. This time however, the door handle was poking out, rather than being flush with the side of the car, which I took to mean the door was unlocked.

The handbag was still on the front seat.

"A miracle!" I thought. Perhaps I should knock on the door of the nearby house and tell them that their bag was there, and someone – not me obviously – might take it. Rest assured the neighbourhood was safe, but still, best to be careful.

But then I got suspicious. Who leaves a fancy bag on the front seat of a car with the door unlocked?



One of the mysterious chocolates spotted around Mt Victoria. Can they be trusted?

I looked around. Was this some kind of sting operation? A candid camera event to see who in the neighbourhood was honest and who wasn't?

I tried to act normal as I scurried away.

The Victoria Bowling Club found out the hard way that it pays not to leave anything out for miscreants to get a hold of.

Some time last year people with too much time on their hands did some burn outs on the lovely bowling green and then found some bowling balls that were not locked away.

Realising that they were not far from one of the most brilliant slopes in the city – Pirie Street – they let them loose, and presumably watched them roll with increasing speed through Mt Victoria and into the city.

The next day, bowling balls were found as far away as Taranaki Street, and someone from the Bowling Club then had to walk around central Wellington with a trolley trying to retrieve them.

It's a great story as long as (we are assuming) no one got hurt. I can't imagine my reaction if I were crossing Pirie Street by the KFC and saw a bowling ball hurtling towards me.

You like to think your neighbourhood is safe and your neighbours are kindly people, but are they really?

A reader recently alerted me to an interesting phenomenon she has noticed: someone has been leaving Lindt chocolates at various houses.

She writes: "I've been left a single chocolate at least three times and have seen many more on the fences of other homes too.

"I was wondering if anyone else has noticed this and if it's happening on their street too."

I have to say my reaction on reading this was the same as hers however: delight + suspicion. She wrote: "It's a lovely gesture but at the same time I am reluctant to eat them just in case they have been spiked with anything – lol!"

Indeed no one will be laughing out loud if there's a mass poisoning event, but by the same token it's a bit sad that our reaction is instinctively one of apprehension, when someone out there is probably just trying to brighten our day.

I am not sure what happened to the designer handbag in the end. I haven't seen that sports car around here recently either. Perhaps it was stolen. **TL**

The unusual history of the Ellice Street Quarry

Te Aro reclamation (to the left in the harbour) and the quarry location circled c. 1883. [Alexander Turnbull Library 1/1-025883-G]. The quarry site is circled in yellow, and the railway trestle for constructing the reclamation goes across the harbour from Clyde Quay to Taranaki Street.

The Ellice Street quarry has been the scene of a surprising variety of activities over the last 150 years, as Joanna Newman of the Mt Victoria Historical Society explains.

The distinctive scoop out of the hill at the top of Ellice Street dates back to the mid-1870s when, for approximately 10 years, that part of the Town Belt was used as a quarry. It was opened to provide rock for the nearby Te Aro harbour reclamation.

In 1880 a citizen wrote protesting at the immense excavations destroying the contour of Mount Victoria and pressure started mounting to close the quarries. That year the Council's Public Works Committee recommended twice that the quarries on the Town Belt be closed and planted with trees or let for grazing purposes. However, it was still being used by the Council for roading purposes in 1889, and only finally closed around 1904.

Since then, it has had some interesting uses.

From 1928 until 1950 it was leased by the Defence Department as a rifle range for "musketry practice." In 1946 this was explained as being required particularly for High School Cadets.

(And, if you've ever wondered why Mt Victoria is so weedy, this 1946 note by the Town Clerk recommending approval may be part of the explanation: "At present it is more or less a rubbish dump for garden refuse for people in the vicinity.")

From 1960 until 1983, the Northern Soccer Club (later the Brooklyn Northern United Association Football Club) had a gymnasium/club rooms and training ground in the former quarry. Their occupation only came to an end when the building burnt down.

All the banks in Wellington used it for staff firearms training from 1955 until 1962. Pistols or revolvers had been used by bank officers for security since the earliest days of banking – bankers slept with revolvers by their beds; a firearm might be stored behind the teller's counter; an armed officer would accompany the transfer of cash to an agency or branch; and a revolver would be nearby if a staff member was operating a small agency on their own. Permits were issued by the Council on the understanding that practice was carried out under police supervision and public indemnity insurance was provided.

And, just over 20 years ago, it became a film location for *Lord of the Rings* and stood in for Dunharrow Rohirrim encampment, Helms Deep in Rohan and Minas Tirith in Gondor.

In 2021, a more permanent addition arrived, with the installation of a sculpture to commemorate Anne Frank. **TL**



ANZ bank officers at firearms training in the Ellice Street quarry, 18 September 1957. [Alexander Turnbull Library EP/1957/3729-3-F]

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